

Université de Montréal

“The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us by grace”:  
A psychobiography and soteriology of mirroring in Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*

par

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Cette thèse intitulée:

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A psychobiography and soteriology of mirroring in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*

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## SOMMAIRE

Cette recherche relève les fonctions de l'activité du miroir dans les *Révélations* de Julienne de Norwich.

L'activité du miroir, telle que comprise par D.W. Winnicott, est habituellement une fonction de la qualité du regard de la mère, et, chez l'enfant, un élément du développement d'un sentiment initial du soi, nécessaire autant pour la capacité de négocier une séparation, d'accepter la réalité, et de construire un symbole, dans une aire intermédiaire de l'illusion, qu'il appelle l'espace potentiel. Un transfert thérapeutique en miroir est nécessaire, selon Heinz Kohut, là où cette activité parentale a été continûment absente.

Appuyée sur ces théoriciens de la psychanalyse relationnelle,<sup>1</sup> cette recherche met de l'avant notre compréhension de Julienne de Norwich et de ses *Révélations* de deux façons. De plus, dans un troisième mouvement, cette lecture des *Révélations* de Julienne peut aussi fournir des éléments de réponse à la crise de la sotériologie contemporaine.

Premièrement, à partir d'une méthodologie psychobiographique particulièrement sensible au contexte historique, notre recherche propose une esquisse de la Julienne d'avant les visions et identifie des signes d'une crise indiquant un manque précoce de l'activité du miroir. Elle relève de plus la maturation de son besoin de l'activité du miroir, selon les trois étapes thérapeutiques de Kohut, comme cela se dégage du transfert en miroir dont elle investit le Jésus de ses visions. Je décris cette maturation comme un déplacement du subjectivisme fusionnel au réalisme relationnel.

En deuxième lieu, cette recherche étend le recours à la théorie psychanalytique de l'activité du miroir à l'examen de la sotériologie des *Révélations* de Julienne. La prémisse, ici, est que le besoin précoce, chez Julienne, de l'activité du miroir, dont on retrouve des échos dans le régime de négligences et d'abus de la culture religieuse anglaise de la fin du 14<sup>e</sup> siècle, a favorisé chez elle une crise sotériologique pré-oedipienne et peut-être même la maladie.

Dans cette perspective, l'analyse utilise une méthodologie de corrélation. La sotériologie contemporaine éprouve aussi une crise de crédibilité. La prémisse

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<sup>1</sup> Ce mot sert à désigner la théorie des relations d'objet (Winnicott), la psychologie du soi (Kohut) et la psychanalyse féministe américaine. MITCHELL, Stephen et Lewis ARON, *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, Hillsdale NJ, The analytic press, 1999, pp. x - xii.

méthodologique est que la psychanalyse relationnelle peut être mise à profit pour une réponse libératrice à cette crise sotériologique. La description, par Elizabeth Johnson, des trois étapes d'appropriation dans une herméneutique féministe de la libération encadre cette application aux *Révélations* de Julienne. La sotériologie psychanalytique de Sebastian Moore et sa relecture féministe par Cynthia Crysdale permettent d'identifier, chez Julienne, les motifs et les traits de l'appropriation d'une sotériologie de l'activité du miroir dès ses débuts dans son identification fusionnelle avec les souffrances de la passion du Christ. Le chapitre de la thèse d'Elisabeth Koenig sur l'activité du miroir appliquée au *chere*, ou regard, du seigneur dans l'*exemplum* de Julienne et l'analyse de Derek Anderson de la théologie non-violente de l'activité salvatrice de la Trinité à travers l'incarnation du Christ m'ont servi d'appui pour proposer que l'activité du miroir non seulement suscite la pratique d'appropriation de la sotériologie de l'*exemplum* de Julienne, mais aussi sa compréhension mûrie de l'œuvre salvifique de la Trinité par le Christ à même la création dans le passé, dans le futur et au présent.

La lecture psychobiographique de l'activité du miroir dans l'histoire personnelle de Julienne peut être utile à la découverte de l'histoire de Julienne de Norwich, et aussi à une meilleure appréciation de sa maturation psychodynamique dans ses *Révélations* et de l'évolution historique de sa compréhension et appropriation du salut.

Cette corrélation sotériologique contribue à la redécouverte de cette tradition perdue grâce à une compréhension historique plus profonde de la motivation et des forces de la sotériologie trinitaire inscrite dans son *exemplum*.

Dans un troisième temps, cette lecture en corrélation aide à rendre la sotériologie de Julienne de Norwich plus accessible comme ressource contemporaine pour s'approprier l'œuvre de salut du Christ et pour mener une réflexion théologique sur le salut, d'autant que ses écrits sont susceptibles de susciter une activité du miroir chez ses lecteurs actuels.

**mots clés:**

Julienne de Norwich, le salut, la psychohistoire, la vie spirituelle, le féminisme, la théorie des relations d'objet, la psychologie du soi, le miroir, le maternage

## ABSTRACT

This study traces the function of mirroring in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*.

Mirroring, as understood by D.W. Winnicott, is usually a maternal function, and a necessary element in the infant's development of a nascent sense of self, as well as for the possibility of negotiating separation, reality acceptance, and symbol formation in a creative, illusory realm he calls transitional space. A therapeutic mirroring transference, according to Heinz Kohut, is necessary in cases where this parental function has been chronically missing.

Drawing on these relational psychoanalytic theorists,<sup>2</sup> this study advances our understanding of Julian of Norwich and her *Showings* in two ways. And in a third move, this reading of Julian's *Showings* may also contribute toward a response to the contemporary crisis in soteriology.

First, using a psychobiographical methodology which is sensitive to the historical context, it gives a profile of the pre-visionary Julian, and finds evidence for a crisis recapitulating an early lack of mirroring. It then traces the maturation of her need for mirroring, through Kohut's three therapeutic phases, as this manifests itself in the mirroring function with which the Jesus of her visions is seen to be invested. I describe this maturation in terms of a movement from merged subjectivism to relational realism.

Second, this study extends the use of the psychoanalytic theory of mirroring to an examination of the soteriology of Julian's *Showings*. The premise here is that Julian's early need for mirroring reverberated at a systemic level of neglect and abuse in late fourteenth century English religious culture, prompting a pre-oedipal soteriological crisis, and perhaps even her illness.

At this level, the analysis uses a correlative methodology. Contemporary soteriology is also suffering a crisis in credibility. The methodological premise here is that relational psychoanalysis can be enlisted as part of a liberationist response to this soteriological crisis. Elizabeth Johnson's formulation of the three stages in the appropriation of a feminist liberation hermeneutic frames this application to Julian's

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<sup>2</sup> This term is used to describe the approaches of object relations theory (Winnicott), self psychology (Kohut) and American psychoanalytic feminism. MITCHELL, Stephen and Lewis ARON, *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, Hillsdale NJ, The analytic press, 1999, pp. x - xii.

*Showings*. Sebastian Moore's psychoanalytic soteriology and Cynthia Crysdale's feminist rereading of Moore help elucidate the motivation for, and contours of, Julian's appropriation of a soteriology of mirroring from its beginnings in a merged identification with the suffering Christ's Passion. Elisabeth Koenig's thesis chapter on the mirroring function of the *chere* or face of the lord in Julian's *exemplum*, and Derek Anderson's analysis of Julian's non-violent theology of the saving activity of the Trinity through Christ's Incarnation, assist me to argue that mirroring dynamizes not only Julian's practice of appropriating her distinctive *exemplum* soteriology, but also her mature understanding of the Trinity's saving work through Christ in creation, in the past, in the future and in the present time.

It is hoped that the psychobiographical reading of mirroring in Julian's personal history can contribute to the search for the historical Julian of Norwich, as well as to a greater appreciation of psychodynamic maturation in her *Showings* and of the historical evolution of her understanding and appropriation of salvation.

The soteriological correlation may contribute to the retrieval of this lost tradition by means of a profounder historical understanding of the motivation for, and the dynamics of, the trinitarian soteriology embedded in her *exemplum*.

In a third move, this correlational reading may help make Julian of Norwich's soteriology more accessible as a contemporary resource for appropriation and theological reflection on salvation, not least because her writing is intended to engage the mirroring dynamic in her readers in the present time.

**Keywords:**

Julian of Norwich, salvation, psychohistory, spirituality, feminism, object relations theory, self psychology, mirroring, mothering



## RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse se situe à la fois en histoire de la spiritualité et en théologie. Elle cherche à répondre à trois questions. Premièrement, est-il possible d'écrire une psychohistoire de Julienne de Norwich utile à des études historiques et théologiques de ses *Révélations*? Deuxièmement, comment est-elle arrivée, ou qu'est-ce qui explique, sa sotériologie? Et, troisièmement, à partir de la réponse fournie par cette thèse aux deux premières questions, comment les acquis de cette recherche peuvent-ils contribuer à répondre à la crise de crédibilité que vit la sotériologie contemporaine?

La réponse à la première est habituellement non. Dans l'introduction de la thèse, j'énumère les trois raisons de cette réticence et mes réponses à chacune d'elles. Je prétends que non seulement l'approche psychanalytique relationnelle peut s'adapter de façon critique et non réductrice à la nature du sujet, mais qu'il y a en plus une raison pour laquelle *ne pas* entendre une telle démarche contribuerait à maintenir la tendance à se satisfaire d'un manque de conscience historique dans les efforts pour s'approprier aujourd'hui la spiritualité de Julienne. Un des fruits de la dimension psychohistorique de cette thèse, j'espère, sera de fournir une saisie plus claire de sa motivation et de l'enracinement historique de sa sotériologie.

Ma première hypothèse méthodologique est que, d'une part, avec ce que Julienne dit elle-même, et ce que, d'autre part, les outils de la psychanalyse relationnelle offrent pour soutenir une démarche psychohistorique sensible à une conscience historique, il sera possible de dégager des faits nouveaux qui pourront servir les autres objectifs de la présente thèse et, éventuellement, d'autres recherches historiques et théologiques sur Julienne de Norwich.

La matière des révélations personnelles de Julienne étalées dans le temps dans ses *Révélations* conduit à une application à double entrée de la méthode psychohistorique utilisée ici. La première consiste à extraire, dans une approche de psychanalyse relationnelle, une esquisse de l'histoire de la Julienne d'avant les révélations à partir des indices qu'elle nous offre. La deuxième utilise les trois étapes de la démarche thérapeutique de Heinz Kohut pour chercher comment Julienne entre, poursuit et mature dans un transfert en miroir avec le Jésus de ses visions, ceci à partir du récit des seize visions dans la version courte jusqu'à celui de l'*exemplum* dans la version longue. De plus, en raison de la nature

imaginaire de ses visions et de sa réflexion ultérieure sur celles-ci, et parce que ces visions sont le fruit et l'objet permanent de sa pratique de la prière, ou ce qu'elle appelle *beholding* (la contemplation), le concept d'espace potentiel de Winnicott devient un outil méthodologique significatif pour considérer l'ensemble de ses textes comme un lieu permanent de cette intégration psychodynamique.

Cette application double s'appuie sur l'hypothèse psychohistorique que le *chere* (le regard) du seigneur dans l'*exemplum* est chargé d'une fonction compensatoire de l'activité du miroir (hypothèse mise de l'avant par Koenig<sup>3</sup> en 1984), et que cela peut guider la recherche d'indices supplémentaires témoignant autant au début de l'histoire de Julienne d'un manque de l'activité parentale du miroir, que d'une évolution de la maturation psychodynamique de cette fonction et de son intériorisation dans les *Révélations*.

La recherche montre que la maturation psychodynamique à travers ce transfert en miroir de Julienne est évidente à la longueur de ses *Révélations* dans une transformation développementale ou maturation, ce que j'appelle le passage d'un subjectivisme fusionnel à un réalisme relationnel. Cette découverte peut être utile pour établir une corrélation entre la maturation spirituelle et psychodynamique face au besoin de l'activité du miroir dans le reste de la recherche et dans d'autres applications.

La deuxième question, à savoir comment Julienne a élaboré sa sotériologie, est reliée à la première. Plusieurs spécialistes de Julienne ont relevé l'originalité de différents aspects de sa théologie. Mais l'approche que j'entends favoriser, tout en tenant compte du corpus des débats sur d'éventuelles influences, et même en soulignant certaines sources de redécouverte de la tradition, cherche aussi à dépasser l'unicité de sa sotériologie pour atteindre ce qui l'a motivée. Mon hypothèse ici prolonge celle de la psychohistoire en proposant que le manque de l'activité parentale du miroir s'est installé à un niveau systémique, sociétal, et codifié dans l'enseignement commun de la Sainte Église. J'analyse les textes pour trouver des indices suggérant que Julienne aurait pu expérimentée une crise sotériologique dans sa condition humaine frappée de désespoir à l'époque de sa maladie, et qu'elle est parvenue au long des années à une solution satisfaisante dans la sotériologie de son *exemplum*. Je m'inspire d'Elizabeth Johnson pour interpréter ses *Révélations* comme une démarche de conversion ressemblant aux trois étapes de la structure herméneutique de la théologie de la libération.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The "Book of showings" of Julian of Norwich: A testcase for Paul Ricoeur's theories of metaphor and the imagination*, Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, ch. 7.

<sup>4</sup> JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is : The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1992, ch. 4.

Cette deuxième question implique aussi une hypothèse méthodologique à savoir qu'une corrélation, telle que menée dans les *Révélation*s, entre les discours contemporains en psychanalyse relationnelle et l'herméneutique de la libération en sotériologie peut être très fructueuse. Ces discours n'ont pas été mis en dialogue depuis longtemps, aussi leur langage commun de corrélation est relativement sous-développé. L'espoir est de faire avancer l'échange.

L'application de la méthode de corrélation à ce point de l'analyse mène à l'hypothèse suivante. À partir de ce que Julienne nous dit dans ses *Révélation*s, et avec l'aide de théoriciens de la sotériologie comme Sebastien Moore et Cynthia Crysdale qui empruntent à la psychanalyse relationnelle, je suggère qu'une des clefs pour comprendre ce qui soutient la sotériologie de Julienne tient au fait de lire ses *Révélation*s comme une appropriation de ce que j'appelle sa sotériologie de l'activité du miroir.

Les discours en psychanalyse relationnelle, en psychohistoire et en sotériologie sont tous profondément patriarcaux. Un défi méthodologique confronte mais aussi supporte la présente thèse, soit de lire ces discours «du point de vue féminin». De ce point de vue, tel qu'appliqué à l'étude de Julienne de Norwich, le discours de la psychanalyse relationnelle sur l'activité du miroir dévoile un lien inattendu avec celui de la sotériologie, qui renverse les perspectives traditionnelles sur le narcissisme et le péché.

La recherche montre qu'un argument en faveur d'une démarche de conversion, selon l'herméneutique d'appropriation de libération féministe, est fourni dans le renversement par Julienne du sens et de la logique de la théorie de la satisfaction d'Anselme, dans sa redécouverte du symbolisme médiéval du miroir, et dans sa pratique de la vocation d'anachorète, qui impliquent aussi un renversement des présomptions sotériologiques habituelles. L'*exemplum*, la pierre d'assise de sa sotériologie, conserve à la fois la situation contrastante entre la condition humaine de Julienne frappée de désespoir et sa résolution libérante. La fonction de la constance d'objet de l'activité du miroir du seigneur dans sa relation au serviteur permet à Julienne de maintenir le transfert en miroir qui est essentiel au mouvement du processus thérapeutique. Mais en plus elle lui permet de clarifier pour elle-même le sens du péché et de la souffrance, d'exercer un renoncement à sa préoccupation pour la souffrance du Christ, de développer une anthropologie plus adéquate, et de découvrir la Trinité tout entière à l'œuvre dans la restauration de la création par l'incarnation. Le fait que ses réflexions sur la Trinité à partir de l'*exemplum* doivent la conduire à la reconnaissance du Christ comme mère (et comme mère Église) est une autre preuve que l'activité du miroir du Jésus des *Révélation*s de Julienne oriente l'évolution de sa sotériologie.

La troisième question soulevée par cette thèse porte sur l'utilité des découvertes enregistrées dans les deux premières parties pour fournir un apport à la crise de crédibilité de la sotériologie contemporaine. L'hypothèse méthodologique dans ce cas suggère que l'application de la psychanalyse relationnelle en lien avec la sotériologie peut contribuer à rendre les *Révélations* de Julienne de Norwich plus accessibles et plus utiles comme ressource pour la recherche contemporaine en sotériologie. Ce troisième projet imprègne tout notre effort, mais ne peut aucunement être mené à terme dans ce projet. Toutefois, les *Révélations* de Julienne nous fournissent un exemple si concret de ce qu'une femme mystique, dont les écrits témoignent d'une maturation psychodynamique et théologique si profonde, peut apporter à notre compréhension du salut et de la théologie, que quatre questions doivent être explorées, même si c'est à des degrés différents.

Premièrement, les résultats de l'hypothèse selon laquelle Julienne a vécu une conversion sotériologique dans sa compréhension du sens du péché et de la passion et de la souffrance du Christ suggèrent que la lecture du développement de sa sotériologie de l'activité du miroir peut aider à soutenir l'opinion croissante que la sotériologie trinitaire de Julienne offre une réponse significative à la crise de crédibilité de la sotériologie contemporaine au sujet du sens de la croix.

En retraçant la sotériologie de l'activité du miroir de Julienne dans ses ultimes réflexions sur la Trinité et la christologie, cette thèse montre, en deuxième lieu, comment ce qui a soutenu la sotériologie de Julienne peut représenter la nature compréhensive et intégrale de sa sotériologie ainsi que la genèse historique de sa théologie de la Trinité et de la maternité du Christ, et, troisièmement, que cela rejoint aussi la requête contemporaine d'une cohérence entre les activités créatrice et salvifique de Dieu.

Enfin, le dernier chapitre de la thèse s'intéresse surtout à l'apport particulier de Julienne à la question de la cohérence entre les sotériologies subjective (appropriation) et objective (l'œuvre salvifique du Christ). Ce problème est au cœur de la demande postmoderne que la sotériologie soit réelle, c'est-à-dire susceptible d'être expérimentée au présent. Les découvertes ici sont peut-être l'apport le plus important de cette thèse.

L'analyse de l'activité du miroir clarifie comment la sotériologie objective dans le passé, le futur et le présent (le présent étant la sotériologie subjective) s'harmonise dans l'*exemplum* de Julienne. Elle permet une appropriation contemporaine du salut autant en manières de penser que d'éprouver et dans des pratiques qui transforme la connaissance relationnelle de soi et de Dieu en cette vie. La recherche souligne que Julienne attribue à la *chère* de Dieu notre Seigneur le travail en nous de l'activité du miroir par la grâce.

La thèse est organisée de la façon suivante. Le premier chapitre identifie les fondements herméneutiques de la présente recherche, et les questions principales et hypothèses retenues pour cette recherche, de même que les méthodologies utilisées. Il situe alors la problématique foncière occupée à chercher une réponse à la crise de crédibilité de la sotériologie. À partir des travaux de Roger Haight, Elizabeth Johnson et autres, il ébauche les questions majeures auxquelles la sotériologie contemporaine doit répondre en même temps que les exigences postmodernes qui alimentent ces questions, le tout exigeant la mise en œuvre d'une méthode de corrélation critique. Ce chapitre identifie des éléments de réponse sur ce qu'est l'œuvre salvifique du Christ et au comment cette œuvre est reçue, eu égard à la structure de l'herméneutique de la théologie de la libération féministe. Il montre ensuite comment la psychanalyse relationnelle est devenue un partenaire dans ce dialogue théologique. Enfin, il reconnaît la signification de la présente recherche pour une réhabilitation des mystiques en vue de l'appropriation en notre temps aussi bien que dans la démarche théologique.

Les chapitres 2 et 3 fournissent les fondements méthodologiques de l'application de la psychanalyse relationnelle au projet psychohistorique.

Les chapitres 4 et 5 répondent aux questions sur qui est Julienne de Norwich. Le premier des deux identifie les manuscrits et les preuves historiques de son existence. Il repasse ensuite les principales questions sans réponses au sujet de son état de vie, son éducation et la composition de ses deux écrits, pour lesquelles tout spécialiste de Julienne doit mettre de l'avant des pistes d'interprétation. Le chapitre 5 propose une première application de la méthode psychohistorique aux premiers chapitres des *Révélations* pour dégager les traits psychodynamiques de la Julienne d'avant les révélations.

Le reste de la thèse est organisé en une série de diptyques. La raison de cette stratégie organisationnelle tient au fait que la corrélation proposée ici implique plus d'un niveau d'analyse. Le dialogue encore peu développé entre la psychanalyse relationnelle et la sotériologie s'ajoute à cette raison. Ainsi le chapitre 6, l'introduction aux diptyques, présente un bref survol de la structure et de l'orientation de chaque ensemble de diptyques. Le premier chapitre de chacun des diptyques (soit les chapitres 7, 9 et 11) propose l'application des trois étapes de la méthodologie thérapeutique de Heinz Kohut selon le transfert en miroir à l'étude psychohistorique des deux versions des *Révélations* de Julienne. Le deuxième chapitre de chaque diptyque (soit les chapitres 8, 10 et 12) propose alors la corrélation sotériologique en ayant recours à la structure de la démarche de conversion en trois étapes de l'herméneutique de la libération féministe de Johnson à partir des mêmes textes.

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What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there*. All this is too easily taken for granted. I am asking that this which is naturally done well by mothers who are caring for their babies shall not be taken for granted.

D. W. Winnicott  
"Mirror-role of mother and family in child development"

And what can make us to rejoice more in God than to see in him that in us... he has joy?...  
And this makes the soul which so beholds like to him who is beheld, and unites it in rest  
and peace.

Julian of Norwich LT 68



## INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to respond to three questions. First, is it possible to write a psychobiography of Julian of Norwich which will be helpful for historical and theological studies of her *Showings*? Second, how did she come up with, or, what motivated her soteriology? And third, based on how this thesis answers the first two questions, how might the findings help contribute a response to the crisis of credibility in contemporary soteriology?

As for the first question, the answer is usually no. I identify three reasons for this, and my response to each.

Julian specialists have been relatively reticent to speculate about this anonymous author, precisely because so little is known of her. And yet, every study of her texts must make interpretive decisions with respect to who Julian of Norwich was, often on the basis of implicit historiographical assumptions. The fertility of the field of psychohistory has not been extensively exploited with regard to Julian, perhaps because it is also a field whose understanding of evidence and objectivity is challenging, and open to various criticisms, such as reductionism. However, relational psychoanalysis is a theoretical perspective which is able to appreciate religious pathology and maturation, and even offers a framework for understanding visionary experience critically, and non-reductionistically.

The biographical information about the person we call Julian of Norwich is mostly what she herself has written, which is to make the usual psychobiographical analysis impossible or, at least, very limited. However, from another perspective, what we do have is what she herself tells us in the two versions of her revelations (the Short Text and the Long Text of the *Showings*), the writing of which was separated in time by at least twenty years. In Julian's *Showings* it is she who is speaking and projecting herself into her writing, which, considering she is a medieval woman, is itself extraordinary and potentially more revealing than the accounts of secondary sources would be. Moreover, a sensitive psychohistorical study will draw on other sources of sociohistorical data, such as contemporary cultural and literary studies which are producing new knowledge about women in the later middle ages.

Finally, perhaps this reticence is also because of a hagiographical awe of its subject: Julian of Norwich is held in such high esteem (not exclusively, but particularly by women) as a spiritual writer and theologian, that few have ventured far to explore a pre-visionary

psychobiographical profile and its evolution through the two versions of the *Showings*. The problem with this reticence is that, as Julian's work is increasingly being recognized and appropriated as theology, specifically as a soteriology, a Christology and a trinitarian theology, there is scholarly unevenness as to our understanding of the historical genesis and evolution of that theology.<sup>1</sup> One of the fruits of the psychobiographical dimension of this thesis, I hope, may be to contribute to a clearer sense of the motivation for, and historical genesis of her soteriology.

My first methodological hypothesis is that, with what she herself says on the one hand, and with the tool of relational psychoanalysis to support an historically grounded psychobiographical method on the other, it will be possible to extract new evidence for a psychobiographical interpretation of her two texts, and that this evidence can contribute to the other objectives of this thesis, and to other historical and theological studies of Julian of Norwich.

The subject matter of Julian's self-revelation over time in her *Showings* leads to a two-pronged application of the psychobiographical method used here. The first application involves extracting a relational psychoanalytic profile of Julian's pre-visionary history from the hints she gives us. The second application uses the three phase therapeutic method of Heinz Kohut to explore how Julian engages, works through and matures in a mirror transference with the Jesus of her showings from her account of the sixteen showings in the Short Text through to the *exemplum* in the Long Text. Moreover, because the visionary nature of her showings and her subsequent reflections on them are the fruit and ongoing subject of her prayer practice of what she calls *beholding*, Winnicott's concept of transitional space is a significant methodological tool for engaging the whole of her

---

<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Walker Bynum writes soberingly as both a feminist and medieval historian that [a] good deal of what seems to me irresponsible theologizing about women has been done recently, based on a superficial understanding of the history of Christianity; and certain claims about women's need for female symbols or for affectivity or for the unstructured are among the most empty and ill-informed.

BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone, 1992, p. 50.

Likewise, in his study of the trinitarian hermeneutical "principles [governing] the relationships between Julian's memory of her revelation, her subsequent meditations on it, and the written accounts that attempt to articulate it", Nicholas Watson observes that "a kind of fundamentalism" exists in much of Julian scholarship, motivated in part by the desire to confirm that her vision is "in some final sense right". WATSON, Nicholas, "The trinitarian hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 80. Exeter symposium V. I do not deny that that motivation continues in the present study. But my hope is to give some account for why Julian's work is approached this way.

visionary experience, her memory of and meditation on it, and the texts she composed, as a sustained locus for this psychodynamic integration.

This two-pronged application is based on the psychobiographical hypothesis that the face of the lord in the *exemplum* is invested with a compensatory mirroring function, (a hypothesis proposed by Koenig in 1984),<sup>2</sup> and that this can orient the search for further clues as to both Julian's early history of a missed parental function of mirroring and the evolution of her psychodynamic maturation and internalization of this function in the *Showings*.

The second question, how did Julian come up with her soteriology, is related to the first. Many Julian specialists have commented on the originality of various aspects of her theology. But the approach I intend to take, while incorporating the body of debate on potential influences, and even highlighting certain sources for retrieval, also attempts to get behind the uniqueness of her soteriology to what motivated it. My hypothesis here extends the psychobiographical one, to propose that the missed parental function of mirroring was compounded at a systemic, societal level, and codified in the common teaching of Holy Church. I explore the texts for clues suggesting that Julian might have experienced a soteriological crisis in her human predicament of despair at the time of her illness, and that she worked through it to a satisfying resolution in the soteriology of her *exemplum*. To do this, I draw on Elizabeth Johnson to interpret her *Showings* as a conversion process bearing resemblance to the three stage structure of the liberation hermeneutic of appropriation.

This second question engages a methodological hypothesis as well, which is that a correlation between the contemporary discourses of relational psychoanalysis and the liberation hermeneutic in soteriology, as applied to the *Showings*, could be very fruitful. These discourses have not long been in dialogue, and so the shared language of correlation is relatively undeveloped. The hope would be to advance the conversation.

Applying the correlative method at this level of the analysis leads to the following hypothesis. With what Julian tells us in the *Showings*, and with help from soteriologists Sebastian Moore and Cynthia Crysedale who draw on relational psychoanalysis, as well as those who have articulated the contours of the liberation hermeneutic of appropriation, I propose that a key to understanding what motivated Julian's soteriology lies in reading her narrative and long-term process of interpretation of the *exemplum* as her appropriation of what I call a soteriology of mirroring.

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<sup>2</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The 'Book of showings' of Julian of Norwich: A testcase for Paul Ricoeur's theories of metaphor and the imagination*, Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, ch. 7.

The discourses of relational psychoanalysis, psychohistory and soteriology are all profoundly patriarchal. A methodological challenge compounding, but assisting this thesis is to read these discourses “in the feminine case”. From that vantage point, and as applied to this study of Julian of Norwich, the relational psychoanalytic discourse of mirroring reveals an unexpected relationship with that of soteriology, reversing the conventional perspectives on narcissism and sin.

The third question this thesis poses asks how the findings from the first two questions might help contribute a response to the crisis of credibility in contemporary soteriology. The methodological hypothesis here is that the application of relational psychoanalysis in dialogue with soteriology will help render Julian of Norwich’s *Showings* more available and useful as a resource for contemporary soteriological research. This third undertaking pervades the whole exercise, but can by no means be accomplished in this project. Nonetheless, Julian’s *Showings* give us such a concrete example of what a woman mystic, whose writings witness to profound psychodynamic and theological maturation, can contribute to our understanding of salvation and theology, that four of these questions must be recognized, if in varying degrees of rigour.

First, the findings from the hypothesis that Julian underwent a soteriological crisis in her understanding of the meaning of sin and Christ’s suffering and Passion, suggest that the *exemplum* mirrored a coherent narrative reflection of that crisis and its potential resolution. I suggest that reading the development of her soteriology of mirroring in terms of a liberation hermeneutic may help contribute to the growing view that Julian’s trinitarian soteriology offers a significant response to the contemporary soteriological crisis of credibility.

By tracing Julian’s soteriology of mirroring through her later trinitarian and christological reflections, the thesis shows, secondly, how what motivated Julian’s soteriology can be seen to account for the historical genesis of her theology of the Trinity and the motherhood of Christ, and thirdly, that it also responds to the contemporary demand for coherence between the creative and saving activity of God.

Finally, I explore Julian’s distinctive contribution to the question of the coherence between objective and subjective soteriology (with help from Julian specialists Elisabeth Koenig and Derek Anderson in the final chapter), a problem which is at the heart of the postmodern exigency that soteriology be real, that is, capable of being experienced in the present time. The findings here are perhaps the most significant part of the thesis.

Before outlining the thesis chapters, I believe it may be helpful to the reader to situate my interest and motivation to pursue the subject of this thesis. In 1991 I found

myself in a critical situation in which the emotional supports in my life were taken out from under me. At that point I had been ministering as an ordained Anglican priest for several years. My formation in the secular atheism of social sciences was strong. The spiritual resources available to me from my past, for a response to this crisis, were slim. However, at that time I was receiving Ignatian spiritual direction and was guided to meditate using scripture and to be attentive to the products of my imagination. I was discovering just how distant and abandoning my unconscious image of God had been. As well, I began attending a twelve step group for codependents. I was also at that time enrolled in a masters programme in spirituality in NYC and was privileged to take two courses from Dr Elisabeth Koenig which have had a permanent influence on me, one which introduced me to relational psychoanalysis and its theological response, the other on the English mystics of the fourteenth century. A masters thesis directed by Dr Elisabeth Koenig, enabled me to bring together all these influences in an initial application of the relational psychoanalytic theory of mirroring to Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, followed by a self-study of some of the imaginative material which my meditations had generated.

I would like to report one of the meditations used for this self-study, as I believe it addresses, in a visual way, the contemporary soteriological preoccupation with the incredibility of the tradition's accounts of the meaning of the cross which runs through this thesis, as this intersects with the issue of appropriation.

In a meditative exercise I followed on healing one's image of God, the following image presented itself in my imagination. I saw myself in the presence of a large, dark and obscure body. This Other had one arm around my back to comfort and support me. The other arm was extended in front of me, and held a hand mirror before my face.

In the mirror, with the eye of the heart and mind, I saw a somewhat shrouded image of what I understood to be the experience of death-in-Jesus. I resorted to using the cross as a short form for this. Although I felt the potential of fear to look and see what was there in the mirror, another newer feeling predominated. It was the feeling of new identification with the suffering and death of Jesus *in me*. The feeling of this identity revealed in the mirror had the character of being *in me* and *in God*.<sup>3</sup>

As the reader of this thesis will see, this image is pertinent to much of what follows. But my intention in including it here is to underline my developing preoccupation with contemporary soteriological issues. At the time, and in the masters thesis, I was preoccupied with the psychoanalytic implications of this image for my personal history and spiritual integration. But increasingly I have found that the image also engages a deep

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<sup>3</sup> RATCLIFFE, Holly, *Mourning and kenosis: Mirroring of God and self in transformation*, S.T.M. thesis, NY, General Theological Seminary, 1997, p. 133, emphasis in text.

ambivalence with regard to the meaning of the cross. I was developing, by then, a vivid meditational experience of death in Jesus as part of my grief process. The tomb meant much to me. But the image of the cross in the mirror was shrouded and did not feel as if it connected with what I had come to experience as meaningful, transformational. The cross, as symbol, did not connect either with what I was naming as sin for myself, or with the suffering I was experiencing.

What has become clearer in the meantime is that the difficulty I had connecting with the cross is endemic to our time, and that my experience of ambivalence has significant parallels to that of other women seeking an authentic appropriation of the Christian faith tradition.

When I finished that masters thesis I knew I wasn't finished with the subject of mirroring or with Julian of Norwich. The present thesis represents a more extensive psychobiographical exploration of the person we call Julian of Norwich, and of what I call Julian's mirroring transference with the Jesus of her *Showings*, with the help of theorists D. W. Winnicott and Heinz Kohut.

However, this thesis introduces another level of correlation, drawing on the contemporary responses by Sebastian Moore and constructivist feminists to the crisis of credibility in soteriology. Was there a crisis of meaning for Julian at the time of her illness, too, which was in some sense both psychoanalytic *and* soteriological, to which she received her sixteen showings as a response? Could this be what motivated her lifelong preoccupation with appropriating the meaning of Christ's Passion in a way that could make sense to her? Did her method of *beholding* prayer enable her mirroring transference to continue to function and evolve, particularly in her ongoing meditation on the *exemplum*, over the decades following the visions, into an incarnational trinitarian theology? Is there more to the historical evolution of her trinitarian and motherhood of Christ theology than meets the eye?

Most of these questions address the soteriological problem, but enlist psychoanalysis as a partner in the dialogue. Whereas the psychoanalytic and psychobiographical analysis privileges the historical subject and can help shed needed light on Julian's shrouded personal history and development, contemporary soteriological questions address the problem of the meaning of the cross at a comprehensive level.

As will be seen below, this study uses the correlative method both to understand Julian of Norwich in her time and to enable her *Showings* to be more available as a theological resource for us in our time. The correlative method has an uneasy alliance with theology. And I am proposing to use a social science that has a history of a particularly

uneasy alliance. How can relational psychoanalysis be a resource for a profounder understanding of what Breton calls “les assises anthropologiques”<sup>4</sup> of Julian of Norwich and for the retrieval from her mystical theology for the soteriological questions we face?

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 1 identifies the hermeneutical foundations for the present study, and identifies the main questions and hypotheses with which the study is concerned and the methodologies which have been used. It then situates the primary contemporary problematic of seeking a meaningful response to the crisis of soteriological credibility, as this motivates the present thesis. Drawing on work by Roger Haight, Elizabeth Johnson and others, it outlines the major questions to which contemporary soteriology must respond, along with the postmodern exigencies which are driving these questions, all of which require the application of a mutually critical correlative method. The chapter identifies elements of a response for what the saving work of Christ is (objective soteriology), and for how that work is appropriated (subjective soteriology) in terms of the structure of the feminist liberationist hermeneutic. It then turns to show how relational psychoanalysis has become a partner in this theological dialogue. Finally, it acknowledges the significance of this study for the retrieval of the mystics for appropriation in the present time as well as for the theological enterprise.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the methodological foundations for the application of relational psychoanalysis to the psychobiographical project.

Chapters 4 and 5 begin to respond to the question who was Julian of Norwich. The first of these two chapters identifies the manuscripts and the external historical evidence of her existence. It then rehearses the major unanswered questions concerning her state of life, education and the composition of the two texts, to which every Julian specialist must make some interpretive response. Chapter 5 makes an initial application of the psychobiographical method to the early chapters of Julian’s *Showings* in order to reveal a psychodynamic profile of the pre-visionary Julian.

The rest of the body of the thesis is organized into a series of diptychs. The reason for this organizational strategy is because the correlation being attempted here is at more than one level of analysis. The relatively undeveloped dialogue between relational psychoanalysis and soteriology also contributes to this need. Thus, chapter 6, the introduction to the diptychs, gives a brief overview of the structure and direction of each set of diptych chapters. The first chapter in each diptych (i.e., chapters 7, 9 and 11) advances

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<sup>4</sup> BRETON, Jean-Claude, “Retrouver les assises anthropologiques de la vie spirituelle”, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 17, 1988, 97 - 105.

the application of the three stages of the therapeutic mirroring transference methodology of Heinz Kohut to the psychobiographical study of the two versions of Julian's *Showings*. The second chapter in each diptych (i.e., chapters 8, 10 and 12) then advances the soteriological correlation using the three stage structure of the conversion process in Johnston's feminist liberation hermeneutic of appropriation in these same texts.

The examination of the function of the mirroring dynamic in Julian's transitional relationship with the Christ of her *Showings* reveals a transformation which is traceable both in her self-understanding and in her appropriation of Christ's saving work. Moreover, her grasp of the coherence between the objective soteriology which emerges from the *exemplum* and her appropriation of the saving work of Christ's *chere* in this world is such that she seems to be offering her visionary texts as a locus for that transformative mirroring dynamic to be engaged in her readers.

Let us turn now to the present time, to the problems this thesis is addressing, and in particular, to the situation of soteriology in which we find ourselves.



## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEMS IN CONTEMPORARY SOTERIOLOGY

#### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by establishing the hermeneutical foundations of this interdisciplinary study. It identifies the questions, the main hypotheses proposed in this study and the methods to be used. The rest of the chapter focuses on the situation of contemporary soteriology, reviewing the major themes in soteriology and the postmodern exigencies which impel them, as presented comprehensively by Roger Haight in his recent study *Jesus, symbol of God*. The structure of the liberationist hermeneutic for a credible contemporary understanding of the process of appropriating salvation is explored in feminist terms, after Elizabeth Johnson. The chapter then makes the case for including relational psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup> as a dialogue partner in soteriology within this liberationist dynamic and reviews the proponents who will feature later in this study. Lastly, the chapter acknowledges the contemporary feminist search for models of authentic spiritual life and practice among women mystics in the Christian tradition. The chapter closes by proposing that this study of mirroring in Julian of Norwich may be able to contribute to the larger project of the retrieval of the mystics for a soteriology which facilitates appropriation and seeks the mature flourishing of women's spiritual lives in the present time.

#### 2.0 Hermeneutical foundations

The present thesis situates itself in both the history of spirituality and theology. On the one hand, it studies Julian of Norwich to try to understand something of the psychodynamics of the unknown personality and situation of this mysterious and brilliant 14th century woman through her *Showings*.<sup>2</sup> When I speak of a psychobiography of mirroring, it gives some indication of the interdisciplinary nature of the study which will

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<sup>1</sup> This term is used to describe the approaches of object relations theory (Winnicott), self psychology (Kohut) and American psychoanalytic feminism. MITCHELL, Stephen and Lewis ARON, *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, Hillsdale NJ, The analytic press, 1999, pp. x - xii.

<sup>2</sup> When I speak of Julian's *Showings* I am referring to her two texts of visions or "showings" which she composed. (See chapter 4, below, concerning these texts.) When I speak of her showings, I am using a modern English translation of her middle English word "*shewing*" (singular) or "*shewings*" (plural) to refer to the visions themselves.

follow. One might speak of this aspect of the study as potentially contributing to the search for the historical Julian of Norwich and to a greater appreciation of the “*assises anthropologiques*”<sup>3</sup> which motivated the psychodynamic maturation in the particular religious experience we associate with Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*.

But the present thesis also studies Julian of Norwich’s soteriology, largely in order to interpret her 14th century text in terms which might render its truths more accessible for understanding and appropriating Christ’s saving work in our own day, particularly, though not exclusively, for women. The methods of studying spirituality these days are diffuse, and for many good reasons to be discussed, some of them shy away from talk of Jesus Christ, particularly his Passion and death, as saving humanity.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Julian’s spirituality is a reflection of her person embedded in her historical environment. However, spirituality, for her, as it was for the earliest Desert fathers and mothers, *is* soteriology, focused on the constitutive scriptural tradition of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that soteriology, as she understood it, was comprehensive; it was intended for all who experienced the human predicament as she did. Reading Julian inspires me to want, with her help, to understand soteriology afresh, to help untangle it from that complicated and compromised history, and enable it to speak in new ways as the core of the Christian spiritual life.

But here the title of the thesis becomes obscure. I am saying that this study of Julian of Norwich’s *Showings* is also a soteriology of mirroring. At this point in time, this is a nonsensical phrase in the discipline of soteriology. Mirroring is a relational psychoanalytic concept, referring to an early narcissistic need on the part of the infant in the maternal-infant relation. Soteriology and psychoanalysis do not have a good correlational track record,<sup>5</sup> though, as will be seen below, this is changing, with Winnicott, Alice Miller and theologians inspired by relational psychoanalysis. My hope is that, by the end of this

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<sup>3</sup> BRETON, Jean-Claude, “Retrouver les assises anthropologiques de la vie spirituelle”, *Sciences religieuses* 17, 1, 1988, pp. 97 - 105.

<sup>4</sup> Sandra Schneiders acknowledges the “complicated historical relationship between theology and spirituality” which has led to different understandings of the function of theology in the contemporary discipline of spirituality. SCHNEIDERS, Sandra, “The study of Christian spirituality: Contours and dynamics of a discipline”, *Christian spirituality bulletin, Journal of the society for the study of Christian spirituality* 6, 1, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> The researcher in the present intellectual horizon is formed by the discourses of Freud (and Marx), and the heritage of hermeneutical suspicion dialectical discourses have grown up around them. These discourses, where they have addressed Christian understandings of sin, salvation and the spiritual life, have reduced them to social and psychological pathology, respectively. From its side, theology has felt threatened by the reductionistic approach of psychoanalysis to religious experience. McDARGH, John, *Psychoanalytic object relations theory and the study of religion: on faith and the imaging of God*, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1983, p. xiii.

study, David Tracy's comment, about the value of theology being in dialogue with other disciplines, might be seen to apply in some measure here, that "after any genuine dialogue, what once seemed merely other now seems a real possibility".<sup>6</sup>

The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer in hermeneutics is significant for the present study in recognizing the historicity of all interpretation, theological, social scientific and literary alike. Gadamer understands that "understanding always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's present situation".<sup>7</sup> Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons" between the historicity of the text and the historicity of the present situation of the interpreter consciously acknowledges the tension between the two. At the same time, he acknowledges that every act of interpretation itself becomes "recombined" and embedded in the continuing historicity of the matrix of tradition. Thus, for Gadamer, the central problem of hermeneutics is the problem of "application".<sup>8</sup> This hermeneutical stance points us toward the possibility of a mutually critical correlational conversation between contemporary human science and Christian tradition.<sup>9</sup>

What is significant about the historicity of our present North American situation is that we do tend to interpret the world through a psychological or psychoanalytic lens. Jean-Marc Charron writes that psychohistory, for example,

est une entreprise de compréhension du passé sur la base d'une sensibilité contemporaine à savoir l'intérêt pour l'univers affectif, la vie émotionnelle, l'élaboration de la personnalité... etc. À cet égard, elle est de son temps, de notre temps. H.-G. Gadamer suggérerait que quiconque veut comprendre doit poser des questions, qu'il n'y a pas de méthode pour apprendre à questionner et que ces questions, tout autant que les voies de réponse qu'elles ouvrent, appartiennent au monde de celui qui les assume: *on comprend dans et pour son monde*. Notre monde est traversé par la préoccupation "psy" et on comprend, dès lors, combien pertinente peut être l'interrogation quant aux profils psychologiques des générations passées.<sup>10</sup>

The hunch behind this study is that the relational psychoanalytic language of mirroring has something to contribute to contemporary soteriology.

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<sup>6</sup> TRACY, David, "The uneasy alliance reconceived: Catholic theological method, modernity and postmodernity", *Theological Studies* 50, 1989, p. 562.

<sup>7</sup> GADAMER, Hans-Georg, *Truth and method*, NY, Continuum, 1999, p. 308.

<sup>8</sup> GADAMER, 1999, pp. 306-307.

<sup>9</sup> See TRACY David, *The analogical imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism*, NY, Crossroad, 1981, 467 p. Also HAIGHT, Roger, *Jesus, Symbol of God*, Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1999, p. 45 fn. 35, where he says "Correlation [as theological method] involves among other mechanisms a fusion of horizons and appropriation".

<sup>10</sup> CHARRON, Jean-Marc, "Psychohistoire et religion: Perspectives défis et enjeux", *Religiologiques* 1, 2, 1990, p. 73. He draws on GADAMER, 1999, p. 306.

### 3.0 The questions and hypotheses of this study

This hermeneutical foundation leads me to the three questions which this thesis asks. First, is it possible to write a psychobiography of Julian of Norwich which will be helpful for historical and theological studies of her *Showings*? Second, how did she come up with, or, what motivated her soteriology? And third, based on how this thesis answers the first two questions, how might the findings help contribute a response to the crisis of credibility in contemporary soteriology?

The psychobiographical question I am pursuing is this: What type of psychoanalytic function is fulfilled by the Jesus of Julian of Norwich's *Showings*? What type or types of relationship does Julian enter into with the Jesus of her visions, and, how are they transformed? In effect, *how does the Jesus of Julian of Norwich's showings function to bring about healing and flourishing in her life as recorded in her texts?* Can this give us a clearer psychobiographical understanding of the function of the psychoanalytic dynamic of the maturation of the need for mirroring as this is reflected in her *Showings*? My hypothesis is that it can, and that it can be helpful for other studies including the soteriological project of this study.

The soteriological questions concern the saving work of Christ and the human graced response of appropriation. In effect, these too are "how" questions, which also attempt to get at the dynamics which are operative in Julian's soteriology. *How, according to Julian of Norwich's Showings, does Jesus save? And, how, according to her texts, does humankind appropriate this saving work, in ways that are liberative?* As I ask these questions of her *Showings*, however, I will bring my relational psychoanalytic reading of mirroring in her texts to bear on my reading of what might have motivated her to shape her soteriological response to these questions in the original way that she did. Here again, my hypothesis is that this can help us understand the historical evolution and dynamics in Julian's *Showings* of how the Jesus of her showings functions salvifically.

Moreover, all these disciplines, psychoanalysis, psychohistory and soteriology are implicated in the effects of patriarchy which neglect and distort the experience of women. In the present attempt to trace the function of mirroring through these different levels of analysis, I seek also to be attentive to the feminist voices which are addressing that neglect and distortion in each of these fields.

At the core of the Christian tradition's understanding of the spiritual life is the salvific work of Jesus Christ, witnessed in personal human testimonies and liberative social transformations throughout history. In terms of the present study, to interpret Julian's *Showings* psychoanalytically and soteriologically in terms of the function of mirroring is to

engage consciously in the hermeneutical activity of fusion of horizons and application.

Julian had great difficulty in appropriating the meaning of the showings for her life as they stood in such contrast with the doctrinal horizon of her situation, yet the same visions were the means she was given to appropriate a soteriology which was credible to her in her experience of the human predicament of sin and human suffering. Can this study help us to identify the contours of what we might call an implicit psychological and soteriological crisis being expressed and worked through to resolution in the *Showings*? The evidence I propose suggests that it can.

*Can the present study of mirroring in Julian's Showings also help us understand her 14th century text in terms which might render its truths more accessible for understanding and appropriating Christ's salvific work socially and personally in our current situation?* The main hypothesis of this study is that it can.

#### 4.0 The methodologies

The methodological approach of this thesis is psychohistorical and correlational.

The psychohistorical method draws on primary textual and other sources of evidence available to delve into the unconscious motives for an historic person's attitudes and actions with the help of psychodynamic theory. As part of a larger movement called the new history, it recognizes that every object of study is affected by the subjective interests of the student. It has a certain fertility as well as potential weaknesses, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

Most psychohistorians indicate that a "disciplined subjectivity" is needed in order to avoid countertransference, that is, the projection of the student's unconscious needs onto the object of study which potentially distorts the data and their interpretation by the psychobiographer.<sup>11</sup> To have access to the interiority of others the student is required to have "plumbed the depths of their own subjectivity, and this in a relatively non-defensive way".<sup>12</sup> In this way a hermeneutical objectivity is possible which respects the primacy of *understanding* the historical context under study.<sup>13</sup> Only to that extent is *explanation*, as a goal of psychobiography, appropriate.

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<sup>11</sup> KOHUT, Thomas, "Psychohistory as history", *American historical review*, 91, 2, 1986, p. 342.

<sup>12</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, "Review symposium of *Jesus, the liberator of desire* by Sebastian Moore", *Horizons* 18, 1, 1991, p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> See Sandra Schneiders' careful distinction of hermeneutical subjectivity and objectivity from that in ontology, epistemology and methodology, in SCHNEIDERS, Sandra, "The paschal imagination: Objectivity and subjectivity in new testament interpretation", *Theological studies* 43, 1982, pp. 52 - 68.

As noted above, there is admittedly an “uneasy alliance” of epistemologies in the methods of this study.<sup>14</sup> Thus, another dimension of the methodology must examine the basis on which such an alliance is possible, and what its advantages and limitations are.

On the one hand, the choice of a Christian mystic as the material object of this thesis is motivated by the need for some form of “transcendental reflection”.<sup>15</sup> But as David Tracy observes, “insofar as all modes of reasoning are linguistically rendered (as they are), they are historically embedded. Any transcendental method needs to pay greater attention to that fact than many forms of theology, both classical and modern, characteristically do”.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, there is built into the method of psychohistory, a self-critical requirement of the student to be aware of her subjectivity, as integral to the possibility of any objective discernment.<sup>17</sup> Focusing on the maturation of mirroring needs is itself a study in how subjectivity and objectivity become more integrated in their relatedness in a non-defensive way. In fact, the maturation of the mirroring need is about recognizing and accepting one’s *embeddedness* in a matrix (family, tradition, history etc.) as a feature of negotiating one’s relationship with the maternal selfobject. And narcissistic maturation as a whole is about the dying of grandiose and omnipotent archaic selfstructures to give way for a more realistic and creative acceptance of self and reality within a trusting (familial or therapeutic--and also perhaps ecclesial?) relationship. So in an unusual way, the pragmatic method of the object relations school of psychoanalysis may contribute to theology a means by which to assess for these features in a hermeneutical methodology sensitive to historical consciousness.

To articulate this complementarity, I will draw on Tracy’s understanding of the importance of a mutually critical correlational method for a systematic theology.<sup>18</sup> Tracy above all is committed to the challenge of dialogue between theology and our pluralist contemporary situation. He draws on the concept of analogy to justify a dialogue between disparate realms of discourse. A major critique of analogy as it has been used theologically has been that in finding relationships between phenomena it ignores real differences between them. Tracy is keen to recognize dialectical languages of rupture as embraced within an adequate analogical language. Analogies must allow for “real-

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<sup>14</sup> TRACY, 1989, pp. 548 - 570.

<sup>15</sup> TRACY, 1989, p. 559.

<sup>16</sup> TRACY, 1989, p. 559.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter 3 below for discussion of this point.

<sup>18</sup> TRACY, 1989, pp. 24 - 27, 374 - 376.

similarities-in-real-difference”.<sup>19</sup> The present study will seek to honour both as these emerge in the subject matter.

The use of relational psychoanalysis in contemporary soteriology and in the history of spirituality is relatively undeveloped to date. Therefore, the rest of the present chapter aims to provide a theological justification for the methodological strategy of enlisting relational psychoanalysis as a partner in the correlative project of a) developing a soteriological response which embraces a liberationist hermeneutic of appropriation, and b) drawing on the mystics as a resource for developing a credible soteriology which can be experienced in our time. However, I will not attempt to outline in any more detail either relational psychoanalysis or psychobiography in this chapter. Rather, I devote a separate chapter to each. Chapter 2 will describe the theory of relational psychoanalysis (Winnicott’s object relations theory, Heinz Kohut’s self psychology) and the directions of the psychology of religion which have emerged from this psychoanalytic orientation. Chapter 3 will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the psychobiographical method and the appropriateness of the choice of relational psychoanalysis for the subject of the present study.

### 5.0 The contemporary crisis of credibility in soteriology

In his recent, seminal text *Jesus, symbol of God*, Roger Haight poses the central, multifaceted problem of a credible Christian soteriology for our postmodern era in this way:

Many of the traditional expressions of how Jesus saves resemble myths that no longer communicate to educated Christians; some are even offensive. Many of the traditional theological “explanations” of salvation through Christ do no better. Often treatments of salvation are devoted to rehearsing traditional theories or presenting models or types which seem to inject some order in the disarray. But one cannot assume that the traditional language sounds credible today; it may function as an obstacle to faith, and too little attention is given to critical reinterpretation of it. Given the pluralism of conceptions, is there a way systematically to establish a center of gravity on the salvation mediated by Jesus that will be clear and definite but open and not exclusive? In the face of the confusion about the nature of salvation, can one formulate today’s questions and crises to which Jesus mediates a salvific answer? Given the incredibility of the mythological language when it is read at face value, can one find a symbolic formulation of this doctrine that is intelligible and closer to actual human experience?<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> TRACY, 1981, p. 409. For a more extensive discussion of the strengths and limitations of the mediating theology of Paul Tillich and David Tracy see RATCLIFFE, Holly, “Analogy and correlation in Paul Tillich and David Tracy”, unpublished paper, Faculté de théologie, Université de Montréal, 1999, 23 p.

<sup>20</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 335 - 336.

Haight's response to this question is extraordinarily comprehensive and it sets the parameters for the approach to soteriological issues to be used in this study.

### 5.1 The epistemological problematic in soteriology

In the first place, Haight spends considerable time articulating a religious epistemology which he calls "symbolic realism".<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Haight proposes a hermeneutical methodology that seeks "to overcome a radical historicism and to reflect in its theory of knowledge the deep continuity in human existence that is continually mediated by history".<sup>22</sup> Haight's whole project is grounded in a mutually critical correlative method that seeks to "balance faithfulness to the tradition" with "present interpretation that actually engages today's questions" in "a theological language that combines a symbolic, mystical dimension with historical and political realism".<sup>23</sup>

Haight actively embraces the pluralism which marks the postmodern mind, but is not content with settling down to any easy relativism.<sup>24</sup> His project is "modest" in the postmodern sense of being truly apologetic, "from below" and deeply respectful of the differences along with the similarities to be found in the dialectical, mediated structure of all tensive symbolism and human existence generally. He takes seriously the presence of subjectivity in every attempt at objectivity as discerned by means of the correlative method.

At the same time and as an act of application of this "symbolic realist" epistemology, Haight's project belongs to the constructive (as distinct from deconstructive) branch of postmodern reflection on soteriology. The heart of this constructive project is to be found in his chapters 12 and 13. In chapter 12 Haight offers a description of the elements necessary for an objective soteriological account which might be credible to the postmodern mind; "objective" in the sense that it focuses on the work of Jesus. Then in chapter 13 he draws on "family resemblances" he finds in the hermeneutical structure of liberation theologies as a structure for the process of the subjective appropriation of salvation for our time. From these two core chapters Haight proceeds to outline elements

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<sup>21</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 11, 472. This is Haight's expression by which he recognizes the tensive, historically mediated character of all religious language. On the one hand, all theology is symbolic; its assertions are not direct statements of information or objective data about God. This is important because "theologians are sometimes so drawn into the linguistic, textual, and cultural world of a tradition that meaning becomes taken for granted and begins to function like ordinary non-symbolic language". To this extent, Haight is moving away from the idea that tradition, as a source for theology, can somehow be understood "literally". On the other hand, "symbols draw human consciousness and life into a deeper world of encounter with transcendent reality. This represents epistemologically a symbolic realism". HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>22</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p.41.

<sup>23</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 490 - 491.

<sup>24</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 188, 428.



of a constructive, postmodern Christology and trinitarian theology. Before we turn to a closer look at his constructive project, however, some further orientation to the way in which Haight examines the Christian tradition concerning soteriology and its narrative nature is in order.

## 5.2 The Christian tradition of soteriological narratives

“The term ‘salvation’ refers to the most fundamental of all Christian experiences.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, concerning the history of soteriological accounts of how Jesus saves, Haight observes that an “extravagant pluralism” of narratives has been proposed, and that, unlike the case of christology, no council has ever formulated a definition or provided a universally accepted conception of salvation.<sup>26</sup> “Because of the fullness of the experience of salvation and the amplitude of its existential reality, no single definition of salvation can confine its meaning” for all times and places.<sup>27</sup> Haight observes, and I agree, that “[p]eople interpreted who Jesus was on the basis of what he did; Christology is dependent on soteriology”.<sup>28</sup> This structure of priority helps us understand the historical genesis of doctrine.

To substantiate the pluralism of narratives historically, in chapter six Haight briefly outlines no less than five Christologies and their implicit soteriologies in the New Testament.<sup>29</sup> He goes on in chapter eight to describe an even larger number of the classical soteriological narratives from early Eastern and Western patristic, through medieval and reformation sources, which draw on these Biblical themes in different ways and develop them in terms of the christological formulations of Nicaea and Chalcedon. From these narratives, he retrieves analytically an “ideal” experience of salvation which underlies them.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 335.

<sup>26</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 335.

<sup>27</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 335. Nonetheless Haight offers his own definition of Christian salvation for this postmodern era as “the encounter with God in Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus makes God present in a saving way”, p. 338. He also approves of David Tracy’s definition of salvation as “the experience-acceptance of a releasement from the bondage of guilt-sin, the bondage of radical transitoriness and death, the bondage of radical anxiety in all its forms....” TRACY, David, “The Christian understanding of salvation-liberation”, *Face to face* 14, 1988, p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 340. This structure of the “priority of soteriology to christology is not agreed upon by all theologians”. HAIGHT, 1999, p. xii.

<sup>29</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 155 - 184. These Christologies include the Last Adam Christology of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, the Son of God Christology of Mark, the Spirit Christology of Luke, the Wisdom Christology of Philippians 2, and, the Logos Christology of John. The presence of, or allusion to, several of these themes in Julian’s *Showings* is addressed fully in NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom’s daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, ch. 3.

<sup>30</sup> From among the narratives of Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Luther and Calvin, Haight abstracts seven propositions descriptive of the idealized experience of salvation: 1) Jesus the teacher is experienced as revealing God; 2) God is encountered in Jesus; 3) God is experienced as a loving Creator;

Haight's project is constructive, a hermeneutics of retrieval. He admits at the outset that some of these narratives have come historically to lose touch with their symbolic, multivalent and dialectical structure and take on an ontological, "literal" status.<sup>31</sup> Over time, this reduction of their narrative depth has resulted in their becoming obstacles, instead of invitations, to a deeper appropriation of the salvation of God in Jesus.

It needs to be emphasized here that this has become a major reason for the crisis in soteriological credibility today. Among the narratives which Haight considers, the Anselmian ontological argument for a satisfaction theory of redemption came to dominate the Western Church. As Elizabeth Johnson observes,

I sometimes think that Anselm should be considered the most successful theologian of all time. Imagine having an almost one-thousand-year run for your theological construct! It was never declared a dogma but might just as well have been, so dominant has been its influence in theology, preaching, devotion, and the penitential system of the Church, up to our own day.<sup>32</sup>

It is not Haight's intention to go into critical detail as to how aspects of the "idealized" experience underlying salvation in Anselm's *Cur Deus homo* became distorted. I note, however, Anderson's briefer and more critical account of the "violent" character of this and a number of the classical soteriologies.<sup>33</sup> And as Elizabeth Johnson observes, the "effective history" of Anselm's theological construct has been quite different from the "idealized" experience. She criticizes the satisfaction theory

for its focus on the death of Jesus to the virtual exclusion of his ministry and resurrection, thus truncating the biblical witness; for its methodological mistake of literalizing what is meant to be, in truth, a metaphor, turning it into an ontological reality; for its promotion of the value of suffering, easily exploited to maintain situations of injustice; and for its effective history which has fostered the idea of an angry God who needs to be recompensated by the bloody death of his Son.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Schillebeeckx observes that late medieval devotion to, and imitation of, the suffering Jesus represented a movement in the Christian interpretation of suffering into

a phase in which the symbol of the cross becomes a disguised legitimation of social abuses, albeit to begin with still unconsciously.... "Suffering in itself", no longer suffering through and for others, took on a mystical and positive significance so

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4) The devil represents an experience of *a priori* evil to which human existence is in bondage; 5) Divine fidelity is experienced in Jesus' human fidelity; 6) Jesus is experienced as the archetypal human being, the final Adam; and 7) Jesus' resurrection is the promise that meets the hope of human existence. HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 237 - 243.

<sup>31</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> JOHNSON, Elizabeth, "Jesus and salvation", *Proceedings of the Catholic theological society of America* 49, 1994, p.5.

<sup>33</sup> ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D., Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, ch. 1.

<sup>34</sup> JOHNSON, 1994, p. 5.

that instead of having a critical power it really acquired a reactionary significance. Suffering in itself became a “symbol”.<sup>35</sup>

Soteriology is “intrinsically narrative”.<sup>36</sup> Haight notes the transformational character of the experience of salvation in narrative:

A narrative involves an event that moves things from one state of affairs to another. In this case, human existence is affected and changed through the event of Jesus Christ. Soteriology is an interpretation of the story of Jesus Christ by retelling, or redescribing, or expanding or augmenting it, with the result that the particular salvific point of the story is highlighted. The unity or coherence of the story of salvation, its salvific point, is the movement from the problem in which human existence finds itself to its resolution by the event of Jesus Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Haight observes that each soteriological retelling of how human existence is changed in a saving or liberating way by the event of Jesus Christ can be judged as to its effectiveness: “It is successful in the measure in which it corresponds to the event of Jesus, and the people to which it is addressed are drawn into it, and recognize its relevance in their own existence”.<sup>38</sup>

To get at the experience underlying each narrative, Haight asks such questions as Just what is human existence being saved from? What exactly did Jesus do for our salvation, or what did God do in or through Jesus? What is the “being saved” or the saved state of human existence? And how are people involved or drawn up into this story so that they are a part of it, and it is their story?<sup>39</sup>

These questions and the answers they elicit will become very helpful in reading the soteriological narrative embedded in Julian’s *exemplum* of the servant and the lord.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> SCHILLEBEECKX, Edward, *Christ: The experience of Jesus as Lord*, NY, Seabury Press, 1990, p. 699. David Aers’ study of the humanity of Christ in Julian of Norwich and other “oppositional traditions” in late fourteenth century England asks pointedly whether his own appropriation of this liberationist critique is a form of “presentism”. The same will, no doubt, be asked of the present study. Aers finds, rather, that “these questions must be answered in the negative. The projects of many late medieval Christians included a response to the Gospels, and to current orthodoxies, quite congruent with aspects of commentary by Segundo and Schillebeeckx”. AERS, David, “The humanity of Christ: Reflections on orthodox late medieval representations”, in AERS, David and Lynn STALEY, *The powers of the holy: Religion, politics and gender in the late medieval English culture*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, pp. 41 - 42. Although Aers’ methodology differs from mine, the rigour of his historical consciousness contributes to the persuasiveness of the present thesis’ correlative project.

<sup>36</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 214. Cf. ROOT, Michael, “The narrative structure of soteriology”, *Modern theology* 2, 1986, p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 214 - 215.

<sup>38</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 215.

<sup>39</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 215.

<sup>40</sup> SLUSSER, Michael, “Primitive Christian soteriological themes”, *Theological studies* 44, 1983, pp. 555 -569, applies these questions to the soteriologies of the New Testament with distinctive responses in each case.

Haight does not consider Julian’s text among the soteriological classics he analyzes, though it will become clear that it responds to many aspects of the idealized experience he describes. In the final chapter

Haight approaches the classical soteriological narratives with the balance he desires to achieve. His preference for “retrieval” as the resolution for “suspicion” of the tradition is clear. But it is on the basis of the criteria of today’s needs and the hermeneutic awareness of the structure of human knowledge and existence that his assessment of the tradition is made. It is in the same spirit that the current study will be attempted. We turn now to look more closely at his assessment of the postmodern situation and soteriological themes.

### 5.3 Currents in contemporary soteriology and postmodern exigencies

Haight identifies a number of themes in contemporary soteriology as a discipline which indicate a shift taking place from modernism into postmodernism.<sup>41</sup> Within each theme, I will also identify the postmodern exigencies or questions to which these themes are attempting to respond.

First on the list is the shift to an historical imagination, which, focused in soteriology on the life and ministry of the person Jesus of Nazareth, began with Schleiermacher. This represents a significant departure from the mythic style of language of the classic soteriological narratives which view redemption as some kind of objective event. Elsewhere in the book, Haight traces the evolution in western Christianity of Logos Christology, which took on a life of its own entirely apart from the biblical narratives of Jesus, and presumed that knowledge of the life of the Trinity *in se* was available to human nature. Anselm’s satisfaction theory of the Logos as the means by which God’s honour is repaired after the damage done to it by human sin, would be an example of this kind of mythic language of objective event, which is no longer believable.

Conscious of the hermeneutical dimension inherent in any “life of Jesus”, Haight has nonetheless laid the groundwork for the appreciation of the “concrete symbol” Jesus, as against, in this case, the “conceptual symbol” of the Logos of a Christology from above.<sup>42</sup>

The salvific character of Jesus’ action must be found precisely in his historical action, his this-worldly comportment. It cannot be understood by projecting actions and behaviors of Jesus outside this world, about which in principle we know nothing.<sup>43</sup>

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of this thesis I will be better able to show how her *exemplum* narrative responds to a number of the current exigencies raised by Haight himself. I argue there that her text can no longer not be considered in any serious discussion of the classics, or of a credible soteriology for our time.

<sup>41</sup> The following account of these themes and exigencies is found in HAIGHT, 1999, ch. 12, “Jesus as savior”, pp. 335 - 362.

<sup>42</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 344.

<sup>43</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 338. GALVIN, John, “From the humanity of Christ to the Jesus of history: a paradigm shift in Catholic christology”, *Theological studies* 55, 1994, p. 260, traces this paradigm shift

Moreover, this shift to historical imagination extends to the influence of Jesus, or the spirit of God present in him, on his followers and the institution of the Church “which is the medium of this historical influence”. Thus the doctrines concerning Jesus also are to be seen genetically, emerging historically in relation to contextual exigencies in the Church. Salvation is not privatistic but unfolds in and through the community. It must be able to be described phenomenologically, though symbolically, recognizing that the reality of salvation from God can only be expressed in an historically mediated way.

Correlative to the theme of historical consciousness are two observations in Haight’s own construction of objective soteriology. Salvation, he holds, must be integral.

[I]t cannot touch a so-called spiritual dimension of a person’s life and not include his or her activity in this world. Salvation today cannot be interpreted as salvation from the world.... The world is the full measure of the human body.... Salvation must incorporate the world insofar as the world, although in one respect over against the self, is also part of the self.<sup>44</sup>

Salvation must also be comprehensive. It must be interpreted socially as well as individually. “The idea of an individual salvation apart from the salvation of the species is incoherent”.<sup>45</sup> The postmodern respect for the unintelligibility and mystery of evil as witnessed this century in its collective manifestations is a major starting point for any credible soteriology. Our implication in systemic forms of evil, sin, suffering, ignorance, guilt and death requires a concomitant understanding of salvation. “There is no salvation apart from being in relation with other human beings”.<sup>46</sup>

The pluralism, within the tradition, of soteriological responses to this question “what is human nature being saved from?” bears some relation to the answers they give to the question “what did Jesus do that saved us?” and “how did that make so great a difference?” Slusser shows, with sensitive historical imagination, how different biblical soteriologies respond differently to this question.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, it is important to seek responses which help “decomplexify” the experience of sin and salvation, where this has been entangled with Church teachings which have produced false, unnecessary suffering

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which has occurred in the latter part of the 20th century. Previously, theological interest reflected on the implications of the Chalcedonian formulation. The interest in the Jesus of history however, began with an increased interest in biblical matters, and has developed out of a new integration of questions of fundamental theology into dogmatic theology and with a questioning of the meaning of christological statements. This will be a significant shift to remember as this study later turns to Julian of Norwich, for whom the humanity of Christ was paradigmatic.

<sup>44</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 355.

<sup>45</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 365.

<sup>46</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 365.

<sup>47</sup> SLUSSER, 1983, pp. 556 ff.

and served only to keep some groups of people in despair of appropriating the comfort and joy of salvation.

The significance of these two exigencies in the postmodern world for Haight is such that in his subsequent chapter on the subjective appropriation of salvation this dimension of salvation as integral to and affecting all aspects of human action is taken up as the very basis on which to ground Christian spirituality. Likewise, salvation or liberation of human freedom in action must take place in and be a response to society.<sup>48</sup>

The second theme which Haight identifies in modern soteriology shifting into postmodernism, is that of salvation as revelation, championed by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. It is not merely knowledge or explanation, it is the experience of encountering God. Jesus reveals God; makes God present in a mediated way. The concept of revelation here is not fundamentalistic or literalistic. It is both subjective and objective.<sup>49</sup>

The postmodern exigency to which this theme attempts to respond is that salvation must be able to be actual and real, experienced now, and not just a promise or an exclusively future reality. What is at issue is that “secular societies generate a combination of critical skepticism and naive trust.... Any deep and lasting notion of salvation must be drawn from an experience of an objective mediation that is equally solid and enduring”.<sup>50</sup>

The third theme in contemporary soteriology has to do with what Jesus did for our salvation.

One of the most serious problems for understanding today what Jesus did for human salvation is the traditional focus that Christians place on the suffering and death of Jesus. Even more troubling is the positive valuation they place on Jesus' death on a cross. How can the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus be anything but evil? How can the strange and tortuous explanations of how the cross could have been positive and salvific even begin to make any sense to a postmodern imagination?<sup>51</sup>

Any literalized construal of the language of sacrifice, as encountered in the classical soteriological narratives, begets misunderstandings and problems. Haight draws on the writing of liberation theologian Jon Sobrino who argues from Paul's theology of the cross that it was not Jesus' death that was pleasing to God; it was not the pain and suffering Jesus underwent which produces salvation. Rather, what was pleasing to God was the whole of Jesus' life, that is Jesus' faithfulness. The cross highlights “that this is how

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<sup>48</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 389.

<sup>49</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 344 - 345.

<sup>50</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 355.

<sup>51</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 345.

Jesus' life was".<sup>52</sup> Sobrino understands Jesus' faithfulness as salvific for others because God is at work in the ministry of Jesus. It is God's faithfulness, God's love for humankind which is rendered transparent in Jesus' faithfulness. The cross is revelatory of God's love by symbolic causality, not efficient causality.<sup>53</sup> Further, this reveals that concerning human existence, Jesus mediates what God wants human beings to be. "Human beings, therefore, have a model to see what the human can be and should be".<sup>54</sup> Says Sobrino, "this saving efficacy is shown more in the form of an exemplary cause than of an efficient cause".<sup>55</sup>

This theme is at the heart of the postmodern demand for credibility in Christian soteriology, which must begin from below, with the human, historical person of Jesus. It is in line with the exemplar theme in Pauline soteriology which, as Slusser notes, emphasizes the humanity of Jesus.<sup>56</sup> Jesus must be an approachable example on which his followers can model their lives, and through whom they can experience God's salvation.

The fourth theme which Haight treats is related to the third. Just as Jesus' whole earthly ministry is important in his saving action, so also is his Resurrection, as described by Pannenberg and Moltmann. "The salvific power of the resurrection is explained by correlating it with the human experience of hope".<sup>57</sup> Such hope is unequivocally joyful, and not a fearful expectation of an uncertain outcome of the Last Judgment. To describe the salvific character of resurrection hope requires us to enter into a projection of the transformation of the disciples before and after their realization that Jesus was risen. The reversal of despair which is effected by that transformation, the exceeding of the fulfilment of the void they had experienced in Jesus' death, is not merely a psychological state, but the source of a significantly different vision of reality which opens their vision of the future to a new dimension of being and action.

Clearly this theme responds to the postmodern exigency that salvation be revelatory, disclosive of an encounter with God mediated by Jesus which is transformative. As well, it responds to the postmodern concern that history, and human freedom and creativity within history, have ultimate meaning given to it by the finality of salvation.

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<sup>52</sup> SOBRINO, Jon, *Jesus the liberator: A historical-theological view*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1993, p. 228.

<sup>53</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 346.

<sup>54</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 347.

<sup>55</sup> SOBRINO, p. 230.

<sup>56</sup> SLUSSER, p. 567.

<sup>57</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 347.

Human existence is intentional action that extends into the future and always effects novelty, new forms of being.... Salvation in our world must address the connection between human action and the ultimate state of things, the eschaton.<sup>58</sup>

The fifth theme in modern soteriology shifting into postmodernism examines the question of what kind of causality can properly be attributed to Jesus' saving action. The appeal to classical narratives and even some twentieth century soteriologies, in which Jesus' saving action is narrated in terms of events as transactions occurring in another world, appears mythological and unintelligible to the postmodern sensibility. However, a simple appeal to experience in the context of a pluralistic world does not satisfy the question of intelligibility either. How does Jesus save then? This question is conditioned by the perspective of the postmodern historical and pluralistic awareness of the exigency of responding to the fact and presence of other world religions.

Modern christology is split between those who retain the idea that Jesus caused or causes the salvation of all and those who do not.... Only by means of a theoretical or speculative metaphysical construction can one attempt to understand how Jesus Christ had a causal influence on the salvation of those who have never come in contact with him historically, or who existed before the appearance of Jesus.<sup>59</sup>

Haight proposes an answer to the question of the causality of Jesus' saving action as being "in the genus of symbolic or sacramental causality".<sup>60</sup> Because only God can save, the "action of God as saving Spirit or grace occurs from without, because it is transcendent, but within a person, because it is God's presence as saving power restoring human existence".<sup>61</sup> Jesus represents, symbolically and sacramentally, God's action and thus makes it conscious and explicit to human beings in a way which would otherwise not have been known consciously.

Christ causes the salvation of Christians by transforming God's presence for salvation into an explicitly conscious encounter. Jesus does not cause God's loving presence to human existence which is there from the dawn of creation. But Jesus causes it to be revealed, and thus formally accepted by human freedom, and thus consciously effective.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, the work of Jesus' saving action, which Haight describes as "objective salvation" is intrinsically a question of symbolic causality. The knowledge of this objectivity is related to its subjective appropriation. This does not make it less "real"; rather, it acknowledges openly the symbolic nature of that realism. Christians and non-Christians have salvific

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<sup>58</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 356.

<sup>59</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 349.

<sup>60</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 350.

<sup>61</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 350.

<sup>62</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 350.



knowledge differently but those differences may be accepted without the need for coercion.

The sixth and final theme in modern-turning-postmodern soteriology which Haight treats concerns the relationship between the creative and the saving activity of God. Following Augustine, Barth sees these as activities of two radically different orders: “salvation repairs an otherwise permanently damaged and fallen nature.... Reality itself has been changed”.<sup>63</sup> Rahner views them as distinct but inseparable. Schillebeeckx, however, recognizes no real distinction between the creative and the saving activity of God, and it is this perspective which Haight advocates as one which meets the postmodern exigency of historical consciousness.

In a context of radical awareness of contingency and fragility of the human project and the unintelligibility of evil, the root sense of salvation will not be isolated from God’s creative power: “Wherever there is wholeness, wherever there is healing, wherever things go right, the condition leads back to God’s creative, saving power as source and ground”.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, in the postmodern context, one must say not only that God creates in order to save, but also that “God saves in order to create”.<sup>65</sup> That is to say, God’s saving action “augments human freedom and releases it for creativity. Salvation is not merely salvation from but also salvation for a renewed exercise of human freedom”.<sup>66</sup> Recognizing God’s creative and saving activity as one is significant for responding not only to the fragility of the human project, but of the ecological precariousness of the earth itself. Theologians such as Moltmann and Elizabeth Johnson are calling for a soteriology which makes the object of salvation cosmic in this new sense.

The above whirlwind tour only begins to scratch the surface of engagement between contemporary soteriology and postmodern context, but it gives a taste of the mutually critical correlational method at work in contemporary approaches to objective soteriology. A fair number of these problems and exigencies will take on new colour as we revisit them in the final chapter of this study. Certainly Julian’s understanding of the meaning of the cross, the Resurrection and her grasp of the revelatory nature of salvation will stand out, but they are not the only issues she addresses by means of her understanding of the saving work of Christ. We turn now to Haight’s articulation of a credible subjective soteriology, the dynamism underlying how that saving work of Jesus is appropriated.

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<sup>63</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 351.

<sup>64</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 352.

<sup>65</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 353, following J. L. Segundo and Elizabeth Johnson.

<sup>66</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 353.

#### 5.4 The hermeneutical structure of appropriation: the case of feminism

Given the exigencies of the postmodern context to which contemporary soteriology seeks to respond in the themes described in the preceding section, Haight turns in chapter 13 to the hermeneutical structure of interpretation found in liberation theologies for the most adequate approach to understanding the dynamism of subjective soteriology, the appropriation of salvation, for our time. This chapter is central to his correlative method and religious epistemology. Among liberation, feminist and political soteriologies he identifies a “family resemblance” in terms of their structure of the dynamism of appropriation.<sup>67</sup> The structure of interpretation common to liberation theologies is threefold.

It begins with a negative experience of contrast or suspicion which elicits a question or set of questions concerning some matter in the situation. There must be an existential problem, a social evil which is unintelligible, and which comes to be seen as needing resolution. So, for example, in feminism, the negative experience is of the

sexism built into androcentric cultures, societies and patriarchal institutions. Often the structures of inequality are blatant and obvious. But when this sexism is written deeply into a traditional culture, it often goes unnoticed, for it has roots in a long-standing memory, often codified into law, and subsists in an intertwined network of instances. In some cases the biases lie so deeply ingrained that they are experienced as precisely what should be, even according to the will of God. Often only the experience of the victims can witness to the negativity, to the demeaning effects of the system.<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, the matter discloses a response to the question, fulfilling a positive demand for intelligibility. “The ultimately mysterious and unintelligible evil of these situations touches the inquirer and thus becomes a religious question”.<sup>69</sup> One of the three religious questions Haight goes on to address has to do with the ground of human identity. In terms of systems and relationships of power, “What is the source of human personhood? Is the person any more than his or her social identity? Are groups of people able to be defined, stereotyped and relegated to an inferior place in society?”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 370. The following account is drawn from his ch. 13 “Liberation and salvation: Christology and the Christian life” pp. 363 - 394. He draws extensively from JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is: the mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1992, ch. 4, where, on p. 62, she calls this structure the “dynamism of the conversion experience”. Johnson’s account will become part of the structure of the diptychs in the final part of this thesis.

<sup>68</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 372.

<sup>69</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 373.

<sup>70</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 373.

The same social relationships that shape human beings also have the capacity to submerge the individual, negate the person, destroy identity, rob whole groups and classes of people of their autonomy, freedom and creativity. The... structures of patriarchy that subordinate people because of their gender... attack human beings as subjects: open, free and equal with all others.<sup>71</sup>

This kind of question also probes what kind of God is behind this vision of oppression, what interest this God has in human existence, and what the nature and quality of God's will for human history is. By posing these questions to the negativity of the patriarchal situation, the feminist liberation dynamic sets up a dialectical tension which demands a positive intelligibility. What kind of God would indeed be believable from a woman's point of view?

The second religious question Haight identifies is that of the meaningfulness of human history in view of the extent of innocent suffering in it. And the third addresses the purpose of human freedom given the postmodern sense of "ambiguity and potential destructiveness of what otherwise might be taken for values.... At what point does the dynamic energy of freedom to achieve something pass over and become a quest for... male domination...?"<sup>72</sup>

Lastly, in the threefold structure of liberation hermeneutic theologies, the response to these questions is appropriated into the situation of the questioner. The response discloses the object of interpretation: God as mediated by Jesus Christ.

The historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth is the basis for most liberation theologies.

The oppressive situations against which liberation christology reacts require less a *logos* of the cosmos and more a *mythos* of history.... Only a historical figure can mediate meaning and salvation to precisely those historical situations that make no sense for either the victims or the community as a whole.<sup>73</sup>

Haight notes however, that for some feminist Christologies, this becomes problematic because of the tension between the genders:

If a fundamental feminist christological question is how a male figure can be a savior for women and the problem in the question is located in a tension between the sexes, there is less likelihood for an extensive appeal to the historical career of Jesus. By contrast, feminist christology which is explicitly liberationist locates the problem not in gender *per se*, but in the ideological construal of gender, i.e., in androcentrism, patriarchy and more generally dominating power.<sup>74</sup>

In liberationist Christology it is the Jesus of history who has a prophetic bearing on the present day situation, and revealed through Jesus is God. For Haight, the nature of God,

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<sup>71</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 373.

<sup>72</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 375.

<sup>73</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 377.

<sup>74</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 377 n. 20.

is expressed in the main metaphor used by Jesus, of God as Abba, Father, which points to God's goodness and love for people as God's children.<sup>75</sup> It is God's faithfulness and trustworthiness which Jesus reveals; God's non-authoritarian non-oppressive transcendence and yet God's loving nearness to creation, actually touching and engaging of human existence. Feminist Christologies have difficulty with the metaphor of the fatherhood of God revealed through Jesus because in a patriarchal Christian society this metaphor has become deeply distorted. Dorothee Soelle, for example, asks

why it is that human beings honor a God whose most important attribute is power, whose prime need is to subjugate, whose greatest fear is equality.... Why should we honor and love a being that does not transcend but only reaffirms the moral level of our male-dominated culture? Why should we honor and love this being, and what moral right do we have to do so if this being is in fact no more than an outsized man whose main ideal is to be independent and to have power?<sup>76</sup>

Feminist theologians find a variety of sources by which to introduce femininity into the very traits Sobrino attributes to God the Father as revealed through Jesus, in relation to God's children. God's nature as essentially related (as opposed to unrelated) to human existence, and God, revealed in the crucifixion, as participant in human suffering (as opposed to being the perpetrator of it), are found to be feminine, maternal traits.<sup>77</sup>

In the last section of this chapter on the liberationist hermeneutic of appropriation of salvation, Haight draws out its implications for a Christian spirituality. His stress, again, is on the social character of sin, and thus also the social, integral and comprehensive nature of soteriology which is needed to address it coherently.<sup>78</sup>

## **6.0 Relational psychoanalysis as dialogue partner with soteriology and feminism**

This chapter now turns its attention to attempt to situate the potential place of relational psychoanalysis as a dialogue partner with soteriology and feminism.

At first glance, a post-Freudian relational psychoanalysis which came into existence as a means of responding to the problems encountered in narcissistic personality disorders and focusing on the pre-oedipal period in human psychodynamic development, may seem to have little to do with Christian soteriology or feminism.

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<sup>75</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 381 - 382, after Sobrino.

<sup>76</sup> SOELLE, Dorothee, *The strength of the weak: Toward a Christian feminist identity*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1984, p. 97. For other sources of feminist critique of the model of God as father see JOHNSON, 1998, p. 282, n. 57.

<sup>77</sup> JOHNSON, 1998, chapters 10 - 12.

<sup>78</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, pp. 382 - 385.

D. W. Winnicott of the British school of object relations theory, however, opened the way toward a greater ease of dialogue between post-Freudian psychology and religion. The potential for this development lies in his concepts of transitional objects and transitional space, as not simply intrapsychic illusions, but as essential dynamics in the creation of all cultural phenomena, art, science, philosophy and religion.<sup>79</sup> Winnicott's contribution here is multi-layered, but includes an epistemology of symbol formation as well as a relational understanding of human nature.

Epistemologically, Winnicott's theory offers a means of understanding the genesis of symbol formation and the dynamism of the interrelatedness of subjectivity and objectivity in all symbolic formation.<sup>80</sup> Transitional space is the locus for the development of symbols and all cultural phenomena, which retain this quality of being both subjective and objective, created and found. Object relations theory, while it draws on classical psychoanalytic concepts such as transference, critiques the Freudian judgment of illusion as wishful thinking to be discarded in the process of maturation toward the goal of resignation to the reality principle. Objective reality "out there" simply is not available to human structures of development and knowledge. Rather, all knowledge of reality is infused with symbolism, metaphor and illusion engaging self/not self.<sup>81</sup> This epistemology, although it is a social scientific one, is not uncongenial to the symbolic realist epistemology and the correlative method described above, as well as to the psychohistorical method.

Relational psychoanalysis is founded on an understanding of human anthropology as intrinsically relational. One of the chief concerns of these theorists is to show how patterns of relating to the human "other" which evolve in the dynamics of our earliest infant-maternal, and -paternal relations (symbiosis, separation, rapprochement, etc.), are representationally paralleled in all subsequent patterns of relating to others. Winnicott is at pains to show that this is not simply a process of an intrapsychic nature: all cultural as well as personal creativity comes from this source. Rizzuto shows that this also extends to our patterns of relating to (unconscious) representations of the divine "Other".<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, [1971] 1989, chapters 1, 4, 7. His object relations theory is discussed more fully in chapter 2.

<sup>80</sup> As will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, the earliest transitional objects of teddy bear, blanket, etc. give the child the sense of object permanence of the mother's breast and face and are invested with both self/not self meaning. These objects give way and become diffused as other transitional objects take on these meanings. The basic relationship of trust in the mother or maternal object, made possible by "good enough" mirroring, is what facilitates the child's creation, in the act of play, of a third space or transitional space in which objects are "both found and created".

<sup>81</sup> See JONES, James, "Knowledge in transition: toward a Winnicottian epistemology", *Psychoanalytic review* 79, 2, 1992, pp. 223 - 227.

<sup>82</sup> RIZZUTO, Ana-Maria, *The birth of the living God*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 88.

As the dialogue between relational psychology and Christian theology is beginning to develop, the connections and ramifications of this theory for Christian soteriology generally and for feminist soteriology in particular are emerging.

In a pithy article entitled "Theological uses of psychology: retrospective and prospective", John McDargh brings the field of object relations theory directly into dialogue with Christian soteriology.<sup>83</sup> In the process, McDargh brings to life aspects of the postmodern situation which the revised correlational method in theology seeks to address, as we saw in Haight's study.

McDargh argues that life is seeping out of contemporary Christian soteriology. He quotes John Macquarrie:

A religious tradition which seeks to insulate itself from all connection with man's general experience and knowledge on the supposition that God is not to be measured by the wisdom of the world, not only shows impiety towards the divine creation, but also runs the risk of losing its very life.<sup>84</sup>

McDargh goes on to say that

soteriology is the dialogue I once saw spray-painted on a subway wall. Someone had written, "Christ is the answer", in response to which an unknown wag had later written, "Yes, but what was the question?" Soteriology is the effort of the believing community to identify the universal question of the heart for which Christ was, is, or may be some kind of adequate answer. Where Christ is offered as an answer to questions no one is asking, the spiritual life blood of the tradition drains away.<sup>85</sup>

In effect, he says, Christianity needs relational psychoanalysis to help find a language for a postmodern situation which will help to identify effectively its religious questions and answer them in a credible soteriological narrative which can enable salvation to be appropriated in our day.

McDargh draws on Jürgen Moltmann, a German Protestant theologian, as a starting point from which to identify the positive and specific contribution of psychology in helping to identify the pathological distortions of human religion, and as a full partner in specifying the soteriological norm for theology.<sup>86</sup> According to Moltmann, psychology must do two

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<sup>83</sup> McDARGH, John, "Theological uses of psychology: retrospective and prospective", *Horizons* 12, 2, 1985, p. 259 ff.

<sup>84</sup> MacQUARRIE, John, *Thinking about God*, NY, Harper and Row, 1985, p. 136, cited in McDARGH, 1985, p. 259. We are reminded here of Haight's identification of the postmodern demand for relating God's activity of creation and salvation.

<sup>85</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 259.

<sup>86</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 259. McDargh observes that Moltmann's awareness of psychoanalytic theory is almost exclusively limited to Freud's classic critique of religious origins [and that he] does not appreciate the psychological revisions which would serve his theological project. Yet his call for them is so clear that his discussion is a useful place to begin.

things: First it must help name that essential human problematic to which the saving activity of God's Christ is directed; second, it must help render an account of the redemptive process by which human brokenness or sin is overcome.<sup>87</sup> The first of these two would seem to amount to the kinds of questions Haight poses of objective soteriology, that is, "from what is humankind being saved?", "how does Jesus save?" etc. The second appears to point to the requirement for an account of the dynamism of subjective soteriology, or appropriation.

With regard to the first requirement, that psychology help name the essential human problematic to which God's saving activity in Jesus is directed, Moltmann is critical of the (post-world war two) individualism and privatization of much theological existentialism, and wants to ground his discussion of the "liberative dynamics" of God's salvific action in Christ in a sound understanding of psychological processes.<sup>88</sup> This language of liberation is significant, as it exposes the general direction toward which the dialogue between soteriology and relational psychology is becoming oriented. Moltmann seeks a psychology which can embrace a social, comprehensive understanding of soteriology.

For Moltmann the essential human problematic which psychoanalysis must reveal is "the psychological barriers on which [Christian faith] can exercise its liberating power".<sup>89</sup> Initially, Moltmann had in mind Freud's critique of the "religion of anxiety" focused on self salvation and perfection, with its attempts to avoid the terror of death and the awesomeness of human responsibility.<sup>90</sup> But beyond seeing psychology as a "bulldozer in the way of the gospel", Moltmann is calling for a therapeutic understanding of soteriology, beginning with the negative question which is in effect, "If Jesus saves, but we are still in our psychological distress, so what?" Soteriology must in Moltmann's eyes be able to address the distress of our age, with help from psychoanalysis. The liberationist focus Moltmann identifies at work in this dialogue between psychoanalysis and soteriology situates it in the general sector of the hermeneutical theologies of appropriation, which Haight finds most able to respond to postmodern exigencies. Presumably because of the "individualism and privatization" which was present, not only in the existential theology of that time, but also in Freud's intrapsychic psychoanalysis, with which Moltmann was familiar however, Moltmann was unable to draw out the liberationist theme in any extensive way. Perhaps

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<sup>87</sup> MOLTSMANN, Jürgen, *The crucified God: The cross of Christ as the foundation and criticism of Christian theology*, London, SCM Press, 1974, pp. 298 ff, in McDARGH, 1985, p. 260.

<sup>88</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 260.

<sup>89</sup> MOLTSMANN, 1974, p. 298.

<sup>90</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 260.

this is why Haight does not include the application of psychoanalysis to soteriology among the liberationist theologies he considers.

The limitations of Freudian theory to offer an account of the workings of Christian salvation and its vision of the fulness of humanity brought Moltmann to the second criterion of psychoanalysis for dialogue with theology, that it must help “render an account of the redemptive process by which human brokenness or sin is overcome”.<sup>91</sup> Those limitations reduced all religion to pathology in a spirit of stoic resignation or *apatheia*. Any form of religious or utopian hope must be given up as residues of illusions of early wish fulfilments. According to McDargh, for Moltmann

[c]lassical psychoanalysis errs precisely in its despising of the dreams of our individual and collective youth, that is, in its failure to understand how the wishes of infancy may ripen and mature into the mature hopes of adulthood, and yet remain throughout life the creative source of what is new and renewing in human life. Similarly Christian prayer... is incomprehensible --except reductionistically-- within a psychology that does not understand the life-long function of fantasy and imagination as an instrument to discover reality. But, if there were a psychology that appreciated how the most vital and intense yearnings of the human infant for connection, for relationship, and for recognition are not necessarily resigned in maturity, but rather imaginatively reworked and reinterpreted to become a resource for psychic renewal and spiritual discovery, then such a psychology might indeed be a full partner in a soteriological project.<sup>92</sup>

McDargh has written elsewhere, and the next chapter of this study will show in more detail, that object relations psychology “appears to offer a way of understanding the origins of human religious sensibility... that finally does justice to religious maturation as well as religious pathology, adult faith as well as childhood fantasy”.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, what earlier psychoanalysis viewed as private, intrapsychic mechanisms are now seen through the lens of object relations psychology as interpsychic, interpersonal and potentially culturally mediated phenomena. This bears directly on the power of this school of psychoanalysis to address soteriological appropriation more fully in terms of the liberationist hermeneutic.

### 6.1 Sebastian Moore

It is at this point that McDargh draws on the work of Sebastian Moore’s “psychological appropriation of the story of Jesus” in the categories of object relations psychology. Moore’s work will help significantly to articulate the liberation dynamic in Julian’s conversion process, beginning with the first diptych in the last part of this study.

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<sup>91</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 260.

<sup>92</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 261.

<sup>93</sup> McDARGH, John, *Psychoanalytic object relations psychology and the study of religion: on faith and the imaging of God*, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1983, p. xiii.



Moore's problematic is explicitly soteriological: in an age of narcissistic longing for self worth he asks "how is the crucifixion of Jesus salvific?" Moore, a British Roman Catholic Benedictine monk, desires to translate into categories of interiority what people mean when they give testimony to Jesus for transformations in their lives.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, Moore sees no way to recover a universal salvific significance from the story of Jesus unless it intersects with the pre-religious story of human consciousness. This consciousness Moore locates not in some transcendental reflection, but in the contemporary postmodern psychoanalytic account of narcissism: the one universal human desire is for self worth, a desire "to know ourselves as loved, valued and the source of delight to a beloved other" which amounts to a pre-religious orientation toward God.<sup>95</sup> According to McDargh,

Moore proposes... that all human beings have a "pre-religious love affair with God" insofar as the question of the heart "do you love me?" is ultimately asked not just to the significant others that are the human child's first interpersonal universe, but to the horizon of all meanings and existence -- the origin and end of human becoming, in short, to God. With the postmodern psychoanalytic thinkers, Moore sees these questions not as infantile yearnings better outgrown, but as the persistent *crie de coeur* [sic] of every human being which are dealt with throughout life in the matrix of real relationships in the world as well as in the experientially real inner representational world in which we represent to ourselves in story and symbol the ultimate answers we live by. The encounter in prayer, sacrament and community with the living Christ is thereby given a psychological location and a reality that is not reductive, even though it is psychologically located.<sup>96</sup>

Clearly, relational psychoanalysis has touched a nerve in discerning the distress of our age, and may foster the emergence of the kind of "re-mythologized" or symbolic narrative Haight is calling for as an effective soteriological response to postmodern exigencies. It may well move toward the development of a credible soteriological narrative which is able to respond to the question "How does Jesus save?" with an effective epistemological understanding of how that causality is symbolic.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 262.

<sup>95</sup> McDARGH, 1985, p. 262. See MOORE, Sebastian, *The fire and the rose are one*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Press, 1980, 158 p.

<sup>96</sup> McDARGH, 1985, pp. 262 - 263.

<sup>97</sup> I would suggest this is being borne out concretely in relational psychoanalysis by the varieties of approaches which are emerging at this nexus of dialogue. See for examples, the article by RANDALL, Robert, "Soteriological dimensions in the work of Heinz Kohut", *Journal of religion and health* 19, 1980, pp. 83 - 91; and the cultural study of the "root" or "generative" metaphor of theodicy and the redemptive process as essentially a narrative one deriving from "biblical theology and neo-platonic mysticism", but being mapped out anew in the discourse of anglo-american psychoanalytic theory, in KIRCHNER, Suzanne, *The religious and romantic origins of psychoanalysis: individuation and integration in post-freudian theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 3 - 11.

Moreover, McDargh is also sensitive to the privatizing Freudian legacy out of which neo-psychoanalytic theory has emerged, and proposes that relational psychoanalysis is a means to redress what Haight has highlighted as the urgent requirement for social comprehensiveness in any postmodern soteriology that would claim to ground Christian spirituality in a liberationist structure of appropriation. McDargh draws attention to the “intellectual and empirical pressures within modern psychoanalytic theorizing which move it in creative ways to engage political and social realities as essential and not accidental components in the formation of intrapsychic life”.<sup>98</sup> He includes here, significantly, the work of Alice Miller on the impact of psychological and physical abuse in childhood on psychic development as well as the long-term consequences for political and cultural life which are perpetuated by such abusive family and child-rearing patterns. Object relations theory, he notes, is being extended in the direction of family therapy and general systems theory.

Another area of serious significance, which McDargh does not include explicitly, is the development of feminist themes in relational psychoanalysis which bear on soteriology. The final part of this chapter turns briefly to this area.

## 6.2 Cynthia Crysdale

Moore’s project is developed in feminist terms by Canadian Anglican theologian Cynthia Crysdale for an understanding of the process of appropriation of salvation which does justice to the human predicament of women. Her feminist reading of Moore is grounded even more explicitly in a liberationist structure of conversion. I draw extensively on her work in the second diptych.

Cynthia Crysdale’s appropriation of Moore’s soteriology is sensitive to both the social location of women, and the concern to understand personal responsibility for sin in tandem with the systemic causes and effects of sin.<sup>99</sup> I will follow Crysdale’s description of her soteriology as a double-sided approach to redemption.<sup>100</sup> In the first movement Crysdale examines how women and others on the underside of history can find the cross an authentic symbol of salvation when women can situate ourselves primarily as having been victims of systemic sin, and can identify with the crucified rather than the crucifiers, a difference in situation which has important consequences for how sin and salvation are experienced by such persons, at least initially.

<sup>98</sup> McDARGH, 1985, pp. 263 - 264.

<sup>99</sup> CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, 208 p.

<sup>100</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 25.

However, Crysdale is also concerned, as is Sebastian Moore, that only Christ is truly sinless. Victims of social and familial systemic sin participate nonetheless in those systems, but can, with healing, become more responsible agents. It is this second movement, which is concerned with articulating an authentic expression of what the experience of sin and personal responsibility is for women and others who have no voice in history, which rounds out Crysdale's soteriology, and makes it even more interesting for an application to one, who, I suggest, did undergo gracious healing of a systemic distortion in her understanding of sin, and maturation in human freedom and responsibility.

### 6.3 Elisabeth Koenig

Elisabeth Koenig, an American Episcopal<sup>101</sup> theologian, has also been influenced by Sebastian Moore's soteriological project.<sup>102</sup> Her doctoral thesis on Julian of Norwich will be valuable in the final diptych both because of her original identification of the compensatory mirroring function operative in the *exemplum*, but also because of her intuition that it also contributed to Julian's reshaping of other elements in the objective soteriological tradition. Moreover, Koenig's Ricoeurian approach was motivated by the same hermeneutical assumption as the present thesis, that the *Showings* can speak to our contemporary situation.

### 7.0 Retrieving the mystics

As Haight sees it, the language of soteriology is the language of the Christian spiritual life. The relative lack of dialogue between relational psychoanalysis and soteriology is felt perhaps most keenly in the study of the history of spirituality. McGinn writes that the

stand-off between empiricism and transempirical epistemology is as strong now as it was at the beginning of the century. Even those, like myself, who are convinced that a purely empirical reading of mystical texts from a reductive psychological perspective has only an ambiguous contribution to make to the present study of mysticism, cannot but be troubled by the lack of conversation between psychological investigators and those involved in studying the history and theory of mystical traditions. Both sides seem equally at fault in this unrealized conversation.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The American Episcopal Church is part of the world-wide Anglican communion.

<sup>102</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, "Review symposium of *Jesus, the liberator of desire*, by Sebastian Moore", *Horizons* 18, 1, 1991, pp. 112 - 118.

<sup>103</sup> MCGINN, Bernard, *The foundations of mysticism*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, p. 343. The presence of God: A history of western Christian mysticism 1.

That the more serious problem for McGinn should be the fact of the lack of conversation than the “ambiguous contribution” he believes such a conversation might make, is significant. The lack of conversation is felt particularly as a reverberation of the postmodern exigencies that salvation be real, revelatory, able to be experienced in the present time, and also that it be integral and social, comprehensive.

The language of soteriology needs models of practice for women which are drawn from the tradition and also facilitate or encourage healing and social liberative experiences of self, God and community. Contemporary feminists are searching the tradition and texts of women mystics for models of authentic spiritual life and practice which honour the healing of what Beverly Lanzetta calls women’s “soul wounds” and make possible the flourishing of women.<sup>104</sup> And some are seeking to reinterpret some of the more ambiguous themes from the spiritual tradition in woman-affirming ways so as to reclaim their profound spiritual truths.<sup>105</sup> If the psychoanalytic discourse of mirroring correlated with Julian’s soteriology can respond to these exigencies, then the study has more than just academic significance.

It is not incidental that the subject of this study is a major female mystic and theologian in the history of spirituality. The choice of this spiritual writer to study is partly because of the particular difficulties attending any woman’s desire to grow in personal maturity and theological integrity. Where is a woman to see the needs of her nascent self mirrored in soteriological narrative? The tendency which the tradition has inculcated is rather for women to feel overresponsible for sin, which deeply conditions our image of, and quality of relationship with, self and God. To accept that this is not God’s will and relinquish overresponsibility can feel life-transforming, but somehow heretical.

Because of the psycho-spiritual maturation evidenced in Julian’s life and text, it might give us unusual “analytic access”<sup>106</sup> to both the therapeutic dimension of, and the integral conversion implied in, the process which that maturity entails. Julian’s vocation as understood in her time was the rigorous one of anchoress. As will become clearer in the latter part of the study, Julian’s soteriology of mirroring does not remain simply an epistemological appropriation. Rather, it engages her, and her readers, in a practice which is intended to facilitate profound self-knowledge and the gradual transformation of human affects in the present time. If it can be shown, by means of the methodology of this study,

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<sup>104</sup> LANZETTA, Beverly, *Radical wisdom: A feminist mystical theology*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress, 2005, pp. 8 - 11.

<sup>105</sup> RUFFING, Janet, “Spiritual direction with women: Reclaiming and reinterpreting key themes from the spiritual tradition”, *Presence, an international journal of spiritual direction* 12, 3, 2006, pp. 36 - 46.

<sup>106</sup> HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 5. KOENIG, 1991, pp. 112 - 113, appropriates the term.

that her soteriology of mirroring can have a socially and personally liberative, transformative effect in people's lives in our time, then the study will also contribute to the retrieval of the mystics for a soteriology which seeks the mature flourishing of women's spiritual lives.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

The present chapter laid out the hermeneutical nature and challenges of the present study, its problematics, hypotheses and methodologies. In drawing together the theological resources which will be used for the soteriological dimension of the present study, the foundation is laid for the application of mirroring theory to a study of Julian's *Showings* in terms of the structure of a liberation conversion process.

But first, the next two chapters will look at what mirroring theory is, assess the value of the theory for a psychohistorical study, and lay the groundwork for the parallel structure of the Kohutian reading of the therapeutic mirroring transference in Julian's *Showings*.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MIRRORING AND PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION BASED ON RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

#### 1.0 Outline of the chapter

This chapter begins by situating the psychological concept of mirroring historically in terms of two divergent developments from Freud which represent two philosophical trends, humanist and antihumanist. It then outlines the psychology of mirroring, as it has been developed along the humanist trend, both by Heinz Kohut in terms of a therapeutic approach to disorders of the self, that is, narcissistically wounded adults, and by D.W. Winnicott in terms of a theoretical understanding of the neglected importance of the function of mirroring in the maternal-infant relation in psychoanalysis for the healthy development of the self, based on his paediatric studies of interactions between mothers and their infants. The chapter then turns to explore the literature which has begun to correlate relational psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup> with a psychology of religion. Finally, it situates the present thesis in this emerging field.

#### 2.0 Mirroring: Situating humanist and antihumanist developments from Freud

In classical psychoanalysis Freud's great theoretical breakthrough focused on his concept of the oedipal complex.<sup>2</sup> For Freud, the paternal element, focused in the oedipal conflict between father and son, was the most important one in any psychoanalytic study.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As noted elsewhere, the expression "relational psychoanalysis" will be used to describe the larger psychoanalytic movement which includes, among others, Winnicott, Kohut and proponents of American feminist psychoanalysis. See MITCHELL, Stephen and Lewis ARON, *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, Hillsdale NJ, The analytic press, 1999, pp. x - xii. If the circumstances require more precision, I will refer to Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory as object relations theory, and Kohut's as self psychology.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Freud's *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*, in FREUD, Sigmund, *Sigmund Freud on sexuality: Three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*, ed. Angela RICHARDS, NY, Penguin, 1977, pp. 149 - 150: "...the importance of the Oedipus complex has become more and more clearly evident; its recognition has become the shibboleth that distinguishes the adherents of psychoanalysis from its opponents".

<sup>3</sup> FREUD, Sigmund, *Totem and taboo*, ed. James STRACHEY, Toronto, Hogarth, 1955, p. 147.

By contrast, the pre-oedipal period, characterized by the infant's early relation with the mother, when he finally addressed it in his 1931 article "Female sexuality", was for Freud inaccessible to the methods of psychoanalysis.<sup>4</sup> The oedipal complex remained for Freud the context from which emerges the source of the religious sentiment. Freud rejected Romain Rolland's notion that the source of religious experience might have something to do with the earliest infant-maternal relationship. In *Civilization and its discontents* Freud acknowledged that an "oceanic feeling" of "an indissoluble bond; of being one with the external world as a whole" may stem from the infant's experience of the breast, but, admitting that he cannot "discover this 'oceanic' feeling" in himself, he rejects the possibility that this might be a source of the religious and relegates it to being a later connection. Rather, he derives religious needs "from the infant's helplessness and the longing for the *father* aroused by it... I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a *father's* protection".<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, Freud's theory has spawned two schools of psychoanalysis which have focused on the pre-oedipal relationship between mother and infant, drawing on very divergent tensions both present in Freud's corpus, and with quite different consequences for a theory of a psychology of religious experience. These tensions have been described as developmental (humanist) and structural (antihumanist), and are opposed in their understanding of the subject, and in their confidence (or lack of) in the individual consciousness as locus of knowledge and truth.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1 French structuralist psychoanalysis

Jacques Lacan's French structuralist psychoanalysis focuses on the fundamental fragmentation, rupturing or decentering of the self as the effect of language and as the condition of meaning. Lacan is one of the masters of the hermeneutic of suspicion, focusing on alienation and fragmentation in the subject. However, where this focus becomes exclusive, it becomes difficult to understand how there can be any psychoanalytic

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<sup>4</sup> "Everything in the sphere of this first attachment to the mother seemed to me so difficult to grasp in analysis-- so grey with age and shadowy and almost impossible to revivify..." FREUD, Sigmund, "Female sexuality", in *Sigmund Freud on sexuality: Three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*, ed. Angela RICHARDS, NY, Penguin, 1977, p. 373.

<sup>5</sup> FREUD, Sigmund, *Civilization and its discontents*, ed. James STRACHEY, NY, Norton, 1962, pp. 12, 14, 19, emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup> See FLAX, Jane, *Thinking fragments: Psychoanalysis, feminism and postmodernism in the contemporary west*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 56.

growth or development; hence, as noted above, the presence of both structuralist and developmental tensions in Freud's corpus.

Lacan's work has been developed and critiqued in very fruitful ways by French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, and by Jesuit historian Michel de Certeau. French structuralist feminists stress the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship as a primary and continuously determinative force in women's psyche and activity. They see language as a result of symbolic systems which constitute gender relations. However, they argue that there are fundamental differences between men and women. They focus on the difference of women's sexuality and pleasure in its pre-oedipal modes and challenge its repression in phallogocentric culture.<sup>7</sup>

Michel de Certeau uses Lacanian psychoanalytic procedures but from another philosophical position. He focuses on the formal parallels in the discursive practices of mysticism and of science, and has opened a way to retrieve the mystics from "objectifying" scientific practices. The tendency of psychoanalytic science has been to focus on psychosomatic behaviours or "mystical phenomena", which tendency obscures the practice of mystics and the nature of the reality which mystics encounter which escapes objectification. De Certeau, rather, observes the parallelism of functioning formality between science and mysticism as that of a "return to an origin", neither inherently religious nor scientific. He wants to affirm the heterogeneity and irreducibility of mystical experience. What distinguishes the individual mystic from psychoanalytic pathology is the "grace" which the mystic displays to remain in a condition of rupture without seeking to flee or repress it in illusions of union. At the same time, de Certeau recognizes that the language and experience of mystics are culturally defined and that systems of meaning and symbolism in the West have been shaped by the Christian tradition.<sup>8</sup> He allows for a locus of culture in the mystical experience, a point of commonality with object relations psychology of religious experience as we'll see below, despite their different methodologies.

## 2.2 Relational psychoanalysis

The other school of psychoanalysis to emerge from Freud's explorations is the British school of object relations psychology and its American counterpart, the self psychology of Heinz Kohut.

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<sup>7</sup> FLAX, 1990, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> DE CERTEAU, Michel, "Mystique", *Encyclopaedia universalis*, Éditeur à Paris, France, 1985, pp. 873 - 878.



In relational psychoanalysis gender relations are seen as constitutive of symbolic systems.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, the place of language figures far less highly in this school, which studies the pre-oedipal dynamic of the mother-infant relation in its pre-linguisticity. Winnicottian object relations theory focuses explicitly on maternal practices as constitutive of the infant's sense of self.

Winnicott and others in British object relations theory as well as Heinz Kohut in American self psychology, share a humanist, developmental understanding of the self. Depending on how development is understood, this approach can have the weakness of underestimating human pathology, and making the social seem secondary to the individual. Aware of this, I turn to the next section which will examine their approach at greater length.

### **3.0 A psychology of mirroring based relational psychoanalysis**

Consistent with the humanist orientation of object relations theory, Kohut refers to the self broadly speaking as the centre of the individual's psychological universe.<sup>10</sup>

Specifically

the nuclear self is the basis for our sense of being an independent centre of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with the experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and a continuum in time.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, as Kohut emphasizes repeatedly, the thrust or programme of the nuclear self is toward a cohesive self.<sup>12</sup> However, Kohut also uses the term self in a narrow sense, referring to a structure of the mind understood as a mental apparatus.<sup>13</sup> It appears, from this use of the term, to be comparable to the ego, one element in Freud's map of the self.<sup>14</sup>

His theory is based on "genetic reconstructions" of pre-oedipal childhood experience from adult clinical psychoanalytic data. While others have observed how much his approach overlaps with that of the object relations theorists, such as Winnicott, Mahler,

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<sup>9</sup> FLAX, 1990, p. 169.

<sup>10</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *The restoration of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1977, p. 311.

<sup>11</sup> KOHUT, 1977, p. 177

<sup>12</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *How does analysis cure?* Chicago, Chicago Universities Press, 1984, p. 147. See also JONES, James, *Contemporary psychoanalysis and religion*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991, p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *The analysis of the self*, Madison, CN, International Universities Press, 1971, p. xv. See also KOHUT, 1977, pp. 310 - 311.

<sup>14</sup> Kohut describes what he calls a complementarity between Freudian drive psychology based on the assumption of conflict within the self and his self psychology focussed on the will to cohesion within the self, 1977, pp. 77 - 78, 310 - 311. This theoretical ambiguity around Kohut's concept of self is encountered consistently throughout his work.

Miller and others, Kohut acknowledges that he makes no attempt to co-ordinate his theory with the work of that school.<sup>15</sup> He does contrast the theoretical basis of his work with that of Margaret Mahler.<sup>16</sup> She studied the same pre-oedipal phase of self-development in children directly and posits a single line of development from early autism through symbiosis to individuation. In her view of individuation, the narcissistic grandiosity of the child's symbiotic relationship with the maternal object gives way to (among other things) the capacity for object love.<sup>17</sup> Kohut sees his own clinical work, however, as supporting the view that narcissism has its own independent line of development quite distinct from that of object love.<sup>18</sup>

The mature capacity for object love, Kohut says, is to be able to recognize the other as a separate "centre of independent initiative, not an extension of ourselves".<sup>19</sup> Mature narcissism, on the other hand, expresses itself among other things in the capacity for empathy, that is the capacity to "experience oneself in another person".<sup>20</sup> Kohut has much more to say about empathy, as we will see below.

Mature narcissism, Kohut argues consistently, is to be recognized in self-structures expressive of mature forms of self esteem and self acceptance, and in a sense of energy and purpose in one's goals and ambitions.<sup>21</sup> The process of maturation of narcissism is necessary and has its own unique configuration; *it is not to be judged as ill or evil*.

This is a most significant point. Kohut is convinced that the narcissistic needs of very young children for phase appropriate mirroring and affirming of idealized grandiosity

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<sup>15</sup>See JONES, 1991, pp. 16 - 18; also KOHUT, 1977, pp. xix - xx.

<sup>16</sup>MALHLER, Margaret, *On human symbiosis and the vicissitudes of individuation*, NY, International Universities Press, 1968, 271 p.

<sup>17</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 220.

<sup>18</sup>He varies as to how he perceives this independence. Sometimes he argues that narcissism is the antithesis of object love, as in his later book *Self psychology and the humanities*, NY, Norton, 1985, p. 99. Elsewhere in the same book he notes that they are not inversely related, as on p. 127. Then again he writes that the maturation of narcissism may make possible a "non-specific change" in the increase of capacity for object love: "The more secure a person is regarding his own acceptability... the more self-confidently and effectively he will be able to offer his love without undue fear of rejection, humiliation, etc". KOHUT, 1971, p. 298.

<sup>19</sup>MOSS, David. "Narcissism, empathy and the fragmentation of self: An interview with Heinz Kohut", in *Pilgrimage* 4, 1, 1976, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup>MOSS, 1976, pp. 31 - 32. In that context Kohut says,

Empathy is an aspect of narcissism. It is not to be contrasted with it.... [E]mpathy has to do with one's capacity to experience himself in another person, to understand how he feels. This is a creative expansion of the self and therefore an aspect of the development of narcissism: one of the aspects of healthy narcissism is to be capable to (sic) understand human beings on the basis of a bridge of likeness.

<sup>21</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 220.

and omnipotence often go unmet in childhood and lead to the adult narcissistic disorders of the self. But he is adamant that psychoanalysis perpetuates the problem by applying negative moral judgments to or not taking seriously these needs in the theory of, and therapeutic methods applied to, disorders of the self.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1 The child's healthy narcissistic needs

According to Kohut the two major narcissistic needs of children beginning as early as five to twelve months of age and older are *mirroring* and *idealization*.

First, the child needs to be mirrored by the maternal selfobject, usually the mother. The child at this age expresses "phase appropriate" grandiosity and exhibitionism as he merges with the omnipotent self-object. In effect the child experiences himself as "I am perfect and you are a part of me".<sup>23</sup> When the mother can attend in an affirmative way to these needs of the child at this phase, the child feels a sense of the mother's abiding approval and affirmation of the child's nascent self:

The most significant relevant basic interactions between mother and child lie usually in the visual area: the child's bodily display is responded to by the gleam in the mother's eye.<sup>24</sup>

Compare Winnicott:

What does the baby see when she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that ordinarily what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words, the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there*.<sup>25</sup>

The empathic mirroring of the child by the maternal selfobject, then, fulfills the child's need to be seen, recognized and affirmed in his first, phase appropriate, grandiose experiences

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<sup>22</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 178 - 179; 272, etc.

<sup>23</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 117.

<sup>25</sup>WINNICOTT, D. W., "Mirror role of mother and family in child development", In *The Predicament of the Family: A Psychoanalytic Symposium*, ed. LOMAS, P., London, Hogarth Press, 1967; reprint in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 112, emphasis in text. (In this and other articles which have been reprinted in *Playing and reality*, I will include the original source in the first citation. In subsequent references to the article I will cite the reference in *Playing and reality*, but include the date of the article's first publication. So, for example, this article will appear as WINNICOTT, [1967] 1989.)

In this article, on p. 111, Winnicott acknowledges his indebtedness to the work of Jacques Lacan in the area of the mirror in early infancy:

Jacques Lacan's paper "Le stade du miroir" (1949) has certainly influenced me. He refers to the use of the mirror in each individual's ego development. However, Lacan does not think of the mirror in terms of the mother's face in the way that I wish to do here.

See LACAN, Jacques, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique", reprinted in LACAN, Jacques, *Écrits*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, [1949] 1966, pp. 93 - 100.

of himself or herself. It contributes to the building of a cohesive sense of self. Winnicott (as distinct from Kohut), observes that it is also necessary for “the infant to begin to develop a capacity to experience a relationship to external reality [and] even to form a conception of external reality”.<sup>26</sup>

When mirroring by the maternal selfobject inevitably is not perfect, or rather, as Winnicott would say, as the good-enough mother “adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant’s growing ability to deal with her failure”,<sup>27</sup> the child’s sense of grandiosity and omnipotence in this relationship with the mirroring selfobject suffers fragmentation. According to Kohut the child then needs to be allowed to idealize a parental selfobject, usually the father. The child needs to be encouraged to project the “lost” grandiosity and omnipotence onto an ideal or “perfect” parental selfobject. If the idealized parent responds empathically to this need, the child will feel a sense of “exhilarated approval” in relation to the idealized parent imago: “You are perfect, but I am a part of you”.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, this idealization is not perfect either. The parental selfobject who empathically encourages the child’s idealization of him, also needs to allow the child to learn that the parent is limited and not the deity he was once perceived to be.

For healthy maturation of these narcissistic needs

[w]hat a child needs is neither continuous, perfect empathic responses from the side of the selfobject nor unrealistic admiration. What creates the matrix for the development of a healthy self in the child is the selfobject’s capacity to respond with proper mirroring [and approval of idealization] at least some of the time; what is pathogenic is not the occasional failure of the selfobject, but his or her *chronic* incapacity to respond appropriately, which, in turn, is due to his or her own psychopathology in the realm of the self.<sup>29</sup>

Kohut reconstructs that the healthy development of the young child in this crucial period progresses by means of “optimal frustration” of these needs for mirroring and idealization. The parents’ responses to the child are consistently, though not perfectly, *empathic*, or “in-tune” with the child’s experience of his narcissistic needs. And yet the parents also know that for the child’s own health, he must learn to internalize the ability to

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<sup>26</sup>WINNICOTT, D. W., “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena”, in *International journal of psycho-analysis*, 34, 2, 1953, p. 94, reprinted in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup>WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, p. 10. Winnicott understands that the mother “by an almost 100 per cent adaptation, affords the infant the opportunity for the *illusion* that her breast is part of the infant”. (p. 11, emphasis in text.) But he also understands that the mother gradually disillusions the infant of this illusion.

<sup>28</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 187. The reader will recognize the similarity of this idea to Winnicott’s concept of the “good enough mother”.

meet these needs himself so that as an adult he can “become empathic with himself”.<sup>30</sup> Through a gradual process of tolerable, non-traumatic frustration, the child gradually learns to lay down within the main sector of his ego, cohesive structures of self.

By internalizing the function of the mirroring maternal selfobject in this “bit by bit” way, the child develops an ability to soothe himself and regulate tension, that is, deal with the feelings of emptiness and deprivation which arise from the periods of frustration, with an abiding sense of self esteem and self acceptance.<sup>31</sup> In adulthood he is able to restrain the drive to grandiose fantasies and redirect it in realistic ambitions.<sup>32</sup>

By internalizing the function of the idealized parent imago he acquires his own internal goals and purposes.<sup>33</sup> He also attains a stable sense of self sufficiency and independence from the idealized selfobject.<sup>34</sup> In adulthood these internalized ideals are longed for and loved.<sup>35</sup>

Kohut describes the self thus constituted as being bipolar, its structure determined by these two basic narcissistic needs. Both the need for the self to be mirrored and the need to have targets for idealization continue as the child matures into adulthood in, respectively, realistic ambitions, and, ideals and goals. This gradual process of laying down healthy structures of self is what Kohut calls “transmuting internalization”.<sup>36</sup>

Transmuting internalization means that what someone gets from the outside is received so gradually, in such a fractionated, detailed, bit by bit way that what is inside then becomes adapted to one's own needs. It has been transmuted...<sup>37</sup>

Kohut speaks here as though the self is constituted from outside, i.e., poured into the individual through interactions with parental selfobjects, for better or worse. Yet Kohut also describes a sense in which the self has a virtual or rudimentary self, an “unknowable essence”.<sup>38</sup> With help, it naturally intends toward the integration of latent structures of self

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<sup>30</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 125.

<sup>31</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 49 - 56; KOHUT, 1977, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup>KOHUT, Heinz, *Self psychology and the humanities*, NY, Norton, 1985, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 49 - 56.

<sup>34</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>KOHUT, 1985, p. 105.

<sup>36</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 49.

<sup>37</sup>MOSS, 1976, p. 34. This quote continues with a graphic description of this process using the biological analogy of protein synthesis.

<sup>38</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 311.

into an “authentic self”.<sup>39</sup> Then again, he speaks of the self as composed of self/selfobject relations, and not existing outside a “matrix of selfobjects”.<sup>40</sup>

As Jones observes, this relational psychoanalytic approach understands that

[m]aturity... consists not in the outgrowing of relationships but in the capacity to form satisfying and self-sustaining ones, to pick appropriate rather than frustrating and depriving objects for our emotional investments, and to be open and vulnerable enough to allow them to nourish us.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2 Narcissistic psychopathology

Individuals develop narcissistic personality disorders when one or both of their parental selfobjects suffer from a chronic inability to respond phase appropriately either to the child's need to be seen and recognized approvingly in her grandiosity by the mirroring selfobject, or, to the child's boundless longing to admire the idealized paternal selfobject.

The selfobject's failures to be empathic with the whole self of the young child has disintegrating results, that in consequence of the incapacity of the selfobjects to respond to the whole self, the complex experiential configurations of which [the whole self] is originally made up begin to fragment.<sup>42</sup>

A vivid description of the mirroring relationship and how it goes awry is given by Winnicott, again in terms of what the baby sees in the mother's face. He addresses the

case of the baby whose mother reflects her own mood, or worse still, the rigidity of her own defenses. In such a case what does the baby see?  
...[M]any babies do have a long experience of not getting back what they are giving. They look and they do not see themselves...[T]he baby gets settled in to the idea that when he or she looks, what is seen is the mother's face. The mother's face is not then a mirror. So perception takes the place of apperception, perception takes the place of that which might have been the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two-way process in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovery of meaning in the world of things seen.<sup>43</sup>

When these needs are not met in childhood and transformed by transmuted internalization through optimum frustration into more mature self-structures, the individual continues to seek to have these archaic pre-structural needs met in all other relationships.

If the child does not acquire the needed internal structure his psyche remains fixated on an archaic selfobject and the personality will throughout life be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger. The intensity

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<sup>39</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 210.

<sup>40</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 49. JONES, 1991 p. 20 holds that Kohut's theory rests consistently on the concept of self as matrix of self-object relations. I am not sure how these views of the self, as matrix of relations and as having an unknowable essence are to be reconciled.

<sup>41</sup>JONES, 1991, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 247.

<sup>43</sup>WINNICOTT, [1967] 1989, p. 112.

of the search for and dependence on these objects is due to the fact that they are striven for as a substitute for the missing segments of the psychic structure.<sup>44</sup>

In simpler terms, he will look at others craving to see himself affirmed there, not in order to see the other in her own right. This retardation or fragmentation of normal structural development of the self is reflected in alternations of mood, “between unbridled ambitions and a sense of failure, and, between grandiose vanity and searing shame”.<sup>45</sup> This alternation is consistent with the fact that such persons are so vulnerable to the variable responses of others.

### 3.3 The feminine expression of narcissism

In recent literature concerning narcissism a neglect concerning differences in female and male expressions of narcissism has been detected. This neglect is systemic and historical. Philipson observes that narcissism

is universally assumed to describe both female and male experience.... This gender neutrality is brought into question, however, by the disproportionate representation of men in the clinical case material that forms the basis of our understanding of what narcissism is and how it functions.<sup>46</sup>

Rossiter argues for a recognition of a feminine expression of narcissism which, while not clinically recognized in the medical diagnostic criteria, is well-described as codependency by the grassroots Twelve step movement. Groups for codependents are dominated by the presence of women. Rossiter recognizes that women tend to be more focused on relationships than on defending ego autonomy. He shows how, despite psychiatry’s neglect to recognize it, feminine narcissism is expressed in terms of relationships, as the need to control others in relationships. When looked at in that light, the diagnostic criteria for narcissism (grandiosity, omnipotence, etc.) can be seen to be more applicable to women.<sup>47</sup>

Since this is a study of a woman, namely, Julian of Norwich, in using the concept of narcissism I will be referring, from here on, to a feminine expression of narcissism, after Rossiter.

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<sup>44</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 192.

<sup>46</sup> PHILIPSON, Ilene, “Gender and narcissism”, *Psychology of women quarterly* 9, 1985, p. 213.

<sup>47</sup> ROSSITER, Stanford Kent, *Narcissism and codependency*, Ph.D. thesis, The Wright Institute, 2004, pp. 63 - 73.

### 3.4 The three stages of Kohut's therapeutic process

Kohut believes that persons with narcissistic disorders are still capable of laying down new structures of self in psychoanalysis, through the process of transmuting internalization, by means of the development of a mirroring (or idealizing) *transference* relationship with the analyst. The therapy involves three phases: first, overcoming the client's resistance to establishing the transference; then, working through the transference; finally, separating or relinquishing the transference.

In the first phase, there is *resistance* on the part of the client to forming a mirroring transference with the empathic analyst. The absence of nuclear authentic self-structure at this stage is identifiable in the two fragments of archaic prestructure which present themselves alternately and unconnectedly as narcissistic omnipotence or grandiosity, and, searing shame. This phase ends at the point at which the individual's trust of the empathic analyst is sufficiently secure to accept to establish a mirror transference. This establishment of trust allows the client to tolerate some degree of chaos in play, dream, imagination, etc. in relation to the analyst.

The second phase involves *working through* the narcissistic rage and disillusionment which emerge in the client as the analyst engages the client in a process of optimal frustration, empathically presenting the client with a "confrontation with reality". Gradually, through this confrontation, the client comes to recognize the archaic prestructures or the self-fragments which manifest as grandiose omnipotence and searing shame in the client's behaviour. This phase is characterized as a working through the narcissistic disillusionment with regard to what constitutes the true, or authentic sense of self. In this phase, Kohut says that *transmuting internalization of the function of the mirroring mother* weakens the client's propensity to react to frustration alternately with grandiose vanity or searing shame, and interiorizes the capacity for soothing, affect regulation and perduring self acceptance and self esteem.<sup>48</sup> Gradually through transmuted internalizations of the analyst's empathic mirroring, the individual can recognize what this confrontation has exposed in herself and begin to lay down new self-structures in the reality ego which are at once more realistic, cohesive and satisfying.

In the third and final phase of the therapeutic transference, the individual is enabled to begin to *relinquish* the mirroring transference. The movement toward relinquishing the mirroring transference requires that self and other become sufficiently distinguished that the client can begin to interiorize the mirroring function herself.

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<sup>48</sup>KOHUT, *Analysis*, p. 199; KOHUT, 1977, p. 53.



Kohut's therapeutic process will be used as the basis for the psychobiographical analysis of Julian's showings in the diptychs, below.

### 3.5 The therapeutic method of empathy

The analyst's therapeutic method needs to match the early needs which were never met in childhood. Hence Kohut is adamant that the use of rational interpretation, moralistic judgments or didactic techniques is inappropriate with narcissistic disorders, as the individual will not develop the sense of being seen or recognized in his or her own experience.<sup>49</sup> The mirroring transference will thus be aborted. Rather, what is needed is an attitude of empathy. The analyst is required to enter the experience of the client as if in his or her own shoes, which technique Kohut calls vicarious introspection.<sup>50</sup> Thus grandiosity, etc., is recognized and affirmed in the client in its phase appropriate expression, and the client is drawn into a relationship of trust with the analyst in which a mirror transference can develop.

### 3.6 Merging, twinning and mirror transferences

Depending on the severity of the infantile trauma, this transference may take the form of merging, twinning or mirroring proper.<sup>51</sup> Merging, or fusion, refers to the most archaic form of mirroring transference, in which the selfobject is merged with the grandiose self, or is an extension of it. In the twinning transference, the selfobject is seen as like the self. In the mirror transference proper, the selfobject is perceived as a separate person, providing the affirmation of the "gleam in the mother's eye".<sup>52</sup>

The mirror transference in all its forms thus creates for the patient a position of relative security which enables him to persevere with the painful task of exposing the grandiose self to a confrontation with reality.<sup>53</sup>

If the client does not feel mirrored in the analysis, her rage is not a defense but rather the cry of one who does not feel understood.<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere, however, Kohut says that

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<sup>49</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 179, 192, etc.

<sup>50</sup>KOHUT, "Introspection, empathy and psychoanalysis", *Journal of the American psychoanalytic association* 7, 1959, pp. 459 - 465.

<sup>51</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 114 - 115.

<sup>52</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 116.

<sup>53</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 191.

<sup>54</sup>KOHUT, 1977, p. 88.

resistance to this process is also motivated by the client's desire to avoid feeling concomitant shame.<sup>55</sup>

Once resistance to establishing the mirror transference has been overcome, the analyst needs to keep the transference activated through consistent affirmation of the client's archaic grandiose self which so needs the feeding of recognition. Use of optimal frustration is made as the means for the gradual appropriation of the need for recognition and affirmation by the reality ego, through the process of transmuting internalization. In other words, the analyst assists the client in directing the infantile drive for parental acceptance through the discomfort its exposure creates, toward its integration into the mature and reality-adapted sectors of the psyche. This is accomplished

through the accretion of specific, new psychological structures which master the drive, lead to its controlled use, or transform it into a variety of mature and realistic thought and action patterns.<sup>56</sup>

Thus in the working through phase, transmuting internalization of the function of the mirroring mother weakens the client's propensity to react to frustration alternatingly with grandiose vanity or searing shame, and interiorizes the capacity for perduring self acceptance and self esteem.<sup>57</sup>

Kohut gives a significant (though technical) description of the growth in self-understanding in the client which can occur through the regulated discomfort experienced in the process of transmuting internalization:

The patient will gradually realize that the self-experience in the horizontally split sector of his personality -- *a self-experience of being empty and deprived* which, although underemphasized, has always been present and conscious--*constitutes his authentic self*, and that the up to now predominant self-experience in the non-dichotomized sector--the self-experience of overt grandiosity and arrogance--did not emanate from an independent self but from a self that was an appendage to the self of his mother.<sup>58</sup>

Recall that grandiosity and shame are linked together as the two emotional expressions of the same fragmentation of self. As the client grows in tolerating the self-experience of emptiness, that is of neither grandiosity nor shame, she makes room for the recognition and acceptance by the reality ego of appropriate mirroring and idealizing needs within the authentic self.<sup>59</sup> This growth in capacity to "have empathy for herself" signals

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<sup>55</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 184.

<sup>56</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 197.

<sup>57</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 199; KOHUT, 1977, p. 53.

<sup>58</sup>KOHUT, 1977, pp. 210 - 211.

<sup>59</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 186.

the point at which the mirroring transference relationship with the analyst can be relinquished.

#### 4.0 Contours of a psychology of religion based on object relations theory

##### 4.1 Kohut on religion

Kohut has only a rather limited use for religion, specifically organized religion, which he occasionally disparages as having the function of keeping people at archaic levels of narcissistic development.<sup>60</sup> Even in his “positive assessment of the role of religion” Kohut would relegate Julian's visions to “hallucinatory conjurings of the presence of the idealized Godhead”.<sup>61</sup> The needs of what he calls “guilty man” of nineteenth century Victorian Christian and Freudian culture, suffering from the repression of self, are not Kohut's interest. Rather it is the narcissistic needs of “tragic man” of the twentieth century, primarily suffering from fragmentation of self, which concern him, and which make the need for empathy as a psychoanalytic tool so important in his work.<sup>62</sup>

Kohut, it seems, believes there is no religion which corresponds to this need. The positive function of religion is reflected, however, in any experience “which uplifts the self of man”, which can include many kinds of experiences not necessarily viewed as religious in a conventional sense.<sup>63</sup> Even so, despite the centrality of the empathic relationship in Kohut's therapeutic approach and of his high regard for the person of Jesus in this respect as an empathic figure,<sup>64</sup> religion according to Kohut is *not* to be construed ultimately as a relationship, nor “even a relationship which constitutes not only the meaning and significance of life but the very self itself”.<sup>65</sup>

In his later book however Kohut suggests that God may function as one pole of a selfobject relation, and that in a successful analytic relationship, the capacity “to create substitute selfobjects via visual imagery when external reality is devoid of tangible selfobjects must be counted among newly acquired assets”. This, he acknowledges, leads

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<sup>60</sup>KOHUT, 1971, pp. 164, 316.

<sup>61</sup>KOHUT, 1984, p. 76.

<sup>62</sup>KOHUT, 1977, pp. 132-133.

<sup>63</sup>RANDALL, Robert, “Religion within the framework of self psychology”, *Journal of supervision and training in ministry* 5, 1982, p. 120.

<sup>64</sup>MOSS, 1976, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> RANDALL, 1982, p. 125. One wonders how excessively Kohut's own “religious” experience may have been influenced by an idealization of a paternal god/selfobject without the necessary precedent of a mirroring god/selfobject?

to a “nonapologetically positive assessment of the role and significance of art and religion... which differs from the assessment of classical analysis”.<sup>66</sup> Still, Kohut only sees such God selfobjects as serving to ground a sense of self. He does not extend it into a theory of religion.

#### 4.2 Winnicott's concept of transitional space

Clearly the justification for the following study of Julian of Norwich's mystical theology, then, does not come from within Kohut's theoretical framework. But neither does it need to. Winnicott's parallel work is able to entertain the notion that transitional objects can evolve to include the creative, and not just the pathological, dimensions of religion.

In Winnicott's view, the purpose of the early mirroring relationship is to affirm the infant's illusion of omnipotence in order gradually to bring about the process of disillusioning it, to make way for the development of the concept of external reality and the creative work of relating inner and outer reality.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Winnicott's understanding of the experiential aspect of the process of “disillusionment” dovetails with Kohut's rich description of the client's first experiences of the authentic self as a “self-experience of being empty and deprived”. While Kohut believes there is no religion which puts the restoration of the self at the centre of its concern, he is in better company than he may imagine.<sup>68</sup>

Kohut does at least recognize that mirroring needs are reflected at every level of the maturation of the self. Winnicott's approach allows that transformation in the understanding of self/not-self occurs in the early infant's maternal mirroring relationship, but also that in the realm of religious experience transformation is possible in the understanding of self and transitional godobject.

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<sup>66</sup> KOHUT, 1984, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> See however KOHUT, 1984, p. 99, as noted in JONES, 1991, p. 99. As we'll see below, theologian Peter Homans, drawing on a Kohutian framework, picks up the idea of “mourning” as foundational to the experience of individuation in relation to lost cultural and religious symbolism in the West. HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, 390 p.

I am reminded here of another theologian, Johannes Metz, who argues that what is fundamental to the transformation of Christian religious experience is the long-resisted acceptance of our “poverty of spirit” as mirrored in Jesus' kenotic Incarnation. Traditionally, this embracing of our human poverty of spirit has been described as our baptism into Christ's death... a death of the “old self” which brings us into the life of the new self (Romans 6). Metz understands the experience of one's poverty of spirit encountered in this death as “the doorway through which men must pass to become authentic human beings”, in METZ, Johannes, *Poverty of spirit*, transl. DRURY, John, NY, Paulist Press, 1968, p. 26.

What makes this possible in object relations theory is Winnicott's introduction of the concept of transitional space, for which there is no clear parallel in Kohut's conceptual framework, in order to allow specifically for a psychoanalytic understanding of the evolution of the early childhood realm of play into cultural phenomena. According to Winnicott, transitional space is a potential space that is created between the individual and the environment. The emergence of a transitional space, and from there of true play activity, retains certain characteristics and requirements. I have identified five characteristics to describe here: Transitional space is both subjective and objective; it depends for its existence on a trusting relationship; it is the stuff of illusion and paradox understood in a positive sense; it can allow for the possibility of a positive relationship between creativity and tradition; and lastly, that it opens itself to a new level of dialogue with theology, faith and prayer experience.

First of all, this potential or transitional space is neither simply subjective nor simply objective. It is not enough to identify subjective "inner reality" to the individual as distinct from an objective "outer reality" of interpersonal relationships. Winnicott holds that a "third space" is needed:

The third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated...<sup>69</sup>

The transitional phenomena which emerge in this potential space between the infant and mother stand for the mother's breast, which is first understood by the infant to be part of him or herself, a situation made possible by the good-enough mother's accommodation to the infant's need. As the mother gently disillusiones the child of this illusion of omnipotence, the child begins to weave "not-me" objects into the personal pattern.<sup>70</sup> Such items as the end of a blanket with the thumb or a soft teddy bear take on a vital importance for the infant as a defense against anxiety and for comfort at bedtime. Winnicott summarizes in great clinical detail the special qualities of the infant's relationship with the transitional phenomena, which account for the root of symbol formation, the journey or process of the infant's becoming able to accept difference and similarity.<sup>71</sup> In Winnicott's view, the phenomena of this third, intermediate space are both objective and subjective, "found" and "created".

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<sup>69</sup> WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, p. 2, emphasis in text.

<sup>70</sup> WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>71</sup> WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, pp. 91 - 92.

As the child grows, the transitional space becomes the locus for the realm of play. The reliability of the mother's love gives the child a sense of trust or confidence in his or her experiences of the self and the environment he or she is newly discovering. This is a primary condition for the possibility of play, whether for the infant, the psychoanalyst and or any individual who seeks to negotiate life's circumstances creatively.

The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living.<sup>72</sup>

Play is a non-purposive state, an experience of desultory formlessness or chaos. Winnicott describes this state as a "sort of ticking over of the unintegrated personality".<sup>73</sup> This is only possible in a state of relaxation which, he holds, requires the context of the trusting, reliable maternal or therapeutic mirroring relationship. Any anxiety in that regard inhibits the possibility of relaxed play and the "creative reaching out" which it promotes.<sup>74</sup> Finally, for creativity to flow, the experience of play requires a summation or reverberation by the mirroring object:

It is only here, in this unintegrated state of the personality, that that which we describe as creative can appear. This, if reflected back, *but only if reflected back*, becomes part of the organized individual personality, and eventually this in summation makes the individual to be, to be found; and eventually enables himself or herself to postulate the existence of the self.<sup>75</sup>

Winnicott holds that the evolution of transitional space is witnessed in examples of creative living such as art, philosophy, creative science and religion, each of which is a third area of "illusory" experience, having both subjective and objective dimensions, but distinct from each. Winnicott treats the concept of illusion as a necessary, paradoxical feature of human life:

I am... studying the substance of *illusion*, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes the hallmark of madness when an adult puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own. We can share a respect for *illusory experience*, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences. This is a natural root of grouping among human beings.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., "The location of cultural experience", *International journal of psycho-analysis* 48, 3, 1967, part 3, reprint in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 103.

<sup>73</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., "Playing: Creative activity and the search for self", in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 55.

<sup>74</sup> WINNICOTT, 1989, p. 55.

<sup>75</sup> WINNICOTT, 1989, p. 64, emphasis in text. Kohut's empathic method is based on the same principle.

<sup>76</sup> WINNICOTT, [1953] 1989, p. 3, emphasis in text.

Winnicott's use of the term illusion is not equivalent to Freud's assessment of illusion as unreal or ideosyncratically subjective wishful thinking. Rather, he understands the phenomena of transitional space to be the locus of cultural creativity, potentially capable of being socially communicated (as well as potentially pathologically incommunicable). Winnicott's location of the emergence of cultural experience in the transitional space intermediate "between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world", allows him likewise to balance the negative contemporary valuation of "tradition" with the potential for a positive valuation as well. Concerning creative originality, he makes this interesting further observation that

in any cultural field *it is not possible to be original except on a basis of tradition*. The interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness seems to me to be just one more example, and a very exciting one, of the interplay between separateness and union.<sup>77</sup>

I suggest that in effect Winnicott is allowing that the particular way in which a person experiences "tradition" (including religious tradition) is itself to some degree a reflection of that person's history of experience of transitional space and of the mirroring relationships in which the capacity for entering into transitional space is either encouraged or impeded.

In a more recent posthumous publication, edited by his wife and others, Winnicott was beginning to offer some exploratory observations, which have been taken up by more recent theorists for a psychology of religion based on object relations theory. For example, concerning the theological implications of his view of transitional phenomena, transitional space and their adult manifestations in religion, Winnicott speculated:

...Is there a God? If God is a projection, even so is there a God who created me in such a way that I have the material for such a projection? Aetiologically... the paradox must be accepted, not resolved. The important thing for me must be, have I got it in me to have the idea of God? -- if not, then the idea of God is of no value to me.<sup>78</sup>

This suggests avenues of exploration of this theological paradox which acknowledge, on the one hand, the very real fact of the presence of anthropological creation and self-projection in religious traditions, and their lived expressions in faith and prayer. On the other hand, it does not deny *de facto* the possibility that human nature is created in such a way as to have some potential for probing its self-transcendence in the religious endeavour.

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<sup>77</sup> WINNICOTT, [1967] 1989, p. 99, emphasis in text.

<sup>78</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., "Playing and culture", in *Psycho-analytic explorations*, eds. WINNICOTT, Clare, R. SHEPHERD and M. DAVIS, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1989a, pp. 204 - 205.

### 4.3 The theological background of the historical antecedents of Winnicott's concept of transitional space

The forerunners of Winnicott in the field of object relations theory, W. R. D. Fairbairn and his student Harry Guntrip had both had theological training. In his noting of this fact, John McDargh observes that the object relations theory recovery for psychoanalysis of the “irreducible centrality of the human for *relationship*” reflected a reappropriation of the influence of John MacMurray, Martin Buber and others who sought to introduce the relational paradigm into fundamental theology.<sup>79</sup> The object relations theory revision of Freud's psychoanalytic theory thus adopted MacMurray's theological agenda in seeking to understand the developmental blocks to our capacity for communion. McDargh's quotes from these theorists indicates that they see the work of therapy as in effect the work of “salvation from the past of bad object relations”.<sup>80</sup> This historical note is not insignificant for the present work of correlation between psychology and soteriology.

Moreover, McDargh outlines Winnicott's dissatisfaction with the scientific form of “religious positivism” in Fairbairn's and Guntrip's theorization about inner and outer reality. Inner reality developed, they argued, as a defensive process of the unconscious “internalization” of bad object relations from early life, which then distorts all subsequent object relations. Their view of maturation involved a kind of reforming of the inner world such that the individual might fully experience all that is “really there” in the “external world”. As McDargh puts it,

[w]hen one builds a theory of religion upon this structure one ends up with Guntrip's positivist notion that somehow one “finds” God or the universe rather than simultaneously “creating” and “encountering” the reality of the divine in a more complex process of introjection and projection.<sup>81</sup>

Winnicott's contribution of the concept of transitional space is precisely to allow for and affirm the simultaneously subjective and objective, created and found nature of all transitional phenomena including religious experience and symbolism. Developmental maturation in religious and object relations theory terms does not do away with the presence of “illusion” in transitional phenomena, but rather, in Winnicott's understanding of this term, requires an acceptance rather than a challenging of its paradoxical nature. The possibility of creative playfulness within religious as with other kinds of tradition depends on the presence of a trusting, one might say maternal, environment.

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<sup>79</sup> McDARGH, John, *Psychoanalytic object relations theory and the study of religion: On faith and the imaging of God*, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1983, p. 206, emphasis in text.

<sup>80</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 207.

<sup>81</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 212.



#### 4.4 A feminist object relations psychology of religion

In developing the links between object relations theory and a psychology of religion, it is important to recognize how this dovetails with “second wave” feminist concerns.

In a significant article entitled “Object relations theory, mothering and religion: toward a feminist psychology of religion”, Diane Jonte-Pace argues first that the historical thrust behind the emergence of pre-oedipal, relational psychoanalysis dovetails with feminist concerns: it rejected the androcentric basis of Freud’s oedipal psychology.<sup>82</sup> Second, she argues that relational psychoanalysis values positively three central foci of feminist theological orientations: relationality, mature dependence and a revaluing of the mother-infant relationship. From there she goes on to show how object relations theory has moved toward appropriating a feminist psychology of religion in exploring the maternal-infant matrix as a psychological source of religious experience and religious ritual, and in examining the pre-oedipal origins of the image of God.

While Freud had nothing good to say about religion, reducing it to projection and pathology, what he did say about it was from an androcentric and even “patricentric” point of view. Jonte-Pace observes that the criticisms of Freud’s psychoanalysis by object relations theorists resonate with some of the major concerns of feminist thought.

First, Freud’s focus on drives relegated relations with the world and others as derivative of the drives themselves. The foundation of Freudian psychoanalysis is impersonal instinctual energies needing to be discharged, which is seen in some feminist thought to be androcentric. Object relations psychology, on the other hand, sees the person as “a unique center of meaningful experience growing in the medium of personal relationships”.<sup>83</sup> Second, Freud’s theory rests on the assumption that dependence is a bad thing. Oedipal developmental maturity is judged by the degree to which one attains autonomous independence, renouncing dependencies and attachments as illusions. Object relations theory challenges this assumption by showing that dependence, like illusion itself, is not a need which is outgrown in life and that there are mature forms of dependence, which co-exist with growth in autonomy. Finally, object relations theory challenges the focus on the centrality of the oedipal conflict in Freudian psychology. “For Freud, in any psychoanalytic study of culture or personality, ‘the paternal element [is] the most important

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<sup>82</sup> JONTE-PACE, Diane, “Object relations theory, mothering and religion: toward a feminist psychology of religion”, *Horizons* 14, 2, 1987, pp. 311 - 314.

<sup>83</sup> GUNTRIP, Harry, “Psychodynamic theory and the problem of psychotherapy”, *British journal of medical psychology* 36, 1963, p. 166.

one' and the oedipal conflict between father and son is the crucible of both health and pathology".<sup>84</sup> The pre-oedipal, as far as Freud was concerned, was a stage inaccessible to the methods of psychoanalysis and insignificant. Object relations theorists on the other hand argue that the pre-oedipal period, during which the mother-infant relationship predominates, is the context out of which the self is constituted, differentiated from other, and yet nonetheless in relationship with the other.<sup>85</sup> It is at this level that object relations theory challenges the patricentrism of Freudian psychoanalysis directly.

All three of these critiques in object relations theory redress Freudian reductionism, androcentrism and misogyny in a positive, complementary way, thus opening a way for a convergence between relational psychology, "second stage" feminist theory and the study of religious experience.<sup>86</sup> In fact, Jonte-Pace shows that this thematic convergence reveals feminist concerns to have been explicitly at the core of the historical controversy over the meaning of the castration complex, penis envy and gender differences, in the development of object relations out of the Freudian school, though this was later forgotten.<sup>87</sup>

In the rest of the article, Jonte-Pace devotes space to showing how an object relations theory helps us to understand the psychological origins of religious experience in the maternal-infant matrix as well as the pre-oedipal origins of both ritual and the image of God. The first and the third of these will interest us here.<sup>88</sup>

For Freud, the oceanic feeling of an indissoluble bond, while it might stem from the infant's experience at the breast, was not the source of religious sentiment. Fairbairn, Guntrip and Winnicott on the other hand, "situate the psychological origins of religious experience in the maternal-infant dyad, each focusing on a different point along a

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<sup>84</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, p. 313, quoting FREUD, Sigmund, *Totem and taboo*, ed. J. Strachey, Toronto, Hogarth, p. 147. The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud 13.

<sup>85</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, pp. 313 - 314. She observes that French psychoanalytic feminists Luce Irigaray and Julian Kristeva, both influenced by and critical of Lacan's rereading of Freud, are also critical of the object relations theoretical tradition, but their emphasis on the pre-oedipal coincides with this latter school.

<sup>86</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, pp. 314 - 315, acknowledges that not all feminists would agree with this argument. Drawing on Juliet Mitchell's terminology, she observes that some "first stage" feminists would appraise motherhood and domestic activities associated with women as negative, sexist social constructions.

<sup>87</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, p. 318.

<sup>88</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, pp. 323 - 324 discusses the pre-oedipal origins of ritual and its positive, creative elements on the basis of the work by ROSS, Mary Ellen and Cheryl Lynn ROSS, "Mothers, infants and the psychoanalytic study of ritual", *Signs* 9, 11, 1983, pp. 26 - 39. That subject is significant because in relation to the medieval devotion to the humanity of Christ, imagery of Christ's maternal, nurturing qualities were linked explicitly to eucharistic feeding, all of which was well known to Julian in her time. See BYNUM, Caroline Walker, *Jesus as mother*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, pp. 110 - 146. However, not all object relations feminists hold to an unambiguously positive relation between religion and mothers, as will be seen further below.

continuum from undifferentiated unity of self and other to ‘separation-individuation’”.<sup>89</sup> Fairbairn located the origins of religion in the earliest experiences of symbiosis and understood religion in terms of “mystical experience” thus understood. For Guntrip it was in the development of human dependency and interrelatedness, slightly later in the mother-infant interaction, and religion was about the development of a cosmic sense of well-being. Winnicott places the antecedents of religious experience in the transitional space created during the period of separation of self from other, and views religion culturally and epistemologically. “Winnicott’s rich understanding of transitional objects leads to a psychological view of religion as illusion, wherein, one might say, God is both created and found”. Whereas for Freud, illusion, like dependency, was to be renounced, Winnicott, as was shown above, holds that illusion and reality are “interpenetrating, mutually inclusive categories.... By placing this process within the vicissitudes of the maternal-infant relationship, Winnicott challenges Freud’s patricentrism as well”.<sup>90</sup>

In the last section of her article, Jonte-Pace looks at the pre-oedipal origins of the image of God. Freud saw the development of the image of God as a father projection, situated exclusively in the oedipal phase. Jonte-Pace looks at the work of Antoine Vergote and Ana-Maria Rizzuto, to show evidence that questions this hypothesis. She concludes that “these psychological reflections upon the latent maternal or feminine component in the patriarchal images of the divine are particularly striking in their resonance with projects initiated in other areas of feminist scholarship”.<sup>91</sup> She sees that the attempt to link mother-infant relationships with religion enacts a radical shift in psychoanalytic thought and quotes Shirley Garner as saying “To link the potential for reproduction in all women with the capacity for cultural production is to transform not only the figure of the mother, but the very bases of psychoanalytic theories in their oedipal orientation”.<sup>92</sup>

Jonte-Pace does not discuss Kohut, since he does not link his self psychology with the development of religious experience, and also probably because of androcentric tendencies in the interpretation of narcissism. But neither is Jonte-Pace primarily concerned with the therapeutic aspect of object relations theory for women. A more recent

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<sup>89</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, p. 320.

<sup>90</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, p. 323.

<sup>91</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1987, p. 326. See RIZZUTO, Ana-Maria, *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979, 246 p., and VERGOTE, Antoine and A. TAMAYO, *The parental figures and the representation of God: A psychological and cross-cultural study*, The Hague, Mouton, 1981, 295 p.

<sup>92</sup> GARNER, Shirley, *The (m)other tongue: Essays in feminist psychoanalytic interpretation*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, Introduction, p. 9.

article by Jonte-Pace situates critical, inclusivist and analytical approaches for a feminist psychology of religion. The most prominent approaches which make use of object relations theory are inclusivist and analytical.

The inclusive object relational approach typically assumes that religion is valuable, adaptive and benign, and that a loving relationship with a good or “good enough” mother... provides the psychological foundations of faith, mysticism, ritual and God representations....

The analytic approach, on the other hand, assumes that religion sometimes functions as a carrier for psychological and cultural fears of destructive and vengeful women, and that the psychological source of these fears and fantasies lies in anxiety over the relation with the mother.... The analytic approach thus suggests that neither mothers nor religions are unambiguously good or “good enough”.<sup>93</sup>

The psychobiographical dimension of the present study, insofar as it seeks to identify a psychodynamic process of healing and restoration from an inadequate maternal relation, situates itself in the more “ambiguous”, analytic approach. But insofar as I am also suggesting that there had been some compensatory relation, and that the soteriology which emerged from her visionary mirroring transference also drew from certain aspects of the tradition and is a needed corrective in theology today, the study could also be said to assume an inclusivist approach.

In short, the present study has a developmental thrust: it finds both a therapeutic and a conversion process at work in the *Showings*. I see Kohut’s three phase therapeutic process engaging a mirroring transference as helpful for articulating stages in the compensatory healing and development of the self.

Moreover, Meissner’s further elaboration on how transitional objects and transitional space *function* in religious experience which can be linked with object relations theory will be particularly helpful for focusing on the *changes in that functioning* in this psychobiographical study.

#### **4.5 William Meissner and Peter Homans: New avenues of an object relations theory exploration of religion**

In the subsequent development of links between object relations theory and a psychology of religion based on object relations theory, the Jesuit psychiatrist William Meissner has been among the first to recognize the applicability of Winnicott’s theory to religious experience and to develop this in theoretical terms since the late sixties. Freud saw that the “structures, in terms of which personality organization and functioning can be

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<sup>93</sup> JONTE-PACE, Diane, “Feminist analysts, critics and inclusivists: Feminist voices in the psychology of religion”, in *Religion and psychology: Mapping the terrain*, eds. JONTE-PACE, Diane and William PARSONS, NY, Routledge, 2001, p. 137.

analyzed, have a genetic history”; similarly, Meissner states clearly what an object relations theory approach to religious experience assumes: “that the shape of the faith experience as it evolves developmentally is contingent on and reflects, as well as conditions, the developmental vicissitudes of both narcissism and object relations”.<sup>94</sup>

Meissner holds that “religion partakes of the character of transitional phenomena or the transitional process and as such achieves its psychological reality and its psychic vitality in the potential space of illusory experience”.<sup>95</sup> He identifies four aspects of religious experience which lend themselves to an analysis of their transitional and illusory aspects, namely: 1) the faith experience as both subjective and objective; 2) the God representation as transitional object; 3) the use of material objects as religious symbols, such that their meaning and significance within a religious symbolic system only come to “function” symbolically to the extent that they become part of the transitional realm; 4) the experience of prayer.<sup>96</sup>

McDargh’s published doctoral study focused on both the first and second areas, showing how an object relations theory framework helps us understand not only the characteristics of individuals’ God representations, but also the psychoanalytic conditions which make God representations available or unavailable for the experience of faith.<sup>97</sup>

Concerning the first area of the faith experience as both subjective and objective, McDargh outlines complementary Protestant and Catholic definitions of faith, drawing on theological representatives Richard Niebuhr and Karl Rahner, and relates these to the work of psychoanalysts James Fowler and William Meissner respectively.<sup>98</sup> Out of this study he explores six defining features of faith, drawing heavily on Winnicott and Meissner: the sense of being real, the sense of being in relationship to a real and meaningful world, the capacity to be alone, the capacity to tolerate dependence, the capacity to tolerate ambivalence, and the capacity to become available for loving self-donation.<sup>99</sup> These will

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<sup>94</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., *Psychoanalysis and religious experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, pp. x - xi. Not unlike Erikson or Fowler, though with the help of object relations theory, Meissner wants to show the developmental, epigenetic progression of religious experience, to create a typology of religious experience which integrates the developmental lines of narcissism, object relations and faith into a coherent schema.

<sup>95</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 178.

<sup>96</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, pp. 178 - 182.

<sup>97</sup> See McDARGH, 1983, p. 18.

<sup>98</sup> See McDARGH, 1983, chapter two, pp. 23 - 65.

<sup>99</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 66.

be helpful signposts in assessing for movements from lesser to greater integration of subjectivity and objectivity in the *Showings*.

The second area, that of the God image or representation *as* transitional object, has received considerable attention, beginning with Ana-Maria Rizzuto's groundbreaking relational psychoanalytic study of clients' images of God, as Jonte-Pace observed above.<sup>100</sup> Rizzuto uses Kohut's concept of a mirroring transference and his understanding of the self as created in selfobject relations in order to hypothesize that the early God representation emerges from the experience of the mother. For Rizzuto, the early experience of mirroring and its formative influence in the cohesiveness of the sense of self lie at the core of the individual's God representation.<sup>101</sup> McDargh extends Rizzuto's work into a more theological exploration. Theological concepts are understood as being transitional in quality: the concept of an "image" or representation of God is to be understood not as a conscious picture of God, but as the "individual's very personal, dynamic relationship to this [conscious and unconscious] constellation of values, impressions, memories and images".<sup>102</sup> McDargh holds that object relations theory thus

appears to offer a way of understanding the origins of human religious sensibility, and in particular the creation and elaboration of our images of the divine that finally does justice to religious maturation as well as religious pathology, adult faith as well as childhood fantasy.<sup>103</sup>

The third area Meissner identifies as fertile for an object relations theory exploration is that of the transitional quality of material objects imbued with the religious symbolism of a belief system, or tradition. He names Christian examples (as one such tradition among others) such as the crucifix, the bread and wine of the Eucharist, etc.

[T]he objects as religious symbols are neither exclusively perceived in real and objective terms, nor simply produced by subjective creation. Rather they evolve from the amalgamation of what is real, material, and objective as it is experienced, penetrated, and creatively reshaped by the subjective belief and patterns of meaning attributed to the object by the believer.<sup>104</sup>

Meissner is touching on the question here of how the symbols of religious traditions might be conceived psychoanalytically which allows for the possibility of a positive relation to

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<sup>100</sup> See RIZZUTO, 1979, 246 p. See also PRUYSER, Paul, *The play of the imagination*, NY, International Universities Press, 1983, 226 p., and JONTE-PACE, 1987.

<sup>101</sup> RIZZUTO, 1979, 185 - 188.

<sup>102</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 18.

<sup>103</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. xiii.

<sup>104</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 181.

creativity, and not simply in terms of a tendency to deceive. Just as an abstract religious belief system would not be able to be sustained without sensory concretization,

[b]y the same token, the religious symbols would not be able to serve their function if they were not received into the transitional realm of experience of each participating believer who brings to the reality of the crucifix, for example, his own creative impulse expressed in and through his belief and its attendant faith. Consequently, their meaning and significance are achieved only to the extent to which such symbols become part of the transitional realm of the believer's illusory experience.<sup>105</sup>

A significant study which contributes to our understanding of how critique or hermeneutical suspicion can be integrated into this subject of how religious symbols function meaningfully in transitional space, more specifically through their loss of meaning, is found in Peter Homans' *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*. This is a fascinating study which explores how contemporary Christianity has suffered a "loss" of meaning in its cultural/religious symbols. Homans extends Winnicott's thoughts within a Kohutian analysis of the historical origins of psychoanalysis out of a religious matrix. He calls the large psychological and social process he is describing "individuation". Unlike Freud, Kohut and the psychoanalytic movement in general, which views individuation "individualistically", Homans argues, following Winnicott's lead, that in the process of disillusionment or mourning of lost meanings

the response to loss opens up the transitional space, which is both social and historical, and in this space persons construct a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy and its implicitly narrative character.<sup>106</sup>

Interestingly, Homans never once uses the term "mirroring". Freud's creativity sprang, he says, from his personal and cultural mourning of the loss of the "idealized" objects of his religious and cultural traditions. But Homans wants to argue that such objects are never completely "lost". Rather, they become transmuted to an "object gain" in the creation of new meaning.<sup>107</sup> In the process of mourning, individuation and the creation of new meaning, the ego comes increasingly to recognize both its separation from the past and its dependence on the past for the cultural symbols it has been "given" as well as "created" in that transitional space between self and social other.<sup>108</sup> "The reality and

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<sup>105</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 181.

<sup>106</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.

<sup>107</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.

<sup>108</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 334.

recognition of interdependence is the point at which a structure within the organism deeper than the ego begins to take shape. It is best to call this structure the self".<sup>109</sup>

Homans is helpful here because he sees the whole history of western intellectual curiosity since the late middle ages as the social, interpsychic expression of this process of individuation. He exposes the limitations to the psychoanalytic assumption Kohut, for example, holds, that narcissistic self-processes and their products are ultimately private, intrapsychic illusion. Homans assists relational psychoanalysis in locating the social, interpsychic realm within the individual.

Homans approaches his study from a secularist perspective. "Individuation", he says, "is secularization".<sup>110</sup> I sense that he is sympathetic to Ockham and his psychoanalytic nominalist descendents in the following statement:

The historical emergence of psychoanalysis was but a much, much later version of Ockham's disillusionment with religious reality. His God, the God of theological absolutism, was the cosmological instauration of medieval, Christian men's shared propensity to totalize and constellate their grandiose, narcissistic potential around and within a socially agreed-upon idealized object.<sup>111</sup>

The invaluable gain from the process of mourning and individuation is, according to Homans, *a greater sense of coherence or flexible interaction between inner and outer worlds*, and it is here that he will be most helpful in our study.

Any such deepening of interdependence between the ego and the realm of cultural symbols is predicated upon an understanding of illusion as a creative as well as a destructive force in development. Whenever a person comes to recognize how psychological are his attachments to the common cultures of his past, he will also come to realize how psychological all culture is. Through this recognition he can then come to 'own' in a more conscious way the character of his participation in culture and his commitments to its imperatives and consolations.<sup>112</sup>

Mourning need not be conscious, in Homans' view, to be life enhancing. Still, the conscious experience and work of mourning which brings about this "owning" or befriending of the psychological process and with it, a degree of relativization, is to be preferred.

In the first instance products of culture are experienced unconsciously in an undifferentiated and identificatory way and one is inclined to believe in them, or -- as the case may be -- reject them entirely. In the second instance, when psychological understanding prevails, the products of culture do not die simply because their psychological significance is known; rather they 'return' to the person in the form of powerful illusions which the ego-self then uses as the raw material for the construction of new meanings and a new relationship to the past.... The

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<sup>109</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 334.

<sup>110</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 322.

<sup>111</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 321.

<sup>112</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 334.



former absolutism continues to exist and is experienced as necessary, but it is also recognized as 'illusory.' Such products are, in other words, 'necessary illusions'.<sup>113</sup>

It is the work of mourning which "returns" to the individual an awareness of dependence on cultural objects and allows the grip of denial concerning the illusory aspect of their givenness to dissolve. It is the work of individuation and creation of meaning to "release" new created meaning to these objects. While still illusory, they are recognized as in some sense "real" and to some extent socially communicable.

Homans offers a brilliant and revealing summary of this process as regards religious individuation/secularization: "What was first experienced phenomenologically to have been 'on the outside' (cosmology and myth) was returned to its proper and natural place 'on the inside' (psychology)".<sup>114</sup> The creation of meaning thus understood would seem to have a great deal to do with transmuting internalizations, which I would argue, would include the maturation of *mirroring* as well as idealization needs.

Homans does not speak of what new meaning the God of the Christian tradition and its cultural symbols may be found (and created) to have. But it is clear that his critique correlates well with both the analytic and the inclusivist object relations theory-based approaches to some of these Christian symbols, in contemporary feminist theology and psychology of religion.<sup>115</sup>

It will be for Julian to show, and for the subsequent chapters of this thesis to pursue further, how individuation need not simply be defined in secularist terms, but is revealed to be at the heart of the new meaning of the Incarnation. "For Julian, ...meaning is a process by which humanity comes to the fulness of the complex mystery of God's gift of being incarnated in human life".<sup>116</sup>

Meissner identifies prayer as the fourth area of potential interest to a psychology of religion using object relations theory. Meissner sees prayer as a religious activity in which the individual figuratively enters into the transitional sphere and meets his or her God

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<sup>113</sup> HOMANS, 1989, pp. 334 - 335. Perhaps this is one area in which Michel de Certeau's and Anglo-American psychoanalytic differing methodologies of studying the mystics come to similar conclusions.

<sup>114</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 320.

<sup>115</sup> JOHNSON, Elizabeth Johnson C.S.J., Susan A. ROSS and Mary Catherine HILKERT, O.P., "Feminist theology: A review of literature", *Theological studies* 56 1995, p. 344: "No symbol is more problematic for feminist theologians than the cross".

<sup>116</sup> GILLESPIE, Vincent and Maggie ROSS, "The apophatic image: The poetics of effacement in Julian of Norwich", in *The medieval mystical tradition*, ed. Marion Glasscoe, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1992, p. 55, n. 8, Exeter symposium V.

representation. This topic puts us directly into the realm of transitional space, of accepting to enter into the hermeneutic of relational trust. Meissner observes

In this activity, the believer immerses himself in the religious activity in a more direct, immediate and personal way than in any other aspect of his religious involvement...

It is here that the qualities of the God-representation and their relationship to the believer's self-representation become immediate.

Meissner continues:

The God he prays to is not ultimately the God of the theologians or of the philosophers, nor is this God likely to be in any sense directly reconcilable with the God of scripture. Rather, the individual believer prays to a God who is represented by the highly personalized transitional object representation in his inner, private, personally ideosyncratic belief system.<sup>117</sup> Thus, all the unconscious and preconscious as well as conscious and reflective elements of the individual's relationship to God and the characteristics of his God-representation come into play. These may include elements that are more consciously mature and self-reflective but also elements that stem from earlier developmental levels and have a more infantile, dependent, and even narcissistic quality.

One might say that in prayer the individual enters the transitional space where he meets his God-representation. Prayer thus can become a channel for expressing what is most unique, profound and personal in individual psychology. All the elements of transference... can enter into the prayer experience and come to shape the individual's experience both of God and of himself in its context.<sup>118</sup>

It is Meissner's conviction that the illusory transitional dimension of religious experience in prayer is not reducible to Freud's concept of "wishful" illusion of transcendence. Transference there is, but there is also the recognition of the possibility of self-reflection and, to that extent, self-transcendence, within a relational matrix:

We need only remind ourselves that for Winnicott the area of illusory experience is a potential space whose foundation is 'the baby's trust in the mother *experienced* over a long-enough period at the critical stage of the separation of the not-me from the me, when the establishment of an autonomous self is at the initial stage'. Within this potential space, then, man must revive the roots of this capacity for creative living and for faith experience.

But the assertion of faith carries with it a transcendent element, addressing itself to the most developed forms of religious experience. The assertion of faith is not merely a reassertion of basic trust; it is rather a creative assertion of something beyond trust and far more significant. Its regression is, if anything, recapitulative: it returns to the rudiments of trust in order to go beyond them....

This is the creative moment in the illusion of faith.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> See the section above, however, for Peter Homans' argument that this "private" intrapsychic realm, if it is to be true to the objective and subjective dialectic of illusion in object relations theory terms, is also social and interpersonal.

<sup>118</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 182. Interestingly, Jonte-Pace, in the article cited above, omits this area of application of object relations theory in a feminist psychology of religion.

<sup>119</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, pp. 183-184, quoting WINNICOTT, 1989, p. 110; emphasis in text. See also ERIKSON, Erik, *Young man Luther*, NY, Norton, 1962, quoted by Meissner here as being on p. 262, on

Discussing Meissner's work, James Jones has proposed a shift in psychoanalytic study of religion from studying the individual's godobject or representation, to studying the object *relation* one has with one's God, that is, the *function of such objects and the interpersonal nature of the relationship of the self to them, in the psychological "space" or experiential state of consciousness of prayer*.<sup>120</sup> This focus is more consistent with Winnicott's own interest in the soothing *function* of transitional *experience*. Thus as Burns-Smith also observes,

Winnicott's focus was on the space within which transitional objects are used, and not primarily on the objects themselves. The important concept here is that the transitional space operates as the realm of relationality, the place where the individual encounters all Others.<sup>121</sup>

On the basis of Jones and Meissner's work, Saur and Saur have begun to explore aspects of the unconscious qualities of the relational flavour of transitional phenomena encountered in prayer.<sup>122</sup> Their clinical study helps to "reaffirm and expand upon the usefulness of Winnicott's idea of the transitional sphere as a contemporary psychoanalytic framework for understanding religious experience" not so much in terms of studying the individual's image of God, as in studying the quality of the highly personal object relationship the individual has with their God.<sup>123</sup>

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trust and integrity. For an example of a theological dialogue with Erik Erikson on trust see BRETON, Jean-Claude, *Foi en soi et confiance fondamentale: Dialogue entre Marcel Légaut et Erik H. Erikson*, Montréal, Bellarmin, 1987, 358 p.

<sup>120</sup> JONES, James, *Contemporary psychoanalysis and religion*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 41 - 42, 59.

<sup>121</sup> BURNS-SMITH, Charlene, "Theology and Winnicott's object relations theory: a conversation", *Journal of psychology and theology* 27, 1, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>122</sup> SAUR, Marilyn and William G. SAUR, "Transitional phenomena as evidenced in prayer", *Journal of religion and health* 32, 1, 1993, p. 56.

<sup>123</sup> SAUR and SAUR, 1993, pp. 64-65. Saur and Saur studied two groups of people for the presence of transitional phenomena: those who were active in a religious tradition and pray and those who were not. They found that those subjects who were not active in a religious tradition tended not to exhibit transitional phenomena and indicated that they did not pray. To photographs of people praying they gave responses in which they expressed emotional distance from the figure and could not identify personally with the prayer activity. By contrast, those subjects who were active in religious traditions and had active prayer lives all exhibited transitional phenomena in much the same way as Winnicott described this behaviour and what was happening psychologically between child and teddy bear. These subjects portrayed prayer as playful, and as "feeling connected" in relation to God even when the figure in the photograph was physically alone. Neither relational quality was present among those who did not pray. See SAUR and SAUR, 1993, pp. 58 - 62.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This chapter situates the relational psychoanalytic study of mirroring and highlights the theories of both Winnicott and Kohut for the psychology of mirroring as they are being extended into a psychology of religion.

Winnicott's theory of transitional space is a profoundly helpful construct for approaching Julian of Norwich's *Showings*. The epistemological flexibility of Winnicott's theory of symbol formation makes it a valuable tool for the present study. The theory's challenging of patriarchal psychoanalytic assumptions makes it valuable for a feminist psychology of religion.

The last two of the four aspects that Meissner identifies for exploring religion through the "transitional" lens of object relations theory will be particularly important for the present study, that is, how religious symbolism is appropriated and functions, and how religious transitional objects function and undergo transformation in the experience of prayer.

The relational psychoanalytic approach to religious experience allows for a subtlety of understanding how religious symbols function in transitional space and are appropriated. It is attuned to recognizing experiences of mourning, transformation and maturation in this realm, notably through Winnicott's concept of disillusionment, taken up in Homans' notion of mourning lost meanings of cultural symbols. Thus, it can take seriously both pathology and the possibility of maturation and creativity in the individual's intersychic relation to tradition. It can comprehend the place of hermeneutical suspicion as well as hermeneutical restoration or construction within the gamut of religious experience, important elements in any theological study which is sensitive to contemporary feminist concerns. Moreover, it allows for the potential integrity as well as the illusoriness of prayer experience. It can understand the life of prayer as itself a kind of hermeneutics of transitional space, dependent on a trusting mirroring relation. Taking it one step further, object relations theory may offer a psychoanalytic tool for understanding how the relational, transitional realm of prayer may be important for healing and for the creative work of theology.

Kohut's three phases in his therapeutic mirroring process will be a helpful tool and structure for examining how Julian's self-experience and God relationship are transformed over the course of her lifetime.

A major thrust of what follows in this study of Julian of Norwich will be to read the "genetic history" of her pre-oedipal psychological life through her prayer experience as this is recorded in the two versions of the *Showings*, in which the central symbol of the crucifix finds new salvific meaning for her. It will attempt to show how this woman's mirroring relationship in prayer, with the religious transitional object which she identifies as the Jesus

she encounters on the crucifix, enables a transformation in both her understanding of herself and of God.

At the centre of Julian's progress is the transitional space of her visionary experiences of 1373 and of her subsequent years of meditations on them, in which she comes to know herself to be mirrored in, or united to, the Christ of her showings in his self-emptying Incarnation. I will propose that this is integral to the therapeutic process by which, according to Kohut, the "authentic self" comes to be recognized, experienced and claimed. It also is the potential space in which Julian's creative appropriation of the theological and devotional tradition is engaged. It is the source for her own theology as well as her theological method.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, as we will see, Julian seems intent on shaping her text as an extension of that potential space for her readers.

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<sup>124</sup> See HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Colledgeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, pp. 23 - 42 who describes Julian's theological method as the "hermeneutic of beholding".

## CHAPTER 3

### ON PSYCHOHISTORICAL METHOD

#### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a theoretical background and justification for the psychobiographical method used in this thesis. It begins by situating the field of psychohistory within the larger historical enterprise, then reviews the advantages and weaknesses of the method, and offers a number of reasons for the choice of relational psychoanalysis for the subject of the present study. Finally, it gives both personal and textual reasons for the choice of the subject.

#### 1.1 Psychohistory and the new history

Psychohistory, and more specifically one of its two branches, psychobiography, is an area of contemporary historical research which focuses on the study of one individual in history rather than a larger social process.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on the primary textual and other sources of evidence available, psychobiographical history seeks to delve into the unconscious motives for historic persons' attitudes and actions with the help of contemporary psychodynamic theory.

This approach makes certain assumptions about "interested" or subjective objectivity in historical knowledge, and about the methodology it requires. These assumptions locate psychobiographic studies within a larger movement called the new history.<sup>2</sup> They open psychobiography both to certain advantages and to potential weaknesses of this contemporary approach to historical subjects. Before proceeding then, a brief examination of the epistemological assumptions of the new history, as these relate to psychohistory, is in order.

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<sup>1</sup> The other branch, group psychohistory, deals with psychological characteristics and/or formative experiences of groups. RUNYAN, William McKinley, *Life histories and psychobiography: Explorations in theory and method*, NY, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> SHELDRAKE, Philip, *Spirituality and history: Questions of interpretation and method*, NY, Crossroad Press, 1992, pp. 20 - 21.

## 1.2 Historical objectivity, countertransference and disciplined subjectivity

The new history is both a reaction to and a development of nineteenth century historicism. Historicism, as a theory of history, sought to know the past objectively “as it really was”, to understand the uniqueness of an historical subject and to describe it on its own terms, rather than interpret or offer explanations of it in terms imposed by the researcher.

With regard to historical objectivity, the new history is a reaction to historicism, arguing that the very idea of disinterested, objective knowledge, unaffected by the subjectivity or interests of the historian, is a chimera.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the interests the observer brings to her study “are constitutive of knowledge and not merely prejudices which imperil it”.<sup>4</sup> It is when these interests or assumptions about reality remain unacknowledged by the historian that they have a more powerful, insidious influence on the selection and reconstruction of the past than an honest admission of the validity, as well as the limitations, of contemporary questions.<sup>5</sup>

For example, Meissner, in the introduction to his massive psychobiography of St Ignatius of Loyola, describes both the legitimacy and the riskiness of the enterprise with respect to the potential distortion of the data and their interpretation by the psychobiographer, wherever countertransference, that is the projection of the student’s unconscious needs or attitudes onto the subject of study, *goes unrecognized*.<sup>6</sup>

Rather, it is the conscious accounting for and appropriation of the psychobiographer’s countertransference subjectivity as a tool of perception which makes for the possibility of the

development and enlargement of the realm of the healthy observing ego -- the capacity to simultaneously be both subject and object -- [which] will foster a creative awareness and empathy with the object of study.<sup>7</sup>

To quote Loewenberg further:

The anxious clinging to “hard” facts and the refusal to view “facts” in any but what is interpreted as the “obvious” way -- i.e., in the manner which a given researcher can tolerate and therefore “see” -- is the scholarly analogue to the psychoanalyst’s

<sup>3</sup> SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 22

<sup>4</sup> SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 22

<sup>5</sup> SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., *Ignatius of Loyola: The psychology of a saint*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, pp. xvi - xx, 425 fn. 2. See also Thomas KOHUT, “Psychohistory as history”, *American historical review* 91, 2, 1986, p. 342.

<sup>7</sup> LOEWENBERG, Peter, *Decoding the past: The psychohistorical approach*, NY, Knopf Press, 1983, pp. 12 - 13. Similarly see KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, pp. 347 fn. 21.

countertransference. Freud introduced the therapist's unconscious feelings into the essence of the therapeutic situation; Einstein and Heisenberg placed the physicist as an integral part of scientific experiment; but the historian as a person is yet to be placed as a subjective consciousness in the historical enterprise. No phenomenon has an inherent meaning. It becomes a datum by being assigned a frame of reference which confers meaning... Distortion arises from the failure to account for the observer in each act of knowledge....

My solution to this problem of cognition... is to bring the countertransference feelings into consciousness and to *use them as a tool of perception*. All research is unconsciously self-relevant, regardless of how distant it appears to be from the self on a detached scholarly level.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly Alain Besançon can say

le *contretransfert* est l'ensemble de distorsions dans la perception et la réaction du psychanalyste à son patient... Il est donc de même nature que le *transfert* qui désigne les réactions du patient, c'est pourquoi il n'y a pas d'inconvénient à employer ce dernier terme pour désigner le phénomène tel qu'il peut se produire hors de la situation de cure....

Or le phénomène du transfert est général à tout savoir, à toute science. Cela autorise l'espoir d'une application authentique de la psychanalyse, puisque sa seule prétention, à cet égard, réside dans l'utilisation systématique et consciente du transfert commun à tout chercheur.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the psychohistorians quoted above indicate explicitly that this kind of "disciplined subjectivity" as Erik Erikson called it,<sup>10</sup> requires the psychohistorian to undergo his or her own analysis.<sup>11</sup> It isn't something you can learn in school. As Koenig comments in the context of studying discernment in the history of Christian spirituality,

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<sup>8</sup>LOEWENBERG, 1983, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup>BESANÇON, Alain, *Histoire et expérience du moi*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971, pp. 63 - 64. See also Saul FRIEDLÄNDLER, *Histoire et psychanalyse*, Paris, Seuil, 1975, pp. 38 - 39.

<sup>10</sup>STROZIER, Charles, "Disciplined subjectivity and the psychohistorian: A critical look at the work of Erik Erikson", *Psychohistory review* 5, 3, 1976, pp. 28 - 31.

<sup>11</sup>KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, p. 342. Loewenberg also observes that "[s]elf-analysis is the way that historians can eliminate in themselves defenses against understanding portions of their materials of research". LOEWENBERG, 1983, pp. 6 - 7. Meissner, a psychiatrist, stops short of saying this, simply quoting Freud that the work of future psychobiographers would likely be contaminated by "infantile needs and wishes". See MEISSNER, 1992, p. xviii. In a subsequent article, Loewenberg uses a personal example to show how the psychohistorian's appropriation of his own countertransference subjectivity can become a tool of perception, in his assessment of his own interest in the person of Walter Rathenau, who, in Loewenberg's estimation "behaved like a person who wished to be murdered. But why?" Loewenberg writes

Whereas traditional historians purge or work around subjective sensations and build rigid barriers to the admission of feeling in the name of an ephemeral 'objectivity', today's historians realize that their feelings, sensations and responses, both to the data and to its manner of presentation, are themselves a preciously significant data [sic] of cognition....

...[T]he reader will no doubt wish to know what are my own feelings toward Rathenau and what the obvious and expressed frustration with his conduct means to me personally.... My parents left Germany in September 1933.... [Rathenau's] books were on our shelves.... My childhood was filled with the emotional resonances of Hitler's apparently unstoppable destruction



psychologists point out that people will have access to the interiority of others (through psychic resonance) only and to the degree that they have already plumbed the depths of their own subjectivity, and this in a relatively non-defensive way. The discipline inherent in that project, along with its necessary sacrifice of ego-based illusion, indeed, the sheer suffering, results in its non-appeal to our mainly extraverted culture. Nevertheless, many people through the centuries have recognized that knowledge of one's own subjective structures, with all their painful and unflattering truths, is the necessary prerequisite for a discernment that is clear and objective, whether one is deciding personal matters, or those that concern theology, society and politics.<sup>12</sup>

We may summarize this discussion thus far. Within the field of psychohistory, as one expression of the new history, there is a consistent criticism of the idea that the student can have an historically objective understanding of an historical person which is independent of the student's condition of self-awareness -- or lack of it. The possibility of objectivity is opened only when the student of history can articulate transparently her horizon of particular subjective interest in the subject of study. The new historian's interior motivations must be named and claimed in order that the historical person under study may be recognized as having a reality as a "centre of independent initiative" which resists reduction to the historian's perceptions.

Herein perhaps lies the developmental continuity between historicism and the discipline of psychohistory, in that they both seek to understand the historical subject without reductionism. Psychohistory sets the bar of "objectivity" at a more challenging level.

### 1.3 Methodological consequences

Sheldrake identifies the new history has having three characteristic methodological consequences.<sup>13</sup>

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of democratic regimes and the intimidation and brutalization of democratic leadership. The imperative to see reality and clearly assess danger, the unequivocal need to act, to take decisive preventative measures to insure self-preservation, were the ineradicable survival messages of my childhood. This is the emotional countertransference stance of my frustration with Rathenau and my sensitivity to the issues of his life and death. LOEWENBERG, Peter, "Psychoanalytic ego psychology and object relations and their uses for the historian", *Psychohistory review* 25, 1, 1996, pp. 30 - 31.

Sheldrake fails entirely to include the psychodynamic among valid contemporary theoretical approaches to the history of spirituality where one might expect him to do so. See SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 21. It would seem that the history of spirituality has yet much to learn from contemporary psychohistory.

<sup>12</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, "Review symposium of *Jesus, the liberator of desire* by Sebastian Moore", *Horizons* 18, 1, 1991, pp. 112 - 113.

<sup>13</sup> SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 18.

- The new history takes a revolutionary approach to historical evidence. It values the minutiae of all aspects of life as the integral context for historical understanding, and thus critically challenges reliance on single kinds of source, or sources taken at face value, and requires the validation of evidence in light of the particular questions being asked.
- The new history challenges the primacy of elitist structures. It privileges a focus on “lost traditions” and on groups or classes as opposed to significant individuals.
- It involves changes in methodology, challenging the view that history is what is “documented”. Since it focuses on undocumented, lost traditions (eg. women, laity), it looks to unwritten evidence (eg. art, oral history, etc.).

Not all of these have been appropriated as fully as they might be in psychohistorical studies to date.

With respect to the question of evidence on which psychohistorical studies are based, psychohistory clearly participates in the new history’s revolutionary approach to evidence. Psychohistory is fully committed to the integral nature of the human being, such that by posing new psychological questions, new data emerge as sources of historical evidence. Loewenberg, for example, offers twelve techniques or methodological signposts for the use of ego psychology and object relations by the historian, based on clinical technique and historical experience. They include affect, imagery, repetition of themes, internal conflict, absence of material, action or inhibition, frustration tolerance, rationalization, polarization and splitting, symbolic politics and anxiety, demography and trauma, narcissistic rage.<sup>14</sup> Friedländer offers four criteria by which to validate evidence used in psychohistorical explanation: convergence (overdetermination), gestalten (repetitive character of behaviour), comparability (over time and in whole categories of personalities), and quantitative analysis.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless he says, psychoanalytic explanation remains indirect, a mixture of explanation and intuition or understanding.<sup>16</sup>

With regard to Sheldrake’s second characteristic of the new history, that it challenge the primacy of elitist structures, psychohistory as a discipline with its own history has not been in the forefront. Because of the coherence of the individual personality, biography has dominated the genre of psychohistorical study.<sup>17</sup> An overwhelming majority of psychohistorical studies have focused on significant historical figures, almost exclusively

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<sup>14</sup> LOEWENBERG, 1996, pp. 40 - 43.

<sup>15</sup> FRIEDLÄNDER, Saul, *Histoire et psychanalyse: Essai sur les possibilités et les limites de la psychohistoire*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1975, pp. 45 - 51.

<sup>16</sup> FRIEDLÄNDER, 1975, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> FRIEDLÄNDER, 1975, p. 84.

white, male leaders. The equally overwhelming reliance on the “universality” of the oedipus complex as a structure of the human psyche, even among those who follow other psychodynamic schools of thought than Freudian psychoanalysis (such as Erikson), has “focused historical attention on male leaders and their conflicts with their fathers; maternal relationships have typically appeared as secondary, and female subjects have been rare”.<sup>18</sup> However, in more recent years, psychohistory is making more of the subjects of history which are to be discovered among the lost traditions.

With regard to the third characteristic of focusing on undocumented sources of evidence emerging from asking new questions of lost traditions, psychohistory has only begun to address women as individuals and as classes as historical subjects in their own right, with questions from, for examples, the perspectives of women’s psychology and the “primary institutions” of mother-infant relations.

## 2.0 Critiques of psychohistory and its responses

### 2.1 Critiques by "traditional" historicists

Psychohistory is frequently criticised by traditional historians because of its disregard for conscious purpose and the conjectural and reductionist nature of its explanations of historical causality, based on incomplete evidence of early childhood experiences and relations.<sup>19</sup>

All psychohistorians are in agreement that the primacy of the historical context under study must be respected. Thus while psychoanalytic theory may be applied to the past for a fuller understanding and explanation of the past to be possible, the problem of reductionism looms large if the past is simply applied to the explanatory model.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> HOFFMANN, Louise, “Object-relations theory and psychohistory”, *Bulletin of the Menninger clinic* 49, 2, 1985, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, p. 336.

<sup>20</sup> KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, p. 338; MEISSNER, 1992, p. xx; SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 21. Sheldrake calls this subordination of history to present meaning “presentism”. SHELDRAKE, 1992, pp. 16, 22 - 23. Runyan identifies three specific critiques of reductionism as applied to psychohistory: 1) that psychological factors are emphasized at the expense of external social and historical factors; 2) that psychobiography focuses excessively on psychopathological processes and gives insufficient attention to normality and creativity; 3) that it tends to explain adult character and behaviour exclusively in terms of early childhood experience while neglecting later formative processes and influences, whether in terms of Erikson's critique of “originology” and/or Mack's critique of the “critical period fallacy” or “eventism”. Runyan's response is to point to psychobiographers who are aware of and avoiding such dangers. RUNYAN 1982, pp. 208 - 209. See also ERIKSON, Erik, *Gandhi's truth*, NY, Norton, 1969, p. 98, and MACK, J. E., “Psychoanalysis and historical biography”, *The journal of American psychoanalytic association* 19, 1971, p. 156.

What makes psychohistory all the more susceptible to the criticism of reductionism is that the evidence deemed to be acceptable is, as noted above, of a necessarily broader definition.<sup>21</sup> Specifically, with regard to psychohistory, where one is seeking to understand and explain attitudes and behaviour of historic persons in terms of their unconscious motivations, the notion of “hard” facts or evidence becomes much more conjectural. At the same time, the approach to sources of historical evidence becomes more critical.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, causality was assumed by historicists to be simply linear, a sequential narrative of events to be taken at face value. When psychoanalytic theory is applied to the historical subject, however, the concept of cause and effect becomes much more complex.<sup>23</sup>

The various critiques of psychohistory are potentially valid limitations to the project. Yet the balancing question has to do with whether historians, informed only by “intuitive” psychological “common sense” and not the fruit of a whole body of systematic empirical and clinical data, are in any better position in their interpretive task.<sup>24</sup> This was precisely the question with which William Langer challenged the American Historical Association in 1957 in his presidential address which is hailed as the “birth” of psychohistory:

How can it be that the historian, who must be as much or more concerned with human beings and their motivation than with impersonal forces and causation, has failed to make use of these findings? Viewed in the light of modern depth psychology, the homespun commonsense psychological interpretations of past historians, even some of the greatest, seem woefully inadequate, not to say naïve. Clearly the time has come for us to reckon with a doctrine that strikes so close to the heart of our own discipline.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, p. 338; SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> SHELDRAKE, 1992, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> And among psychohistorians of different schools of psychoanalysis this problem of attributing causality reveals the extent of its complexity. In the case of Freudian psychoanalytic historians for example, the cause of symptoms of disorder which is sought is the subjects’ internal oedipal conflict exclusively, whereas for historians of the relational psychoanalytic school, the cause is to be found at the level of chronic experiences of pre-oedipal deficit, neglect or abandonment by the maternal selfobject, but also includes larger societal influences of trauma which recapitulate those early childhood experiences. See SZALUTA, Jacques, *Psychohistory: Theory and practice*, NY, Peter Lang, 1999, pp. 158 - 159. American university studies series xix, General literature 30.

<sup>24</sup> SZALUTA 1999, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> LANGER, William L., “The next assignment”, in *Psychoanalysis and history*, ed. MAZLISH, Bruce, NY, Grosset and Dunlap, 1971, p. 90. Langer’s address is singularly significant for the present study, in that he goes on to speak of the application of Freudian psychoanalysis to the study of groups, and uses as an example the period of epidemic during the fourteenth century known as the Black Death and its effects on the population. He writes:

All men, as individuals, carry within themselves a burden of unconscious guilt and a fear of retribution which apparently go back to the curbing and repression of sexual and aggressive drives

In the intervening fifty years, psychology has become an even more pervasive hermeneutical tool for interpreting experience in the western world. A major justification for the psychohistorical enterprise, then, must rest, as Charron has argued, on an open, non-naïve recognition of the place of psychoanalysis among the contemporary hermeneutical assumptions we carry.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2 Critique from within psychohistory

In a critique of the method of psychohistory by a specialist in the psychology of religion, Diane Jonte-Pace observes that the discipline has much to learn from biblical scholarship concerning three problems insufficiently recognized: the subject of psychohistory, the cultural context, and, related to this second problem, hermeneutics. In her review of a book of twenty psychohistorical “lives of Augustine”, Jonte-Pace’s concern is that a refusal to recognize these three problems in psychohistorical methodology leads to a naïve psychohistorical literalism. For example, concerning the problem of the subject of the psychohistory, Jonte-Pace argues against the interpretation of the *Confessions* as simply the autobiographical account of one individual. Rather, she says, Augustine’s life history “is made up, in part, of units of narrative borrowed from traditional literature and scripture” and that it is also in part “a fictionalized self, constructed by a master rhetorician to meet the structural, rhetorical, and theological needs of his narrative”.

Augustine... is not just telling his life story; rather, he is recounting a parable of human pilgrimage toward a conversion by “The Book” which he hopes his book will recapitulate in the souls of his readers..... A “quest for the rhetorical Augustine”, one might say, must precede the quest for the psychological Augustine.<sup>27</sup>

The question of the self or subject must be posed of the text: Is the self-portrayal “a portrait of the inner life of an individual or is it a rhetorically constructed account of a subject as prototype or archetype?”<sup>28</sup> She argues for a hermeneutic of caution before accepting the text at face value and interpreting it psychologically.<sup>29</sup>

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in childhood and the emergence of death wishes directed against the parents. This sense of sin, which is fundamental to all religion, is naturally enhanced by the impact of vast unaccountable and uncontrollable forces threatening the existence of each and every one. LANGER, 1971, p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> CHARRON, Jean-Marc, “Psychohistoire et religion: Perspectives, défis et enjeux”, *Religiologiques* 1, 2, 1990, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> JONTE-PACE, Diane, “Augustine on the couch: Psychohistorical (mis)readings of the *Confessions*”, *Religion* 23, 1993, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1993, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1993, p. 75.

Secondly, she argues that psychohistorians tend to underestimate the differences between cultural contexts of the author of the text, and our own. There is, she says, a certain hermeneutical tendency to deny and/or pathologize the cultural alterity of the other, in phrases such as that Augustine, in this case, lived in a period of history very much like our own. What she wants to stress is that psychohistorians be aware and cautious of their tendency to adopt a hermeneutics of sameness: “what appears different and pathological to the contemporary reader... must be examined in its cultural context before difference can be equated with pathology”.<sup>30</sup>

She sees the problem of hermeneutics going even further, however, citing Peter Homans, Michel Foucault and others, as showing that psychoanalysis has taken over the discourse of self, morality and culture previously articulated by Christianity. “This disjunction, which is also a continuity, between religious discourse and psychoanalytic discourse, militates against the simple application of a psychoanalytic methodology to Augustine's autobiographical, religious or theological texts”.<sup>31</sup>

Jonte-Pace holds that a psychohistorical approach which takes cultural studies, hermeneutics and literary criticism seriously and sensitively as well as psychoanalytic theory is possible. The text can be “both rhetorically constructed and psychologically determined”. Moreover, she offers certain suggestions as to what questions to ask of the text. Recognizing the presence of borrowed narratives for example, the psychohistorian might well “use psychology to interpret the choices [the author] made and the way he narrated the stories he chose”.<sup>32</sup> Psychological insight then could come from recognizing the author's unique way of describing inner states in, and his or her unique alterations of, the borrowed narratives, much like Freud argued back in 1908: “The writer retains a certain amount of independence which can express itself in the choice of material and in changes in the material chosen, which are often considerable”.<sup>33</sup>

Given that Julian of Norwich's *Showings* are also remarkable for their rhetorical and literary quality, this critique must be taken seriously in the methodology of the present study.

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<sup>30</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1993, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> JONTE-PACE, 1993, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> FREUD, Sigmund, “The relation of the poet to daydreaming”, in *Culture and character*, ed. RIEFF, P., NY, Collier Macmillan, [1908] 1963, p. 42. The Standard edition of the collected works of Sigmund Freud 9.

### 3.0 The choice of psychodynamic theory for this psychohistorical study

#### 3.1 Criteria for choosing a theoretical framework

With a methodology which is as open to critique as is psychohistory, the choice of psychological theory appropriate to the historical subject matter at hand is critical. Three criteria have tended to form the basis for the selection of psychoanalytic theory to be applied to historical subjects. 1) The theory's fundamental concepts must be compatible with the basic modalities of historical evolution: the evolutionary character of the theory is important. 2) The theory must be able to be applied to problems in human behaviour that are quite complex so as to allow for an investigation of the kinds of major psychological questions which the historian can encounter. 3) The theory must be sufficiently coherent and structured to be useful.<sup>34</sup>

Szaluta provides an overview of the schools of psychodynamic theory which to date have been used for psychohistorical studies: Psychoanalysis (Freud), Ego psychology (Erikson), Object relations theory (Melanie Klein, Winnicott), Structuralist psychoanalysis (Lacan), and Self psychology (Heinz Kohut). He includes some positive and negative features of each, and some examples of psychohistorical studies which have emerged in most of these traditions.<sup>35</sup>

#### 3.2 Reasons for choosing relational psychoanalysis for the theoretical framework for this study

I have chosen to draw on relational psychoanalysis (object relations theory and self psychology) as the theoretical psychological foundation for this study. As indicated above, the choice is never a simple response to the historical subject. Why have I chosen this approach? I offer a number of reasons.

For one thing, the focus on the maternal-infant environment and its ramifications for patterns of subsequent motivation and behaviour in women historical subjects, such as these are accessible through the available texts and other sources of evidence, has hardly been overworked in psychohistorical studies.

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<sup>34</sup> FRIEDLÄNDER, 1975, p. 23. Psychoanalysis, in its beginnings with Freud, has been intrinsically historical, taking a genetic, developmental approach to the individual and society. While some aspects of his work have come under increasing critique, such as his theory of early childhood psychosexual determinants, many of his conceptual formulations have passed into general use in other schools, such as the concepts of unconscious motives, conflicts, defense mechanisms, transference, etc. These remain useful in any psychohistorical endeavour. See RUNYAN, William McKinley, "Alternatives to psychoanalytic psychobiography", in *Psychological and historical interpretation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 238.

<sup>35</sup> SZALUTO, 1999, chapters 2, 4, 5. Surprisingly, no examples of application of Lacan are included.

For another, the relational psychoanalytic concept of the need for mirroring, developed distinctively by both Winnicott and Kohut is a fertile and underdeveloped tool in psychohistory. The focus on the consequences, specifically of chronically inadequate functioning of the mirroring maternal selfobject in bipolar patterns of emotional response in women historical subjects needs much greater attention.

In this regard, I do not find helpful Szaluta's assessment of self psychology as inadequately focused on early relational "deficit" (as distinct from Freud's focus on internal "conflict"), and therefore, presumably not able to fulfill Friedländer's criteria for the selection of an appropriate psychoanalytic theoretical framework for psychohistory.<sup>36</sup> Particularly in relation to women historical subjects, the systemic societal "neglect" of women is so enormous, that any psychodynamic theory which might help at all to redress that neglect and deficit, if only to acknowledge and study their presence and effects more explicitly, must be deemed a positive contribution which this school can offer the psychohistorical enterprise.<sup>37</sup> Szaluta concludes that although self psychology has brought attention to a "wider segment of patient population, those... having severe narcissistic disorders" it is simply not as "broad in range and depth" as Freudian psychoanalytic theory for use in psychohistory. I would hold that each theory has its more appropriate historical subjects of application. However, his negative judgment could be held to be perpetuating the tendency to dismiss the significance of women as appropriate historical subjects, insofar as through the centuries women have suffered systemically from unrecognized forms of narcissistic deficit. I refer to the recent literature within the discipline of psychology that acknowledges the systemic and historical nature of the neglect of what Rossiter describes as the feminine expression of narcissism within the field.<sup>38</sup>

A third reason for choosing object relations theory and self psychology concerns the theoretical provision Kohut offers for the possibility of reconstructing the "therapeutic process" at work over time, in his formulation of stages of maturation of mirroring needs.

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<sup>36</sup> SZALUTO, 1999, pp. 158 - 159. Here Szaluto accepts the conclusions drawn by Greene in his critique of self psychology in GREENE, Marshall, A., "The self psychology of Heinz Kohut: A synopsis and critique", *Bulletin of the Menninger clinic*, 1984, 48, 1, pp. 37 - 53.

<sup>37</sup> See SZALUTO, 1999, pp. 158 - 159. See in this regard the critique of Freudian based psychohistory from an object relations theory perspective by HOFFMAN, 1985, pp. 120 - 121. Object relations theory offers, she says,

an opportunity to redress the male gender bias implicit in earlier explanations and to redirect attention toward experiences that previously were given little weight... expand[ing] the range of questions and interpretations available to historians and biographers. It is also congruent with current developments in family history.

<sup>38</sup> See PHILIPSON, Ilene, "Gender and narcissism", *Psychology of women quarterly* 9, 1985, pp. 213 - 228; and ROSSITER, Stanford Kent, *Narcissism and codependency*, Ph.D. thesis, The Wright Institute, 2004, 88 p.



This corresponds to the fulfillment of the criterion that the theory be compatible with historical evolution. Kohut also offers distinctions in the modes of mirroring transferences which will be useful for the present work both for the psychohistorical study of maturation of this basic narcissistic need, and for the subsequent reflection on its implications for our understanding of the soteriological dynamics with which, I hold, the chosen text presents us.

It should be noted (since there is no mention of this school in Szaluta), that James Fowler, Robert Kegan and Carol Gilligan have developed theories of human maturation which are described as structural developmental and oriented toward identifying stages of human maturation. These theories are also being used for psychobiographical purposes.<sup>39</sup>

Object relations theory and self psychology are distinguished from life-span development theory, such as Erikson's. My application of Kohut's three phase therapeutic process which engages a mirroring transference will be for the purpose of discerning psychological maturation of the need for mirroring. To the extent that advances in the phases of mirroring transference may not happen at all, there is a link between the self psychological and the structural developmental approaches. However, I am restricting myself to Kohut (and Winnicott) because of the reasons listed above, and below.

Yet a fourth reason for the choice of relational psychoanalytic theory with which to broach this psychohistory concerns Kohut's use of empathy. The clinical method used in self psychology, when adopted as a technique in psychohistory, allows for a greater possibility of understanding the historical subject.<sup>40</sup> It should be evident at this point that I do not imply that one historian's "empathic understanding" of an historical subject could exhaust all interpretations which could be made. But if it is a human narcissistic need to be mirrored, affirmed, and understood, then perhaps empathy can be useful in the psychohistorical project, and particularly so in the case of women subjects such as Julian of

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<sup>39</sup> Joann Wolski Conn describes her application of these theorists to the life of a saint as a method for correlating psychological structural developmental maturity with spiritual maturity:

Structural development of self is distinguished from 'life-span development', made famous by Erik Erikson, by the fact that life-span development is rooted in tasks that arise inevitably, such as identity and intimacy, whereas advances in structural development may not happen at all. In a structural framework, development is a process of detaching oneself from embeddedness in restrictive relationships in order to love with more realistic self-knowledge and self-donation.

WOLSKI CONN, Joann, "'Thérèse of Lisieux: Far from spiritual childhood"', *Spiritus* 6, 2006, pp. 69 - 70. The method was developed by Elizabeth Liebert. See LIEBERT, Elizabeth, "The thinking heart: Developmental dynamics in Etty Hillesum's *Diaries*", *Pastoral psychology* 43, 6, 1995, pp. 393 - 409. A study of Julian's *Showings* using that theoretical framework would be helpful to confirm or critique the maturation process discerned in the present one.

<sup>40</sup> This is the proposal made by KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, pp. 336 - 354, a psychohistorian and son of Heinz Kohut.

Norwich, who historically have been systemically subjected to the negative judgment of patriarchal terms of reference in the tradition. In self psychology, the validity of the psychoanalysis is determined by the extent to which the client feels understood by it. Now the historical subject no longer lives to give feedback whether she feels understood. But Thomas Kohut argues that the validity of the psychohistorical study is determined by the extent to which the *reader* feels he or she understands the historical subject.<sup>41</sup> The goal of empathic placing of self in the other for the possibility of understanding, and for the validity of interpretation, is the same in both fields, Thomas Kohut holds. Psychoanalytic theory clearly does not use the conscious language or have the conceptual universe of the historical subject, and psychohistory understands that its interpretations are a result of the practice of a disciplined subjectivity. Still, unconscious motivations made manifest through empathy may reveal in the psychobiographical subject an enduring human *need*, at least, to be understood “on one’s own terms”, in the sense of being mirrored back, of oneself being revealed or disclosed to oneself.

A fifth reason for the choice of relational psychoanalytic theory for this psychohistory concerns the theoretical availability of this school to avoid reductionism by accounting for adaptive, indeed creative, responses to the vicissitudes of life as well as for pathological responses, as we saw in chapter 2. While allowing for the reality of unconscious desires being in conflict with conscious purpose, object relations theory also recognizes, by means of its distinctive concepts of false and true selves, the potential of the human being for greater coherence and integration.

A sixth reason would be the relative capacity of Winnicott’s and Kohut’s theories to avoid the other two kinds of reductionism mentioned by Runyan above.<sup>42</sup> I would argue that relational psychoanalysis is adequate to the task of integrating social and individual determinants of history, as well as childhood and adult experiences, in its application to historical subjects who give significant evidence of narcissistic preoccupations. The concepts of transitional space, narcissistic trauma and rage, disillusionment and mourning, as well as the creative responses to loss in fantasy activity, illusion and narrative are all significant contributions to the power of this theoretical framework for the present study.

Specifically, the unique contribution of Winnicott’s concept of *transitional space* must be recognized for grasping the subjective dimension of the historical life as a cultural construction. Loewenberg argues that this should be taken as seriously as materialist interpretations of history. Object relations theory, he says, allows the historian to observe

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<sup>41</sup> KOHUT, Thomas, 1986, pp. 344 - 345.

<sup>42</sup> RUNYAN, 1982, pp. 208 - 209.

and explain the actual processes through which inner experience is formed and defined, and to understand its cultural foundation and expression in social and historical groups, as well as in the integration of individuals in such groups. It shows how intention, fantasy, motivation and adaptation work in history, and how these may be recognized in language and behaviour, interpreted and given meaning.<sup>43</sup>

In the present case, the composition of the *Showings* can itself be seen as a fruit of the work of transitional space. Whatever was the original occasion of the visions, it *and* the ongoing life of meditation on the visions *and* the composition of the *Showings* can be grasped, by means of the concept of transitional space, as being of one, albeit evolving, piece, both personal and cultural.<sup>44</sup> Given that the texts are about all we have to work with in our knowledge of the present historical subject, this particular dimension of object relations theory dovetails well with the kind of question being posed and the evidence available. It also can take seriously Jonte-Pace's own criterion that psychohistory be attentive to the author's psychology expressed through the unique use of the text's borrowed elements from literary, biblical and theological sources.

Likewise, the focus on the effects of *trauma*, personal and societal, as expressed in the symptoms of narcissistic injury, rage and even a wish to die, is a welcome contribution to psychohistory through self psychology.<sup>45</sup> How this is processed in women historical subjects has received extremely little attention.

Recent feminist attention has focused on women's tendency, at once due to psychology and to having no privileged status in society, to interpret our lives and religious symbols in terms of *continuity* of experience as over against traumatic *rupture* or reversal, as in men's experience -- and as in men's interpretations of women's experience.<sup>46</sup> Drawing on Nancy Chodorow's object relational feminist psychology, Carolyn Walker Bynum writes that women

in general are less likely to use images of gender reversal or to experience life-decisions as sharp ruptures because women, raised by women, mature into a

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<sup>43</sup> LOEWENBERG, 1996, p. 43. It is to this end that Loewenberg, pp. 40 - 43, offers his 12 techniques and signposts referred to above.

<sup>44</sup> Compare BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 49 - 50 on the debates over the relationship of original experience and subsequent interpretation of Julian's *Showings*, which debates, Bauerschmidt, like de Certeau, sees as "produced by our particular way of using the text.... [T]he text as it comes to us is so resistant to the separation of experience and interpretation. It is all part of what is shown to Julian, thus it is all part of the 'original experience'".

<sup>45</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *Self psychology and the humanities*, ed. STROZIER, Charles, 1985, NY, Norton, p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, NY, Zone, 1992, pp. 27 - 51.

continuous self whereas boys, also raised by women, must undergo one basic reversal....<sup>47</sup>

Bynum's more central thesis is that historically, only men's stories are full social dramas; men use images of reversal to express liminality-- to escape anxiety or self-doubt over leadership or other responsibilities. (Francis of Assisi's reversal, taking on symbols of poverty and femininity, is classic.) Women, on the other hand, have historically never had such elite privilege from which to need symbolic means of escape.<sup>48</sup> In contradistinction to Victor Turner's anthropological theory of liminality, Bynum argues from her knowledge of women's use of medieval symbolism, that such use of symbolism by women tends not to be symmetrically opposed to those of men, as men would suppose (i.e., women do not undergo reversals taking on symbols of wealth or masculinity in a neat symmetry). Rather, women's *shifts in symbol interpretation* tend to more polysemic images of identifying with human suffering and with self-acceptance: "To medieval women, at any rate, Christ on the cross was not victory or humility but 'humanity'. And in eating and loving that 'humanness' one became more fully oneself".<sup>49</sup> Bynum challenges Turner's own privileged social location in his concept of liminality:

Liminality itself... may be less a universal moment of meaning needed by human beings as they move through social dramas than an escape for those who bear the burdens and reap the benefits of a high place in the social structure. As recent liberation theologians have pointed out, it is the powerful who express imitation of Christ as (voluntary) poverty, (voluntary) nudity and (voluntary) weakness. But the involuntary poor usually express their *imitatio Christi* not [in reversal] as wealth and exploitation but as struggle.<sup>50</sup>

Let this not lead us to imagine that women do not experience personal and collective *rupture* or are not changed by such trauma throughout history. The structure of the liberation hermeneutic of conversion has its own dynamic shape. However, taking seriously this feature of continuity in women's stories and symbols can perhaps help us better recognize and give significance to the covert signs of the presence of massive personal or collective trauma in *shifts in symbol interpretation* in women's experience, specifically in the present study.

In his list of twelve "techniques and methodological signposts" useful for the application of object relations theory and self psychology to individual and group historical

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<sup>47</sup> BYNUM, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> BYNUM, 1992, pp. 33 - 34, 43.

<sup>49</sup> BYNUM, 1992, p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> BYNUM, 1992, p. 34. See GUTIERREZ, Gustavo, *A theology of liberation: History, politics and salvation*, transl. INDA, Caridad and John EAGLESON, Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1988, ch. 3.

subjects, Loewenberg goes on at substantial length about the eleventh one, that of “demography and trauma”:

We are now on the grounds of massive psychic trauma and its sequelae in the posttraumatic stress disorders.... The evidence is clear: Given a large enough social or collective traumatic event, no one escapes a posttraumatic stress disorder. Its hallmark is a fixation on the trauma but with new variations and with an altered conception of the self and the world. The symptoms are lifelong. No one is immune. Adaptive and coping capacities are enfeebled. Massive trauma is a crucial bridge to history. We are no longer speaking of singular cases or a unique psychogenesis. Our history as humans is the story of large scale traumas of war, disease and epidemics, famine, dislocation and migration, economic crises, draughts, and pestilence. The psychoanalytical perception of anxiety as a signal of the danger of helplessness and hopelessness is a political and social category of understanding whose full implications have yet to be explored and exploited by social scientists. Trauma is the theoretical link from individual to group, cohort, population, nation, the world. Here historians appropriately introduce their categories for understanding groups and institutions... traditions, civic culture, myth, symbol, the artifacts of popular and high culture.<sup>51</sup>

Again, how that anxiety will manifest itself in women needs to be factored in. But within the context of the history of Christian spirituality and the evolution of Christian doctrine, I suggest that we have failed to pay sufficient attention to the effects of this phenomenon, and to the distinctive responses which women have had in such contexts. This may be a case of our denying the alterity of cultural upheaval, political and epidemic trauma of the 14th century. One of the reasons then for the choice of theory to support the present psychohistorical study is to attempt to redress this situation in some limited way. Pursuing this question of narcissistic trauma may allow for a closer examination of evidence of personal and societal trauma and mourning in the present psychohistorical study.

### **3.3 Peter Homans on mourning lost symbolic meanings**

Peter Homans, a psychohistorian of religion, formed in the tradition of object relations theory and self psychology, has explored a further characteristic of narcissistic trauma and rage, which contributes to the choice of theoretical framework for this study. Homans focuses on the rise of psychoanalysis as a result of the historical process of disillusionment and mourning the loss of the symbolic meaning of cultural objects in western culture. Homans argues that this process of disillusionment is the precondition

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<sup>51</sup> LOEWENBERG, 1996, pp. 41 - 42. The other techniques and methodological signposts he describes and which are listed above in this chapter, while not all being exceptional to object relations theory or self psychology only, do give a feel for the kinds of clues and evidence the psychohistorian seeks to develop in his or her hypothesis.

for the possibility of individuation and authentically creative responses to this loss.<sup>52</sup> I include here a brief description of his thesis.

Homans situates the rise of psychoanalysis itself in an historic context in the West dating back to fourteenth century nominalist theology and seventeenth century science. His epistemological argument is that the western mind is individuating away from absolutism toward relativism. At the level of psychoanalytic explanation, his argument depends upon a fundamental process of “disillusionment” or mourning the loss of symbolic meaning of cultural objects, including the religious experience of God.<sup>53</sup> For Homans, this process of disillusionment is ubiquitous in western culture and in its individuals. Therefore Homans argues, in both the structure and content of his essay, that psychobiography and the larger field of psychohistory are in themselves inadequate universes of discourse without the extended historical perspective of this cultural critique within western theology and science.<sup>54</sup>

The mourning process can be avoided or addressed personally and culturally, but inevitably it will intrude its presence in life. Its presence is received more welcomingly, perhaps even into consciousness, he observes, wherever people on the margins of their society have “analytic access” to this experience of loss, as the transitional space in which old symbols die and new ones are received and created.<sup>55</sup>

This necessary loss of self and cultural objects (and ultimately, godobject) Homans holds to be fundamental in the Western human experience of individuation. One of the fruits of individuation is a deepened sense of the relativity of one’s knowledge, that subjectivity infuses all objects of knowledge. I agree with this as far as he goes with it. But my sense is that Homans’ fertile concept of mourning and disillusionment as human experiences can yield further fruit.

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<sup>52</sup> HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> HOMANS, 1989, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>55</sup> Homans understands “analytic access” to refer to “the integrative and depth psychological probes an individual can make with regard to into his inner world. It is by no means limited to psychoanalysis, for it is found in introspective literature, in philosophical reflection and religious experience, etc”. HOMANS, 1989, p. 5. He is indebted to Winnicott for the basis of his understanding of mourning as fundamental in western history and contemporary life in terms of Winnicott’s concept of transitional space intermediate between the self and the social other...I think that here in this marginal space or area, analytic access and common culture have always intersected to form a genuine reality which exists apart from and is also some part of ‘psyche’ and ‘culture.’ It is in this area that the formation of symbols takes place and here creativity also occurs. This place is at once social and psychological. HOMANS, 1989, p. 5.

Paul Ricoeur wrote, in a now famous passage, that the psychoanalytic approach is necessarily iconoclastic:

My working hypothesis... is that psychoanalysis is necessarily iconoclastic, regardless of the faith or nonfaith of the psychoanalyst, and that this 'destruction' of religion can be the counterpart of a faith purified of all idolatry. Psychoanalysis as such cannot go beyond the necessity of iconoclasm. This necessity is open to a double possibility, that of faith and that of nonfaith, but the decision about these two possibilities does not rest with psychoanalysis.<sup>56</sup>

But as Vernon Gregson has observed, "Paul Ricoeur has [also] written that although Freud has served up to the present to foster unbelief, now is the time to use his insights to foster belief."<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps there is a link to be made here with the tension within the new history (including psychohistory) as epistemologically agnostic and relativistic on the one hand, and on the other, as appealing, consciously or otherwise, to some fundamental (psychodynamic) human experience by which to understand the historical subject "on its own terms". Despite his expressed relativism, Homans privileges the process of cultural mourning as, in effect, an ubiquitous human experience -- at least in western culture since the 14th century. Certainly, psychoanalytic iconoclasm is part of the Western process of cultural disillusionment Homans is describing. Given analytic access, the process of disillusionment and mourning will reveal false selfobjects and false cultural objects including archaically idealized religious ones. I hold that the potential experience of new meaning through mourning the death of the old can open up the possibility of a new, creative emergence of an individuated experience of Christian faith symbols and narrative themes concerning salvation. A major thrust in the present thesis will be to seek traces of this process at work in the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich.

Ultimately creative individuation, viewed through the lens of object relations theory and self psychology, can become a means for understanding the history of mourning on its own terms, and I think, provide a kind of transitional space for a fresh personal and cultural appropriation of the meaning of Christian faith. Individuation thus understood paradoxically does not deny but embraces the matrix of subjective interest out of which all meaning is created and found, which when embraced allows that "clear and objective discernment" to which Koenig encourages us to aspire.

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<sup>56</sup> RICOEUR, Paul, *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970, p. 230. See MEISSNER, 1992, p. xxv.

<sup>57</sup> GREGSON, Vernon, "Review Symposium of *Psychoanalysis and religious experience*, by W. W. Meissner", *Horizons* 13, 1, 1986, p. 397. The reference to Ricoeur's statement is not cited in that text.

In choosing a theoretical framework for this psychohistory which will allow new forms of evidence to come to light, I find that Homans offers a valuable development of the object relations concepts of transitional space, illusion, disillusionment, fantasy activity, movement responses and narrative in the narcissistic response to loss.

Homans is at pains to extend Winnicott's fertile concepts of transitional space and illusion further into the realm of cultural phenomena. Homans argues that fantasy activity is personal *and* social, "an intersubjective transitional form of mental activity", somewhere between the "polarities of inner and outer".<sup>58</sup>

The perception of movement or "movement responses" in fantasy activity reveals four components of psychological makeup: 1) deep bodily feelings, 2) issues of narcissism and self esteem, 3) the capacity for empathy, 4) the capacity or readiness to engage in fantasy activity.<sup>59</sup> He goes on to say that movement responses in fantasy activity "display an incipiently narrative character". A person

responds to the unconscious sense of loss [imposed by ambiguous or unstructured stimuli] by beginning to tell a story.... [The individual] "reach[es] out for the construction of plots, the essential element in narrative... in order, in Shakespeare's well-known phrase, 'to give airy nothing a habitation, and a name'".<sup>60</sup>

Homans holds that it is this combination of the presence of the social other in fantasy activity and of movement and narrative which constitute the nucleus of the "creation of meaning" or the "construction of symbols". He aligns it with the Winnicottian sense of play as building up meaningful structure.<sup>61</sup> He goes on to relate observations on the psychology of movement to the wider processes of mourning and individuation:

The response to loss opens up the transitional space which is both social and historical, and in this space persons construct a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy activity and its implicitly narrative character.<sup>62</sup>

Homans goes on to ask a fascinating question which with his answer are so fertile with implication as to warrant full quotation here.

What might the relationship be between narcissism and narrative? It seems reasonable to suppose that the work of narrative building transforms some bits and pieces of the self's original, archaic narcissism (Kohut) and its residual, unconscious memories of maternal and infantile omnipotence (Winnicott) into a conversation with the social order. This supposition is grounded in the social character of all narrative, on the one hand, and its roots in depth-psychological personal experience, on the other hand. The most common examples are the

<sup>58</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 330.

<sup>59</sup> HOMANS, 1989, pp. 330 - 331, drawing on the work of SCHACHTEL, Ernest G., *Experiential foundations of Rorschach's tests*, NY, Basic Books, 1966, 342 p.

<sup>60</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 332.

<sup>61</sup> HOMANS, 1989, pp. 332 - 333.

<sup>62</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.



keeping of a diary, the reading or writing of an autobiography or novel, and the viewing (or writing) of a play or movie. Complex as such experiences are, all of them include a fundamental transaction or interchange between individual, unconscious fantasy processes and socially and historically grounded and shaped events and figures which play out human relations, situations and predicaments, over a set time span. In imaginatively entertaining such experiences, persons work out and over and build up relations between their inner worlds and the world of shared collective meaning and memory. As old meanings are sorted out and discarded and new ones entertained and formed, the distance between the ego and the social order at first lessens but then also deepens. Such activities facilitate transformations in persons' narcissistic organization.<sup>63</sup>

If this supposition is true, then it seems to me it would apply to the therapeutic context, to the context of constructing creative social theory (which is Homans' own particular focus), and as well, to that of the particular historical development of Christian soteriological narratives. In particular, it could apply to Julian of Norwich's soteriology in her *Showings*, which grows out of prayer and meditation practices which incorporate and encourage the use of imagination to construct meaning out of traumatic social and personal events.

Both Julian's Short and Long Texts are structured around their adherence to the narrative quality of the visions. As narrative, involving the fruits of mystical vision, *lectio divina*,<sup>64</sup> prayer, meditation and dream, the *Showings* would fall within the genres of writing which Homans identifies as helpful for transformation in narcissistic organization. But they would not be limited to this. Evidence of the four elements of psychological makeup which reflect such "movement responses" in the texts could be looked for at the same time as indicators of just such a process at work in the unique contours of her visionary narrative.

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<sup>63</sup> HOMANS, 1989, pp. 335 - 336.

<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, Vincent Gillespie points out that in fact a movement away from *lectio divina* to a *lectio domini* was taking place in late medieval English piety, in which imagery, specifically the image of the crucified body of Christ, replaced the literary text as focus for the meditation. See GILLESPIE, Vincent, "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. HOGG, James, Salzburg, 1987, pp. 111 - 159. *Analecta Cartusiana* 117. With regard to Julian, however, Oliver Davies has noted (in a language suggestive of the mediated realm of transitional space) the extent to which scriptural text is infused into her work: "Julian's 'revelation' cannot but seem to take place within a space in which the Word of God is everywhere present by virtue of its absence". DAVIES, Oliver, "Transformational processes in the work of Julian of Norwich and Mechtilde of Magdeburg", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1992, p. 46. Exeter symposium V.

## 4.0 The choice of subject

### 4.1 Personal countertransferential issues

So why have I chosen to approach the soteriology of Julian of Norwich's *Showings* from a psychohistorical perspective informed by object relations theory and self psychology?

First, the kinds of narcissistic problems which emerge from a deficit in pre-oedipal mirroring have become a central focus for my own self understanding, as well as for understanding our culture. How these issues express themselves in women as distinct from men is of personal interest. It has been a difficult thing to recognize deficit in my upbringing, because of the very isolative behaviour patterns which would not allow me to be close enough to others to recognize the lifelong effects of adequate (and inadequate) mirroring and affirmation.

Second, a personal traumatic experience of abandonment in my late 30's which resulted in the eruption of narcissistic rage and the loss of the illusion of grandiosity or control of my environment, has become a critical element in my personal history, self knowledge and spirituality. It inaugurated a long period of mourning which I embraced in a context of therapy, a 12 step support group, a practice of scripture based meditation, journalling and spiritual direction. The presence of mirroring others in the support group and spiritual direction facilitated my entering more deeply into this mourning experience. In fact, in the course of being encouraged to meditate on the Passion, I found myself entering into the death of Jesus. I experienced myself dying, and then for a number of months afterward, dead with Jesus in the tomb. It was, as I came to see, a "necessary death".<sup>65</sup> I encountered great resistance in making sense of the cross, as the traditional list of sins, for which Jesus died, did not seem to correspond to anything in this naked experience of abandonment. And yet what I was experiencing was a process of traumatic loss and the eventual creation of meaning out of that loss. It transformed my understanding of myself and the quality of my relationship to God encountered in that transitional space of prayer. This experience has helped me to recognize the importance of trauma, personal journalling, narrative out of prayer experiences, and the presence of mirroring others, for a maturation to be possible along the axis of narcissistic mirroring needs. At the same time, I have come to see this as a praxeological process of appropriating salvation in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>65</sup> For accounts of these meditations from my journal at the time, as well as of my process of interpreting them with help from both Julian of Norwich and object relations theory, see RATCLIFFE, Holly, *Mourning and kenosis: Mirroring of God and self in transformation*, S.T.M. thesis, NY, General Theological Seminary, 1997, chs. 6 - 8.

I bring this history to my psychohistorical interpretation of Julian of Norwich's soteriology.

I came to Julian's writings, then, at a time in my life when my fundamentally agnostic assumptions about the possibility of communication with God in prayer were being challenged. That is to say, my godobject and I were moving toward a more communicative relationality. The concept of prayer as transitional space helped that to be possible, and has highlighted for me the extent to which Julian's writings describe a shift into a new communication, a relationality, taking place in the third realm of prayer. This has admitted hermeneutical consequences for how I read Julian -- as distinct from someone reading Julian who does not have an active prayer life.<sup>66</sup>

What is significant in this context is that I acknowledge that I come to Julian as one who is now receptive to transitional phenomena in prayer. Consequently I read the desire for communication and relationality in prayer as pervading Julian's writings and as foundational to her struggle to express this core orientation in her theology.

In his recent book on psychobiography, William Todd Schultz argues that the psychohistorian must seek to elucidate a mystery, a question in the material seeking an answer, some "paradoxical, elusive phrase or episode requiring for its solution a leap to another level of understanding".<sup>67</sup> Something in the question will be distinctive, not just

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<sup>66</sup> Recall the work (noted in the last chapter) by Marilyn SAUR and William SAUR, "Transitional phenomena as evidenced in prayer", *Journal of religion and health* 32, 1, 1993, pp. 55 - 65. These psychologists studied differences in how people described what was going on in photographs of people praying, and found that those who had no background of active involvement in a religious tradition or prayer expressed the feeling of being emotionally distant from the figure in the photograph, of not identifying with the prayer activity, and of not connecting any perceived comfort in the photograph of the praying person with that person being in a relationship. In effect, the authors conclude that the experimental population who did not have an active prayer life did not manifest transitional phenomena in their perceptions of the figures praying in the photographs. This was not the case with the other populations, who had active religious traditions. In their case, many of the features of transitional phenomena as described by Winnicott were evidenced in their responses. Among other things the researchers noted that although the photos were of figures thought to be alone, the respondents reported that the figures were relating to God, "feeling connected". They perceived that silent communication was going on in the photographs of the praying persons and that God could receive the communication.

The researchers conclude that their study demonstrates Meissner's suggestion that the study of prayer facilitates understanding of the deeply personal object related nature of religious experience [and] reaffirms and expands upon the usefulness of Winnicott's idea of the transitional sphere as a contemporary psychoanalytic framework for understanding religious experience. SAUR and SAUR, 1993, pp. 64 - 65.

Might these same dynamics not also be functioning in how contemporary people read and interpret literature which was written as the fruit of and intended to stimulate prayer?

<sup>67</sup> SCHULTZ, William Todd, ed., *Handbook of psychobiography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 8.

about the subject of the study however, but in attracting the attention of the psychohistorian it will also say something about that person.

When I encountered Julian of Norwich, I found in her writing someone who also had to struggle to appropriate the meaning of the cross and death of Jesus, in a way which could function salvifically to respond to her deepest needs for affirmation and mirroring, but through the jungle of the dogmatic tradition's understanding of sin and its redemption which was quite foreign to her need.

I acknowledge that my story is not the same as her story; nor is my cultural context the same as hers. The subject chosen for psychohistorical treatment is ultimately her soteriology embedded in the *Showings*, not her personal history. But by focusing on her unique treatment of soteriological material, with some personal interest in why and how it might have emerged and spoken to her, as it does to me and others of this generation, I hope that some new psychohistorical light may be shed on her text.

Countertransference questions I pose to Julian's *Showings* stem from this problematic. The questions it prompts in me include the following:

- Why did Julian not have to die in her symbiotic union with Jesus in his/her suffering at the point of death?
- How is it that Julian of Norwich understands and articulates so intimately the feelings of psychological distress in the condition of perceived abandonment, such that it is fundamental to the dynamic of her *exemplum* of the servant and the lord? Cheerful, optimistic personalities do not have this empathic articulate understanding of such difficult emotions if they have had experiences of abandonment but have avoided embracing such trauma.
- What is the unidentified element or movement behind her *exemplum* which shifts the servant's (and Julian's, and the reader's) focus from his self-preoccupation with his condition of distress, to turning to behold the face of the loving lord while in that condition?

My personal countertransference reasons for adopting a psychohistorical method of interpretation lead me to want to explore empathically these and related psychodynamic features of her *Showings* for what they may tell us about the genesis, development and appropriation of her distinctive soteriology.

## 4.2 The nature of the textual material of Julian of Norwich's *Showings*

### 4.2.1 Textual evidence conducive to a psychohistorical study

The choice of historical subject appropriate to the kinds of evidence made available by the questions posed by the psychoanalytic theory is important.

The complaint is frequently made by psychohistorians that there is not enough "free association and dream material" and not enough evidence from the childhood of the historical subject to make for a convincing psychobiography.<sup>68</sup> In an early article Heinz Kohut wrote of "applied analysis" (psychobiography) that it "must proceed without the central instrument for the investigation of the unconscious: free association".<sup>69</sup> He observes there that what is lacking is "the living ebb and flow of the transference... the interplay of interpretation and resistance..." Still, in that article he is reviewing four psychobiographies of creative authors and artists, and is struck by the amount of material a prolific artist offers which is usable for psychoanalytic investigation. He observes in his conclusions to the review that

[t]he analysand's stories and those found, for example, in literary works of art contain intricate mixtures of revelation and concealment; thus there is also a structural parallel between the material investigated by the clinical analyst and the subject matter of the worker in applied analysis.<sup>70</sup>

There is very little known about the history of the person we have come to know as Julian of Norwich. The kind of documentation or evidence she has left behind in her *Showings* does not include explicitly any reference to her early childhood. Any speculation there would have to be corroborated by what little we know of patterns of maternal-infant relations among the different classes in 14th century England. As well, it would have to resonate with what Julian does "say" -- and omit to say -- in terms of the clues and traces which can be discerned in her texts by means of the tools available to psychohistory.

But as for dream material and free association, here the evidence in her *Showings* is not insubstantial. She does in fact recount one dream in LT 67. Moreover, if we consider the subject of her whole discourse, that is, the revelations she received on 8 May, 1373 and her lifelong meditation on their meaning, as the documentation of a kind of transitional

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<sup>68</sup> RUNYAN, 1982, p. 203.

<sup>69</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, "Beyond the bounds of the basic rule", *Journal of the American psychoanalytic association* 8, 1960, p. 571.

<sup>70</sup> KOHUT, 1960, p. 585.

space, then it could be argued that Julian is in this respect at least, a far more legitimate subject for a relational psychoanalytic psychohistorical treatment than are many other more materially documented historical personages. In other words, there is an openly “illusory” -- in Winnicott's redeeming use of the word -- quality to the genre of the texts of the *Showings* as we know them, which can be seen as psychohistorically valuable, even as it is also influenced by, and must be read in light of, literary and devotional conventions.<sup>71</sup>

In arguing for the recognition of Julian of Norwich's *Showings* as the fruit of a life of creative transitional space activity, I hold, in keeping with Winnicott's insight into this concept of a third space, that it contains and shapes both personal, subjective elements and cultural and rhetorical borrowings which must inform the psychohistorical reading.

In this respect, it will be important to focus the study not simply on the presence or absence of features which, in psychoanalytic terms are “hot” issues (such as her identification of Jesus as Mother), as if they existed atemporally, but rather, on Julian's choice and unique treatment of materials which contain narrative or rhetorical units borrowed from her cultural environment of biblical, theological and ecclesiastical traditions. The questions which need to be asked of her texts would include:

- What is unique or distinctive in the way in which she uses or reinterprets the soteriological tradition at hand?
- How does she use scripture in unique ways?
- How does she retrieve and reinterpret elements of the anchoritic and mystical traditions?
- What psychodynamic functions or patterns can be seen in these uses, and what can they tell us about the person?

#### **4.2.2 The "lost tradition" of soteriological narrative embedded in her texts**

We live in an age when theologians are seeking to retrieve lost traditions in the history and evolution of Christian theology. That there is a lost tradition of Christian soteriological narrative embedded in Julian of Norwich's *Showings* is now undisputed.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> I acknowledge that in the last several years a huge body of literary studies of Julian of Norwich has developed, beyond what this study has been able to integrate.

<sup>72</sup> See NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom's daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroads, 1991, 217 p. PALLISER, Margaret Ann, o.p., *Christ our mother of mercy: Divine mercy and compassion in the theology of the Showings of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Walter de Gruyter, 1992, 262 p. BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, 290 p. ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, NY, D. S. Brewer, 1999, 197 p. HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian*

And that her soteriology speaks to people of our age is also undeniable.<sup>73</sup> As noted above, our age, for better or worse, is deeply influenced by the interpretive lens of psychoanalysis. So if it is possible by means of a relational psychoanalytic psychobiographical lens to shed further light on how it is that her soteriology calls forth such a resonating response in us, then this aspect of the thesis is more than simply a psychohistorical case study of Julian of Norwich. It may enlarge our understanding of the motivation for, and historical genesis of, her soteriology. It may also make a contribution to our contemporary soteriological reflection.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This chapter argues that an application to Julian's *Showings* of a relational psychoanalytic psychobiographical method which is aware of its limitations as well as its potential strengths, and recognizes the need to avoid a naïve psychohistorical literalism, is justified. The relational psychoanalytic application is found, for several reasons, to be particularly suitable for the subject matter.

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*of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical press, 2001, 233 p. ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, 269 p.

<sup>73</sup> See UPJOHN, Sheila, *Why Julian now?: A voyage of discovery*, Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 1997, 132 p., for one example.

## CHAPTER 4

### A REVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JULIAN OF NORWICH, THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF HER WRITINGS, AND BIOGRAPHICAL SPECULATION

#### 1.0 Who was Julian of Norwich?

Historical information about Julian of Norwich is gleaned from a few hints she gives in her book, a few external witnesses, and what is known about late medieval England and its religious and social institutions. Over and above the lack of recorded evidence which has come to be expected in studying women's traditions in medieval mysticism, Julian has mastered the practice of effacing details about herself. Even her name was most likely adopted by her after she became enclosed as an anchoress at St Julian's Church in Conisford, Norwich. This lack of information at every turn has spurred speculation and debates about several interrelated aspects of Julian's life which will be reviewed further below, specifically: what state of life she was in prior to enclosure, what her educational background was, the date of her enclosure, the dates of composition of the shorter and the longer versions of her book.

The information she herself provides comes to us in the form of two accounts of her showings or revelations, separated in time by a period of up to some fifteen to twenty years during which she continued to meditate and reflect theologically on her visions. These two versions, more familiarly known as the Short and the Long Text respectively,<sup>1</sup> are all that we have of the writing of this woman who is now recognized as having been the first woman, and the first theologian of either sex, ever to write a book in the vernacular of the English people.

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<sup>1</sup> In the section below on the manuscript tradition and scholarship I will go into more detail about these texts.



What we do know of Julian's biographical background from her book is that on the 8th or 13th May 1373<sup>2</sup> at the age of 30 and a half, she lay dying of a very severe, life threatening illness.<sup>3</sup> Thus we can date her birth to have been in November, 1342.

She tells us in her first chapter that earlier in her life she had prayed for three graces: the first was to have recollection, a bodily sight of Christ's Passion, the second to have a bodily sickness, and the third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds. Moved by hearing the story told by a man of Holy Church, of St Cecilia receiving three wounds, Julian desired and prayed for the wound of compassion, the wound of contrition and the wound of longing for God. In her account of the bodily illness from which she was suffering (written some time after the fact), she interprets this illness as sent by God in response to this second grace she had desired.

After three days and three nights of physical suffering, she received the last rites. She describes how she continued to live in this deteriorating condition for two more days and nights and on the third night both she and those attending her bedside, which included her mother, believed that she was at the point of expiring. Those who were with her sent for the curate, who placed a crucifix before her eyes. She turned her eyes, which had been looking up, to look at the crucifix. She saw the crucifix begin to bleed, the beginning of her sixteen revelations or showings. The first fifteen of these showings continued until noon of the day, during which the symptoms of her illness disappeared; however they returned when the visions ceased. A man of religion came to see her and she told him that she had been raving. However, he took her description of her experience seriously and respectfully. The following evening, after a demonic dream assault while she slept, she awoke, and recalling what the Lord had revealed to her that day along with the faith of Holy Church, both the demonic apparition and the symptoms of her disease vanished. At that point, she received the final, sixteenth vision as a conclusion and confirmation of all that she had received previously. Thus, Julian recovered from her illness, and recorded her first account of her near-death experience and the revelations or showings at some later point.

She also at some point adopted the life of anchoress, whether before or after her visionary experience we do not know. By 1393 and at least until 1415, however, Julian was living in a cell attached to St Julian's Church at Conisford in Norwich. These dates

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<sup>2</sup> One manuscript (S) reads "viii" while another (P) reads "xiii". Benedicta Ward has made the argument that a scribal error from x to v is more likely, in her "Julian the solitary", in *Julian reconsidered*, eds. LEECH, Kenneth and Benedicta WARD, Oxford, Fairacres, 1988, p. 35, n. 41. The Roman Catholic Church remembers Julian on 13 May. However, in 1980 the Anglican Communion chose to commemorate Julian of Norwich on 8 May, a reflection of this ambiguity in the texts, and the history of the manuscripts.

<sup>3</sup> Because of a variety of interpretations of her illness, this will be treated in the next chapter.

are attested to not only in the first chapter of Julian's Short Text, in which the scribe asserts that she is still living as recluse at that point of copying the manuscript in 1413, but also by the record of four wills in which bequests are left to provide for Julian's wellbeing. The first of these bequests dates from 1393, twenty years after the visions, the last bequest from 1415.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Julian's presence in the anchorhold in Norwich is attested by the writings of Margery Kempe, a contemporary mystic laywoman who wrote of her visit Norwich at some point between 1413 and 1415, to "an anchoress in the same city who was called Dame Julian".<sup>5</sup> Margery tells us that Julian "was an expert in such things and could give good counsel", evidence which suggests that Julian enjoyed a reputation as a holy woman. It is clear however that Julian "was not well known as an author during her lifetime", from the paucity of surviving manuscripts.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.0 The Julian manuscript tradition

The Julian manuscript corpus is limited to seven non-autographic texts, plus one printed version contemporary with some of the manuscripts. Of these sources, one sole manuscript from the 15th century called the Amherst manuscript (A) after a previous owner but known technically as London British Library MS Additional 37790, exists of the Short Text, the earlier account of her visions.<sup>7</sup>

The other six manuscripts and the first printed edition are of the Long Text, the account she produced after fifteen to twenty years of meditation and reflection on her visions.<sup>8</sup> Only one of these manuscripts predates the dissolution: the Westminster MS (W), located in the Westminster Diocesan Archives, dates from around 1500 though with heavy 17th century annotation. However, it is incomplete, being a series of extracts from the Long Text for devotional use. It includes the theological reflection on the motherhood of Christ, but omits explicit reference to the visions except in one place.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For details concerning the evidence from the wills, see the Introduction to COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, pp. 33 - 35.

<sup>5</sup> KEMPE, Margery, *The book of Margery Kempe*, transl. B. A. WINDEATT, Harmondsworth, England, Penguin, 1985, ch. 18, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> BAKER, Denise, *Julian of Norwich's Book of showings: From vision to book*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> This manuscript was largely unknown until 1909 when it was donated to the British Museum. See BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, p. 207.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed description of the manuscript tradition see COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 1 - 33.

<sup>9</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 263, fn. 16. See below for Holloway's alternative interpretation of the composition of W.

Three of the manuscripts of the Long Text, the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS fonds anglais 40 or (P), the London British Library MS Sloane 2499 (S1) and the Upholland Seminary Library (U) fragment, along with the Serenus Cressy 1670 printed text (C), date from the mid 17th century. The remaining manuscript, the London British Library MS Sloane 3705 (S2), is a late 17th or early 18th century copy of S1, collated with either the P manuscript or Cressy's printed edition. Another handwritten copy of the Long Text, from the same time period as S2 and based on Cressy's printed edition, is now recognized as London British Library MS Stow 42.<sup>10</sup>

According to Colledge and Walsh, of the extant manuscripts of the Long Text, P and S1 are the only two independent witnesses.<sup>11</sup> Note that no pre-Reformation manuscript of the long text in its entirety is known to exist, but given its early date, the extract from the Long Text in W is being taken increasingly seriously. Since Colledge and Walsh's publication, Kempster has clarified that W cannot be derived as a manuscript from either S1 or P and therefore must be the survival of an otherwise lost, third textual branch of the stemma of the Long Text.<sup>12</sup>

Both P and S1 date from about 250 years after Julian received her visionary experience and in different ways to some extent reflect modernizations in the English vernacular by scribal editors in the interim. Given the inconclusivity of the linguistic characteristics of the manuscripts, Julian's geographical origin may or may not have been Norwich.<sup>13</sup>

The existence at all of Julian's texts after the Reformation can be traced to Benedictine devotion to Julian which preserved knowledge of her work, in the Counter-Reformation piety of Augustine Baker. This accounts for its circulation on the continent specifically in the women's Cambrai and Paris English Benedictine communities in exile, and for its publication by Baker's successor, Serenus Cressy.<sup>14</sup> Scribes who produced the manuscripts were most likely nuns in these two communities. To my knowledge, Hide is

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<sup>10</sup> See APPLEFORD, Amy, "Bibliography", in *The writings of Julian of Norwich: 'A vision showed to a devout woman' and 'A revelation of love'*, eds. WATSON, Nicholas and Jacqueline JENKINS, University Park PN, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p. 459.

<sup>11</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH 1978a, pp. 25 - 26.

<sup>12</sup> KEMPSTER, Hugh, ed., "Julian of Norwich: The Westminster text of *A revelation of love*", *Mystics quarterly* 23, 1997, pp. 177 - 245.

<sup>13</sup> See COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 28 - 33; BEER, Frances, ed., *Julian of Norwich's Revelations of divine love: The shorter version, ed. from BL Add. MS 37790*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1978, pp. 14 - 28; and PELPHREY, Brant, *Love was his meaning: The theology and mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Salzburg, Universität Salzburg, 1982, p. 19, who includes further references.

<sup>14</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 12 - 18.

the only Julian specialist to hold and give evidence to support the idea that because the P manuscript left England “it is less likely to have been edited according to the concerns of the reformers”.<sup>15</sup>

Colledge and Walsh draw their versions of the Long Text, both the critical edition in middle English and its translation into contemporary English, primarily from P, though drawing on S1 as needed.<sup>16</sup> Marion Glasscoe’s 1976 edition of the Long Text *Julian of Norwich: A revelation of love*, is based solely on S1, and represents a move toward offering editions of the manuscripts as they exist in middle English, rather than as attempts to harmonize or correct the different manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> Her point will be well taken in this thesis that S1 better preserves the dynamic reality of Julian’s religious experience of salvation and of the psychological reality of theological statements. Glasscoe’s text however lacks a critical apparatus and has only a partial glossary. And, we are dependent on other critics for a translation of S1 into modern English.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> HIDE, Kerrie, “‘Only in God do I have all’: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich”, *Downside review* 122, 2004, p. 57, fn. 10.

<sup>16</sup>For their critical edition see COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, 2 vols. The first volume includes a lengthy introduction to Julian of Norwich by the editors plus their edition of the Short Text. (The present reference is taken from p. 26, i.e., of volume one.) The second volume contains the Long Text, an appendix and glossary.

<sup>17</sup> See GLASSCOE, Marion, ed., *Julian of Norwich: ‘A revelation of love’*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1976, 148p. Glasscoe gives convincing examples of her preference for S1, in her “Visions and revisions: A further look at the manuscripts of Julian of Norwich”, *Studies in bibliography* 42, 1989, pp. 113 - 114 and 119, where she holds that the P manuscript represents a diluting of the dynamism of the theology of S1. S1 conveys “the psychological reality of theological statements” and “a greater sense of religious experience as a dynamic reality”. In terms of the manuscript itself, Glasscoe believes that “the conservatism and lack of concern for appearances on the part of the S1 scribe suggest that his copy may well be more reliable as a copy text than the carefully worked over and modernized P”. Colledge and Walsh, however, deny that P is a modernization of an earlier manuscript. See COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 17. Their reason for choosing P has to do with the presence of rhetorical structures, but Glasscoe wonders whether this is not just the effect of scribal editing. See GLASSCOE, 1976, p. 119. On the same page, Glasscoe concludes that an “eclectic text” such as Colledge and Walsh’s “critical edition”, is not viable in terms of the long-proven tradition of textual scholarship in Biblical and literary studies, particularly in that it misrepresents what S1 actually says in places. For a history of editions, translations and modernizations of Julian of Norwich’s texts, see BARRATT, Alexandra, “How many children had Julian of Norwich? Editions, translations and versions of her *revelations*”, in *Vox mystica: Essays on medieval mysticism*, ed. BARTLETT, Anne Clark et al., Cambridge, Brewer, 1995, pp. 27 - 39. Barratt on p. 38, echoes Glasscoe’s textual concerns where she writes that “some recent studies of [Julian of Norwich’s] theology are perfectly happy to base themselves on existing translations rather than the Middle English originals, a method that would be unthinkable in dealing with biblical or patristic texts”.

<sup>18</sup> See for one example, Clifton WOLTERS, transl., *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of divine love*, Harmondsworth England, Penguin, 1966, 213 p., but frequently reprinted since then. His interpretation of Julian, however, as merely an affective, devotional writer simply is not adequate for fully understanding her contribution to theology. More recently in 1998, Penguin Press has published a new translation of both A

In the course of writing this thesis, two new editions of the middle English manuscripts have been published. As well as continuing the discussion around which manuscripts to draw on, these two new editions now reflect different theories about practices of modernization.

In 2003 Julia Bolton Holloway, drawing heavily on Sr Anna Maria Reynolds' 1956 thesis, published in Italy a lavish edition of W, P, S1 and A, replicating the text as it appears on the actual page of each of these manuscripts. For all except for S1 she provides a parallel modern English translation. Photographs of pages from each manuscript, as well as the inclusion of Hoyt Greeson's glossary of S1, enrich this large volume. Ostensibly it is a major contribution to Julian textual scholarship in the direction of, as she puts it, a "definitive edition".<sup>19</sup>

Holloway, however, holds a view of the sequence of composition of texts which seems not to have convinced anyone else in the field. She argues on the basis of "explicit and implicit evidence" given in the Westminster manuscript, which bears the date of 1368, that the Julian portion of W is not a series of excerpts from the Long Text, but rather Julian's first full, previsionary text, and reflects Julian's brilliant theology of Christ our Mother before she received her revelations. Holloway argues, on p. 9, that subsequently it was the Long Text which Julian wrote next after her visionary experience, and that this was then abridged in the Short Text (using the opening rubric of A as evidence that the work was written in 1413), under threat of censorship by Church and State in the 15th century under Archbishop Chancellor Thomas Arundel.

The primary evidence against this revised sequence of composition comes from W, and from the Long Text. W contains one reference to what Julian saw in the "ninth revelation". Holloway interprets this as an "interpolation" by the W scribe in 1500, who knew her Long Text. Others simply explain it as an omission to cut all references to Julian's visionary experience in the Long Text in a later period of English religious history, now suspicious of mysticism. Moreover, in the Long Text, Julian acknowledges that deepened understanding of the meaning of the *exemplum* of the servant and the lord,

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and the long text (S1) by Elizabeth SPEARING and A. C. SPEARING, by the same title and designed to replace Wolters' translation. Earlier translations of S1 include COLLINS, Henry, transl., *Revelations of divine love, shewed to a devout anchoress, by name Mother Julian of Norwich*, London, Thomas Richardson and sons, 1877. WARRACK, Grace, transl., *Revelations of divine love, recorded by Julian, anchoress at Norwich, anno Domini 1373*, London, Methuen, [1901] 1952, 208 p; and HUDLESTON, Roger, transl., *Revelations of divine love shewed to a devout ankress, by name Julian of Norwich*, London, Burns and Oates, 1927, 256 p.

<sup>19</sup> REYNOLDS, Sr Anna Maria and Julian Bolton HOLLOWAY, eds. and transl., *Julian of Norwich: Showing of love*, Firenze, Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001, p. 5. Biblioteche e archivi 8.

which leads to her theological meditation on Christ our Mother, required 20 years of reflection following the reception of the shewings themselves (LT 51). Bauerschmidt critiques this view, rightly I believe, as misrepresenting Julian, “with her theology having little connection with the visions”.<sup>20</sup>

Since, however, Holloway’s argument runs through much of her annotation of the manuscripts, it renders the use of this volume more difficult as the preferred edition for this thesis.

The other new edition of Julian's texts by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins represents a hermeneutical approach to the texts which is at variance with the insistence by Glasscoe, Barratt and now Holloway (2003) that scholars of Julian of Norwich adhere to the manuscripts as we have received them.<sup>21</sup> But their argument goes against recent arguments concerning editing medieval texts which hold that all the variant versions of a work should be seen as equals and that “the idea of the ‘definitive form’ of a work is foreign to medieval manuscript culture, where all works were more or less fluid...”<sup>22</sup> Watson and Jenkins hold, rather, that that cultural context did not see the work as a resource to be adapted as others wished, but rather “as an authoritative account of a divine intervention in the world”. Because its author explored and expanded it, it may have never attained a definitive form in practice, and have led to variant texts (such as we have in P and S1). Nonetheless, these editors argue on p. 29 that “the notion that the work aspires to definitive form remains and deserves serious consideration in deciding what editorial methodology to follow”. The approach Watson and Jenkins take is to draw on all the variants and to make textual and orthographic emendations as they see fit. A major objective is to make the middle English more consistent and more accessible to the reader so that translation into modern English would not be necessary. This they argue is what Julian herself would want, that her text be available to all her *even* (fellow) Christians. They acknowledge the “artificiality” of their product but argue, in language reminiscent of de Certeau, that this artificiality is a

sign of the distance that lies between the works and their modern readers and the inevitable incompleteness of the attempt to think across that distance.... A strong resonance vibrates between our incompletable attempts to interpret aright and hers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 263 - 264, fn. 16.

<sup>21</sup> GLASSCOE, Marion, “Visions and revisions: A further look at the manuscripts of Julian of Norwich”, *Studies in bibliography* 42, 1989, pp. 103 - 120; BARRATT, 1995, pp. 27 - 39; REYNOLDS and HOLLOWAY, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 31. See their extended argument in their “Introduction” to this edition, pp. 24 - 43.

Despite its immediate appearance of artificial hybridity, being neither middle English nor modern, the Watson and Jenkins edition has one advantage over all the others: in their edition of the Long Text, the equivalent passage from the Short Text (where there is one) is repeated below it on the same page, thus making comparisons between the Long and the Short Texts much easier.

### **2.1 A note on the choice of version and method of citation used in this thesis**

With all these versions of Julian's writings each competing for the role of being used by Julian specialists to come, a decision must be made, and the consequences of that decision must be lived with. I have chosen to draw on the Colledge and Walsh translation primarily.<sup>24</sup> First of all, I have chosen their translation of *Showings* rather than a middle English edition because it will facilitate the comprehension by French speaking readers as well as English speaking readers unfamiliar with middle English. Secondly, for the theological purpose of this thesis, I want to take advantage of the textual research which has been done by Colledge and Walsh on potential sources and influences in the text, especially as this has been used by many other Julian specialists since that publication. I will draw on Colledge and Walsh's edition for the middle English text where the language is important to the argument. However, Holloway's new edition will be helpful to see what the existing texts look like, and to cite the text exactly as it appears in the manuscript, where that differs from the Colledge and Walsh edition. The Watson and Jenkins parallel edition of the Long and Short Texts will be useful for comparing the two versions. But, unlike these latter two Julian specialists, I am not fundamentally a literary scholar, I am a theologian, who acknowledges both the contemporary intellectual distance from and the contemporary spiritual responsiveness to Julian's work.

As for citing the Long and the Short Texts, I have opted for a simple method, which will work with Julian's two texts regardless of the translation, the edition, or even the translation into another language which the reader may be using as a reference. Since only one of the chapters in Julian's writings exceeds two pages in length, I propose simply

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<sup>24</sup> COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, transl., *Julian of Norwich: Showings*, NY, Paulist Press, 1978b, 369 p. It was in the same year that these two editors published their critical edition (1978a) that they published this translation of the middle English into modern English of both the Short and Long Texts as the first volume of the series *The classics of western spirituality*.

to identify the Long Text as LT and the Short Text as ST, followed by the chapter number in Roman numerals. (The only chapter where this method is imprecise is in the case of LT 51.)

Since there is no system of italicization in Julian's manuscripts, all emphasis added to direct quotations taken from her writings for this thesis may be assumed to have been added by myself unless otherwise noted.

### **3.0 A review of Julian's historical context, influences and social location**

Developing a sensitivity to who Julian was in relation to her historical context is an exercise in engaging in a pluralist historical consciousness as that is expressed in current historical scholarship. The paragraphs which follow will review in broad strokes some background as to what the anchoritic life was to which Julian was called, and what some of the larger social realities of late 14th century England were, which must have affected her. Beyond this, however, our review of who Julian was will necessarily take us into diverse and sometimes conflicting views of her social location.

#### **3.1 Julian and the anchoritic life**

We can glean some idea of what Julian's later life as an anchoress was like from what is known of the anchoritic life generally. Whereas a hermit lived a desert solitude wandering from place to place, and a recluse lived in seclusion from the world, the vocation of anchorite (male) or anchoress (female) involved living in a populated area in a cell built onto the side of a church.<sup>25</sup> The vocation of anchoress was open to religious and laity, which fact has made it harder to determine Julian's state of life prior to being enclosed. Most of her time would be spent in solitude in prayer, meditating on the episodes of the Passion of Christ through the canonical hours, and in doing some handiwork to make a little money. An important function of the anchoress was to be available to give spiritual counsel to visitors, within the schedule of her prescribed prayers. For this reason, the cell or "anchorhold" had three windows. One window opened onto the sanctuary of the church so the anchoress could see the mass and receive communion. Another, covered with a black drape with a white cross on it, faced the outside, to which people would come to speak with the anchoress and receive spiritual counsel. A third

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<sup>25</sup> Brant Pelphrey describes in some detail and with explicit reference to his sources, what is known about the anchoritic life as Julian would have experienced it, in his published doctoral dissertation entitled *Love was his meaning: The theology and mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Salzburg, Universität Salzburg, 1982, pp. 12 - 16. I also draw on the description and newer sources provided by BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 210 - 211.



opening served to receive food and pass refuse. The anchorhold might also have another room for a servant.<sup>26</sup>

While research into wills shows that Norwich had had many anchorites in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, in fact more than any other English city at that time, for at least fifty years into the fourteenth century there is no evidence of anchoritic presence in Norwich. However, during Julian's lifetime, the number increases again, probably because of her influence.<sup>27</sup>

Much of the theory and practice of the anchoritic life is known to us from the practical "rule" preserved in the form of the thirteenth century Norfolk text called the *Ancrene wisse*, also known as the *Ancrene riwle*, written by a male cleric for anchoresses. It describes the austere, yet moderate life of enclosure, prayer and the giving of spiritual counsel, which it is thought Julian undertook to live.<sup>28</sup>

In the present context of a proliferation of literary and theological readings of Julian's *Showings* and fascination with what Bauerschmidt describes as the "symbolic marginality" of the anchoritic life, it is important to emphasize the "various associations between anchoritic enclosure and death".<sup>29</sup> Both the anointing of the anchoress with extreme unction and a mass of the burial of the dead, in which the anchoress was locked in to her "tomb" from the outside by the bishop, were part of the liturgical rite of anchoritic enclosure.<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to overemphasize for contemporary readership that the vocation to the anchoritic life was one of living a liminal life of symbolic death.

At the same time, as Glasscoe observes,

[i]t is clear from the evidence of wills from all social classes up to the sovereign himself that society valued the spiritual input of those whose dying to worldly values (at their enclosure the burial service was read over them) was not regarded

<sup>26</sup> For a fuller description of anchoritic cells, see WARREN, Ann, *Anchorites and their patrons in medieval England*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1985, pp. 27 - 39.

<sup>27</sup> See TANNER, Norman P., *The Church in late medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984, p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> A recent translation of *The ancrene riwle* and other examples of anchoritic literature can be found in SAVAGE, Anne, and Nicholas WATSON, transl., *Anchoritic spirituality: ancrene wisse and associated works*, NY, Paulist, 1991, pp. 41 - 207. The classics of western spirituality 74. For a middle English version see TOLKIEN, J. R. R. ed., *Ancrene wisse*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962, 222 p. Early English Text Society 249. For another rule see AELRED OF RIEVAULX, *De institutione inclusarum*, eds. AYTO, John and Alexandra BARRATT, London, Oxford University Press, 1984, 193 p. Early English Text Society, o.s. 287.

<sup>29</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> For descriptions of different rites of anchoritic enclosure see CLAY, Rotha Mary, *The hermits and anchorites of England*, London, Methuen, (1914), 1968, pp. 94 ff., and DARWIN, Francis, *The English medieval recluse*, London, SPCK, 1944, pp. 71 - 78, as well as WARREN, 1985, pp. 97 - 100.

with jokey discomfort as disturbingly eccentric, but valued as contributing a unique gift to a total social welfare.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2 Social realities in 14th century Norwich

No account of the historical evidence of Julian of Norwich is adequate without a serious regard for the larger situation in which she was living, as this conditioned both her psychology and her theology. Norwich was the second largest city in England and from the medieval period it had attracted a number of religious orders who built houses, libraries and developed magnificent religious art. It was now also a flourishing centre of commerce. In the midst of this richness, Norwich, in Julian's lifetime, partook of traumatic events which were changing the face of English society. The Hundred Years' war began in 1337 and dragged on. The Black Death spread through England during the fourteenth century and struck Norwich in 1348-49, again in 1361, and yet again in 1369, all three waves of this epidemic taking place during Julian's lifetime when she would have been aged 5, 18 and 26 respectively.<sup>32</sup>

Its psychological effect on the people was massive, both because of the shock associated with mass deaths, and because of the theological climate of the time. Death without the sacraments guaranteed damnation, but the deaths were too massive for the priests to handle all the rites. "The result was widespread fear and depression... The assumption that salvation might not be a possibility any longer, because of the evident wrath of God, must have affected moral behaviour as well".<sup>33</sup> The Peasants' Revolt shattered Norwich in 1381, the first civil uprising of its kind in England, and signalling the beginning of the breakdown of the structure of the feudal system.

All of these sources of heartbreak lend poignancy to Julian's desire prior to the visions to die, to be 'freed of this world' ... and to her searching questions, throughout the *Revelations*, regarding the wrath of God and the evidence of his love.<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, Roland Maisonneuve describes the political divisions and theological tensions in the Church in Julian's lifetime which contributed significantly to her preoccupations:

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<sup>31</sup> GLASSCOE, Marion, *English medieval mystics: Games of faith*, London, Longman, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 1 for a graph which gives indication of the drastic population changes in England at this time, taken from DYER, Christopher, *Standards of living in the later middle ages: Social change in England c. 1200 - 1520*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> This brief historical overview draws on PELPHREY, 1982, pp. 44 - 51 who is quoted here on pp. 47 - 48.

<sup>34</sup> PELPHREY, 1982, p. 49.

Lorsqu'elle naît, la Captivité de Babylone-- séjour des papes à Avignon-- dure depuis 1305. Le Grand Schisme (1378-1417) éclate cinq ans après ses premières visions. Avec l'élection de deux, puis de trois papes, elle voit l'Église devenir monstre bicéphale, puis tricéphale. Le retour à l'union par la désignation de Martin V, le 11 novembre 1417, suit ou précède de peu sa mort. Le petit peuple anglais comprend mal la division de l'Église. Remises en question théologiques et contestations hérétiques se font jour avec âpreté. Wycliff (+ 1384) attaque la papauté... Il proclame que l'Église doit renoncer à tout bien temporel. Il réaffirme la primauté de l'Écriture et insiste sur l'illumination personnelle. Ses doctrines corrosives, épousées par ses partisans, les *lollards*, contaminent le diocèse de Norwich. Le lollard Geoffrey Lister attaque la ville avec une troupe nombreuse, la met à sac, massacre des notables, s'installe avec sa horde au château, à moins d'un demi-mile de la cellule ou demeure Julienne. L'évêque-soldat de Norwich, Henri Despenser, le poursuit et écrase les rebelles. Lister est pendu, écartelé, dépecé en quatre parties: l'une est accrochée devant la maison du lollard, une autre, à l'une des portes de la cité. L'exécution terminée, l'évêque se rend à la cathédrale et y célèbre une messe d'action de grâce. Dans l'intensité de sa foi et le frémissement de sa sensibilité, Julienne n'a pu qu'être frappée par tous ces événements et confronter, avec toute la lucidité de son intelligence et sa soif intérieure de vérité, justice et miséricorde, foi et amour. Écriture et enseignement de l'Église, dogmatisme et évangélisme, temps historiques et éternité, immutabilité de Dieu et vicissitudes humaines, qui sont autant de thèmes du *Livre des Révélations*.<sup>35</sup>

Another insight into the cultural context of late medieval, pre-Reformation England is given by Marion Glasscoe, who sensitively relates the theological tensions of the times to the flowering of creative literary and mystical literature. One of these tensions was due to the social dynamics which were contributing "to raise the profile of the individual within society rather than submerge it in low relief within a predetermined authoritarian hierarchy".<sup>36</sup> Specifically, these social dynamics were giving rise to a growing desire among the laity to appropriate a vernacular piety and forms of active and contemplative life, as well as conciliar directives to the clergy to offer instruction to the laity in the vernacular.<sup>37</sup> "Among all levels of society -- university teachers, those living in religious communities, women with time on their hands from the new bourgeoisie -- there was a deep engagement with religious truth". Glasscoe continues that another tension existed in the world of learning,

between the intellectual arguments of scholasticism and the more experiential piety of the monastic orders given a powerful voice by such men as Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugo and Richard of St Victor, [which world] was preoccupied with the

<sup>35</sup> MAISONNEUVE, Roland, trad., *Julienne de Norwich: Le livre des révélations*, Paris, Cerf, 1992, pp. 11 - 12. JANTZEN, Grace, *Julian of Norwich, Mystic and Theologian*. London: SPCK, 1987, pp. 8 - 12, also gives an account of this background. In particular she notes the character of the Bishop of Norwich, who gained the nickname for himself in his lifetime as *episcopus martius*; this same bishop was responsible for judging Julian's suitability for the anchoritic life.

<sup>36</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, p. 25. She draws here on MORRIS, Colin, *The discovery of the individual, 1050 - 1200*, London, SPCK, 1972, 188 p. Quotations from Glasscoe in this section are drawn from pp. 25 - 47.

<sup>37</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, p. 26

relationship between the operations of reason and faith and a growing tendency to see them as distinct rather than complementary experiences, a climate of thought favourable to mystical theology.<sup>38</sup>

Julian is contemporary with Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland, two great, early figures in English vernacular literature, each of whom, according to Glasscoe, is responding creatively to the “ambiguity” and “gap between the ideals of the faith and their realisation within the social fabric of Church and State”. Julian is also one of a group of five English mystics whose writings emerged in the late 14th century. Another one of this group is also a woman who has already been mentioned above, the mystic housewife Margery Kempe, along with Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle and the anonymous author of the *Cloud of unknowing*.

One of the unique developments of this period of tension is in the area of women’s traditions of piety. Current scholarly focus is helping us to see this dimension of Julian’s social context in fresh lights. In Europe various forms of lay women’s communities developed. Glasscoe cites Catherine of Siena, the Belgian women mystics called Béguines, who received spiritual guidance from religious houses, and the communities which followed Bridget of Sweden, whose rule included unrestricted access to books. These *mulieres sanctae* were known in England by the 14th century, although in England there were no equivalent associations.<sup>39</sup>

What makes Glasscoe’s treatment particularly sensitive, is that she is writing for a contemporary audience of analytically minded literary critics and feminists for whom Christian truths and spiritual life may hold little meaning or are even perceived to be barriers to their understanding the 14th century English mystical literature. Given the nature of the present study, it is difficult not to find appealing this unannounced apologetic strategy. Glasscoe traces through these social dynamics and the cultural moment how the kinds of literature and liturgical patterns appropriated through primers and other resources available to the laity promoted Franciscan affective meditation on, and imaginative identification with, Christ’s Passion and the mysteries of the Incarnation. The stress she lays is on how the literature is shaped to fire the imagination and stir the emotions as to the meaning of the scripture, and how the “ritual process enacts a pattern which can be

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<sup>38</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, pp. 37 - 38, 42. Glasscoe cites substantial bibliographical references to important feminist studies which contribute to a clearer grasp of cultural context of female spirituality in the middle ages on p. 56, fn. 140.

<sup>39</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, pp. 42 - 43.

translated into inner experience in the contemplative tradition”.<sup>40</sup> It is the transfiguration or transformation of experience on the pattern of Christ, through suffering and death to resurrection, which, although given unique expression at the hands of different mystics, is at the heart of the 14th century, and so of Julian’s, contemplative experience.

### 3.3 Speculations on Julian’s early learning, state of life and social location

This section integrates briefly the research of a number of Julian specialists engaged in the critical debate concerning Julian of Norwich’s life history, specifically in terms of what exposure to theological and literary education Julian might have had. The questions which this debate raises inevitably prompt further biographical speculation as to her state of life prior to the showings, and further, the dating of her entrance into the anchorhold, the dating of the two texts and the process of composition of the Long Text.

Why is it important to go into detail about this debate? As will become clear below, it is impossible for anyone’s reading of Julian not to be affected by the kind of assumptions we make as to her social location

How one assesses her education will clearly affect how one reads her *Revelation*. As Michael J. Write [sic] points out, “it is unfortunate, but perhaps inevitable, that the question of Julian’s early intellectual formation should become involved in a battle of appropriations.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, biographical speculation in the latter 20th century about Julian of Norwich’s intellectual life history has polarized between two extremes.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand there is the view of Colledge and Walsh, based on their detailed analysis of rhetorical conventions in the texts and certain parallels in the syntax of her scriptural allusions to that of the Vulgate, that despite her claim to be “a simple, illiterate or unlettered creature” (LT 2), Julian was indeed “lettered” meaning, to these editors, that she was educated in Latin, knowing the Vulgate, a number of spiritual and literary writings and theology.<sup>43</sup> The main

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<sup>40</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, p. 30, where she is showing how the liturgical hours of the primers were shaped to move the meditator daily through the Passion story from Christ’s betrayal through to his entombment. See also pp. 6, 33.

<sup>41</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 204-205, citing WRIGHT, Michael, “Julian of Norwich’s early knowledge of Latin”, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 95, 1, 1993, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> This was already observed by JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 15 - 20.

<sup>43</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 43 - 59 where they interpret this phrase to mean she was simply lacking in literary skills. Colledge and Walsh share with some of the feminist scholars such as Baker cited below, the view that Julian’s assertion that she is unlettered is an example of *captatio benevolentia*, a literary convention of humility common in that time and used by men and women. See the article by the same editors, COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, “Julienne de Norwich”, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8, 1974, pp. 1605 - 1611.

example they use to argue that she made her own translations of the Vulgate into the vernacular is the occasion in the tenth chapter of the Short Text in which, they say, Julian provides “an exact reproduction of the Latin syntax of Philippians 2:5”, that is, “each soul should do as St. Paul says, and feel in himself what is in Christ Jesus”.<sup>44</sup> From this premise they argue that Julian was therefore likely to have entered a religious order from early on in her life in her teens, that she composed both the Short Text and the Long Text *before* she became an anchoress, and that she entered the anchorhold around 1393 in her 50th year, the date of the first will naming her as the recipient of a bequest. They stress that she was immersed in the monastic prayer life of *lectio divina* from her youth, that her knowledge of theology was not influenced by the polemic or dialectic of the scholastics, yet neither that she was self-taught. They acknowledge that it was improbable that any English house for women religious in that era taught women the arts of discourse. Still, they hold that she was taught by some “scholar or scholars who perceived the fine quality of her intellect, and who encouraged and helped her to acquire facility in thinking and writing in *figurae*”.<sup>45</sup>

It should be recognized that Colledge and Walsh draw on, and extend, prior research done by Anna Maria Reynolds in the 1950s.<sup>46</sup> To encapsulate the breadth of literary, rhetorical, spiritual monastic and scholastic knowledge which Colledge and Walsh attribute to Julian: as well as scripture and the *Ancrene riwle*, she must have known the devotional writings of other contemporary English mystics such as Rolle, Hilton and the author of *The cloud of unknowing* and further, the German and Flemish mystics Eckhart, Ruysbroeck and Tauler. There are indications that she knew the work of Gregory the Great, Bernard, William of St. Thierry, the Franciscan meditative prose and verse of Bonaventure as well as the visual art inspired by that school. She seems to know *The harrowing of hell*, *The chastising of God’s children*, *Qui habitat*, *Bonum est*, and to

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<sup>44</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, “Editing Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*: A progress report”, *Medieval studies* 38, 1976, p. 422. Nicholas Watson critiques this picture of Julian as one “serenely confident in her *magisterium* as an author” which, he says, Colledge and Walsh create. Still, Watson’s take on Julian, structured around discerning traces of misogynistic gender stereotypes absorbed and transmuted by Julian, requires her text to be “a sophisticated response to and critique of [that] tradition”, on p. 15 of WATSON, Nicholas, “‘Yf wommen be double naturelly’: Remaking ‘woman’ in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of love*”, *Exemplaria* 8, 1, 1996.

<sup>46</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p.vii, where they acknowledge her contribution to the development of their critical edition. With regard to Julian’s education see, for example, REYNOLDS, Anna Maria, “Some literary influences in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich”, *Leeds studies in English and kindred languages* 7 and 8, 1952, pp. 18 - 28.

have read Chaucer's translation of *Boethius*. There are signs of her knowing Augustine and Anselm, and of using the philosophical categories of Aristotle and Aquinas. The editors describe at length the influence on Julian of the traditions of the vernicle legend and devotion to the sacred heart.<sup>47</sup>

Colledge and Walsh's view was received largely without critique for a number of years. Thus other Julian specialists have proceeded on the set of assumptions established by Colledge and Walsh.<sup>48</sup>

The problem with this view is that it goes against everything that we know about the state of education of women --lay and religious-- in the 14th century, not to mention what Julian herself and/or a scribe have to say. Thus, Marion Glasscoe, middle English scholar and editor of the S1 manuscript published in 1976, takes Julian's statement that she was unlettered at face value and argues that Julian was an uneducated laywoman who became an anchoress after receiving her visions. There is a textual difference in LT 2 between P and S1: whereas P states that "this revelation was made to a simple unlettered creature", S1 says that "these revelations were shown to a simple creature that could no letter",<sup>49</sup> a phrase which suggests more explicitly that Julian could not read or write in her own vernacular, let alone in Latin. Glasscoe holds that Julian used an amanuensis, and that her written style has all the marks of an author thinking aloud, with the effect of engaging the reader in creative primary mental process.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 36 - 37, 44 - 59; also their analysis of the text on pp. 732 - 733.

<sup>48</sup> For examples, MAISONNEUVE, Roland, *L'univers visionnaire de Julian of Norwich*, Paris, O.E.I.L., 1987, pp. 63 - 76; CLARK, John P. H., "Fiducia in Julian of Norwich, I", *The Downside review* 99, 335, 1981, pp. 97 - 98, NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom's daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, pp. 8 - 10.

<sup>49</sup> See COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 285, fn. 2 concerning S1 and S2, and GLASSCOE, 1976, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> GLASSCOE, 1976, pp. xviii - xix. Examples of scholars who have explored this oral dimension of Julian's written style include Felicity Riddy and Diane Krantz. Felicity Riddy argues that it is irrelevant whether Julian of Norwich was a nun prior to the visions or not because what is significant is that both nuns and devout aristocratic women participated in the same feminine literary culture. This literary culture, drawing from the clerical reading of texts, was a vernacular, oral and memorizing culture, sharing religious books in small reading groups by word of mouth: "The rhetoric of Julian's own prose must have been influenced by the habits of speech developed in 'holy dalyawns [conversation]' with her spiritual advisors and female friends", in RIDDY, Felicity, "'Women talking about the things of God': A late medieval sub-culture", in *Women and literature in Britain, 1150 - 1500*, ed. MEALE, Carol, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 114. Riddy's argument is all the more compelling in that it places Glasscoe's recognition of an oral tradition in Julian's prose rhythms within a vernacular theological community of women, and as Riddy puts it, challenges scholars such as Colledge and Walsh who "appropriate her book to a masculine clerical culture, analyzing the rhythms of her prose in terms of Latin rhetoric". RIDDY, 1993, pp. 112 - 113.

Diane Krantz offers a speculation based on literary structures of "enclosure" in the Long Text, to argue that Julian was a laywoman when and after she had the visions. Drawing on Riddy's analysis, she argues on the basis of traces of both oral and literate forms of expression in the Long Text that Julian must

Brant Pelphrey, Sr Benedicta Ward, Nicholas Watson, Frederick Bauerschmidt and others follow Glasscoe arguing that Julian was a laywoman prior to the visions with no education in Latin, although they differ among themselves on the question whether Julian could write and when she wrote the two texts. They identify evidence that argues against Colledge and Walsh's view that Julian was a nun prior to and following her reception of the showings.

Thus Pelphrey holds Glasscoe's view that Julian went from being a laywoman (not a nun and not educated at Carrow priory), to entering the anchorhold as a result of receiving the showings, where she wrote both the Short and Long Texts. He cites evidence from the life situations of Catherine of Siena and of Margery Kempe to argue that Julian of Norwich could also have been "illiterate" in the sense of not being lettered in Latin or even able to write in English, and so dependent on a scribe, and yet simultaneously "well-read" in having had scripture, theological and spiritual texts read to her.<sup>51</sup>

Historian and Anglican religious, Benedicta Ward, offers compelling evidence to argue that Julian could not have been a religious in her early life.<sup>52</sup> Her argument is based on internal and external evidence as well as the absence of evidence one might expect if Julian's early history had been associated with a religious house. Among other things, she points to a number of contexts in which, had Julian had a history as a Benedictine, it would have been made explicit in the historical record of that era. In its place there is silence. So for examples, the scribe who copied the Short Text describes Julian as a recluse and "devout woman" (ST 1), not as a sister in religion. The bequests left to Julian in the wills are all direct bequests, making no mention of Carrow or any other priory. If she were associated with a priory this would have been noted in the wills, as was the case with another solitary, Juliana Lampit. Nor is there any record of Julian at any priory. Ward

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have held the memory of the revelations for years by means of mnemonics without access to writing materials, until, fifteen years after the visions, she entered her enclosure where she "had time" to practise writing and compose the Long Text over the next five years in its final form. KRANTZ, M. Diane F., *The life and text of Julian of Norwich: The poetics of enclosure*, NY, Peter Lang, 1997, pp. 46 - 47. Krantz (following WATSON 1993, below) dates Julian's act of entering the anchorhold and living that vocation, some fifteen years after the visions in 1388, thus overcoming her prior psychological ambivalence around that vocation, in KRANTZ, 1997, pp. 46, 56. Like Riddy, Krantz reflects the secularity of textual studies which address theological dimensions of Julian's writing when she writes "The high proportion of priests and religious among those who study Julian both reflects what any critic should expect to find--that religious works interest religious people--and requires that one should scrutinize these editions for monolithic biases: do certain perceptions of what or why Julian wrote result from religious preconceptions of her editors?" pp. 6 - 7. The present study would agree, but want to apply that same critical question to secular, presumably "non-religious" studies of Julian as well.

<sup>51</sup> PELPHREY, 1982, pp. 26 - 28, also noting the mixture of oral and literate expression in the *Showings*. See also WARD, 1988, pp. 25 - 26.

<sup>52</sup> WARD, 1988, pp. 17 - 26.



notes, too, that if Julian had been associated with a Benedictine community, the community would have done two things in view of the respect in which Julian came to be held. With such a celebrated solitary among their numbers the priory would have ensured that her burial be on their grounds, and that copies of her *Showings* be made and kept in the scriptorium. The anonymity of her burial site must be reckoned with and the silence and disappearance of her work suggests that few copies were made. And the presence of Julian's mother among others and a secular priest (the parson, her curate) at her deathbed would not be customary for an enclosed religious or anchoress.<sup>53</sup>

Ward speculates further that Julian's background prior to receiving the visions and entering the anchorhold was as a wife, widow and perhaps even a mother of a child who died in the Black Death.<sup>54</sup> Her view that Julian's motherhood of God theology springs from this background, despite Ward's own acknowledgement of Julian's relationship with her own mother which "shows no warmth at all", suggesting that Julian's "own mother totally misunderstood her", is questionable in terms of its psychological credibility.<sup>55</sup> Ward downplays the value which any education at a religious house might have had. She sees Julian rather as a literate laywoman writing in the vernacular for solitaries and the laity, part of a "close-knit network of solitaries" and spiritual individualists in England at that time, rather than as a nun writing for other nuns.<sup>56</sup>

However, the idea that Julian has been deeply affected by grief in her personal history is significant. What Pelphrey wrote in 1989 remains very significant:

...Julian wrote especially for women, and particularly for women who suffer from exploitation or from situations of hopelessness or helplessness. More needs to be said along these lines.... Julian will be especially helpful, too, to those readers who grieve for loved ones or who themselves face the prospect, as she put it, of 'an end to this mortal life'.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> On this subject see Colledge and Walsh's evidence of relaxed practices in the covents by the late middle ages to defend their view, in COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> WARD, 1988, p. 24. Others who think similarly include PELPHREY, 1982, p. 270; and McAVOY, Liz, "'The Moders service': Motherhood as matrix in Julian of Norwich", *Mystics quarterly* 24, 1998, p. 183.

<sup>55</sup> WARD, 1988, p. 24. See Christopher Abbott's argument that those, such as Ward, who speculate, on the basis of her motherhood-of-God theme, that Julian may have borne children are on pretty shaky ground. Most human beings have some idea of what a mother is, and we ought to bear in mind that Julian's description of God's motherliness is written, as it were, from the *child's* side,

in ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, Cambridge, Brewer, 1999, p. 2, emphasis his.

<sup>56</sup> WARD, Benedicta, "Lady Julian and her audience: 'mine even-Christian'", in *The English religious tradition and the genius of Anglicanism*, ed. ROWELL, Geoffrey, Wantage, Ikon, 1993, pp. 47 - 63.

<sup>57</sup> PELPHREY, Brant, *Christ our mother: Julian of Norwich*, Wilmington Delaware, Michael Glazier, 1989, p. 15.

Bauerschmidt's focus on the symbolic liminality of the vocation of anchoress leads him to read her early desire for a bodily sickness and the last rites as an indication of her early desire as a laywoman, educated in the vernacular, for the anchoritic vocation. He holds that she became an anchoress in response to the bodily sickness, her reception of extreme unction and visions. At that time "it was widely and erroneously held that the... reception of extreme unction was a sort of ordination or consecration, cutting the recipient off from the normal activities of life, even should they recover".<sup>58</sup> Thus, Bauerschmidt argues that Julian's statement that she hoped to live more to the worship of God because of that sickness (LT 2) could well indicate

that she saw her reception of the last rites as a kind of consecration. In any case... if her fellow citizens shared the common view of the effects of extreme unction, then even prior to her enclosure as an anchoress she would have been marked for them... as a kind of... sacred intruder from the land of the dead.<sup>59</sup>

Grace Jantzen gives a list of alternative life styles which have been variously proposed to account for the belief that Julian received instruction, could probably read and write in the vernacular, and perhaps could read some Latin, at least by the time of the Long Text, though was not a nun.<sup>60</sup> Apart from being a nun, or a married widow and mother, Julian might have been a Béguine (as the one and only house of Béguines in England at that time was in Norwich), or a devout woman of independent means, or a single laywoman looking after her mother until she herself became sick.<sup>61</sup> Although she is unwilling to take any final position, Jantzen does observe two reasons for supposing that Julian had already made the anchoritic life her state of life *prior to* her visions:

First is the depth and profundity of her prayer life and devotion to Christ, who was her entire focus already at the time of her illness. It is clear that this depth of prayer had been developed over some considerable time; and although it is... possible that this could occur in a secular situation (or in a convent) it might well be thought that this points already to the life of deep devotion of a recluse. The second reason is the negative consideration of [how Julian was living a retired life of prayer and

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<sup>58</sup> DUFFY, Eamon, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England c. 1400 - 1580*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 313.

<sup>59</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 78.

<sup>60</sup> JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 25, 29, who holds that Julian was from a wealthier class and likely received an education as a girl at the Carrow school, p. 18. This, she acknowledges, is in spite of the historians' view that by that time such an education for religious women or girls from the laity would not amount to much beyond embroidery. See POWER, Eileen, *Medieval English nunneries c. 1275 to 1535*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, [1922] 1964, p. 168n.

<sup>61</sup> JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 22, 25. See BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian of Norwich: Writer and mystic", in *An introduction to the medieval mystics of Europe*, ed. SZARMACH, Paul, Albany, SUNY, 1984, p. 196, and BEER, Frances, *Women and mystical experience in the middle ages*, Suffolk, Boydell and Brewer, 1992, p. 130. Julian explicitly refers to her mother being at her bedside during her illness in the Short Text.

meditation all the time she was composing the two texts]: if she was not an anchoress, what was she?<sup>62</sup>

Most of the arguments that fall into this second perspective on Julian, as having been a laywoman in her early years, at least initially uneducated in Latin, and differing on the issue whether she was literate in the vernacular, tend to revolve around questions concerning the social class from which Julian came if she were educated in Latin as a nun or as a laywoman in the context of a priory school, which would affect assumptions about the audience to which she was therefore speaking through her writings, and thus also affect interpretations of the theology of salvation which she was expressing through the two texts. These arguments also imply or express explicitly a critique of any historical method of source study which assumes a clerical theological appropriation of her theology, in the face of Julian's vernacular background.

Pelphrey says any argument that she was educated in a religious house assumes that she came from an elite class, and holds that her anonymity, the bequests, and her repeated phrase "*even Christians*" as consequently referring only to the highest classes, are surely evidence against this view. He argues that Julian never refers to any of the trappings associated with the religious life, but "on the contrary, she continually refers to her *even Christians*--implying, in the parlance of her time, that she was a laywoman writing for other layfolk, rather than a nun writing for other contemplatives".<sup>63</sup> Actually this is not quite true. As regards Julian's audience, Windeatt observes that Julian's aim in the Long Text is not to talk just to her fellow contemplatives but to simple folk, since she makes revisions from the Short Text in which her experience is described as relating specifically to contemplatives, to be more inclusive of a general audience in the Long Text. Windeatt cites two examples in the Short Text where a third person reference to "every man and woman... who desires to live contemplatively" (ST 4), and "every contemplative soul" (ST 13), as revised in the Long Text, either does not limit the address, or is replaced by a first person plural "our soul". (LT 5.)<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 24-25. The article by BAKER, Denise, "Julian of Norwich and anchoritic literature", *Mystics quarterly* 19, 4, 1993, pp. 148 - 160, would give further weight to this view.

<sup>63</sup> PELPHREY, 1982, pp. 17 - 18, 22.

<sup>64</sup> WINDEATT, B. A., "Julian of Norwich and her audience", *Review of English studies* new series 28, 1977, pp. 6 - 7. On p. 3 Windeatt observes that there is a consistent shift from the Short Text to the Long Text toward greater universalism with regard to her audience. According to Windeatt, this shift is from greater self-preoccupation, anxiety about her position as author, insecurity and sense of the otherness of sinners in the Short Text, toward a more universalist position in the Long Text, in which she reduces attention to the particularities of her personal selfhood, she is more confident of her authorial position and understanding of her material, and, her occasional aloofness is cast aside in favour of accepting and uniting herself with simple folk.

This could suggest that Julian's early adult life, prior to the visions, was formed by her participation in the monastic life, in some form of enclosed contemplative community. However, Nicholas Watson, who sees his own argument as complementary to that of Benedicta Ward, wants to make more precise links "between Julian's development and the religious climate of her day".<sup>65</sup> He regards the writing of the Short Text as taking place in Julian's early years of anchoritic enclosure, and reflecting the newer influences on her of, and her anxieties about, the anchoritic tradition and community.<sup>66</sup> The subsequent Long Text revisions toward universalism would reflect, in her mature years of enclosure as an anchoress, her daily exposure and accessibility to the laity seeking her for counsel at her anchorhold window.<sup>67</sup> Watson's own view of Julian's learning runs a middle way between Colledge and Walsh and Glasscoe, accounting for both Julian's early lack of learning and her later learning of orthodox doctrine however this was acquired.<sup>68</sup>

With the current rise in recognition of the genre of "vernacular theology" as a distinct tradition within the late middle ages, along with scholastic and monastic traditions of theological literature,<sup>69</sup> Julian specialists are paying more nuanced attention to the kinds of literature and prayer which would be customary for laywomen as well as nuns and anchoresses in the late 14th century. Thus, as noted above, Glasscoe presents a strong case for the laity as receiving religious instruction in the vernacular and using primers to pray, as the anchorites did, the episodes of the Passion on the canonical hours.<sup>70</sup> On the

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<sup>65</sup> WATSON, Nicholas, "The composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", *Speculum* 68, 3, 1993, p. 673.

<sup>66</sup> WATSON, 1993, pp. 673 - 674, fn. 86. More recently Watson has changed his view, and now sees the Julian of the Short Text as having been a nun, and only in the longer version as an anchorite, in WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> By contrast, COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 215, argue that the ancestor of all three of the Long Text manuscripts has been edited for a more secular readership.

<sup>68</sup> WATSON, 1993, p. 676, fn. 87 gives textual evidence for Julian's lack of early education both in her "reliance on priestly storytelling" for the formative experience which led Julian to seek the three wounds, and in the poor Latin preserved in her response to the first visionary experience (in P but corrected in S1), "*Benedicite Dominus*", in LT 4. On the other hand, he says, unlike other works by continental visionaries dependent on clerical amanuenses who tend to make their presence felt, Julian's texts do not have this quality.

<sup>69</sup> See MCGINN, Bernard, "Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the context of vernacular theology", in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine mystics*, ed. MCGINN, Bernard, NY, Continuum, 1994, pp. 4 - 14; also WATSON, Nicholas, "Censorship and cultural change in late-medieval vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel's constitutions of 1409", *Speculum* 70, 4, 1995, pp. 823 - 824, and by the same author, "Visions of inclusion: Universal salvation and vernacular theology in pre-reformation England", *Journal of medieval and early modern studies* 27, 2, 1997, pp. 145 - 146.

<sup>70</sup> See GLASSCOE, 1993, p. 30 and by the same author, "Time of Passion: Latent relationships between liturgy and meditation in two middle English mystics", in *Langland, the mystics and the medieval English*

other hand Denise Baker argues, on the basis of a comparison of Julian's text with Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum* a 12th century text of guidance for anchoresses, that Julian's third request for the grace of three wounds reflects exactly the three stage tradition of spiritual development, a progression from the affective (contrition), to the moral (compassion), to the contemplative (longing with the will for God).<sup>71</sup> Since these practices as applied to the laity in England by the late 14th century would only have included the first two stages, Julian's third wound of longing for God, a prayer for mystical union, would not be customarily practised by the laity.<sup>72</sup> This leads Baker to think that Julian was in some kind of vowed life, whether as nun or anchoress, prior to her visions.<sup>73</sup>

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*religious tradition, essays in honour of S. S. Hussey*, ed. PHILIPS, Helen, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1990, pp. 141 - 160.

<sup>71</sup> BAKER, 1993, pp. 153 - 154, 158.

<sup>72</sup> BAKER, 1993, pp. 154 - 155, 158. Here, Baker draws on the work of Elizabeth Salter's survey of Latin and vernacular devotional texts, from the 11th through the 15th centuries, showing that "systematic meditation originally followed this three-stage progression from the affective, to the moral, to the contemplative" as practised by religious and anchorites, but as meditation became more popular with the laity, "the final goal of contemplation was omitted". See SALTER, Elizabeth, "Nicholas Love's *Myrroure of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ*", ed. HOGG, James, Institut für englische Sprache und Literatur, Salzburg, Universität Salzburg, 1974, pp. 134, 172 - 178. *Analecta cartusiana* 10.

Elizabeth Salter's study of Nicholas Love's vernacular translation of pseudo-Bonaventuran meditations on the sacred humanity of Christ, shows how he repeatedly omitted sections of the *Meditationes* dealing with the contemplative life to focus on its affective and moral uses. Interestingly, however, Salter writes that Love "showed that he was fully conscious of the third 'fruit' of meditation; in a passage, as far as can be known original to him, he described accurately the spiritual joy which succeeds deep meditation on the Passion". (SALTER, 1974, p. 177.) Nicholas Love is quoted:

Sothely this sizt of oure Lorde Jesu hangynge so on the crosse / by deuoute ymaginacioun of the soule is so deuoute to some creatures that after longe exercise of sorwefull compassioun they felen some tyme so grete likynge / nouzt only in soule but also in the body / that they kan not telle / and that no man may knowe but onely he that by experience feleth it...

LOVE, Nicholas, *Myrroure of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ*, eds. HOGG, James and Lawrence POWELL, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1989, p. 244, *Analecta Carthusiana* 91.

Truly this sight, on the part of the soul's devout imagination, of our Lord Jesus hanging thus on the cross is so devout to some creatures that after long exercise of sorrowful compassion they feel such great delight at times that they cannot describe and that no one can know except the one who by experience feels it... (My translation)

Could Julian be behind this "original" comment in Love's translation, published as it was in 1410?

<sup>73</sup> BAKER, 1993, p. 158. Baker's conclusion is cautious, that "prior to her visionary experience of 1373, she was familiar with tenets of medieval spirituality identified with vowed religious, including anchorites".

Note also that in Baker's 1994 book *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From vision to book*, Baker observes from sources contemporary with Julian such as Richard Rolle and Nicholas Love how the terms "simple" and "unlettered" were undergoing transitions in meaning to indicate affective rather than intellectual texts and could refer to literate audiences. On p. 11 Baker concludes:

Phrases similar to Julian's '*symple creature vnlettyrde*' thus seem to be conventional signals of devotional discourse rather than descriptions of the educational achievements of their readers. Even though this evidence does not resolve the question of whether she could read Latin or only English,

Despite the refinement of historical analysis, then, the verdict is still out on Julian's state of life and education prior to her visionary experience. On the whole, however, in the last few years the tide in Julian scholarship has shifted increasingly toward accepting the view that Julian knew only the English vernacular, and that she was a devout laywoman by background, prior to entering the anchorhold, whether her change in state of life was before or after she had the visions.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4.0 The composition and dating of the texts

A subcategory of conflicting views has developed concerning when and how the Short and Long Texts were composed. It is almost universally held that the Short Text is an earlier version of the Long Text and not a subsequent abridgement of it. The reason for this view has to do with what Julian herself says about receiving a deeper understanding of the original vision in the Long Text. The Short Text does not contain the *exemplum* of the lord and servant or the theological reflection on the Trinity and the motherhood of Christ, which amount to a substantial amplification of Julian's final three revelations.<sup>75</sup>

In the first chapter of the Long Text, a summary of the contents of the rest of the chapters, the absence of reference to the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant and to the theological material on the motherhood of Jesus has led Colledge and Walsh to posit a theory that the Long Text was composed in two stages, with an intermediate edition of the Long Text which did not yet include this material from the fourteenth revelation, and the "final" edition sometime after she received her insight into the meaning of the *exemplum* in 1393. The intermediate edition is inferred from an account of a subsequent revelation in the last chapter of the Long Text, where Julian writes:

From the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning

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it does undermine the view that Julian of Norwich was unable to read or write in any language. Her silence about an amanuensis... gives further warrant to the conclusion that Julian not only composed but also inscribed and revised her own text.

It is Baker's thesis however, that Julian moves from an affective visionary experience in the Short Text to a theologically educated interpretation of it in the Long Text, though how Julian would have got that education is unknown. BAKER, 1994, pp. 12 - 14.

<sup>74</sup> Thus even BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 207, who clearly respects Colledge and Walsh, argues for a "least common denominator" procedure, in trying to locate Julian within the medieval theological tradition: "In other words, there is no reason to posit her having read Augustine's *De Trinitate* when we can find the outline of an Augustinian understanding of the Trinity in a source such as John Mirk's *Festial*, a collection of vernacular sermons", i.e., the sort of teaching likely to have been heard from English pulpits of the time.

<sup>75</sup> The exception to this view of the sequence of the Short Text preceding the Long Text in composition is the argument by Julia Bolton Holloway which was discussed above. She argued the sequence as W, A and then the long text, first in her article "Chronicles of a mystic", *The tablet*, 11 May 1996, pp. 610 - 611.

in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. (What did he reveal to you? Love.) Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end.

So I was taught that love is our Lord's meaning. (LT 86.)<sup>76</sup>

The final edition is inferred from what Julian writes in LT 51, the long chapter in which Julian narrates and reflects on the showing she received concerning what she calls the "example" of the servant and the lord:

For twenty years after the time of the revelation except for three months, I received an inward instruction, and it was this: You ought to take heed to all the attributes, divine and human, which were revealed in the example, though this may seem to you mysterious and ambiguous. (LT 51.)

Based on these texts and their chronological references, Colledge and Walsh argue that the composition of the Short Text dates from sometime soon after Julian received the showings in 1373.<sup>77</sup>

Nicholas Watson also holds to a processual view of the composition of the Long Text, but dates both the Short Text and the Long Text much later in Julian's life as an anchoress than do Colledge and Walsh. The prevailing "bias" in favour of an early dating of the Short Text is not unrelated to Colledge and Walsh's desire to authenticate Julian's visions as divinely inspired, says Watson.<sup>78</sup> Watson prefers to want to show that "neither Julian nor her book were impervious to history".<sup>79</sup> He argues that the English conservatism with regard to visionary experiences (as compared with the situation on the continent), combined with her consequent sense of isolation as a writer of her experience, would have impeded Julian's confidence in writing, up to fifteen years after her visionary experience.<sup>80</sup> He cites evidence in the Short Text that would suggest that the time of recording the event was at some distance from the event of revelation itself.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, in chapter one of the Short Text only, Julian seems to be assuring her readers of her orthodoxy regarding the use of images, which Watson takes to be an attempt to defuse any potential charge of Lollardy, a movement, following John Wyclif, known for its critique of the use of images. External historical evidence would suggest that such a statement would

<sup>76</sup> The bracketed sentences are collations from S1 inserted into Colledge and Walsh's edition of P.

<sup>77</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, pp. 19, 25.

<sup>78</sup> WATSON, 1993, pp. 640 - 641.

<sup>79</sup> WATSON, 1993, p. 683.

<sup>80</sup> See Nicholas Watson's argument, in WATSON, 1993, pp. 657 - 672. By contrast, Colledge and Walsh argue that Julian wrote the Short Text immediately after the visions in 1373 and thus prior to her becoming an anchoress.

<sup>81</sup> WATSON, 1993, p. 658. See ST 11, "...this has *always* been a comfort to me, that I chose Jesus as my heaven in all time of suffering and of sorrow. And that *has taught* me that I should always do so..." and likewise, ST 6, "...in the *first* moment when I saw it..."

only make sense after the Blackfriars Council of 1382, when the question of images became a controversy.<sup>82</sup> Thus Watson dates the Short Text at no earlier than 1382, and no later than 1388, when Julian received that further enlightenment as to the meaning of the revelation, quoted above from LT 86, but not in the Short Text.<sup>83</sup> Watson holds that the composition of the Long Text was begun at the earliest in 1393, twenty years after the visionary experience (LT 51), when Julian's understanding of the *exemplum* of the servant and the lord was deepened, but that this life work could have continued to be written as late as 1415 in the ripeness of years. The fact that the Short Text was copied as late as 1413 may even indicate that she was still writing the Long Text. Thus Watson makes much of the chapter heading of the last chapter in the Long Text, that this is a book which is "not yet performed", to argue that the Long Text was a life-long project for Julian.<sup>84</sup> One of the advantages of Watson's argument for a later date of composition for the Long Text is that it allows for the greater possibility of influence on Julian by the writings of the European mystics as these became more available in vernacular translation.<sup>85</sup>

I believe Watson's redating of the Short Text would seem to make more sense of certain larger movements in the historical context in which Julian was writing. At the same time, I can see Lawlor's explanation that Julian would be obliged to her superiors to give an account of this extraordinary visionary experience, all the more so because of English conservatism in that regard; an account that would be characterized by "simplicity and brevity, and where content is concerned, an emphasis on what had been revealed as distinct from the author's meditation upon it. These are the qualities of Amherst".<sup>86</sup> And that the Short Text would be the version copied as late as 1413 could be due, among other reasons, to the fact that the control of publication of the Long Text was not in Julian's hands.

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<sup>82</sup> Watson's argument is extensive, in WATSON, 1993, pp. 659 - 666.

<sup>83</sup> WATSON, 1993, pp. 664, 667.

<sup>84</sup> WATSON, 1993, pp. 678, 681 - 682. See LT 86.

<sup>85</sup> However, see Aers and Staley's response that Julian's "often radical vernacular theology is most unlikely to have been possible after Arundel's Constitutions of 1407/9", in AERS, David and Lynn STACEY, *Powers of the holy*, Pennsylvania Park PN, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, p. 79, fn. 4. Then again, as Bauerschmidt contends, this may well account not for the *production* of the theology of the Long Text but rather for its lack of *distribution*. The paucity of medieval manuscripts of the Long Text suggests that it was never published. BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 208 - 209. Lawlor's article already in 1951 makes this distinction, though within the context of a different argument, in LAWLOR, John, "Notes and observations: a note on the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich" *Review of English studies*, n.s. 2, 7, 1951, p. 256. Watson continues to defend his position in WATSON, Nicholas, "Censorship and cultural change in late-medieval England: vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel's constitutions of 1409", *Speculum* 70, 4, 1995, p. 850, fn. 80.

<sup>86</sup> LAWLOR, 1951, p. 257.



Perhaps, however, Watson's and Lawlor's views of A are not finally mutually exclusive, as we have no idea how long it took her to compose. As to the composition of the Long Text, I am inclined to follow Watson's dating. As Bauerschmidt observes

If the long text was written in 1393, when Julian was only fifty, it leaves us wondering whether Julian abandoned the minute meditation on her visions. However, if she was still working on it in her seventies (as Watson's dating would indicate), then we would read the long text as a life-project, what Lynn Staley has described as "a text for a life".<sup>87</sup>

## 5.0 Summary

To summarize what has become a complex web of arguments in recent Julian scholarship concerning her education, early state of life, her and other related historiographical questions, Bauerschmidt is helpful in his succinct description of the implications of these two disparate lines of reading of Julian's early history. He observes of Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Augustinian and Jesuit, respectively, by background) that "[t]heir critical edition clearly wishes to vindicate the orthodoxy of Julian's theology by placing her firmly within the Western medieval theological tradition" and highlights how their procedure, of "literally embedding the text of Julian's *Revelation* within extensive notes that point to parallels in both Latin and English theological works", is an extension of their interpretive lens. By contrast, Bauerschmidt says, "[i]t is perhaps no accident that her [Glasscoe's] edition of the long text (in contrast to Colledge and Walsh's edition) is without any critical apparatus or references to other texts", which accords with Glasscoe's estimation of Julian as less concerned with Christian doctrine than with her insight into the inner realities of human existence.<sup>88</sup>

Michael Wright sees this "battle of appropriations" as reflecting contemporary hermeneutical differences.

What is at stake in the question of Julian's early knowledge of Latin is our understanding of her both as a figure in her own time, and as a writer of spiritual significance to a number of contemporary readers. Are the visionary experience and, more significantly, Julian's understanding of it, the product of a lay female piety, formed to some extent outside formal ecclesiastical institutions though of such significance as to provoke a conversion to the most individualistic of the orders; or do we have the record of the experience of one already professed to the contemplative life? The resolution of the question will determine the historical context from which we may consider Julian's willingness to instruct, or even to

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<sup>87</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 208. See JOHNSON, Lynn Staley, "The trope of the scribe and the question of literary authority in the works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe", *Speculum* 66, 1991, p. 833. Watson's hypothesis is gaining acceptance in recent Julian scholarship. See for example, ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, pp. 234 - 238.

<sup>88</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 205.

write; her intended audience; and her theological assumptions, most notably the question of universalism. For readers to whom Julian is our contemporary, one would assume that her status as a theologian of a somewhat unchurchly spirituality is at issue.<sup>89</sup>

In effect, Wright is arguing that the current interest in Julian as a vernacular writer, represented by Glasscoe and others, reduces to an interest in lay piety which excludes a serious recognition of her as a theologian, by scholars sympathetic to what he calls an “unchurchly spirituality” in their hermeneutical perspective. Not surprisingly then, Wright’s argument that Julian *did* know Latin leads him to the conclusion that Julian’s reference to her audience as her *even* Christians is to other contemplatives; that “she is writing of and for people like herself, embarked on the pursuit of perfection and for whom salvation should not be a daily issue”.<sup>90</sup> It seems to me however as will be developed below, that Julian *was* preoccupied with the problem of salvation. Moreover, even Julian’s own mature discourse supports a rather different view, of her “having little interest in stages of spiritual progress”.<sup>91</sup> While I do recognize the differences of readings which these ambiguities in Julian’s background open up, I do not hold that the current hermeneutical pluralism with regard to Julian studies need be regarded in such oppositional terms of a “battle of appropriations”.

Everyone who reads Julian of Norwich is struck by the rich allusions to scripture throughout the texts, though she rarely quotes scripture directly. The same can be said for her drawing on spiritual classics and theologians of the time, particularly in the anchoritic and vernacular traditions of piety and theology. Strains of the scholastic and monastic theological heritage echo through her work as well, even if these may have been more oral than literary influences. The variety of studies reviewed above shows that Julian has been deeply influenced by the rich and conflicting religious currents of her age. It helps us to humanize her by locating her in her cultural context. It also begins to help us clarify in what ways she saw and spoke differently from her environment. What is incontestable even in view of all the possible influences on her work is the theological and literary

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<sup>89</sup> WRIGHT, 1993, pp. 37 - 38.

<sup>90</sup> WRIGHT, 1993, p. 44.

<sup>91</sup> This view is held by Frederick Bauerschmidt in his “Seeing Jesus: Julian of Norwich and the text of Christ’s body”, *Journal of medieval and early modern studies* 27, 2, 1997, p. 204; drawing on TUGWELL, Simon, *Ways of imperfection: An exploration of Christian spirituality*, Springfield IL, Templegate, 1985, p. 187.

originality of these texts<sup>92</sup> and their powerful integration of theological questions into a fundamentally prayerful and practical mystical and theological vision.

At the same time, the very variety and conflict to be found in the religious-cultural context of the late 14th century in England is a different, yet similar mirror reflection of the diversity in historical source studies and the pluralism of the contemporary scholastic community generally. In this respect, I have difficulty with Bauerschmidt's concern to identify Julian as a vernacular theologian over against her being a writer of "monastic theology... scholastic theology, and *especially not 'devotional' literature*".<sup>93</sup> Her authorial mediation in the texts is both theological and devotional, a reading which is better preserved by Derek Anderson's four trajectories for reading Julian, as will become evident below. Even if one wishes to "appropriate" Julian strictly as a theologian, new questions arise: To which theology is this author appropriating Julian? How faithfully can this theology respond to the practice of living the Christian spiritual life (the mystical tradition) on its own terms? Any serious historical, theological study must now come clean as to its own hermeneutical interests which provide the horizon of the world before the text of the interpreter.

It is clear that Julian has mastered the practice of effacing details about herself in the texts, hence this variety of conclusions to which Julian scholars have come as to her intellectual biography, her state of life prior to the documentation of her being an anchoress, the dating of her entrance into that form of contemplative life and the dating of the composition of the texts.

Bauerschmidt observes concerning the outline of what we know about Julian of Norwich that it is more a delineation of options than a description: "Interpretive choices must be made at almost every point and these choices have important consequences for

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<sup>92</sup> Bhattacharji has carefully shown this, using a methodology of "establishing what [Julian] has in common with others, in what she is *not* original", in order to pinpoint where Julian's thought is unprecedented in medieval literature, in BHATTACHARJI, Santha, "Independence of thought in Julian of Norwich", *Word and spirit* 11, 1989, p. 79.

<sup>93</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 211, emphasis added. On the following page he writes, It is important to identify Julian as a *theologian* rather than a devotional writer because one should approach *A revelation of love* without either premature reverence, as if it were the direct outgrowth of a self-authenticating and unassailable religious experience, or premature scorn, as if it were *merely* the direct outgrowth of a self-authenticating and unassailable religious experience. God seldom speaks in Julian's book. The revelation makes little pretense of immediacy and Julian is very conscious of her mediating role as a theologian. (Emphasis in text.)

Bauerschmidt contrasts the "ambiguity of authorship" present in other medieval women theologians, but does this ambiguity make them any less theologians? He cites Julian as negotiating three factors: natural reason, the normal teaching of holy Church and the inward working of the Holy Spirit. (LT 80.) It seems to me that by that late date in the composition of the Long Text, Julian is flexible about moving among all three.

how one reads *A revelation of divine love*".<sup>94</sup> Thus, in the same way, I turn in the final paragraphs of this chapter to outline the most important interpretive choices that underlie my reading of Julian. My reasons for these choices will become evident in the course of the thesis.

## 6.0 Interpretive choices underlying my reading of Julian

At the end of section 4.0 above, I spoke of my position concerning the dating of the composition of the two texts. Particularly concerning the Long Text, it seems increasingly evident that Julian never stopped meditating and working on this text, so an early date of completing the composition seems less and less likely.

As for Julian's early education, I tend to agree with Watson, Bauerschmidt, Baker and others that vernacular sources can account for much of Julian's educational background, that she was not educated in Latin, but that her intelligence and the literary attention expressed in the *Showings* suggest she could read and write in her own vernacular by the time of composing the Short Text, and that she continued to learn throughout her life. The extreme views of Colledge and Walsh, Wright, Reynolds and Holloway and others (seeing Julian as formally educated in Latin from an early age) and of Glasscoe, Pelphrey and others (that she was illiterate) do not fit the entire picture received in the texts themselves. I agree with Bauerschmidt and Watson that Julian is to be understood in the context of English vernacular theology, because of Julian's writing in the vernacular, and her intended audience.<sup>95</sup>

Ward's view of Julian's formation as resulting from her participation in a network of solitaries (particularly in view of the individualism of the English eremitic tradition as Ward herself describes it), and Riddy's argument that what matters more than whether Julian was lay or religious is her having participated in a devout women's orally shared literary group, in which the literature would have been common to both states of life, are interesting in this respect, that they attempt to place Julian within a supportive community of like minded people.

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<sup>94</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 211. Significantly, Bauerschmidt leaves to the last chapter of his study his own assessment of Julian's background.

<sup>95</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 211. On the meaning of the term "vernacular theology" see WATSON, Nicholas, "Visions of inclusion: Universal salvation and vernacular theology in pre-reformation England", *Journal of medieval and early modern studies*, 27, 2, 1997, pp. 145 - 146 and also his "Conceptions of the Word: The mother tongue and the incarnation of God", in *New medieval literatures*, eds. SCASE, Wendy, Rita COPELAND, David LAWTON, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 89 - 90. See also MCGINN, Bernard, "Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the context of vernacular theology", in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine mystics*, ed. MCGINN, Bernard, NY, Continuum, 1994, pp. 4 - 14 who first coined the term.

However, I am suggesting that neither talking or reading *about* God with others nor being given advice *about* God is adequate to explain what I will argue are the signs of an invisible *empathic, encouraging and formative relational presence* behind Julian's visions and, over time, her creative soteriological appropriation of the mirroring function of the Jesus of her showings. Moreover, I do not find convincing Ward's speculation that Julian got her education in effect as a mother and widow, though the experience of grief is certainly present. To think that mothering children, and table talk with an "averagely devout husband" could provide her with the background reflected in the *Showings*, as Ward would have it, is not, in my view, compelling.<sup>96</sup> Julian's vocation, her theology, would have been written silently into her children's flesh, not into a manuscript.<sup>97</sup>

As for her state of life prior to the illness and visionary experience of 1373, the textual evidence of Julian's third request for the three wounds/graces as having been made prior to this time and continually desired thereafter, suggests that she was actively using the resources at hand for a contemplative life of prayer. The practice of imaginative, affective Franciscan meditation on the Passion of Christ was already a lively element of that prayer life. Colledge and Walsh's view that Julian had been saturated from an early age in the "old-fashioned", pre-scholastic monastic tradition of *lectio divina* may well be accurate,<sup>98</sup> though given the widespread cultural interest in the spiritual life, this, and other, more visual, methods of appropriating the faith which will be explored further below, may have been taught to her.

We receive the picture of an already very devout woman by the time of her illness and visionary experience, who is well accustomed to the practice of confession and of receiving spiritual counsel, though with the gamut of questions which has been raised about her early state of life, not enough attention has been spent on the role of her advisors and friends in the spiritual life. Would there have been a difference in the nature of the

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<sup>96</sup> WARD, 1988, pp. 24 - 26.

<sup>97</sup> I note here the article by LICHTMANN, Maria, "I *desyrede a bodylye syght*': Julian of Norwich and the body", *Mystics quarterly* 17, 1, 1991, p. 18 who writes: "Unlike Margery Kempe, for whom chastity after bearing 14 children has become an obsessional issue, Julian sees birthing as a divine function, in that Jesus as true Mother carries us, bears us forth, and nourishes us". Lichtmann's comment about Kempe here is psychologically realistic, but she does not apply the same psychological realism to Julian. The psychobiographical question remains whether or in what way Julian's preoccupation with the adequacy of the functions of motherhood in the Jesus of her visions might also have a psychological referent in her early childhood experience.

<sup>98</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1976, pp. 420, 424.

relationship she would have had with a spiritual counsellor or director, depending on whether she were a member of a religious order or a devout laywoman or an anchoress?<sup>99</sup>

This question again puts the focus on what the *relational context* of her formation in the discipline of prayer was, rather than the content of her reading *per se*. It seems to me the nature and influence of this or these unseen relationship(s) with a confessor and spiritual director have not been explored adequately. A psychobiographical study gives us the opportunity to attempt to explore the traces of this relational context. Too little attention has been paid to the possibility and nature of a long-term relationship with a confessor and/or someone who functioned as a spiritual director, and its effect on her, but I sense this is very significant context for her learning of both piety and theology prior to and following the visionary experience. Evidence both from her book and from what historical interpreters of the period offer is scanty, but will be discussed below, as well as what we know of other women recluses. In the psychobiographical analysis which follows however, it will be the particular qualities of the intensely personal, intimate relationality in her meditational relationship with the Jesus of her showings which will be explored at length in this thesis to see what traces they may reveal of formative relationships in Julian's life.

I am impressed by the historical evidence Ward gives against Colledge and Walsh's argument that Julian had been a religious. Ward observes that in 14th century England

[t]he gap between the spirituality of the cloister and the hermitage was growing. The desire for intense prayer rarely led people into the cloistered life... But real spiritual vigour was beginning to be manifested in movements of lay piety rather

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<sup>99</sup> See JANTZEN, 1989, pp. 23, 35 who asserts that she must have had a confessor and spiritual director. Also Roland Maisonneuve writes in this regard, "Julienne eut des confesseurs..." See the introduction to his translation into French of the LT, in MAISONNEUVE, Roland, trad., *Julienne de Norwich: 'Le livre des révélations'*, Paris, Cerf, 1992, p. 10. On the other hand, recall RIDDY, 1993, p. 114 who draws on ST 16 to emphasize more the influence of female spiritual friends :

The rhetoric of Julian's own prose must have been influenced by the habits of speech developed in 'holy dalyawns' with her spiritual advisers and female friends. The latter presumably included the 'certayne personn' she loved and about whose spiritual progress she wanted assurance, and whom the Short Text reveals to have been a woman.

Then again there is Gilmore's take on the clerical confessional context of the production of Julian's texts, in GILMORE, Leigh, *Autobiographics: A feminist theory of women's self-representation*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 194, p. 117:

Julian interprets and represents *The Revelations* within the context of the confession she would later make. Her representation of the experience documents this regulatory presence and the extent to which she has internalized the demands of such policing. This internalization is demonstrated throughout *The Revelations* as she forms a judgment about her experience.

Abbott acknowledges Gilmore's position, though not its radical political implications, and does not distinguish further between the roles of confessor and spiritual father than to be that of giver of absolution and dispenser of advice respectively, in ABBOTT, 1999, p. 62 fn. 36.

than in the religious orders: the *Imitation of Christ* after all, came from Thomas à Kempis and belonged more to the *devotio moderna* than to the religious orders.<sup>100</sup>

Thus Ward asserts, “[i]t was not monks but laymen following the solitary life who were the recipients of advice about prayer”; the “stars” of the English mystics, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and the author of the *Cloud of unknowing* were all addressing their works to anchoresses. “It was not to the cloister but to the hermitage that their counsel was offered”.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Ann Warren has observed that while male anchorites tended to be clerics, female anchorites usually had *not* been nuns before their enclosure.<sup>102</sup> Glasscoe’s study of the literary evidence for lay education by that time lends further weight to the view that Julian had been a laywoman in her early years.<sup>103</sup> To be sure, Bernard McGinn argues for a “conversation” between the older monastic and scholastic theologies, on the one hand, and the new, vernacular mysticism, on the other.<sup>104</sup> All to say, that as a laywoman or anchoress in her earlier state of life before the time of the visions, Julian might have had considerable exposure to spiritual guide(s) who were monastic, clerical and anchoritic, open to the creativity and innovation of visionary experience.

Thus, I hold that Julian had not been a nun in her early years. Moreover, to date, I am inclined to find Jantzen’s hypothesis can best fit the evidence, that is, that Julian had been a laywoman who early on in her life felt called to enter the anchoritic life, *prior to* her visionary experience in 1373.<sup>105</sup> At least, I propose she was practising some form of reclusion, even if not yet enclosed in the anchorhold. The evidence I find most convincing to uphold this position is from Baker’s analysis of the influence of anchoritic literature in Julian’s texts themselves. As noted above, Baker observes that the presence in Julian’s prayer of the request for the third wound of longing with her will for God is indicative that Julian was familiar with the devotional practices of anchoritic spirituality prior to her visions.<sup>106</sup> Behind the presence of Julian’s familiarity with anchoritic literature prior to the visions then, the kind of counsel Julian might have received could very well reflect and

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<sup>100</sup> WARD, 1988, p. 16.

<sup>101</sup> WARD, 1988, pp. 16 - 17.

<sup>102</sup> WARREN, 1985, p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> GLASSCOE, 1993, p. 26.

<sup>104</sup> MCGINN, Bernard, *The flowering of mysticism: Men and women in the new mysticism 1200 - 1350*, NY, Crossroad, 1998, p. 23, The presence of God: A history of western Christian mysticism 3. This would certainly seem to be borne out by the various states of life of the “stars” of English 14th century mysticism themselves who were dispensing spiritual advice to anchoresses: Walter Hilton was a hermit, but later became an Augustinian canon. The debate is still out on the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* as to whether he was a secular priest or a contemplative monk. Richard Rolle broke off theological studies to become a hermit at the age of 18, and later died and was buried in a Cistercian convent.

<sup>105</sup> JANTZEN, 1989, pp. 24 - 25.

<sup>106</sup> BAKER, 1993, pp. 153 - 154, 158.

encourage not only the emphasis on contrition and compassion, which she has so obviously interiorized, but also one of contemplation, the tone of moderation and “relaxed common sense, not scrupulous anxiety” recommended in the rules for the anchoritic life.<sup>107</sup> Thus, I hold that Julian entered the anchorhold, or at least some initial practice of reclusion, earlier in her life, perhaps having already experienced a “spiritual crisis”, as Lawlor puts it, which drew her to this vocation, well before the time of her mortal illness.<sup>108</sup> But it seems to me that the crisis was not resolved, simply by being enclosed.

I believe this view makes better sense of the disparate bits of historical detail we glean from her text. Jantzen observes that the presence of others in an anchoress’ cell, in times of extremity, would not be implausible. There would in any event be the servant(s) attending the anchoress. The call for the curate, the priest of the parish church to which Julian’s cell was attached, would be a “local call” in such an emergency. It would make sense that the man of religion who comes later, and listens seriously to her description of her visionary experience, could well have been her confessor/spiritual director.<sup>109</sup>

I suggest then that it is in the anchorhold, or at least in a life of reclusion, perhaps within her family home, that Julian became mortally ill, and received the visionary experience, while meditating imaginatively on the crucifix placed before her, a practice with which she was already well familiar. Whether living in some form of informal reclusion or in the anchorhold, she has had the experience of the safe space of solitude, in which to develop her life of meditation on Christ’s humanity, under the guidance of a spiritual director and/or confessor, who provided a compassionate, relational context.

But is this all we can say about Julian of Norwich’s biography?

Everyone in 14th England was touched by the plague and the social and religious upheavals at that time. But it is Julian who was given to see and speak to the depthless pastoral need for God’s maternal comfort and compassion among her even Christians when Mother Church was not doing it, and to devote her later life to giving her showings a soteriological and trinitarian defense. Someone who has had “good enough mothering” would not be thus motivated to the same degree to address the soteriological crisis of credibility in the Church.

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<sup>107</sup> BHATTACHARJI, 1989, p. 80.

<sup>108</sup> In 1951, John Lawlor speculated that Julian was undergoing a “spiritual crisis” at the time she asked for the three graces and was either testing a vocation to the anchoritic life, or already an anchoress at the time of her visionary experience, in LAWLOR, 1951, p. 257.

<sup>109</sup> Colledge and Walsh hold that this religious person “knew her well and was prepared to give credence to what she might say”, in COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 168, though they argue that she was a nun prior to the visions. See RIDDY, 1993, pp. 114 - 115 for a rather more critical take on the assumptions that this person might make toward a woman having a visionary experience.



What would have motivated Julian to come up with the showings she had, and to devote the rest of her life to praying a form of *lectio divina* on them, and to writing and reflecting on their theological import? This is the question which seems to have been missing from the current retrieval of Julian of Norwich's original soteriology for theology today. This is the question to which, I believe, a psychobiographical study using relational psychoanalysis could be a very fruitful tool to develop a response.

### **7.0 The potential contribution of a relational psychoanalytic psychobiographical method**

The issue of the battle of appropriations, as Wright calls it, could be said to be itself a reflection of the central problem of this thesis: that is, the problem of the credibility in our own day of the medieval soteriological tradition of Anselm and successors, such that Julian of Norwich's soteriology is being retrieved both for a more comprehensive, theological appreciation of it, and for its usefulness as a resource for contemporary soteriology. If there is an "unchurchly" crowd appropriating Julian of Norwich it is perhaps because at some level she is speaking to people's needs, regardless of their churchly background. Rather than a situation requiring a response of "battle", it seems clearly to demand a response which can engage a correlative dialogue.

Julian has left us two texts, separated in time by at least twenty years, in which she writes uncommonly openly about her visionary experience and subsequent practice of meditating on those showings. By some historiographical criteria that is not much evidence for a biography. But by other criteria, namely psychobiographical criteria, what Julian has left us is a gold mine. The showings and Julian's subsequent meditations and theological reflections on them, viewed with a Winnicottian sensibility, constitute the witness of a long and evolving transitional space activity. As such, they are full of data and omissions which could be examined for traces of psychobiographical evidence.

In effect, to glean more knowledge of this person who wrote the *Showings*, and look back to speculate on Julian's history prior to their reception, this methodology enables us to see that there is much in what she does tells us about herself, but also much which can be discerned through her visionary experience. And we can look to her description of her visions of Christ to provide evidence of the psychodynamic function this plays in her conversion process.

Julian's showings, while they are very much divine gifts of grace, do not come out of nowhere historically, but are also intimately reflective of a personal and social historical context, which we can attempt to study. In imaginative meditation based on the sacred humanity of Christ, Julian's visionary relationship with the Jesus of her showings, as

Meissner suggests of prayer activity generally, takes on the pattern and quality of supplying what she lacks, or needs, reflecting very intimately and humanly critical elements of her personal, social and psychological history.

This approach takes seriously the method of psychobiography which is sensitive to the historical context of the subject. So, as well as being sensitive to women's and vernacular forms of spirituality in the fourteenth century, it will be aided, for example, by socio-historical research which has begun to investigate what the mothering practices of the late 14th England were and how they differed among the classes. What the evidence reveals is far from being a complete picture, but what it does reveal is not pretty. It may, however, provide new sources of psychohistorical evidence as to what Julian's earliest mothering experiences might have been, as well as from what class she may have come.

This psychobiographical approach will use object relations theory to draw out the significance of early maternal mirroring for the earliest foundation of the nascent sense of self and trust in the other -- and the effects of its absence. This approach, I argue, can give us insights into what her psychological preoccupations were in the years preceding the visions and provide a necessary psychobiographical, relational foundation for the activation of her theologically mirroring imagination during and after the visions.

At the same time, this approach to Julian also takes seriously the potential adequacy of the theology of revelation developed in the Franciscan and later Ignatian spiritual tradition which encourage imaginative affective meditation on the life, Passion and Resurrection of Christ. This theology of revelation recognizes both human agency and grace, and acknowledges that grace, in prayer activity, mirrors the subjectivity of the meditator and reveals her developmental and spiritual needs in that condition.

Precisely because of the distance in time between the Short Text and the Long Text, we are also given the data for a developmental approach to Julian's profile. For this reason, Kohut's three phases of therapeutic mirroring transference will be enlisted to help trace the transformative and developmental dimension of Julian's transitional relationship with the Jesus of her showings.

Moreover, the following study will use this methodology not simply to advance a psychobiographical profile, but to engage this, together with a sociohistorical sensibility, in furthering our understanding of the liberative conversion process in Julian's attitudes toward salvation, before, during and years after the occurrence of the showings. A psychobiographical method as applied to her writings can help us to see just how much she reveals about her early psychological disposition and preoccupations and their resolution in specific ways, as these are reflected in her lifelong thematic concern with sin, suffering, salvation and its appropriation, human self-knowledge and union with God in Christ. It is

these psychological dispositions and preoccupations and the patterns of resolution she adopts which might also have something to contribute to a fuller picture of both Julian's early life and her theological originality. The kind of correlation I am proposing takes seriously the signs of maturation both in Julian's psychodynamic need for mirroring, and in her creative struggle to appropriate a credible soteriology.

## CHAPTER 5

### JULIAN'S PRE-VISIONARY LIFE: ASPIRATIONS AND ANXIETY

#### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter traces a relational psychoanalytic psychobiographical profile of the pre-visionary life of Julian of Norwich, drawing on evidence which she gives in her two texts.

To begin, however, the reader is oriented to some of the working hypotheses which support this and subsequent chapters. Both theological and psychodynamic assumptions are briefly identified.

Julian begins her Short and Long Text by describing three graces she had asked for in her youth. Since this is the most Julian ever tells us about her past history, her description of these graces, and the differences in her description between the two texts, are explored for what they might also tell us about her psychobiographical history. Beyond this, I look to her accounts of her service in her youth, her relationships with identified others, and her particular expression of the cultural trope of modesty, for further clues as to her early narcissistic need for mirroring.

Many previous studies have interpreted the illness which Julian was suffering when she received her visionary experience. These are reviewed; then the approach of the present study is described. The mortal illness is understood as a limit situation which, with the presence of the crucifix, opened up a transitional space between inner and social worlds in which Julian expresses a psychodynamic pattern. The evidence of Julian's experiencing a recapitulation of her early lack of mirroring along with a loss of meaning suggests that the illness might have been prompted by a soteriological crisis which intensified the symptoms.

Finally, I draw a brief portrait of what Julian's early soteriological beliefs might have been.

#### 2.0 Working assumptions and hypotheses

This section orients to the major interdisciplinary assumptions which, taken together, ground the methodology of the present and subsequent chapters of analysis.

## 2.1 Theological assumptions and objectives

With Bernard Lonergan and Sebastian Moore I hold the assumption that conversion is the essential meaning-giver for the theologian.<sup>1</sup> This assumption orients us to look for signs of conversion *from* some prior, ambivalent belief(s) consciously or more likely unconsciously expressed, *to* other, more life-giving beliefs, more or less consciously expressed as the meaning of the conversion, or transformative experience.<sup>2</sup> The present chapter applies this orientation to Julian of Norwich and has as its objective the elucidation of what those early theological, and more specifically soteriological beliefs might have been in her case, prior to her reception of the visions.

The hypothesis I hold is that an inauthentic soteriology will have the effect of keeping the believer in a condition of social oppression and psychological isolation, of unconscious despair at his or her powerlessness to be situated anywhere else than among the damned, despite what the religious discourse and/or imagery may say. By contrast, the discourse and imagery of an authentic soteriology will engage and reflect on deep patterns engraved by one's social and psychological location and forge a liberating sense of personhood and destiny in relationship to a loving Other.

## 2.2 Psychodynamic assumptions

One basic psychodynamic assumption I hold with Freud and many others, is that the "structures, in terms of which personality organization and functioning can be analyzed, have a genetic history". More particularly, as Meissner puts it, "the shape of the faith experience as it evolves developmentally is contingent on and reflects, as well as conditions, the developmental vicissitudes of both narcissism and object relations".<sup>3</sup> This assumption grounds the psychohistorical method of looking for signs of Julian's early

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<sup>1</sup> See MOORE, Sebastian, "Some principles for an adequate theism", *Downside review*, 95, 1977, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Although this thesis will not be using the discourse of Lonergan directly, his discussion of conversion undergirds the work of Moore and Crysdale who do figure in the chapters to come. His understanding of intellectual conversion bears affinity to what Jones calls Winnicott's "epistemology". See LONERGAN, Bernard, *Method in theology*, NY, Seabury, 1979, pp. 237 - 244, The Seabury library of contemporary theology; and JONES, James, "Knowledge in transition: Towards a Winnicottian epistemology", *Psychoanalytic review* 79, 1992, pp. 223 - 237. The work of Robert Doran extends Lonergan's understanding of conversion to include a fourth type, which he calls "psychic conversion" with regard to the distorted cycles of one's affectivity, is also important for the present study as it comes closer to Sebastian Moore's understanding of the liberation of desire. See DORAN, Robert, "Psychic conversion", *The thomist* 41, 1977, pp. 200 - 236; and CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, pp. 141 - 144.

<sup>3</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., *Psychoanalysis and religious experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, pp. x - xi.

soteriological assumptions in the traces of her early psychodynamic attitudes and behaviour patterns discernable in the two texts.

Another assumption is that both compensation and correspondence hypotheses are operative in the shape of Julian's genetic history and faith experience. These terms describe two psychological approaches to contemporary religious experience, based on attachment theory (an outgrowth of object relations theory developed by John Bowlby). The compensation hypothesis assumes that significant religious experiences may be a result of children failing to develop secure attachments with their parents, i.e. suffering "avoidant maternal attachments", and seeking such attachments elsewhere, such as in special teachers, mentors, priests, etc., and presumably in their relationship to God.<sup>4</sup> The correspondence hypothesis, on the other hand, argues that "the security - insecurity of a person's attachment relationships with parents should predict one's religious inclinations directly rather than inversely" such that God images tend to correlate positively with images of preferred parents and self - concepts, and, conversely, that a loss of faith is associated with poor parental relationships.<sup>5</sup> He continues, that this latter hypothesis would account more for people who have not undergone "radical transformations of mental models of attachment from insecure to secure". Kirkpatrick's studies however have included examples of people who have undergone such radical transformations, which is the general scenario I am proposing as the backdrop for what we see in Julian's religious transformation in the *Showings*. He writes:

Some hints regarding how these various relationships may fit together were suggested by the additional finding that security of attachment to God showed a direct correspondence to security of adult love relationships, but only for participants who had reported insecure maternal attachments during childhood. It was suggested that, when people undergo radical transformations of mental models of attachment from insecure to secure, all attachment relationships -- including a relationship with God -- are similarly affected. These findings underscore the importance of examining an individual's entire hierarchy of attachment figures and other personal relations in order to understand his or her religious and human - relationship experience.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3 The pre- and post-visionary Julian

Julian's reception of the visions changed her life. This is not news, although many Julian commentators give the impression that her life prior to the visions, psychologically speaking, was essentially of a piece with the Julian which they see represented in her texts. In fact it surprises me that so few commentators have taken an approach which

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<sup>4</sup> KIRKPATRICK, Lee A., "An attachment theory approach to the psychology of religion", *The international journal for the psychology of religion* 2, 1, 1992, pp. 16 - 17.

<sup>5</sup> KIRKPATRICK, 1992, p 18.

<sup>6</sup> KIRKPATRICK, 1992, pp. 18 - 19.

incorporates, as will this project, both compensation and correspondence hypotheses in the shape of Julian's genetic history and faith experience.

The dramatic character of this radical transformation in Julian of Norwich I propose to call conversion through, in this case, her visionary experience. I assume this conversion had consequences for her future life, bringing new areas of her life experience and personality organization as well as the revelations themselves, over time, under the light of the meaning which was given by means of the visionary experience. The theological fruit of Julian's years of contemplation of her showings, that "Love was his meaning", implies that Julian underwent a profound conversion in her understanding of her relationship with God.

My first assumption then is that in some sense the pre-visionary Julian had unconsciously believed that something else -- but not Love -- was the Lord's meaning, or at least that this meaning was in some sense compromised by other "meanings" based on fear, doubt, shame, despair, etc., as she variously describes her psychospiritual condition. In other words, in order better to understand where Julian of Norwich ended up in her appropriation of her relationship to the Jesus of her showings in his saving work (with all its implications for her *even* Christians and the Trinity), I propose in this chapter to attempt to understand where she started from.

The little that Julian offers us in terms of traces of her early life before the visions (along with a familiarity with studies of the religious climate, social history and childrearing practices in late medieval England) can help us understand a bit better what her early assumptions about her relationship with God might have been like. One objective of the present chapter to arrive at a sketch of Julian's early soteriological assumptions, by means of reading traces of the shape of the developmental viscissitudes of Julian's early life with the help of object relations theory.<sup>7</sup>

It will be essential to include in this study of Julian the profound effect of the then widespread cultural and religious tradition of affective meditation. This tradition, absent in contemporary secular psychological culture, contributed elements which facilitated the appropriation of a transformational relational encounter with the religious transitional object.

The second assumption this chapter makes is that Julian's visionary experience can fruitfully be understood as an example of transitional activity, as Winnicott understood it.

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<sup>7</sup> The usefulness of this psychoanalytic school of thought for understanding the origins of human religious sensibility in the infant-mother relationship, and in a way that does justice to religious maturation as well as pathology has been explored in chapters above.

This visionary experience took place in the context of the limit experience of near mortal illness, and can be conceived as transitional phenomena arising in transitional space, that third realm between subjectivity and objectivity, which came to life as Julian beheld the crucifix set before her dying eyes. The crucifix, symbol par excellence of Christ's saving action, functions as the transitional object and is the focus throughout Julian's transformative, visionary experience, the transitional space or realm of symbol formation.

This chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of the visions themselves, and makes the assumption that this transitional activity can be said to take on the pattern and quality of supplying, psychologically speaking, what she most lacks or needs, and that it reflects, very intimately and humanly, critical elements and patterns in her social and psychological history.

I hold that traces of real human relational failures and healing substitutes can be read both through what she discloses of her pre-visionary self, and through a pattern discerned at the outset of her visions. My hypothesis in this chapter is that this approach can supply new sources of potential evidence of the genetic history of vicissitudes in Julian's early object relations and narcissism which condition the pattern of her psychospiritual maturation of mirroring and her appropriation of a credible soteriology to be explored in subsequent chapters.

At the same time, I stress again that the psychohistorical method I will employ to explore this hypothesis will be sensitive to historical research available to us concerning the cultural and religious influences which bore on Julian's experience. My hope is to develop a psychobiographical interpretation which is rooted in what we know of the sociocultural, theological and ecclesiastical influences on Julian, and attentive to her conventional and original borrowings from that historical context.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.0 The three graces**

We know from the little Julian tells us before launching into the showings themselves that at some earlier time in her life than when she had the showings, she had asked for three graces: a bodily sight of the Passion, a bodily sickness, and the three wounds of contrition, compassion and longing with her will for God. How much earlier in time this was we do not know but it is likely to have been years before. Her prayer request reflects an early desire to immerse herself in the tradition of affective piety of the day.

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<sup>8</sup> See JONTE-PACE, Diane, "Augustine on the couch: Psychohistorical (mis)readings of the *Confessions*", *Religion* 23, 1993, pp. 71 - 83.



This section will look at each grace separately. I will review the research which gives clues to the historical background behind her description of each request. Then I will offer what might be discerned from this, with the help of the psychobiographical lens, about the vicissitudes of Julian's early life and her pre-visionary views and assumptions about salvation.

### 3.1 The first grace: "I desired a recollection of the Passion"

About the first grace Julian writes in the Short Text 1:

As to the first, it came into my mind with devotion; *it seemed to me that I had great feeling for the passion of Christ, but still I desired to have more by the grace of God.* I thought that I wished that I had been at that time with Mary Magdalen and with the others who were Christ's lovers, so that I might have seen with my own eyes our Lord's Passion which he suffered for me, so that I might have suffered with him as others did who loved him, even though I believed firmly in all Christ's pains, as Holy Church shows and teaches, and as paintings of the Crucifixion represent, which are made by God's grace, according to Holy Church's teaching, to resemble Christ's Passion, so far as human understanding can attain. But despite all my true faith I desired a bodily sight, through which I might have more knowledge of our Lord and saviour's bodily pains, and of the compassion of our Lady and of all his true lovers who were living at that time and saw his pains, for I would have been one of them and have suffered with them. I never desired any other sight of God or revelation, until my soul would be separated from the body, for I trusted truly that I would be saved. (ST 1.)<sup>9</sup>

There is in the first grace she requested at once a quality of *desire* to know more of the Lord's pains and of Mary Magdalene's compassion, two prominent devotional aspects of affective meditation on the crucifixion of Jesus, and a quality of *restraint* around desiring any visionary experience as adding anything to what can be known "by human understanding" of the "true faith" through the texts and images which Holy Church prescribes.

Her early desire for deeper knowledge of, and feeling for, the Passion, by means of visionary sight and feeling, reflects an exposure to the affective, meditation tradition which

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<sup>9</sup> LT 2 omits the lines beginning with "even though I believed firmly in all Christ's pains, as Holy Church shows and teaches, and as paintings of the Crucifixion represent... so far as human understanding can attain". See WATSON, Nicholas and Jacqueline JENKINS, eds., *The writings of Julian of Norwich: 'A vision showed to a devout woman' and 'A revelation of love'*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania State University, 2006, p. 62: "Decorated crucifixes, ubiquitous in late medieval English churches and public spaces, were under attack from reformers in the 1380s who objected to their lavishness and the practice of venerating them". This supports Watson's view that the composition of the Short Text was not completed before the mid to late 1380s and that the Long text was fifteen to twenty years after that in being composed.

would promote her to be disposed toward having what Barbara Newman calls “scripted visions” and a desire for “relational encounter” by means of meditation.<sup>10</sup>

Julian’s request for a bodily sight would suggest strongly that, like other women in that period, religious and lay pious women alike, she was already in the Franciscan practice of meditating on the pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditations vitae Christi*. This practice was particularly encouraged by Aelred of Rievaulx in his *De institutione Inclusarum* a 12<sup>th</sup> century manual for anchoresses which encouraged affective participation in the life and Passion and death of Jesus through texts and images as a means of deepening the subjective appropriation of the Passion in the life of the meditator.<sup>11</sup>

Barbara Newman’s recent study argues that these “scripted visions”, written by clerics largely for women, contained a conventional plan as to how the meditator would develop her spiritual life and appropriate the salvific work of Jesus in the events of the Passion. They were, she says, the first experiments in the “genre of guided meditations” which were intended “not as an exercise in historical reconstruction, but as a script to awaken the reader’s visionary imagination”, such that the reader might “make herself present” within the dramatic scenarios “as a participant”. They conceived the vision, among other things, “as a relational encounter”.<sup>12</sup>

‘Seeing’ in short means visualizing, with a certain measure of imaginative freedom.... In this form of meditation the boundary between ‘I visualized’ and ‘I saw’ is porous indeed.... Anyone who performed such meditations as directed and failed to have visions would have been seriously lacking in imagination.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NEWMAN, Barbara, “What did it mean to say ‘I saw’?: The clash between theory and practice in medieval visionary culture”, *Speculum* 80, 2005, pp. 26 - 28.

<sup>11</sup> See BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, p. 34 and ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1999, p. 53 on these practices. See also GILLESPIE, Vincent, “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. HOGG, James, Salzburg, 1987, pp. 111 - 159. *Analecta Cartusiana* 117, on the shift from *lectio divina* to *lectio Domini*, a practice of visual meditation on images of the crucifix by the late 14th century.

<sup>12</sup> NEWMAN, 2005, pp. 26 - 28. Her contemporary anthropological comparison is with neo-pagan (here Wiccan) visionary scripts, but she also refers indirectly to similar contemporary movements within Christian spirituality, namely, the democratization of the Ignatian practice of meditation and contemplation, in NEWMAN, 2005, p. 3. Newman distinguishes the genre of scripted visions from unscripted visions, which presuppose a prior reading and memory of a wide variety of scriptural, liturgical and classical texts and images, and led to new literary creation. Scripted visionary guides such as Aelred’s, on the other hand, “require the reader to consult only one book, and their vernacular offspring do not even presume direct knowledge of the Gospels. Many such works are dedicated to women, whose devotional reading was expected to result in the experience of new visions but not necessarily in the creation of new texts”. NEWMAN, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> NEWMAN, 2005, pp. 28 - 29.

Elsewhere, Bauerschmidt observes that “the eye is... an avenue of communication and communion with Jesus’ pain”:

To gaze with the same intensity of love as Mary upon Christ crucified was to be with him on the cross, to the point where perception lapses over into imitation. In the same way Julian seemed to desire not simply a vivid imagination of Christ’s crucifixion but something akin to actually being present at the historical event, just as Mary was, so as to identify with Christ’s sufferings.<sup>14</sup>

In support of the view that Julian was familiar with this meditation practice, there is Julian’s description of herself as wanting to experience what Mary, Mary Magdalene and the other first disciples did, and calling them “Christ’s lovers” and “true lovers”.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Julian reflects a quality of restraint around having desired any visionary phenomena in her youth.<sup>16</sup> As she says, “I never desired any other sight of God or revelation”. Newman and others have noted here in ST 1 an echo of the negative attitude in (nominalist) English scholasticism toward visionary experience, such that the imagination was judged to be an avenue to deception in fallen humanity. This was quite different from the situation on the Continent where the influence of *devotia moderna* was much stronger, and in which visual meditations among the laity were endorsed.<sup>17</sup>

Still, we see that she is ambivalent about this restraint as she says, “*But despite all my true faith I desired a bodily sight, through which I might have more knowledge of*

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<sup>14</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 12. In an attempt to place Julian within a supportive community of like minded people Watson and Jenkins wonder whether Julian’s use of this phrase refers indirectly to her identification with such a community. Specifically, they wonder whether Margery Kempe might have distributed Julian’s work to a circle of

members of an informal group of priests, monks, anchorites, and laypeople whom [Margery’s] *Book* calls “our Lord’s lovers” or “God’s servants”. These individuals have no more in common than that they share an outlook sympathetic to devotional and visionary experience, as well as a discernible dislike of ecclesiastical formalism.... Indeed, Julian may have self-consciously written as a member of the “lovers of God”, a phrase she uses, in various forms, of the devout, of potential readers, and of herself.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Nicholas Watson, that Julian’s “youthful request for more ‘*feleing in the passion of Christe*’... surely implies that her imagination was not of the kind that found easy the sympathetic absorption in the events of Christ’s death that Passion meditation demands. WATSON, Nicholas, “The trinitarian hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of love*”, *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 85. Exeter symposium V.

<sup>17</sup> NEWMAN, 2005, p. 35. Nicholas Watson draws on Julian’s expressions of restraint already present in the Short Text in his argument for the later dating of the composition of both her texts, as the theological climate in England became increasingly suspicious of visionary experience. See WATSON, Nicholas, “The composition of Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of Love*”, *Speculum* 68, 3, 1993, pp. 637 - 683; and “Censorship and cultural change in late-medieval vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel’s constitutions of 1409”, *Speculum* 70, 4, 1995, pp. 822 - 864.

our Lord and saviour's bodily pains...." (ST 1.) The reason Julian herself gives for her restraint is that "I trusted truly that I would be saved."

Given this expression of ambivalence in ST 1, the "trust" which Julian says she has here is, I suggest, a conventional trust in salvation, to be correlated with her early acceptance of the "true faith" which Holy Church dispenses by means of its teachings, i.e., an intellectual assent rather than a felt knowledge. Since "trust" is a word which recurs a great number of times in the showings and represents a major relational preoccupation in her psychological and soteriological dynamics, I suggest that her use of this phrase here, where she is clearly defensive of her motives being misunderstood, reflects a relatively conventional ecclesiastical understanding of the concept. Perhaps she is also restrained because of an ambivalent attitude toward what a relational encounter with Christ and his lovers through imaginative, visionary prayer might reveal. Her trust in being saved seems then, in her early years, to have been based on her adherence to the sacramental requirements of the church, and her good works of devotion from an early age. About the latter, see below, the section on her "service" to God in her youth. It does not seem to me that her description of this early stage in her life reflects as yet a conscious examination of her personal doubts about her trust either in the teachings of Holy Church or in her future salvation -- except in this expression of ambivalence around accepting the true faith as adequate to her needs.<sup>18</sup>

Her ambivalence, it seems to me, could be said to reveal a woman who at a young age has developed an intense devotional life and religious aspirations to salvation, though as yet understood in fairly conventional terms. Abbott observes that "[a]t the start of the text Julian portrays herself rapt in an intense personal devotion to Christ, concerned primarily for her own salvation and desiring an intensification of her religious experience."<sup>19</sup> What I am adding to this is the observation that there is a quality of anxiety in Julian's ambivalence around pursuing this first grace: it's as if she is saying that the true faith ought to be enough for her to trust in salvation... but is it?

### 3.2 The second grace: "I desired a bodily sickness"

In this respect, the second grace she had asked for in her earlier life is also very interesting: She writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Contrast this with, for example, what she says in ST 19 "Often our trust is not complete, for we are not certain that almighty God hears us, because of our unworthiness, it seems to us, and because we are feeling nothing at all; for often we are as barren and dry after our prayers as we were before...."

<sup>19</sup> ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, NY, D. S. Brewer, 1999, p. 47. *Studies in medieval mysticism* 2.

As to the second grace, there came into my mind with contrition -- a free gift from God which I did not seek — a desire of my will to have by God's gift a bodily sickness, and I wished it to be so severe that it might seem mortal, *so that* I should in that sickness receive all the rites which Holy Church had to give me, whilst I myself should believe that I was dying, and everyone who saw me would think the same, for I wanted no comfort from any human, earthly life. In this sickness I wanted to have every kind of pain, bodily and spiritual, which I should have if I were dying, every fear and assault from devils, and every other kind of pain except the departure of the spirit, for I hoped that this would be profitable to me when I should die because I desired soon to be with my God. (ST 1.)

What might be her reasons, at this earlier period in her life, for wanting a bodily sickness which would take her to the brink of death – but not over it to actual death, particularly, if, as she says she desired soon enough to die and “be with my God” ? What would she have been feeling contrition about that it would bring her to desire to make this request?

She herself acknowledges that this second grace as well as the first were not “an ordinary petition” (ST 1), i.e., “not the ordinary practice of prayer”( LT 2), with respect to what the Church required or necessarily encouraged in its sacramental and ecclesiastically sanctioned avenues to salvation. But they would not have been uncommon requests in her social context, for women particularly seeking a more intense religious experience, particularly if she had had some exposure to movements happening on the Continent. In Julian's case, what she says seems to reflect an early interest in spiritual disciplines for the sake of having the intensity of the experience itself, and not necessarily for any expectation of transformative effect it might have on her sense of being saved, in her relations with others or even in her relationship with Jesus. Indeed, if she were feeling contrition for some apparently sinful desire, thought or act on her part, could her desire for such an illness be in effect a desire to languish in the pain and suffering it brought her, perhaps as some kind of self-imposed penance? In any event, she believed that the experience would be profitable to her when she died.

Abbott sees in this an “idiosyncratic” and “peculiarly strong self-dramatizing instinct”, a sort of desire for “self-separation” from those whose prayer is in the common way, and the pre-visionary “conviction that hers is a special case”.<sup>20</sup> Abbott summarizes his reflections on the “psychological and moral dynamic informing” her early explicit religious aspiration:

This is a stage of great feeling, of self consciousness and also self-dramatization, of struggle and strain. [It] produces a particular focus on *herself*, keeping Julian as agent at the centre of the picture. By contrast, the showings which follow are ascribed to the direction [sic] action of God himself.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 57 - 60.

<sup>21</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, p. 60 emphasis added.

In sum, says Abbott in the same place, the Julian of this picture of her earlier spiritual aspirations (in ST 1-2 and LT 2-3), is that of a “religious narcissist”. Bauerschmidt makes a similar thought less explicit observation when he writes that “it is only when Julian *actually\_becomes sick* that she seems explicitly to connect her second request to the first, so that the pain of her bodily sickness becomes part of her identification with Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, if she was hoping actually to die shortly thereafter, Julian’s early desire for a near death experience would explicitly exclude any further motivation for deepened growth and maturation in her psycho-spiritual self-understanding or relation to God in Jesus, in her service of God, or her interpersonal relations with others in this world. Rather, the sickness she had originally desired she tells us, would have availed her of “all the rites which Holy Church had to give me”. The language she uses here suggests that these rites would somehow make her special, position her, and increase her salvation “insurance” in the short term so to speak.

At this point in Julian’s second request for the grace of a bodily illness she says: “In this sickness I wanted to have every kind of pain, bodily and spiritual, which I should have if I were dying, every fear and assault from devils, and every other kind of pain, except the departure of the spirit”. (ST 1.) Her intention here has again the tone or quality of desiring an extremely painful challenge not unlike “extreme sport” aficionados of our own day. If indeed the athletic analogy can be applied here, it could be suggested that, at a psychodynamic level, a certain fatalism underlies this kind of life-defying ascetic discipline, a pessimism about the future condition of, or even about the likelihood of continuity or quality of life in this world. There are, at least, in Julian’s explicit request to suffer every kind of pain and fear, certain elements shared by the contemporary youth’s attraction to extreme sports: a certain tacit awareness that death may come any time soon and a kind of heroic albeit martyrish seeking of attention. A more feminine, contemporary example might be the kind of woman who wants to be first to enter into a field of work which has been heretofore dominated by men. It is a challenge which can invite a person to the extremes of feeling overwhelmed and easily brought to discouragement, as well as to feelings of exhilaration. Julian in her youth would appear to be driven by desire for *special spiritual knowledge -- through extreme suffering*, though prior to the visions here, her image of what she will know by means of the challenge is notably quite controlled, even planned.

Julian continues in the Short Text saying that in her request for all this pain, assault and fear in her illness “I hoped this would be profitable to me when I should die, because I

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<sup>22</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 39, emphasis added.

desired soon to be with my God". Whatever the cause of her contrition which prompted her to ask for this second grace, the text gives the impression of severe discontent with herself and her life on earth.

At one level, if we consider that there was at that time a general societal fear of eternal damnation in dying without receiving the sacrament of extreme unction, Julian's already being prepared for death well in advance, receiving the last rites prior to actually dying and indeed planning the occasion for receiving the last rites before she is even sick, takes on a rather perfectionistic quality, of wanting to be as prepared for, or as able to control the (desired) outcomes of the death process as is humanly possible in this life.

At another level, as Bauerschmidt points out, in medieval understanding the reception of extreme unction, understood in that society as the anointing of the dying exclusively, set a person apart from the rest of that society.<sup>23</sup> Eamon Duffy writes in this regard:

It was widely and erroneously believed that the solemn anointing of all the senses involved in the reception of extreme unction was a sort of ordination or consecration, cutting the recipient off from the mortal activities of life, *even should they recover*. They would have to live thereafter as a sort of animated corpse, as it was widely thought that "stinking Lazarus" had done after Jesus raised him. Despite all the authorities could do to reassure them many lay people believed that an anointed person could never again eat meat or have sexual relations with his or her spouse.<sup>24</sup>

Bauerschmidt describes the effect of this anointing as making the person as a "liminal figure who dwelt on the boundary between this world and the next" and observes that this was a symbolic marginality shared by anchorites.<sup>25</sup> In the Long Text 2 at this point Julian writes in a somewhat different tone that "I wanted to be purged by God's mercy and afterward to live more to the worship of God because of that sickness because I hoped that this would be to my reward when I should die because I desired soon to be with my God." On the basis of this, Bauerschmidt argues that Julian saw her reception of the last rites as a kind of consecration, a symbolic death in her own and her fellow Christians' eyes, preparing her for the anchoritic life. He says

It is impossible to know with our current information when Julian became an anchoress, so it is difficult to know how, if at all, living such a life of symbolic death would have affected her writings. Yet we might say that even if Julian became an anchoress only relatively late in life, this was in substantial continuity with her early desire for bodily sickness to the point of death, and in particular her desire to

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<sup>23</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 78.

<sup>24</sup> DUFFY, Eamon, *The stripping of the altars: Traditional religion in England c. 1400 – 1580*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 313, emphasis added.

<sup>25</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 78.

receive the last rites, which can be read as a desire for the same symbolic liminality as the anchorite.<sup>26</sup>

This is an extremely interesting argument. However it is also interesting that Bauerschmidt is not concerned to compare the Short Text version with the Long Text at this point. In ST 1 Julian writes simply that when she requested the bodily illness “I hoped that this would be profitable to me when I should die, because I desired soon to be with my God”. There is here no reflection on the gift of “purgation by God’s mercy” it might bring about, or the hope that she would “afterward live more to the worship of God because of that sickness” as in LT 2.

Rather, in ST 1, she seems to be more preoccupied with using the rites of Holy Church as a means of securing her own personal salvation when she died. An actual death soon after, and thus prepared for, would ensure that her desire “soon to be with my God” would be fulfilled. It is true that in ST 2 she gives a rather more ambivalent reason for wanting to go on living after the illness, in order to obtain “more” grace. This will be discussed further, in the section on her service in her youth.

As Julian describes this second request for the grace of a bodily sickness in her early text, she does not seem to have reflected on what her life afterward in this world would be like. She seems rather to have had little intention of being long afterward in this world.

I have no doubt that the subsequent occurrence of the illness and the reception of extreme unction at the age of 30 had the effect, as Bauerschmidt suggests, of marking her for her vocation, or transforming her understanding of life as an anchoress. But I am not convinced that we can trace in her outlook on the future in those early years of her pre-visionary spiritual life when she had made these requests, as Bauerschmidt puts it, a “continuity with her early desire for bodily sickness to the point of death... and a desire for the same symbolic liminality as the anchorite”. That, it seems to me, is what her experience of the visions and her reflections on them bring about, in a way she could not have anticipated. The differences between ST 1 and LT 2 would argue rather for a lengthy period of reflection on and reinterpretation of her early desires, as a result of her life experience and spiritual development subsequent to the writing of the Short Text.

### **3.2.1 The echo of early childhood viscissitudes?**

I propose that less noble, more human traces of her early viscissitudes in life may also be discerned in what she says about her desire for the bodily illness. I suggest that

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<sup>26</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 78.



what we see here are traces of Julian's personal and family dynamics at work *within* the fourteenth century cultural attitudes toward suffering, extreme unction and death which Bauerschmidt indicates are part of the backdrop or heritage of her spiritual development.

What might we make of her statement concerning her desire to receive all the rites which Holy Church had to give her while she thought she was dying, that "everyone who saw me would think the same; for I wanted no comfort from any human, earthly life in that sickness"? (ST1, LT2.) She is concerned here about what others would think; that others would think she was dying and therefore not give her any comfort. In effect, it could be suggested that she is requesting the illness, in part at least, so that she will experience a kind of extreme emotional isolation from and abandonment by family and friends, at the same time as she would be in a condition of extreme need for comfort and reassurance at the brink of death, a situation of isolation which would bring on assault by devils, all on top of being in physical pain. In Julian's script of this moment "those who saw me" would simply remain emotionally distant.

It is true we know nothing of her family background. But in psychodynamic terms, this could possibly be regarded as a kind of impulse to recreate or recapitulate an early childhood traumatic experience in a critical moment or situation in later life that would leave her isolated, distanced from those around her. It provokes the question: Is there any evidence in her texts which could support the notion that Julian suffered a traumatic experience of isolation, loss, neglect, or even abandonment at an extremely young age, when her *need* for comfort, reassurance, affirmation and compassion would be most heightened? I will explore in a section below what Julian's texts say about her mother, who was present at the time of Julian's illness.

However, at this point I offer some thoughts, inspired by Meissner and others, on what psychoanalytic studies show of children's behaviours in response to the death, loss and/or neglect of a parent. The following is admittedly speculation but based, I hope, on evidence discerned in Julian's own description of her pre-visionary self.

Meissner reviews the literature and notes Miller's research that indicates that a child's capacity to mourn a parental death follows a different path than that in adults, and has as its goal "to avoid the acceptance of the reality and emotional meaning of the death and to maintain in some internal form the relationship that has been ended in external reality".<sup>27</sup> This denial of the finality of the loss leads to hopeful fantasies of reunion and idealization of the lost parent. Long term sequelae include "acting out symbolic repetitions

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<sup>27</sup> MILLER, J. B. M., "Children's reactions to the death of a parent: A review of the literature", *Journal of the American psychoanalytic association* 19, 1971, pp. 697 - 719.

of the loss of the parent -- as in attachment to idealized substitute figures or devotion to idealized causes -- in an unsuccessful attempt to master the trauma of loss." The child may develop an identification with the lost parent, and "with the state of death itself, reflecting an unconscious wish to achieve reunion with the lost parent".<sup>28</sup>

Recall that when Julian would have been about five in 1348, the first wave of the Black Plague wiped out as much as half of the population in Norwich.<sup>29</sup> Since she does not speak of her father being present by her deathbed, we may wonder if he had died by the time she was thirty in 1373. By that time all three waves of the plague had passed through Norwich, the third being four years before. If her father had died in her early youth, Julian may well have been sent away from the family home, to be looked after by a guardian, a relative or placed in a nunnery. And if Julian's family did not have servants, her mother would have been alone to work *and* care for her family.<sup>30</sup>

Meissner's description of how children respond to a parent's death could be said to bear some resemblance to Julian's description of her early life of utter and singular devotion to Christ, such that she desired a bodily sight of him, and was preoccupied with a desire for a near mortal illness. Although the present study will not be exploring idealization as a psychodynamic process in Julian, the exploration of these resemblances along those lines does suggest itself as matter for further study. However, if this speculation as to the possibility that her father died when she was very young can be followed, it could well lead to her feeling responsible or guilty for this death, particularly if she felt close to him. Such is what Martellock argues for example in the case of Catherine of Siena:

Catherine feels guilty and responsible for her sister's death. She reasons that she loved her sister more than she loved god and allowed her sister to draw her toward a worldly life. In Catherine's mind, god killed Buonaventura because Catherine was sinful. It is not hard to imagine that other unprocessed losses in her life -- like that of her twin sister -- are also revived and given meaning in this context. "I think that hell itself was not enough to punish me."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., *Ignatius of Loyola: The psychology of a saint*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> This is a statistic recorded in many places. I am drawing on a general chronology found in DINSHAW, Carolyn and David WALLACE eds., *The Cambridge companion to medieval women's writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xv. See also the graph in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

<sup>30</sup> ORME, Nicholas, *Medieval children*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 53 - 56.

<sup>31</sup> MARTELLOCK, Amy King, *She who is not: A psychobiography of Catherine of Siena using the theories of D. W. Winnicott*, Ps.D. dissertation, Massachusetts school of professional psychology, 2003, p. 127, citing RAYMOND of CAPUA, *The life of Catherine of Siena*, transl. KEARNS, Conleth, Wilmington DE, Glazier Press, p. 42.

Apart from the possibility that her father was lost to her, did Julian suffer a very early loss of her mother, in some sense, and that this would return as “unprocessed loss” under any other circumstance of loss or abandonment? Clearly Julian indicates that her mother was alive when Julian was preparing to die. But consider Jacques Maître’s study, *Mystique et fémininité*, which links the devotion to Jesus as mother to the loss of the mother. Maître observes that

[l]a perte de la mère semble avoir joué un rôle chez bien des mystiques. Plusieurs se sont retrouvés orphelins très précocement (Catherine Labouré, Jean de Dieu [+1550], Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, Thérèse d’Avila), d’autres un peu plus tard (Bernard de Clairvaux, Jean de la Croix). Dans certains cas, une séparation familiale ou un rejet massif est intervenu durant l’enfance du mystique (Jeanne Guyon, Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, Marie des Vallées). Je n’ai pas réuni les données qui permettraient de systématiser davantage ce recensement. Mais on toucherait vite une limite en se bornant à la matérialité des événements: la façon dont a été subjectivement vécue la position de l’enfant dans sa constellation d’origine est le point essentiel.<sup>32</sup>

In particular, Maître draws on a study by André Green that describes this subjective experience as the “complexe de la mère morte”. As Maître describes it

Le complexe de la “mère morte”... ne s’agit pas d’une relation à la mère décédée, mais d’une déréliction survenue dans l’enfance du sujet, au moment où la mère se déprime, absorbée qu’elle est par un deuil. L’imago maternelle s’altère alors brusquement, de sorte que la vitalité heureuse de l’enfant est désormais bloquée avec la perte d’une relation jusque-là riche et heureuse. Le désinvestissement de l’objet maternel laisse place à une identification inconsciente avec la “mère morte”. Pour l’enfant, la perte de sa mère reste inexplicable et la quête du sens perdu induit désormais une prolifération des capacités fantasmatiques et intellectuelles du Moi à la recherche de son unité. En même temps peut se développer une culpabilité, l’enfant ayant l’impression d’avoir perdu par sa propre faute la chaleur maternelle.

Le “complexe de la mère morte” apparaît chez l’enfant dont la mère est soudain la proie d’une perte dont elle ne parvient pas à faire le deuil, de sorte que l’enfant est jeté par l’angoisse dans un état de vide parce qu’il se trouve inexplicablement privé de son “objet” maternel. La mère n’est pas physiquement morte, mais elle n’a plus les ressources affectives nécessaires pour investir son enfant d’une façon qui donne vie à celui-ci.<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly, Maître compares the effect of this extreme neglect on the infant to the “agonies primitives”, the “unthinkable anxieties” of falling apart or into emptiness, which Winnicott describes.<sup>34</sup> And Maître links this to the experience of women mystics, marked

<sup>32</sup> MAÎTRE, Jacques, *Mystique et fémininité: Essai de psychanalyse sociohistorique*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1997, pp. 187 - 188.

<sup>33</sup> MAÎTRE, 1997, pp. 189 - 190. See GREEN, André, “Le ‘complexe de la mère morte’”, *Narcissisme de vie, narcissisme de mort*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1983, ch. 6.

<sup>34</sup> MAÎTRE, 1997, p. 191. See WINNICOTT, D. W., “Ego integration in child development”, in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1965, pp. 56 - 63.

by a mystical experience of a “relation fusionnelle manquante”.<sup>35</sup> Maître quotes Michel Ledoux on characteristic elements of this “relation d’absence”:

Tout ce qui était exprimé venait s’inscrire dans le registre archaïque de la relation fusionnelle dont le prototype est celle qui s’instaure à l’origine entre la mère et l’enfant. Union, fusion dans l’indéterminé, absence de limites, de frontières précises entre moi et l’autre, fusion qui peut aller jusqu’à l’interchangeabilité des positions “subjectives” entre les deux partenaires de la relation.<sup>36</sup>

Historically, this psychodynamic complex could be related to the more systemic question as to how mothers in the late middle ages related to their children.

The infant mortality rate was very high in the Middle ages, such that families, despite the large number of births, had an average of only two to three children who survived to adulthood. In the time of the plague, the mortality rate was even higher. There are differing opinions on the effect of the high rate of infant mortality on medieval attitudes toward children. Ariès, Shorter and DeMause held a negative and pessimistic view of childhood in the medieval world, described, in Shorter’s words as “maternal indifference”; DeMause saw the 14th century as the point at which an “abandoning mode” began to shift into an “ambivalent mode” of childrearing.<sup>37</sup> More recently, these extreme negative views have been challenged.<sup>38</sup> While Nicholas Orme for example wants to argue that medieval parents regarded their children with more attachment and sympathy than this, he does not deny however “that many children died young, all lived closely together with adults, and most were sent away from home in youth to school or to service in other people’s houses”.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, none of these authors distinguishes between how male and female children might have fared.

Depending on the class into which Julian was born, her family might have had servants, and if so, she would have had a wet nurse in her infancy.<sup>40</sup> So in any event, it is quite conceivable that Julian’s mother was not emotionally close to her daughter. It is conceivable that Julian was an only surviving child in her nuclear family. Although in the

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<sup>35</sup> MAÎTRE, 1997, p. 185.

<sup>36</sup> LEDOUX, Michel, “La relation d’absence”, *Résurgences et dérivés de la mystique, Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 20, 1980, p. 239.

<sup>37</sup> ARIÈS, Philippe, *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’ancien régime*, Paris, Seuil, 1973, 316 p.; SHORTER, E., *The making of the modern family*, NY, Basic Books, 1975, 368 p.; DEMAUSE, Lloyd, “The evolution of childhood”, *History of childhood quarterly*, 1974, 1, pp. 503 - 606.

<sup>38</sup> GIES, Frances and Joseph GIES, *Marriage and the family in the middle ages*, NY, Harper and Row, 1987, 372 p.

<sup>39</sup> ORME, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> See the studies of fifteenth century women’s occupations related to female biology: wet nurses and midwives, in HANAWALT, Barbara, ed., *Women and work in preindustrial Europe*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, chapters 5 and 6.

Middle ages, unlike today, she would not have lived in social isolation, it is conceivable that her early childhood was experienced in this way.

Meissner also observes the clinical symptoms of those who have been deprived of maternal care at an early age, or who have suffered the death of a parent. "The most noteworthy sequela of early parental deprivation is the tendency to depression that can afflict the individual throughout life.... There may be long-term narcissistic difficulties involving issues of self-esteem regulation and the prolongation of infantile narcissistic grandiosity."<sup>41</sup>

Meissner is applying these clinical psychological findings to the boyhood life of Ignatius of Loyola. How would they apply more specifically to a young girl, like Julian?

Recent literature on gender and narcissism has refined the data on differences between infant male and female children in relation to their mothers. Philipson for example has noted how boys develop a sense of separateness and an appearance of autonomy from the mother, which may be a narcissistic defense against vulnerability and dependency and display the classical narcissistic traits of grandiosity. Girls on the other hand identify with their mothers, so that ego boundaries are more permeable and defined in terms of relationality rather than autonomy, and so female narcissism may present itself under the guise of overinvesting and overidentifying with the mother and then others.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, when the little girl moves toward separation from the mother, if the mother is unable to tolerate this, this is likely to increase the female child's separation anxiety. This is compounded by cultural expectations that compel yet devalue a submissive relational style in women.<sup>43</sup>

Rossiter's recent thesis draws this material together to paint a portrait of feminine narcissism, which, because of cultural expectations of women, has been difficult to separate out from feminine virtues; indeed the subject itself has suffered systemic neglect. What is distinctive in that portrait, however, is the degree of controlling behaviour (a masked form of grandiosity) exerted in relationships in which the woman feels compelled to over-rely on others for a sense of self cohesion, often at the expense of her own needs and desires, to avoid feelings of abandonment (shame).<sup>44</sup>

And, to ask the more significant feminist question for this study as a whole, to what extent would these effects on the infant Julian be *amplified* in a context of systemic societal

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<sup>41</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., 1992, p. 427.

<sup>42</sup> PHILIPSON, Ilene, "Gender and narcissism", *Psychology of women quarterly* 9, 1985, pp. 213 - 228.

<sup>43</sup> BENJAMIN, Jessica, *The bonds of love*, NY, Pantheon, 1988, ch. 3.

<sup>44</sup> ROSSITER, Stanford Kent, *Narcissism and codependency*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Wright Institute, 2004, pp. 56, 63 - 73.

neglect of females as children and as adult women? Renée Neu Watkins speaks of the “holy self-hate” which was so prevalent among women religious figures in the late middle ages, such as Catherine of Siena and Angela of Foligno, and for which choosing to suffer was the only means of transformation open to them. Watkins writes: “Angela had wished to overcome her former character, which, as she saw it, was that of a vain, gluttonous, petty, smug, hypocritical ‘good’ woman. And what else made Julian desire an illness that would make her believe she was dying?”<sup>45</sup>

These speculations could perhaps account for some of the attitudes and patterns I have observed in Julian’s self-description thus far. It is conceivable that Julian’s religious aspirations in her early life were marked by a perfectionistic tendency to want to control the outcome of her experiences, in the sense of repeatedly acting out an unresolved issue of loss in her childhood. If so, I suggest that the pre-visionary Julian had not yet become “acquainted with grief” in the sense of having come consciously to terms with mourning the uncontrollable personal losses in her life. But an early scenario of maternal deprivation in Julian’s life, such as has been suggested here, could provide a basis for a preoccupation with herself, with an ambivalent desire for death and with being set apart, or isolated, as a special case.

Her early preoccupation with wanting to serve God scrupulously and obediently, I suggest, would reveal a person as yet quite uneasy in the liminal space which describes the experience of mourning, and the open-ended loss of meaning it entails, when it is allowed to be fully embraced. In my reading of the launching of the visions, it is their very uncontrollability which signals an unprecedented shift in Julian’s religious experience.

### 3.3 The third grace: “I desired three wounds”

Julian’s third request for grace in this snapshot of her earlier life which she offers her reader, was to receive three wounds “the wound of contrition, the wound of

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<sup>45</sup> WATKINS, Renée Neu, “Two women visionaries and death: Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich”, *Numen: International review for the history of religions* 30, 1983, p. 185. For object relations psychological studies of women from a more recent era in Christian history see for example GIUGLIANO, Robert, “Separation, loss and longing in the infancy and early childhood of St. Thérèse of the child Jesus and the holy face”, *Studies in spirituality* 14, 2004, pp. 225 - 253. Emily Dickinson has also been the focus of studies from an object relations perspective, which take up questions of maternal deprivation at an early age to account in some measure for her tendency to isolate in reclusion and to find greater meaning in the Lord and the world of poetry than in people. See for examples, ROGERS, Robert, “The sequestered self of Emily Dickinson”, in *Self and other: Object relations in psychoanalysis and literature*, NY, New York University Press, 1991, pp. 136 - 158; and ALEXANDERSON, Gun, “You cannot solder an Abyss with air: Traces of early relationship to mother in the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson”, *The Scandinavian psychoanalytic review* 26, 2003, pp. 151 - 162.

compassion and the wound of longing with my will for God". (ST1, LT2.)

Recall that Denise Baker argues, on the basis of a comparison of Julian's text with Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum*, that Julian's third request for the grace of three wounds reflects exactly the three stage tradition of spiritual development, a progression from the affective (contrition), to the moral (compassion), to the contemplative (longing with the will for God).<sup>46</sup> Since these practices as applied to the laity in England by the late 14th century would only have included the first two stages, Julian's third wound of longing for God, a prayer for mystical union, would not be customarily practised by the laity.<sup>47</sup> This leads Baker to think that Julian was in some kind of vowed life, whether as nun or anchoress, prior to her visions.<sup>48</sup> At least it suggests she was aspiring in some sense to such heights.<sup>49</sup>

The impetus for this request for the three wounds came to her, she says in ST 1, after hearing "a man of Holy Church tell the story of St. Cecilia and from his explanation I understood that she received three wounds in the neck from a sword, through which she suffered death".

Julian's request here in ST 1 is framed in the context of a desire to take on the qualities of a martyr, like St Cecilia, perhaps so that her own death (physical and/or spiritual) might come through these three spiritual wounds, as did St. Cecilia's through her actual neck wounds.

Here in the Short text version, is it possible to see this request in more psychodynamic terms as allied with the other two graces which she asked for, in rendering her "perfectly" prepared for death, and thus further insuring her salvation by the ecclesiastical means available to her? So far from "trusting in salvation" as she later came to learn what this meant by her experience of its absence in despair, her early motivation may have had the as yet unpurged undertone of wanting to insure her salvation in the next world by controlling every means available to her in this world in her service of God.

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<sup>46</sup> BAKER, Denise N., "Julian of Norwich and anchoritic literature", *Mystics quarterly* 19, 4, 1993, pp. 153 - 154, 158.

<sup>47</sup> BAKER, 1993, pp. 154-155, 158. Here, Baker draws on the work of Elizabeth Salter's survey of Latin and vernacular devotional texts, from the 11th through the 15th centuries, showing that "systematic meditation originally followed this three-stage progression from the affective, to the moral, to the contemplative" as practised by religious and anchorites, but as meditation became more popular with the laity, "the final goal of contemplation was omitted". See SALTER, Elizabeth, "Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ*", ed. HOGG, James, Institut für englische Sprache und Literatur, Salzburg, Universität Salzburg 1974, pp. 134, 172 - 178, *Analecta cartusiana* 10.

<sup>48</sup> BAKER, 1993, p. 158. Baker's conclusion is cautious, that "prior to her visionary experience of 1373, she was familiar with tenets of medieval spirituality identified with vowed religious, including anchorites".

<sup>49</sup> See Julian's own identification with those who would live contemplatively in ST 4 and 13.

The LT 2 description of her intention in requesting the grace of these three wounds, on the other hand, is more general, omitting the oblique reference to the preacher from whom she received the teaching. "As to the third, by the grace of God and the teaching of Holy Church I conceived a great desire to receive three wounds in my life, that is the wound of true contrition, the wound of loving compassion and the wound of longing with my will for God". It strikes me that the suppression here in the Long Text of her enthusiasm for the story of St. Cecilia's martyrdom and its clerical source, and the attribution of this desire first to the grace of God and then to the general teaching of Holy Church, reflects the intervening years of having lived a kind of green martyrdom in the anchorhold, a mellowing of her experiential familiarity both with the anchoritic life and with the process of dying to the false self in the spiritual life. Perhaps it could be said to reflect a growth in Julian's capacity to relinquish her self-preoccupation with needing to control the outcome of her efforts to insure personal salvation.

In Ellen Ross' study of the function of suffering in Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, she draws on these three graces of response to suffering that is, contrition, compassion and longing, to argue that "suffering functions... as a part of the process by which the human person learns to perceive God as love. The experience of pain functions as a way to God...[T]he believer's Jesus-identified emotional and physical suffering is not an end in itself".<sup>50</sup> She argues on p. 51 that Julian and Margery

do not linger over cataloguing the varieties of sufferings that plague humans because they are not interested in the pain that accompanies discipleship for its own sake.... The physical suffering that may come readily to a contemporary person's mind was often far from what the most important suffering was about.... The suffering that most concerns these figures is the physical and emotional (including mind and affections) anguish that emerges in their relationship to God".

Suffering in each of these three "progressive stages correlates with the process of coming to understand that the Christ who suffered is God", as in LT 20 where Julian says "the most important point to apprehend in his Passion is to meditate and come to see that he who suffered is God..." though this is not in the Short Text.

Ross describes the kind of suffering associated with each of these stages.

Contrition or compunction, associated with confession, had a long and varied history in the medieval tradition. Compunction, as Gregory the Great had described it, had

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<sup>50</sup> ROSS, Ellen, "'She wept and cried right loud for sorrow and for pain': Suffering, the spiritual journey, and women's experience in late medieval mysticism", in *Maps of flesh and light: The religious experience of medieval women mystics*, ed. WIETHAUS, Ulrike, Syracuse NY, Syracuse University Press, 1993, pp. 49 - 50. See also BURROWS, Mark, "'Yett he sufferyth with us': Divine asceticism in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", *Studies in spirituality*, 7, 1997, p. 111.



two forms: the compunction of fear was felt first and later on, compunction of love.<sup>51</sup> But by the fourteenth century, with the rise of a more personal, affective devotion to the suffering and humanity of Christ, the prior preoccupation with the eschatological aspects of compunction were obscured.<sup>52</sup> As was observed earlier, the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and other aids encouraged enthusiastic devotion by means of imaginative meditations on the Passion, with the individual as engaged participant. The bodily sufferings and agonies of Christ were understood to be caused by the sinner, and these meditations served to focus the individual on his own sinfulness and unworthiness.

Julian reflects the widespread notion of universal guilt for the sufferings of Christ and the mourning it should cause: "We have now matter for mourning, for our sin is the cause of Christ's pains". (LT 52.)

Ross acknowledges the close association of contrition with confession and penance since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and acknowledges the struggle with scruples this tended to produce in religious persons. Also, anchoritic spirituality did not place importance on external penance, but rather interiorized contrition and compunction.<sup>53</sup> Presumably this could compound a sense of scrupulosity. Ross holds that Julian did not

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<sup>51</sup> Gregory writes:

When [the penitent] considers his sins he is overcome with weeping because he fears eternal punishment. Then when his fear subsides through prolonged sorrow and penance, a feeling of security emerges from an assurance of forgiveness, and the soul begins to burn with a love for heavenly joys. Now the same person who wept out of fear of punishment, sheds abundant tears because his entrance into the kingdom of heaven is being delayed. Once we envision the choirs of angels, and fix our gaze on the company of the saints and the majesty of an endless vision of God, the thought of having no part in these joys makes us weep more bitterly than the fear of hell and the prospect of eternal misery did before. Thus, the compunction of fear, when perfect, leads the soul to the compunction of love.

GREGORY THE GREAT, St. *Dialogues*, transl. ZIMMERMAN, Odo John, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1959, pp. 173 - 174. *Fathers of the church* 39.

<sup>52</sup> As McEntire observes of the doctrine of compunction:

A consideration of mourning, weeping and personal sinfulness seems a morbid preoccupation for the modern. But from the earliest days of Christianity, weeping and mourning were central to the daily spirituality of the saints, East and West. The Desert Fathers and the great Fathers of the Church focused their attention on the importance of salvation and eternal life. This concern with salvation gave rise to the essential teachings about compunction or *gratia lachrymarum*. Initially found and nurtured within a monastic context, *compunctio cordis* came to the attention of the public at large through sermons and devotional texts in the vernacular languages. In England, in particular, the documents attest to the evolution of the doctrine from its traditional patristic foundations to a more enthusiastic, personalised spirituality in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

McENTIRE, Sandra, "The doctrine of compunction from Bede to Margery Kempe", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1987, pp. 77; 84. Exeter symposium IV.

<sup>53</sup> See GEORGIANNA, Linda, *The solitary self: Individuality in the 'Ancrene wisse'*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1981, chapter 3.

seem to have suffered the affliction of scruples.<sup>54</sup> The assumption here, as with many interpreters of Julian, is that she was too spiritually mature and balanced for this affliction. Still, the effect of scruples is to lead to despair. Could it be that Julian's relative silence (compared to Margery Kempe's loud and demonstrative displays of contrition) has as much to do with a narcissist's hypersensitivity to criticism and desire to avoid feeling shame and despair, as it does to a spiritual restraint and maturity hard won? As we'll see below, shame and despair are pervasive conditions of her soul with which Julian must come to terms. Indeed, they are her core states which are in need of redemption. But she does not come easily to recognize them.

Ross allows that since contrition was explicitly associated with sin and its healing, both the recognition of the sin (sorrow and shame) and the penance for it (physical illness, sorrow, or the world's contempt) could be painful. "Suffering functions both as a *signal* and as a *response* to the presence of sin".<sup>55</sup>

Compassion as a kind of suffering comes into play, says Ross, when a person experiences the depth of their love for Christ, identifying with, and thus suffering with Christ's pains as a participation in Christ's salvific work. Christ suffered on account of human sin, as so much of late medieval devotional material emphasized. But Ross also acknowledges that in Julian, *Christ also suffered in compassion for human sorrow and anguish at his suffering*.<sup>56</sup> The effect of this compassion, or suffering with, Christ's compassionate suffering is to increase love for Christ and enlarge the believer's capacity to have compassion on others. (ST 13, LT 28.)

Longing has its own form of suffering, as a response to Christ's longing thirst for humanity to be reunited with God. "The longing for the joy made possible by Christ's suffering creates its own pain of desire which can be satisfied only after this life".<sup>57</sup>

For the present, I propose in the latter part of the following section simply to pose certain questions from a self psychological perspective to Julian's texts concerning the first

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<sup>54</sup> ROSS, 1993, p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> ROSS 1993, p. 54, emphasis added.

<sup>56</sup> ROSS, 1993, p. 56. This text, found in LT 20, however, is a passage not present in the Short Text. As Burrows' article argues "how Julian related human and divine suffering [is] through a Christological model that is apparently without precedent in the medieval schools... one that locates suffering as a continuing dimension of *askesis* in Jesus, and thus in God". Burrows also shows that this development is much more present in the Long Text and hinges on the central point that "Jesus's suffering did not end with his crucifixion but continued beyond his death" in Jesus' thirst. BURROWS, 1997. p. 104.

<sup>57</sup> ROSS, 1993, p. 58. This corresponds to the eschatological "compunction of love" identified by Gregory the Great in McEntire's article cited above.

of these forms of suffering primarily, that is the two-edged sword of suffering associated with contrition, which functions both as a *signal* and as a *response* to the presence of sin.

### 3.3.1 More echoes of the psychoanalytic profile of the pre-visionary Julian?

To return to the pre-visionary Julian: what might this line of interpretation of her two accounts of these early requests for grace further suggest about the antecedent patterns of her psychological makeup which contributed to Julian's ardent spiritual search? Are any early childhood dynamics discernable in the marks of her personality left behind in these particularly personal historical references? Are there any signs of other influences of a remedial or compensatory nature?

At what early age did she have the desire to ask for these three graces, which by all accounts are signs of a precociously intense interiority and spiritual search and draw on some familiarity with the affective contemplative resources of her day? She says in both texts that "I desired soon to be with my God", by which it seems she means to die. But she also says that "When I was young I desired to have that sickness when I was thirty years old". (I am not aware of any cultural significance this age might have had.) So there is an ambivalence here: a desire to die and "be with my God" on the one hand, and on the other, to have a special spiritual experience predicated on nearly dying (but not quite) when she reached the age of thirty. Can we ask whether there is evidence to suggest that Julian's request for these graces took place much earlier in her youth than just before she turned thirty? Certainly the way she says it, it sounds like "when I was young" was many years before she turned thirty. Is she picturing, at that early age, two contradictory futures in effect: one in which a life of suffering in this world would come to a speedy resolution through death and anticipated union with God; the other in which some as yet hypothetical spiritual experience through heightened suffering was desired? What was her early personal experience of suffering which caused her ambivalently to want to die, and yet also to desire its resolution through a spirituality predicated on suffering? I suggest that, whatever was the trauma of parental loss and neglect Julian suffered in her early years, it is possible to trace in this cultural preoccupation with suffering an ambivalent personal thread of unresolved identification with the parental loss, and "with the state of death itself, reflecting an unconscious wish to achieve reunion with the lost parent".<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., 1992, p. 10.

What we have observed so far of her youthful, pre-visionary personality is her desire to be, as Abbott puts it, a “special case”, preoccupied with personal expectations of attaining heights of perfection and personal salvation, an extreme sport athlete in the ascetic life. Kohut would see the narcissistic need to feel “special” as an incidence of grandiosity. The unconscious psychological suffering associated with the other split off pole of narcissism is a profound sense of isolation, despair and shame. In this coincidence of ambivalent desires around death, the pre-visionary Julian, I suggest, is crying out of a primary sense of isolation; living out at once a tendency to desire to avoid (disdain?) the society of others, and a sense of helplessness as to how to address or resolve the loneliness, distress and isolation which this tendency produces. This trace of a psychological pattern, which I am proposing we see in the early Julian through these texts, is toward non-relationality, a seeking to be self-sufficient at the expense of never knowing loving acceptance or comfort in human relationships. I suggest this “trace” represents a psychological coping mechanism from a very early age, an age when her need for maternal affirmation and mirroring was strong, but chronically unfulfilled. It may also represent a denial of grief around this unmet need. I propose that this was the psychological pattern which contributed to her early attraction to the contemplative life and prayer disciplines, and at the same time, to her experiencing anxiety with regard to this same vocation. Recall Jantzen’s observation that the vocation to the anchoritic life was seen as the highest and most individualistic of vocations (certainly among the options open to women). Thus perfectionism, isolating egocentricity and ambivalence around mourning early losses, could be seen as possible tendencies in Julian’s early personal history.

Given, as we saw above, that suffering and sorrowing are omnipresent in late medieval spirituality and particularly in the experience of contrition and penance for sin, what personal psychodynamics brought on suffering in Julian for which she would seek understanding in the spiritual tradition available to her? How did the pre-visionary Julian understand sin? As will become evident in this study, sin is *the* problem for Julian.<sup>59</sup> In ST 13 Julian expresses a prior wish that God might have prevented sin altogether. Is it possible that Julian resisted feeling contrition for pain which had no apparent sinful cause? Did she feel ambivalent around what constituted sin for which contrition would be appropriate? Recall the narcissist’s apparent disregard for moralism (pre-oedipal): the narcissist’s issues are not around guilt but around shame.<sup>60</sup> Ross observes on p. 53 that

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<sup>59</sup>JANTZEN, Grace, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and theologian*, London: SPCK, 1987, p. 167.

<sup>60</sup> See KOHUT, Heinz, *The restoration of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1977, pp. 132 - 133; also CAPPS, Donald, *The depleted self: Sin in a narcissistic age*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress, 1993, pp. 67 - 68 and 98 - 99.

“meditation on sinfulness alone can lead to despair”. We may ask whether the shame and sorrow which the believer was supposed to feel in contrition and in repentance, became, for Julian, a form of suffering marked by unrelenting despair. If so, would it be so surprising that the Christ of Julian’s visions suffers compassion for suffering humanity, which is so in need of what Kohut has called empathy, if, somehow she received that empathy from some source?

I want to propose in the following section that Julian does show signs of having received some compensatory relational experience for this emotional absence of mirroring in her early life, through the formal means of spiritual counsel or direction as distinct from sacramental confession.

### 3.3.2 Evidence of spiritual counsel

Julian tells in both texts that while she asked for the first two graces conditionally, she asked for the third grace without any condition. Because the first two were not ordinary petitions, she had said

Lord, you know what I want. If it be your will that I have it, grant it to me, and if it be not your will, good Lord, do not be displeased, for I want nothing which you do not want.... The first two desires which I mentioned passed from my mind, and the third remained there continually. (ST 1.)

We have already observed that England was theologically much more cautious than the Continent with regard to encouraging visionary experience by the late 14th century. And as is well attested historically, women were regarded as especially vulnerable by nature to deception if special requests for personal spiritual experiences were pursued; hence the writing and practice of “scripted visions” to ensure the orthodoxy of their products. Oversight, instruction, guidance in these matters were all essential prerequisites for women. The text here is unchanged in the Short Text and the Long Text, putting the emphasis on obedience to the Lord’s will. Julian strikes me as a deeply teachable spirit, craving instruction and guidance in the spiritual life, in an attempt perhaps to fill the emotional void of self within, and perhaps also as a means of seeking to come out of isolation. Again, this study will not pursue the need for idealization in Julian’s personal history, but her obedience to the counsel of confessors and religious suggests that they may well have functioned as objects of idealization. The potential, remedial mirroring function of such religious figures in her life, however, is what I am seeking to address here.

This text concerning the request for the three graces has been used as evidence to suggest that Julian was well versed in the affective devotion and contemplative traditions of the vernacular theology of the late middle ages. Still, what are we to make of her saying that the first two desires, not being ordinary petitions, “passed from her mind”? We may

well imagine that in sharing these prayer requests with her spiritual counsel, she was likely discouraged from pursuing desires which would encourage her in seeking “extraordinary” visionary or bodily experiences for their own sake. Perhaps that counsellor saw that her tendencies needed to be balanced by a greater attention to the “ordinary” teaching and society of the Church. Even so, I suggest it is unlikely that these two desires passed from her mind very quickly. Rather, it would seem to me that if these requests were in some sense Julian’s spiritualized attempt to respond to early infant experiences of loss or neglect, then some lengthy period of time elapsed during which she revised and accepted the reduced goals to be set for her spiritual quest. This would favour the view that her request for the three graces took place in her youth, many years before she turned thirty.

It is clear from all this that she received spiritual counsel. Her text attests to her being in a pattern of seeking sacramental absolution regularly. (LT 66.) Recent feminist scholarship has tended to put emphasis on the “policing” nature of these formal relationships, and I am not denying this as a determining feature of her social location.<sup>61</sup> What has not to my knowledge been proposed is that the relationship with a spiritual advisor might have had a profound psychological compensatory effect, which will be explored further below.

#### 4.0 Her service and labour in her youth

At ST8 / LT14 Julian tells us that the Jesus of her visions says to her “I thank you for your service and your labour, and especially in your youth”. This is the first word that the Jesus of her visions addresses to her directly. It is significant here in that it speaks of the most significant service and labour she felt she carried out in her early life, since it is that which this dialoguing Jesus identifies as worthy of thanks.

What was this service and labour? This direct speech follows on what she sees at that point to be the labour of Jesus Christ, his Passion and death, by which the fiend (the devil) is overcome. She says that this deed was accomplished by our Lord “in great earnest and with heavy labour”. (ST 8, LT 13.) There is reason, then, to suppose that there might be some parallel in what Julian means by her service and labour as having entailed great suffering, and Jesus’ own labour, such that the Lord speaks to her to thank her for it.

She goes on to describe the reward for this service in more detail in the “three degrees of bliss” which God showed her. (ST 9, LT 14.) The first is to receive thanks

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<sup>61</sup> See RIDDY, Felicity, “Women talking about the things of God’: a late medieval sub-culture”, in *Women and literature in Britain, 1150 - 1500*, ed. MEALE, Carol, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 104 - 127; and GILMORE, Leigh, *Autobiographics: A feminist theory of women’s self-representation*, London, Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 106 - 120.

from the Lord for voluntarily serving God, when one is delivered from pain, “for it seemed to me that all the pain and labour which all living men might endure could not earn the thanks that one man will have who has voluntarily served God”. The second degree of bliss makes known a soul’s service to all who are in heaven. Could this suggest that perhaps that she felt the service she speaks of was not recognized or affirmed? In that showing she then saw that every person “will be rewarded for his voluntary service and for the time that he has served, and especially the age of those who voluntarily and freely offer their youth to God is fittingly rewarded and wonderfully thanked”. (ST9, LT 14) The third degree of bliss is the security that it will last without end.

As Watson and Jenkins see it, the “three degrees” probably refer to “three states of life” or “spiritual estates” of spouse, widow and virgin, each of whom was thought to bring forth “‘bliss’ that corresponds to the yield of the fruitful seed in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3 - 8)”. In that logic, Julian’s receiving all three degrees of bliss would argue for her prior state of life to have been as a virgin, whether religious or enclosed laywoman. They hold that the young Julian was a nun and that the service of her youth is “a commendation either of Julian’s life of devotion before the revelation, or perhaps of the three youthful requests to God described in Chapter 2”, i.e., ST 1, LT 2.<sup>62</sup>

We can fairly assume that in the third person, she is writing of her own commitment from an early age to “offering her youth to God” and serving the Lord in a life of prayer and devotion. Indeed, this revelation reaffirms a belief she seems already to have had early on, that God takes note of the age of the person who thus voluntarily offers youth and service to God. This would count as fairly strong evidence for the view that, regardless of the particulars of her early state of life (whether as religious or pious lay woman), Julian from a very early age was drawn to a life of prayer and devotion and possible virginity, and that there was a sense that this would be especially well regarded and rewarded by God, such that she could “trust” in salvation, by her good works in this service.<sup>63</sup> Watson and Jenkins also observe the traces of a medieval belief that reward in heaven for service to God accumulated with long life:

The logic here, which the Middle English poem *Pearl* goes to lengths to deny, is that long life gives more opportunities for good works, which lead to greater heavenly reward. *Rev* 14.23 - 30 [LT 14] also seems to assume this cumulative idea of reward, again associated with Julian’s early life.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, pp. 78 and 172.

<sup>63</sup> This would argue against Benedicta Ward’s hypothesis that Julian’s service was as a wife and mother. WARD, Benedicta, “Julian the solitary”, in *Julian reconsidered*, eds. LEECH, Kenneth and Benedicta WARD, Oxford, Fairacres, 1988, pp. 11 - 31.

<sup>64</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 130, commenting on ST2 and LT3.

Perhaps this belief, that her service and the graces it would procure were quantitatively related, contributed to her anxiety around wanting both to die and yet only to come to the brink of death, so as to have received more grace in this life before entering heaven.

The evidence thus interpreted seems to me to coalesce in the picture of Julian as a young person of perfectionistic religious aspirations which she and others saw as service to God. The suffering associated with her high expectations of herself in this service would in that case be intensified by her personal ambivalence around whether to live or die. Moreover, if there was indeed a culturally imposed sense of uncertainty, particularly as a woman, as to whether or to what degree this service would be rewarded by God, it would generate considerable unconscious anxiety: Despite all her service, could she trust in salvation?

In LT 14 only, Julian expands her account of the bliss to be had from being thanked for one's service to God with the inclusion of an "example" of the Lord God as lord in his own house, calling his friends to a feast "gladdening and consoling his dear friends with himself, very familiarly and courteously...." And again, that "If a king thank his subjects, it is a great honour for them; and if he make this known to all the kingdom, then their honour is much increased". Her service, would seem to be associated with an experience of "bliss" (personified perhaps in a relationship of accountability to a religious authority or counsellor which has deepened over the intervening years?) in which she anticipated only to have "courteous" relations, but was treated with unexpected (non-abusive) "familiarity" and consolation. I am wondering whether this could reflect an underlying psychodynamic factor which found expression in the striking and unprecedented visionary juxtaposition of "homeliness" with "courtesy" in her visions of Christ.<sup>65</sup> Specifically, could this suggest that what whiff of affirmation she so longed for through her rigorous service came, not from her nuclear familial circle, perhaps not even from a circle of peers,<sup>66</sup> but from a far more unlikely source: clerical and/or monastic person(s) who, as spiritual father(s) encouraged and directed her in her religious aspirations? This is putting a new, more psychobiographical twist on Colledge and Walsh's argument that Julian "must, early in life, have attracted the benevolent attention of some scholar or scholars who perceived her spiritual and intellectual gifts, and passed on to her the learning of the schools".<sup>67</sup> In her early years, I propose, this hunger for affirmation and mirroring drew Julian to seek from

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<sup>65</sup> See Anna Maria REYNOLDS, "'Courtesy' and 'homeliness' in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich", *The fourteenth century English mystics newsletter* 2, 1979, pp. 12 - 20.

<sup>66</sup> Recent feminist theorists have argued for this idea of a late medieval women's reading circle to account for their knowledge of spiritual writings. See RIDDY, 1993, pp. 104 - 127.

<sup>67</sup> COLLEDGE Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, p. 45.



such a source a kind of “bliss” which might be understood as the subjective feeling tone of an as yet immature mirroring need expressed in terms of narcissistic grandiosity.

## 5.0 Significant identified relationships

### 5.1 Julian’s mother

In the Short Text, at the point when Julian says she wanted those who were with her to think she was dying so that they would not offer any consolation, Julian includes observations of her mother’s presence and actions at Julian’s deathbed. This reference is suppressed in the LT, and in neither text is there any identification of the “others” at her side as being members of her family. In ST 10 Julian has begun to have the visions of the head of Christ on the crucifix bleeding. But she makes this reference to what was going on in the room around her at this same time:

My mother, who was standing there with the others, held up her hand in front of my face to close my eyes, for she thought that I was already dead or had that moment died; and this greatly increased my sorrow for despite all my pains, I did not want to be hindered from seeing, because of my love for [Christ]. (ST 10.)

Elisabeth Koenig disagreed with previous (and some subsequent) commentators who had supposed that Julian’s relationship with her birth mother must have been a rich and fulfilling one, such that Julian was able to describe God as mother with such depth and beauty.<sup>68</sup> Rather, using object relations theory, Koenig builds a strong psychohistorical case from Julian’s texts that her relationship with her birth mother was *not* satisfying; indeed that it could be said to have left Julian in a condition of narcissistic rage. I quote here only her conclusion regarding this one reference to Julian’s mother in ST10:

Julian’s mother, in the only glimpse we have of her, is *non-empathic* to the degree that she thinks her daughter is dead when, in truth, Julian is feeling great pain and great desire to continue looking at the face of the crucifix, and her mother’s action causes her sorrow. Julian does not include this passage in the Long Text. Could this mean that through her twenty years’ reflection on the parable she has learned to love and therefore has forgiven her mother?<sup>69</sup>

What at least is evident is that what Julian *thought* would be the case -- i.e., that others would think she was dying and therefore offer no comfort -- seems to hold true with

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<sup>68</sup> See for examples, KNOWLES, David, *The English mystical tradition*, NY, Harper and Brothers, 1961, p. 128; and ALLCHIN, A.M., “Julian and the continuity of tradition”, in *Julian woman of our day*, ed. LLEWELYN, Robert, Mystic CN, Twenty-third Publications, 1988, p. 39.

<sup>69</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The ‘Book of Showings’ of Julian of Norwich: A Testcase for Paul Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor and the imagination*. Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, pp. 214 - 215.

regard to what she says about her mother's actions at this critical moment in Julian's illness. Her mother is not indicated as offering her any comfort or reassurance.

As Julian lies dying, her gaze is directed toward the face of Jesus on the crucifix. This latter was a customary practice of the devout at their last hour, and it is for this purpose that the curate is called to attend to Julian, setting the cross before her face. Still, it is striking that this same Julian, if she had had an exceptionally rich relationship with her birthmother, does not gaze at all at her own mother's face, or speak fondly of her.<sup>70</sup>

Bernadette Lorenzo argues in an unabashedly ahistorical Freudian theoretical framework, that Julian's "psychic structure bears distinct marks of the oral phase", that is, Freud's first infantile stage of psychosexual development.<sup>71</sup> She notes that in this phase, feeding and hunger provide elective significations through which is expressed and organized the relationship with the object. She observes that Julian hungers to see and excels at describing faces, Christ's or the devil's. But she does not do so with Mary, or, we may add, with her mother.

Julian refers to Mary three times in the Short Text. (ST 4, 10, 13.) The second reference to Mary, follows immediately on the reference to her mother, where she sees something of Mary's compassion for Christ in his suffering and sees Mary's union with her son in love as the cause of the greatness of her pain which surpassed that of the other disciples. Perhaps a contrast may be observed here between the apparent lack of compassion of Julian's mother toward the pain her daughter is suffering. Julian takes the vision of Mary's singleheartedness into herself as she then resolves to keep her eyes fixed on the cross "for I knew well that whilst I looked at the cross I was secure and safe... for apart from the cross there was no safety, but only the horror of devils". (ST 10.)

In the first and third of these references to Christ's mother, Mary is beheld as one who beholds her God in contemplation, first as at the conception and then in the third, the vision of Mary glorified. Julian observes: "And after this our Lord showed himself to me... and in this I was taught that every contemplative soul to whom it is given to look and to seek will see Mary and pass on to God through contemplation". (ST 13.)

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<sup>70</sup>Bernard de Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi's accounts of the affirming and ambitious attitudes of their actual birth mothers toward their sons provides a dramatic contrast, even if we allow for self-effacement in Julian's writing. See CHARRON, Jean-Marc, *De Narcisse à Jésus: La quête d'identité chez François d'Assise*, Montréal, Éditions Paulines, 1992, pp. 98 - 104; and CHARRON, Jean-Marc, "Le rapport au féminin chez Bernard de Clairvaux: Lecture psychanalytique de la *Vita prima*", *Religiologiques* 7, 1993, pp. 111 - 122.

<sup>71</sup> LORENZO, Bernadette, "The mystical experience of Julian of Norwich, with reference to the epistle to the Hebrews (ch. IX), semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1982, p. 162 - 163.

As we saw above, Kohut and Winnicott both identify the hunger to see oneself in the face of the other as the primary symptom of the child's earliest mirroring need not being adequately fulfilled by the maternal selfobject.

If the child does not acquire the needed internal structure his psyche remains fixated on an archaic selfobject and the personality will throughout life be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger. The intensity of the search for and dependence on these objects is due to the fact that they are striven for as a substitute for the missing segments of the psychic structure.<sup>72</sup>

The question whether Julian suffered a traumatic early infant experience of abandonment cannot be answered on the basis of the reference to her mother in this text. But we can at least ask whether this brief report of her non-empathic "encounter" with her own mother (and the brevity with which she contemplates Mary), might reflect in Julian's early childhood a maternal relationship toward her characterized by a lack of empathy, and a relational distancing and unavailability on her mother's part? If this were so, we may read an oblique and somewhat angry reference to her mother among "the people who were with me" when she says she said to them:

Today is my Doomsday. And I said this because I expected to die; because on the day that a man or a woman dies, he is judged as he will be forever. I said this because I wished them to love God more and to set less store by worldly vanity, and to make them mindful that this life is short, as they could see by my example, for in all this time I was expecting to die. (ST 7.)

This hypothesis might to some degree offer a psychodynamic account for Julian's isolation, ambivalence around death and her desire for an illness which would effectively cut her off and permanently isolate Julian from human, comforting contact. If something like this were the case, it would certainly set the stage, psychodynamically speaking, for Julian's rigid refusal in that moment "to be hindered from seeing, because of my love for [Christ]". (ST 10.) It would suggest that the figure of Christ had become the substitute for that intense object hunger.

## 5.2 The religious person

If it is the case that there was a chronic absence of mirroring in Julian's early relationship with her mother, it might account to some degree for the extreme object hunger we see, even here, in Julian's desire for spiritual sight of Christ's face in the context of extreme illness. Yet, if Julian suffered from a sense of isolation, how are we to account for the emergence, in Julian's visions, of the particular qualities of the intensely personal encounter, and the intimate and creative relationality which emerge in her engagement with

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<sup>72</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *The analysis of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1971, p. 45.

the Jesus of her showings? Could the practice of affective piety and scripted visions alone account for this? While this practice is an essential element, my view would be that the spontaneous, “transitional” quality of her visionary imagination also suggests the influence of a compensatory human relationship of an affirming, empathic mirroring nature.

Winnicott observed very astutely that activity in transitional space is only possible in a state of relaxation which, he holds, requires the context of a trusting, reliable maternal or therapeutic mirroring presence. Any anxiety in that regard inhibits the possibility of relaxed “play” and the “creative reaching out” which it promotes.<sup>73</sup> For this kind of experience to be possible, it requires a summation or reverberation by the mirroring object:

It is only here, in this unintegrated state of the personality, that that which we describe as creative can appear. This, if reflected back, *but only if reflected back*, becomes part of the organized individual personality, and eventually this in summation makes the individual to be, to be found; and eventually enables himself or herself to postulate the existence of the self.<sup>74</sup>

Winnicott holds that this is seen in the *evolution* of transitional space witnessed in persons in creative lives of art, religion, etc. Although anticipating myself somewhat, I suggest that in Julian’s launch into her visionary experience we see the beginning of such an evolution, and that this signals that there was just such a therapeutic mirroring relationship which provided her with some prior experience of that affirming “reverberation”. What traces might be revealed of such formative, mirroring relationships in Julian’s life?

Notably, there is the specific reference Julian makes to the “religious person” who visited her during the day following her reception of the first 15 revelations. She is astounded, and ashamed, as her recounting to him of her “ravings”( as she prejudices them) is met with his entirely unjudging, respectful response. That he is not a priest himself is suggested by the fact that she says she then wanted to make a confession for having doubted that the visions were from God, “[b]ut I could not tell it to any priest, for I thought: How could a priest believe me?” (ST 21.) Still, she is able to receive his positive valuation of them. This encounter conditions and shapes her subsequent discernment of the source of these 15 visions as she undergoes demonic assaults, and of the final, confirming vision the next day.

In her way of effacing detail, Julian may be describing here an episode in an unusually trusting, longstanding relationship with a monastic spiritual guide. Such a context bears little superficial resemblance to the “policing” context of confession which

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<sup>73</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., “Playing: Creative activity and the search for self”, in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 55.

<sup>74</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., 1989, p. 64, emphasis in text.

Riddy finds so determinative of Julian's place as a woman in medieval visionary culture. Rather, without denying the cultural context of the omnipresence of the confessional box, I would hold that Julian's description of this encounter has the earmarks an affirming relationship of spiritual counsel.<sup>75</sup>

It could quite conceivably be this man, who, by his counsel and affirmation over the years prior to Julian's having the visions, had become a substitute for Julian's object hunger for a lost maternal mirroring object. But more than this, perhaps through this mirroring relation, he helped to shape in her a capacity for relating to Christ in prayer which came to life in her showings. And perhaps he continued to help her shape her theological reflections on the revelations in her later years as well. The presence of counsel which she was able to receive is inferred, for example, where she tells us that with regard to the first two of the three graces she had asked for when she was young, that is, a to have a bodily sight of Christ's Passion and a bodily sickness, she set the condition that she receive them only if it be the Lord's will, because "it seemed to me that neither was an ordinary petition" (ST 1). Because of that, she tells us, these requests passed from her mind. Although we have no direct evidence for proposing this as one potentially long term relationship of spiritual counsel in Julian's life, if the religious had known of her request for these graces earlier in her life and counselled her as to how to proceed, it certainly would underline the "seriousness and surprise" with which she tells us he then took her description of the visions she was receiving.

### 5.3 The creatures who occupy themselves so much in the Lord's privy counsel

In ST 14 do we glimpse a hint of anger at the arrogance of theologians or clergy of her day whose intellectual speculations seem far from having any relevance to her need, and the need of the people, to trust in salvation? The Lord shows her two portions. The first is the saviour and our salvation which is open and clear, etc. The second is all which is additional or irrelevant to our salvation, that is the Lord's privy counsel. She observes with unusually explicit exasperation that "some creatures occupy themselves so much in

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<sup>75</sup> Others have argued that the universal medieval discipline of confession led to greater introspection, self analysis and the autobiographical impulse. See AERS, David, "A whisper in the ear of early modernists; or, reflections on literary critics writing the 'history of the subject'", in *Culture and history 1350 - 1600: Essays on English communities, identities and writing*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1992, pp. 177 - 202; and ZIMMERMANN, T. C. Price, "Confession and autobiography in the early renaissance", *Renaissance studies in honor of Hans Baron*, eds. MOLHO, Anthony and John A. TEDESCHI, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Press, 1971, pp. 121 - 140. Biblioteca storica sansoni, nuova serie.

this”: wanting to know the Lord’s privy counsel which “is closed to us and hidden”. Rather she comes to understand that we should be occupied in accepting that

this is our Lord’s privy counsel, and it is fitting to God’s royal dominion to keep his privy counsel in peace, and it is fitting to his subjects out of obedience and respect not to wish to know his counsel.... Our Lord has pity and compassion on us because some creatures occupy themselves so much in this; and I am certain that if we knew how much we should please him and solace ourselves by leaving it alone, we should do so. (ST 14.)

This suggests that *she* did not have compassion on those creatures, and that she was angry that they did *not* leave it alone. In LT 30 this text is unchanged.

Julian’s request, as she beholds the cross in her dying state, is for the second wound of compassion. This is of course compassion for the suffering Christ which, in the stages of spiritual ascent she was pursuing before her visionary experience, was the grace of the second, moral stage. But could this request also have an anthropological significance? Could it be related to her anger, this lack of compassion toward arrogant members of the clergy? Could it be a hint as to her pre-visionary attitude toward others as well, indeed toward God? Could she be in a condition of profound anger at the seeming dissonance between what so many theologians (and therefore God?) seemed to be about, and the life and death crises she, and others, were suffering? Could her rage here be at a heavy sense of sinfulness for which there seemed no way out? Could this be a pattern which might be repeating itself since her early experience of her mother?

In ST 13 Julian sees that it is her sin which keeps her from the purity she desires and so from receiving the third wound of longing for God, the highest of the three contemplative stages in spiritual ascent. She tells us here of a tendency in her early life to anger and impatience and especially to blame God for the imperfect state of the world: “[B]efore this time I often wondered why, through the great and prescient wisdom of God, sin was not prevented; for it seemed to me that then all would have been well”. It is only later, in the writing of her showings, that she sees that “it would be most unkind of me to *blame God* or marvel at him on account of my sins”. (ST 13.)

These suggestions would point to a critical side to Julian, critical of the failure of the Church to respond to the situation of its people (and hers in particular) with a vision of salvation which could offer comfort and trust. The criticism extends to an assumption that the situation should not exist, and that somehow God is responsible for its existence (and not the solution to it). What is also significant is that the pre-visionary Julian seems bent on criticizing herself for being thus critical.

## 6.0 Julian's self-abasement and effacement

There are other relationships mentioned in the course of her Short Text, the description of which undergoes reduction in detail or omission in the Long Text. There is, for example the reference to the woman, "a certain person whom I loved", whose future she daringly asks Christ about in ST 16 but is told to be content with the confidence that all will be well. In LT 35 (with considerable future now past) the reference to this significant personal relationship is rendered asexual as "a certain creature whom I loved, if it would continue in the good living which I hoped had been begun by the grace of God". Even more anonymous is the reference to the child accompanying her curate in ST 2, which is omitted in LT 3.

Our total lack of biographical knowledge of Julian, and her tendency between the writing of the ST and the LT to remove even more of the presence of particulars in her own biography, as well as the particulars of those around her, has led to considerable variations of interpretation.

### 6.1 Self-abasement

It has been frequently observed by feminists and others that in the Short Text Julian emphasizes certain qualities in herself which were typically, and negatively, associated with her gender. In the Short text she is a "devout woman", "uneducated (*lewed*), feeble and frail", who insists that because of her sex she cannot be a teacher. By the writing of the LT, much of this self-abasement has been toned down and all explicit reference to her gender has been removed, though she still describes herself as a "simple, unlettered creature". (LT2.)<sup>76</sup>

As we saw in the introductory chapter, some interpreters see Julian as following a cultural norm for women, a trope of modesty or humility, which allowed Christ to be the

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<sup>76</sup> BAKER, Denise N., *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From vision to book*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 11. Baker observes from sources contemporary with Julian such as Richard Rolle and Nicholas Love how the terms "simple" and "unlettered" were undergoing transitions in meaning to indicate affective rather than intellectual texts and could refer to literate audiences. On p. 11 Baker concludes:

Phrases similar to Julian's '*symple creature vnlettyrde*' thus seem to be conventional signals of devotional discourse rather than descriptions of the educational achievements of their readers. Even though this evidence does not resolve the question of whether she could read Latin or only English, it does undermine the view that Julian of Norwich was unable to read or write in any language. Her silence about an amanuensis... gives further warrant to the conclusion that Julian not only composed but also inscribed and revised her own text.

author of the woman visionary's voice, in a Church in which she could not have any voice of authority of her own. Watson and Jenkins observe that these self-characterizations are more than gestures of modesty, and argue for a shift in the literary persona Julian is taking on in each of the two versions of her showings, from participant to interpreter. They hold that in the Short Text Julian characterizes herself as the participant or "creature", the one who *desires*, in this visionary genre.

[I]t is such individuals, helpless in their untutored createdness, not the educated, who experience visions: chosen individuals, to be sure, but more importantly representatives of everyone.... In Christian thought Christ, who emptied himself to become human, 'taking the form of a servant,' has a mysterious affinity with the humble (Phil. 2:7)....  
[T]his creature... must be presumptuously trusting and receptive, asking 'lewed' questions out of personal need.<sup>77</sup>

They go on to argue that the literary persona of the Long Text is the "interpreter", the one who *understands*, must be represented as educated by means of these same showings, in order to justify it and reveal that the creature's singular experience is exemplary of a wider human need and a larger divine truth. And to do this, Julian the interpreter assumes the authoritative role which many women's visionary writings give to clerics (amanuenses).<sup>78</sup> Experience and interpretation are not mutually exclusive in Julian's writings, because of her way of both describing and interpreting her experience as "I saw".<sup>79</sup> They conclude that this doesn't help us know Julian's biography, but that it does give us two images of Julian

neither of which can be wholly a construct.... We will never know. Written under a name and profession that symbolized separation from the world, the works have been carefully put together so as to conceal the worldly history of their composition.<sup>80</sup>

## 6.2 Effacement of details of others

This shift would partly account for her effacement of other particular individuals from the Long Text. Abbott's argument, that this reduction in the Long Text of extraneous detail about others (her mother and the child accompanying the curate at her deathbed, and

<sup>77</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, pp. 7 - 8.

<sup>78</sup> Their example here is from LT 4, where the "trinitarian hermeneutic" is introduced, that "Where Jesus appears the blessed Trinity is understood, as I see it". See WATSON, 1992, pp. 79 - 100. Exeter symposium V. Compare Denise Baker's thesis which is that Julian moves from an affective visionary experience in the Short Text to a theologically educated interpretation of it in the Long Text, though how Julian would have got that education is unknown. BAKER, 1994, pp. 12-14.

<sup>79</sup> Surprisingly, Watson and Jenkins do not refer to Kerrie Hide's "hermeneutic of beholding" to underline this continuity. See HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>80</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 10. Watson now holds that perhaps Julian the "creature" was a nun, and Julian the "interpreter" an anchoress.



even the certain female creature whom she loved) is to highlight in a literary way the intensity of the drama of Julian's self-absorbed encounter with "her personal fantasy-Christ", would put the emphasis on a literary Julian creating a persona of her early life, in effect decades later.<sup>81</sup> This interpretation would seem to be unnecessarily contrived. I prefer the interpretation of Watson and Jenkins of the mature Julian the anchoress, as addressing her readers of the Long Text with just the necessary essentials as viewed, so to speak, from beyond the grave.

### 6.3 Self-effacement

However, in looking ahead to the mature Julian who composed the Long Text, the contrast with the young Julian as portrayed above is marked. The qualities of her unconscious pre-visionary self-perception as a "special case", a "spiritual narcissist", traces of which Abbott has found and which I have developed above, could tend without direction and the critical intervention of the visions themselves, in the opposite direction of adding detail reflective of her self-preoccupation, such as has been observed in Margery Kempe's *Book*.<sup>82</sup> What could have evolved from her self-description in ST 6 as the "wretched worm, sinful creature" to whom the revelation was shown,<sup>83</sup> in a social context which would systematically have her believe this, had there not been some direction against pursuing a tendency to disparaging self-preoccupation?

It would seem plausible to me that Julian's capacity for self-effacement was in fact not great in her early life; that while it might have been an ideal in women's visionary culture, she was debilitated by her extreme hunger to be seen and affirmed, paradoxically evident among other places, in this early tendency to self-abasement. It would seem that Julian at that early age would not have been able to take on the invisibility required of an anchoress for the right reasons.

Abbott describes Julian's pre-visionary stage as one of

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<sup>81</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, p. 59. In ST 16, for example, Julian asks about how a certain creature is doing: I wished to know, concerning a certain person whom I loved, what her future would be; and by wishing this I impeded myself, for I was not then told this. And then I was answered in my reason, as it were by a friendly man: Accept it generally, and contemplate the courtesy of your Lord God as he reveals it to you, for it is more honour to God to contemplate him in all things than in any one special thing.

In the Long Text the gender of this creature is removed.

<sup>82</sup> See for example, WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> This is how COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a p. 219, interpret the ambiguous word at the bottom of the page, but which has been variously rendered as "the wretched, worldly sinful creature" by REYNOLDS and HOLLOWAY, 2001, pp. 722 - 725, and "wretched, sinful creature" by WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 73.

great feeling, of self-consciousness and also self-dramatization, of struggle and strain. Julian wants to see Christ; she wants to be wounded; she yearns to taste death (but only *taste*).... to create an authentic religious experience but aching for something beyond its unaided capacities....

Julian's concern in [LT] 2 and 3 with presenting a picture of emotionally-charged religious exertion inevitably produces a particular focus on herself, keeping Julian as agent at the centre of the picture. By contrast, the showings which follow are ascribed to the direction [sic] action of God himself.<sup>84</sup>

The development of her capacity for self-effacement to such a dramatic extent in the evolution of her two texts could then be seen as a function of the effect of the visions and her subsequent life of meditation on them, which allowed for a maturation in her need for mirroring. Her genre of writing the *Showings*, which brims with her pervasive personal presence as the one who sees and is beheld, is the evidence for this line of argument. Perhaps the reverential authority in which she was held by others in her later life in her pastoral role as spiritual counsellor could be part of the backdrop? Although "unseen" within the anchorhold, and so, effectively "self-effaced", she would nonetheless be esteemed and affirmed for her contribution to the spiritual health of her even Christians.<sup>85</sup> As will be explored further along in this thesis, the capacity for self-effacement most certainly had to do with her growth in perception of herself as convinced of her acceptability as a human being assumed into Christ, allowing her, as Watson and Jenkins put it, to speak as a "representative of everyone".<sup>86</sup>

## 7.0 The illness

### 7.1 What Julian says

The context in which the visionary events occurred, she tells us, was a period of 24 hours at a point of illness nearing death. A number of people have speculated about what kind of illness this was, and about the visionary experience happening in that state. That it was a bodily sickness she indicates herself, in her description of the symptoms.

What does she say about the illness she receives in ST2 and LT3? She says it lasted three days and nights at which point she received extreme unction, as she was expected not

<sup>84</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 59 - 60.

<sup>85</sup> Compare the description of this paradox in WARREN, Ann, *Anchorites and their patrons in medieval England*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 7:

Encouraged, applauded, and supported by society and church, [anchorites] undertook their solitary life by encamping in the heart of the community. Enclosed and yet exposed, hidden and yet visible, shadows behind the curtains of their access windows, medieval English anchorites were daily reminders of the proper focus of Christian existence.

<sup>86</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 7.

to live till day. However she lingered on for two more days and nights. On the third night (although she was in some inner conflict about wanting to live longer so as to have more opportunities for good works in this life and so increase her heavenly reward), she assented to die. She tells us that her body felt dead from the waist down. She was propped up as she had trouble holding her head up, and her eyes were rigidly fixed upward. Once she turns her eyes to gaze upon the crucifix that her curate sets before her, her sight begins to fail, except for a light in the image of the cross,<sup>87</sup> and everything around the cross in the darkness, she says, was ugly to her and occupied by a great crowd of demons. The upper part of her body began to die such that she had no sensation left. In the Short Text but not the Long Text she says her hands fell down on either side and that she was so weak her head lolled to one side. Her greatest pain was shortness of breath and the ebbing of her life and she felt she was truly at the point of death. At this point, she experiences a vanishing of the symptoms of pain, particularly in her upper body. At later points in the texts she recounts the return of the symptoms, but it is not known or identified that after this episode she suffered from the bodily sickness, and she is thought to have lived for over forty years after this experience.

She also tells us however, that in her early request for an illness, she had wished to receive not only physical pain, but “every kind of pain, bodily and spiritual, which I would have if I died, every fear and assault from demons and every other kind of pain except the departure of the spirit”. (ST 1.)

Julian tells us she recognized this illness she was now suffering as an opportunity to ask for the second wound of compassion, “that the Lord would fill my body full with recollection of feeling of his blessed Passion, as I had prayed before, for I wished that his pains might be my pains, with compassion which would lead to longing for God”. (ST 3; and LT 3.) Her request seems to mingle with the request for compassion and her early desire for the first grace of a bodily sight of the Passion (despite her comment that she never wanted any bodily vision) in her present situation of bodily illness. She also tells us in both texts “When I was young I desired to have that sickness when I was thirty years old”. The coincidence of the sickness and the visions now at the age of 30 constitutes, for Julian, a response by God to her youthful first two requests for a “bodily sight” or recollection of our Lord in his Passion, and for a “bodily illness”.

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<sup>87</sup> WATSON and JENKINS, 2006, p. 132 call this “tunnel vision”.

## 7.2 Psychobiological interpretations of this illness

Colledge and Walsh consulted heart specialists who considered that Julian suffered from “severe heart failure”.<sup>88</sup>

Brant Pelphrey believes she actually died of a severe chest infection, that the showings were “an experience which today we might call ‘life after life’”, and that after 11 hours she “awoke ‘with a loud sound and a bang’”, alive but in pain; the visions resumed when she later fell asleep again.<sup>89</sup>

James McIlwain explores four different physical diseases which could account for the symptoms which Julian describes in a way that is “relatively ample by medieval standards”. He concludes from her central complaint of ascending paralysis and from the fact of her eventual recovery, that Julian suffered from a case of botulism.<sup>90</sup>

More recently, Richard Lawes has argued that an organic illness, involving a very severe debilitating febrile illness such as pneumonia, would be more likely. He argues (against Barratt) that since medieval psychology itself sought biological bases for diagnoses, an organic medical approach can correlate well with the “conventions of affective piety informing such physical descriptions of the passion”, and so “far from creating reductionist explanations, allow resonances which enrich meaning”. His argument hypothesizes that such illness, with its strange psychobiological disturbances was a stimulus for the emergence of the autobiographical impulse. This impulse is “related to the intensity and strangeness of the experience itself and the strength of its challenge to the coherence of the individual’s inner world”.<sup>91</sup>

What is evident is that Julian’s description of her pain is global and diffuse, encompassing physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions in her awareness of being on the border between life and death. This diffuse, global quality is taken up into her visions

<sup>88</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 69.

<sup>89</sup> PELPHREY, Brant, *Christ our mother: Julian of Norwich*, Wilmington Delaware, Michael Glazier, 1989, p. 17 and p. 259 fn. 1. See also his “Afterword”, in *Vox mystica: Essays on medieval mysticism*, ed. BARTLETT, Anne Clarke et al., Cambridge, Brewer, 1995, p. 234. I do not accept Pelphrey’s speculation that Julian did in fact die, and returned to life, though not on the basis that it is an academically unacceptable hypothesis, but rather that it does not fit Julian’s psycho-spiritual condition as reflected in the texts themselves.

<sup>90</sup> McILWAIN, James T., “The ‘*bodelye syeknes*’ of Julian of Norwich”, *Journal of medieval history* 10, 1984, pp. 167 - 180.

<sup>91</sup> LAWES, Richard, “Psychological disorder and the autobiographical impulse in Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Thomas Hoccleve”, in *Writing religious women: Female spiritual and textual practices in late medieval England*, eds. RENEVEY, Denis and Christiania WHITEHEAD, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2000, p. 238. See also BARRATT, Alexandra, “‘In the lowest part of our need’: Julian and medieval gynaecological writing”, in *Julian of Norwich: A book of essays*, ed. McENTIRE, Sandra, London, Garland Publishing, 1998, p. 255.

and her eventual understanding of the pain of the human condition and the point of entry into union with the humanity of Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

### 7.3 Psychological examinations of the illness

Psychological interpretations of Julian's illness, its relation to the visions and to her recovery have their own history, related, like the psychobiological ones, as much to the context and attitude of the researcher as to their subject matter.

Roman Catholics earlier in the 20th century tended to analyze the material on the basis of criteria for canonization. Molinari seeks to distinguish a "divine origin" of her sickness (and so, her visions) from a "neurotic" or psychosomatic origin, and argues that it was divine.<sup>93</sup>

The coincidence of the sickness and the visions causes several to explore whether the illness along with the visions were of a psychological or psychopathological nature. Early in the century, Renaudin saw the visions as having been prepared by a long period of desire and expectancy, such that the correspondence between Julian's desires and their realization suggests the possibility of auto-suggestion, the desire causing the "ecstasy". He concludes however, that this was not the case; that Julian had a sound attitude of prudence.<sup>94</sup>

Others were more critical, concluding that Julian was in a "state of hypnotism" or that she was in a "trance state" experiencing "physical illusion".<sup>95</sup> Thouless, although he wants to understand her mysticism, gives a Freudian explanation of certain episodes in the showings, arguing that in the (unidentified) sickness "her normal mental life was weakened, and the scenes of the Passion with which meditation had stored her mind welled up to the surface of consciousness and presented themselves with hallucinatory vividness".<sup>96</sup> Conrad Pepler concludes that Julian's condition was an "extreme pathological state...[of] acute neurosis induced perhaps by an over-enthusiastic life of

<sup>92</sup> See GALEA, Kate, *'I desyred to haue all maner of paynes': A study of the function of pain in 'The Showings' of Julian of Norwich*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1997, 271 p.

<sup>93</sup> MOLINARI, Paul, *Julian of Norwich: The teaching of a 14th century English mystic*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1958, pp. 22 - 30.

<sup>94</sup> RENAUDIN, Paul, *Quatre mystiques anglais*, Paris, Le Cerf, 1945, p. 60. See also TYRRELL, George, *The faith of the millions*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1901, pp. 12 ff; KNOWLES, David, *The English mystics*, London, Burns, Oates and Washbourne 1927, pp. 150 ff; COLEMAN, T.W., *English mystics of the fourteenth century*, Westport CN, Greenwood Press, [1938] 1971, pp. 138 ff.

<sup>95</sup> For the former see INGE, W. R., *Studies of English mystics*, London, John Murray, 1906, p. 58, and for the latter, WARRACK, Grace, ed. and transl., *Revelations of divine love, recorded by Julian, anchoress at Norwich, anno Domini 1373*, London, Methuen, [1901] 1952, pp. xxxvii - xxxviii.

<sup>96</sup> THOULESS, Robert, *The lady Julian of Norwich: A psychological study*, London, SPCK, 1924, p. 25.

penance and solitude. But she appears to have retained consciousness throughout, except in the final dream".<sup>97</sup>

More recent psychological studies reflect their theoretical preferences for Freud, Jung, Lacan, Irigaray, and Winnicott. Some focus less on the illness itself (and sometimes neglect the context of her meditation history), though frequently assume that the context of the illness for the visionary experience implies a weakened state vulnerable to regression.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> PEPLER, Conrad, *Life in the spirit* 3, 1949, p. 486.

<sup>98</sup> I have referred already to the Freudian study by LORENZO, Bernadette, "The mystical experience of Julian of Norwich, with reference to the epistle to the Hebrews (ch. IX), semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1982, pp. 161 - 176. Two articles published from these approach the *Showings* from a Jungian and a Lacanian perspective respectively: BUSSHART, Helen, "Christ as feminine in Julian of Norwich in the light of the psychology of C.G. Jung", *Mystics quarterly* 11, 1985, pp. 63 - 84; PETERSEN, Zina, "'Every manner of thing shall be well': Mirroring serenity in the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich", *Mystics quarterly* 22, 1996, pp. 91 - 101. The best Lacanian analysis of Julian's *Showings* would be that by COINER, Nancy, "The 'homely' and the 'heimlich': The hidden, doubled self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Exemplaria: A journal of theory in medieval and renaissance studies* 5, 2, 1993, pp. 305 - 323. For a feminist, Irigarayan study, see ROBERTSON, Elizabeth, "Medieval medical views of women and female spirituality in the *Ancrene wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", in *Feminist approaches to the body in medieval literature*, eds. LOMPERIS, Linda and Sarah STANBURY, Philadelphia PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, pp. 142 - 167, New cultural studies. Elisabeth Koenig devotes a chapter of her Ph.D. thesis to a depth psychological approach using Winnicott and Alice Miller to Julian's image of the face of the lord in the parable of the servant and the lord in KOENIG, 1984, pp. 184 - 220. The insights of Koenig's chapter have been critical for the development of the focus for the present study. A masters thesis I wrote under Dr Koenig's direction began the psychoanalytic study of mirroring in the *Showings*. See RATCLIFFE, Holly, *Mourning and kenosis: Mirroring of God and self in transformation*, S.T.M. thesis, General Theological Seminary, NY, 1997, 245 p. Other articles address aspects of the current study. See for examples Sprung's literary study which incorporates Winnicott, in SPRUNG, Andrew, "The inverted metaphor: Earthly mothering as *figura* of divine love in Julian of Norwich's *Book of Showings*", in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. PARSONS, John and Bonnie WHEELER, NY, Garland, 1996, pp. 183 - 199. Other studies include McCONNELL, Helen, "From shame to joy: Julian of Norwich, companion on the journey to spiritual wellness", *Studies in formative spirituality* 14, 1993, pp. 395 - 405; also, RUDD, Jay, "Images of self and self-image in Julian of Norwich", *Studia Mystica* 16, 1995, pp. 82 - 105; LUKAS, Elona, "Psychological and spiritual growth in Hadewijch and Julian of Norwich", *Studia mystica* 9, 3, 1986, pp. 3 - 20; ROGERS, Daniel, J., "Psychotechnological approaches to the teaching of the *Cloud*-author and to the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. Marion GLASSCOE, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1982, pp. 143 - 160, whose interesting section on guided imagery takes no account of the historical practices of which Barbara Newman speaks. Morea includes Julian of Norwich in his study which uses what he calls a "Christian psychology", in MOREA, Peter, *Towards a liberal catholicism: Psychology and four women*, London, SCM, 2000, 184 p.

## 7.4 The hermeneutical significance of the illness together with the crucifix as context of visionary experience

### 7.4.1 The visions as found and created

It would seem then, that contemporary interpretations of symptoms of her illness may be to some degree related to how flexibly or inflexibly the author perceives the relationship between divine and human agency in the visions which Julian experienced in that context. An inflexible, “all or none” interpretation, as Barbara Newman has described one theology of revelation in her study of late medieval women’s visionary culture, would require that the visions (and therefore the illness) be either just a psychological/pathological phenomenon, or an intervention of divine agency (either way disparaging the human agency of the woman). But, as Newman is at pains to show, even in the Middle ages, discernment of human and divine agency in visionary experience could be more adequate and subtle than this, even producing a visionary culture, although it did not remain that way. She identifies four components which appear in most medieval vision texts: the paranormal (spontaneous), the meditational (cultivated), the aesthetic, and the supernatural.<sup>99</sup> Near-death experience or mental illness could be a context for spontaneous visions, “uncanny, defying the norms of ordinary perception”, and Julian of Norwich is cited as a “celebrated example” of the former.<sup>100</sup> Newman observes that visions could *also, and at the same time* be the fruits of a complex spiritual discipline, and as will be seen below, Julian’s texts bear witness to her having, in her early years, begun to cultivate meditational disciplines which could facilitate visionary activity. Prior to the 15th century, in which the suspicion of visions, and the use of the imagination to induce them, became an ecclesiastical and juridical imperative, another theology of revelation held sway, with its roots in monastic tradition but expanded into the vernacular tradition by the 14th century. In that theology of revelation, the imagination could be put to the service of the devotional life. In effect, it “envisaged an implicit synergy between grace and human effort”.<sup>101</sup>

The advantage of using an object relations theoretical basis for this psychohistorical study can be seen here, in that it also is (potentially) open to holding a more flexible “both/and” (rather than “either/or”) view of the relation between “human and divine agency” in the visionary experience of our subject. Winnicott describes the experience of transitional phenomena in play, religious experience, art, etc., as having the quality of

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<sup>99</sup> NEWMAN, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> ZALESKI, Carol, *Otherworldly journeys: Accounts of near-death experience in medieval and modern times*, NY, Oxford University Press, 1987, 275 p.

<sup>101</sup> NEWMAN, 2005, p. 6.

being “both found and created”; as both a product of the imagination bearing the imprint of the psychodynamic history of the individual, and in some sense “received”, shaped by cultural symbols, traditions, external circumstances, etc. In so doing he is opening psychological discourse to a potentially more nuanced hermeneutical framework for understanding, in this instance, Julian’s near-death experience as the context of her visions. As he says, originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness are another, largely unexplored, locus for the psychological dynamic of separateness and union in cultural life.<sup>102</sup>

#### 7.4.2 Illness as limit situation

It is one thing to practise such meditation techniques which encourage the use of the imagination in the course of one’s life. It is another to do so at the point of dying.

The context of the physical near death experience as the locus for her receiving the revelations could be seen as significant in that it would represent a physical crisis or “limit situation”. Such an extreme limit (life ending and entering death) experience may well have been for Julian an occasion of recapitulating previous experiences of unresolved grief at the (historically quite probable) deaths of significant others and, prior to that, perhaps of an early maternal environment of traumatic separation, loss or neglect. We will never know.

Here it is significant to step back and recall that whatever Julian experienced in 1373, which prompted this critical illness, may also be a sign to us of the effect of large scale social or collective trauma reverberating through her text. If we look again at the graph of the drastic change in population at that time in English history which was to continue for over one hundred years (see Appendix 1), Loewenberg’s comments on massive psychic trauma take on new significance:

Its hallmark is a fixation on the trauma but with new variations and with an altered conception of the self and the world. The symptoms are lifelong. No one is immune. Adaptive and coping capacities are enfeebled. Massive trauma is a crucial bridge to history.... The psychoanalytical perception of anxiety as a signal of the danger of helplessness and hopelessness is a political and social category of understanding whose full implications have yet to be explored....<sup>103</sup>

Jean-Marc Charron observes, from a rather more Freudian perspective, that “{a}u plan psycho-dynamique, l’enthousiasme autant que l’insécurité se comprennent par l’effritement du Surmoi individuel et collectif qui accompagne de telles périodes de changement”.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., “The location of cultural experience”, *International journal of psycho-analysis* 48, 3, 1967, part 3, reprint in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 99.

<sup>103</sup> LOEWENBERG, Peter, *Decoding the past: The psychohistorical approach*, NY, Knopf Press, 1983, pp. 41 - 42.

<sup>104</sup> CHARRON, 1992, p. 127.



His suggestion about the emergence of narcissism at just such points in history makes sense:

La thèse de Lasch repose sur une conception du narcissisme contemporain comme aboutissement logique du culte de l'individu inhérent à l'idéologie libérale qui domine le développement du capitalisme depuis le XIXe siècle. Nous suggérons de comprendre aussi l'émergence du narcissisme comme un phénomène lié à la crise culturelle que traverse l'Occident; dans notre perspective, le narcissisme accompagnerait les périodes de mutations civilisationnelles et ne saurait être réduit à un trait de psychologie collective unique à notre génération post-industrielle.<sup>105</sup>

What Julian says at this point is very significant, then. From having been “very sorrowful and reluctant to die”, she undergoes what I hold is a significant shift to assent: “So I thought: Good Lord, is it no longer to your glory that I am alive? And my reason and my sufferings told me that I should die; *and with all the will of my heart I assented wholly to be as was God's will*”. (ST 2, LT 3.) Given her prior condition of ambivalence around living or dying, this assent to die (if it be God's will), signals a real, interior shift from a condition of resistance to one of consent -- come what may. In effect, I suggest that this shift opens her to become aware of or receptive to repressed feelings, thoughts and fantasies which are beyond her control. Engaged as her religious visual imagination is in beholding the crucifix, the shift to an interior condition of assent opens her to an experience of psychospiritual death, even as it represents a consent actually to die. Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross have observed the radicality of this shift when they speak of “the loss of control that is a form of death” as the paradigm which the reader of Julian must also enter, along with Julian herself, in order to put on the kenotic “mind of Christ”.<sup>106</sup>

Julian then says that she felt dead from her waist down. Since Julian is so attentive to her feelings, her description of “feeling dead” is strikingly similar to Winnicott's clinical descriptions of the contrast between feeling dead and feeling alive. Could this condition of feeling disconnected from her body -- at the very point at which she is about to die and, in terms of the faith tradition she wants to believe, be *united* with God -- be a description of a recapitulation to a condition caused by the repression of painful memories of *separation*? Can we at least take from this description that her feeling dead may reflect not only a physical condition, but also be replicating the particular shape of a dissociated experience of overwhelmingly painful viscissitudes of early narcissism and object relations?<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> CHARRON, 1992, p. 127. He is referring to the study by LASCH, Christopher, *The culture of narcissism*, NY, Norton, 1978, 268 p.

<sup>106</sup> GILLESPIE, Vincent and Maggie ROSS, “The apophatic image: The poetics of effacement in Julian of Norwich”, in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1992, p. 60. Exeter symposium V.

<sup>107</sup> See MEISSNER, 1984, p, x - xi.

But the near death condition as limit situation, between life and death, would in any event be an occasion in which, from an object relations theoretical perspective, entry into transitional space activity assumes some prior capacity for trust. As Winnicott is at pains to show, activity in the transitional realm is only possible in an environment in which some maternal mirroring presence is felt by the child/person to exist, allowing the movement into absorbed, desultory “play” activity. I take it from this that *the limit situation of the illness would not in itself be the sufficient cause for movement into the transitional realm to occur*. Julian’s assent to die, while beholding the crucifix, is a consent to trust both her helplessness and her religious imagination to the unseen Other, allowing the movement into the transitional realm of the showings.

Julian’s profound surprise and disorientation at the initial shift into the visionary world which opened before her, suggests that on the one hand she was familiar with the practice of meditating on the Passion narratives and images of the crucifix. The appearance of the visions at that point of near death can be appropriately grasped and historically more contextually understood if Julian were already many years in the religious cultural practice of *lectio divina* meditating on the texts and images of the life and Passion and death of Christ, even if she were no longer actively seeking to have visions. Indeed, this practice could even be seen to be a significant cultural element which helped to compensate for an otherwise early lack of mirroring, trustworthy environment which would encourage her to engage in transitional space.

On the other hand, the sudden explosion into the realm of a visionary world that was taking on a life of its own before her suggests that she was not one whose prior experience of prayer had made her at ease in this realm of free-flowing, uncontrolled, visionary fantasy or illusion, as we saw in Julian’s restraint concerning the first two of the three graces she had requested of God in her youth. Her ambivalence to dying reveals a similar resistance pattern. Again in this regard, it is significant that in ST 21 Julian is herself the first person to reduce the visionary material to the result of a condition of “raving”, perhaps precisely because of their spontaneous, uncontrolled appearance.

#### **7.4.3 Interpretation of Julian’s eruption into transitional space**

All this gives the impression that with the eruption into the transitional space of the visions, Julian’s tight control and self-judgment of her feelings and desires in prayer and in her psychological life is lost, as is the basis for her trust in salvation, as she had previously

understood it in terms of intellectual assent to the teachings of Holy Church, and not based on felt knowledge.

With the illness as critical context for her reception of the visions, I suggest that we might begin to look for this pattern of shift from conflicted resistance to assent to loss of control at significant intervals throughout the visions themselves, which begins to be recognizable here in her dying state, as she is suspended in suffering between life and death. What I am finding distinctive about this surprised shift into transitional space is that it introduces a pattern of transformation from suffering, pain, and despair to a condition of consolation, which in the course of the showings is continually related to the movement of the eyes to gaze upon “the face of the crucifix” (St 2) in her dying moments, though manifesting itself in different appearances. It is the shift from being at the brink of dying (physically and in terms of the ghostly or spiritual pains Julian associated with death), in a mysterious moment of fusion with the crucifix in the bodily condition of dying (and later of reciprocated eye contact with the face of the crucifix), to being transformed into a condition of health, both physical and spiritual.

The pattern seems to include an extended period of intense suffering (including physical symptoms of pain and paralysis, but also emotional and spiritual ambivalence, resistance and distress, with a seeking after discernment as to how to understand the suffering). This is followed by a moment of eye contact with the face of the crucifix (combined with an interior disposition of desire for compassion), at which there is a shift into a state of restoration to emotional calm (if not “bliss”) and spiritual consolation. At this point, it can only be observed in rudimentary outline. I will return to this however, again and again as it develops and is reformed in the visions themselves.

What might this entry into the transitional space of her showings suggest about Julian’s need for mirroring and its maturational development? What personal dynamics might have brought Julian to begin that visual meditative practice which so favoured the emergence of a visual, and relational encounter? I have argued above that there are signs that she continued her prayer life faithfully, but that she encountered difficulties, both in the form of conservative caution expressed by her spiritual counsel and by the cultural context, and in the form of internal psychological blocks to allowing scripted meditations on the Passion to take a spontaneous course. As she describes in ST 19, she often “felt nothing at all, ...as barren and dry after [her] prayers as before”. I have suggested here that the mortal illness functioned as a limit situation which, with the help of her prior experience of the religious tradition of meditation on the Passion, facilitated Julian’s shift into the transitional realm of her showings. Now I ask, what psychodynamic elements of her life

context might we see functioning in the breakthrough into the visionary transitional space at that moment?

Specifically for this study, what patterns in the makeup of her psychodynamic history might have resonated with her personal and cultural experience at that moment, which then shaped the transformative visionary experience which was to emerge?

- Could a chronic lack of mirroring others in her early life have led her to hunger for mirroring and visual affirmation, have brought her to an intense devotional practice with perfectionistic religious aspirations? Could Julian's seeking nourishment *both* in practising these affective meditation disciplines *and* in receiving spiritual counsel in tandem with this have provided a means to begin to address that mirroring need in her, in ways she could not have foreseen?
- Could the illness itself have been as much precipitated by, as it was a stimulus for, a traumatic experience in her life at that moment? And could that moment of assenting to die have opened up a sense of mourning a "loss of meaning"? This loss of meaning, as Homans says, would be at once personal (a lost childhood) and social (her experience of the Church's teaching on salvation and theological neglect of its people in critical need of consolation).
- Could this moment have brought to light a profound dissonance in her experience between what she had been taught to *think* about the Church's teaching on sin, damnation and salvation, and what she had been taught to *feel* about it?
- Could this dissonance be a recapitulation of an experience (or repeated experiences) of pain and suffering due to loss, neglect and isolation in her life in infancy and again later in her life, which she unconsciously associated with the Church's descriptions of the pain of sin and exclusion from salvation?
- Could these be significant psychohistorical elements which together predisposed her -- in her moments suspended between life and death when she was presented with the crucifix to behold, that symbol so rich yet ambiguous with meaning -- to move dramatically into the transitional space of her visionary experience? Again, "the response to loss [of meaning of religious symbols] opens up the transitional space, which is both social and historical, and in this space persons construct a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy and its implicitly narrative character".<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 333.

Looked at in this way, I suggest that these elements could together make for a very powerful cocktail to account for Julian's spontaneous and dramatic entry into visionary experience, and for the singularity of her desire to see Jesus and appropriate his saving work in a way which more adequately resonated with her situation and her need.

Through this interpretive lens, the illness as context for the visionary experience need not be seen as merely a psychobiological trauma, nor does it need to imply a psychopathological condition. I suggest that the context of that limit experience may be said to have produced a recapitulation of an early childhood psychodynamic crisis (with physical and a variety of other symptoms of suffering), now with an added crisis in soteriological meaning, a condition of profound pre-oedipal and soteriological dissonance evoking a fundamental, unconscious terror of death as exclusion and abandonment. I propose that it was this that she had previously resisted, repressed and sought to control by every possible means. By assenting to die, she was admitting her powerlessness over it and entering unknown territory.

### **8.0 A portrait of Julian's early, pre-visionary soteriological assumptions**

On the basis of the foregoing review of literature and speculation as to some of the early patterns in Julian's psychodynamic history, is there evidence of the shape of Julian's soteriological beliefs early on in her life, prior to the visions? Are there, reflected in her pre-visionary aspirations and anxiety, signs of incoherence between her intellectual assent to the teaching of Holy Church and her emotional beliefs about where she stands as she prepares to face her own "doomsday"?

First, the idea she held that service to God in her youth, and cumulatively with age, would contribute toward her salvation seems to have led her to be ambivalent about whether to live or die. Her salvation would seem to be based on what she does, not who she is, and this idea of service could have the effect of implying that no good work is good enough. Presumably what she does, then, can never be enough. I observe this religious scrupulosity in ST 13 and LT 27 where she wondered, in a condition of longing (which she sees in the visions is to be shunned, because it leads her to mourning and sorrowing unreasonably, lacking discretion) why the beginning of sin was not prevented, "for if there had been no sin, we should all have been pure...." I propose to see this as a clue to her suffering an ubiquitous, heavy sense of sinfulness... as though her soul "had been in pain or prison". (ST 19.) Indeed, though she is in a state of contrition, she expresses fear of God being angry at her because of the same sin for which she has contrition, and makes confession and does other good deeds in order to appease God's anger. (ST 19.) Looked

at in this light, there is a sense in the pre-visionary Julian, despite all her service to God and her good works, of her feeling doomed to fail.

Related to this is her recognition which also comes to her only after the visions, of a prior belief that God is somehow seen as responsible for sin. This belief results in an oppressively heavy sense that sin is ubiquitous, that “nothing” in effect “will be well”. We are far from the chirpy descriptions of Julian as “optimist”, here. Compare Bauerschmidt here who says:

The key theological problematic with which [Julian] wrestles -- how it could be true that ‘*alle shalle be wele*’ if some are damned, excluded from enclosure in God’s goodness -- is a question of how the boundaries of salvation are delimited.<sup>109</sup>

In light of the present study, this statement would include the pre-visionary Julian, more explicitly than does Bauerschmidt’s wording, in that condition of helpless exclusion outside the boundaries of salvation.

Second, I have characterized the youthful, pre-visionary Julian as one who is a religious perfectionist, seeking to be as Abbott calls her a “special case”, in effect a “religious narcissist” whose desire for special spiritual experience is focused on herself as agent, and her own personal salvation. I have noted what I perceive to be her tendency to isolation and self-sufficiency, which would, under the circumstances of her extreme need, be extremely painful. And as Abbott has shown, the pre-visionary Julian was driven by a sense of her personal pain seeking personal salvation/union with Christ. Perhaps a painful sense of isolation, and a privatized understanding of salvation may not be unrelated: There is a sense of isolation or distance between herself and others -- including God. Julian of Norwich before the visions is not explicitly aware of or primarily concerned about corporate pain, the pain of others. Nor can the pre-visionary Julian “feel” the pain of the crucified Lord. Her request, on entering the transitional space, is for the second wound of compassion. She intends this to be a desire to have compassion with Christ’s lovers, the first disciples, for Jesus’ suffering. Could this request however open up a tacit request of God to have compassion on her?

Finally, the overwhelming pain of coming into an experience of mourning over which she had no control, is the situation for which she needed a soteriological answer or response. This pain of feeling powerless in the face of loss of meaning had many levels, physical, psychological, relational and spiritual. But somehow the pain of that very powerlessness was tied up with the pain she associated with sin and ultimate exclusion from God’s love. This was the dissonance which drove her, as we will see, to seek greater

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<sup>109</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 79.

understanding of the peculiar pain of sin and to discover that seeing it in Jesus's sight was essential to knowing how she should behold herself in the sight of God.

One side of the hypothesis of this chapter is that Julian's early experience of object relations and narcissistic need for mirroring can to some extent be traced in her text. The other side of the hypothesis would be that her soteriological assumptions and appropriation of them would reflect aspects of her early experience of object relations and mirroring need as well.

What then might be the "situation" of her early experience of object relations and mirroring we see reflected in her appropriation of these soteriological beliefs?

The situation of the earliest stages of infancy is characterized by vulnerability, helplessness and utter dependence on the maternal presence, in order to form a sense of trust in the reliability of the maternal environment and then of other environments, and to begin to negotiate a sense of nascent self in relation to other.

Julian's early soteriological beliefs as presented here would suggest that it is this earliest situation which has not been adequately grounded in Julian's history. To be vulnerable, helpless, utterly dependent on the other is, in the terms of the soteriological assumptions Julian seems to have appropriated early on, not a safe condition to be in. Hence evolves the shame response to this condition, and its masking in patterns of control, perfectionism, etc. In other words, patterns reflective of a false self organization based on shame produce both a false self-understanding (as self-sufficient, yet submissive, etc.) and a false godobject (the god whose expectations must, yet cannot, be met, and thus whose anger needs to, yet cannot, be appeased).

A process of mourning of the false self and its organization, and an increasing acceptance into consciousness of the "situation" of the (female) infant's narcissist and object relational needs for mirroring in a condition of dependence, vulnerability and helplessness, is in therapeutic terms, the saving work.

Ruether briefly traces the outline of feminist theological studies of Julian's understanding of sin and redemption.<sup>110</sup> She, too, articulates Julian's understanding of her concept of sin, reflective of her situation as a woman, as recognized in "pain", and then shows how Julian's visions led her into an understanding of God's redemption of humankind which responds to the needs of one in that situation. Ruether writes:

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<sup>110</sup> RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, *Women and redemption: A theological history*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress Press, 1998, pp. 104 - 111, drawing on BAKER, 1994, pp. 63 - 106; JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 190-196; Joan NUTH, *Wisdom's daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, pp. 43-72.

In sharp contrast to the Augustinian view of sin as overweening pride and concupiscence, Julian views our bondage to sin primarily as our entrapment in an overwhelming sense of fear and worthlessness and as manifest in pain, not pleasure. But once we glimpse God's continuing love and our own worth *in God's eyes*, we can become secure in our trust in God. Our wounds can become our medicines for growth in contrition, compassion for our fellow Christians, and reunion with God and with our own true selves.<sup>111</sup>

The question which the present study addresses is: How does Jesus save? in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*. This chapter has attempted to amplify our understanding of the situation Julian was in, both psychodynamically and soteriologically, *prior to* the time of her visions and her subsequent years of reflection on them. The following diptychs will attempt to put flesh on *how* Julian might be said to have come to "glimpse God's continuing love and [her] own worth in God's eyes" and how that describes Jesus' saving work and her appropriation of it in the *Showings*.

## 9.0 Conclusion

Evidence from comparing differences between the Short Text and the Long Text descriptions of her pre-visionary life and situation suggests the profile of the pre-visionary Julian as having had an early history of lack of adequate mirroring. This is reflected in signs of perfectionistic aspiration, anxiety and ambivalence, and object hunger. Some indication of a compensatory mirroring relationship is suggested, perhaps with the religious person she mentions in both texts as coming to see her during her illness, and as a result of medieval devotional meditation practices. This profile is further correlated with a perceived pattern of distorted, ambivalent affectivity concerning her beliefs about the possibility of salvation.

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<sup>111</sup> RUETHER, 1998, p. 111, emphasis added.



## CHAPTER 6

### INTRODUCTION TO THE DIPTYCHS

#### 1.0 Orientation to the diptych format

Until now, this study has focused primarily on examining possible traces of an early psychobiographical portrait of Julian of Norwich. The following chapters however, will be engaging this background material in two distinct, yet interrelated ways. Each of these can be considered as an application of the method of mutually critical correlation.

First, Heinz Kohut's psychoanalytic discourse of three phases in the therapeutic mirroring transference is used as a hermeneutical tool to examine the motivation for, and the process of, Julian's maturation in her pre-oedipal need for mirroring. In a second move, the material will then be looked at through the liberation hermeneutical lens of Elizabeth Johnson's three phase structure of conversion to explore the function of mirroring in the soteriology of Julian's *Showings*. In the final chapter the results of this double examination will be further correlated with themes in contemporary soteriological thought and suggest how they might respond to the some of the important exigencies of the situation in soteriology today.

In the first instance I will be continuing the psychobiographical application of the relational psychoanalytic discourse on mirroring to the writings of Julian of Norwich begun in the previous chapter on the pre-visionary Julian. But in the second instance, the results of the psychobiographical study will be extended, as it were, back onto Julian's *Showings* to explore the contours and evolution of the function of mirroring in Julian's soteriology.

Because of the double nature of this correlation and because of the relatively undeveloped condition of the dialogue between relational psychoanalysis and soteriology, I have chosen to develop these themes in the form of three diptychs. Each application of Kohut's three phases of the therapeutic mirroring transference to Julian's showings will be coupled with each of Johnson's three movements in her feminist liberationist dynamic of appropriation as conversion experience. In this way the first half of each diptych will lead into the second half.

The material in the *Showings* which is examined in relation to each of these three diptychs corresponds to what we know of the chronology of Julian's writing of the two texts. In the first diptych, it is primarily the early chapters of Julian's Short Text (and their differences from those in the Long Text version) which is the focus. The second diptych

explores similarities and differences in material which is common to both the Short Text and the Long Text, and therefore excludes from any sustained focus the account of the *exemplum* in LT 51 and the subsequent theological reflections. The third diptych focuses on the Long Text material which is not in the Short Text. The primary focus here is the *exemplum*, as this is where the mirroring action is most dynamically developed, but it also incorporates the Christ our Mother and trinitarian theological reflections.

I am convinced that Julian herself would approve of this methodology, insofar as she regarded the showings as given not just to her, but through her to her *even* (fellow) Christians. This is her way of saying that she desired that Christians in every generation appropriate the mysteries of the meaning of the showings that were revealed to her “for the profit of many others” (ST 6) so that we also might know that “it is [God’s] will that we know them”. (LT 34.)

I will now outline each of the two correlational approaches more explicitly as they will be developed across the three diptychs.

### **1.1 The relational psychoanalytic psychobiographical correlation**

The first of these approaches consists in examining Julian’s *Showings* from a Kohutian self psychological perspective, to explore how Julian engages in and works through a mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings. The first chapter of each of the three diptychs, (i.e., chapters 7, 9 and 11) will be structured around Kohut’s understanding of the three phases in the therapeutic development of a mirroring transference (that is, resistance to entering into a mirroring transference, working through narcissistic rage and disillusionment, and lastly relinquishing the mirroring transference), as a means of conceptualizing the process of radical transformation which I hold is taking place in Julian’s self- and God understanding. While I will continue here and in the following chapters as in the previous chapter to recognize the historical embeddedness of her texts in the religious conventions of the time, I will seek to tease out, from the elements she borrows from that background and her unique use of them, what they might also have to tell us about Julian’s psychobiographical condition. This may provide confirmation for the psychobiographical hypothesis that Julian suffered profound maternal neglect in her earliest stages of life.

This study proposes that the showings reveal evidence of the healing and indeed maturation of her mirroring need. What the study will be looking for are signs that what begins as a mirroring transference with more archaic features undergoes transformation into

one with greater flexibility and differentiation in relationship, characterized by features of mature narcissism and object relations.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 The liberation hermeneutic soteriological correlation

Secondly, just as the psychoanalytic correlation of mirroring in Julian's *Showings* will be found in the first chapter of each of the three diptychs, so also the soteriological correlation will be developed in the the second chapter of each diptych. In particular, Elizabeth Johnson's understanding of the three phases of a liberation theological hermeneutic of appropriation of salvation, which she describes as a conversion process, will provide a backbone for the soteriological correlation, in chapters 8, 10 and 12.

In the chapter 8, I draw on Sebastian Moore's soteriological study, informed as it is by object relations theory, of what is at work in desire, resistance, healing and transformation in the spiritual and psychological life, as a starting point for bringing contemporary theological discourse into dialogue with Julian's description of her entry into the visionary experience. Particularly, Moore will help with the identification of the contrast experience in Julian's soteriological crisis. In chapter 10, Cynthia Crysdale's sensitive feminist rereading of Moore will provide a contemporary discourse for helping to identify a credible feminine expression of the dynamic of dying to ego in Julian's conversion,

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<sup>1</sup> Meissner and Wolski Conn have observed that this type of psychoanalytic correlation leaves open the relation between psychological maturity and holiness. As Wolski Conn puts it in her study of structural-developmental stages of maturation in Thérèse de Lisieux,

to be holy is to love God and neighbor with one's whole heart, with the fullness of whatever developmental stage one has reached. Thus, one can be holy in a more or less mature way. Nevertheless, the great spiritual teachers promote cooperation with grace by choices for greater self-knowledge and surrendering love, all of which also characterize this model of psychological maturity and reinforce the mysterious working of grace with nature.

WOLSKI CONN, Joann, "Thérèse de Lisieux: Far from spiritual childhood", *Spiritus* 6, 2006, p. 70; and MEISSNER, William, *Ignatius Loyola: Psychology of a saint*. NH, Yale University Press, 1991, 480 p. In language which sounds very much like Sebastian Moore she continues:

Each phase of development is a process of making the meaning of self and others through balancing the two basic human longings for independence and attachment. It is not a matter of either autonomy or attachment but of *how* the balance of both will tilt through our choices in each of these different "stages" or ways of viewing reality.

WOLSKI CONN, 2006. p. 70, emphasis in text. Wolski Conn draws on a theoretical framework for discerning structural psychological development proposed by Elizabeth Liebert and based on psychologists Robert Kegan, Jane Loevinger and others, which is different from the one used here. See LIEBERT, Elizabeth, "The thinking heart: Developmental dynamics in Etty Hillesum's *Diaries*", *Pastoral psychology* 43, 1995, pp. 393 - 409; and by the same author, *Changing life patterns: Adult development in spiritual direction* St. Louis MI, Chalice Press, 2000, 225 p. In a sense, in using Kohut and Winnicott to examine issues of mirroring, I am drawing more on Meissner's object relations psychoanalytic methodology than on a psychological model of normal maturation, even though both involve structural developmental patterns.

specifically in Julian's revision of her understanding of what sin is and how salvation effectively responds to sin in the human condition. After looking at Julian through the eyes of Crysedale, this second part of the soteriological correlation begins to look for retrievals. I look for sources in the traditions from which Julian herself may have retrieved. Specifically in this context, I will look at symbolism from the anchoritic tradition and the metaphor of the mirror in English medieval mystical tradition, as well as how Julian reverses the Anselmian logic of satisfaction. In the final chapter 12, I will develop the soteriological ramifications of Elisabeth Koenig's study of the mirroring function of the face of the lord in the *exemplum* for articulating in Julian terms what is traditionally called the objective salvific work of Christ and the subjective appropriation of that work. It is in this last chapter that the thesis comes together. I hold that in its maturest expression in the *exemplum* the function of mirroring in Christ governs *both* the development of her subjective appropriation of salvation *and* the dynamism of Christ's objective saving work in the *Showings*.

### 1.3 Toward retrieving Julian's soteriology for today

Finally, the material generated in this double study of the maturation of mirroring in Julian will be correlated with themes in the contemporary problem of soteriological credibility with the hope of rendering Julian's soteriology more recognizable and available as a contemporary response. Julian's soteriology is only beginning to be recognized and affirmed for the capacity of its narrative and theological reflection to engage us, the postmodern seeker, in imagination, prayer, and significant theological dialogue about the human predicament(s) we experience and about what would constitute one or more credible Christian soteriological response(s) to that predicament.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ANDERSON, Derek, "Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation", Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago IL, 2005, 269 p.; BAKER, Denise N., *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From vision to book*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, 215 p.; BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, 290 p.; BOZAK-DELEO, Lillian, "The soteriology of Julian of Norwich", in *Theology and the university*, APCZYNSKI, John ed., Lanham, MD, University press of America, 1990, pp. 37 - 44; BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian of Norwich, everyone's mystic", in *Mysticism and spirituality in medieval England*, POLLARD, William and Robert BOENIG, eds., Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1997, pp. 139 - 158; HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, 233 p.; and HIDE, Kerrie, "The parable of the lord and the servant: A soteriology for our times", *Pacifica Australian theological studies* 10, 1997, pp. 53 - 69; JANTZEN, Grace, *Julian of Norwich, mystic and theologian*, London, SPCK, 1987, 229 p.; NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom's daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, 217 p.; and also by NUTH, "Two medieval soteriologies: Anselm of Canterbury and Julian of Norwich", *Theological studies*, 53, 1992, pp. 611 -

Since this correlation is addressed only in the final chapter of this thesis, this can only be a beginning of such a correlation. Julian's *Showings* touch on virtually every theme in contemporary soteriology. Four of these are named but only two of these are being addressed with any depth in the present study: 1) the problem of the meaning of the cross and Christ's Passion and death as saving work, and 2) the theme of salvation as revelation, and the exigency that salvation be real and able to be experienced in this life, which raises the question of the relation between objective and subjective soteriology.

## 2.0 The human predicament

Julian says, once, late in her Long Text, that she

understood no greater stature in this life than childhood.... For the child does not naturally despair of the mother's love, the child does not naturally rely upon itself, naturally the child loves the mother and either of them the other. (LT 63.)

How did she get here, both psychobiographically and soteriologically? Is this pathology or maturity? What is the human predicament for Julian which needed salvation? What is the salvific work of God in Christ in Julian's visionary soteriology, and how did she appropriate it, such that she was enabled to come (as this thesis argues) to prophetic human maturity in childlike dependence? And how can this speak to us now?

The human predicament identified in Julian's *Showings* is one of relational dependency combined with *vulnerability to profound violation of trust*, as is the case of infants, children and adults in systemic psychological and societal situations of neglect and abuse. I suggest that Julian's texts reveal her to have experienced this human predicament largely as normal until she was ushered into the visionary world of the showings, at which point she experienced what I am calling a pre-oedipal soteriological crisis in that it manifests issues of shame and self worthlessness rather than oedipal issues of guilt.

This crisis, I suggest, was brought to consciousness, or at least became recognizable, in the confusion around suffering, sin and whether salvation was possible, which the showings elicited in her. Julian's is not initially a problem of coming to terms with guilt for past actions, as it was for example with Augustine. Julian's is a much more subtle problem. What is sin when, fully expecting to be overwhelmed and condemned by its presence in the showings, she can't see it? And what, then, is the purpose of suffering contrition, penance and physical pain for what she thought was sin? Julian's attentiveness to the showings leads her into uncharted waters. Secret sins, which are of a much more

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645; PALLISER, Margaret Ann, *Christ, our mother of mercy: Divine mercy and compassion in the theology of the Showings of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Walter de Gruyter, 1992, 262 p.

pre-oedipal character, are revealed as her more chronic challenge. These bring her to a new awareness of who Christ is, who she is and greater compassion for the lot of the rest of humankind in this condition. Her crisis is resolved in a life transformed over the years by her relationship with God in the Christ of her showings. The crisis, brought to consciousness in the first showings of Christ's Passion, as well as its resolution reflected in the meanings of the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant, are expressed in terms of profound interiority and yet also having liberative social consequences yet to be fully plumbed. This study will explore one particular thread running through the reformation of soteriological symbolism in her showings and years of meditative reflection on them, that is, the mirroring dynamic of the face of God in Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the linking thread among all three discourses (relational psychoanalysis, feminism and the tradition of soteriology) could be said to be the search for a soteriology which responds both healingly and liberatively to the situation of *child abuse* as characteristic of the human predicament for which Christ's saving work must offer a credible answer.<sup>4</sup> This understanding of the human situation must engage earliest infancy in which the effects of chronic neglect and abandonment are subtle, yet traumatic and systemic. Of course it also engages the situation of violent physical and sexual abuse, and how this can become even more clearly social, systemic sin when linked with issues of poverty, racism, etc.

It responds to the human situation of utter vulnerability, fragility and dependence, the need for empathic, trustworthy parental care, the suffering which is associated with the neglect, abandonment and violation of trust in the child's condition of dependency, and the debilitating consequences of such trauma for the possibility of healing and growth into mature dependency in psychological and spiritual development. It asks the question *what sin looks like in the effects (as distinct from the causes) of innocent suffering*.

It is not difficult to see that the human predicament of fragility and utter dependence is the primary human condition of infants, male and female, rich and poor alike, coming into the world. But if the needs for the spiritual correlative of a reliable holding environment and an empathic mirroring maternal relation are not only not met but

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<sup>3</sup> About the social liberative consequences, two recent works stand out: BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, 290 p., on Julian's imagining the political; and ANDERSON, 2005, 268 p.

<sup>4</sup> Compare this with Elizabeth Johnson's statement: "For me, the goal of feminist religious discourse pivots in its fullness around the flourishing of poor women of color in violent situations". JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is: The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1992, p. 11. On the one hand, her articulation is historically and socially grounded in the experience of those on the underside of history, but on the other, it does not explicitly address the situation of "cosmic child abuse" in the tradition of juridical soteriologies.

systematically withheld, this can be seen to install a false sense of self and with it a profound confusion as what suffering is supposed to mean.<sup>5</sup> Sebastian Moore's soteriological response to this confusion around suffering as a function of "muddled religious thinking" will be explored more fully below in his psychoanalytic soteriology. Male and female differences in the presentation of this false self must be distinguished, hence the need to attend to the neglected feminine face of narcissism, as well as the effects on women of systemic neglect in Christian patriarchy.

But this predicament also responds to the situation *within the tradition* of soteriology itself, which has led to an effective history of teaching that God is angry and in effect not trustworthy, and therefore that there is no salvific meaning possible in being dependent on God, particularly for those who have suffered at the hands of those who have been authorized to teach and transmit this tradition, but also for their oppressors.<sup>6</sup> This coming together of discourses seeks to respond to this double-sided situation by looking at Julian's *Showings* to explore how Christ's saving work *works* for her, how she appropriated it, and how it might speak coherently and credibly to those who can recognize themselves in this condition in our own day.

Historically, Anselmian soteriological theory was a significant development from the ransom theory to which Anselm was responding, which had made salvation a kind of deal between God and Satan and left humankind a sort of pawn in the drama. Anselm responded to a need in *that* context for greater focus on the responsibility of the Christian person for sin, and to that extent his satisfaction theory took human anthropology more seriously. This is perhaps more obvious in the affective prayer tradition which Anselm initiated, focusing on the humanity of Christ.

It would be a significant study to explore why Anselm's prayer life and his theology came to speak such different languages, and more significantly, what consequences that has had for soteriology. For Anselm belief was necessary for experience and for theology to arise out of experience. And yet as William Loewe writes "the quest for that experience moves many of Anselm's prayers in a direction *opposite* that of the *Proslogion*".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> On the systemic nature of this violence from a relational psychoanalytic perspective see for example Alice MILLER, *Thou shalt not be aware: Society's betrayal of the child*, NY, Meridian, 1990, 329 p.

<sup>6</sup> See Elizabeth Johnson on "scotosis". JOHNSON, 1992, pp. 13 - 14.

<sup>7</sup> LOEWE, William, "By way of introduction: Sebastian Moore, Anselm and friends", in *Jesus crucified and risen: Essays in spirituality and theology in honor of Dom Sebastian Moore*, eds. LOEWE William and Vernon GREGSON, 1998, pp. vi - vii.

On the one hand, Anselm seeks in solitary meditation the grace to feel what by faith he knows to be true. Anselm wrote “Lord, let me taste by love what I taste by knowledge”.<sup>8</sup> Loewe says of this Anselm, that “[w]hen that grace is granted, prayers of this type open a space in which faith’s affirmations penetrate the imagination and shape one’s affective life”.

On the other hand however,

the opening chapters of the *Proslogion*... begin with Anselm’s fervent quest for the experience of union with God. Soon, however, they register a shift. First gradually, and then torrentially, prayerful recollection cedes to a different dynamic that moves Anselm out of prayer and into a quite distinct pattern of consciousness. Instead of abiding quietly in God, Anselm gives himself up to his intellect’s restless desire to understand how it is that what he believes about the God whose face he seeks is true.<sup>9</sup>

In the feudal society everyone knew their place and their responsibility to their superior. So to speak of human responsibility for sin was a meaningful response in that social situation of order. But by the fourteenth century, the feudal system was falling apart and the centre could no longer hold. To hold to the same view that humankind should know its responsibility in this radically liminal, overwhelmingly chaotic time, was to inspire collective confusion as to the meaning of suffering and one’s responsibility for sin. The problem for women was compounded however, in that within the tradition women had been marginalized, neglected and blamed as responsible for sin. So in a systemic sense, I suggest, their situation consciously or otherwise was all the more more comparable to that of child abandonment and abuse. The suffering of this nature is the effect of innocent suffering, well-described by Wendy Farley as radical suffering:

Radical suffering is present when the negativity of a situation is experienced as an assault on one’s personhood as such.... this assault reduces the capacity of the sufferer to exercise freedom, to feel affection, to hope, to love God.... In radical suffering the soul itself has been so crippled that it can no longer defy evil. The destruction of the human being is so complete that even the shred of dignity that might demand vindication is extinguished.<sup>10</sup>

Beverly Lanzetta describes this suffering, as experienced systemically by women, as a form of spiritual violence inflicting a soul wound:

Elusive and difficult to grasp, spiritual violence invades the integrity of a woman’s psyche and soul at such a primary level that most women cannot recognize or name what has harmed them. Unable to identify the source of their pain, women often blame themselves and develop strategies to protect their oppressors. This quality of

<sup>8</sup> ST. ANSELM, “Meditation on human redemption”, in *The prayers and meditations of Saint Anselm*, transl., WARD, Benedicta, NY, Penguin, 1973, p. 237.

<sup>9</sup> LOEWE, 1998, p. vi.

<sup>10</sup> FARLEY, Wendy, *Tragic vision and divine compassion: A contemporary theodicy*, Louisville KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 1990, pp. 53 - 55. Quoted in JOHNSON, 1992, p. 249.



soul suffering, which survives at the cost of women's spiritual diminishment, inflicts on women an unequal burden of sin and blame. Thus, without understanding the subtle ways in which her soul is violated and the fierceness that marks the site of her affliction, a woman cannot resolve her inner conflict. Often unspoken, denied, and ridiculed, or dismissed as unimportant and emotional, women's soul wounds must be brought to consciousness to avoid the trivialization of their experience and for healing to occur. It is in their anguish and despair, sorrow and betrayal, rage and tears that women [move] beyond fragmentation and false passivity to wholeness and empowerment.<sup>11</sup>

We know now that the child in his or her earliest condition of powerlessness and dependence, desires to trust the parent whether or not the parent is trustworthy. Where the parent is unable to respond adequately to the child's needs, a child will take on a sense of responsibility for the parent and internalize an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. Thus satisfaction theory, as it has been put to use in the tradition, has had the effect of reinforcing both the confusion and suffering of women (and men) living out of a false sense of self. What relational psychoanalysis is helping us to understand is that there can be no appropriation of the true self, or the development of a capacity for taking appropriate responsibility for one's actions, before these pre-oedipal needs are given a way to be recognized and healed. When salvation is looked at from the perspective of the vulnerability of the abused, it is this healing, involving its own brand of redemptive suffering (Winnicott's and Kohut's notion of disillusionment, Homans' understanding of mourning, and Moore's notion of "ego-death", as these are expressed in women's experience) in an empathic mirroring relation which becomes the means for potential conversion.

Theologically, feminists are clear that the soteriological tradition associated with the language of atonement (expiation, satisfaction), which was intended to help women and men appropriate salvation in Christ, has effectively served to produce profound confusion around what is redemptive about suffering, thus perpetuating false self structures and legitimizing abusive suffering of women.

This is the situation which renders incredible in our day so much of Anselmian atonement theory and the judicial imagery of it and subsequent Reformation formulations. Not only does it not describe adequately the human situation of vulnerable dependence and the systemic violation of trust, it also renders the salvific work of Christ incredible. Rita Nakashima Brock argues that "[s]uch doctrines of salvation reflect by analogy, I believe,

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<sup>11</sup> LANZETTA, Beverly, *Radical wisdom: A feminist mystical theology*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress, 2005, p. 72.

images of the neglect of children or, even worse, child abuse, making it acceptable as divine behavior -- *cosmic child abuse*, as it were”<sup>12</sup>

Hence this predicament requires that the saving work of Christ be coherent and credible to those for whom trust (necessary for growth in self worth) has been violated and rendered incredible. My hypothesis is that in this close reading of Julian’s psychobiography and its correlation with a liberation hermeneutical reading of her appropriation of the saving work of Christ, by means of her mirroring relationship with the Jesus of her showings, lies a key to understanding both the *evolution* of her understanding of the saving work of Christ and its *coherence* with how that saving work is appropriated, in a way which is unique in the history of Christian soteriology, and, can speak to our present postmodern situation, particularly to those on the underside of history.

## 6.0 Introduction to each diptych

### 6.1 The first diptych

I will begin chapter 7 of the first diptych with a summary of the first of the three phases through which we can see the therapeutic process of maturation of mirroring needs in Kohutian self psychology. This first stage requires an overcoming of resistance to enter into a mirroring transference with a trusted, empathic Other, and is a prerequisite for there to be an experience of disillusionment and mourning, experienced as a kind of exposure to the archaic prestructures, or false self. I reiterate as well the four movement responses which Homans appropriates from Schachtel to describe the dynamics which signal the presence of mourning, not only the loss of sense of self but also the loss of meaning of the cultural symbol of the crucifix as expressing the relation between sin and suffering. This chapter then goes on to examine the first therapeutic phase of maturation in mirroring needs as this developmental procedure highlights a pattern in Julian of resistance shifting to assent to entering into the most archaic mirroring transference, that is, fusion, with the suffering Christ of the showings in the Short Text.

I explore two moments of Julian’s first entry into the transitional realm. First I examine her initial shifts in bodily feelings from resistance into assent, which lead into her showings. The bodily feelings evoke pre-oedipal associations with Winnicott’s concept of the holding environment. Then I explore her bodily sight of the Passion which becomes alive as she enters the transitional realm of beholding the crucifix. Her bodily sight of the

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<sup>12</sup> BROCK, Rita Nakashima, *Journeys by heart: A christology of erotic power*, NY, Crossroad, 1988, p. 56, emphasis added.

crucifix is characterized as merged or fusional, and the anchorhold is identified as a possible holding environment enabling this experience. It is Julian's request for the wound of compassion (rather than contrition) which is responded to in the empathic bodily sight of the kenotic, suffering Jesus of her showings. The disorientation of feeling both mourning and comfort gives rise in Julian to confusion.

With this in hand, I will turn in the second chapter in this dyptich, chapter 8, to explore how her condition on entering the showings contributes to what I will describe as her experience of soteriological contrast. Thus, the second part of this dyptich will engage an exploration of Julian's experience of contrast, that is, what I propose to call her pre-*oedipal* soteriological crisis of meaning with regard to what she had previously appropriated from the tradition concerning sin and her destiny, now in light of the showings. It is at this point that I will begin to draw for help explicitly on the soteriology of Sebastian Moore for this correlation. His identification of a fundamental confusion in the Christian tradition around the meaning of suffering and his distinction between dying to sin and Jesus' death to ego correspond well I suggest with what seems to be at work in Julian's confusion.

## 6.2 The second diptych

The first chapter in the second diptych, that is chapter 9, will explore with Kohut how Julian's two texts, the Short Text and the Long Text, give signs of her shift into the second therapeutic phase in the maturation of mirroring needs, that is, of the "working through" the disillusionment of the archaic narcissistic prestructures of both grandiosity and shame/despair through an empathic confrontation with reality by the mirroring other. This exposure makes possible the appropriation of a truer sense of self, distinct from her experience of fragmented feelings, and the identification of two secret sins. I hold that Julian experiences this true self first of all as empty and deprived but constituted relationally, both *exposed and affirmed* in the sight of the compassionate mirroring Other. Julian's images of mutual beholding develop the theme of the compassionate suffering of the kenotic Christ and his transformation into joy as functioning to mirror Julian's own healing and transformation. Finally, I propose that her images of mutual bodily enclosure with Christ signal her working through the fusion toward a more flexible mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings.

In chapter 10, the second chapter of the second diptych, I draw on Cynthia Crysdale's feminist appropriation of Moore's work to flesh out what sin and salvation look

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like from the side of the dispossessed. In particular, I correlate Julian's astounding revision of the Church's teaching on sin with Crysdale's "double-sided approach to redemption" of "accepting both the pain and the responsibility for new life".<sup>13</sup> In the case of women, sin, for Crysdale, needs to be understood not as pride, but rather, grief. Julian's retrieval of Anselm's soteriology within the *Showings* undergoes a reversal transformation, and the spiritual traditions available to her for intelligibility find polyvalent resonance in the medieval mystical metaphor of the mirror as well as the symbol and practices of anchoritic enclosure.

### 6.3 The third diptych

The first chapter in this third diptych, chapter 11, will explore the third phase of Kohut's therapeutic process of maturation of mirroring need as applied to the Long Text. In some sense there is in Julian's *Showings* no ultimate relinquishing of a mirror transference with God, but rather a maturation from merged subjectivism into a more flexible experience of self and other which I call relational realism. The chapter develops the idea that Julian's self-identification with the kenotic Christ unfolds as a *mature* working through to relinquishing archaic forms of mirroring transference in her soteriological vision of the *exemplum* of the servant and the lord, particularly by means of the object constancy which beholding the *exemplum* enabled her to internalize over time. As Julian's self-understanding as constituted in the sight of God in Christ strengthens, self and other are more clearly differentiated yet united in substance and sensuality, Julian's unique understanding of human anthropology. The *exemplum* functions to promote, and her recognition of the gamut of the work of Christ as "mirroring" mother reflects, a growth toward greater object constancy with regard to Julian's beholding of God. Knowing herself to have her true being only in-the-sight-of-God is the basis for her understanding of the unbreakability of human union with God in substance and this is necessarily inclusive of herself and *all her even* Christians. Union with God in sensuality, is in the human day to day condition of human fragility experienced as a movement from the distress of narcissistic resistance to the assent to behold Christ's empathic responsiveness to her situation. (healing of pain and making sense of suffering-with Christ; responsibility--passing quickly over unnecessary suffering of self-pre-occupation). It too invites inclusion of all her *even* Christians in their various conditions, and reflects her own mature capacity to function as the mirror of Christ's compassion or empathy for others.

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<sup>13</sup> CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, pp. 25 - 26.

The second chapter in this final dyptich, chapter 12, draws again on Sebastian Moore's understanding of desire for God as growth in trust. As he understands maturation in the spiritual life, our dependence on God, experienced as balance between oneness and separation is "mutually advancing and mutually enhancing" with each ego death and transformation.<sup>14</sup> Julian's distinctive constellation of dynamic imagery in the *exemplum* is the summation of her vision of differentiated union with God in Christ. Drawing on brilliant, and largely unrecognized work done by Elisabeth Koenig, I argue that the implied dynamism of mutual beholding, that transformative movement to eye contact in the imagery of the servant-lord relation, captures Julian's understanding of how she is appropriating salvation in her life by means of a compensatory mirroring function. But it also provides a key to noticing how her adaptations of Christ's objective salvific action in the past and future move in the direction of expressing the mirroring function as a christological trinitarian activity. All the other maternal functions of Christ and the Trinity which Julian subsequently develops in the Long Text are seen to draw their coherence from this primary mirroring dynamic. The earlier condition of mirroring in Christ's suffering is never abandoned in the later mirroring image in the *exemplum*. This is the genius of Julian's soteriology that, in one dynamic vibrant image of the mirroring Christ, it gives at once a single coherent vision of redemption and sanctification, and a credible account of both objective and subjective soteriology. Julian's soteriology of mirroring assists her and humanity to appropriate and participate more and more profoundly in the salvific work her *Showings* imaginatively enact.

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<sup>14</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *Jesus, liberator of desire*, NT, Crossroad, 1989, pp. 15 - 16.

DIPTYCH 1

## CHAPTER 7

### DIPTYCH 1.1 FROM RESISTANCE TO ASSENT: ENTERING THE TRANSITIONAL SPACE OF THE BODILY SIGHT

#### 1.0 Introduction

The study thus far has examined possible psychobiographical traces of Julian having suffered in her infancy from a neglect of maternal mirroring with resulting narcissism and object relations issues. I have observed that there are many other sources of this systemic neglect in her social location and religious context which would compound this primary absence of mirroring. I have proposed that a pre-oedipal separation trauma of this nature can help to account for the intensity of her experience at the time of her illness and presumed to be imminent death in 1373.

I propose to call this experience her *pre-oedipal soteriological crisis*; pre-oedipal because it is genetically prior to oedipal issues of guilt traditionally associated with sin; soteriological because the intensity of its effect of inculcating a terror of abandonment/exclusion/damnation resonated not simply at an individual, psychobiographical level, but also at the level of her social location. In a pre-oedipal soteriological crisis, I suggest, the issues have to do with fundamental shame and self worthlessness. Julian, I hold, experienced, at the point of imminent death, a condition of intense confusion around suffering, sin and hints of an underlying sense of despair of salvation. In other words, I am suggesting that Julian approached death unconsciously or ambivalently fearing death and damnation while trying to “trust in salvation” and that this *reverberated* at a pre-oedipal level with her experience of neglect and traumatic separation as an infant. The intensity of the crisis was, I suggest, compounded by the access to this lost, neglected self which opened up as Julian was at the point of dying. This would help to account for what I will call her resistance to entering into the mirroring transference with the Jesus of the showings. I propose more generally that this helps to account for her singular lifelong preoccupation with issues, at once psychodynamic and spiritual, intrapsychic and interpsychic, of beholding and being beheld by God in Christ. It may be said to be reflected in the nature of the bodily sight she received and the intensity of her desire both to *feel* with Christ in his suffering (“to have *mynd* and feeling of Christ” as she puts it, after 1 Cor. 2:16 and Philippians 2: 5) and to *see* the face of the Jesus of her showings, good descriptors for object hunger, as well as goals of meditative

*contemplatio*. It is reflected in her intensity to share her visionary experience with others so that they too might experience what she was being shown.

I suggest that the three wounds she prayed for, that is, contrition, compassion and longing for God both prepared her and in some sense hindered her for this crisis. They prepared her insofar as the affective meditative tradition encouraged the affective appropriation of Christ's saving work on the cross. I propose that they hindered her insofar as in frequently practising these prayer requests and the religious means available to her (such as meditation on the crucifix) she tacitly assumed to know their outcomes before she received them in her visionary experience, and that there was a crisis of meaning for her to go through as to the coherence between what she thought would be salvific for her, and what would become for her a bodily and visual experience of salvation, to which she could assent to trust.

The first chapter in this diptych will engage what I am calling her pre-oedipal soteriological crisis from the pre-oedipal side, so to speak. Drawing primarily on Kohut's description of the first phase of entry into the mirror transference, I will explore those first moments of Julian's entry into the visionary experience as she beheld the crucifix in her dying state. (The second chapter of the diptych will turn these reflections in the other direction, exploring how Julian's shifts from resistance to assent to enter into the mirroring transference became the means for her to begin to see what Elizabeth Johnson calls a contrast experience in the process of appropriating Christ's saving work.)

## **2.0 A brief review of the first of the three phases of mirroring transference in Kohut**

Recall that Kohut describes the process of maturation in the therapeutic context as having three distinct phases. In the first phase, which I explore in this chapter, there is *resistance* on the part of the client to forming a mirroring transference with the empathic analyst. As we saw above, the absence of nuclear authentic self structure at this stage is identifiable in the two fragments of archaic prestructure which present themselves alternately and unconnectedly as narcissistic omnipotence or grandiosity, and, searing shame. We have been sensitized to the possibility that symptoms of the feminine expression of narcissism are located in the quality of relationships, rather than in the desire for autonomy, and that shame may predominate over grandiosity. Kohut's first phase ends at the point at which the individual's trust of the empathic analyst is sufficiently secure to accept to establish a mirror transference. This establishment of trust allows a transitional space to become possible in which the client may tolerate some degree of chaos in play, dream, imagination, etc. in relation to the analyst.



## 2.1 Homans on mourning and the psychology of fantasy and movement

This chapter will draw on Kohut, Winnicott and other object relations psychoanalytic theorists to flesh out the present study. But the second chapter of this diptych also proposes to discern in Julian's *Showings* a concern that the credible appropriation of Jesus' salvific work was not a private, intrapsychic revelation for herself alone. It involved symbolic imagery and narrative which could be shared socially with *others*. The correlation between these two chapters bears at once on both Julian's own experience of need (her vision of the human predicament and Christ's salvific response) and that of her *even* Christians. Therefore it is important to show that what Julian's *Showings* reveal is not merely intrapsychic but has social meaning, and involves a transformation of the conventional meaning of the concept of sin and of the religious, cultural symbol of Christ's suffering in the Passion. For this reason I will continue to draw from time to time on Homans' work (inspired by Kohut) on disillusionment, mourning and the creation of new meaning out of lost cultural symbols, as that was described in earlier chapters.

Recall that Homans sees this work of mourning in terms of movement responses, fantasy activity and the narrative impulse. Homans writes:

[T]he path of mourning and individuation leads into fresh territory, the experience of creating meaning.... I think that people neither simply repudiate nor simply reappropriate meanings but instead create meanings in an arena of social space which lies midway between the past and the future...

The key to this process of reappropriation lies in the psychology of fantasy activity and in understanding that activity in terms of the construction and perception of movement, which is in turn related to the human propensity to narrate.<sup>1</sup>

Linking the intrapsychic with the interpsychic, by means of Kohut's self psychology, recall that Homans holds that the loss of meaning of cultural symbols leads to mourning which leads to fantasy activity, the narrative impulse and the movement responses in mourning: deep bodily feelings; a readiness to engage in fantasy activity (transitional realm) and its narrative quality; narcissism and object relations issues; and finally a capacity for empathy.<sup>2</sup> Observing the presence of these movement responses in Julian's *Showings* will be a further support for the correlation between the intrapsychic and the social dimensions of the

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<sup>1</sup> HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 326 - 327.

<sup>2</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.

meaning embedded in her mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings. Homans' work thus helps build a correlative bridge between the diptychs, so to speak.

### 3.0 From resistance to assent to enter into a mirroring transference in Julian's Short Text

#### 3.1 The first movement responses

In Julian's initial description of her dying condition and her responses to her visions, I perceive what I would call a phase of *resistance* which corresponds to Kohut's first phase of the narcissist's resistance to entering into a therapeutic mirroring transference. I described at the end of the last chapter how this resistance was focused in her *ambivalence* around dying: wanting at some level to be dead and out of this world of sin and suffering, but that as she approached death in her illness, she became reluctant, thinking consciously of this as a shortening of her life and as a kind of abortion of the graces yet to be obtained for the next world by living longer in this one. I suggested that this signals an unconscious pre-oedipal ambivalence and fearful doubt as to her status among the saved on her Doomsday, bringing her in effect, in Winnicott's phrase, to "the brink of unthinkable anxiety" of abandonment and fragmentation.<sup>3</sup> All of this in effect provokes a paralyzing resistance in her to either living or dying, and compounds her suffering condition. And, I suggest, it intimates an unrecognized kind of suffering too, the grief of the abandoned self within.

The first movement responses, from resistance to assent, occurs as Julian lingers on in a condition somewhere between life and death. She comes to the point where she tells us she thought "Good Lord, is it no longer to your glory that I am alive? And my reason and my sufferings told me that I should die; and with all the will of my heart I *assented* wholly to be as was God's will". (ST 2.)

This is the first textual description of a movement response of this nature, and in each case to be described below there is a shift in bodily feelings and eventually in what she sees, which follows from each act of assent. In this case, she tells us, she then felt dead from the middle of her body down. She also tells us she was moved to ask to be propped up, so that her "heart might be more free to be at God's will and to think of him" in her last moments of life. It is at this point that the curate is called for.

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<sup>3</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., "Ego integration in child development", in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, [1962] 1965, p. 57.

The second movement response from resistance to assent comes when the priest placed the crucifix before her eyes. Julian tells us “my eyes were set upwards toward heaven, where I trusted I was going; but nevertheless I *assented* to fix my eyes on the face of the crucifix if I could...” (ST 2.) There is a sort of rigidity implied in her description of her eyes as “set upwards toward heaven”, which could be understood as a frozen resistance to... what? Speculation has suggested that Julian had been influenced by the apophatic tradition of Hilton’s *Scale of perfection* and the anonymous *Cloud of unknowing* which moved away from meditation on Christ’s humanity toward some “higher” form of imageless contemplation.<sup>4</sup> Could it also be a description of a frozen ambivalence toward the moment of Julian’s death and judgment? In assenting to “fix” her eyes on the crucifix, it would seem that, before the fact, she didn’t expect this frozenness to thaw. However, she tells us, then her sight begins to fail, and then she felt as if the upper part of her body were beginning to die. It would seem that her “*assent* to be as was God’s will” is hastening her end: “Then truly I believed that I was at the point of death”. But there is a further movement response: “And suddenly in that moment all my pain left me, and I was as sound, particularly in the upper part of my body, as ever I was before or have been since”. (ST 2.)

These first movement responses are experienced as *deep bodily feelings*, leading her first to assent to feel more keenly the symptoms of death, and then, surprisingly and mysteriously, to feel physically eased. There is still resistance, however, as she tells us “I had no more confidence that I should live, nor was the ease complete, for I thought that I would rather have been delivered of this world, because that was what my heart longed for”. (ST 2.)

Stephen Johnson, following Kohut’s description of “optimum frustration”, describes what it takes to break through a narcissist resistance to entering into a mirroring transference. The recovery of the true self requires “a massive, cumulative failure coupled with supportive therapeutic intervention” to bring the narcissist to the realization that he or

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<sup>4</sup> See TUGWELL, Simon, o.p., *Ways of imperfection: An exploration of Christian spirituality*, Springfield, IL, Templegate, 1985, pp. 187 - 188. Bauerschmidt agrees with this view, as over against Abbott, who argues that Julian was in the affective tradition at the time of the showings. ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1999, pp. 48 - 57. Bauerschmidt reads Julian as rejecting both affective and contemplative pieties, in their respective capacities to keep the believer preoccupied with the act of prayer rather than with the attributes of God. I agree as long as it is clear that it is her experience of the showings and years of reflection on them which brought this home to her. It isn’t apparent here in her report. See BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, p. 52, fn. 55.

she has constructed a false self that is no longer tenable.<sup>5</sup> The failure in Julian's case may be at many levels. It is essential to remember that in speaking of narcissism here, I am referring to a feminine expression of narcissism, as has been articulated by Rossiter.<sup>6</sup> But I suggest it is the *failure of the self she has known* to be able to know or control the outcome of this experience of really dying which is what Julian is assenting to feel in her body. Perhaps her assent, and the pain which that initially brings on, could be described as her entry into an awareness of an (heretofore resisted) "identification with the state of death". In psychoanalytic terms this could be described as an awareness of a self she has not known before, a self which had been abandoned, a grieving for which had itself been buried.<sup>7</sup> The initial descent into feeling even more keenly the symptoms of her own death reflects, I suggest, her assent or surrender to recognizing her powerlessness to know or affect the outcome of this awareness. Following this line of thinking, the fact that this assent to surrender to a condition of powerlessness is occurring at the point of death is significant. It suggests that despite all the suffering Julian has experienced prior to this, nothing provided the trigger for the traumatic frustration (cumulative massive failure) which brought about this new condition of assent. It could be suggested that this is diagnostic of the degree to which Julian had defended herself against experiencing such a condition "nakedly" (as she would later put it), that it would take an actual experience of imminent death to bring it about. In view of that, it is all the more an act of courageous assent or surrender to "taking in" the wished-for yet dreaded experience of actual death.

I must pause to say that I realize that the language of "assent" and "surrender" are charged with difficulty in feminist discourse which frequently has identified such movements with "submission". It is true that they have a long and continuous history in the thought and language of the Christian spiritual life (and now more recently in the advent of the Twelve step movement, an ostensibly secular spiritual programme of recovery but with Christian roots). But perhaps there are different kinds of assent according to spiritual and psychological maturity as well as social location. In this instance, of Julian's first experience of it, there is something quite parallel going on in Michel Hulin's description of "le paradoxe mystique", which he observes clinically and in women mystics:

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<sup>5</sup> JOHNSON, Stephen, *Humanizing the narcissistic style*, NY, W. W. Norton, 1987, pp. 57 - 58.

<sup>6</sup> ROSSITER, Stanford Kent, *Narcissism and codependency*, Ph.D. thesis, The Wright Institute, 2004, pp. 63 - 73.

<sup>7</sup> Compare the kind of deep bodily feelings Julian assents to feel with, for example, the anonymous account of a sexually abused woman which introduces the chapter on grieving and mourning, in BASS, Ellen, and Laura DAVIS, *The courage to heal: A guide for women survivors of child sexual abuse*, NY, Harper and Row, 1988, p. 118. "Sometimes I think I'm going to die from the sadness. Not that anyone ever died from crying for two hours, but it sure feels like it".

C'est en s'effaçant complètement... elle bascule, parfois d'une seconde à l'autre, de l'état de torture dans l'état de consolation. Elle plonge dans la béatitude à l'instant même où elle consent à sa propre abjection.<sup>8</sup>

The “consolation” received in total self-effacement has been interpreted as perpetuating the mold of subjection of women in female mysticism.<sup>9</sup>

Emmanuel Ghent's object relations study of masochism and submission as “lookalikes” for surrender may help to clarify why it is important to identify this shift in Julian from frozen resistance to assent or surrender, and why so many feminists have dismissed this seemingly passive dimension of Julian's spirituality.<sup>10</sup> In using the phrase “taking in”, Ghent is describing the wish to surrender in this way: to “‘take in’ the inner truth, to perceive self and other as they really are, that is, without regard to the false selves erected out of compliance to early authorities”.<sup>11</sup> He draws on Menaker who observes that “the patient is faced with the single ultimate choice: will he [or she] choose growth or refuse it -- can he [or she] take in what is, permit the resultant disorganization of the status quo of the self...?”<sup>12</sup> Echoing this, but from the discipline of the history of spirituality, Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross describe Julian's moves toward relinquishing control of her visionary experience as a form of death, as testified in her use of language. I have spoken above of Julian being in a condition of frozenness prior to her experience of the showings. Likewise they observe incidents of Julian experiencing “impasse” at those moments where she is unwilling to relinquish control of the signification of her vision.<sup>13</sup> The status quo of the self would be to remain attached to the illusion of control in relating to the other, which describes the feminine form of grandiosity and shame which can be detected in that expression of narcissism. To choose growth is to face and feel bodily the disillusionment and fragmentation of that self. For Julian I suggest this is a *first* response

<sup>8</sup> HULIN, Michel, *La mystique sauvage: Aux antipodes de l'esprit*, Paris, PUF, 1993, pp. 179 - 180.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the writing of BECKWITH, Sarah, “A very material mysticism: The medieval mysticism of Margery Kempe”, in *Medieval literature: Criticism, ideology and history*, ed. AERS, David, NY, St. Martins Press, 1986, p. 55, fn. 4.

<sup>10</sup> GHENT, Emmanuel, “Masochism, submission and surrender: Masochism as a perversion of surrender”, in *Relational Psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, eds. MITCHELL, Stephen, and Lewis ARON, Hillsdale NJ, Analytic Press, 1999, pp. 211 - 242.

<sup>11</sup> GHENT, 1999, p. 231.

<sup>12</sup> MENAKER, Esther, “Will and the problem of masochism”, in *Masochism and the emergent ego: Selected papers of Esther Menaker*, ed. LERNER, Leila, NY, Human Sciences Press, 1979, pp. 84 - 98.

<sup>13</sup> GILLESPIE, Vincent, and Maggie ROSS, “The apophatic image: The poetics of effacement in Julian of Norwich”, in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1992, pp. 56, 60, 69. Exeter symposium V.

of choosing to grow, not the last, and that perhaps it could *only* have begun in this way, if indeed she suffered very early from a maternal deficit.

The loss of this sense of the self she has known, I suggest, sets up a response of mourning a false self and assent to what is the case. These are of a piece. The whole process of illusion becoming disillusionment in transitional phenomena, as Winnicott describes it, is the process whereby inner and outer worlds can become related more effectively. As a new sense of selfhood emerges, Julian's image of God or "godobject" changes too. The spiritual tradition might liken this process to the way of purgation in knowledge of God and self. Homans says of mourning that the "[t]he response to loss opens up the transitional space which is both social and historical, and in this space persons construct a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy activity and its implicitly narrative character".<sup>14</sup> I suggest that this is what is needed for Julian eventually to see herself in relation to God from a new perspective, and that the meanings (and practices?) she has associated with sin and salvation have been off the mark.

The "supportive therapeutic intervention" in Julian's traumatic experience -- of failure / powerlessness / mourning / disillusionment / identification with the state of death / or "unthinkable anxiety" -- is symbolized in the crucifix the priest sets before her eyes. Whatever this symbol has meant to her until now, and it has no doubt meant submission, obedience to the authority and the teachings of Holy Church as Abbott holds,<sup>15</sup> the crucifix must also, from what we know of late medieval women's piety, have had maternal associations for Julian of *passio*, of suffering as giving birth, of lactation, and of the generative body of Christ as itself *ekklesia*.<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Walker Bynum clarifies that in Julian and others in the fourteenth century, the emphasis on Christ's suffering in the Passion, "is not primarily a stress on the sacrifice needed to bridge the gap between us in our sin and God in his glory; it is rather *an identification with the fact that Christ is what we are*."<sup>17</sup> This was the fruit of the historical shift to devotion to the humanity of Christ. Until the high middle ages, the Christological focus had been on the glorified Christ which heightened the sense of the distance between God and the creature.

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<sup>14</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.

<sup>15</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 61 - 63.

<sup>16</sup> BYNUM, Caroline Walker, *Fragmentation and redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone Books, 1992, ch. 3.

<sup>17</sup> BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the spirituality of the high middle ages*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1982, p. 130, emphasis added.

Julian looks at the crucifix and her feelings of physical pain and spiritual suffering are taken away. Coupled with the experience of being on the brink of unthinkable anxiety, Julian looking into the face of the crucifix, sees her own helpless suffering condition mirrored there. Her bodily feelings shift as she sees this.

Winnicott describes that the good-enough mother “puts herself in the baby’s place... to know what the baby needs” in the infant’s vulnerable physiological condition of being on the brink of unthinkable anxiety.<sup>18</sup> It is this which, according to Winnicott and Kohut, the therapeutic intervention must match in order to respond to the missed early parental function. I suggest that Julian is experiencing the two together, a situation of traumatic frustration (as Kohut calls it) which brings her to the brink of unthinkable anxiety in her vulnerability and the “supportive therapeutic intervention” (or optimum frustration as Kohut would put it) that meets her need for an empathic presence in that moment: “...and suddenly in that moment all my pain left me”. To the extent that this fits the evidence, I suggest that this could be diagnostic of an early experience of the missed maternal function of an empathic holding environment, the precursor of the mother’s face.

I suggest she is now experiencing a “match” between her need and the appearance at the right time of the face of the mirroring crucifix in an empathic response to her condition. A transitional space is opening, in which her deep bodily feelings are becoming an organ of surprising knowledge. A new respect for assenting to a self / an Other she has not known before comes into being, as she finds her body restored.

I suggest that what Julian found herself feeling was both more and less than she bargained for. The increase in conventional sorrowing she perhaps expected to feel on beholding the crucifix in contrition for sins was not there: all her pain was taken away.<sup>19</sup> Rather, it would seem that what Julian is describing to us in her first encounter with the deep, disorienting and liberating bodily experience of suffering is a kind of *self-kenosis*, *fused* with Christ’s *kenosis* in his Passion. In this chapter, it is the quality of fusion or merging with the crucifix which is significant, as I propose it signals her engagement in a mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings.

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<sup>18</sup> WINNICOTT, [1962] 1965, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> The focus on contrition and confession led in the fourteenth century frequently to preoccupation with scruples, that is “the ever-present danger of a failure to balance acute awareness of sin with acceptance of forgiveness”. See ROSS, Ellen, “‘She wept and cried right loud for sorrow and for pain’: Suffering, the spiritual journey, and women’s experience in late medieval mysticism”, in *Maps of flesh and light: The religious experience of medieval women mystics*, ed. WIETHAUS, Ulrike, Syracuse NY, Syracuse University Press, 1993, p. 52.

I am suggesting that, out of an unconscious identification with the state of death, frozen in its resistance to living or dying, Julian assents to enter into an active mourning process mirrored in the suffering she sees in the face of the crucifix. I propose that this mourning for a lost self will be mirrored in what she sees and feels, fused in this mirroring transference.

Alice Miller has identified that once a person enters into a therapeutic mirroring relation (formulated here in Sebastian Moore's words), "*what the client sees in the analyst is not the parent but the child he or she has had to repress*".<sup>20</sup> Looking at Julian's recounted experience in this way, it will be possible to see the lost, abandoned child of Julian's true self in the gamut of bodily feelings she experiences as she identifies with Christ's pains, and in what she sees in the face of the suffering Christ. It will also become for Julian a doorway to discovering the degree to which as yet unnamed sins had secretly determined that false sense of a self-sufficient, isolated self, practising acts of suffering associated with contrition, penance and compassion in a scrupulous, self-preoccupied way. The mourning that she is now experiencing would then become the means toward making more real for her what her sins really were -- in God's sight -- for which contrition and forgiveness would be essential and effective means of healing and grace. It would also make compassion an experience of communion with Christ and her even Christen, rather than simply a conventional act of prayer on her part.<sup>21</sup> These fruits of the mourning process will be discussed further throughout these chapters. Most of all, it would open the door to a new appropriation of herself in relation to the Christ of her showings.

### 3.2 Julian's bodily sight

Yet another movement response to assent to enter into the transitional realm occurs when, with the ease which came in the mysterious removal of her symptoms of suffering, Julian remembers to ask for the grace of the second wound (of compassion, though it includes elements of her other requests as well):

that our Lord... would fill my body full with recollection [mynd] and feeling of his blessed Passion, as I had prayed before, for I wished that his pains might be my pains, with compassion which would lead to longing for God.... I desired to suffer with him, living in my mortal body, as God would give me grace. (ST 3.)

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<sup>20</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *Jesus, liberator of desire*, NY, Crossroad, 1989, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamary, *Julian's way: A practical commentary on Julian of Norwich*, London, Harper Collins, 1992, p. 171.



It is at this point that she in effect *assents to enter the transitional realm of spontaneously recollecting the Passion* for which she has long been praying, and to experience it in the form of a bodily sight which she had ceased actively to request.

Her initial entry into the visionary experience as Julian recounts it is in an image of blood flowing from under the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head. It is a conventional enough image, in the context of fourteenth century affective devotion focused on the crucifix. She says,

I desired to suffer with him, living in my mortal body, as God would give me grace. And, at this, suddenly I saw the red blood trickling down from under the crown, all hot, flowing freely and copiously, a living stream, just as it seemed to me that it was at the time when the crown of thorns was thrust down upon his blessed head.... I was greatly astonished by this wonder and marvel, that he would be so homely with a sinful creature living in this wretched flesh. I accepted it that at that time our Lord Jesus wanted, out of his courteous love, to show me comfort before my temptations began.... (ST 3.)

Even here there is doubt and fear of the temptation of devils awaiting her at her death (also a common teaching of that era). But she observes that with "this sight of his blessed Passion and with his divinity, of which I speak as I understand, I saw that this was strength enough for me, yes, and for all living creatures who will be protected from all the devils of hell and from all their spiritual enemies". (ST 3.) I propose that this is a signal that her archaic narcissistic false self (as self-sufficient, isolated etc.) is giving way to a conscious, astonished awareness of some new sense of self, in the paradoxical condition of fundamental fragility *and* safety as she enters into a merged mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings, here in his *homely* (i.e., intimate, familiar) companionship.

### 3.2.1 The transitional function of the bodily sight

Julian gives a kind of categorization of the types of visions she received: bodily sight, words formed in my understanding, and spiritual sight (ST 7), which, according to earlier Julian commentators, were derived from Augustine's categories for classifying prophetic visions.<sup>22</sup> However, those who have attempted to follow such categorizations when applied to Julian's showings are, as Bauerschmidt observes, "inevitably frustrated",

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<sup>22</sup> See, for examples, MOLINARI, Paul, *Julian of Norwich: The teaching of a 14th century English mystic*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1958, pp. 60 - 72; PELPHREY, Brant, *Christ our mother: Julian of Norwich*, Wilmington Delaware, Glazier, 1989, pp. 80 - 91. The way of the Christian mystics series 7. See AUGUSTINE, St, *De genesi ad litteram*, book 12, chapter 7, translated as *The literal meaning of genesis*, transl. TAYLOR, John Hammon, NY, Newman Press, 1982, p. 186, on the categories of corporeal, spiritual and intellectual visions.

as they do not seem to work.<sup>23</sup> Bauerschmidt, on the other hand, makes a significant observation about how Julian's use of the phrase "bodily sight" actually functions in the visions. Bodily sight in Julian of Norwich, according to Bauerschmidt,

indicates both a *mode* of seeing -- something involving *physical sensation*, though in a way that to her is clearly different from the usual perception of a material object -- and an *object* of vision -- Christ's body, specifically the body on the crucifix that the priest has placed before her. Julian speaks of "bodily sight", without further qualification, *only* in reference to this specific representation of Jesus' body and the various permutations that she sees it undergo.<sup>24</sup>

Bauerschmidt is at pains here to distinguish this view of Julian's use of the notion of bodily sight as an *object* of vision from that of many Julian commentators, such as Pelphrey. Bauerschmidt says that Pelphrey, for example, regards it as "primarily a mode of subjective apprehension -- a mode that engages, or seems to engage, the senses -- which leads them to try to categorize any 'vision' Julian has as a bodily sight". Rather, Bauerschmidt draws on observations made by Nuth, Baker and others to emphasize that Julian's use of the concept of bodily sight is reserved exclusively for the "rather obscure transformations associated with the crucifix upon which she was gazing.... [T]he bodily sights are distinguished from the other sights because they are of Christ crucified and are closely related to the material object of the crucifix".<sup>25</sup> Thus he stresses that Julian does not have bodily sights of anyone else. As Denise Baker has observed, Julian's

visions include none of the personages who play such a large role either as torturers or as compassionate witnesses in the serial Passion narratives and much of the devotional art of the late medieval period. Only Jesus appears in bodily likeness; even her visions of Mary at the time of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion are not corporeal.<sup>26</sup>

About the function of bodily sight as a *mode* of seeing, Bauerschmidt describes it as "something distinctive about the *manner* in which Christ's body is perceived. It is as if there were a resonance between Julian's body and the body of Christ on the cross, communicated through the medium of sight". Bauerschmidt sees this mode of seeing as involving "the physical displacement of Julian's pain by Christ's", though he allows that in the first showing she says her pain had been taken from her and that the dynamic of Julian actually describing herself as participating in Christ's pains only begins in her recounting of

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<sup>23</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 42, emphasis in text.

<sup>25</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 43 - 44, and his fn. 34 on p. 230.

<sup>26</sup> BAKER, Denise N., *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From vision to book*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 48.

the eighth showing. What is significant at this point is Bauerschmidt's observation that "*she does not 'see' simply with her eyes, but with her entire body*".<sup>27</sup> Carolyn Walker Bynum was the first to highlight that for medieval religious women the body was a vehicle of knowing and the source --through suffering -- for an experienced union with Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Bauerschmidt draws a connection here with the participative model of perception which was basic to medieval epistemology (even though in Julian's day this was being challenged by nominalism's approach to perception as efficient causality). Thus Thomas Aquinas spoke of how "the received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver".<sup>29</sup> Julian's bodily seeing, as a participative mode of perception,

is the adequation of her disease-wracked body to the object of her perception: Christ's suffering, generative, crucified body.... She cannot maintain the distance that the eyes allow, but sees Christ's suffering by participating in it. At the same time, while the otherness of the crucified comes to inhabit her in compassionate intimacy, he still maintains his otherness.<sup>30</sup>

Bauerschmidt has given an excellent close reading of the nature of Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix. But I have to say his preference for the "objective" quality of the crucifix and its meaning, over the "subjective" quality of Julian's experience of beholding it, may be problematic, as I see it. What Abbott calls the "animated" quality of the crucifix, the "external correlative of her inner experience" seems to leave us even moreso with two unrelated realms, the objective or the subjective.<sup>31</sup>

I propose that Julian is entering and seems in her text to be inviting the reader into a third realm. I am suggesting that what Julian is describing can perhaps be understood in terms of an epistemology which embraces the work of creative symbolic formation in the third realm of transitional space that is at once personal, subjective and social, objective.<sup>32</sup>

As such, I suggest that we see Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix, insofar as it is as Bauerschmidt says an "object of vision", as a *transitional* object, or a self/not self

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<sup>27</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 44. emphasis added.

<sup>28</sup> BYNUM, 1992, chs 3 and 6 (reprinted in this book from earlier publications as articles); see also LICHTMANN, Maria, "*I desyrede a bodylye syght*": Julian of Norwich and the body", *Mystics quarterly* 17, 1991, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> AQUINAS, St Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, transl. ERNST, Cornelius o.p., Oxford, Blackfriars, 1972, 1.84.1.

<sup>30</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> JONES, James, "Knowledge in transition: Towards a Winnicottian epistemology" *Psychoanalytic review* 79, pp. 223 - 237, and, by the same author, *Religion and psychology: Psychoanalysis, feminism and theology in transition*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, chs. 4 and 5.

object. The mother's breast, the edge of the blanket, the teddy bear, if we may say so, are likewise the "object of vision" in the child's emerging transitional world of symbol formation. But what constitutes the *otherness* of the transitional object is *itself* in a process of dynamic transformation, and revelatory of Julian's transforming sense of self as well as of Christ's homeliness. The religious transitional object (the godobject) of someone who has developed a mature capacity for play and integration will retain its profound sense of connectedness with self and other, but may not look like its early predecessors.

Likewise, insofar as the bodily sight of the crucifix is a "mode of seeing" I suggest we understand that to mean that it is significant as the feeling tone of Julian's assent to enter into *transitional space*, that is, the presentation of the crucifix at that moment is related to the development of a sense of trust in a condition of rest made possible only by being alone in the presence of an empathic other. It is a mode of seeing and knowing with the body which resonates with the pre-oedipal issue of relational *trust*. I suggest that it might be viewed as a mode of seeing which is engaged in a mirroring transference. Just as the "adequation" of the interior condition or feeling life of the child to engaging in transitional space (play) is effected through trust in the presence of an accepting other, so also I suggest does Julian's bodily sight function to engage her in a visionary experience which presupposes the presence of an empathic other, in this case, the suffering Christ of the crucifix (with whatever the empathic relational resonance was which she might have associated with that). The results of this, which in the child promotes the development both of a sense of the reality of the nascent self and of object relations, negotiating inner subjective and outer social worlds, could then be looked for in the development of Julian's showings.

To repeat, on the one hand, Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix as an object of vision functions as a transitional object. It represents at some level the *found* quality of everything Julian has received from her tradition as to the significance of the crucifix, and in this sense is objective, in the way in which Bauerschmidt is using that term. But as a transitional object the crucifix is *also* at some level being *created* by Julian, registering her profound need to be mirrored in the meaning which her bodily sight of the crucifix comes to have for her. As Bauerschmidt concludes, Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix is the inauguration of a process of formation of a new identity shaped by "*mynd* of the passion".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 62.

At the same time, her bodily sight of the crucifix, as a mode of seeing, functions as enabling her simultaneously to enter into transitional space. It provides that *trusting resonance* between Julian's interior state and the empathic mirroring Other whose presence makes possible Julian's assent to enter into a mode of knowing through deep bodily feelings and a readiness to engage in visual fantasy activity and narrative. It is this mode of knowing and learning which Homans describes as important for engaging movement responses in transitional phenomena for the work of mourning both a false self and lost meanings of cultural symbols. All the bodily senses are engaged in what Julian will come to call the prayer of beholding.<sup>34</sup>

In Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix she seems both to *find and create* there a transitional object, and as she enters the transitional space of beholding the face of the crucifix, she experiences bodily and visually what she most needs to see, feel and know in her vulnerable condition. I suggest that this will enable her development both of a new core sense of self and of the reality of the other. And this, I suggest, will be reflected in signs of growth in maturity in Julian's need for mirroring.

Moreover, this transitional realm becomes the site for her creative work of formation and transformation of symbols within her religious tradition, in particular with regard to sin and salvation in Christ, which she believes, God desires to make available as well to her *even* Christians in such need of comfort as to herself. (ST 6.) What is significant is that there will be evolution in the meanings which Julian draws from her transitional bodily sight and perhaps transformations in her relationship with this transitional object. What remains constant throughout is that meaning comes through Julian's beholding Christ's face beholding her. As will become clearer later on, Julian's shifts from resistance to assent will become increasingly expressions of desire as to what she will see of herself and of Christ in that mutual beholding, and over the years, as to what further meaning these showings will come to have for her.

### 3.2.2 Assent to *kenosis*: "I felt no pains except Christ's pains"

The next movement response from resistance to assent seems to be at the point at which her mother provides the "resistance", such that it prompts Julian to assent to see and feel within her the suffering of Christ's own pains.

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<sup>34</sup> See LT 43; also HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, p. 25.

In ST 10, Julian is focused on Christ's *face* as the locus for all his pain and suffering, and then on his body as if it had been dead for a week, which was drying and blowing in the wind. In one of Julian's very few explicit references to scripture she quotes here in ST 10 the great kenotic hymn in Philippians 2:5, "But each soul should do as St. Paul says, and feel in himself what is in Christ Jesus. This revelation of Christ's pains filled me full of pains...."<sup>35</sup>

While her mother is attempting to close Julian's eyes believing her to be dead, Julian is intensely engaged with the physical suffering of Christ. Her mother's action

greatly increased my sorrow, for despite all my pains, I did not want to be hindered from seeing, because of my love for him. And with regard to either, in all this time that Christ was present to me, I felt no pain except for Christ's pains; and then it came to me that I had little known what pain it was that I had asked for, for it seemed to me that my pains exceeded any mortal death. I thought: is there any pain in hell like this? And in my reason I was answered that despair is greater, for that is a spiritual pain. But there is no greater physical pain than this; how could I suffer greater pain than to see him who is all my life, all my bliss and all my joy suffer? Here I felt truly that I loved Christ so much more than myself that I thought it would have been a great comfort to me if my body had died. (ST 10.)

What I observe is that Julian responds by resisting her mother's intervention, and assenting, with greater determination, marked by her reference to Philippians 2, to engage in a mirroring transference with Christ in suffering which, in her description here, involves a desire both to see and feel the pains of his *kenosis* as her own interior condition.

Although she retains a sense of Christ's otherness, I suggest her description of her visual engagement with and feeling of Christ's pains could be described as one of visceral fusion. The description by Ledoux of the fusional relation of the female mystic characterized by the "relation d'absence" comes to mind:

Tout ce qui était exprimé venait s'inscrire dans le registre archaïque de la relation fusionnelle dont le prototype est celle qui s'instaure à l'origine entre la mère et l'enfant. Union, fusion dans l'indéterminé, absence de limites, de frontières précises entre moi et l'autre, fusion qui peut aller jusqu'à l'interchangeabilité des positions "subjectives" entre les deux partenaires de la relation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Some see the very few scriptural quotations in Julian's *Showings* as due to the rising ecclesiastical concern at the Lollards' vernacular translations of scripture at the time, as well as to her use of the late medieval visual meditative practice, focused on the crucifix, of *lectio Domini*. On the other hand, it has also been observed that Julian's writing is infused with scriptural allusions. While the present study is not engaging an analysis of her use of language per se, it is striking that there should be a sense of fusion between Julian and sacred scripture, such that the latter is everywhere present but rarely, apart from this instance, even indirectly identified. Whether her "texts" for meditation were written or visual, (or both, in the case of her *Showings*), Julian knew how to do *lectio divina*.

<sup>36</sup> LEDOUX, Michel, "La relation d'absence", in "Résurgences et dérivés de la mystique", *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 20, 1980, p. 239.

What is also significant is a shift here from confusing her previous condition of spiritual pain (such as despair) with physical pain. Until now, Julian's description of her desire for the pains of illness and the pains of contrition do not seem to be distinguishable. For the first time, Julian is describing a distinction that is significant. She does not see or feel Christ in despair, only in incredible physical pain. To put a sharper point on it, rather than envisioning Christ as being superhumanly powerful, Julian sees Christ as being superhumanly powerless in his Passion, containing all the suffering of humankind. It is as if she is seeing her own life of immense suffering for the first time as mirrored in the crucifix. Whereas earlier, Julian's solitary suffering and pain was confused and ambivalent, I propose that we see in Julian a shift within herself, such that in this transitional realm of Julian beholding the crucifix, her body is teaching her to make a distinction in her own feelings between the kenotic state of intense bodily suffering of a powerless condition *shared in Christ*, and the spiritual pain of isolation, ambivalence and despair which also has its own, resistive, bodily feelings. And, it would seem, this movement response is made possible by her entry into a fused mirroring transference with the innocent suffering Christ of her showings. It is the fusion or merging of bodily feeling with the suffering Christ which dominates Julian's initial entrée into the showings.

### 3.2.3 The alternations between visions of the flowing blood and the dying body of Christ

Following on the initial showing of the bleeding crucifix (ST 3), the next two visions are again of the bleeding crucifix, with images first of the blood drying and caking (ST 7), then of the blood flowing again, at which she repeats her description of how copiously and freely it was flowing. This time she adds: "...and I saw this blood run so plentifully that it seemed to me that if it had in fact been happening there, the bed and everything around it would have been soaked in blood". (ST 8.) As well as the flowing blood of the suffering, healing, nurturing crucified One being an allusion to the eucharistic wine, several feminist scholars have drawn connections here to medieval images of menstrual blood, lactating breasts and the mother's suffering hemorrhage in birthing a child.<sup>37</sup> With knowledge of the context in which it arose in women's medieval devotion, the symbol still functions polysemously to inspire different contemporary interpretive explorations. Could it also be an image of the overwhelming flood of thoughts and feelings she has heretofore resisted experiencing in consciousness, her confusion of fears

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<sup>37</sup> See for examples BYNUM, 1982, pp. 132 - 133; and LICHTMANN, 1991, p. 15.

of being judged, her terror of (and potential rage at?) her condition of powerlessness which up to now has been equatable with damnation -- the ultimate abandonment by God?

Then again in the eighth showing (ST 10) the vision of Christ is as he is dying, Julian describes the dryness, bloodlessness of his face and body. Abbott treats at length the Long Text version of these first showings, where the drying out of the flesh of the Christ-figure is much more expanded and intensified with imagery of cloth flapping in the wind, etc. This too, was a conventional image at the time. Kuryluk observes that the "vision of Christ's dried-up skin reflects the nature of mystical experience which, oscillating between the extremes of fullness and nothingness, ecstasy and mortification, empties out and annihilates the object of its desire".<sup>38</sup> But what Abbott associates most fully with these images in the Long Text could be said to be present in some degree already in the Short Text. Abbott holds that these images

dovetail with the theological theme of Christ's self-emptying, his *kenosis*. The crucifixion is thus evoked as a depersonalizing process in which the supremely living person, whose blood Julian saw flowing '*hote and freisly and ryth plenteously*'... descends to the status of a dead object, a *thing* to be characterized in terms of other things."<sup>39</sup>

The descriptions of these visions of Christ alternately bleeding and drying may be "iconic", as Abbott has described it, referring to its static, non-reciprocal, non-narratorial quality, "recreating the intense focus of Julian as viewing subject" in which Christ "is appropriated as an object of her exclusive attention".<sup>40</sup> From that perspective they could also be said to be fragmentary images which describe what Julian's mourning is feeling like. I would hold, in keeping with recent theory about mourning, that while the loss of the object of desire may be real, the intensity of the mourning is related to the sense of *self* that is lost in relation to the other. Perhaps what we see in Julian's alternating visions of endless blood and endless drying in Christ's Passion could be seen as alternating images of the confusion Julian is feeling interiorly. Thus, on the one hand, Christ's tears/lifeblood which will never stop flowing, could be seen as an image of the flood of confusion and grief raised by her powerlessness to control these events, yet eased by some hint of life she does not yet know -- here amplified by the medieval eucharistic allusion. On the other, the dry deadness of Christ's body could be seen as an image of the fear that life as she has known it is gone forever, the life of her suffering self as she has known it up till now; the emptiness and deprivation of an as yet unknown sense of herself. These images could

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<sup>38</sup> KURLYLUK, Ewa, *Veronica and her cloth*, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1991, p. 209.

<sup>39</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 69 - 70.

<sup>40</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 67, 73.



suggest an interior chaos erupting in her sense of selfhood. Because this occurs very early on in her showings, perhaps these oscillations could also be seen as a precursor to the fragmented images of the alternating feelings of spiritual bliss (through suffering) and abandonment Julian experienced in the third showing. (ST 9.)

Such are some of the significant movement responses in Julian's entry into her visionary experience in these bodily sights of the Passion, as seen through the lens of Kohut, Winnicott, Miller and Homans. What I want to suggest is that there is embedded in all this imagery, projected onto the screen of the bleeding crucifix, also a reflection of a process of profound mourning, depersonalization, *self-emptying* going on in Julian's own personal history. Abbott's insistence on the distant, objective or iconic quality of the animated images related to the suffering, dying Christ on the cross, it seems to me, would reinforce my interpretation of its projected (as yet relatively split or unintegrated) transference quality, alongside its religious conventionality. But I would hold that Julian's bodily sight of feeling Christ's pains represents a shift into entering a merged or fused mirroring transference, and not a distant kind of seeing.

I have stressed that these movement responses are at the level of deep bodily feelings of resistance shifting into assent. The surprising effect of these movement responses, as that registers in her feelings, is one of *comfort*, that the Lord

would be so familiar with a sinful creature living in this wretched flesh... And at the same time as I saw this corporeal sight, our Lord showed me a spiritual sight of his familiar love. I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help... (ST 3 - 4.)

Julian's practice of desiring the wound of contrition may well have contributed to her receptivity to feeling comfort in such extreme circumstances, but not simply for the conventional devotional purpose of increasing her personal sorrow for sins (and masochistic comfort in succeeding). However it is perhaps significant that it is Julian's request for the wound of compassion (rather than contrition) which is responded to in the empathic bodily sight of and her merged feelings with the kenotic suffering Jesus of her showings which elicited this strange new sense of comfort.

This response of comfort speaks to me of Julian undergoing this process of mourning with some bodily perceived sense of her deepest needs being mirrored and affirmed in the transitional realm of beholding the crucifix. To use Homans' phrase, she shows already some preparation for engaging in this growth in her "ability to mourn". This emphasis on comfort in Julian's response would confirm Abbott's distinction between the

youthful, self-preoccupied and self-isolating, religious narcissist Julian, and the self from which Julian speaks as she *records* her showings later.<sup>41</sup>

Another confirmation would come from Nancy Coiner's fascinating study "The 'homely' and the *heimliche*: The hidden, doubled self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*". Coiner has developed Freud's argument that the "*unheimlich*" or uncanny, "the affect caused by the return of the repressed", is a species of the "*Heimliche* (home-like or familiar) to account for Julian's astonishment at seeing the face of the crucifix begin to bleed, and at its *homely* meaning of comfort. Coiner believes that "what is most 'homely' or *heimlich* (and therefore also most *unheimlich*, or uncanny) turns out to be the hidden nature of the self, and argues that Julian experiences -- and confronts -- a "crisis in subjectivity". For both Julian and Freud, the self is disconcertingly split between two parts, each of which is hidden from the other's view. Furthermore, for both Freud and Julian, that split self is constituted by a deep connection to the maternal body... as a site where all categories (of life and death, of separation and unity) blur.<sup>42</sup> This raises the question of what might have helped constitute that deep connection to the maternal body? Like Coiner, I am drawn to turn to a medieval symbol, the anchorhold.

#### 4.0 The anchorhold as holding environment

In the study of the history of Christian doctrine among other fields, the *context* of doing theology is becoming recognized increasingly as having a determinative effect on the practice of theology. In the case of our present subject Julian of Norwich this is no less significant particularly given the originality of her work. Hence, I have been paying attention to the debates about what state of life Julian was in prior to and following the showings and the writing of the two texts.

But this question of context is also significant from an object relations theoretical perspective, which identifies the maternal holding environment and mirroring function as a significant element in any context which affirms and enables human maturation and creativity. In a culture dominated by male writers and theologians, this "context" may be taken for granted by its privileged members; it was simply the air which men breathed. However, for a brilliant, psychologically oversensitive, devoted medieval woman who

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<sup>41</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, ch. 2.

<sup>42</sup> COINER, Nancy, "The 'homely' and the 'heimliche': The hidden, doubled self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Exemplaria: A journal of theory in medieval and renaissance studies*, 5, 1993, p. 307. See FREUD, Sigmund, "The uncanny", in *Sigmund Freud: Collected papers*, transl. RIVIERE, Joan, NY, Basic, 1959, 4, pp. 368 - 407.

dares to write her theology in the vernacular, we can assume that a mirroring, affirming context would be systemically withheld from her, yet all the more necessary for such creative work.

In the chapter on the pre-visionary Julian I argued, among other things, for an interpersonal presence of a mirroring other in the person of a spiritual counsellor or director in Julian's youth which may well have continued on into her maturity as an anchoress, and which prepared Julian for this therapeutic process of redressing the debilitating effects of original trauma of maternal neglect and loss and their ongoing effects on her adult life, on her capacity for self-acceptance (narcissism) and object relations. It would seem that positing such a relationship might also help account for her overcoming her resistance to entering into a therapeutic mirroring transference relationship and self-identification with the kenotic Christ.

I also underlined the significance in Julian's early history of the tradition of affective meditation on the Passion as an imaginative devotional means of encouraging a relational encounter and participation in the scenes of the Passion. I argued that this too could have had a significant, culturally accepted mirroring function of encouraging healing and integrative work in prayer, particularly if she had been reticent to enter into mirroring relationships. I suggested we might see this form of devotion as promoting a creative meditation activity characterized by Winnicott as a transitional realm, insofar as it presupposes the trustworthy presence of an other who reflects back affirmingly the emergence of the nascent self.

At this point I wish to introduce another source in the medieval religious tradition for what I will call an imaginative holding environment, a social or interpersonal environment of nurture and therapeutic mirroring, which, I believe, functioned powerfully as a container and mirror for the work of self-transformation in relation to Christ: the tradition surrounding the anchorhold. I suggest that themes associated with the anchorhold and the anchoritic vocation can be detected here in the fusional or merged character of her transformative visionary experience of the bodily sight of the suffering Christ.

I propose that by the time of the showings Julian had been influenced by the imaginative symbolic power of the tradition of anchoritic literature and bodily enclosure. I am aware that to argue that Julian was already enclosed before her near death experience goes against the currently held view of Julian's state of life at the time of the showings (apart from Jantzen and Baker). Perhaps the psychohistorical evidence for such a proposal could be a case in point of how a psychohistorical study can contribute new sources of evidence for the practice of the new history. There is the possibility that she lived in seclusion in her own home before actually becoming formally enclosed. Contemporary

women's experience as well as women mystics in the Christian tradition corroborate this proposal. While acknowledging the ambivalence of the tradition of enclosure for women, Janet Ruffing has shown how significant "enclosure" can be as a spiritual sanctuary, "safe places set apart and protected in some way..." for women to have "respect, solitary time..., space to grieve".<sup>43</sup>

Such places provide a safe environment that encourages women to sink to other levels of awareness. Enclosures allow women to soften the defenses they maintain to protect themselves and to stop the constant 'radar' and early warning systems they maintain to alert them to approaching danger.<sup>44</sup>

Ruffing also notes: "Carolyn Bynum discovered that the earlier a woman entered the monastery, the stronger her sense of self and the more original her metaphoric language was".<sup>45</sup> In the history of women mystics, periods of informal enclosure are a repeated phenomenon. For example, Catherine of Siena spent three years in seclusion in her parental home after the death of her sister.<sup>46</sup> Marie de l'Incarnation also enclosed herself informally after the death of her husband. Even more significantly than these active mystics for the purpose of this study of Julian is the case of the Montreal recluse Jeanne Leber, who lived for fifteen years in reclusion in her own home prior to her formal enclosure.<sup>47</sup> Would this have been a possibility in Julian's case?

I propose that while the tradition and bodily practices of the anchoritic vocation may have functioned for Julian initially as a symbol of her ambivalent, resistive identification with the state of death, in the Short Text account of the first showings, enclosure in solitude, whether formally in the anchorhold or informally, is hinted already as becoming a kind of therapeutic holding environment.

The earliest condition of the infant, prior to any separation of the infant's self from the mother, is one of absolute fragility and dependence on maternal care. Winnicott denies

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<sup>43</sup> RUFFING, Janet, "Spiritual direction with women: Reclaiming and reinterpreting key themes from the spiritual tradition", *Presence, an international journal of spiritual direction* 12, 3, 2006, p. 40.

<sup>44</sup> RUFFING, 2006, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> RUFFING, 2006, p. 40. See BYNUM, 1982, 279 p.

<sup>46</sup> MARTELLOCK, Amy King, "She who is not: A psychobiography of Catherine of Siena using the theories of D. W. Winnicott", Ps.D. dissertation, Massachusetts school of professional psychology, 2003, p. 130, argues that long after she came out of seclusion Catherine retained the "secret cell" of self-knowledge as a way "to feel that the most important part of herself was always in the presence of God and that this connection and communion was more real than her objective reality.... It is another creative use of transitional phenomena for defensive purposes".

<sup>47</sup> "Jeanne est dans sa trente-quatrième année [au moment où elle s'enferme formellement dans son reclusoir à la CND pour le reste de ses jours]. Depuis quinze ans (1680), elle a vécu recluse sous le toit paternel". DERROY-PINEAU, Françoise, *Jeanne Leber: La recluse au coeur des combats*, Montréal, Bellarmin, 2000, p. 119.

the concept of an infant in this earliest condition as having a “self”; the infant exists as a dyadic relationship of mother-baby. What is needed at that time for the baby to develop is a reliable environment which provides for the baby’s bodily and physiological needs. Recall Winnicott’s description of the function of the holding environment as allowing a state of unintegrated relaxation in the baby’s condition of absolute dependence, in which the baby can move non-defensively toward integration of the environment. Winnicott describes this from the baby’s perspective as “I am seen or understood to exist by someone” and “I get back (as a face seen in a mirror) the evidence I need that I have been recognized as a being”.<sup>48</sup> This, Winnicott calls the “holding environment”, which functions clearly as more than just physical handling and includes the essential component of mirroring.<sup>49</sup>

Both Winnicott and Kohut are agreed that the therapeutic or “analytic” situation must replicate these unmet needs for any real development to be possible in the adult who has not received this early maternal attention. Winnicott’s and Kohut’s

view of the development of the self led Winnicott [and Kohut] to redefine both the analytic situation and the analytic process. Whereas Freud saw the analytic situation in terms of abstinence (instinctual wishes emerge and find no gratification), Winnicott sees the analytic situation in terms of *satisfaction*, not of instinctual impulses per se, but of crucial developmental experiences, *missed parental functions*. The couch, the constancy of the sessions, the demeanor of the analyst – these become the ‘holding environment’ which was not provided in infancy. Freud saw the analytic process in terms of renunciation; by bringing to light and renouncing infantile wishes, healthier and more mature forms of libidinal organization become possible. Winnicott sees the analytic process in terms of a kind of revitalization; the frozen, aborted self is able to reawaken and begin to develop as crucial ego needs are met.<sup>50</sup>

For both Winnicott and Kohut then, a receptive, empathic acceptance of “narcissistic illusions” as describing the analytic situation is the medium for the “growing edge of the self”.<sup>51</sup>

I hold that what is reflected in Julian’s deep body movement responses from frozen resistance to assent to enter into the transitional realm of the showings, would require a situation in which she felt safe and accepted, as the medium for the growing edge of the

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<sup>48</sup> WINNICOTT, W. D., [1962] 1965, p. 61; and by the same author, “The theory of the parent-infant relationship”, in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, [1960] 1965, pp. 37 - 55.

<sup>49</sup> WINNICOTT W. D., [1960] 1965, pp. 48 - 49.

<sup>50</sup> MITCHELL, Stephen, “The wings of Icarus: Illusion and the problem of narcissism”, in *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition*, eds., MITCHELL Stephen and Lewis ARON, Hillsdale NJ, Analytic Press, 1999, p. 162, emphasis added.

<sup>51</sup> MITCHELL, 1999, p. 163.

self. The lived martyrdom of the anchoritic vocation, which promoted the generosity, intimacy and gentleness of Christ's relationship with the anchoress could perhaps have provided significant elements of such a "holding environment". I will explore in more depth the symbolism Julian retrieved from the anchoritic tradition below, in chapter 10.

As Julian's experience of entering the world of the showings begins, it is remarkable how quickly it is revealed to her that the fragility of all creation is simultaneously safely kept and loved, in the "spiritual sight of his homely love" in the image of the hazelnut. The associations Julian has of simultaneous fragility and security in her vision of the hazelnut are already there in the first showing. (ST 4.)

#### 4.1 The hazelnut and other visions of comfort and enclosure in the first showing

Julian's very early vision of the hazelnut in the palm of her hand echoes the theme of comfort while describing an image of enclosure:

And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, and I perceived that it was as round as any ball. I looked at it and thought: What can this be? And I was given this general answer: It is everything which is made. I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that it was so little that it could suddenly fall into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it, the second is that he loves it, the third is that God keeps [preserves] it. (ST 4.)

It is in the very first showing, at the same time that Julian has the first bodily sight of Christ, that she receives this spiritual sight of Christ's homely love as

everything which is good and comforting for our help.... Christ is our clothing, for he is that love which wraps and enfolds us, embraces us and guides us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us. And so in this sight I saw truly that he is everything which is good, as I understand. (ST 4.)<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In LT 6 Julian extends this section to include a vision of the human body as a purse, which is opened and shut in the time of its necessity, and observing that it is God that does this. There continues to be a controversy as to whether the middle English word *soule* here refers to "food" -- and its digested form as "soil", or as a variant of *saule*, or "soul". Personally, I have long held to the former interpretation, and considered that this is an oblique reference to the condition of constipation which must have been frequent among anchorites. For example, the hagiographer of the anchoress Christina Markyate writes: "Through long fasting, her bowels became contracted and dried up"; cited in TALBOT, C. H. transl. and ed., *The life of Christina Markyate: A twelfth-century recluse*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 104, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 39. Julian, in that light, sees even the daily bowel movement as a gift of God's goodness, which, I hold, serves as an excellent example of the homely concretization or internalization of the symbolism of the enclosure.

See also WATSON, Nicholas and Jacqueline JENKINS, eds., *The writings of Julian of Norwich: 'A vision showed to a devout woman' and 'A revelation of love'*, University Park PN, Pennsylvania State

The anchoritic literature, or possibly the anchorhold itself, then, could have had a very strong influence on Julian, in that it provided a imaginative symbolic container or holding environment for her to embrace the psycho-spiritual dying to self in Christ, the mourning of a false self in a transforming, life-giving way, characterized by the surprising visceral quality of fusion, containment, comfort and familiarity (homeliness) that Julian tells us she experiences, even as she is experiencing deep disorientation and pain unlike anything she has previously known. It is her assent to enter such a painful, disorienting, yet strangely comforting fused kenotic experience which I propose to explore in the second chapter of this diptych as that which inaugurates the contrast experience in Julian. Here I am proposing that Julian's knowledge of the anchoritic tradition contributed to this dimension of her showings and facilitated her experience of spiritual comfort in entering this fused union with Christ in his suffering.

### 5.0 Julian's confusion

Thus far, I have emphasized a psychobiographical interpretation of Julian's response in these first showings to the suffering of Christ on the cross. Their meaning to her centres around how the suffering humanity of Christ is revealed to be intimately reflective of her own human condition in that moment, not as sinful *per se*, but as simply suffering incredible pain, weakness, powerlessness and the disorientation of mourning. But this very meaning also causes her confusion because the common teaching of the Church taught her to see herself as essentially sinful and as having caused Christ's suffering and God's wrath. She expresses her confusion or disorientation as a preoccupation with "sin" which doesn't make sense in light of the deeply felt compassion she is experiencing with Christ's own suffering:

And after this I saw God in a point... and by this vision I saw that he is present in all things.... I marvelled at this vision with a gentle fear, and I thought: What is sin? For I saw truly that God does everything, however small it may be, and that nothing is done by chance, but it is of the endless providence of God's wisdom. Therefore I was compelled to admit that everything which is done is well done, and I was certain that God does no sin. Therefore it seemed to me that sin is nothing,

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University, 2006, p. 142, who see it as an anticipation of the portrayal of God as mother in LT 55 - 62. Julian is shown that God says that he

comes down to us in our humblest needs. For he does not despise what he has made, nor does he disdain to serve us in the simplest natural functions of our body for love of the soul which he created in his own likeness. For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the trunk, so are we, soul and body, clad and enclosed in the goodness of God. (LT 6.)

In all of this, it is "God who has enclosed us all in himself". (LT 6.) Kerrie Hide has recently argued that in this early image of the hazelnut is contained Julian's soteriology. See HIDE, Kerrie, "'Only in God do I have all'", *Downside review*, 122, 2004, pp. 43 - 60.

for in all this sin was not shown to me. And I did not wish to go on feeling surprise at this, but I contemplated our Lord and waited for what he would show me. (ST 8.)

In the enclosing imagery of God in all things, the pre-oedipal themes of mourning, vulnerability and comfort in knowing her condition to be mirrored, or more specifically merged in the other, are all present. But it is in this latter aspect of her experience, of wondering what sin is that it has no place in this experience, that her *confusion in her suffering* lies. This experience, at once personal, pre-oedipal and yet reverberative of the human predicament of her *even* Christians -- particularly women -- brings to light what I propose is an underlying situation of soteriological contrast. The study turns to this in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 8

### DIPTYCH 1.2 SUFFERING AND CONTRAST EXPERIENCE

#### 1.0 Introduction

The present chapter begins with Elizabeth Johnson's description of the contrast experience, the first stage of the conversion process in the liberationist appropriation of soteriology. It then looks at these same first showings of the Short Text as in the last chapter to explore how they might reflect the contours of Julian's soteriological crisis in Johnson's terms. I will argue that this contrast experience was brought to consciousness by her showings and resulted in confusion between what her showings would teach her and what the Church's common teaching held. I explore Sebastian Moore's psychoanalytic soteriology as a way of articulating Julian's confusion around suffering more explicitly along these lines.

#### 2.0 Naming Julian's experience as an experience of contrast:

##### **The link with Johnson's first movement in the liberation dynamic of conversion**

Johnson describes the three phases of the conversion process understood as the feminist expression of the liberation dynamic of appropriation: the identification of an experience of *contrast*, the *confirmation* of the dignity of the subject as she comes into speech (which involves a positive *retrieval* of more meaningful and coherent sources from the tradition), and the *appropriation* of an understanding of salvation which is responsive to the deepest needs of women (and men) and so, liberative and transformative.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on Schillebeeckx, Elizabeth Johnson describes the contrast experience in the following way:

It is the kind of fruitful experience that transpires when persons bump up against the stubborn resistance of historical reality to what they sense to be true, good, and beautiful. When reality is thus 'dis-illusioning', the contrast challenges people to a

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<sup>1</sup> See JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is: The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1992, chapter 4, and her "Jesus and salvation", *Proceedings of the Catholic theological society of America* 49, 1994, pp. 1 - 18.

decision: either close their minds and deny what they have experienced, or use it as a springboard to address and struggle with the causes of the suffering.<sup>2</sup>

How, then, could Julian's experience be akin to this?

Julian's experience of contrast is perhaps the reverse of contemporary feminists' experience. As the contemporary liberation dynamic is articulated, a situation of unintelligible social evil demands intelligibility, and renders naïve belief in the status quo incredible. What is "incredible" for Julian, however, is not her early life of devotion to chosen and unchosen suffering. It is rather the familiarity, the intimate and comforting homeliness of God revealed to her from the first of her showings of the Crucified which is incredible, in the sense of its being "too good to be true". Julian was living in an age which had no concept of freedom and equality between the sexes or classes of people. I believe we can safely say of sexism, whether projected back into the medieval period or since, that as it is "written deeply into a traditional culture, it often goes unnoticed, for it has roots in a longstanding memory.... [T]he biases lie so deeply ingrained that they are experienced as precisely what should be, even according to the will of God".<sup>3</sup> This situation of practising pious acts of suffering, as a way perhaps of unconsciously dealing with massive unintelligible societal suffering, was perhaps as it should be, for Julian. It is only in light of the showings that she assents to an awareness of her radical powerlessness and unchosen vulnerability in the face of suffering at death, the outcome of which she could not control. As I see it, it is only in light of the showings which set up the contrast that her fear of death as the recapitulation of traumatic separation and abandonment is brought to the fore. It seems to be only in light of the showings that she becomes confused and she doesn't know what sin is anymore. It is only in light of the showings that the situation of the contrast experience arises to consciousness, and focuses the question for Julian around what to believe -- the Church's teachings or her showings?<sup>4</sup>

As Julian puts it more eloquently in the Long Text:

How can this be? For I know by the ordinary teaching of Holy Church and by my own feeling that the blame of our sins continually hangs upon us, from the first man until the time that we come up into heaven. This, then, was my astonishment, that I saw our Lord God showing no more blame to us than if we were as pure and as holy as the angels are in heaven. And between these two oppositions my reason was greatly afflicted by my blindness.... (LT 50.)

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<sup>2</sup> JOHNSON, 1992, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> HAIGHT, Roger, *Jesus, symbol of God*, NY, Orbis, 1999, p. 372.

<sup>4</sup> Marguerite del Mastro gives an extended description of what she calls the "contradiction between the doctrine of the Church as she had learned it, and what she was now being shown", indicating five popular teachings of the time and Julian's paradoxical visionary responses, in DEL MASTRO, Marguerite, "Juliana of Norwich: Parable of the lord and servant -- radical orthodoxy", *Mystics quarterly* 14, 1988, pp. 84 - 86.

I suggest that what Julian, recollecting her experience, names as blindness is, in this case, *confusion in the meaning of her suffering and its relation to sin*, as the underlying experience of soteriological contrast.

As she watches Christ's blood flow and the body die before her she feels she is dying a new death. No longer are these the pains of ambivalence she was suffering on the verge of dying -- she is quite clear: they are not her pains; they are Christ's. This is not suffering that is conventional or compulsive, driven by the desire to control the outcome, or at least by the presumption to know what that outcome will be, and to avoid facing some more fundamental pain within of being totally powerless in the face of death and in some sense fearing the worst. Now she is feeling Christ's overwhelming pains in her own body. But given all she has interiorized about suffering, she might well be unclear. Despite all this agitation, fear and doubt she is in a condition of knowing her utter powerlessness: she has assented to the reality that she is physically dying. Nonetheless, at the same time she is experiencing a union with Christ as he approaches death, such that she sees God "present in all things" -- and by implication, in herself.

The contrast experience which comes into her awareness through the showings is between Julian's visceral sense of *comfort* and of being *loved and safe in her condition of fragility*, united with Christ in his suffering, and yet *confusion* in her "reason" as to how her suffering can be anything but a sign of her sinfulness, the blame for which hangs continually about her and which is what separates her from Christ, as she has been taught by Holy Church.

The real work of contrition here it would seem is a work not of self-judgment, but as Watkins has described it, of self-surrender.<sup>5</sup> It is a relinquishing of the "strong sense of self-will" which had led her to the perfectionist "belief that she knew what she needed for her own spiritual progress".<sup>6</sup> In other words, we might say that it is a surrender of who she thought she was, to enter into a relationship of shared suffering with an as yet unknown, uncontrollable yet *homely*, mirroring Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> WATKINS, Renée Neu, "Two women visionaries and death: Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich", *Numen: International review for the history of religions* 30, 1983. p. 197, fn. 11.

<sup>6</sup> PANICHELLI, Debra Scott, "Finding God in the memory: Julian and the loss of the visions", *The Downside review* 104, 1986, p. 307; as well as ABBOTT, Christopher, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and theology*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1999, p. 60.

### 3.0 Sebastian Moore's psychoanalytic soteriology

I propose that as Julian assents to enter into the visionary experience she undergoes *confusion in her suffering and its relation to sin*, as the underlying experience of soteriological contrast. This is akin to the confusion around indiscriminate suffering which Sebastian Moore describes as having rendered the suffering of Christ on the cross meaningless in our day. In one place he calls this the “cult of suffering”.<sup>7</sup> In the following paragraphs I will describe Moore's psychoanalytic soteriology, which, although a contemporary soteriological attempt to speak to the problem of the incredibility of the cross, is initially difficult to grasp perhaps because of how it differs from the ways in which the soteriological tradition has effectively taught generations of Christians to think of God, sin and salvation.

It is to this Christian heritage of misconceived suffering associated with the cross to which Sebastian Moore wants to apply his psychoanalytic soteriology. Moore understands that recovering the salvific significance of the story of Jesus must intersect with the pre-religious story of human consciousness. He locates this consciousness not in some transcendental reflection like Rahner, but in the contemporary postmodern psychoanalytic account of narcissism. For Moore, the one universal pre-religious human desire is for *self worth*, a desire, as McDargh puts it “to know ourselves as loved, valued and the source of delight to a beloved other”.<sup>8</sup> McDargh goes on to describe Moore's insight:

Moore proposes... that all human beings have a “pre-religious love affair with God” insofar as the question of the heart “do you love me?” is ultimately asked not just to the significant others that are the human child's first interpersonal universe, but to the horizon of all meanings and existence -- the origin and end of human becoming, in short, to God. With the postmodern psychoanalytic thinkers, Moore sees these questions not as infantile yearnings better outgrown, but as the persistent *cries de coeur* of every human being which are dealt with throughout life in the matrix of real relationships in the world as well as in the experientially real inner representational world in which we represent to ourselves in story and symbol the ultimate answers we live by. The encounter in prayer, sacrament and community with the living Christ is thereby given a psychological location and a reality that is not reductive, even though it is psychologically located.<sup>9</sup>

To the contemporary question “If Christ saves but we are still in our psychological distress, so what?” Moore would pose his own: “The central question for an understanding

<sup>7</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *The crucified Jesus is no stranger*, NY, Paulist, 1977, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> MCDARGH, John, “Theological uses of psychology: Retrospective and prospective”, *Horizons* 12, 1985, p. 262; MOORE, Sebastian, *The fire and the rose are one*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Press, 1980, 158 p.

<sup>9</sup> MCDARGH, pp. 262 - 263.

of our salvation in Jesus Christ is: What is the *death of ego* out of which we are brought into divine union?<sup>10</sup> Moore's project is an attempt to describe what he means by ego death, and why it is important for the appropriation of a credible soteriology.

Moore sees his as an "inverse soteriology", beginning with humankind (in particular Jesus' grieving disciples, after his death) and how we appropriate salvation, and then from there, moving to what it is that Jesus does which is salvific. He seeks to offer this in terms of a psychology that "grasps what bereavement *does* to the ego".<sup>11</sup>

This methodology, has been criticized for potentially confusing Christian spiritual growth with any psychological experience of grief. Moore's response is simply that without the experience of grief as an ego death, suffering remains confused. Moore's inverse soteriology has also been criticized for its assumption to know what was going on in the hearts and minds of the disciples, and for reducing the Resurrection to a subjective experience. Moore's methodology is clearly drawn from his own life of affective meditation on the gospels, and the meaningful prayer encounter which he has experienced through this practice.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting in the context of the present study to observe Moore's continuity with Julian in the practice of *lectio divina*. She too desired to experience, by means of imaginative meditation, what Jesus' closest disciples felt at his Passion. Julian writes:

I wished that I had been at that time with Mary Magdalen and with the others who were Christ's lovers, so that I might have seen with my own eyes our Lord's Passion which he suffered for me, so that I might have suffered with him as others did who loved him...." (ST 1.)

In this respect her methodology was not unlike Moore's (although she got more than she bargained for). As for the critique that it renders the Resurrection a subjective experience, the stress Winnicott and Homans lay on the third, transitional realm, between subjective and objective, as the locus for the creation of meaning of symbols, could be invoked to respond to this criticism. Interiority does not necessarily equate to private subjectivity.

Moore draws on Alice Miller's object relations theory as a basis for his "adequate intentionality-shaped psychology".<sup>13</sup> With relational psychoanalysis he holds that we are

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<sup>10</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *Jesus, liberator of desire*, NY, Crossroad, 1989, pp. ix - x.

<sup>11</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, "The forming and transforming of ego: An explanatory psychology of soteriology", *Loneragan workshop vol. 8*, 1990, pp. 180 - 182, emphasis in text.

<sup>12</sup> For the criticism see, for one example, DUFFY, Stephen, "Ego transcendence and transformation: The soteriology of Sebastian Moore", in *Jesus crucified and risen: Essays in spirituality and theology in honor of Dom Sebastian Moore*, eds. LOEWE, William and Vernon GREGSON, Collegeville MN, Michael Glazier, 1998, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> MOORE, 1990, p. 180.

born into dependence and that life is lived in dependence on others and ultimately on the mystery which is God. The idea that the self is an isolated monad is an illusion, he says.<sup>14</sup> However, oneness and separation are the two pulls that shape human infancy and they remain in tension until death.<sup>15</sup>

Moore understands desire as set into this relational context of trust. "Desire is solicitation by the mystery we are in".<sup>16</sup> By this he means that desire does not begin with us but with God. "Desire is not an emptiness needing to be filled but a fulness needing to be in relation".<sup>17</sup> To grow in desire is to grow in trustful relationship in the total mystery which is God. This vital desire only increases with satisfaction: "*One can always be more trustful, more connected, which means, more desirous*".<sup>18</sup>

The way we experience desire, however, changes. He seeks an adequate psychology to account for how we experience changes in the way we feel situated in the "total mystery", i.e., in our relation with God.

In fact he says, the important changes in our experience of desire come through growth crises.

The growth crises of our life will bring about changes in our desire. Between the desire of the infant for the glory of the maternal embrace and the desire of a Gandhi to restore the self love of a people, and at the limit, the desire of Jesus for a baptism that will send fire through the earth, there lie many growth crises. The process is... the liberation of desire.<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to say that the crises of life, such as falling in love, undergoing conversion, suffering bereavement, etc., "all present the painful and bewildering demand that the person die to the existing ego-form and into a new interaction of the two great constitutive forces, of oneness and separateness".<sup>20</sup> Tensions at every point of life crisis are resolved through a death to the current ego-consciousness and birth of a new, "mutually enhanced, mutually advanced" balance between oneness and separation.<sup>21</sup> This process of transformation of ego through life crises is what Moore calls the process of the liberation of desire.

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<sup>14</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 9

<sup>15</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> MOORE, 1990, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 11, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> MOORE, 1989, pp. 12 - 13.

<sup>20</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> MOORE, 1989, pp. 15 - 16.

Before proceeding, it is essential to be clear about what I understand Moore's concept of dying to ego to mean and not to mean. Johnson says that in the classical theological understanding of dying to self developed by men, this was understood as a decentring of the prideful self who asserted itself over others.

But the situation is quite different when this language is applied to persons already relegated to the margins of significance and excluded from the exercise of self-definition. For such persons, language of conversion as loss of self, turning from *amor sui*, functions in an ideological way to rob them of power, maintaining them in a subordinate position to the benefit of those who rule.

[W]omen's primordial temptation is not to pride and self-assertion but rather to the lack of it, to diffuseness of personal center, overdependence on others for self-identity, drifting and fear of recognizing one's own competence.... In this situation grace comes... not as the call to loss of self but as empowerment toward discovery of self and affirmation of one's strength, giftedness and responsibility.<sup>22</sup>

I believe Sebastian Moore would agree wholeheartedly with this description of the situation of women. What does need to be retained, however, is what Johnson later refers to as "loss of self-identity [which] is also a loss of the experience of God".<sup>23</sup> She uses this negative way to describe what is going on when women begin the conversion experience of discovering and affirming a truer centre of selfhood, which simultaneously transforms the experience of who God is too. It is this loss of self-identity (as it has been known) as loss of the experience of God (as that has been known) which I mean to correlate with Moore's notion of ego death, as "a death to the current ego-consciousness and birth of a new, 'mutually enhanced, mutually advanced' balance between oneness and separation".

### 3.1 Sin as resistance to ego death

What is sin for Moore? Moore focuses on the resistance we have to this lifelong process of dying to ego-consciousness. "We fear becoming someone we do not as yet know".<sup>24</sup> We fear the eruption of the "oceanic" in each life crisis of desire as a challenge to the ego-consciousness to which we have become accustomed and in which we have experienced the trust relationship. (Perhaps for women or others who have suffered neglect, it could better be said that we fear the spectre of fragmentation posed by the renegotiation of "separation" in each life crisis as well?) It is precisely at such times that the "mystery appears thoroughly untrustworthy, capricious, and cruel".<sup>25</sup> It is only when we

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<sup>22</sup> JOHNSON, 1992, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> JOHNSON, 1992, p. 65, drawing on Karl Rahner.

<sup>24</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 20.

somehow recognize that the existing trust relationship doesn't work anymore that we are changed:

The growth crisis is not undergone unless we seem to be swallowed up by the oceanic. How this is not our destruction but on the contrary the threshold of our destined life, is the most mysterious thing in the finite's dialogue with the infinite. It is the experience of rebirth out of death.<sup>26</sup>

(Again, for women could that experience seem initially more like being fragmented by overwhelming separation?) Such deaths of ego become the condition of our development.<sup>27</sup>

Before proceeding to describe further why it is that humankind resists undergoing such ego deaths, I would make an observation. Moore's understanding of humankind as essentially relational, dependent on and drawn by desire into a trusting relationship with the mystery that is God, stands against the effective history of the satisfaction theory of salvation, which as Johnson has observed, "has fostered the idea of an angry God who needs to be recompensed by the bloody death of his son".<sup>28</sup>

That Julian had absorbed this effective history is clear in her pre-visionary, perfectionist tendency to blame God that sin had not been prevented from ever coming into the world. (ST 13.) It is also implicit as a fear of God's wrath as she describes this later in her marvelling at its absence in her showings. (LT 48, 49.)

### 3.2 Moore's psychoanalytic parable of original sin

For Moore as we saw, the one universal pre-religious human desire is for *self worth*. Moore likewise reconceives what sin looks like: "sin is self-hatred".<sup>29</sup> Sin is understood as resistance to undergoing the ego deaths which life presents us. Why is it that some people do not grow, do not face the fear of ego deaths? Reasons such as personal negligence or perversity are not adequate he says. Moore writes that "Christian tradition has a name for the spiritual inertia that is woven into the human condition over and above personal sin: *original sin*".<sup>30</sup> He turns again to psychoanalytic theory for a description of original sin as the "systemic societal repression in people of the 'true self':

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<sup>26</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> JOHNSON, 1994, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> MOORE, 1977, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 25.



the true self that does trust life, that does want to grow, that does ‘desire to desire more’”.<sup>31</sup>

Moore draws on Alice Miller’s work for a relational psychoanalytic theory of mirroring very akin to that of Winnicott, to give a theological account for original sin. He describes the effects of what can go wrong in the infant’s early experience of mirroring. Whereas the child seeks to see and enjoy *herself* in the mother-mirror, under those circumstances of chronically inadequate mirroring the child rather is made to feel shame, and so to abandon the important maturation in narcissism and object relations of negotiating that true sense of self.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly Moore describes what might more typically be a little boy’s response to the mother, insofar as typically the boy tends to identify himself as autonomous, separate from the mother:<sup>33</sup>

The infant is drawn into oneness with the mother through seeing *itself* in the mother, and this fascination is held in balance by the growing sense of its separate existence.... The sense of separateness allows the infant to enjoy himself in the mother-mirror without getting lost in it -- to enjoy *himself* there. Now if the mother won’t let him *be* separate but holds him to her *as a mirror to herself*, then he is not free to enjoy himself in her. Thus he learns to crush the self in which he should delight, to crush it not only in himself but in the people he meets in later life.<sup>34</sup>

If the feminine side of narcissistic dysfunction is attended to, the picture perhaps looks different, but arrives at the same self-sabotaging end. Insofar as the little girl (whose need for relationality makes her separation from the mother more attenuated) needs to see herself in the mother-mirror, but is neglected and cannot see or enjoy herself there, the dynamic moves in a different direction, that of getting lost in the unthinkable anxiety of experiencing fragmenting separateness too soon, before ever having enjoyed the oneness. So she crushes the self in which she should delight, and crushes it in others, in her very hunger for the relational oneness she never enjoyed.

The effect is that the child never enters fully into the mirror phase, and so cannot get beyond it. Moore sees this permanence of what he calls “early ego” (akin to Kohut’s archaic prestructures) as the social norm in our culture. Thus the arrest at the early ego phase makes the long journey of death and transformation of ego seem quite unreal. Moore

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<sup>31</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> See CHODOROW, Nancy, *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, 263 p.

<sup>34</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 27.

sees that this “system of deprivation” is a societal systemic, not merely an individual problem and describes the consequences of this resistance as original sin.<sup>35</sup>

Moore turns to Jesus and the effects of his death on the entry of his disciples into bereavement as reversing the “millennially inherited resistance to this transformation”.<sup>36</sup> Moore sees that what the Christian fact (Jesus’ gift of his true self for the life of the world through a lifelong practice of death to ego) does to the familial and social repression of the true self is

(a) to reveal the end and meaning of human transformation by effecting it in Jesus for his disciples, (b) thus to restore the transformative dimension to its normative status after it has been virtually eclipsed by sin, and (c) swallow up sin in transformation.<sup>37</sup>

Moore’s project is to sort out confusion in Christianity’s customary indiscriminacy concerning suffering, and to put meaning back into Jesus’ life, death on a cross and Resurrection. In this project he distinguishes between dying to ego and dying to sin. Significantly Moore argues that only Jesus died to ego only, and that his whole life is an example of transformation, *the* example for Christians of liberated desire trusting in the mystery of God. *Dying to sin is what Moore calls the healing of this resistance to ego death, the healing of the early ego.* “The difference between sin and the reluctance we experience in face of a challenge to grow is that sin systematically prevents the challenge from presenting itself”.<sup>38</sup> In other words, feeling fear or dread of the challenge to mature in self-love is not in itself sinful. The repression of feeling the dread, the refusal to recognize that there is a challenge, is. “Finitude, creaturehood, is not sin”, says Moore, and I would add: though from the perspective of sin it is finitude and creaturehood -- i.e., dependency -- which *look* sinful. It is precisely the consciousness of human fear, dread, etc. which is unthinkable and incapable of being felt from the perspective of sin. Sin is resisting to feel that fear.

For Moore, affective non-defensiveness is an essential category for doing theology. Where this is not the case in theology, Moore argues that there are customary distortions made in our theological concepts of sin and suffering. “The muddle is to associate *all*

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<sup>35</sup> MOORE, 1989, pp. 28 - 29.

<sup>36</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 32.

suffering, suffering as such, with sin, and to hold onto this connection even in the case of Jesus by the subterfuge of saying that he suffers *our sin*".<sup>39</sup>

Moore describes the difference in kind of suffering which is undergone in dying to ego, in entering the transformative process into which love invites:

The truth is that suffering inheres in finitude in the presence of the infinite, and that Jesus undergoes *this* suffering which we, because of sin, are *unable* to undergo until we see our true self and its proper suffering in him.... Jesus, sufferer of the infinite, suffers empathically with that in us which, because of sin, is unable to suffer and it is the awareness of being suffered-with where sin prevents us from suffering that causes sin to fall away.<sup>40</sup>

Moore is insistent that Jesus' life was one that was in a continual process of dying to ego into fuller life, and that our appropriation of Jesus' creative, transformative suffering is the way to become "progressively more in solidarity with others and alive to the nerve of pain, desire, and hope, that runs through us all".<sup>41</sup> This, in effect, is the fruit of ego death, a movement out of self-preoccupation toward a greater sense of solidarity, communion with humankind in its various conditions.

This kind of suffering is very different from the kind of suffering which is perpetuated by repressing occasions for ego deaths. The latter translates into the complacency with the ego/society as it is which leads to depersonalized, systemic distortions such as racism, sexism, etc.<sup>42</sup> From this we can see that confusion in suffering does not lead to real solidarity, but simply perpetuates a sense of self-preoccupation with personal (over)responsibility and a sense of isolation.

The first chapter of the next diptych will explore in kohutian terms Julian's struggle to render her confusion around suffering intelligible in light of the trust which she experiences with the Christ of her showings and to reform her understanding about what sin is for her in a non-defensive way. In the soteriological correlation part of that diptych I will explore with help from Cynthia Crysdale what Julian might have to offer to the question of what sin looks like from the underside of history, that is, as it is experienced by those whose condition of dependency could be said to render them susceptible to violation of trust. Exploring the correlation Crysdale asks what personal responsibility would look like from the perspective of such suffering? Having undertaken the journey of ego deaths,

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<sup>39</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 35, emphasis in text.

<sup>40</sup> MOORE, 1989, pp. 35 - 36, emphasis in text.

<sup>41</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 33.

how, from that perspective, would this journey bear fruit in greater solidarity with humankind?

In the present context, I simply want to draw a correlation between Moore's distinction between these two kinds of suffering, and what I perceive to be at work in Julian's confusion around her experience of suffering as she assented to enter into the visionary experience.

#### 4.0 Suffering death of ego in Julian

The muddle in religious thinking about suffering as Moore describes it has resulted as we have seen in unredemptive suffering. In the case of women, this has perpetuated women's sense of being responsible for others' suffering, and supremely, for Jesus' suffering and God's wrath, the effect of which is a sense of unmitigated burden of sinfulness. It is the confusion inherent in this vicious circle which Julian, I suggest, became aware of when, by contrast, her showings revealed not a confirmation of what she had been taught by Holy Church, but a disconfirmation, in the form of that strange, disorientingly painful yet *homely* comfort, as she entered into an active encounter with the Jesus of her showings.

Using the way Moore describes the kind of suffering which Jesus undergoes, and which humankind undergoes when we begin to see our true self in Jesus, how might we see this in Julian's experience? I repeat Moore: "Jesus, sufferer of the infinite, suffers empathically with that in us which, because of sin, is unable to suffer and it is the awareness of being suffered-with where sin prevents us from suffering that causes sin to fall away".

Using Moore's language, what was the pre-visionary Julian unable, because of sin, to suffer? It seems that prior to her assent to enter into the mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings she had been unable to suffer two things: first, she had been unable to suffer the acceptance of her powerlessness over imminent physical death (a refusal to accept her creaturely limitedness or feel the fear of damnation she had internalized); second, she had not been able to suffer the disorienting pain of receiving comfort in union with Christ empathically suffering with her.

First, as we saw in the early shifts from resistance to assent to enter the visionary realm, Julian seems to be led to feel her symptoms of death more keenly. There is a relinquishing of a fundamental ambivalence toward death in those first shifts. It is possible to see in her self-preoccupied ambivalence what Moore would call an unliberated desire to trust, a thwarting of her experience of knowing herself to be "solicited by the mystery" she is in. The shift to relinquishing that ambivalence and assenting to die brings on a shift into

feeling more keenly the death she has resisted. Perhaps Moore would say that in this instance Jesus suffers empathically with that *assent to die* in Julian, which she has not been able to suffer heretofore. But this interior assent to die brings on more than she anticipated, as the symptoms of dying then shift off into a condition of comfort. The resistance is swallowed up.

Second, if we continue to use Moore's language, Jesus suffers empathically with that *comfort* in Julian. Julian becomes aware in ST 10 that it is no longer her own pain, but only Christ's pain in her that she is feeling. So far in her ascetical training, she has practised acts of compassion in order to have (manufacture?) *mynd* and feeling of Christ. But now, it is Christ who is suffering in her. It is Christ's suffering-with, or compassion, causing this disorienting painful comfort in her which she heretofore has never known, which causes the sin (in Moore's understanding of sin as that which resists experiencing ego death) to fall away, with the result that she begins to feel what she has been unable to feel until now. She is confused, but having become conscious of the difference in this shared suffering with Christ which is also a strange comfort, it would seem she cannot go back.

I propose that this is Julian's first assent to undergo an ego death, as Moore has described it, a death to the false self which had grown up in the absence of a mirroring (m)Other. If this is so, then what Julian will see mirrored in Christ will be a first sight of her true self assenting to be solicited by the mystery, assenting to trust in Christ whom she has desired, yet never before been enabled to enjoy, never before seized within. And if this is the case, the pattern we see here will be repeated, as Julian becomes more and more acquainted with the interior shifts and assents which the practice of dying to ego, the liberation of desire enables. And we will see Julian become more astute in discerning what constitutes resistance to this liberation.

Until this moment of assent or surrender to the visionary realm, Julian, I would propose, has not experienced or "seen" the contrast between the suffering that is a "*consequence of union with God*" as distinct from suffering that was understood as a "means to it".<sup>43</sup> This new, disorienting visionary world, which is opening to her as she assents to surrender her conventional picture of the outcome of religious means of devotion, brings the contrast into focus.

But having had this awakening to confusion, this consciousness raising as to her blindness or inability to experience *homely* comfort in relation to Christ, Julian understands

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<sup>43</sup> CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, p. 124.

that this is a problem not just of a personal order, but for all her *even* Christians. If God does not want God's people to be bowed down in some compulsion to be working at suffering endlessly and non-redemptively, then this is something people need to know. Indeed, she says, God wants us to know it. And from very early on in the Short Text (although this will become more pervasive in the Long Text) she tells the reader she believes she has had this showing for the sake of others:

...I counsel you... that ... you contemplate [behold] God, who out of his courteous love and his endless goodness was willing to show this vision generally, to the comfort of us all. And you who hear and see this vision and this teaching, which is from Jesus Christ for the edification of your souls, it is God's will and my wish that you accept it with as much joy and delight as if Jesus had shown it to you as he did to me.... But it is truly love which moves me to tell it to you, for I want God to be known and my fellow Christians to prosper, as I hope to prosper myself by hating sin more and loving God more. But because I am a woman, ought I therefore to believe that I should not tell you of the goodness of God, when I saw at that same time that it is his will that it be known? (ST 6.)

### 5.0 "What is sin?"

The effect of Julian's experience of contrast is confusion in suffering. I said in the last chapter that while beholding the crucifix Julian's bodily sight began to teach her to make a distinction in her own feelings between the kenotic state of intense bodily suffering of a powerless condition *shared in Christ*, and the spiritual pain of living in isolation, ambivalence and despair which for Julian has its own bodily feelings. Thus seeing bodily, in a condition of fusion with the crucifix, became an organ of knowledge for Julian. But this seeing with her body does not cohere with what she has been taught.

Julian focuses her confusion in her preoccupation with sin, in the disorienting fact that she does not see sin revealed to her in the showings. Julian thought she knew what sin was. She knew what the Church taught was sin and what to do about it. But underlying that was a tacit understanding that there was really nothing that could be done about sin; that God was fundamentally absent from all things. Then in her vision of God in a point, she says that

in my understanding and by this vision I saw that he is present in all things. I contemplated it carefully, knowing and perceiving through it that he does everything which is done. I marvelled at this vision with a gentle fear, and I thought: What is sin? For I saw truly that God does everything, however small it may be, and that nothing is done by chance, but it is of the endless providence of God's wisdom. Therefore I was compelled to admit that everything which is done is done well, and I was certain that God does no sin. Therefore it seemed to me that sin is nothing, for in all this sin was not shown to me. And I did not wish to go on feeling surprise at this, but I contemplated our Lord and waited for what he would show me. (ST 8.)

Perhaps there is a correlation to be made here with Sebastian Moore's negative understanding of sin as that which prevents us from suffering the challenge of dying to ego with which life confronts us, prevents us from being empathically suffered-with by Jesus. For Julian, the question of what is sin becomes the question which now needs intelligibility. The idea that sin is nothing would have been familiar to her in the Augustinian tradition. But what the Church had effectively taught her about sin, and what she had internalized about sin, suggests she anticipated seeing herself as blameful, as having caused Christ's suffering. (LT 50.) I propose that Julian's central problem, clearly articulated already in the Short Text, is her agonized experience of soteriological crisis, that what she had been taught to believe about sin and her accessibility to salvation in Christ was not believable -- at the point at which she needed most to believe it. Instead, she is plagued with a sense of ambivalence and isolation. But what brought this to a head was that it did not cohere with what the suffering Christ of her showings would teach her. Again, the contrast arises in light of what her showings have disconfirmed. What, then, is sin?

At one level, blindness is Julian's acknowledgement of resistance to seeing and understanding, with the eye or bodily feelings, what her showings would reveal to her. This blindness could be what Moore and the psychoanalytic tradition call defensiveness. I am suggesting that Julian's word "blindness" describes, at a more fundamental level however, her experience of soteriological contrast, this confusion around the meaning of her suffering and its relation to sin. The next diptych will turn to Julian's search for the intelligibility of sin and human responsibility in view of the meaning which her visionary experience brings to light concerning her human condition.

**DIPTYCH 2**



## CHAPTER 9

### DIPTYCH 2.1      EMPATHY AND EXPOSURE

#### 1.0 Introduction

The first chapter in this second diptych will explore with Kohut how Julian's texts give signs of her shift from the first phase into the second therapeutic phase in the maturation of mirroring needs, that is, of "working through" the disillusionment of the archaic narcissistic prestructures. This exploration will draw primarily from her Short Text but will also examine the Long Text's reworking of material in the Short Text, as her appropriation of this shift occurs over time. It will be for the third diptych to explore the further maturation of her mirroring need as that is witnessed in her *exemplum* of a lord and a servant, contained only in the Long Text.

In the following pages I will draw out Julian's working through of attitudes toward herself and her relationship with God and humankind as this is revealed and developed in her probing of the question of sin and its relation to God and selfhood in the showings.

It is through the evolution of her showings that the problem of sin is resolved for Julian. Bradley has observed, in an article which will be examined more closely in the next chapter of this diptych, that mirroring images in Julian and other fourteenth century English mystics serve the function of articulating "the maturing process within the mystical life."<sup>1</sup> Specifically, I propose to show how the maturation of the mirroring function in the Julian's showings allows a transformation in her attitudes toward herself and God and a reconceiving of what sin is in light of this. I hold that the locus for this maturation is in the function which her mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings plays. This visionary Christ thus assumes the missed parental function of the mirroring other which allows for maturation to take place.

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<sup>1</sup>BRADLEY, Ritamary, "The speculum image in medieval mystical writers", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer Press, 1984, p. 23. See also ABRAMS, M. H., *The mirror and the lamp*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953, 406 p., who distinguishes the medieval symbol for consciousness, that is, the mirror, from the modern symbol, the lamp; and MEDCALF, Stephen, "Medieval psychology and medieval mystics", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed GLASSCOE, Marion, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1980, pp. 120 - 155.

In this chapter I identify three areas which are indicators of this maturation in Julian's showings. These areas could be described as essentially movement responses: deep bodily feelings, eye contact and images of bodily enclosure.

The chapter also looks at what Julian calls the "pain of self-knowledge", and her identification of two "secret" sins, and how this gives her better understanding of herself and something of an answer to her initial conundrum about sin. Julian's double anthropology is studied in these terms.

Since these themes are interrelated I will follow largely the order in which Julian presents her visions both in their sequence and in the differences she records between the Short and the Long Text. In so doing, I hope the organic connections will be more clearly maintained. The parallels with Kohut's self psychology will be made throughout the text.

## **2.0 A brief review of the second of the three phases of mirroring transference in Kohut**

Kohut describes the process of maturation in the therapeutic context as having three distinct phases. Once resistance is overcome and the mirror transference is established, the second phase involves *working through* the narcissistic rage and disillusionment which emerge out of the empathically presented "confrontation with reality". It is this working through process which the present chapter will examine. Gradually, through this confrontation, the client comes to recognize the archaic prestructures or the self-fragments which manifest as grandiose omnipotence and searing shame in the client's behaviour. This phase is characterized as a working through the narcissistic disillusionment with regard to what constitutes the true, or authentic sense of self. In this phase, Kohut says that *transmuting internalization of the function of the mirroring mother* weakens the client's propensity to react to frustration alternately with grandiose vanity or searing shame, and interiorizes the capacity for soothing, affect regulation and perduring self acceptance and self esteem.<sup>2</sup> Gradually through transmuted internalizations of the analyst's empathic mirroring, the individual can recognize what this confrontation has exposed in herself and begin to lay down new self structures in the reality ego which are at once more realistic, cohesive and satisfying. In effect, what is first experienced as "out there" comes, by transmuted internalizations, to be experienced as "in here". Kohut's analysis of the maturation of this mirroring function has been refined in more recent theory as the

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<sup>2</sup>KOHUT, Heinz, *The analysis of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1971, p. 199; and *The restoration of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1977, p. 53.

individual's capacity for mentalized affectivity, that is, for identifying and interpreting subjective affect states with greater realism and coherence.<sup>3</sup>

Recall Kohut's description of the *experience* of growth in self-understanding in the client which can occur through the regulated discomfort experienced in the process of transmuting internalization:

The patient will gradually realize that the self-experience in the horizontally split sector of his personality -- *a self-experience of being empty and deprived* which, although underemphasized, has always been present and conscious-- *constitutes his authentic self*, and that the up to now predominant self-experience in the non-dichotomized sector--the self-experience of overt grandiosity and arrogance--did not emanate from an independent self but from a self that was an appendage to the self of his mother.<sup>4</sup>

Grandiosity and shame are linked together as the two emotional expressions of the same fragmentation of self. As the client grows in tolerating and reinterpreting the experience of emptiness, that is of neither grandiosity nor shame, she makes room for the recognition and acceptance by the reality ego of appropriate mirroring and idealizing needs within the authentic self.<sup>5</sup> The archaic narcissist prestructures of grandiosity and shame are exposed, in the presence of the empathic other, such that a new, more cohesive sense of self may come to be experienced, albeit at first in feelings of deprivation and emptiness.

As new research in narcissism has shown, narcissism in women is made more complex, and potentially neglected, by the fact of the systemic effects of patriarchy.<sup>6</sup> This study will be alert to recognizing that the archaic prestructural symptoms of "grandiosity" and "shame" may reveal themselves in different -- and perhaps reverse -- proportions and colours in women, and in Julian in particular. As Rossiter has shown, narcissism in

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<sup>3</sup>Mentalized affectivity is defined as

a mature capacity for the regulation of affect and denotes the capacity to discover the subjective meanings of one's own affect states. Mentalized affectivity lies, we suggest, at the core of the psychotherapeutic enterprise. It represents the experiential understanding of one's feelings in a way that extends beyond intellectual understanding. It is in this realm that we encounter resistances and defenses, not just against specific emotional experiences, but against entire modes of psychological functioning.... Thus we can misunderstand what we feel, thinking that we feel one thing while truly feeling another emotion. Moreover, it is even possible that we can deprive ourselves of the entire experiential world of emotional richness.

FONAGY, Peter, György GERGELY, Elliot JURIST and Mary TARGET, *Affect regulation, mentalization and the development of the self*, NY, Other Press, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>KOHUT, 1977, pp. 210 - 211.

<sup>5</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> ROSSITER, Stanford Kent, *Narcissism and codependency*, Ph.D. thesis, The Wright Institute, 2004, p. 71.

women is more correctly described by the symptoms associated with codependency , specifically in a denial of womens' own needs and desire. He writes

Unlike the boy, who develops identity through his denial of the other [the mother], the girl must achieve the capacity for self-abnegation in order to avoid loss of the paramount connection with the mother. The girl's tendency to deny her own needs and desires can be exaggerated by caretaking deficits, and codependency may be a direct result of these deficits. An exaggerated denial of the other is a feature of the narcissist, while exaggerated self-denial is a feature of the codependent.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.0 Summary of Julian's initial transitional process

I argued earlier that we can see in Julian's pre-visionary history a desire mixed with resistance to participating in uncontrolled, imaginative, affective meditation. This provides the background for the significance of her assent to enter into the visionary experience of the showings. This entry into the visionary transitional realm is marked by deep bodily feelings, which merge with her vision to become for her a kinaesthetic "organ of knowledge". I suggested that Julian's astonishing increase and then removal of pain, as the crucifix is placed before her, is a kind of parallel therapeutic situation to that of the infant's needs for bodily care bringing her to the brink of unthinkable anxiety, coupled with the intervention of the mother who is able to put herself in the baby's place to respond to the baby's bodily needs *at the right time*. Her bodily sight of the crucified is characterized by the pre-oedipal themes of seeing and feeling with the body, and also underlines the presence of movement responses akin to what Homans has described as deep bodily feelings and a readiness to engage fantasy activity and narrative in the work of mourning. Bauerschmidt confirmed (without the help of object relations theory) that Julian's bodily sight of the crucifix is both an object of sight and a mode of seeing with the body.

I suggested that Julian's entry into the mirroring transference is in merged or fused images of bodily suffering with Christ in his suffering. The vivid images of Christ's head and body alternately flowing with endless blood and then drying to a point of endlessly dying may hint at a raw, first expression of alternating flooded feelings of bliss-in-suffering and empty, deprived feelings of abandonment, which have yet to be understood by Julian. These raw, "iconic" images of the Passion, I suggested, are perhaps Julian's first visually mirrored experience of archaic false self fragments (sinless and grandiose vs all sinful and despairing) which are in the process of undergoing grief, or a dying to ego after Sebastian Moore. The pain she suffers which becomes Christ's pains is like no suffering of contrition for sin which she has ever known. It is both more painful that

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<sup>7</sup> ROSSITER, 2004, p. 70.

anything Julian has known and yet paradoxically comforting, since she is present to and sharing in Christ's own suffering. It was this that she found so unsettling and yet comforting. I propose that this is a further instance of the face of the crucifix supplying the therapeutic mirroring presence she most needed in that instant.

### 3.1 Sin and selfhood

As we saw in the last diptych Julian expressed her confusion or disorientation at this paradox as a preoccupation with "sin" which doesn't make sense, in light of the deeply felt compassion she is experiencing with Christ's own suffering. Julian asks the Lord early on in her third revelation "What is sin?" (ST 8, LT 11.) The context for this question is her surprise and perplexity in not seeing sin in her first showings. There, where she fully expected to see something, she sees nothing. Admittedly, she knows that in Augustinian theology, sin has no being. So why does this perplex her then? In effect, I suggest she fully expected to see sin as defining her selfhood. But she is shown *nothing* in this regard. When she does not see sin, there is a profound perplexity because in effect she does not see *herself*, at least what she has tacitly understood to be herself until this point, as I see it. I suggest that this is one strong indication that Julian experienced her authentic self first of all as empty and deprived in Kohut's terms, both exposed and affirmed in the sight of the compassionate other. As well as correlating with Kohut, Julian's description of the nothingness of sin seems to describe well what Sebastian Moore is talking about as the initial experience of dying to sin, as assenting to experience that which sin has prevented us from experiencing, which inaugurates a healing of the human pattern of resistance to ego death.

### 3.2 The exposure of fragmented feelings

It is significant that the right understanding of what is (and what is not) sin is so important for Julian, for it is a reflection of her deepest concerns and fears concerning human nature as well as the nature of God's relationship toward her, toward humankind and human destiny. It therefore affects how she is to understand her identity in these visions.

Julian had strong cultural warrant for her early belief in a God who judged and condemned humankind. It was after all a common late medieval belief that *salvandum paucitas, damnandorum multitudo*, "few are saved, many are damned".<sup>8</sup> But it is a

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<sup>8</sup> TUCHMAN, Barbara, *A distant mirror: The calamitous 14th century*, NY, Ballantine, 1978, p. 34.

common experience for people nowadays, too, to hold an incredible, because abusive, image of God, even when these same people would claim not to believe in God.<sup>9</sup> As Bradley puts it

Julian understands how difficult it is to believe that God works by mercy and grace, without wrath. Often we insist on clinging to a punishing image of God: as if all sorrow that enters our life is God's chastening hand.<sup>10</sup>

This, it seems, was her untested assumption when in the seventh showing she encounters her first experience of the revelation of feelings of spiritual delight -- and then their withdrawal. She was thrilled to hear Christ thank her for her service, and was filled with a supreme spiritual delight.

In this delight I was filled full of everlasting surety, and I was powerfully secured without any fear. This sensation was so welcome and so dear to me that I was at peace, at ease and at rest, so that there was nothing upon earth which could have afflicted me.

This lasted only for a time, and then I was changed and abandoned to myself, oppressed and weary of myself and ruing [regretting] my life, so that I hardly had the patience to go on living. I felt that there was no ease or comfort for me except faith, hope and love, and truly I felt very little of this. (ST 9; LT 15.)

Julian is struck that "in this time I committed no sin for which I ought to have been left to myself, [LT for it was so sudden]". (ST 9; LT 15.) Her initial understanding of sin, it appears, is that it is the immediate cause of desolate feelings of abandonment to oneself.<sup>11</sup>

The revelation continues. God gives her again the spiritual comfort, rest, delight and security for her soul--and then again removes it, leaving her feeling abandoned once more.

And then again I felt the pain, and then afterwards the delight and the joy, *now the one and now the other*, again and again, I suppose about twenty times. And in the time of joy I could have said with St Paul: Nothing shall separate me from the love

<sup>9</sup> See RIZZUTO, Ana-Maria, *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 177 - 211, whose study of adults' images of God as "a special transitional object" has spawned a whole field of research.

<sup>10</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamary, *Julian's way*, London, Harper Collins, 1992, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Earlier I noted that it was a customary belief in the late middle ages that sin and compunction for sin both caused suffering. Nowadays we tend to go to the other extreme to avoid sin and so tend to be less familiar with the dynamics of the suffering it produces. Mary Coelho makes a fascinating observation about how as beginners in the spiritual life we tend to assume unconsciously that we could earn a right relationship with God by our activity. She relates this to simple psychological behaviourism:

Behavioural psychologists have done experiments with hungry pigeons given corn at random intervals. The pigeon, in order to try to make the corn come more often, tries to do just what it was doing before the last corn arrived in case that activity had caused the corn to come.

COELHO, Mary, "Understanding consolation and desolation," *Review for religious* 44, 1, 1985. p. 63. Presumably the pigeon also tries to avoid doing what it was doing just before the corn stopped coming?

of Christ; and in the pain I could have said with St Peter: Lord, save me, I am perishing. (ST 9; LT 15.)

I suggest it is important to stress the significance of this drastic experience of rapidly alternating feelings of consolation and desolation Julian has in this showing. What Julian feels as consolation is believed initially to be the bliss of union in the presence of Christ; what she feels as desolation is believed initially to be the hell of separation in the absence of Christ. I am reminded again of Michel Ledoux's clinical comparisons of women mystics and clients who experience archaic merged or fused mirroring relations with the mother. Speaking of a client he says, "[n]e pouvant 'intérieuriser' l'analyste et emportant en elle une image de lui, elle vivait chaque séparation comme définitive et irrémédiable".<sup>12</sup> Absence of the mother is intolerable, yet the relationship is experienced as a "relation fusionnelle vécue dans le manque et l'absence". Ledoux continues:

Or, si cette absence est vécue par les mystiques dans le registre fusionnel, on ne s'étonnera pas d'y trouver l'insupportable souffrance de l'Absence et les moyens de la pallier dans la négation de l'espace et du temps qui spécifient cette relation: relation sans intermédiaire. Relation dans l'actuel de la présence. Refus de l'attente et de la médiation du souvenir.<sup>13</sup>

These alternating feelings are not at this point felt simultaneously, nor does Julian speak anywhere prior to this in the showings of any understanding of their having a meaning in relationship to one another, except as mutually exclusive opposites. It suggests that Julian had known these extremes in her pre-visionary past, certainly the (probably extended) experience of absence, and from this perspective it is possible that what I have called her religious aspirations were fueled by the desire for the thrill of bliss, understood then by Julian as "longing for God" or contemplative union.

Note also the similarity of this description to that observed by Kohut of narcissistic personalities as *oscillating* in presenting feelings between unbridled ambition/grandiosity and searing shame/sense of failure.<sup>14</sup> In the fragmented experience of these two extremes, the narcissistically wounded personality also does not see them as at all related to one another, and so cannot grasp that they might have any meaning apart from what they each feel like.

But Julian does come to recognize that her showings are teaching her to see herself in a new way, and here to see these two extreme feeling states in greater integration. From

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<sup>12</sup> LEDOUX, Michel, "La relation d'absence", in "Résurgences et dérivés de la mystique", *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 20, 1980, p. 239.

<sup>13</sup> LEDOUX, 1980, p. 243.

<sup>14</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 192

this experience Julian learns something which she will learn again and again in more areas of her spiritual life:

This vision was shown to teach me to understand that some souls profit by experiencing this, to be comforted at one time, and at another to fail and to be left to themselves. God wishes us to know that he keeps us safe *all the time*, in sorrow and in joy; and sometimes a man is left to himself for the profit of his soul, although his sin is not always the cause.... (ST 9; LT 15.)

The fact that this is such a significant learning for her however is, I suggest, strong evidence that the earlier, fragmented feelings and the meanings she took from them had dominated her usual experience. The key element in this learning I suggest is the continued merged mirroring function of the suffering Christ of her showings (keeping her safe all the time) while this is happening.

#### **4.0 Eye contact: The change of *chere***

In the eighth revelation as she attends to the vision of the crucifix, Julian's personal, physical pain is replaced with a feeling of Christ's own sufferings enclosing the suffering of all humankind. "In all this time that Christ was present to me, I felt no pain except for Christ's pains..." (ST 10.) This was the fulfilment of her prayer, to have *mynd* or recollection and feeling of Christ's own Passion. (ST 1; LT 2.) It is here in the Short Text only that Julian describes her mother attempting to close her eyes, presuming her already dead. Julian resists this: "I did not want to be hindered from seeing, because of my love for Christ". (ST 10.)

But then she continues: "At this time I wanted to look away from the cross but I did not dare, for I knew that whilst I contemplated the cross I was secure and safe". (ST 10; LT 19.) If, as Kohut would hold, the tendency is typically to see the image of God as a distant paternal image, then an idealizing transference with Christ would remain archaic and shamefilled. Julian's new identification of her suffering in Christ's Passion is, however, of a different order of experience. Her bodily resonance with the crucified Jesus "all the time that Christ was present to me" still has a fusional quality. But here, in her first reception of that filling of her body with Christ's own pain, she reacted ambivalently, both regretting that she'd asked for it -- "I thought: is there any pain in hell like this pain?" -- and at the same time in her understanding, receiving the confirmation -- "Hell is a different pain, for in it there is despair". (ST 10; LT16.)

Significantly, Julian describes that a suggestion came to her "seemingly said in a friendly manner...Look up to heaven to his Father". (LT19, cf ST10.) She recognizes that she must make a choice. "I saw clearly by the faith which I felt that there was nothing between the cross and heaven which could have grieved me, and that I must either look up



or else answer". It is true that this may reflect an influence of apophatic ascent mysticism in England, such as is represented by the author of the *Cloud of unknowing*, although, as noted by Watson, this is not a significant element in anchoritic spirituality. Rather, one of the objectives of anchoritic spirituality is that it does *not* involve a mystical ascent because in the context of the anchorhold the spiritual ascesis of the anchoress is not to *escape* the "world" but rather to *transfigure* her external reality, that is, the anchorhold.<sup>15</sup>

I suggest that the presentation of the choice itself is also a manifestation of her ambivalence around entering into a mirroring relationship of identification with Christ's own suffering. The alternative of a non-specific, distant, impassible heaven/Father could be seen as a representation of a more archaic internalization of an idealized paternal selfobject. Recall that initially when the priest came with the crucifix she had felt it would have been easier to remain with her eyes fixed heavenward. The pain of what is known would be easier to fit into her pre-visionary interpretive framework than the pain of something unknown, unpredictable and so, apparently untrustworthy.

She experiences an ambivalence of simultaneous reactions around the choice she must make. However it is significant that it is only in the Long Text that she can articulate this: "Reluctance and deliberate choice are in opposition to one another, and I experienced them both at the same time." (LT 19.)<sup>16</sup>

The resolution of the ambivalence comes to her as a question of *where to focus her eyes* in contemplation. She chooses against her feelings of reluctance to remain focused on the cross and makes a deliberate, assenting choice:

No, I cannot [look up to heaven], for you are my heaven... So I was taught to choose Jesus for my heaven whom I saw only in pain at that time... And that has taught me that I should always do so, to choose Jesus only to be my heaven, in well-being and in woe. (ST 10 and 11; LT 19.)

We might say Julian is choosing to attend to her need for a present, accessible, mirroring god/selfobject, identifying, in the crucifixion of Jesus, a mirror image of heaven

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<sup>15</sup> WATSON, Nicholas, "The methods and objectives of thirteenth-century anchoritic devotion", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1987, pp. 132 - 153. Exeter symposium IV. This article will be mined further in the next chapter.

<sup>16</sup> The subtlety of such a statement, found only in the Long Text may be an instance of how a psychobiographical approach to history can bear fruit: it contributes to the view that the Short Text was composed prior to the Long Text, and not the reverse as Holloway continues to argue. See HOLLOWAY, Julia Bolton, "Chronicles of a mystic", *The tablet*, 11 May 1996, pp. 610 - 611, and REYNOLDS, Sr Anna Maria and Julian Bolton HOLLOWAY, eds. and transl., *Julian of Norwich: Showing of love*, Firenze, Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001, pp. 5 - 33. *Biblioteche e archivi* 8, where on p. 5 Holloway makes it clear that Reynolds does not hold to the same view.

in pain, in which she beholds herself to be included. Note that her choice was not based on Julian's prior *experience* of identification with Christ in his Passion, although she had desired the grace to suffer with him. (ST 1.) Indeed, whether or not the Church proscribes the seeking of such identification, I suggest that the first inclination of the female narcissistic personality is to feel an unbridgeable distance between herself and the idealized paternal god/selfobject, even if it is Christ in his suffering.<sup>17</sup> Julian acts on faith only, not knowing what the outcome will be but trusting that "he who had bound me so fast would unbind me when it was his will". (ST19, cf ST10.) This act is evidence of a development in her capacity to trust even though the context seems untrustworthy.

We may well imagine however, what emotional turmoil this would cause in her. To be in a state of participation (merging) with Christ as he is dying is both comforting, knowing she is present to Christ and not alone in her suffering, but also presumably terrifying, since, as he dies so will she. Thus we are told in the eighth to ninth<sup>18</sup> revelation that Julian watched for the moment when Christ would expire.

Just as it seemed Christ was at the point of expiring, his appearance changed to one of joy. Simultaneously she experiences a dramatic shift within herself: "And suddenly, as I looked at the same cross, he changed to an appearance [*chere*] of joy." (ST 12; LT 21.)

Because Julian's use of this word *chere* is significant to the present thesis, I will use her own middle English word *chere* instead of other modern translations. The range of meanings of this word *chere* seems to constellate around the visual display of interior states as reflected in the human face. For examples, *chere* is translated in the glossary of the Colledge and Walsh edition simply as "demeanor", although in the text they also translate it variously as "appearance", "countenance", "expression".<sup>19</sup> By contrast, Hoyt Greeson

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<sup>17</sup>A woman I know with wounds of a narcissistic nature has resisted praying herself in Christ in his Passion even though she is in deep distress because, she says, this would be "prideful". I sense that she resists it however because it would also bring to awareness feelings of shame, the other feeling fragment of archaic grandiosity. Compare Kevin Gillespie who notes that in spiritual direction eye contact with an image of Christ is a good "litmus test of shame". See GILLESPIE, Kevin, "Listening for grace: Self psychology and spiritual direction", in *Handbook for spirituality for ministers*, NY, Paulist Press, 1995, p. 356.

<sup>18</sup>In the manuscripts the change of Christ's *chere* at this point occurs in the eighth showing. For the reasons Colledge and Walsh use to justify changing the reference to the "ninth" showing, see COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, p. 95. Acknowledging this, and yet aware of Glasscoe's criticism of this editorial change, I will refer henceforth to this moment of the change of Christ's *chere* as the eighth to ninth showing. GLASSCOE, Marion, "Changing *chere* and changing text in the eighth revelation of Julian of Norwich", *Medium aevum* 66, 1997, pp. 115 - 121.

<sup>19</sup> COLLEDGE AND WALSH, 1978a, vol 2, p. 750.

translates *chere* as “the human face; display of emotion; behaviour; mood; and *chongyng of chere* as the changing of one’s mind or mood”.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the change in Christ’s *chere* has a transforming effect on Julian. “The change in his blessed appearance [*chere*] changed mine and I was glad and joyful as I could possibly be”. (ST 12; LT 21.) It is at this point, where she sees Jesus’ face or *chere* transform, that her bodily fusion, her attachment to seeing Jesus with her body only in his Passion, shifts into a face to face mirroring encounter. Significantly this risen, joyful Christ does not lose his wounds. The showings from now on have a visually more “reciprocal” and verbally “dialogical” quality of encounter.<sup>21</sup>

Recall also what Michel Ledoux observes about Roman Catholic women mystics who have suffered a “relation d’absence” in early infancy. There is, he says, in mystical experience of women with such a history, a tendency toward interchangeability of the subjectivities of the mystic and the Christ of her mystical experience.<sup>22</sup> The simultaneous shift in *chere* (including the interior state) of the Christ of Julian’s showing and Julian herself from suffering on the point of death to joy, I suggest, is a case in point.

What might the transformation in the eighth to ninth showing reveal psychoanalytically in terms of Julian’s working through a mirroring transference?

I suggested much earlier that Julian’s early history had brought about in her an unconscious condition of identification with the state of death. As well as all the unresolved grief and abandonment issues which that would create, Julian would be vulnerable to anger. One expression of anger (for women) is in a grandiose narcissistic sense of overresponsibility for relationships, which expresses itself in a martyrish “need” to suffer. The relational pattern Julian gives us to see in her is in the relationship she has

<sup>20</sup> GREESON, Hoyt, “Glossary to the BL Sloane 2499 manuscript”, in REYNOLDS and HOLLOWAY, 2001, p. 646.

The word *chere*, derives from the Greek *kara* and Latin *cara*, for face. According to the *Dictionnaire Robert*, “*la chère*” (from the Old French *chiere*) is used in the expression “faire bonne chère à quelqu’un”, with two meanings, one now archaic: “lui faire bon visage, bon accueil” and the other modern: “faire un bon repas”.

<sup>21</sup> ABBOTT, 1999, p. 70. Abbott sees this as Julian’s own mature commentary on an “egocentric, self-generated religiosity “ which she has “long - outgrown”. Abbott sees Julian no longer as a religious narcissist, but rather now as a “responding subject”. ABBOTT, 1999, pp. 65 - 66. However, the present study sees in her earlier showings of the bleeding and drying crucifix an archaic, fragmented, but fused mirroring transference describing very precisely the movement response of deep bodily feelings Homans wants to associate with the mourning process, in which she is fused with Christ in the pain she experiences of him. Unlike the present study, Abbott’s interpretive framework does not trace in detail the development in maturation in the showings.

<sup>22</sup> LEDOUX, 1980, pp. 235 - 246.

with God in Christ. We can imagine that from within that perspective, Julian beholding the dying Christ would be in some condition of participating in a relational pattern which she believed would necessarily conclude by increasing her sense of responsibility for his suffering, and which would repeat the archaic grandiose pattern of believing unconsciously that her godobject needed her to suffer in order for the godobject to survive (i.e., that God was under her control), even as it drove her ever more deeply into the other fragmented feeling of shame, associated with sinfulness. In effect, the chronic lack in her early childhood separation-individuation process could well have led her to set aside her own nascent self and her needs and feelings because of her fear that expressing these would “destroy” whatever family milieu she had, and therefore ultimately destroy her. This relational pattern would extend to her relationship with God: we may imagine she assumed that any aggressive feelings on her part would destroy God, and therefore that it was unsafe to trust God with such unwanted sectors of her self. Compare Amy Martellock’s psychobiography of Catherine of Siena on this point:

If we suppose that Catherine experienced infantile trauma, which left the legacy of an unconscious conviction about the dangerousness of her instinctual impulses, we might guess that her sense of being sinful and worthy of punishment predates any lesson learned from religious doctrine. When she is less that perfectly defended against them, her feelings of guilt are themselves psychotically grandiose. In a letter to the Pope, for instance, she implies that it is her sinfulness that has led to a tragic breakdown in relations between Florence and the Vatican.... Her guilt is not linked to a specific act she can remember or name. It is huge and unforgivable, perhaps even by God.<sup>23</sup>

This predicament is to be contrasted with Alice Miller’s observation of how the healthy separation-individuation process (i.e., of mirroring and idealization) includes a sense of the durability of the parental object:

My parents do not need my comfort or my smile... I can be angry and no one will die or get a headache because of it. I can rage and smash things without losing my parents. In D. W. Winnicott’s words, ‘I can destroy the object and it will still survive.’<sup>24</sup>

The situation Julian is encountering as she enters the mirroring transference with the suffering, dying Christ of her showings could be described as an occasion which would provoke in her the fear of repeated object loss, and the impotence to do otherwise that carry

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<sup>23</sup> MARTELLOCK, Amy King, *She who is not: A psychobiography of Catherine of Siena using the theories of D. W. Winnicott*, Ps.D. dissertation, Massachusetts school of professional psychology, 2003, p. 159. See further Martellock’s section entitled “The failure of god” pp. 163 - 170, for her interpretation of Catherine’s resolution of the sense of grandiose responsibility for suffering for others for their salvation, and the guilt (or shame) of not succeeding, by means of starvation.

<sup>24</sup> MILLER, Alice, *The drama of the gifted child: The search for the true self*, NY, Basic, 1981, p. 16.

it out to its conclusion, this time in the destruction of God. Looked at this way, it is possible to see that Julian would have difficulty recognizing and accepting aggressive feelings in herself, but that they might be still present. But what happens in the change of Christ's *chere* astounds her. Although she is merged with Christ in his pains, she does not have the grandiose power to kill Christ in her own suffering which she might have imagined she had. In fact, the mutual change of *chere* which takes place could be said to be effecting a work of disillusionment in Winnicott's and Kohut's understanding of that therapeutic concept. In the change of the dying Christ's *chere* to joy she sees in effect that she "can destroy the object and it will still survive". This new capacity to "use the object" of her showings is important because it leads therapeutically to greater reality acceptance, to the recognition of the other (what Kohut called independent centre of initiative<sup>25</sup>) and its durability, as well as to greater self acceptance.<sup>26</sup>

It could be suggested that at this moment Julian realizes that the Christ of her visions is outside her omnipotent control, such that as Winnicott says "there could be said to be joy at the object's survival". She cannot make him die, even in her own physical death throes and spiritual will to suffer. In that same moment, as we saw, the relationship changes and she begins to look this Christ in the eye, in order to learn from Christ what she is to understand. And, in that instant, she, like the *chere* she is beholding, is transformed

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<sup>25</sup> MOSS, David, "Narcissism, empathy and the fragmentation of self: An interview with Heinz Kohut", *Pilgrimage* 4, 1, 1976, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Winnicott discusses "object use" in the context of discussing the capacity for reality acceptance. He is not using the word use in the sense of "exploitation". The latter would better describe how objects are experienced in more archaic forms of mirroring transference, as subjectively enmeshed engagement with reality in terms of "object relating".

Rather, Winnicott expresses himself on object use in the following way: "The assumption is always there, in orthodox theory, that aggression is reactive to the encounter with the reality principle, whereas here it is the destructive drive that creates the quality of externality. This is central in the structure of my argument...." WINNICOTT, D. W., "The use of an object and relating through identifications", in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, (1969) 1989, p. 93. Aggression as Winnicott is using this word to describe the destructive drive is not about anger, which is much later in infant development. "There is no anger in the destruction of the object to which I am referring, though there could be said to be joy at the object's survival". The destroying (in fantasy) of the object, but discovering that the object survives "makes the reality of the surviving object felt as such, strengthens the feeling tone, and contributes to object-constancy. The object can now be used". WINNICOTT, 1989, p. 93. What object use fosters is the recognition that an "object is outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control.... In this way a world of shared reality is created which the subject can use and which can feed back other-than-me substance into the subject". WINNICOTT, 1989, p. 94.

What both Winnicott's and Kohut's descriptions have in common is that the object comes to be recognized as having a durable otherness as experienced by the subject, and can feed back otherness into the subject's experience. This is considered by both theorists to be a major achievement in terms of the capacity for mature object love.

into a condition of joy. Early on I made the psychobiographical hypothesis that Julian had identified with a state of death, due to early childhood losses and neglect. If this hypothesis is true, then it could help to account for the power of the transformation in *chere* from a dying to a joyous Christ in Julian's eighth to ninth showing.

The reverberation of this change of Christ's *chere* changing hers will echo through her whole soteriological vision, as we will see. It is, I suggest, a pivotal point along the way of her assenting more fully to enter into, and remain in, an evolving mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings. In it, I suggest, we see the critical transformative factor, the therapeutic mirroring function of empathy mirrored in Jesus' compassion for her condition, which Julian, now able to "take it in", sees transformed to joy. In this instance it was brought about by an active choice on her part to suffer with Christ in whatever his condition, which resulted in this surprising transformation. In effect, there is a movement toward greater trust in her experience of this mirroring transference, as mirrored in Christ's change of *chere* to one of joy. In her condition of fusion, her *chere* is changed by his. We are to understand that it is not just Christ's face which transforms but his whole physical and spiritual condition. Likewise, although Julian says that her *chere* changed to joy, we are to understand that it is her whole bodily and interior spiritual condition which is transformed. This is indicated in what the Lord then speaks to her: "Where is there any instant of your pain or of your grief?" (ST 12; LT 21.)

The transformation of the condition of her whole person is experienced and known through the transformation of the *chere* of Christ in this visual encounter. I see this as a significant instance of Christ's face functioning as mirror for Julian, in the active way Winnicott and Kohut have understood. The Christ of this showing is not simply mirroring back her condition of selfhood *as it is*, but the mirror of Christ's *chere* is itself transformative, showing her a part of herself she does not know, the self she is to become, and effecting that transformation, in the transitional space of Julian's visionary experience.

The psychological transformation which this showing effects in Julian is underlined by the fact that she is impelled to write about it in such a way as that it might be "performed" or effected in others as well. (LT 86.)<sup>27</sup> If movement responses lead to the

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<sup>27</sup> A number of Julian commentators have observed that Julian's style of writing or rhetoric engages the reader in the same transformative process. See for examples, KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The 'Book of Showings' of Julian of Norwich: A testcase for Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor and the imagination*, Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, ch. 7; Derek ANDERSON, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, pp. 95 - 109.

narrative impulse, Julian seems to have wanted to stay alive to both for many years, perhaps the rest of her life.

By means of the transformation, the changing of the *chere* of Christ also teaches her how she is to understand her interior states differently from what she has done in the past. In the past, suffering seems to have meant generalized desolation and abandonment and bliss has meant consolation and the immediate gratification of union in heaven. She realizes for the first time in her experience that both conditions, suffering and joy, are conditions in which she has union with Christ. It is experienced here, I would hold, in still a relatively fused way, registering itself in the movement responses of deep bodily and facially reflected feelings. Union with Christ, Julian learns, is in effect heaven both in his Passion and in his Resurrection while she is still here on earth, and she has this experience of heaven in suffering (woe) and in joy (well-being). (ST 10, 11; LT 19.)

In the Long Text only Julian adds

I understood that in our Lord's intention we are now on his cross with him in our pains, and in our sufferings we are dying, and with his help and his grace we willingly endure on that same cross until the last moment of life. Suddenly he will change his appearance [*chere*] for us, and we shall be with him in heaven. Between the one and the other all will be one time; and then all will be brought into joy.... And here I saw truly that if he revealed to us now his countenance [*chere*] of joy, there is no pain on earth or anywhere else which could trouble us, but everything would be joy and bliss for us. But because he shows us his suffering countenance [*chere*], as he was in this life as he carried his cross, we are therefore in suffering and labour with him as our nature requires.... And the harder our pains have been with him on his cross, the greater will our glory be with him in his kingdom. (LT 21.)

What this further reflection on her experience seems to suggest in the psychoanalytic terms I am using in this study is that Julian comes to understand that when she sees Christ in his suffering at point of death it is an indication of labour or integrative work which is going on in her, in her interior condition. So, for example, in the Long Text only, Julian observes that Jesus' beauty or divinity is concealed in her showings of the Passion because in effect he becomes like us in our dying condition:

Jesus wished, for his love and for man's honour, to make himself as much like man in this mortal life, in our foulness and our wretchedness, as a man could be without sin; and this is meant where it is said before that the revelation symbolized and resembled our foul, black mortality, in which our fair, bright, blessed Lord concealed his divinity. (LT 10.)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Anderson observes that when Julian uses the word wretched to describe the human condition, it is to be understood in connection with the dying condition she herself was in at the time of the showings. ANDERSON, 2005, p. 196.

Both the suffering and the Resurrection are registered in Julian's interior condition through the mirroring function which Christ's *chere* fulfills.

If the change of *chere* can be seen as a movement response in Julian, it suggests itself as an instance of a transformative process of grief or mourning going on; a dying to a false self organization; a grief or mourning of a loss of orientation she associated with her former sense of selfhood (as sinful) and with the meaning of the religious symbol of God (as abandoning her in her need), which she associated with that sense of selfhood. Her former orientation no longer holds true to her experience of herself united in Christ in suffering and in joy in the showings.

#### 4.1 "Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you?"

Christ immediately speaks to her in this new condition asking her:

Are you well satisfied [*payde*] that I suffered for you? Yes, good Lord, I said; all my thanks to you [*gramercy*], good Lord, blessed my you be! If you are satisfied [*payede*], our Lord said, I am satisfied [*payede*]. It is a joy and a bliss and an endless delight to me that ever I suffered my Passion for you, for if I could suffer more, I would". (ST 12; LT 22.)<sup>29</sup>

The visual, felt transformation of the change of *chere* is reflected also in this active *dialogue*, an instance, I suggest, of Homans' concept of narrative impulse resulting from a movement response in the transitional realm of mourning. This is the first time Julian replies to the Jesus of her showings. Her response is astounded. I am not alone in suggesting that this was the opposite of what Julian until now might have expected the Christ of her visions to say.

For example, Bhattacharji has commented on this shift from suffering to joy, when Christ asks Julian whether she is well satisfied that he has suffered for her, as reflecting in Julian a marked independence and originality in relation to medieval women's (and men's) writing. Drawing on one example from the religious lyrics which promoted affective meditation on the Passion Bhattacharji writes that they

are all aimed at stirring up a pity in the reader which is designed to lead to repentance and to a response of reciprocal love for Christ. They tend to be on the lines of 'Look at what Christ has done for you; can you give nothing back in return?'... [Christ's] worst pain, however, comes from man's *unresponsiveness*, and the thrust of the whole piece is to produce in the reader shame and guilt at this lack of response....

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<sup>29</sup> The word *payde*, *payede*, or as in the Paris manuscript of the LT has it *apayde*, are all translated as "satisfied" in COLLEDGE and WALSH 1978a, pp. 749, 756. In GREESON's glossary of S1 in REYNOLDS, Sr Anna Maria and Julian Bolton HOLLOWAY, 2001, p. 666 it is translated as "pleased", "satisfied" from the old French (*a*)*payer*.



In marked contrast stands Christ's address to Julian: 'Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you?...'. [W]hen it comes to the response in the beholder that the description of Christ's sufferings is meant to evoke, Julian parts company sharply with her contemporaries. Rather than the provocation of shame stirring one up to greater effort, there is a completely free exchange here: Christ's gift of salvation and Julian's gratitude; his joy and her joy. What Julian stresses is that Christ's love finds a fulfillment in being able to give itself in this extreme of suffering, *independently of any subsequent response from the creature*. It is not so much the agony of the Cross as Christ's delight in self-giving which, almost as a bonus, provokes a response of self-giving in the creature.<sup>30</sup>

Bhattacharji argues that Julian's stress on Christ's joy in self-giving as a motive for the Crucifixion is unique, and that from this flows "all that is most characteristic and unusual about her thought", i.e., the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant, and the motherhood of Christ reflections in the Long Text.<sup>31</sup> For example, Bhattacharji argues that it is this which leads Julian

to liken Christ's love to that of motherhood, as against the far more common presentation of Christ as courtly lover, patiently wooing his lady, the individual soul. The whole object of courtship is to extract, so to speak, a response from the beloved, to draw that person to oneself. A mother, however, cares for her child in order to develop it as a person and to prepare it for life; seeing the child develop is her chief reward. For a mother, then, the greatest threat is not so much the child's unresponsiveness, as misfortune or death to the child.<sup>32</sup>

Despite her careful attention to how Christ's dialogue sets up such an extraordinary response in Julian, Bhattacharji is more interested in Julian's grasp of a truth about God than about the developmental process Julian reveals in her affective response to the showings. In the present psychobiographical study, however, I would have to argue that these are not unrelated spheres. In the next chapter of this diptych, I will revisit this text from a more explicitly soteriological correlative perspective, where "satisfaction" takes on a blunter contrast in the medieval theological context. But in this chapter it seems to me that the correlation needs to be explored at the level of the dynamism in what Julian sees as Christ's human nature -- mirroring her own into being. In particular, I find it significant that Bhattacharji highlights the fact that the capacity of the Christ of Julian's showings to give according to Julian's need, in effect to give her the satisfying mirroring she needs, is

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<sup>30</sup> BHATTACHARJI, Santha, "Independence of thought in Julian of Norwich", *Word and spirit* 11, 1989, pp. 84 - 85, emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> BHATTACHARJI, 1989. p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> BHATTACHARJI, 1989, p. 87. I find Bhattacharji's characterization of the nature of Christ's motivation which Julian then mirrors in her own writing style to be much more precise than Anderson's insistence that Julian seeks to "woo" her reader (presumably in the same way as she experienced this wooing by the Christ of the showings). See ANDERSON, 2005, p. 109 and elsewhere.

not affected by the response of the beholder. It compares significantly with Winnicott's description of the good-enough mother who accommodates herself to the child's need for mirroring, as distinct from needy mothering who cannot function adequately as a "mirror" in Winnicott's terms. It is the needy mother who attempts to draw out the child's visual response to make up for her own chronic deficit in early childhood mirroring, and so limits what the child can experience as acceptable parts of herself.

Moreover, Alice Miller's brilliant insight into what happens once a person enters into a therapeutic mirroring relation (formulated here in Sebastian Moore's words) is that "what the client sees in the analyst is not the parent but *the child he or she has had to repress*".<sup>33</sup> Here it is clear that the therapeutic mirror is experienced by the client as not needy, but rather able to allow the client to be seen, and so see the condition of her unknown true self in relation to the mirror.

Returning to the dialogue above, I suggest that Miller's insight can highlight a new element in what Julian takes from this dialogue in the context of the mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings. Instead of picturing Jesus as saying these words to her, let us imagine this to be Julian's own abandoned self speaking to her. Then she would be hearing her own authentic centre of selfhood, lost to her or abandoned up until now, speaking to her saying: "Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you? ...If you are satisfied... I am satisfied...." (ST 12; LT 22.) The effect, at least on the contemporary reader, of reading these words *as if* they were Julian's authentic but *neglected* self speaking to her (i.e., the merged experience of her selfhood-in-the-Christ of her showings) is equally astounding. How long has that self been living out of a sense of isolation, abandonment, non-recognition? And now to hear the voice of that lost, suffering self now registered in Julian's interior state merged in Christ as a *chere* of joy asking Julian "[a]re you well satisfied that I suffered for you? ...If you are satisfied... I am satisfied...." I suggest that this would effect or instill in the beholder/listener the satisfaction of a long unfulfilled longing for identification with this lost, neglected self and an overflow of sympathy for its suffering condition. I suggest that this is partly at least what Julian recounts in her astounded response of gratitude. (ST 12; LT 22.)

I suspect it had the effect of giving Julian a sense of this alienated, lost self, beheld in the Christ of her showings, as having suffered *enough*. If looked at in this way, what Julian experiences is a kind of homecoming to herself-in-Christ. The abandoned Christ-in-her has suffered enough, and his and her *chere* are transformed to joy. It breaks open in

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<sup>33</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *Jesus, liberator of desire*, NY, Crossroad, 1989, p. 26, emphasis added.

Julian a torrent of compassion in union with Christ in his suffering whom she now knows is adequate to her need. It also opens her to have compassion for the rest of humankind in its suffering state, in the same way as she experiences Christ's compassion in her. Looking at Julian's recounted experience in this way, it is possible to see what I am describing as the lost, abandoned child of Julian's true self as being exposed, given back to her and affirmed in a new way through the reverberating presence of the empathic *chere* of Christ which made the difference. And looking at this interaction in this way, it is possible to see Julian moving a first step toward interiorizing that empathic *chere* and responding in effortless compassion to her own beleaguered self, which has been for so long condemned to suffering in isolation.

I suggest that this speculation helps us to understand why Julian's showings were so significant both for her affective response as well as for the theological consequences they had for her transformed understanding of the nature of her relationship with God in Christ and her new sense of solidarity with her *even* Christians. Her affective, bodily response in this transformation of her interior condition, which I am calling her homecoming to her authentic self by means of her mirroring transference with Christ's *chere*, is, I suggest, Julian's way in to her theological grasp of truths about God, human nature and humankind's relationship with God.

It also gives significance to the understanding Julian comes to have that the suffering of Christ did not end with his crucifixion but continued beyond his death, is ongoing and will continue insofar as there is ongoing suffering *in humankind*.<sup>34</sup> I suggest that *Christ's ongoing suffering is related, for Julian, to her recognition of the ongoing need for the authentic self in each human soul to assent to the satisfaction of its deep need to be seen, recognized and accepted in Christ's chere.*

It is in Julian's moment of knowing that she is dying -- at least some experience of herself which prior to her visionary experience Julian tended to claim as central, and yet which now is seen as false -- that a link can be made with the self-experience described by Kohut which is critical to transformation. As he describes it, feelings of emptiness and deprivation accompany the experience of the authentic self while what was the main (conscious) sector of the self, the "early ego" as Moore put it, comes to be recognized as an appendage of the maternal selfobject which must "die". Julian, or at least the archaic self

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<sup>34</sup> Mark Burrows has observed that Julian's view of Christ's suffering as ongoing shows "how Julian related human and divine suffering through a Christological model that is apparently without precedent in the medieval schools". BURROWS, Mark, "'Yett he sufferyth with us': Divine asceticism in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", *Studies in spirituality* 7, 1997, p. 104.

that defined itself as constitutionally or substantially sinful, is dying, merged in Jesus' death, and yet discovers a different, long abandoned centre of selfhood as she beholds (visually and with her body) his transformed *chere*.

Julian understands from the ninth showing that Christ wants her to know that his suffering was out of love for her and in the tenth showing he shows her the wound in his side in his humanity. (ST 13.) In the intervening years between the Short and the Long Texts, Julian's meditation deepens. Whereas she is drawn to *look at* the wound in Christ's side in ST 13, in the long text she is drawn to *enter* it:

With his sweet regard [Christ] drew his creature's understanding into his side by the same wound; and there he revealed a fair and delectable place, large enough for all mankind that will be saved and will rest in peace and love. (LT 24.)

What is clear in this showing is Christ's capaciousness and inclusivity in his humanity. We may suspect that a bodily knowledge of this capaciousness was previously unavailable to Julian. The Lord says to her "See how I loved you". (ST 13.) This is a confirmation for Julian of being contained within the Body of Christ, and by implication in the twelfth showing in the same chapter contained within the salvation of Holy Church. In that context Christ reveals himself more glorified saying:

I am he who is highest. I am he whom you love. I am he in whom you delight. I am he whom you serve. I am he for whom you long. I am he whom you desire. I am he whom you intend. I am he who is all. *I am he whom Holy Church preaches and teaches to you.* I am he who showed himself before to you. (ST 13, LT 26.)

Here, in this shift from beholding Christ in his suffering humanity to beholding him in his glorified humanity, Julian begins to have an inkling of how she is to understand the relationship between her true self and Christ. Her first experience of this new centre of selfhood is through shared bodily suffering with Christ. Only eventually, as we'll see below, is this selfhood claimed as the core of her identity as Christ reigning within her.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In this shift Julian could also be seen as being drawn to recognize Jesus as object of both mirror and idealized transference in his appearance to her as compassionate, suffering saviour and glorified Lord, respectively. Significantly these images appear to her sequentially, in that order. This paper will not study idealization in Julian's visions. Her life was full of ecclesiastical paternal selfobjects, and her familiarity with God as heavenly Father has already been mentioned. I only draw attention here to the fact that, as Julian would know, the Jesus of the Gospels is *able* to accept the idealizing admiration of others, which is the characteristic of the good idealized selfobject. "Jesus is unembarrassed when a prostitute uses her fallen hair to wipe his feet". See LLEWELYN, Robert, *With Pity Not With Blame*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982, p. 125. This background of idealization heightens, perhaps, the meaning of the visions she has of Jesus as mirror of her humanity, which is why they have such a transforming effect on her self-understanding.

#### 4.2 Substance and sensuality

Julian's showings register both visual and bodily transformations in the dynamic mirroring relation with this visionary Christ. They teach her to understand human anthropology as being of two natures, substantial and sensual, as Christ has these two natures. The substantial union of our humanity in Christ in our creation (our *makyng*) is never broken. The sensual in humankind can come to be oned (*onyd*) or in union with Christ in his "flesh taking" or Incarnation. Sensuality for Julian includes body *and* soul (LT 57), the whole of the psychosomatic condition of human beings in the world, which Julian tells us is changeable.<sup>36</sup> Substance in humankind is described variously as the godly will and as *kynd*.<sup>37</sup> As Julian understands it, substance is "directly united with God at all times, whether or not we are aware of it", though, unlike Meister Eckhart, with whom there is a parallel notion of an essential self always connected with God, Julian's substance is never defined "in terms of the (male) higher, intellect".<sup>38</sup> The "astonishing turn" Jantzen observes in Julian's human anthropology "is the assertion that the essential human self is the substance *and* the sensuality when they are oned together".<sup>39</sup>

Julian begins to speak of substance and of sensuality in human anthropology already in the Short Text, although it took the twenty years of reflection on the *exemplum* to bring it to fuller articulation in the Long Text. Nuth observes how for Julian the human soul is the locus for substance and (potentially) sensuality:

In order to explain the changeable nature of the human being, Julian makes a distinction between the 'substance' of the human soul, which is knit to God

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<sup>36</sup> GREESON translates sensuality as "capacity for receiving physical sensations", "physical appetite". in his glossary for S1 in REYNOLDS and HOLLOWAY, 2001, p. 671. COLLEDGE and WALSH 1978a, p. 757, translate it simply as "physical nature". Jantzen's description is more helpful. Sensuality she says is that which constitutes our God-given independence.... It does not mean 'sensuous' and does not refer exclusively to the physical senses, let alone to sexuality, though all of that would be included. It includes, rather, all of our psychology and physicality as individual human beings; our capacities for perception in sight, hearing, touch, and so on, our whole sensory consciousness, and our capacity for action. JANTZEN, Grace, *Julian of Norwich, Mystic and Theologian*, London, SPCK, 1987, p. 142.

<sup>37</sup> For an account of the rich meaning of this word *kynd*, see KRANTZ, M. Diane F., *The life and text of Julian of Norwich: The poetics of enclosure*, NY, Peter Lang, 1997, pp. 97 - 99, 100. Studies in the humanities, Literature--Politics--Society 32. As well as meaning nature, essence, and kind in the sense of good-natured, Krantz also draws out many other middle English associations of the word with sexuality, which would draw the association with Julian's "sensuality" tighter.

<sup>38</sup> JANTZEN, Grace, *power, gender and Christian mysticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 159. Emphasis in text.

[eternally, in the human soul of Christ (LT 53, 54)] , and ‘sensuality’, the part of the soul closer to the body and affected by the vagaries of time and space.<sup>40</sup>

Nuth puts this into the context of Julian’s need to render intelligible the prevalent belief that God was wrathful, and this will be explored further in the next chapter. The significant question for the psychoanalytic orientation of the present chapter however is this: why would the assertion of the unbroken union with Christ in our substance (in our creation) and the possibility of union with Christ in our sensuality be so significant for Julian? Why is changeability in the human condition otherwise so frightening to her? This leads us to recall that the primary condition of one who has been neglected and abandoned in her need for maternal mirroring is that of always being on the verge of the unthinkable anxiety of disintegration and fragmentation. In effect, I suggest Julian’s double anthropology supplies a ground for Julian’s growth in relationship with a trustworthy other who mirrors her in a way that allows her to gain access to her authentic (cohesive and realistic) centre of selfhood.

More particularly, her assertion of the substantial union of Christ’s humanity with that of humankind which was never broken could be said to function as the ground for this new-found trust that her own changeability, her capacity for anger and blame toward God, would not overpower God’s constancy toward humankind. Her visionary experience of the changing *chere* of Christ brought about a new experience of trust in this mirroring Christ such that, in Winnicott’s words, she could “destroy the object and it will still survive”. It seems to me that this is how Christ’s unbroken substantial union with humankind functions psychoanalytically in her anthropology. As a concept intended to help her articulate the truth of the visionary experience of Christ’s changing *chere*, “substance” helps her to become clearer about God’s reality as an independent centre of initiative beyond her control, thus undercutting the grandiose belief in her overresponsibility for others’ (Christ’s) suffering. At the same time it confirms God’s trustworthiness in a way which allows her greater self and reality acceptance. In time, as we’ll see in the next chapter of this diptych, it helps clarify for her that wrath is only on the human side.

I am suggesting that for humans like Julian to come to know God as God *wants* to be known in God’s sight, Christ’s union with us in our *making*, (that is, our creation, the godly will, *kynd* or substance) would indeed *need* to be kept intact in fallen humanity, if

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<sup>40</sup> NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom’s daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, p. 62. For a longer description of Julian’s understanding of the double nature of humankind, as substance and as sensuality, see NUTH, 1991, pp. 109 - 113.

that humanity is identified explicitly as those whose early child neglect or abuse and social location would otherwise have them introject that they are intrinsically sinful, fundamentally excluded from humankind, less than human and so constitutionally incapable of union with God. I suggest it represents for Julian what the healing, mirroring function of the therapeutic *chere* of the Christ of her showings engaged in her.

I propose that the extraordinary nature of Julian's anthropology needs to be seen in this stark contextual light. This is not a question of her being gnostic or heretical. Rather, the belief in the substantial union of Christ with humankind in our godly will, which came to her through the revelatory play of beholding the showings, plays a fundamental compensatory role of healing and encouraging her to revise a deeply engrained doubt or despair of her self-worth, of her human acceptability, of her inclusion among the saved, and to be delivered from the unconscious grandiosity of overresponsibility for Christ's suffering. Julian's showings are engaging Christ in a mirroring transference which began visually, engaging eye contact, and develop viscerally into what I describe below as images of mutual containment. I am proposing that the anthropology which Julian draws from these showings serves to foster in Julian the *transmuting internalization of the function of the mirroring mother* and to allow her to interiorize the capacity for soothing, affect regulation, perduring self and reality acceptance and self esteem.<sup>41</sup> In other words, a healing and restoration of her true self is engaged in the face to face encounter with the Christ of her showings.

This anthropology also allows her self-knowledge to evolve into a more balanced knowledge of her various conditions or sensuality, as this then is revealed and exposed to her by the empathic Christ of her showings. Sensuality comes to identify the human interior condition where integrative work takes place by Christ's work of mercy and grace in this life.

Instead of simply projecting "the good" out there onto God and being left with the fragments of a constitutionally sinful sense of self, Julian's interiority is changed, in a process of transmuted internalization. Winnicott once observed that

[r]eligions have made much of original sin, but have not all come round to the idea of original goodness, that which by being gathered together in the idea of God is at the same time separated off from the individuals who collectively create and re-create this God concept. The saying that man made God in his own image is usually treated as an amusing example of the perverse, but the truth in this saying could be made more evident by a restatement, such as: man continues to create and re-create God as a place to put that which is good in himself, and which he might

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<sup>41</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 199; and 1977, p. 53.

spoil if he kept it in himself along with all the hate and destructiveness which is also to be found there.<sup>42</sup>

In Julian's case, her double anthropology expresses a growing flexibility in self-understanding as a more coherent centre of selfhood along with a greater self-acceptance as a "both-and" creature. It allows her to retrieve from projection onto God that "place to put what is good in herself" (as well as any "hate and destructiveness") which is essential for her healing to come into a greater knowledge of her true self in the mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings.

But if this is so, contemplating this mirroring Christ will also bring her face to face with a clearer mirror of what is not good in herself in her sensual condition (as distinct from her earlier, archaic global self-hatefulness). As well as revealing her bodily resonance in Christ, beholding Christ will bring her to self-knowledge which contrasts with the sensuality of Christ of her showings. Thus her double anthropology has the effect of insuring Christ's transcendence as well as Christ's immanence because the showings continue to function as revelatory of the *exposing* as well as *empathic* presence of the healing other. Julian insists that while the union of substance is unbreakable, the union of human sensuality with Christ is fleeting and always only "in part" in this world.

But our passing life which we have here does not know in our sensuality what our self is, but we know in faith. And when we know and see, truly and clearly, what our self is, then we shall truly and clearly see and know our Lord God in the fulness of joy....

And so in all this contemplation it seemed to me that it was necessary to see and to know that we are sinners.... (LT 46.)

## 5.0 The pain of self-knowledge

It is in the context of beholding Christ now glorified that Julian remembers her longstanding prayer for the wound of longing for God, that is, contemplative union. Immediately she returns to the problem of sin in the thirteenth revelation, in which she questions why God did not prevent sin, since it is sin which hinders her from experiencing bliss. (ST 13; LT 27.) It is as if she is returning to the pattern of her pre-visionary self which I suggest was primarily split between archaic fragments which could be characterized as "sinless" (grandiose in a self-righteous way) and "all sinful" (shamed, despairing). Her pre-visionary expectation in this way of thinking, she tells us, was to

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<sup>42</sup> WINNICOTT, D.W., "Morals and education", in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, [1963] 1965, p. 94. Anderson's thesis will be particularly significant, as one of the implications of his study is that Julian's showings help her readers to practise ways of encountering and becoming more like God, i.e., nonviolent. See ANDERSON, 2005, ch. 5.



wish herself to be sinless so that she might avoid pain and enjoy bliss, and because it isn't so, to blame God. It is not difficult here to see the re-emergence of the grandiose self, here in a condition of what amounts to narcissistic projective rage, in a condition of resistance, even as it is engaged in this mirroring relation. In fact, in this context Julian recognizes this as an attitude "greatly to be shunned; and I mourned and sorrowed on this account, unreasonably, lacking discretion, filled with pride", but with which she nonetheless struggles. (ST 13.) Interestingly she observes that her interior struggle did not stop the Jesus of her showings from revealing to her what she needed. This Jesus of her showings (with whom she is one in substance if not in sensuality) is not simply a mirror reflection of her grandiosity. Neither would a good-enough mother fail to allow her child lovingly and at the right time to be disillusioned of his or her grandiosity, even though the child did not yet understand this.

The mysterious response to her question which she receives from the Lord is that "Sin is necessary [*behouely*] but all will be well and all will be well and every kind of thing will be well". (LT 27, cf. ST 13.) By sin she understood

all which is not good: the shameful contempt and the complete denial [*noghtynge*] of himself which he endured for us in this life and in his death, and all the pains and passions, spiritual and bodily, of all his creatures. For we are all in part denied [*noghted*] [LT *trobelyd* troubled], and we ought to be denied [*noghted*] [LT *trobelyd*], following our master Jesus until we are fully purged, [ST that is to say until we be fully *noghted* of] our own mortal flesh and all our inward affections which are not good. (ST 13; LT 27.)

She observes that sin has no kind of substance and cannot be recognized except by the pain caused by it. "And it seems to me that this pain is something for a time, for *it purges and makes us know ourselves*". (ST 13; LT 27.) Thus it comes to her that her pain is the pain of coming into self-knowledge. This pain could be called the pain of growth-producing disillusionment of *both* grandiose autonomy *and* despairing isolation, the pain induced by the effective confrontation with reality by a trusted empathic other. Julian's empathic mirroring Christ gives her what she most needs to see exposed in herself and in a way she can accept to see, as she sees "how Christ has compassion on us because of sin". (ST 13; LT 28.)

The Lord in his mercy reveals our sin and our feebleness to us by the sweet gracious light of his own self, for our sin is so foul and so horrible that he in his courtesy will not reveal it to us except by the light of his mercy.... For he in his courtesy measures the sight for us for... we should not endure to see it as it is. (LT 78.)

The pain of this recognition of her sinfulness is met with the consolation that God does not see her sinfulness with the wrath and harsh judgment with which she herself

would judge it, but rather “very tenderly, showing no kind of blame to me or anyone who will be saved”. Indeed in the Long Text she comes to see that because Christ is in union with human beings, when God looks on humanity God only sees Christ’s humanity. “Our Father may not, does not wish to assign more blame to us than to his own beloved Son Jesus Christ”. (LT 51.)

Here is a real movement in Julian's integration of self and god/parent selfobject: until now we can imagine that although she saw God *consciously* or intellectually as loving, there was in her as in most of us, a deep, *unconscious* fear of the God/parent-object’s judgment of her in her imperfect or sinful state; hence her initial desire to know bliss without pain, i.e., to be sinless. What she learns is that since God does not blame her simply for being sinful, she can appropriate this vision of God's generosity into her own self perception: she need not blame herself for her human state of imperfection and sin. Rather it can become the window through which to enter the Lord's love in her more fully, in other words to become more fully accepting of her whole self, substance and sensuality, in relation to Christ.<sup>43</sup>

And so it is that Julian sees the Lord revealing to her that she will sin, that she is not (and need not be) exempt from this human condition. (LT 46.) Sin now has a purpose. *Synne is behouely*, fitting, necessary. Its presence in the human person is not an indictment. It is a part of human nature. Sin is necessary because Julian of Norwich needs to know her whole self, and the particular pain of purgation of sin helps this self-knowledge to come into consciousness. However, sin must be seen by the human person for what it is in Christ’s compassionate sight so that the person may see Christ and be healed and transformed in those wounded places. Redemption is not a personality transplant. Rather, as Julian sees that humans are restored to our full, essential selves in Christ, “sin will be no shame, but honour to man”. (LT 38.) She is shown through the graces of prayer, that is, contrition, compassion and trust, properly understood in relation to the compassionate and joyful Christ of her showings, that the wounds of sin and shame become honours in the sight of God. (ST 17; LT 39.)

Julian’s sensual self, that is her changeable psychosomatic condition, which does consent to sin, she sees now as though through Christ’s eyes of compassion. Seeing herself in his eyes of compassion becomes the means for her to understand her connectedness to the rest of humankind:

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<sup>43</sup>Mountney has understood Julian's meaning here. He writes, “If we can have a deep enough grasp of the depth of God's love even in our sinfulness, and feel and see that he loves us utterly, sin and all, then it becomes easier for us to feel the same for ourselves”. MOUNTNEY, John Michael, *Sin shall be a glory*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992, p. 79.

So I saw how Christ has compassion on us because of sin; and just as I was before filled full of pain and compassion on account of Christ's Passion, so I was now in a measure filled with compassion for all my fellow Christians, and then I saw that every kind of compassion which one has for one's *even* Christians in love is Christ in us. (ST 13; LT 28.)

### 5.1 The two secret sins exposed

This revelation of self-knowledge begins to unveil to her more clearly the answer to her question what is sin. Significantly, she sees that more than all others traditionally so-named, there are two "secret sins" which keep the soul from knowing itself to be united to her Lord. (ST 24; LT 73.) The first is the sin of sloth or impatience, of being complacent with and/or resentful of God and one's circumstances which is the resistance to knowing and accepting oneself in one's fallen condition. Impatience blames God for having created sin, which she had perceived until now as the stumbling block to her experiencing the bliss of union with God. Sloth resists interior change.

Kohut's comparable description of what Julian calls sloth is the resistance of the archaic grandiose self to forming the mirror transference through which alone it will expose itself to a confrontation with reality. A more colloquial expression would be to call this the sin of denial. It corresponds directly with Sebastian Moore's understanding of resistance as original sin. In Julian's case, we can see the sin of impatience and sloth for example in her earlier impatience to die. It can also be traced in her tendency to wish life were otherwise or want to control the outcomes of future events. This is implied in her reflection much later: "Then shall none of us be moved to say in any matter: Lord, if it had been so, it would have been well. But we shall all say with one voice: Lord, blessed may you be, because it is so, it is well..." (LT 85.) It might also have manifested itself in anger. Recall her coldness toward her mother<sup>44</sup> and her veiled anger against the theological authorities who would try to know God's privy counsel (and impose it on others). Recall, too, the speculation that in her early narcissistic sense of being special perhaps lay an unconscious disdain for ordinary folk, which I explored in chapter five.

At the same time Julian sees the second sin of despair for what it is, the motive behind the first sin of impatience and sloth.<sup>45</sup> For Julian despair presents itself in what we

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<sup>44</sup>See KOENIG, 1984, ch. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Compare Joan Nuth on the interrelation between sloth (as impatience) and despair:

Impatience with suffering causes an apathy that leads to "wasting of time", which Julian considers "the beginning of sin". [LT 64.] This leads to despair, since the sinner becomes ashamed and guilt-ridden, "afraid to appear before our courteous Lord". [LT 76.] NUTH, 1991, p. 128.

Nuth's footnote 39 at that point (p. 200) anchors this interrelation historically:

might call an attitude of ontological *unworthiness*, which leads to defenses against exposing herself to God in her need, as she observes of herself:

[O]ften our trust is not complete, for we are not certain that almighty God hears us, because of our unworthiness, it seems to us.... And thus when we feel so, it is our folly which is the cause of our weakness, for I have experienced this in myself. (ST 19.)

Despair holds her to be fully and eternally to blame for her sins.

Julian perceives that despair derives from linking the fear of exposure to the knowledge of oneself as fallen with the fear that God will judge a person hatefully in this condition of contrition and naked self-knowledge. This would appear to be the background for the then common teaching of the Church that God was angry which Julian had also introjected. Increasingly, Julian sees this despair as *the* sin besetting souls seeking union with the Lord:

God's love does not change, but during the time that a man is in sin he is so weak, so foolish, so unloving *that he can love neither God nor himself*. His greatest harm is his blindness because he cannot see all this. Then almighty God's perfect love... gives him sight of himself... And *then it seems to the soul that God has been moved to look upon it*, as though it had been in pain or prison, saying, "I'm glad that you have found rest, for I have always loved you." (ST 19.)

Despair itself must come to be recognized for the sin it is, and yet at the same time, seen through the eyes of the beholding Lord in order to see oneself both objectively and with tenderness. Despair is never a condition which the creature consciously chooses, and so it is inappropriate that the despairing person think God could be angry. The Long Text version of this text from ST 19 reflects the direction she is taking, as she becomes more aware and accepting of her own vulnerable nature:

Man is changeable in this life, and falls into sin through frailty and ignorance. He is weak and foolish in himself, and also his will is overpowered in the time when he is assailed and in sorrow and woe. And the cause is blindness, because he does not see God, for if he saw God continually, he would have no harmful feelings nor any kind of prompting, no sorrowing which is conducive to sin [*no sorowynng that servyth to synne*]. (LT 47.)

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The connection Julian makes between sloth and despair is interesting. By her day, sloth was considered one of the seven deadly sins, and it had acquired the meaning it has today, signifying laziness. But in the cardinal sin tradition, which came to the West through Cassian and Gregory, this sin was referred to variously as *accidia*, implying an apathy or listlessness about spiritual matters, and/or *tristitia*, undue sadness or melancholy.... In linking despair to sloth, Julian betrays some awareness of this earlier stage of the tradition. In the *Ancrene riwle* [part 4], despair is the eighth cub of sloth.

For the history of the tradition Nuth is drawing on see BLOOMFIELD, Morton W., *The seven deadly sins: An introduction to the history of a religious concept with special reference to medieval English literature*, Lansing, Michigan State College Press, 1952, pp. 70, 72, 96, 112 - 113.

To experience the interior condition of despair as a condition of frailty, ignorance and blindness beheld by God in compassion is a risk which can only be taken as an act of trust, and in Julian's case I hold that the therapeutic and salvific *practice* of internalizing that trust came through beholding Christ in the transitional realm of the showings and her subsequent years of meditation on them.

Over the course of years Julian sees this deeply engrained pattern of despair to be the besetting cause of her tendency to a kind of fear she calls "doubtful dread". (ST 21, 24; LT 66, 73.)<sup>46</sup> Whereas the feeling of despair parallels the tendency to fear to make eye contact with the Lord who beholds the creature (and so to imagine that God has turned God's face away, because the creature has turned away from God), so also then, beholding oneself, as beheld by God, replaces despair with joy. Despair, or shame is the sin which keeps Julian from seeing herself, in Kohut's phrase, as the "gleam in the mother's eye". Despair is that which made trusting in salvation effectively impossible and unbelievable earlier in Julian's life, I suggest.

It is significant that in both instances of sloth and despair what results is a blindness, an "ignorance of love", an incapacity to see how God could be present to these conditions in any except a judging way:

And it is about this knowledge that we are most blind, for many men and women believe that God is almighty and may do everything, and that he is all wisdom and can do everything, but that he is all love and wishes to do everything, that is where they fail. And it is this ignorance which most hinders God's lovers, for when they begin to hate sin and to amend themselves according to the laws of Holy Church, still there persists a fear which moves them to look at themselves and their sins committed in the past. And they take this fear for humility, but it is a reprehensible blindness and weakness; and we do not know how to despise it, as we should at once despise it, like any other sin which we recognize, if we knew it for what it is,

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<sup>46</sup> Julian ends the Short Text with a chapter identifying four fears: First there is fear of assault, by which Julian means fear of bodily sickness and other pains which are not in themselves sinful and which can help purge the person. Second there is fear of pain, by which a person is wakened from the sleep of sin and moved to seek comfort and mercy of God and begins to understand contrition. This would appear to be the pain of self-knowledge. Third there is doubtful fear which is a kind of despair. About this she has the most aggressive thing to say, which in itself suggests the extent to which it was a chronic issue for Julian: "For I am certain that God hates all doubtful fear, and he wishes us to drive it out, knowing truly how we may live [LT love]. Lastly there is reverent fear, which she does not describe apart from it being sweet and gentle. This would seem to be akin to trust. (ST 25; LT 74.) Abbott has argued that these four fears formed the core of her message. ABBOTT, 1999, ch 5. See also BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian's 'doubtfull drede'", *The month* 21, Feb, 1981, pp. 53 - 54, who argues that the state of "doubt, bordering on despair" permeates Julian's text. Panichelli goes further to argue that Julian's ending of the Short Text on the note of these four fears suggests that Julian's denial of the visions after the fifteenth showing was a condition of distress which continued to dominate her life. The Long Text she argues was written as Julian gained greater understanding of the meaning of the showings and of what her sin actually was. See PANICHELLI, Debra Scott, "Finding God in the memory: Julian and the loss of the visions", *The Downside review* 104, 1986, pp. 299 - 300.

because it comes from the enemy.... For of all the attributes of the blessed Trinity, it is God's will that we have most confidence in his delight and his love. (ST 24; cf. LT 73.)

It is here that Julian turns to integrating these fragmented feelings into a more consistent attitude in which she can accept that she is beloved of God in well being and in woe, and discovers that different kind of pain, the pain "which purges and gives us knowledge of ourselves". In this way Julian in her own language has come to see each one of the secret sins as representing a form of resistance to the distinctive pain of disillusionment and dying to false selves or ego, a resistance to beholding -- to engaging in a mirroring transference with -- the Christ of her showings. She has come to the point of having a capacity for reinterpreting the meanings of her feelings insofar as she sees them through Christ's love for her. Her integration of this capacity in the Long Text is more apparent where she is adamant about fears which do not come from God, saying that, "though they appear disguised as holiness, they are not so true". (LT 74.)

I observe in passing that Julian's insight into these two "secret sins" of impatience and despair as forms of resistance to trust in God's love is extraordinarily modern (or perhaps I should say, modern psychology actually has quite an ancient precedent) in this respect, that their "secret" or hidden nature bears all the marks of what we would call the "unconscious". Julian's insight helps to open up the concept of sin to new meaning in our contemporary world, and a new vision of what Christ's saving work is.<sup>47</sup>

## 5.2 The human predicament revised

Julian's hard-won revision of her understanding of sin is also significant because it suggests a transposition or shift of awareness in her understanding of what the human predicament is for which salvation is God's response. Lamm observes that the human predicament as Julian describes it is one of exposure, vulnerability and abandonment, and that God's response is appropriate to that condition:

In being exposed, and in realizing the degree to which we are exposed, we learn the extent to which we are always already enclosed in God's love. Seeing our condition as one of being exposed and vulnerable is absolutely crucial for Julian because only through the willingness to experience our exposures can we recognize God's redemption, which comes in the form of loving protection.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>For the Twelve Step Programme, denial is that which keeps people from being able to recover from addictions. Kierkegaard discusses despair as sin in *The Sickness Unto Death*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1983, 201 p.

<sup>48</sup>LAMM, Julia, "Revelation as exposure in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Spiritus* 5, 2005, p. 65.

To be more exact, the condition of exposure, frailty and abandonment, experienced blindly in self-preoccupied despair, is the human predicament to which salvation is a healing and restorative response, as Julian experiences it. However, this was not how the Church regarded the human predicament. The despair Julian introjected is reinforced from without as well, by her knowledge of the “ordinary” teaching of Holy Church, “that the blame of our sins continually hangs upon us”. (LT 50). Julian’s confusion and need for intelligibility requires, therefore, that we pay attention to the question of her social location as well as this proposed psychobiographical dimension in her soteriology. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

### **5.3 The fruit of self-knowledge**

In the present context, I observe at least three fruits of her maturation in mirroring need as they are manifested in Julian’s showings thus far. First, she shows signs of developing a new capacity to have empathy for herself. Secondly, she becomes able to understand her feelings of desolation from a new perspective, even recognizing some suffering as actually “conducive to sin”, and learning that she is to pass over them lightly. Thirdly, she understands compassion for her fellow Christians as Christ’s action in her. From a psychoanalytic perspective, all of these are clear indications of the activity of transmuted internalization and maturation in her self structure and her capacity for empathy and object relations as a result of this mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings.

#### **5.3.1 To have empathy for herself**

As an image of how she sees her whole self, sin and all, mirrored in God’s love, in the Short Text Julian receives the final vision of her soul in the midst of her heart, where Jesus sat at rest. We can see Julian’s process of self acceptance, mirrored in God’s sight deepening here into the beginning of her understanding of the “godly will”, the substance or *imago Dei*, which, in human nature remains united with God and which through prayer and trust becomes united with God in sensual condition also. (ST 19; LT 43.)

Immediately following this vision, the revelations were hidden, and she experienced a state in which she earlier would have believed herself to have become abandoned to herself:

*All this, it seemed was to move me to despair; and I kept on trusting in God, and spoke words aloud to comfort my soul, as I should have done to another person who was so belaboured. (ST 23, LT 69.)*

This I would understand to be an indicator of transmuting internalization through her mirroring relationship with Jesus, in that Julian shows herself to have internalized the mature capacity to have *empathy for herself* in her desolate feelings, as she would for someone else.

### 5.3.2 “It is not God’s will that when we feel pain we should pursue it”

McEntire observes of LT 72 that Julian’s texts reveal a maturity in the contemplative life, as she comes to a greater awareness of the interior nature of the grace of compunction and mourning as well as of the eschatological joy in and desire for eternal blessedness.<sup>49</sup> Whatever maturation Julian experienced, I propose that it included a maturation in her capacity to die to sin (as resistance to consciousness of impatience and despair) and learn to accept the grief (and relief) of narcissistic disillusionment as part of the purgation process in the lifelong process of dying to ego. This affected her scrupulous practice of focusing on false sins for which there was never sufficient contrition, as she came to understand this practice from a different perspective now, as an abandonment of her Christic, authentic self. The mourning or grief which comes with the apparent absence of God in pain (which formerly she equated with God’s abandonment, wrath and punishment) is no longer to be belaboured, but rather passed over as quickly as possible.

God wishes us to know that he keeps us safe *all the time*, in sorrow and in joy; and sometimes a man is left to himself for the profit of his soul, although his sin is not always the cause... Therefore it is not God's will that when we feel pain we should pursue it in sorrow and mourning for it, but that suddenly we should pass it over, and preserve ourselves in the endless delight which is God. (ST 9, LT 15.)

And therefore if a man be in so much pain, so much woe and so much unrest that it seems to him that he can think of nothing at all but the state he is in or what he is feeling, let him, as soon as he may, pass it over lightly and count it as nothing. Why? Because God wants to be known; and because if we knew him and loved him we should have patience and be in great rest, and all that he does would be a delight to us. (ST 20.)

And when we fall back into ourselves, through depression and spiritual blindness and our experience of spiritual and bodily pains, because of our frailty, it is God’s will that we know that he has not forgotten us....

It is God’s will that we accept his commands and his consolations as generously and as fully as we are able; and he also wants us to accept our tarrying and our sufferings as lightly as we are able, and to count them as nothing. For the

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<sup>49</sup> McENTIRE, Sandra, “The doctrine of compunction from Bede to Margery Kempe”, in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1987, p. 87. Exeter symposium IV.



more lightly that we accept them, the less importance we ascribe to them because of our love, the less pain shall we experience from them and the more thanks and reward shall we have for them. (LT 65; see also ST 20.)

From having begun the showings with a global and generalized sense of pain and suffering, Julian has come quite a distance in distinguishing between suffering that teaches purgation (dying to ego) and is restorative, from a different kind of suffering which is based on an obsessive, though unconscious, refusal to assent to God's consolation. "The cause is blindness, because he does not see God; for if he saw God continually, he would have no... sorrowing which is conducive to sin". (LT 47.) In these showings she has become much clearer as to her authentic centre of selfhood *in the sight of God*. This new centre of selfhood, discovered in relation to the mirroring Christ, throws into relief and allows her to name effectively what sin is *for her*. Her coming to name feelings of "sorrow that are conducive to sin", which she once took to be holy, is evidence of Julian developing a capacity for affective mentalization.

### 5.3.3 Compassion for one's *even* Christians

What Julian sees is the *kenosis* of Jesus in the Passion transformed into his Resurrection joy and capaciousness for enclosing all humanity. This is paralleled in the self-emptying which she is undergoing as she discovers and detaches from the feelings of sloth (grandiosity) and despair (shame), associated with the archaic self structures, and opens herself to the loving, compassionate regard in which she sees Jesus behold her. In his *chere* she experiences a different, new centre of selfhood. One way she describes this is in her new experience of compassion for her fellow Christians *as Christ in her*. Insofar as the Christ of her visions shows empathy, she gains a capacity for empathy and shows signs of having a deeper empathy for others. Recall that the capacity for empathy is one of the movement responses Homans observed in the mourning process in narcissism.<sup>50</sup> This is a significant sign of maturation in her capacity to relate internal and external worlds with greater coherence, flexibility and realism, and to relate to others with greater self and object constancy.

## 6.0 Mirror reversal images of mutual enclosure

Following Julian's fifteenth showing she falls asleep and is attacked in a dream by a demonic presence which would have her doubt the showings and believe that she had been

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<sup>50</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 330.

raving. This is a clue as to the prevalence of a fundamental attitude of self-doubt and fear in Julian. The final, sixteenth showing is given, she tells us, as a confirmation of the truth of the others: "Know it well, it was no hallucination which you saw today, but accept and believe it and hold firmly to it, and you will not be overcome". (ST 22; LT 68.) I suggest we not forget here the echo of the mirroring presence of the religious person who came to her after her dream and who, when she judged herself as having been raving, treated her account of her showings seriously and respectfully. (ST 21; LT 66.) She herself is thus enabled to accept this last, sixteenth showing as a confirmation of all the showings which preceded it.

In this final showing Julian receives a vision of her own soul in the centre of her heart in the middle of which sits the Lord Jesus at rest.

[T]hen our Lord opened my spiritual eyes, and showed me my soul in the midst of my heart. I saw my soul as wide as if it were a kingdom, and from the state which I saw in it, it seemed to me as if it were a fine city. In the midst of this city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man, a handsome person and tall, honourable, the greatest lord. And I saw him splendidly clad in honours. He sits erect there in the soul, in peace and rest, and he rules and he guards heaven and earth and everything that is....

...This was a delectable and a restful sight, for it is so in truth forevermore; and to contemplate [*the behaldynge of*] this while we are here is most pleasing [*plesande*] to God, and very great profit to us. And the soul who thus contemplates [*beholdys*] is made like to him who is contemplated [*beholdene*], and united to him in rest and peace..... And when I had contemplated this with great attention, our Lord very humbly revealed words to me, without voice and without opening of lips, as he had done before, and said very seriously: Know it well, it was no hallucination [*rauyng*] which you saw today, but accept and believe it and hold firmly to it and you will not be overcome. (ST 22; see LT 68.)

I want to suggest that what we see in this showing is a kind of reverse image of the tenth showing in which Julian was drawn to enter into the wounded side of Christ .

Between the tenth and the sixteenth showings we see a mirror reversal, first of Julian being drawn into Jesus through the wound in his side, into a place of rest, and then a revelation of her own soul's interior landscape in the midst of which sits Jesus at rest. Both are images of containment or enclosure. In both instances she sees the enclosure as spacious like a kingdom, though they are reverse images of who is enclosing whom.

The entry point into the tenth showing of being contained in Christ is through the wounds of pain and sin which they share in their suffering humanity. Julian recounts in the Short Text that it was

as if he had said: My child, if you cannot look on my divinity, see here how I suffered my side to be opened and my heart to be split in two and to send out blood and water, all that was in it; and this is a delight to me, and I wish it to be so for you." (ST 13.)

The sense she gives in the Short Text passage is that Christ's Passion reveals only his humanity, not his divinity to Julian. Interestingly the Long Text alters the meaning of Christ's side and heart being rent, suggesting that this is also exposing part of Christ's divinity; that in Christ's open side is both a vision of the Creator *and* the saviour:

And with that he brought to mind the dear and precious blood and water which he suffered to be shed for love. And in this sweet sight he showed his blessed heart split in two, and as he rejoiced he showed to my understanding a part of his blessed divinity, as much as was his will at that time, strengthening my poor soul to understand what can be said, that is the endless love which was without beginning and is and always shall be.

And with this our good Lord said most joyfully: see how I love you, as if he had said, my darling, behold and see you Lord, your God, who is you Creator and your endless joy; see your own brother, your saviour; my child, behold and see what delight and bliss I have in your salvation, and for my love rejoice with me. (LT 24.)

Thus only much later are the two natures of Christ actually articulated by Julian in her entry into his open wound. This image of Julian's enclosure in Christ's body is an image of her acceptability, her recognition, her inclusion in Christ's love and in the salvation of the Church. It must be remembered that the context in which she came to this showing was of having internalized the terror of exclusion and unacceptability, as I see it. I argued above that it could represent the limit of the power of her unacceptable feelings of aggression and the durability of God to contain and humanize that anger in Christ's loving regard. In that light, perhaps the Long Text could be said to confirm this psychoanalytic argument in that the same image takes on, over time, a deeper significance as the acceptability of her creation, as well as her salvation, made possible by Christ's union with humanity in substance and sensuality in our creation.

With regard to the reverse image, that of Christ at rest in Julian's soul, which in some sense is also the soul of all humankind as she sees it, and which Christ desires that humankind behold within, this immanent Christ is seen in his double human nature, in substance and sensuality in both the Short Text and the Long Text. The significance of this showing is that it places Christ's two natures within the human soul contemplating Christ. *It unites Christ's substantial humanity (in our creation) and Christ's sensual humanity (in our salvation) with humankind.* This showing, intended to be for Julian a confirmation of all the showings which preceded it, could be said to have the psychoanalytic function of affirming her whole self in all the changeability of her human sensuality. It is, I suggest, a confirmation of Julian's having come a long way to interiorizing the function of the mirroring (m)other, to becoming capable of seeing herself as she is seen by the Christ of her showings. In other words, having experienced Christ's capaciousness to contain her

humanity -- his *capax humani* so to speak, she is given an image of her whole, authentic self as *capax Dei*, having a capacity for God.

What Julian takes from this sixteenth showing is that “the soul who thus contemplates is made like to him who is contemplated, and united to him in rest and peace”. (ST 22; LT 68.) This allusion to 2 Cor. 3:18, which reads “And we with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect: this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit”, suggests that Julian is learning that the face of Christ gives her mirror knowledge of herself and God. However, it is only in the Long Text that she can say this herself: “And *what can make us to rejoice more in God than to see in him that in us*, of all his greatest works, *he has joy?*” (LT 68.)

Interestingly, too, in the Long Text her final showing of Christ reigning in her soul includes this further description that he is “highest bishop, most awesome king...” (LT 68). The fact that the two natures of Christ, that are eventually seen as united and reigning within her, include episcopal dignity in the Long Text suggests that her anxiety concerning what to believe about her human condition before God has become the locus of a sense of interior authority; that having been located “out there” in external authority it is now “in here”, on the basis of the fruits of her life practice of contemplation. In more psychoanalytic terms this would reflect a long term process of undergoing dying to introjected false selves and growing in a cohesive centre of selfhood, as she sees that mirrored in Christ in different human conditions.

In any event, I am proposing, after Kohut, that between the tenth and the sixteenth showings the shift in these images reflects some transmuted internalization of the mirroring transference which deepens in the twenty year period between the Short and the Long Texts. Recall that Kohut identifies the therapeutic import of the mirroring transference to be in the empathic trusting relationship between analyst and client, which allows the client to withstand the exposure of archaic grandiosity and shame to reality through the therapeutic use of optimum frustration. Here, Julian's trust in the Jesus of her showings allows her to receive these new images of herself no longer in an intense merged mirroring transference of suffering Christ's pains, but rather in images of mutual containment, mutual capaciousness and adequacy. First she beholds herself contained by him in his body, and then containing him in her soul. I suggest that the power of both of these images had to do with how they contrasted with what Julian expected prior to the showings: i.e., that she would be excluded from Christ's salvation and that Christ was not in her. Her revision in the Long Text of the meaning of what she was seeing in entering the side of Christ is such

that suffering and joy were now both occasions of union with Christ. This suggests she was experiencing greater experiential confidence than what she had at the time of writing the Short Text.

In both of these cases of mutual enclosure the images are of bodily enclosure, and so, to that extent, bear resemblance to the first experience in the showings of fusion with Christ in his bodily suffering, and manifest the ongoing preoccupation with pre-oedipal issues of bodily display, holding and mirroring. It could be argued that these reverse images of mutual enclosure represent a shift from a merged mirroring transference, involving a merger or symbiosis of primary identity, toward a less archaic transference. They reveal some greater flexibility in the mirroring transference than do her first showings.<sup>51</sup> The thrust of this argument will find further confirmation in the *exemplum*, where Julian shows even greater flexibility and subtlety of relations to obtain between the beholder and the beheld.

## 7.0 Conclusion

An empathic confrontation with the fragmented reality of her interior condition, by the mirroring function of the Jesus of her showings, makes possible Julian's appropriation of a new centre of selfhood in relation to the Christ of her showings. Julian shows movement from fragmented feelings through to the capacity to feel "both at once" (affect regulation), and contain a greater realism around their interpretation in the presence of Christ (mentalized affectivity). As for eye contact, Julian's images of beholding Christ's *chere* change in ST 12 and LT 21 show the compassionate suffering of the kenotic Christ and his transformation into joy as functioning to enable and reflect back or mirror the movement response of transformation of Julian's own bodily and interior healing process.

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<sup>51</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 116. Lamm and Bauerschmidt each describe in their own terms what I suggest is going on in the mirroring transference. Lamm's comment (which is intended to interpret Julian's tenth showing of her entering the side of Christ) is that for Julian "revelation occurs by dissolving the boundaries between what is interior and what is exterior". See LAMM, 2005, p. 62. Compare this with Bauerschmidt's focus on liminality in his comment that "[t]o be embodied is to have boundaries, but to have boundaries is also to have thresholds, points of opening into which others may enter and from which new things may proceed. It is this possibility that Julian highlights". See BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, p. 64. It seems to me that Julian highlights both... and more, insofar as these images are seen as developments toward greater cohesion, flexibility and adequacy of self and object relations within a mirroring transference. This will be developed in the next diptych in the discussion of Julian's *exemplum* where her relationship with the mirroring Christ becomes yet more nuanced.

The double anthropology which Julian draws from these showings serves to foster in Julian the transmuting internalization of the mirroring function of the Christ of her showings. Her identification of the pain of self-knowledge reflects this internalization. And Julian's refinement in the identification of two secret sins, and how she responds to their presence in her life, is also seen to reflect this process of working through toward greater realism and maturation in her need for mirroring in her transference relationship with the Jesus of her showings.

Finally, Julian's images of mutual bodily enclosure mirror aspects of the growing capaciousness of her relationship with Christ and signal her working through the initial fusion she experienced with the bodily sight of the suffering, dying Christ toward a more differentiated mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings.

## CHAPTER 10

### DIPTYCH 2.2 CONFIRMATION AND RETRIEVAL

#### 1.0 Introduction

In the first chapter of this diptych I explored in Kohutian psychoanalytic terms how Julian submits to the struggle to render her confusion around suffering intelligible, to reform her understanding about what sin is for her and about how she is to relate to Christ when there is sin in her.

I now turn the psychoanalytic correlation on its head, to see how this interpretation of Julian's work of disillusionment and visionary exploration of a new understanding of herself, and the meaning of sin and suffering in relation to the Christ of her *Showings*, might help elucidate the motivation for the historical genesis of her soteriology. *A major assumption in this hypothesis is that correlating the psychobiographical speculation concerning her lack of early mirroring with this feminist problematic in the appropriation of Christian soteriology may offer us clues for grasping the existential urgency which drives the theological originality of Julian's showings and her meditations.*<sup>1</sup> In so doing, it may also speak into the contemporary search for a credible soteriology.

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<sup>1</sup> In Derek Anderson's brilliant study of Julian's nonviolent soteriology as being an important resource for contemporary feminist soteriology, it is this existential or praxeological logic which is missing from his "strict" theological analysis. In discussing Julian's editing (or retrieval) of traditional theological ideas, for example, Anderson writes that Julian "reveals her concern for the pacific quality of the divine life itself.... The logic of Julian's approach seems to turn upon the ideal that God's own life does not admit of violence". This gives the impression that Julian began "consciously and systematically" to construct a nonviolent trinitarian theology such that "Julian's soteriology draws its shape from the peaceful nature... of the Trinity". ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, pp. 117, 144. Not surprisingly, he draws exclusively on the Long Text. My argument moves from the opposite direction to the same end, that *her experience* of appropriation of salvation through the showings led her to reshape soteriology and ultimately trinitarian theology, and is underlined in the historical evolution of thought in the Short Text and Long Text. This is a question of taking seriously in an historical subject the disclosure of context and social location as essential to theological methodology. His silence as to his own social location is another instance of this problem. Despite the differences in methodology however, Anderson's study is a major contribution to the feminist constructive project in soteriology, and an articulate response to a major gap in soteriological studies of Julian of Norwich which has failed to treat "Julian's theology as a resource for addressing contemporary concerns for the violent implications of Christian teaching about salvation". ANDERSON, 2005, p. 63. I suspect his work will become a standard by which Julian studies in soteriology will be

Elizabeth Johnson describes the second movement in the liberation dynamic of the conversion process as one of confirmation, involving a retrieval of good news from the Christian tradition through memory, narrative and solidarity with others who are suffering. The problem of intelligibility raised by the contrast experience moves toward the confirmation of a meaningful response experienced in greater flourishing of womankind. With regard to the retrieval moment in this process Johnson writes that “[t]he ambiguity of the Christian tradition lies precisely in this fact, that despite its sexism it has served as a strong source of life for countless women throughout the centuries and continues to do so today”.<sup>2</sup>

I will draw again on Sebastian Moore to assist this correlation, this time in the form of Cynthia Crysdale’s reading of Moore’s soteriology which is sensitive both to the social location of women, and the concern to understand personal responsibility for sin in tandem with the systemic causes and effects of sin.<sup>3</sup> I will draw on Crysdale in two movements, each of which will be followed by an exploration of Julian’s *Showings* in the Short Text and their equivalent in the Long Text. These two movements follow Crysdale’s description of her soteriology as a double-sided approach to redemption.<sup>4</sup> In the first movement Crysdale examines how women and others on the underside of history can find the cross an authentic symbol of salvation when we come to situate ourselves primarily as having been victims of systemic sin, and can identify with the crucified rather than the crucifiers, a difference in situation which has important consequences for how salvation is experienced by such persons, at least initially.

However, Crysdale is also concerned, as is Sebastian Moore, that only Christ is truly sinless. Victims of social and familial systemic sin participate nonetheless in those systems, but can with healing become more responsible agents. It is this second movement, which is concerned with articulating an authentic expression of what the experience of sin and personal responsibility is for women and others who have no voice in history, which rounds out Crysdale’s soteriology.

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measured.

<sup>2</sup> JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is: The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1998, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> I am not the first to apply Crysdale’s work to a study of Julian of Norwich. Pauline Head applies both Crysdale’s Moore-based soteriology and James Alison’s Girardian soteriology to Julian. See HEAD, Pauline, *‘I would be one of them and suffer with Him’: Relationship, sin and redemption in Julian of Norwich’s theology of the trinity*, M.A. thesis, Trinity College, University of Toronto, 2004, 75 p. Unfortunately, this document was not available through interlibrary loan at this time of writing.

<sup>4</sup> CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, p. 25.



Each of these two movements in Crysedale's soteriology will be followed by a correlation of the relational psychoanalytic mirroring dynamic in Julian's *Showings* which I explored in the first chapters of these diptychs, i.e., chapters 7 and 9. This attempt at the correlation of these discourses will help to illuminate for us Julian's search for the locus of her true self and for the intelligibility of sin and human responsibility she found in relation to the Christ revealed in her showings. Her visionary experience brings to light new meaning for her and for us in this century, when it is seen in view of the situation of her human condition I am proposing. It puts into a very different light, for example, the critique, even from some sympathetic Julian specialists, that her soteriology is somehow unorthodox, or even heretical.<sup>5</sup>

As Johnson describes this second movement in liberation conversion, the retrieval must take place in what she calls a context of "narrative remembrance", which "functions to empower women not as individual monads but in a solidarity of sisters".<sup>6</sup> What in Julian's case might have provided material for retrieval, given that she was, as I am suggesting, enclosed in the anchorhold (or at least aspiring to it and living some form of seclusion at the time of the showings)? This chapter closes with three possible (albeit to varying degrees ambiguous) sources in the medieval soteriological, anchoritic and mystical tradition from which Julian seems to have retrieved for her unique appropriation of Christ's saving work in terms of what I am calling mirroring. Although our knowledge of any "solidarity" Julian might have enjoyed (in some postulated network of anchorites, for example) is hypothetical, the account of Margery Kempe's visit to Julian and of the good counsel Julian gave must stand as a witness to the fact that Julian listened to those in need and became renowned in her own day, not for her writing, but for the comfort, compassion and wisdom she shared with those who came to her window. In other words, it can be said with some certainty that she was confirmed by others' responses that what she herself needed was what others needed too.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, LEWIS, Muriel, "After reflecting on Julian's revelations of *behovabil synne*", *Studia mystica* 6, 1983, p. 41, where she writes that Julian makes

statements which advance the most comforting conception of sin to be found in Christian literature. Ideas puzzling, contradictory, astounding and daring to the point of heresy abound in her book. Everyone loves Julian; no [one] wants to think her a heretic. But the writer who wants to present this amiable anchoress as totally orthodox has a problem.... [S]ome critics and commentators in their desire to preserve Julian's orthodoxy, have ignored or tried to explain away her more startling statements.

<sup>6</sup> JOHNSON, 1992, p. 63.

## 2.0 Soteriology from the underside of history

In the first diptych I described Sebastian Moore's psychoanalytic soteriology and parable of original sin, and began to apply it to Julian's experience of suffering. The engagement of her suffering with the Christ of her showings gave rise to what I called the contrast experience in her *Showings*. In this chapter, I continue that application, with help from Cynthia Crysdale. Crysdale draws on Sebastian Moore to explore what sin, salvation and conversion look like from the underside of history, that is, as it is experienced by women and persons in other dispossessed groups who have systemically interiorized self-hate.<sup>7</sup> Crysdale's approach offers an important lens, through which to read Sebastian Moore's soteriology, for women and others who have been oppressed by traditional soteriological interpretations of the cross.

First I will look more closely at what Crysdale has to say about the experience of sin and how salvation is appropriated by those on the underside of history.

Then, turning to Julian's showings, I explore how this approach can help us retrieve what I suggest is happening in Julian as she describes the transformation in the face of the Christ of her visions, which is that it puts a limit to her suffering and causes her to have to discern something new which Christ intends for her to understand about herself and sin, instead of assuming that what she knew before was true.

### 2.1 Cynthia Crysdale's soteriology from the side of the victim: grief as participation in crucifixion

Crysdale, like Johnson but unlike many white western Christian feminists, seeks to find new meaning in the cross, and she engages the search for an authentic meaning of the cross first by reinterpreting suffering, particularly oppressive suffering.

Crysdale's project is what I am calling a "pre-oedipal soteriology" in that, like Sebastian Moore, she is focused on the systemic arrest of the development of *self worth* in women. Crysdale recognizes familial or relational dysfunctionality *as well as* other forms of patriarchal, social sin as systemic to the problem of the incredibility of the cross for women, "*both of which systematically destroy... self esteem in the name of good faith*", particularly as Christianity is a prime mover in all these distortions.<sup>8</sup> She describes

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<sup>7</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 159, fn. 9. Crysdale takes the idea of the "underside of history" from GUTIÉRREZ, Gustavo, *The power of the poor in history*, transl. BARR, Robert, Maryknoll NY, Orbis, 1983, pp. 192, 169 - 234. Crysdale expands the concept to "refer to all who have been left out of the telling of history, those whose voice has not been allowed a public forum".

<sup>8</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 2, emphasis added.

this situation first by drawing an example from the novel *The good conscience* by Carlos Fuentes about the fruitless self-inflicted suffering of a Mexican boy who wants to imitate Jesus and whips himself in an attempt to pay for the sins of his family.<sup>9</sup> What Crysdale takes from this novel is a classic example of what I have described above in the first diptych as Julian's confusion in the meaning of the experience of suffering, which, despite all its good will does not lead to real solidarity and transformation, but simply perpetuates a sense of self-preoccupation with personal (over)responsibility and isolation.

It is important to note, however, Crysdale's observation that there is "no suffering that simply exists 'out there', whose meaning and value are somehow determined apart from the person experiencing the suffering. Suffering is always an *interpreted* event".<sup>10</sup> This is significant, because she does not see events of suffering as redemptive or unredemptive in themselves, but rather in how they are interpreted and evaluated. This grounds her claim that

no evil that one can suffer ... is beyond the scope of God's healing. There is, to be sure, oppressive suffering, and I am not claiming in any way that such suffering is good for people; only that such suffering *can be* the locus of God's presence, *can be* the medium through which we encounter God.<sup>11</sup>

She then uses narratives from her own life to describe what kinds of experience of suffering can be interpreted as redemptive. First she recalls her experience of birthing her first child, and how that pain was also transformative, like dying and rising *simultaneously*.

Then she speaks of her personal growth in recognition of family dysfunctionality which led her to translate "sin into the modern maladies of addiction and victimization, and recovering 'forgiveness of sins' as 'recovery from addictive habits'".<sup>12</sup> This last point is a significant confirmation for the theoretical grounds of the present study, when linked to McDargh's intuition that the extension of object relations theory to family systems is one way in which the barrier between intrapsychic and social discourses in psychoanalytic theory and theology is being dissolved. As McDargh puts it,

There are intellectual and empirical pressures within modern psychoanalytic theorizing that move it in creative ways to engage political and social realities as essential and not accidental components in the formation of the intrapsychic life. We could cite, for example, the increasingly influential work of German psychoanalyst Alice Miller who has forced us to look at the real impact of

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<sup>9</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 33, emphasis in text.

<sup>11</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 33, emphasis in text.

<sup>12</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 3.

psychological and physical abuse in childhood on the psychic development as well as the long-term consequences for political and cultural life of the patterns of family life and child-rearing that perpetuate such abuse. Parallel to Miller's accounts of the systematic character of the social pressures that shape and misshape the human personality are the theoretic and therapeutic efforts to extend psychoanalytic object relations theory in the direction of family therapy and general systems theory. The point of these references is that insofar as they represent the opening of modern depth psychology to the dimension of the political and the social they promise that any theology that seriously dialogues with such theory and its originating praxis may avoid the narrowing focus on the individual that has been one of the hazards of a psychological analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Crysdale also describes her growth in awareness of the importance of feminist issues for her self-understanding.<sup>14</sup> Saiving Goldstein's exposure of the difference between sin as experienced by men and women, Roberta Bondi's *Memories of God* and other feminist influences led Crysdale to affirm with Bondi that, for women and the dispossessed, the authentic

meaning in the cross [comes] through *grief* rather than guilt... seeing the issue of... salvation not as that of forgiveness but as that of healing, healing the false shame....

The cross and resurrection have traditionally been interpreted as redeeming humankind from sin as arrogant ambition. The problem that is solved by the cross is our direct or indirect destruction of those we love -- including God -- and the solution is God's forgiveness, manifested in the resurrection. Redemption involves a transaction whereby Jesus died for us, standing in our place to pay the penalty that we owe to God for sin. While this approach retains its prominence today, another side of the story is now being told.

The difficulties with understanding sin primarily as pride, especially for women and those on the "underside" of history, have been recognized for several decades. *For those who approach the cross with an already beleaguered sense of self, what is to be discovered in the cross and resurrection is not -- initially -- forgiveness but healing.* The wounded victims of the world, in contemplating Jesus on the cross, discover themselves not primarily as crucifiers of a sinless one but as victims who have been slain. Jesus the crucified becomes ally and friend; God the Father becomes grieving parent and the Risen Lord signifies healing and empowerment.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> McDARGH, John, "Theological uses of psychology: Retrospective and prospective", *Horizons* 12, 1985, pp. 263 - 264.

<sup>14</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, pp. 7 - 8, emphasis added. See SAIVING GOLDSTEIN, Valerie, "The human situation: A feminine view", *Journal of religion* 40, 1960, pp. 100 - 112, who was the first to grasp that for women pride is not the primary sin but rather self-deprecation. BONDI, Roberta, *Memories of God: Theological reflections on a life*, Nashville TN, Abingdon Press, 1995, p. 113. Overviews of feminist views of sin can be found in ALSFORD, Sally, "Sin and atonement in feminist perspective", in *Atonement today*, ed. GOLDINGAY, John, London, SPCK, 1995, pp. 148 - 165; CAHOY, William, "One species or two? Kierkegaard's anthropology and the feminist critique of the concept of sin", *Modern theology* 11, 1995, pp. 429 - 454.

Thus Crysdale engages Sebastian Moore's psychoanalytic soteriological insights about sin and salvation but with a particular focus on how this is experienced in human lives lived on the underside of history. She identifies Moore's key insight in his book *The crucified Jesus is no stranger*, that Jesus represents for us our own potential Self -- the deep and hidden person that we are before God -- which we crucify rather than allow to live. "What if Jesus were the representative, the symbol, the embodiment, of this dreaded yet desired self of each of us, this destiny of being human...? The crucifixion of Jesus then becomes the central drama of man's refusal of his true self".<sup>16</sup>

I described in the first diptych how Moore's inverse soteriology comes to see Jesus' own life as this symbol of dying to false self which culminates in his crucifixion. As this drama plays itself out in a person, Jesus' crucifixion confronts him or her with "the evil in his life becoming *explicit* as the wilful destruction of his true self now concrete for him in the man on the cross".<sup>17</sup> Moore says in this place that all symbols transform, that the crucified as symbol transforms and converts evil into sin and sin into grace. "And through this conversion the believer finds as his own that identity which first he rejected and crucified. He passes -- and we are forever passing, back and forth -- from 'crucifying the Lord of glory' to being 'nailed to the cross with Christ'".<sup>18</sup> Crysdale adds that as Jesus' crucifixion was resolved in his bodily Resurrection, "so, in the life of the believer, does the making explicit of one's Self-destruction become the occasion of transformation".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> MOORE, Sebastian, *The crucified Jesus is no stranger*, NY, Paulist, 1977, p. x, in CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 8. Crysdale's assumption on page two that Moore's categories are Jungian is inaccurate, if his later writing is taken into consideration. See the discussion in the previous diptych of his appropriation of Alice Miller's psychoanalysis. The reference to McDargh above makes clear why this clarification is significant. Crysdale's own definition of "Self" is theological -- the *imago Dei* -- "that finds its full flourishing only in the embrace of God's community of love". See CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 159, fn. 10. Nonetheless, her capitalizing of the word "Self" follows Jung -- not Moore. In the present study I will capitalize it only when quoting Crysdale.

Moreover, unlike Jungian archetypes, Moore grounds the Christian encounter with the symbol of Jesus' crucifixion in the realism of history. In his experience of encounter in the Christian contemplative experience there is a tension:

Resolve it by dissolving the thought of the Jesus who actually was on that cross, and the encounter itself, with all its power to evoke in me the self, falls to pieces.... Make of *him* simply the as yet unappropriated self, and the tension and realism of the encounter collapses. MOORE, 1977, p. 30, emphasis in text.

Crysdale recognizes this point. CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> MOORE, 1977, p. x, emphasis in text.

<sup>18</sup> MOORE, 1977, p. xi.

<sup>19</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 8.

According to Moore and Crysdale, the cross makes explicit what otherwise would remain an obscure tendency to destroy what we could, and at some level want to, become. Because there is no evil in Jesus, all evil is revealed on the side of those who will his death. Evil is restricted to his crucifiers, an act arising from the human heart; it is not in God.<sup>20</sup> In this way for Moore sin is not disobedience to a divine command but, as Crysdale puts it, an innate conflict between who we are and who we can become. Unable to believe in ourselves, there is a “death wish” in our desires and aspirations, an alienation between humankind’s conscious ego and this true self.<sup>21</sup> The resistance we can feel to being one’s true self leads, in the full extent of evil, to the destruction -- crucifixion -- of any evidence of being called to full personhood in us, and it is well identified in the kind of envy or resentment one can have of others who *are* dying to ego.

Crysdale contributes to Moore’s soteriology a new and significant dimension. She makes explicit its significance for those on the underside of history. She says that the process of dying to ego,

acknowledging our own Self-destruction, mediated through the crucified Jesus, leads to insights into how we are not only crucifiers but also the crucified. The more we can see the ways in which we sabotage our own flourishing, the more we are able to see how we ourselves are victims, are objects of crucifixion.<sup>22</sup>

But unlike Moore’s understanding of sin, which she says is still linked to pride, such that it is now translated into the “ego needing to be in control, the ego refusing to yield to the Self...”, Crysdale observes that for women and other “designated non-persons in this world -- the path to salvation may begin from the other side”.<sup>23</sup> For those whose value has been interiorized in terms of their helpfulness to other persons, “the rejection of Self comes in a different form, not as the ego taking charge but as the ego capitulating to others’ definition of full human flourishing”.<sup>24</sup> Crysdale’s point is critical.

For those who *begin* thinking of themselves as non-Selves, salvation has to do with the discovery of integral dignity and the choosing of this mystery of Self by a *strengthened* ego. From this angle one discovers something altogether different in entering the cross and resurrection story.... [I]n contemplating Jesus on the cross, one discovers oneself, not as the crucifier who willed this death, but as the victim who has been slain....

In this case *transformation works in the opposite direction*. By identifying with Jesus the Crucified, one is able to name one’s own victimization,

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<sup>20</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 10.

to face the wounds that have hampered one's full human flourishing. *Detrimental assumptions that one is constitutionally unable to be in communion with God are unveiled as false presuppositions that destroy one's potential Self.*<sup>25</sup>

Thus the point is that those on the underside of history will discover themselves primarily in the crucified Jesus *as the crucified, not the crucifier*. For such as these, says Crysdale, the moment of Resurrection transformation conveys not forgiveness initially, but rather empowerment.

If, for those who are the powerful voices of history, the redemptive suffering which leads to forgiveness is the recognition of guilt, what then, for the voiceless, is the kind of suffering which is authentic and transformative into empowerment, as that is mediated by Jesus' crucifixion? Moore's insistence on the place of bereavement, as the different kind of suffering which is undergone in letting go of the resistance to dying to ego as mediated by Jesus' crucifixion, is significant. It connects with Bondi's observation that women come to redemption through *grief* rather than guilt. It seems to me that there is no other response possible than grief when a non-person begins to recognize that non-identity as such by the making explicit of its own symbolic death, as that is mediated in an identification with Jesus' crucifixion.<sup>26</sup>

Recall also that grief, or mourning as Homans put it, is a lieu for transitional activity, engaging narcissism and opening a transitional space where transformation in the spiritual life and symbol formation may occur. Grief engages a new awareness of the disfigured ego's powerlessness to maintain the illusory (shame-based) self and world it had created in order to deny the awareness of systemic suffering. And in the assent to grieve the death of this illusory self and its world (including its god), a different kind of pain is suffered, a pain which can feel like one is dying. And yet through engaging that pain, a new birth is potentially made possible in which a person's awareness of a new, unknown yet familiar centre of selfhood emerges, which Crysdale identifies as the self, constitutionally related to God in Jesus' crucifixion.

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<sup>25</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> Other feminist expressions of this grief on the part of victims of sexual abuse describe this grief as a disillusionment with a false god, expressed as

la souffrance de se sentir abandonnées par Dieu, de devoir faire le deuil du Dieu qui n'a pas sauvé, le deuil d'une certitude ébranlée par l'expérience. Or, des victimes, des survivantes, ont finalement découvert, avec joie et surprise, non seulement qu'il était possible et correcte de douter dans de telles circonstances, mais que Dieu leur était présent même dans ces temps de doute et d'errance spirituelle.

NADEAU, Jean-Guy, Carole GOLDING and Claude ROCHON, "Les victimes d'abus sexuels confrontées à la souffrance et à la violence de la Passion", *Théologiques* 13, 2, 2005, p. 102.

On this experience of grief, which is so significant both to Julian's experience and to Homans' extension of the concept of transitional space from object relations theory into the field of cultural symbol formation, Crysdale does not dwell very long, however. Yet I suspect it is pivotal to grasping the motivation for the reverse direction of the appropriation of soteriology by women. Nor does she go into any detail as to how the identification with the crucified one is experienced in practices that are not just cognitive and linear in nature, unlike Moore who brings his contemplative practice into his soteriology.<sup>27</sup> However, this does not impede the present study from applying Crysdale's insights to Julian's *Showings*.

## 2.2 *Noughting: Julian's identification with Christ's Passion and change of chere*

Turning to Julian's *Showings*, I propose to explore briefly how this approach can give us a language for retrieving what I suggest is happening in Julian as she describes her visionary identification with Christ in his Passion and the transformation in the face of the Christ of her visions. I believe we can see two shifts in Julian's early visionary experience which signal a profound reorientation and transformation: First, as we saw above, she enters into a new kind of suffering of grief and intensified awareness of dying. Second, she experiences this as an identification with the Crucified. This intimacy with the suffering Christ causes her to have to challenge the assumption she seems to have introjected that she is constitutionally unable to experience union with God. It initiates in Julian a healing experience of self worth and human dignity as a new centre of selfhood constituted in the sight of the Christ of her *Showings*.

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<sup>27</sup> In this regard, I observe that it is one of the satisfying aspects of Anderson's thesis that he distinguishes epistemological from ontological and relational accounts of salvation. Ruether's balanced condensation of feminist theological accounts of this-worldly salvation that are responsive to women's flourishing, he observes, "depends for its success upon the ability of excluded people to recognize the value of their own personhood and to resist the structures that silence and exclude". ANDERSON, 2005, p. 47. Anderson, like Grace Jantzen and others, sees this impulse toward liberation in Julian of Norwich. See JANTZEN, Grace, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and theologian*, London, SPCK, 1987, p. 158, for example. However, he says, in feminist discourses, epistemological recognition, or consciousness-raising, tends to be seen as the solution to the problem of sin. This, he argues is not adequate to deal with the human plight, and even alludes to its pelagian consequences, such that in some feminist accounts Christ is rendered incidental to the epistemological account of the solution of sin. ANDERSON, 2005, p. 53. Anderson implicitly adverts to the ontological and relational dimensions of Julian's anthropology which "insists that humans can be restored to just and nurturing relationships with one another only when their humanity is restored to wholeness in mother Christ". ANDERSON, 2005, p. 48. Moreover, he addresses the question of how a salvific mode of discourse might function in human lives in his account of the "performative" nature of Julian's book. The *Showings* became for Julian and her readers a text to meditate on in order that the book might be "performed", i.e., that in the practice, we might become more like the God who was shown to her. ANDERSON, 2005, chs. 2, 5.



The first thing Julian discovers is that her identification with Christ in his suffering produces a new kind of suffering we might call intense grief, which Julian describes as her suffering Christ's pains. We may assume that this pain was not just "in her imagination", though it was in the transitional realm of the showings, but that she also actually felt this pain bodily -- in a new register. Moreover, this new experience of pain opens her to the immensity of Christ's universal suffering, the suffering of all of humankind contained in Christ's suffering. In that sense, this pain gives her a new experience of meaning: it opens her, potentially, to solidarity with the suffering of others. And I suggest it is precisely this new kind of suffering which also begins to set a *limit* to her previous interpretation of suffering as somehow good "in itself". It constitutes her inauguration into the formation of her identity shaped by "*mynd* of the Passion", as a process of what we might call dying to false (dysfunctional) ego in relation to the Christ of her showings.

The redemptive kind of suffering, the lifelong work of dying to false ego associated with "*mynd* of the Passion" is for Julian a process of what she calls *noughting*, which we might reinterpret as a detachment from those creaturely things (and relationships) in which she sought spiritual rest but did not find it. As she writes in the first showing about the little thing no bigger than a hazelnut, which is all of creation:

What may this be? And it was answered generally thus: It is everything that is made. I marvelled how it might last, for it seemed to me it might have suddenly fallen into nothing [*nawght*] because of its littleness.

This little thing which is created seemed to me as if it could have fallen into nothing [*nought*] because of its littleness. We need to have knowledge of this, so that we may delight in despising as nothing everything created, so as to love and have uncreated God. For this is the reason why our hearts and souls are not in perfect ease, because here we seek rest in this thing which is so little, in which there is no rest, and we do not know God who is almighty, all wise and all good, for he is true rest. God wishes to be known and it pleases him that we should rest in him; for all things which are beneath him are not sufficient for us. And this is the reason why no soul has rest until it has despised as nothing [*till it is noughted of*] all which is created. When the soul has become nothing [*is noughted*] for love, so as to have him who is all that is good, then is it able to receive spiritual rest. (LT 5; see ST 4.)

On this point Pelphrey describes two kinds of *noughting* in Julian. The first is the "no thing" of sin in the Augustinian sense. The second is God's own entering into the process of *noughting* in order to redeem creation. "The incarnation, humiliation and crucifixion of the Second Person of the Trinity is precisely God's own experience of *noughting*."<sup>28</sup> It is this *noughting* or *kenosis* which began at Jesus' conception, and

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<sup>28</sup> PELPHREY, Brant, "Much ado about *noughting*", *Julian paper 9*, Waukesha WI, Order of Julian of

which is represented by Jesus' experience of absence and loss in physical pain, thirst, cold and darkness, and by his falling into despair, death, and hell.... In the crucifixion... Jesus allows himself to be negated without any response. It is his failure to react -- his own deliberate *noughting* -- which turns evil around.<sup>29</sup>

Pelphrey describes the two types of *noughting* in Julian therefore in a way that is not unlike Moore. Although Pelphrey does not describe the latter in terms of grief *per se*, neither does he describe it in terms of guilt and forgiveness. He describes it as amounting to a self-emptiness shared in Jesus, which I liken here to that experience of emptiness and deprivation which Kohut describes as the first experience of the authentic centre of selfhood.

For Julian it is possible to experience *noughting* through evil alone -- in which case we experience despair and death -- or it is possible to experience another *noughting* through faith in the redemptive power of Jesus' own self-emptiness, in which case we experience redemption, compassion and new life.<sup>30</sup>

*Nawght* in the first sense might be akin to Julian's pains and suffering which have no intelligibility, experienced as they are out of a sense of isolated abandonment, until they are experienced in the second sense, as a mourning of the dying false ego in union with Christ in whom there is solidarity with other suffering people. *Noughting* in this second understanding, as sharing in Jesus' self-emptying, is that pain Julian describes of coming

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Norwich, 1994, p. 11. Compare Aers who sees this as an example of Julian's strategy of "superseding the conventional image", here, of creaturely fragility, with, in this instance, "theological reflections on the nature of desire". AERS, David, "The humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", in AERS, David and Lynn STALEY, *The powers of the holy: Religion, politics and gender in the late medieval English culture*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania state University Press, 1996, pp. 84 - 85.

See also HIDE, Kerrie, "'Only in God do I have all': The soteriology of Julian of Norwich", *Downside review* 122. 2004, pp. 50 - 51, where, in her exegetical rigour, she notices a spelling variant in P (reproduced in the quote from LT 5 above) between *nawght* and *nought*. According to Hide, "*Nawght* is an Old English word that describes that which does not exist, nothing at all. The 'fall to *nawght*', to be nothing at all, rather than all in God, graphically confronts the reader. It resonates with Julian's interpretation that sin is *nought*". (Admittedly the P manuscript changes the spelling in the second occurrence of this expression.) Then on pp. 52 - 53 she continues:

Julian plays with the paradoxical meaning of *nawght* and *nought*. It is noteworthy that though these words sound alike, spelling distinguishes the nuance in meaning. We think we will fall into nothing, but paradoxically we must become nothing. We are to have "right *nought* between God and [us]..."

(I observe in the OED that contemporary English retains something of this distinction in the meanings of "naughty" and "not".)

<sup>29</sup> PELPHREY, 1994, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> PELPHREY, 1994, p. 13. The context of Pelphrey's interest in this paper is the dialogue between Christians and Buddhists. It is on this last point that Julian, he says, differs from Buddhism.

into self-knowledge. While the experience of self-emptying is at first painful, Hide observes that, for Julian, it is what makes possible her prayer for “full worship” of God.

This usage of the word “worship” means more than honour, praise, glory and thanks. “Full worship” conveys a sense of the total and absolute giving of one’s self. We only fully worship if we come “nakedly, fully” and “*homely*”.... Emptying, becoming as nothing, leaves a space for God to fill us so that we may be true to God’s desire for us to have all.<sup>31</sup>

*Noughting* in union with Jesus’ *noughting*, or dying to ego is also “cosmic compassion” and brings forth compassion in the creature. As Pelphrey observes,

[i]n Christ’s pain or negation we find our own pain and negation; but this, surprisingly, becomes the positive value of compassion. Further, we begin to see the world around us through the eyes of compassion. Thus in our own pain and in the pain of the world, we discover the presence of the divine. Concern for ourselves turns into concern for others, indeed, for the whole world.<sup>32</sup>

The second point I wish to underline is that all of this takes place in Julian’s showings as she enters into a merged identification *only* with Christ. Even Mary plays a relatively insignificant role in Julian’s visionary world, which is different from the affective tradition’s expectations. Although Julian is quick to place herself as among the sinful and unworthy, the early showings consistently return to the bodily sight of Christ’s Passion with which, as I have argued, she enters into an intense fused mirroring transference. If entering into the experience of salvation engages an identification with the Crucified (as distinct from the crucifiers) for those on the underside of history, then Julian’s experience and the *reversal* of anticipated meaning it reveals to her is a classic example of Crysdale’s observation (in section 2.1 above).

Thus the grief-pain and suffering in merged identification with Christ is the beginning of lifelong healing and reorientation for Julian. Consider, in the first showing, the significance of her astonishment and wonder that “he would be so *homely* [intimate] with a sinful creature living in this wretched flesh” (ST 3; LT 4), and again in the next chapter, the vision of the little, fragile thing which God enfolds in love. What I suggest is striking in this response of astonishment is that it would parallel what Crysdale is saying about women who have introjected a systemic belief in their self-hatefulness. In particular, I propose that this vision challenges the root of Julian’s *deleterious assumption that she is constitutionally unable to be in communion with God*. This very first showing

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<sup>31</sup> HIDE, 2004, pp. 54 - 55.

<sup>32</sup> PELPHREY, 1994, p. 13.

reveals this not to be the case, as she finds herself entering actively into Christ's Passion and seeing herself and all creation enfolded in God's love.

Again, the moment of mutual change of *chere* could be said to signal the point at which Julian is called out of an unconscious systemic pattern of relating to Christ, (as to everyone else presumably), out of a self-hateful drivenness to suffer endlessly. Beholding his face of joy beholding her, she now is being challenged to take her own existence or incarnation seriously. This also would seem to be just the opposite of what she might have expected in such an encounter, that is, that Christ's suffering condition would be endless. Or worse, that she would be judged by God as hatefully as by her own internalized, merciless judge.

But what she sees mirrored back is not painful in those ways. Rather, Christ's *chere* of joy encourages her to keep looking "in the mirror" if you will, to see what Christ will reveal that she has not known about herself, especially in terms of her acceptability, her self worth and her belovedness in the eyes of the Jesus of her visions. I would argue that this is the moment that Julian has the first taste of her *true self as that is constitutionally related to, and relationally constituted in the sight of, the Christ of her showings*. I would even venture to speculate that Julian's astonished experience of this eye to eye contact and mutual change of *chere*, is her first experience of the conversion to a new centre of identity in relation to Christ. This reversal of the anticipated meaning of the cross in Julian's showings is also at the heart of salvation for those on the underside of history. As we'll see in the next dyptich, this eye contact and its transforming effect resonates through the mature vision of her soteriology given in the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant.

Julian's reverse images of enclosure are significant expressions of her exploration of the implications of this new centre of selfhood in visual and bodily terms. Entering the wounded side of Christ is an image of her acceptability and inclusion among the saved in Christ's Body the Church. Beholding Christ reigning within her soul gives visual image to the union in substance which was never lost in the fall *and* the union in sensuality which Christ's flesh taking enables in her humanity.

As for Crysedale's description of the empowerment which comes when women undergo this reverse way into the appropriation of salvation in Christ, the final, confirming vision of Christ reigning in her soul also gives the reader a sense of Julian's new self-possession and authority. Recall that in the Long Text her final showing of Christ reigning in her soul includes this further description that he is "highest bishop, most awesome king..." (LT 68). A number of feminists as well as other theologians have

criticized Julian's theology as somehow thwarted or not fully exploiting the criticism of the Church that is in it, due to her limited status, and difficulties in the culture itself, which could be taken as a criticism of the maturity of her sense of inner authority.<sup>33</sup> However, what seems to be evident here is nothing short of Julian's experiencing a sense of empowerment, in the sense in which Crysedale is using this word. In this respect Lamm has recently observed that Julian

has redefined what it is to be a bishop and what it means to have power and authority, and she has redefined such things in terms of a radical love that knows no anger and assigns no blame.... Julian does not have to summon anger to censure the bishops in Avignon, Rome, and Norwich. In simply and faithfully describing the ideal -- Christ as mother, Christ as friend and as courteous Lord, and *Christ as bishop in her soul* -- she has already exposed the distance between the bishops and Christ.<sup>34</sup>

I believe we can see in the character of Julian's peculiar movement into appropriating her salvation that this experience of transformation is, as Crysedale predicted, working in the opposite direction from the traditional model of the appropriation of Christian salvation. Rather than unveiling a sense of guilt for sin, in Julian's case, the encounter with the Christ of her showings uncovers a disorienting (because it challenges her attachment to shame and despair) but irresistible intimacy. This encounter causes her to have to discern something new which Christ intends for her to understand about herself and about suffering and sin, and to relinquish her assumption that what she knew before was true. As we'll see below, this revision of Julian's understanding of her human anthropology and of suffering caused by sin, as mirrored in the face of the Jesus of her showings, becomes the means by which she is also freed for greater self-knowledge and solidarity with others.

### 3.0 Sin and responsibility from the underside

Exploring the correlation further, I will now look at what Crysedale understands to be a more credible approach to what personal responsibility might look like for those on the underside of history who are undertaking -- or rather resisting -- the journey of ego deaths

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<sup>33</sup> See for examples, JANTZEN, Grace, *power, gender and Christian mysticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 182: "Julian's refusal to question the church is even more disturbing because the church of her time was badly corrupt, and Julian knew it". Also, BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. x, where he writes that "there is a certain thwarted quality to Julian's imagining of the social because it was a mythos that was virtually impossible to perform under the conditions of late medieval christendom...."

<sup>34</sup> See LAMM, Julian, "Revelation as exposure in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Spiritus*, 5, 2005, p. 69, emphasis added.

which would bear fruit in profounder self worth and solidarity with humankind. This forms the other side of Crysedale's double-sided approach to redemption.

Crysedale adapts Moore in proposing that those the underside of history will discover themselves in the crucified Jesus, initially at least, as the crucified, not the crucifier. But none of us is sinless. How then to understand the peculiar responsibility for sin on the part of those whose lives have been deeply marked by the *effects* of the social systemic sins of patriarchy, racism, familial or ecclesiastical neglect or abuse, etc., over which they have little if any control?

I propose that the revision of Julian's understanding of suffering caused by sin is seen to expose her to sins she had not recognized before. Seeing nothing, when she expected to see sin -- and nothing but sin, is simultaneously for her an experience of a new centre of selfhood in Christ experienced as unknown and empty. Sin for Julian comes to be identified as blindness in relationship to God, which she recognizes under two forms, as impatience and despair.<sup>35</sup> This blindness I suggest, insofar as it is clung to as a kind of victim identity, represents for Julian the phenomenon of resistance to the salvific process of disillusionment and death to false ego. The blindness in these two forms keeps the soul from experiencing transformation in the self-God relationship in the sight of God. And over time, between the Short and the Long Texts, I propose that we see her conscious discernment of complicity in such blindness deepen. At the same time, her union in Christ is more and more deeply rooted in her self acceptance of her temporal or sensual nature, and compassion for herself in union with Christ becomes a means to greater solidarity with others.

### 3.1 Complicity as sin for those on the underside of history

The suffering, which Crysedale identifies as that which can come to be interpreted as the locus of encounter with God, begins in the conscious recognition of helplessness.

Christians have always insisted on the utter helplessness of human persons before the enormity of sin: to insist that one can reverse the cycles of alienation, can solve

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<sup>35</sup> See NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom's daughter: the theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, p. 128, where she makes the connection between Julian's experience of sin as despair and contemporary feminists' reversal of sin:

Feminist scholars point out that unhealthy self-denial and self-loathing, rather than the self-aggrandizement of pride, are the sins to which women are particularly prone. Julian's emphasis upon depression and doubtful fear of one's self-worth lends support, from a distant century, to this view.

the problem of evil with one's own abilities, is simply to perpetuate the distortion that is at the heart of sin.<sup>36</sup>

The awareness of one's helplessness before systemic types of sin, I would add, is nonetheless an experience which is resisted whether one is on the underside of history or not. In the context of narcissistic woundedness in terms of grandiosity and shame resulting from familial neglect for example, helplessness is a condition of awareness which is to be avoided at all costs. As I have observed above in light of Rossiter's work, women's resistance to yielding to the true self involves self-sabotage, and this may still involve attempts by the *ego in relationships* to control the other, control the outcomes of future events, as well as other forms of evading the experience of fundamental helplessness. Yet without a clear sense of one's helplessness, the notion that God is the agent of salvation and of grace does not make real sense, even if religious language is invoked. More specifically, Jesus' condition of helplessness on the cross will not be a point of self-identification.

In order to understand better how God could be an agent of salvation and grace for people on the underside of history, Crysdale draws a contrast between Walter Wink's description of redemption conceived as a domination system, and another kind of redemption, which she calls an ethic of risk.<sup>37</sup>

Crysdale describes Wink's understanding of how the domination system operates by locating evil outside itself, and producing the myth that violence and control will be redemptive.<sup>38</sup> This system, where it has infiltrated the Christian tradition, has led historically to systemic injustice and therefore contributes to the incredibility of Christian soteriologies of the cross.<sup>39</sup>

Looked at through the lens of women and others who have been the *object* of domination, another twist in the insidiousness of this system must be taken into account in making sense of the cross and of responsibility for sin in a credible and liberative way. Crysdale finds Wink's categories

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<sup>36</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> For this latter ethic, Crysdale draws on WELCH, Sharon, *A feminist ethic of risk*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress, 1990, 206 p.

<sup>38</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 44. See WINK, Walter, *Engaging the powers: Discernment and resistance in a world of domination*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 19, 22.

<sup>39</sup> As Wink puts it:

the dream of the New Reality of Jesus has long since turned into a nightmare, first of Christendom, then of our more recent secular totalitarianisms. In all this, the conquest of women went hand in hand with the exploitation of the poor, the conquest of weaker nations, and the rape of the environment. WINK, 1992, p. 46.

presume overt power to be the culprit. But just as the category of “victim” needs to be added to a theology of sin as pride, so also the “power of capitulation” needs to be added to the analysis of domination. The flip side of the myth of redemptive violence is the myth of redemptive suffering. While some participate in the domination system through overt power, others participate through socialization into being the objects of redemptive violence. *Rather than projecting evil onto others, these introject it onto themselves. The solution to evil is thus seen as self-denigration, sacrifice and suffering.* While the myth of redemptive violence relies on the projection of evil and then its destruction, the myth of redemptive suffering depends on the introjection of evil and its deserved punishment.

The most important point here is that suffering, though in some senses the opposite of domination, is not its antidote. The two simply form a symbiosis that perpetuates evil. The solution demanded here is to break the cycle altogether. What is needed is some “third” way that embraces yet goes beyond the cycle.<sup>40</sup>

Crysdale then describes how the domination system or ethic of control has been used to produce distortions in Christian soteriology. But she proposes a different way of looking at Jesus’ death and resurrection, a form of resistance related to the “ethic of risk”:

[U]nless one discovers oneself in Jesus, discovers oneself as both victim and crucifier, this resistance runs the risk of either succumbing to suffering and yielding to the Powers, or of turning into a vengeful violence that never establishes justice.... *Redemptive healing and resistance involve the withdrawal of projections and acceptance of the evil within. They also demand rejection of falsely introjected sin and the naming and healing of injustice.* This reversal, and the restructuring of meaning, the renaming of oneself that it involves, is not a precursor to authentic resistance but is integrally woven into it.... As one takes responsibility for oneself and embraces pain, one is empowered to discover new meanings and to take action to change oppressive structures.<sup>41</sup>

She observes that Jesus did not “take our sins upon him” as a kind of false or codependent introjection of evil any more than he projected it onto others. Rather Jesus’ “refusal to project or introject evil meant that Jesus bore the *effects* of evil in their extreme. In this sense he did take our sins upon him, embracing suffering as the necessary outcome of his refusal to distort evil through blame or self-denigration”.<sup>42</sup> Crysdale remarks that in so doing Jesus accepts the limitations of his creatureliness. The freedom and significance of Jesus’ actions derives from the intimate relation Jesus shares with Abba, and expresses the dying to ego of continual encounter of the finite in the presence of the infinite. Crysdale describes Jesus’ awareness of his finitude as a surrender to suffer.

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<sup>40</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 46, emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, pp. 55 - 56, emphasis in text.

<sup>42</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 56, emphasis in text.



But this surrender is quite different from the myth of redemptive suffering. It is the acceptance of suffering not as an end in itself, nor as a means to an end -- redemption. Rather, it is surrender as recognition of both finitude -- one cannot by fiat erase moral evils -- and the law of the cross -- that the cycle of victim and perpetrator can only be reversed through someone suffering rather than retaliating.<sup>43</sup>

The cross and resurrection forego control, setting up a matrix of new meanings that are “*potentially, not necessarily, transformative*”.<sup>44</sup> They therefore can raise relevant questions for both perpetrator and victim, though they do not answer those questions *a priori*, but only if one is willing to enter the risk of embracing travail, embraced by God.<sup>45</sup>

The kinds of questions the cross and resurrection raise for the personal responsibility of the victim for sin have to do with one’s response to one’s *complicity* in the structures which have brought about the domination and suffering. To recognize one’s complicity is to recognize that one is at one and the same time victim and sinner, a *mixture* of innocent woundedness and complicit distortion in one’s relationship to God and others. It is to acknowledge and accept one’s vulnerability to capitulating to others’ definitions of oneself. It is to recognize that projecting and introjecting blame are of a piece; that one has creaturely limits and is powerless to change the structures of the environment alone. It is to accept that one is helpless to change the pattern of self-sabotage in isolation. One comes to see one’s complicity when one becomes willing to experience and gain new meaning from the “limit experience” of one’s helplessness, disillusionment and grief and to find solidarity with others risking the same suffering. The awareness of complicity comes through acknowledging confusion (because things are not what they seem), grief and healing, and a willingness to persist in dying to the false ego of the non-self. Recognizing one’s complicity in the denial or abandonment of one’s true self gives new meaning to identifying with the crucified as the lieu of this dying to false self and rising in assuming one’s personal and corporate human dignity and creatureliness in Christ.

It is at this level of complicity that we can begin to understand what sin is for those on the underside of history, as a complacency with the introjection of sin and evil onto oneself, an abandonment or abortion of one’s true self in the symptoms of a relentless attitude of self-hatefulness and self-punishment -- the reverse side of an ethic of control and domination. The solution to evil appears to be self-denigration, sacrifice and suffering,

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<sup>43</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 57, emphasis in text.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson does not include Crysdale in his thesis, but I suspect he might find her project a more adequate response than that of feminists whose vision of empowerment seems at times to participate in Wink’s domination system. See ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 45 - 51.

but these only produce more of the same ambiguous, confusing and painful effects of systemic sin. I suspect that resentment, envy, anger, and isolative self-righteousness which are expressed in futile attempts to control relationships or future outcomes are simply some of the more easily criticizable symptoms of women's complicity in sin as self-abdication to the other.

And it is at this level that we can begin to understand what an authentic response of taking responsibility for oneself would be to this condition, a response which Crysdale characterizes as risk. The response of risk leads out into new meanings, a new self-understanding of one's dignity and of one's real limits, and a new understanding of salvation in community as grief and compassion for the other (as continuous with the grief and compassion one has for oneself) rather than a reversion to the patterns of isolative and distorted suffering and self-sabotage. To risk is to surrender to open-ended hope, as distinguished from clinging to expectations of preconceived outcomes.

Surrender for those on the underside of history is also a call to resistance against deeply engrained patterns of silencing. Crysdale writes, "For those with relative 'speaking privileges', surrender for the sake of solidarity involves learning to listen attentively. For those who have been traditionally silenced, learning to speak may be the risk they need to take".<sup>46</sup>

Crysdale goes on to argue that within the Christian theological tradition, it has been a rational elite who has decided what evil, sin, woundedness and salvation would be for the rest of humankind who have endured the cross. This amounts to a perpetuation of the domination system. However,

[t]he meaning of salvation today, especially if it is to incorporate the cross, must include the power of naming. Those who are the crucified must have the power to discover for themselves the nature of their victimization and their healing.... In short, no one person or group can define for another the travail they must endure.<sup>47</sup>

In the process of naming it becomes clear that for those who historically have wielded such power to speak and decide, sin is appropriately described as pride, usurping the role of God and forgetting our creaturely finitude. For others, the problem of sin "has another face, that of too much limitation".<sup>48</sup> The overcoming of sin for the first, she says, has been "the humility of faith, modeled after the *kenosis* of Jesus himself", but for the latter, overcoming sin involves claiming the transcendent dimension of themselves. Crysdale

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<sup>46</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p.129.

makes the claim that “[h]umility and *kenosis*, in this case, only further promote the illness that needs curing”.<sup>49</sup>

Crysdale understands grace as overcoming the sin of complicity in those who are voiceless in this important “naming” or recognition of sin on the part of the victims themselves. She describes the risk response in those on the underside of history as making one available to the liberation of the operation of grace to transform people’s inner and outer lives and the desires which motivate them:

The deep longing to be a whole human person... is often truncated, both by our own sabotage and by the actions of others. Our socialization into fear of others and accommodation to their needs damage this deepest Desire, which is a yearning to be a whole Self that is met fully only in union with the Divine. The cycles of alienation begin to be transformed when something outside the system shifts what the fathers of the church called our “appetites”. A taste of fulfillment of this deep Desire stirs up power, courage, deeper yearnings, willingness to pursue fulfillment of Self at all costs. Hunger overtakes fear”.<sup>50</sup>

Crysdale’s finding no place for humility and *kenosis* in women’s experience of sin and salvation is echoed by many other feminists. Perhaps this is a case of the meaning of these cultural symbols being not yet fully mourned. It would seem that for Crysdale the significance of “humility... modeled after the *kenosis* of Jesus himself” is still too tied to its patriarchal meanings as to have found new meaning to correlate with the reversal of other elements of her account of salvation. I suggest that the *kenosis* of Jesus and the grace of humility, while they have been twisted to perpetuate abuse in women, can, like the cross itself, come to mean more than just women’s experience of being depersonalized and silenced. The effect of Crysdale’s judgment is to cut off her understanding of the predicament of women’s complicity in sin and its resolution from a soteriology of transformation, fulfillment and flourishing of one’s *identity* in the crucified One whose *kenosis* is his Incarnation.

It suggests that despite her concern for the Christian life and conversion process, Crysdale’s account of sin and its resolution still tends to be limited to the epistemological model of sin, that consciousness-raising is the solution to the problem of sin.<sup>51</sup> It hints at

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<sup>49</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p.129.

<sup>50</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 53.

an absence in practices which might lead to greater non-defensiveness, which for Moore is an essential category for doing theology.<sup>52</sup>

Let us turn now to explore how Julian came to retrieve, name and transform her experience of sin, responsibility and God's saving response. Julian's showings helped her to appropriate a credible and intelligible soteriology which takes seriously the problem of sin, for those whose predicament is one of abandonment and vulnerability, neglect and abuse on the underside of history.

### 3.2 Julian's naming of reverse sins

Julian's methodology is like Crysdale and Moore's in the following respect. As Crysdale writes "[w]e don't begin with God and then make sense of suffering and sin, rather we begin with our experience of pain and alienation and, in making sense of it, discover God and the infinite breadth of her embrace".<sup>53</sup> I suggest that Julian likewise looks to the *effects* of sin in her confusing pain and suffering and seeks their intelligibility from the Christ of her showings. The effect of this is to clarify a startlingly different salvific work and identity in God.

Jantzen observes that the question of sin "could be called the central question of [Julian's] book".<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, one finds an avoidance of sin in some of the current popular interest in Julian that focuses on her creation spirituality, as though that stood alone and apart from her concern with sin.<sup>55</sup> In fact, however, the embracing, compassionate

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<sup>52</sup> Thus, Janet Ruffing, responding to the feminist fear of humility and *kenosis* as "self-negating", asserts that this aspect of the spiritual tradition can still have significance.

[T]he "self" in these teachings about self-negating is not ordinarily our vital aliveness, the origin of our choices and desires, namely our authentic graced selves. These teachings are better reinterpreted as resistance to self-centeredness or selfishness....

Drawing on Dorothee Soelle, Ruffing continues:

This teaching presupposes the universal need to decenter our needy, noisy ego clamoring for attention....

A woman who can embrace self-naughting [sic], self-denial, leaning toward ego-lessness in a discerning and critical way, can tell the difference between self-destruction and self-transcendence. Surrendering when it is appropriate brings women to self-possession and choice after they have grown through a healthy stage of refusing to consent to their own oppression.

RUFFING, Janet, "Spiritual direction with women: Reclaiming and reinterpreting key themes from the spiritual tradition", *Presence, an international journal of spiritual direction* 12, 3, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p.31. See my observation in fn. 1 of this chapter regarding Anderson's application of the opposite methodology to his study of Julian's soteriology.

<sup>54</sup> JANTZEN, 1987, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup> FOX, Matthew, "Creation-centered spirituality from Hildegard of Bingen to Julian of Norwich: 300 years of an ecological spirituality in the west", in *Cry of the environment: Rebuilding the Christian creation tradition*, eds. JORANSON, Philip and Ken BUTIGAN, Santa Fe NM, Bear and Company Press,

love of creation and of her whole self in it in the sight of God, which is so profoundly developed in Julian's spirituality depends upon her growing discernment, through the gift of the visions, of what sin and its purpose is. Jantzen writes that

[p]robing sin and pain is both theologically and psychologically threatening because it strikes at the root of thinking about God and ourselves as good. Yet if we shy away from it in fear or distaste (perhaps disguised as optimism, preferring to think of more cheerful things) nothing can be resolved, because *we have refused the knowledge of ourselves and God* which alone can reunite our sensuality and our substance and thus bring healing. Julian characteristically faces the issues relentlessly, at both the theological and psychological levels.<sup>56</sup>

What is equally true, I suspect, is that "thinking about God and ourselves as good" already presumes a projection of sin and evil outward onto others. One can also be threatened by probing sin and pain if it strikes at the root of thinking (unconsciously) about God and ourselves as *bad*. This would be the case of those who have unconsciously introjected sin and pain in one's family system dynamics and social location. And this is compounded when the soteriological tradition of Church teaching simply does not recognize how these introjections affect the human predicament of sin. Julian's problem is not just the right judgment of *her* sin which she believed God was revealing in her showings, but how to reconcile it with what the Church was teaching and its effects on the human predicament of the larger community of her *even* Christians.

Earlier in this developmental study I noted Julian's pre-visionary desire to see herself as sinless, and speculated that this led to a pattern of anxiety and perfectionistic religious aspiration. Only much later was she able to observe that, before the showings, she had a tendency to blame God that sin was not prevented.<sup>57</sup> In all this early Julian there is a flavour of fear of finding sin in herself, as this would amount to a capitulation to the unthinkable anxiety of being damned. So it would appear that Wink's domination system was alive and well in the early Julian, and expressed itself as both a projection of blame for the existence for sin onto God and an introjection of that blame in Julian's assumption of the need to suffer an unacknowledged sense of responsibility for Christ's (and others') suffering.

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1984, pp. 85 - 106.

<sup>56</sup>JANTZEN, 1987, pp. 172 - 173.

<sup>57</sup> Sally Alsford raises the question "Who is to blame?" as a problematic in feminism generally, and observes that feminism, focused on objective and collective sin, is not much interested in the question of personal responsibility. ALSFORD, Sally, "Sin and atonement in feminist perspective", in *Atonement today*, ed. GOLDINGAY, John, London, SPCK, 1995, p. 157.

I have observed Julian's shock and astonishment that she could not see sin, and, when she saw instead that *God* is in all things, was impelled to ask the Jesus of her showings outright, "What is sin?" (ST 8; LT 11.) It is in the context of Julian's acknowledgement of her "pride" (grandiosity?) in projecting the blame for sin onto God<sup>58</sup> that she receives Jesus' response that sin is *behouely*, that is, necessary or fitting, and learns that it is known only by its *painful effects*. (ST 13; LT 27.) The fittingness of sin is that its pain can teach Julian what in her needs purgation. Like Crysdales point that no suffering is redemptive or unredemptive in itself but rather depends on the interpretation given it, Julian's showing that sin is *behouely* or fitting allows that it is the *meaning* given to the suffering at any point in time which identifies whether it is the *nawghting* of evil or the *noughting* in Christ. The pre-visionary Julian seems on the other hand to have believed in the necessity of unrelenting suffering (practising acts of contrition, penance, compassion, desiring physical illness etc., as in effect ends in themselves), even though there are intimations that this produced confusion, anger and no felt sense of growth or transformation. And yet, this is exactly Moore's point that the resistance of sin effectively prevents the challenge to grow from presenting itself.<sup>59</sup>

That resistance in Julian has been melted in the showings and the confusion exposed. The working through of Julian's mirroring transference with the Jesus revealed to her in the showings is, simultaneously, a progressive dying to sin and healing of her resistance to accept her creaturely limits and powerlessness in the face of the authority and irreconcilable teaching of the Church. Moreover, out of a new centre of selfhood, Julian is learning to distinguish the effects of sin from her core sense of self and the authority of Christ within her. The pain of the effects of sin comes to have intelligibility and meaning, helping her recognize and turn from its "secret" symptoms. Clearly, Julian is doing her part in the work of naming -- but always in the relational context of her mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings.

### 3.2.1 Discerning sin in the common teaching of the Church

But the question remains as to how to discern when pain or suffering is caused by sin when this is linked with a tradition which is itself operating under distortion. Julian

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<sup>58</sup> The projecting of blame for sin onto God for sin could also signal that Julian enjoyed some status associated with a privileged social class. In other words, perhaps this could argue for Julian having come from a more privileged economic social location. In this case Julian would know both privilege (as coming from a wealthy family) and its underside (as a woman).

<sup>59</sup> MOORE, 1989, p. 32.

describes, late in the *Showings*, that some forms of suffering based on fear and ignorance of God's love are falsely called virtuous. (ST 24; LT 73). And it is in this context that she names what, for her are the two kinds of sickness or secret sin which "most belabour and assail us", that is, sloth or impatience, and despair.<sup>60</sup> These oppress Julian and keep her from delighting in and contemplating love. It is ignorance of love which most hinders God's lovers for, as she puts it in the Long Text only, even after

we begin to hate sin and to amend ourselves according to the laws of Holy Church, there still persists a fear which hinders us, by looking at ourselves and at our sins committed in the past, and some of us because of our everyday sins, because we do not keep our promise or keep the purity which God has established us in, but often fall into so much wretchedness that it is shameful to say it. And the perception of this makes us so woebegone and so depressed that we can scarcely see any consolation. And sometimes we take this fear for humility, but it is a reprehensible blindness and weakness; and we do not know how to despise it like any other sin which we recognize, and this comes through lack of true judgment, and it is contrary to truth. For of all the attributes of the blessed Trinity, it is God's will that we have most faithfulness and delight in love. (LT 73.)

Until now, we might imagine, suffering and mourning were related to scrupulous acts of contrition and penance as part of the conventional means of attaining salvation, though in Julian's case, as I have proposed, this seemed to lead her into silent despair of salvation.<sup>61</sup> Now, out of the contrast experience which the showings presented, Julian revises her understanding of what is redemptive about suffering. Scrupulosity, she sees, leads to despair and depression, and away from having faith and delight in God's love.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Anderson's examination of sin in Julian's showings is focused entirely on the overt violence of wrath and blame. Julian's hard-won naming of the obverse introjections of sloth and despair as her sins goes virtually unmentioned. ANDERSON, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> See ROSS, Ellen, "'She wept and cried right loud for sorrow and for pain': Suffering, the spiritual journey, and women's experience in late medieval mysticism", in *Maps of flesh and light: The religious experience of medieval women mystics*, ed. WIETHAUS, Ulrike, Syracuse NY, Syracuse University Press, 1993, pp. 45 - 59, who gives a balanced description of the types of suffering which were to be encountered in sin, contrition, compassion and unitive longing, but does not recognize any tendency to scrupulosity in Julian's history. However, Julian herself admits to scrupulosity in the quotation above. (ST 24; LT 73.)

<sup>62</sup> On this point, Anderson sees Julian's revision of the notion of penance as the strongest evidence of Julian's "editing" of theological commonplaces. He sees Julian transforming penance from being a form of punishment (related to making satisfaction) to being an opportunity for union with God. ANDERSON, 2005, p. 133. Anderson quotes from the Long Text in this place: "[The Lord] regards us so tenderly that he sees all our life here to be penance... and he makes his penance in us, and mercifully he helps us to bear it". (LT 81.) In a subsequent section of this chapter I explore three sources of tradition from which I suggest Julian retrieved. But the reversal of roles we will see below is in evidence here, although Anderson does not recognize the relational reversal explicitly.

If this depression is the effect of sin, what is the cause? With the benefit of contemporary critical disciplines we may wonder to what extent such blindness and wretchedness may be a result of early childhood neglect and inadequate mirroring, compounded by the introjection of a societal projection of sinfulness onto women, and codified in a soteriological tradition which perpetuated such projections and inspired fear and ignorance of God's love. Julian does not explore causes of sin, except to ponder the question of the Church's teaching on blame for sin. The pattern of introjected blame and self-hatefulness is becoming apparent to Julian, however, in her discovery of the secret sins and their disguise as virtue. With a truer judgment of the effects of this pattern (as hindering her delight in God's love mirrored in Christ's *chere*), she is learning a new meaning, a new interpretation to give it. As the working through process of dying to the false ego progresses, we see it represented in the *Showings* among other places in Julian's observations that she is to recognize suffering of a self-preoccupied nature and not dwell on it, but to pass over it as lightly and as quickly as possible (ST 19); and that she is not to accuse herself, such that it results in depression, false humility and sorrow. (LT 47, 73, 77.)<sup>63</sup> In Julian's clear articulation of these conditions -- and not others -- as desolations which perpetuate sin, it is clear these conditions have plagued her throughout her lifetime.

Julian's insights have an extraordinarily contemporary ring to them, if read in light of Crysedale's observations. When sin and its remedy are seen in this reverse light, our response, like Julian's, is made more available to be transformed from one of confusion and negative resistance into one of eagerness and desire for trusting relationship with this healing Christ. Julian is learning the power of naming. But she sees sin as a human plight that is not resolved simply by renaming it in its reverse form. She comes to understand more and more clearly, as the Long Text progresses, that the problem with blindness is *not* that she does not recognize her own spiritual condition, but that *she does not see the God of her showings, so as to know how to interpret her own condition.* (LT 47.) The remedy for sin is not just epistemological insight but also relational trust in the mirror of the Jesus of her showings.

### 3.2.2 Divine and human judgment and the true nature of wrath

In the Long Text Julian expresses herself on the subject of human and divine judgment. She says that God judges us in our substance which is kept united and safe with God. Divine judgment, "which is from God's justice, is from his own great endless love,

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<sup>63</sup> Interestingly Julian's clarification of false humility does not lead her to abandon the practice of humility.



and that is that fair, sweet judgment which was shown in all the fair revelation in which I saw him assign to us no kind of blame". (LT 45.)

Humankind on the other hand judges us in our changeable sensuality. But although she lays no blame, she is in effect making a profound critique, implying that the judgment of Holy Church is itself implicated in the changeable, sensual thing which humankind is.<sup>64</sup> This is because

this judgment is mixed, for sometimes it is good and lenient, and sometimes it is hard and painful. And inasmuch as it is good and lenient it pertains to God's justice, and inasmuch as it is hard and painful, our good Lord Jesus reforms it by mercy and grace through the power of the blessed Passion, and so brings it into justice. (LT 45.)

So it is she tells us that, though the contemplation of God's judgment

was sweet and delectable, I could not be fully comforted only by contemplating it, and that was because of the judgment of Holy Church, which I had understood before, and which was continually in my sight.... And by the same judgment [of Holy Church] I understood that sinners sometimes deserve blame and wrath, and I could not see these two in God, and therefore my desire was more than I can or may tell, because of the higher judgment which God himself revealed at the same time, and therefore I had of necessity to accept it. And the lower judgment had previously been taught me in Holy Church, and therefore I could not in any way ignore the lower judgment.

This then was my desire, that I might see in God in what way the judgment of Holy Church here on earth is true in his sight, and how it pertains to me to know it truly, whereby they might both be reconciled as might be glory to God and the right way for me.... And the more knowledge and understanding that we have by the gracious leading of the Holy Spirit of these two judgments, the more shall we see and know our feelings. (LT 45.)

The only answer Julian was given to this was in the form of the *exemplum* (to be explored in the next diptych), which became the focus for her search for intelligibility in this matter "until the end of my life". (LT 45.)

Julian wants above all to have these two judgments reconciled.<sup>65</sup> Despite their apparent irreconcilability, however, the effect of her recognition of these two judgments helps to put a limit to her introjection of others' wrath, particularly as she sees how God

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<sup>64</sup> Compare Irene Leicht on this: "Das genannte, unstete menschliche Urteil identifiziert Julian mit dem de Kirche". LEICHT, Irene, "Die Vorstellung von Erlösung im theologischen Denken der Julian of Norwich", in *Denkmodelle von Frauen im Mittelalter*, Freiburg Switzerland, Universitätsverlag, Freiburg Schweiz, 1994, p. 193.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson respects what many commentators of Julian wish to deny, that Julian does not resolve the irreconcilability between her showings and the Church's teaching on sin. Rather, he says, she applies what he calls a contrapuntal approach, holding the two in tension just as they are, leaving the reconciliation to God. ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 109 - 115.

sees wrath. This leads her at this point in the showings into a contemplation concerning wrath. What she discovers is that in God there is no wrath.

For I saw no kind of wrath in God.... For truly, as I see it, if God could be angry for any time, we should neither have life nor place nor being.... For though we may feel in ourselves anger, contention and strife, still we are all mercifully enclosed in God's mildness and in his meekness, in his benignity and in his accessibility.... (LT 49.)

Julian sees that all wrath is on the human side. "For I saw no wrath except on man's side.... And it comes from a lack of power or a lack of wisdom or a lack of goodness, and this lack is not in God, but it is on our side". (LT 48.)

...For we cannot be blessedly saved until we are truly in peace and in love, for that is our salvation....

So I saw that God is our true peace; and he is our safe protector when we ourselves are in disquiet, and he constantly works to bring us into endless peace. (LT 49.)

It is clear enough from this that Julian includes herself in this human condition: "For we through sin and wretchedness have in us a wrath and a constant opposition to peace and to love...." (LT 48.) She is acknowledging here, in the Long Text at least, that she does feel anger within herself, whereas, in the Short Text, her silence suggests she was much less confident about admitting such feelings.

But it seems to me that her acknowledgement of wrath in her in this context is also a recognition of her reaction to the falseness of the Church's human judgment, when set beside the peaceful judgment of God. Recall, from chapter 5 on her pre-visionary life, Julian's muted anger at those who think they know more about God than they do. This may give us a clue as to Julian's experience with some sector of Church authority, though, as I have argued above, not that of her spiritual advisor. And Julian's maturity becomes evident as she withdraws angry projections. For example, increasingly she recognizes the futility of focusing on others' sin (which she acknowledges in LT 76 to have been a pattern), unless it be for their comfort and help. (LT 79.) Indeed, she discovers that God, in his judgment, cannot even forgive humankind because he cannot be angry. (LT 49.)<sup>66</sup> There is no question anymore that "the mercy of God will be remission of his wrath after

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<sup>66</sup> Tugwell makes an important etymological comment here:

Using the word 'forgive' in a way which is no longer current in modern English, Julian says that there is no wrath in God for him to "forgive" (i.e., forego, give up), it is our wrath which he "forgives" (that is to say, forgiveness and mercy work in us to dispel our own inner disquiet at ourselves).

TUGWELL, Simon, *Ways of Imperfection: An Exploration of Christian Spirituality*, Springfield, IL, Templegate, 1984, p. 194. Tugwell's comment suggests that God's forgiveness is what is working in Julian to heal her of introjected self-blame.

we have sinned”, as she had previously thought. (LT 47.) No, “where our Lord appears, peace is received and wrath has no place”. (LT 49.) One implication of this is that, despite the common teaching of the Church, which Julian tells us she had in effect introjected in her feeling that “the blame of our sins continually hangs upon us” (LT 50), her showings teach her that humankind will not receive “pain, blame and wrath” from God, because God is incapable of wrath.<sup>67</sup>

Julian’s point compares exactly with Crysedale and Moore’s desire to disentangle God from being complicit in or even causing human suffering in the tradition’s ambiguous and confusing soteriology. For Crysedale, as for Moore, it is imperative to hold that because there is no evil in Jesus, all evil is revealed on the side of those who will his death. Evil is restricted to his crucifiers, an act arising from the human heart; it is not in God.<sup>68</sup>

Julian’s *Showings* explore how in our fallen condition humankind can be mistaken about what sin is and about what human responsibility for it is. As such, humans do not see how sin can have any purpose and so we fail to know ourselves. Moreover, if humankind cannot properly understand what sin is in our condition, then our understanding of God’s saving work will likewise be distorted, off the mark, sinful. Under these circumstances we have alienated ourselves from the One whose saving work would be to help us know ourselves as we are known.

I propose that, in the condition of having suffered a history of compound neglect and having a systemically overdeveloped sense of responsibility for others’ suffering, Julian discovers in her showings that it is off the mark to become preoccupied with seeing one’s suffering as an indication that one is at fault, and at the same time blame God that sin exists. Rather what is to be attended to is the right naming of the condition of impatience, shame and despair which fuels both the blame and the preoccupation with suffering, and then, to respond to it in God’s sight. Easier said than done.

Julian had to die to the attachment to seeing suffering as an indication that she was responsible for her and Christ’s pain. This is, in effect, what she describes in her early showings: her own suffering was withdrawn. Then she experienced a different kind of suffering in union with Christ’s bodily Passion in which she knew this as a suffering in solidarity with humankind. Jesus, Julian discovers, suffers with us until we come to see our illusion for what it is.<sup>69</sup> Jesus’s suffering is no longer an indication of her sinfulness

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson explores this and other implications in the context of what he calls Julian’s editing of several theological commonplaces of her time, under the rubric of “blame” and in his fourth chapter. See ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 121 - 124, and ch. 4.

<sup>68</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> See BURROWS, Mark, “‘Yett he sufferyth with us’: Divine asceticism in Julian of Norwich’s

causing his suffering, which somehow she must remedy. Jesus' suffering rather is now seen as a sign of God's intimate solidarity with her suffering, and the suffering of humankind.

Likewise her understanding of the God of the Christian tradition she inherited must die too, to its false self, in order to become a saving God. Her union with Jesus in his suffering also exposes that which is illusory or non-redemptive in human suffering. It exposes what is illusory about the God which the Church was teaching in practice. It exposes a concept of god whose wrath and vengeance made it impossible to evoke in the human person the response of trust and mature dependence, the response which makes possible the beholding of God's work of salvation in the human non-person on the underside of history in this temporal world.

The meaning of sin and so also of suffering is changed and, as Crysdales puts it, given new meanings. Humans' notion that cultural symbols which have lost their meaning are mourned, and that it is in the transitional realm of creative dying to ego that the lost meaning of symbols gives way to the possibility of new meaning, is important for understanding the kind of participation in Jesus' *kenosis* (dying to despair, turning to God in reverent fear, faithful trust) which is necessary for Christ's saving work to be meaningful to Julian.

Hence, Julian discovers that it is more faithful to pass over, as quickly as possible, suffering that is "conducive to sin", i.e., suffering which is predicated on the painful conditions of self-preoccupation. And then to engage in a new kind of suffering, the suffering of ego death that awakens her to have compassion for herself and others in this vulnerable condition, a suffering in union with Christ in his compassion for humanity: "Then I saw that every kind of compassion which one has for one's fellow Christians in love is Christ in us." (ST 13.)

Julian's first taste of the Resurrection experience comes in the moment of the change of *chere* in Jesus from dying to joy. What Julian learns from this is that, between seeing Jesus as her heaven on the cross, and seeing Jesus in heaven in glory, although they are experienced at different times and associated with times of woe and well-being, they will all be one time. That is, she comes to realize that death and resurrection -- grief and joy -- are simultaneous, as experienced increasingly out of a new centre of selfhood which is in her *and* in Christ. Julian is grieving a history of resisting an unrecognized *centre of selfhood that is relationally constituted in the sight of God in Christ*, a self which has

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*Revelation of love*", *Studies in spirituality* 7, 1997, pp. 99 - 112, on this original aspect of Julian's understanding of the ongoing suffering and crucifixion of Jesus.

suffered silently, having been abandoned to isolation, non-existence and voicelessness. This self, “knitted” or united in Christ and constituted in the sight of God delighting in love, gives her a truer judgment of her sin and responsibility for herself. The change of *chere* to joy is the initial locus in Julian’s showings for Christ’s work of healing and integration, a work which, while it moves toward simultaneity in the death and Resurrection experience, continues throughout her whole life.

To conclude, I suggest that given Julian’s difficulty reconciling the tradition’s teaching on sin and salvation with her experience of the showings, she learns that sin is the cause of distortion both in the human soul and in the tradition’s teaching on sin and salvation. In effect, it could be argued that, in the irreconcilability between what her showings teach her and the common teaching of Holy Church, she is making a subtle distinction between the human predicament of those who are voiceless and vulnerable and the predicament of the privileged, between those on the underside of history (the neglected and systemically abused) and those who would judge them abusively. She does not use this kind of language. But such an argument allows for a correlation to be posited between her lifelong dilemma and the contemporary feminist observation that sin expresses itself in opposite ways depending on one’s social location. The distortion she sees manifest in the human judgment of Church teaching is wrath and blame. Psychoanalysis and liberationist soteriology alike would describe this as a projection (or introjection) of the bad onto the vulnerable. As Julian is able to distance herself from the introjected sins of guilt and identify her experience of the human predicament as exposure, vulnerability and abandonment, the distortion she discovers in herself is that of self-preoccupied (introjected) despair and depression in ignorance of God’s love. It is not a condition which is blameworthy; it is a condition in need of grief and detachment, and then of joy in accepting herself as a child of God’s delight and love.

Julian becomes convinced that God wants us to know that God creates, loves restores us, and that sin is only rightly judged or discerned when the self, formed by *mynd* of the Passion, knows itself to be relationally constituted in union with Christ in God’s sight. She does not know how the teaching of the Church will be reconciled with the showings that she has received. From the centre of selfhood Christ has given her to know in herself, Christ’s words of patience to Julian are: “All shall be well, and all shall be well and you shall see that all manner of thing shall be well”.

However, this does not lead Julian to sit back and relax. Julian’s demand for intelligibility in the contrast experience which her showings present leads her to retrieve resources from the tradition. However as I hope to show, either Julian’s retrieval reverses

their significance to respond to the human predicament she is experiencing, or she uses them because they are able to comprehend differences in one's maturation of understanding of the human predicament and human responsibility

#### 4.0 What did Julian retrieve and transform from the tradition?

I propose to explore three medieval sources of symbolism from which Julian may have retrieved for her original exploration of Christ's saving work. I seek to answer the question what resources and practices might have helped her affirm and mirror her self worth, and recognize her own and others' limited responsibility for sin. I suggest that these retrievals assisted Julian in identifying and responding to her condition and need in such a way as to make sense of her soteriological crisis, bring an intelligible response to bear on her experience of Christ's work of healing and transformation, and enable her appropriation of a credible soteriology.

Although the influence of medieval *imagery* of the motherhood of Christ has been well documented in Julian, I turn rather to influences and practices which might have contributed to her engagement with what I have identified as the *mirroring function of the Christ* of her showings.<sup>70</sup>

The three retrievals I identify come from the medieval tradition of soteriology, anchoritic literature and mysticism respectively.<sup>71</sup> The first symbol I want to examine is

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<sup>70</sup> Julian's Christology (who Christ is) cannot be seen apart from her soteriology (what Christ does that is salvific). In the history of Christian doctrine Christology is dependent on and historically subsequent to soteriological explanations or narratives of what Jesus did, which are themselves presumably dependent on how that saving action has been experienced in the life of the community. See HAIGHT, Roger, *Jesus, symbol of God*, NY, Orbis, 1999, p. 155. I propose that this is no different in Julian's case, that her soteriology drives her understanding of Christ's identity, indeed that of the Trinity. In support of this approach to the historical genesis of her theology, recall that her observation early on in the Long Text that "where Jesus appears the blessed Trinity is understood" (LT 4) has no equivalent in the Short Text. See WATSON, Nicholas, "The trinitarian hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 79 - 100. Exeter symposium V.

<sup>71</sup> As mentioned above, Derek Anderson identifies several medieval theological commonplaces which, he suggests, Julian edits in her own soteriology. His list includes blame, debt, satisfaction, penance, harrowing of hell, and motherhood. ANDERSON, 2005, ch. 3. In what follows, I subsume blame, debt and penance under the one theme of satisfaction. Julian's transformation of other soteriological themes such as the harrowing of hell and Christ's work of mothering will be explored only in the third diptych, in light of the *exemplum*.

Anderson's analysis is helpful because it makes explicit reference in each case to the sources of the "common teaching of Holy Church" (Anselm, anchoritic literature, English lyrical literature, Corpus Christi plays, etc.) that Julian borrowed from but edited in each of these theological commonplaces. Moreover, Anderson's intention is to make explicit through his study how Julian's soteriology responds to the contemporary feminist search for nonviolent soteriologies. My own approach to the question of what

that of satisfaction, drawn directly from Anselm's theory of satisfaction to account for Christ's saving work, but *reversed* in its significance, as we'll see below. The second symbol derives from the anchoritic vocation and looks at the methods and objectives of the bodily and spiritual practices which promoted the experience of union with Christ as a joyful crucifixion. I draw on Nicholas Watson here, whose study shows that the methods and objectives of the anchoritic vocation were also, in some sense, the *opposite* of those of active apostolates. The third symbol is that of the mirror and its function in medieval mysticism of discerning maturation in the spiritual life. I propose that all three of these retrievals seem to have had a significant positive influence on the maturation of Julian's appropriation of a soteriology of mirroring in her conversion process toward acceptance of her full humanity in the sight of God.

#### 4.1 The glorious *asseth making*: Christ's satisfaction of humanity

Julian understood the Anselmian soteriology of the satisfaction of God's honour in the redemption of humankind by the God-man Jesus Christ, as she received it from the Church's teaching. But she retrieved its categories in a way which reversed the assumptions of guilt and responsibility for sin which Anselm made. Julian's understanding of *asseth making*, involves a transformation and reversal of the roles and logic of Anselm's satisfaction theory. The effect of this is, I propose, that "satisfaction" comes to function as an activity of mirroring in the Christ of her showings. Since mirroring is an important function of "good enough mothering", this study may enable us to grasp how the seeds of her much later reflections on the maternity of Christ were sown much earlier, in her pre-oedipal soteriological crisis.

Nuth holds that the belief that God was wrathful was *the* problem for which Julian sought intelligibility.<sup>72</sup> I would suggest that one reason it was a problem for Julian was because of the terrorized false self she had introjected, which the image of a wrathful god reinforced in her, and to which she herself was extremely sensitive. In Julian's near mortal condition of heightened weakness, dependence and vulnerability, a wrathful God was not only not salvific; I suggest it brought her to a recapitulation of the "unthinkable anxiety" of damnation. The showings revealed to her vivid images of a different way of beholding her relationship to God in Christ.

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Julian edited or retrieved tries to get at what motivated Julian to come up with this soteriology. It turns on the hypothesis of this thesis that Julian's showings prompted a healing and maturation in early mirroring need which can be correlated with a liberative conversion process in her *appropriation* of a soteriology of mirroring.

<sup>72</sup> NUTH, 1991, p. 60.

The problem of God being wrathful was directly linked to the medieval Church's interpretation of the satisfaction theory of Anselm. Bradley writes about how the Church interpreted the satisfaction theory at this time:

But some incorporated into the teaching on satisfaction the notion that God not only demands a recompense for sin but is moved by vengeance and wrath to exact a terrible punishment to repair the injury to his honor. The motif was never fully uprooted, even from the Catholic mystical tradition....

Julian would surely have known this view of vengeance, which was widespread in oral and written treatises available in the fourteenth century. Since she was an anchoress herself, a likely place for her encountering Anselm's words on the subject is the *Ancrene riwle*. As quoted in that manual for anchoresses, Anselm had explained the anger of the Father against the sinless Christ by appealing to the doctrine of the union of Christ and sinful humanity in the Incarnation -- through Christ's taking of our flesh: 'How bitterly did God the Father Almighty strike his dearly beloved Son, Jesus our Lord, who had never sinned, only because He had taken on flesh like ours, which is full of sin!'<sup>73</sup>

Julian speaks of Christ's saving work as the glorious *assetth* or *asyeth* (ST 14; LT 29.) *Assetth* in middle English can have different connotations. In their edition of the *Showings* Colledge and Walsh translate it as atonement, but also, in LT 60 (*a seeth*) as fulfilment, in which it is God's work in Christ which is signaled.<sup>74</sup> Other meanings Bradley cites are satisfaction (as a component of penance with contrition and confession) where it is, rather, the penitent sinner's work.<sup>75</sup>

Bradley observes that Julian's use of *assetth making* and related words, such as *bowte* (bought) and *dettor* (debtor) is distinctive. (One might add reward to this list too.) In discussing the saving work of Christ as Julian describes it in these expressions, Bradley links them to Julian's later articulation of Christ as mother. In this context of discussing the theory of "satisfaction", Julian's meanings take on a radically different colour from Anselm's understanding of satisfaction. Anselm's premise was that an offense had been committed against God's honour by humanity and therefore required an infinite satisfaction, which sinful humankind could not pay, and which required therefore satisfaction by the God-man Christ.

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<sup>73</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian of Norwich: Everyone's mystic", in *Mysticism and spirituality in medieval England*, eds. POLLARD, William and Robert BOENIG, D. S. Brewer, 1997, p. 152, citing *Ancrene wisse*. See SAVAGE, Anne and Nicholas WATSON, eds., *Anchoritic spirituality: Ancrene wisse and associated works*, NY, Paulist, 1991, p. 182. The classics of western spirituality 74.

<sup>74</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, vol 2, p. 749.

<sup>75</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 144.



Julian's premise was "focused on the weakness of humanity: man could no more restore himself than he could have made himself in the first place".<sup>76</sup> This is the human predicament to which Christ's saving work must respond. To that extent, the signs of Julian's resolution of this pre-oedipal soteriological crisis through her extraordinary *reverse retrieval of assest making* from Anselm's satisfaction theory can already be found embedded in the Short Text. In Julian's meaning of satisfaction there is no sense of appeasing an offended divinity, because that is an image of the hell she is living, not the salvation she is seeking. "[R]eparation is made by overcoming the harm that sin has wrought, not in 'making amends' to God".<sup>77</sup> Anderson makes an even stronger argument than this in his thesis, in which he argues that Julian's soteriology is a form of recapitulation theory. "The suffering Christ endures is, in [Julian's] view, a profound identification with the condition of human weakness in Christ's representative humanity, and in his death he becomes like all humans who die so that he may restore all to life in his own humanity".<sup>78</sup>

Likewise, for Julian, Christ did not buy back alienated humankind from the devil. Rather we are bought by our spiritual birth in Christ, the divine mother, who by paying the price of pain gives us a share in her nobility. And it is Christ who is *our* debtor, always wanting more and more to satisfy humankind with Christ's love.<sup>79</sup>

It is in the context of Julian's meditations on the motherhood of Christ that Bradley finds that *assest making* comes into its full meaning. Bradley cites from LT 60 in which Julian marvels that even our being born to bliss through Christ's suffering and death might not *makyn aseth* to his marvelous love:

And when he had finished, and had borne us so for bliss, still all this could not satisfy his wonderful love. And he revealed this in these great surpassing words of love: If I could suffer more I would suffer more. He could not die any more, but

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<sup>76</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 145.

<sup>77</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 145.

<sup>78</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 147. See also pp. 30 - 32 of his thesis and the whole of his ch. 4. He finds the source of recapitulation theory in Irenaeus of Lyons' *Against heresies*. ANDERSON, 2005, p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> Anselm's understanding of the reward the Father gives Christ for his saving work is transformed too. For Julian, reward is shared around liberally. We will have Christ as our reward. But humankind is also the reward which the Father gives to Christ: "We are his bliss, we are his reward, we are his honour, we are his crown". (ST 12.) Further, I mentioned above Anderson's observation that Julian's editing of her contemporary understanding of penance transformed it from being a form of punishment to a joyous occasion of union with Christ. See ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 131 - 134. As Julian puts it:

...for the substantial and natural longing in us for him is a lasting penance in us, and he makes this penance in us, and mercifully he helps us to bear it.... For this is our loving penance... for this penance never leaves us until the time when we are fulfilled, when we shall have him for our reward. (LT 81.)

he did not want to cease working; therefore he must needs nourish us, for the precious love of motherhood has made him our debtor. (LT 60.)

Bradley says that Christ's work of *asseth making* is referring to an "insufficiency for satisfying a depthless desire.... The *asseth* demanded to be paid [by Christ] is to satisfy love".<sup>80</sup> God is not our creditor but our debtor, because *God as Mother* "'owes' unconditional love to us, her children".<sup>81</sup> Bradley shows how, in Julian's late meditations on the maternal works of the whole Trinity, Mother Jesus' work is taken up into our creation, into our rebirth in Christ's Incarnation and Passion and into our new beginning without end in the Holy Spirit. The important point here is that "[i]t is not a matter of a reversal of a spoiled relationship with God but 'of the maturing and completion of a relationship that already exists'".<sup>82</sup>

Bradley looks at other commentators' views of what Julian means by *asseth making*, and finds them wanting, in effect, still too marked by Anselm's satisfaction theory.<sup>83</sup> Bradley concludes by saying

*Asseth* means satisfaction -- but in a new way: it is always a 'glorious *asseth*'; *bowte* has a new meaning which Julian presents by *reversing the usual roles* of creditor and debtor and by encoding the *bowte* in the motherhood metaphor....

Thus, the *asseth*, the making good (and making better) which only God can work, can only be properly read in the light of the whole divine plan, including individual reconciliation, our partnership in God's good deed in restoring all creation, and a consummation in heaven.

Julian ... fully accepts the teaching that 'our good Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon himself all our blame'. But she *reverses the reasoning*: it is not that Christ has suffered the wrath of an angry God in our stead, like a scapegoat. Rather, therefore 'our Father may not nor will not assign any more blame to us than to his own dearworthy Christ'.... The satisfaction God seeks is a *sufficiency of love*, like a mother. In our wretched state, however, it is not easy for us to grasp how God is both awesome and humanly familiar in all ways....<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, pp. 146 - 147.

<sup>81</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 149, emphasis added.

<sup>82</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 147, citing PELPHREY, Brant, *Love was his meaning: The theology and mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Salzburg, Universität Salzburg, 1982, p. 136.

<sup>83</sup> See LOGARBO, Mona, "Salvation theology in Julian of Norwich: Sin, forgiveness, and redemption in the *Revelations*", *Thought: Review of culture and ideas* 61, 1986, pp. 370 - 380; and Doyle's interpretation in PEPLER, Conrad, "Creation theology", *Mystics quarterly* 15, 1989, pp. 86 - 89. Bradley does not examine either the fine balanced contrast of Anselm and Julian in their respective soteriologies by Joan NUTH, "Two medieval soteriologies: Anselm of Canterbury and Julian of Norwich", *Theological studies* 53, 1992, pp. 611-645, or the article by Lillian BOZAK-DELEO, "The soteriology of Julian of Norwich", in *Theology and the university*, ed. APCZNSKI, John, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1990, pp. 37 - 44.

<sup>84</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, pp. 154 - 155, emphasis added. See also NUTH, 1992, p. 640.

I am struck by Nuth's and Bradley's intuition of the reversal of roles and reasoning in Julian's retrieval of the notion of satisfaction in the redemption of humankind. This reversal could also, to some degree at least, reflect a more profound intuition on Julian's part of reversal in social location between Anselm and Julian. Male clerical privilege, status, readership, societal recognition and acceptance all would be assumed by Anselm. Julian could assume none of these.<sup>85</sup> Nuth observes that sin was understood by Anselm as an active free choice of evil on the sinner's part resulting in social disorder and disobedience toward God. In utter contrast to this basic "situation", the only sin which made sense in Julian's experience was despair born of self-hatred, not with some conscious intention of choosing against God's purpose, but rather with creaturely frailty and ignorance (fear of trusting God) in the process of trying to do God's will.<sup>86</sup>

It is all the more significant then that in Julian's *Showings* "From the vantage point of God's loving gaze, all other viewpoints, including human experiences of guilt and responsibility for sin, become relativized".<sup>87</sup> Nuth wants to distinguish Anselm's soteriology as oriented toward those in the purgative way from Julian's unitive way. I do not think Julian would want to be so classified, as witnessed in her leveling and universalizing of her "audience" in the Long Text, and also in the nature of anchoritic spirituality as we'll see in the section below.<sup>88</sup> Given her lifelong preoccupation with the sin of despair, my argument here is that God's beholding her in a way which gives *her*

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<sup>85</sup> Although Nuth's excellent article compares Anselm and Julian on a number of points it fails to recognize this difference in social location, with its contrast between privilege and oppression. NUTH, 1992, pp. 611 - 645.

<sup>86</sup> Joan Nuth's article compares Julian's *exemplum* with another *exemplum* written by Anselm. The full weight of the contrast between the two will become clearer in the third diptych. Still, Anselm's *exemplum* is worth reading here. It reads as follows.

Suppose that a man enjoins some task on his servant, and charges him not to throw himself into a pit which he points out to him, out of which he cannot possibly escape. But that servant despises the command and the warning of his master and, of his own free will, throws himself into the pit that has been shown him, so that he is unable to carry out his assigned task. Do you think that this inability is worth anything as an excuse for not performing the assigned task?

ANSELM, St., *Cur Deus homo*, in *A scholastic miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. and transl.

FAIRWEATHER, Eugene R., Philadelphia, Westminster Press, p. 142. Library of Christian classics 10.

See NUTH, 1992, p. 611.

<sup>87</sup> NUTH, 1992, p. 642.

<sup>88</sup> On the question of presumed audience see WARD, Benedicta, "Lady Julian and her audience: 'Mine even-Christian'", in *The English religious tradition and the genius of Anglicanism*, ed. ROWELL, Geoffrey, Wantage England, Ikon, 1992, pp. 47 - 63.

satisfaction that she is loved is the essential, indeed the *only* efficacious, response to the sin of despair.

I suggest that Julian knows Anselm's satisfaction theory to ring false because she has learned, from the contrast which her showings brought home to her, that it leads to unredemptive and unnecessary suffering in her experience and to a terror of God such that humans flee from God in their time of greatest need. Instead, what her showings revealed to her is the compassionate suffering God-man who is *irresistably satisfying to humankind because trustworthy*, a God who knows and suffers with us, mirroring back our condition in order to show us what we can be in the *changing chere* of Christ, and to liberate humankind's desire to trust in God. Julian learns that she

should *behold* the glorious *assetth*... So then this is our blessed Lord's intention, and in this teaching we should pay heed to this: For since I have set right the greatest of harms, then it is my will that you should know through this that I shall set right everything which is less. (LT 29.)

As the foregoing discussion has shown, Julian's original understanding of *assetth making* contributed to, and was amplified by, her late reflections on the motherhood of Christ and the Trinity. Before Julian ever spoke of the maternal functions of Christ explicitly (in LT 58 - 63), however, she explored the saving work which Christ effected in his glorious *assetth making* through the contrast experience which the showings aroused in her already in the Short Text, in what amounts, I suggest, to a *reverse satisfaction*. What Christ accomplishes is the satisfaction (both theologically and psychologically) of the child -- the human soul -- in its utter vulnerability, helplessness and need, not the satisfaction of a needy, wrathful parent-god. Christ suffers his Passion until each human soul is satisfied or pleased [*payde*] -- and so saved --by the overwhelming love Christ depthlessly desires for us to know. Looked at in this way, it is not surprising it took Julian years to appropriate.

In this sense even Bradley's comment that "what the satisfaction God seeks is a *sufficiency of love*, like a mother..."<sup>89</sup> is open to misinterpretation. It would be possible to read into this that the mother *needs* the child's love in order to be satisfied *herself*. But this would represent a similar kind of relational distortion as that which has resulted in the effective history of Anselm's satisfaction theory. Rather, it seems to me that, for Julian, whatever desire Christ has for a response from humankind must be a *desire to see humankind satisfied* in our need to trust in God's love. In this sense it can be correlated

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<sup>89</sup> BRADLEY, 1997, p. 155, emphasis added.

with Sebastian Moore's Jesus, who is the liberator of the desire to trust. I refer back to Bhattacharji who recognized that in Julian's *Showings* neither God nor Christ *need* a loving response from humankind in order to love humankind.

A mother, however, cares for her child in order to develop it as a person and to prepare it for life; seeing the child develop is her chief reward. For a mother, then, the greatest threat is not so much the child's unresponsiveness, as misfortune or death to the child.<sup>90</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Christ's mirroring as satisfying

Correlating the psychobiographical with the soteriological, I propose that the transformation in Christ's mirroring *chere* and comforting words "Are you *satisfied* [*payde*]...?" (ST 12) were essential elements in Julian's experience of conversion to a new sense of beloved selfhood or self worth in relation to the Christ of her showings.<sup>91</sup> I suggest that whatever she had retrieved from Anselm of Christ's saving work as satisfaction was transformed in this new and radically reversed meaning given through her encounter with the Christ of her showings.

The *chere* of Christ satisfied her deepest need to trust in salvation in her most vulnerable near-death condition, and in that sense I would argue that the seed for her motherhood motif was sown in the potential space of this transitional visionary *activity* of what Winnicott would call "good enough mothering". It is not divine motherhood *per se* that saves. As I am arguing, Julian seems to be experiencing Christ's saving activity in the showings as first of all an *act* of mirroring which responds appropriately to the maturational condition and need of the beholding human in a condition of radical vulnerability. As her maturation in the appropriation of trust develops, the *chere* of the mirroring Lord diversifies and becomes yet more fulfilling, but always responsively to the

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<sup>90</sup> BHATTACHARJI, Santha, "Independence of thought in Julian of Norwich", *Word and spirit* 11, 1989, p. 87.

<sup>91</sup> Bynum and others argue that there is no crisis, no radical *transformation* in Julian's showings, only continuity and fulfillment. BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone, 1992, p. 154.

I am sympathetic to her logic which draws on Chodorow's psychology of women, but I am arguing for the presence in Julian's showings of a soteriological crisis which is pre-oedipal in both a personal, psychobiographical sense and in a soteriological sense of causing Julian to experience a contrast between what the Church would teach her of sin and salvation, and what her showings revealed. Moreover, there is the evidence of the radical transformation in Christ's *chere* in which Julian beholds herself participating at the critical point in her own life of being mortally ill. All of this impels Julian to seek greater intelligibility of her experience and spiritual maturation. The fulfillment Bynum speaks of will be more clearly seen in the *exemplum*.

need of the beholder. The third diptych will explore the later expressions of this dynamic in the Long Text.

#### 4.1.2 Saving God

At the level of soteriological crisis, Julian's transformed understanding of *asset making* as satisfaction raises further speculation along this line. Could it be that the Christ of her showings is also making God "good enough", "saving" God from the false, rageful abusive caricature into which humankind in its fallen, wrathful and despairing condition had made God? This would put into a clear light for her the suffering which Julian and her *even* Christians had experienced at the hand of the common teaching of Holy Church. Again, the mirroring of Christ's transforming *chere* is that which gives Julian the assurance she needs to know that her true self-in-Christ has suffered *enough*. As I suggested in the last chapter, for humans like Julian to come to know God as God *wants* to be known, Christ's substantial nature in his incarnate humanity would indeed *need* to be kept intact in the godly (substantial) will of humanity, if that humanity is identified explicitly as those whose social location (and early child neglect or abuse) would have them introject that they are intrinsically sinful, less than human, and so constitutionally incapable of union with God.

Julian's movement toward resolution of her soteriological crisis results in her appropriation of a credible and coherent grasp of Christ's saving work which is more responsive to her *psychospiritual need and social location*. I suggest that this could have helped her in the work of understanding her predicament of vulnerability and abandonment more realistically, and in the challenge to name correctly what sin, in her predicament, was.

Appropriation, however, is not effected simply by means of the new cognitive awareness which the showings brought about, important as that is. The work of appropriation occurs daily and is a lifelong process. In that sense, it could be correlated with the life long work of transmuted internalization of the function of the mirroring Other. For Julian to be increasingly disposed to the condition of union (as she describes it in terms of substance and sensuality), she draws on the practice of beholding.

#### 4.2 The anchoritic identification with Christ in the joyful crucifixion

My reflection in the first chapter of the first diptych (chapter 7) included traces of influence of anchoritic tradition as functioning for Julian as a holding environment which

functioned as the transitional space for the maturation of the mirroring transference. In the following paragraphs I wish to explore some of the practices and symbolism of the anchoritic tradition as a possible source of retrieval in her appropriation of the saving work of Christ, a source which is able to make sense of her soteriological contrast experience and meet her urgent need for mirroring.

These paragraphs will explore further how her prior familiarity with anchoritic symbolism might function as a source both for Julian's working through of the mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings for her own maturation of her mirroring needs, and, for Julian's *retrieval* from that tradition in her process of finding a resolution to her soteriological crisis in the surprisingly parallel generous and *homely* mirroring of the Christ of her showings. I will argue that the anchoritic practices which foster the identification with Christ may have been a unique resource for Julian whose social and psychodynamic location would situate her more clearly among the crucified than the crucifiers.

I suggest that from this source Julian was able to retrieve both meaning and practices which would contribute to and confirm Julian's experience of union, comfort and joyful transformation in these showings of Christ's suffering, particularly as described in her beholding of the changing *chere* of Christ in ST 12. It offers a source from which she might have retrieved a repeated confirmation of the intelligibility and limit of sin and suffering.

#### **4.2.1 The Other who satisfies the needs of those dying to ego**

I suggest that the anchorhold, or at least the generous symbolism surrounding the anchoritic vocation could have played a significant mirroring, affirming role and assisted in enabling Julian both to let go of her resistance to entering into a mourning process mirrored in the suffering Christ of her showings, and to retrieve from this tradition the paradoxical objective of uniting with Christ.

Taking the position that Julian had familiarity with the specialized anchoritic literature prior to her reception of the showings is helpful in distinguishing, from within that context, what some of the units Julian borrowed from that literature would be. The theology embedded in this literature (drawing heavily from Anselm) is an ambivalent source for retrieval. Drawing on an article by Nicholas Watson which looks rather at the *methods* and *objectives* of the anchoritic life, I will explore how Julian seems to have drawn from the practice of the anchoritic life in unique ways to render the soteriology more responsive to her need.

Watson's study identifies the objective of the anchoritic martyrdom, the identification with Christ in his death, as "a *joyful crucifixion*: the transformation of suffering into joy that deserves spiritual reward...."<sup>92</sup>

If Julian were not already enclosed in the anchorhold, I believe she was familiar with the anchoritic literature prior to her reception of the showings as we have them recorded in the Short Text. Unlike the meditations on the Passion which had become quite widespread by the 14th century, the anchoritic literature was specialized, written *only* for those who were living the vocation of anchoritic enclosure. I believe that sometime before she had the showings Julian retrieved from this latter literature more than just her knowledge of contemplative aspirations as this was reflected in her request for the three *graces*.<sup>93</sup>

As well as noting its specialized nature, Nicholas Watson observes two other characteristics of the anchoritic literature which distinguishes it from later 14th and 15th century piety. One is that it does not speak of mystical ascent. The other is that anchoritic texts

refer to or imply the external world of their readers.... [W]hereas I suggested that a major function of the later passion meditations... is to absorb the imagination and hence to occupy the part of the mind which is most liable to earthly distraction, the anchoritic works habitually return the reader to a sense of her own external conditions by recalling the anchorage.... [I]t is life within the cell that the anchoritic works transfigure, and their most characteristic movement is not away from the reader's imprisoned state but back into it. This is presumably because for the intended audience the best possible image for spiritual reality is their own external circumstances; the anchoresses in a real sense embody spiritual reality as perceived by these works, and need not to forget their external circumstances but rather to understand the spiritual significance of their condition.... [T]he anchoresses are already as it were *enclosed within a powerful imaginative structure*, and require only a personal and affective realisation of its significance. The anchoritic works assist in and enact the process of realisation by presenting the life of the anchorage in a variety of images that possess an underlying and unifying coherence. There is a reciprocal relationship, an interpenetration, between these images and the anchoritic image which they 'interpret'.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> WATSON, Nicholas, "The methods and objectives of thirteenth-century anchoritic devotion", in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1987, pp. 143 - 144. Exeter symposium IV, emphasis added.

<sup>93</sup> See BAKER, Denise N., "Julian of Norwich and anchoritic literature", *Mystics quarterly* 19, 4, 1993, p. 158. See also McINERNEY, Maud Burnett, "'In the meydens womb': Julian of Norwich and the poetics of enclosure", in *Medieval mothering*, eds. PARSONS, John Carmi and Bonnie WHEELER, NY, Garland, 1996, pp. 157 - 182.

<sup>94</sup> WATSON, 1987, pp. 140 - 144, emphasis added. See also SAVAGE and WATSON, 1991, pp. 15 - 28; and GEORGIANNA, Linda, *The solitary self: Individuality in the Ancrene wisse*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1981, 169 p.



Watson cites from the literature to show how the most important image of the anchoritic life, that is, martyrdom or crucifixion, is used to evoke in the anchoress an identification with Christ and a sense of his companionship in the anchorhold, so as to *transfigure* her life of enclosure lived until death. This, he says, was conceived as a “sweet martyrdom”. The death the anchoress lived was seen as having a positive meaning, as

*a joyful crucifixion: the transformation of suffering into joy that deserves spiritual reward....* Such an activity is based on the ability of the anchoress to comprehend and to realise the spiritual reality which underlies her way of life, to penetrate the image which she is herself living.<sup>95</sup>

In the literature written for anchorites, the “external world” of the anchorhold is variously symbolized as Mary’s womb (the lieu of Incarnation), Christ’s tomb, a prison, a castle, the soul, etc., and the texts are intended to assist the anchoress in living out the suffering of Christ in his Passion and in undergoing the transformations of participating in the Incarnation, the Passion and ultimately the Resurrection of Christ under the “humiliating, mundane appearance” of daily life in the anchorhold. As I noted earlier, Watson identifies that the spiritual asceticism of the anchoress is not to *escape* but rather to *transfigure* her external reality. In this literature, perhaps because of the extremity of this external context of the anchoritic asceticism, Christ speaks to the anchoress with extravagant generosity, and as an all-loving mother.

Watson wants to show how the anchorite’s interiorization and living of these mysteries is ascetical, mystical and heroic, and that, because it demanded such self-knowledge and subtlety on the part of those who attempted it, it needed no imagery of “mystical ascent”. It is significant for the present study that Watson argues that the methods and objectives for development in the spiritual life of the anchorite, when contrasted with the active lives of those saints who preached, evangelized, and often moved about in the world, are different, unique and indeed *opposite*. A great deal of Julian’s propensity for reversing customary meanings could perhaps be linked to her practising an anchoritic spirituality.

Watson’s point is that there is a common tendency to judge anchoritic literature as somehow less than mystical because of its alien quality and that this judging tendency reveals “an unwillingness to face or respect such a quality”.<sup>96</sup> It seems to me that this

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<sup>95</sup> WATSON, 1987, pp. 143 - 144, emphasis added.

<sup>96</sup> WATSON, 1987, p. 134.

judgment, which Watson wants to reverse, contains a world of “neglect” of pre-oedipal themes to be explored!

This is affective mystical language of a sensual and commonplace kind. What is less than commonplace, however, is its concretion; the failure to *seize Christ within* is an internal failure, but is to be remedied by renewed commitment to the external passion of the cell. Images... cannot in this spirituality become disassociated from the external hardships of its practitioners..... [O]n earth sharing in the love of Christ has to mean sharing in his pain. Thus the element of affective devotion is of a piece with the rest of this anchoritic spirituality; there is nothing rudimentary about it. Although it employs fantasy, it does not consist of fantasy; its roots are physical, existential.<sup>97</sup>

Even in the Short Text I believe it is possible to see the effect of these methods and objectives on the themes and transfigurations in her showings.

In particular, consider the moment in Julian’s eighth - to - ninth showing, when she thinks the suffering Christ will die, and then beholds his *chere* change to one of joy, bringing about the same interior transformation in her. (ST 12.) What we see reflected in the shift in Christ’s face from suffering at the point of death to joy and in the surprising dialogue that ensues is, I am suggesting, a mirror of the context of the anchorhold and the tradition of literature surrounding the anchoritic practice which promoted the transfiguring experience of Christ’s crucifixion as joyful. I see the context of the anchorhold as functioning as a kind of imaginative holding environment for Julian, supportive and encouraging of this transformative symbolic encounter with the crucified Christ, which might otherwise have simply been an experience of overwhelming suffering in isolation.

Moreover, it seems to me that a close reading of Julian’s themes in relation to the anchoritic literature, even in the Short Text, can reveal evidence of Julian’s attraction to a symbolic environment conducive to the maturation of early infant mirroring dynamics. What came about by means of the visions and her continued meditation on them could be seen then as a transformation of her perhaps initial desire to escape from the world *without*. By now it should be clear that the anchoritic life was *not* an escape, for those who endured it. Could it be that with the showings and the mirroring transference with Jesus which emerged, the anchorhold became for Julian the lieu for immersing herself in a healing, symbolically rich environment which would allow her, indeed require her to explore the world *within* and deepen her self-knowledge? Could the symbolism associated with anchoritic practices have become a powerful resource for her in her

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<sup>97</sup> WATSON, 1987, p. 145, emphasis added.

reconstruction of soteriology according to her heightened need for the presence of Christ beholding her and satisfying her need for a mirroring Other?<sup>98</sup>

If indeed her pre-oedipal preoccupation with a need for mirroring was as determinative as I am proposing, the anchorhold may well have been experienced ambivalently by Julian at first, if she did experience an unconscious identification “with the state of death itself, reflecting an unconscious wish to achieve reunion with the lost parent”, prior to her entry into the visionary activity.<sup>99</sup> This would argue in part for her anxiety at the prospect of assenting to die, as she had not yet experienced the anchoritic goal of *seizing Christ within*, and so unconsciously could not feel trust in salvation.

#### 4.2.2 Alone in the presence of Another

One significant speculation Bhattacharji makes concerning the originality of Julian’s vision of Christ’s desire for self-giving is that the separation from the frontline of theological activity which would be afforded by Julian’s being enclosed, may have “allowed her mind to listen to its own depths; to bring, in the phrase of the Eastern Orthodox hesychasts, ‘the mind into the heart’”.<sup>100</sup> This would resonate with the perspective I take in this study, that the anchoritic practice of interpreting her daily experience in this reverse symbolic fashion, and using her prayer of “beholding” to keep the showings before her, were significant for her appropriation of their salvific meaning.

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<sup>98</sup> See KRANTZ, Diane, *The life and text of Julian of Norwich: The poetics of enclosure*, NY, Peter Lang, 1997, chapters 5 and 6, who examines literary images and structures of enclosure in the Long Text, as images of limitation, protection, participation and indwelling. She offers a brief Jungian psychoanalytic explanation for Julian’s motivation for entering the anchorhold at that later time, and makes much of Julian’s “anxiety” at the prospect of entering the enclosure. Curiously she draws on two object relations theorists Karen Horney and Melanie Klein, each of whom in her own way argues that a return to the mother (in images of the breast, the womb etc.) is evoked in response to a “feeling of helplessness in a hostile and overpowering world”. Horney is quoted here by Krantz on p. 21. Krantz uses these theorists to support her claim that Julian’s choice of lifestyle was a response to the “exterior events” of the time, and not because of any “mother fixation”. My psychobiographical antennae go up at this. Everyone in that period suffered one way or another from those calamitous events. But not everyone became an anchoress, nor had the showings which Julian did, nor spent the rest of their life intensely meditating on and writing them. Moreover, Krantz’ argument for a late entry into the anchorhold is partly based on her postulation that Julian’s mother died, and that Julian, who had a dependent relationship on her mother, responded to this exigency by choosing an independent relationship with the Mother Christ of her showings and by entering the enclosure. KRANTZ, 1997, pp. 22, 131. What is that if not a sign of something like a “mother fixation”?

<sup>99</sup> MEISSNER, W. W., *Ignatius of Loyola: The psychology of a saint*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> BHATTACHARJI, 1989, p. 89.

An interesting comparison could be made here with Winnicott's exploration of what is involved in "the capacity to be alone".<sup>101</sup> Winnicott observes that not everyone can be alone and *enjoy* solitude and that in fact this is a sophisticated development in childhood. He writes that "the ability to be truly alone has as its basis the early experience of being alone in the presence of someone" and that this is related to the infant's early relation with the mother. Gradually the infant introjects this environment,

so that there comes about a capacity actually to be alone. Even so, theoretically, there is always someone present, someone who is equated ultimately and unconsciously with the mother, the person who, in the early days and weeks, was *temporarily identified with her infant*, and for the time being was interested in nothing else but the care of her own infant".<sup>102</sup>

I spoke earlier of the possibility that Julian's personal history was such that she had come to identify "with the state of death itself, reflecting an unconscious wish to achieve reunion with the lost parent".<sup>103</sup> I observed that, if she were already enclosed, despite her religious aspirations this situation could be experienced in ambivalence and isolation. However, if, as I am arguing, Julian is fully engaged in a mirroring encounter with the Jesus of her showings *in the anchorhold* or at least in some state of reclusion, she would be experiencing solitude in the presence of an other who responded adequately to her need.

Julian does not mention the anchorhold anywhere in the showings as such. It is true that Julian's use of the verb "enclose" (*beclose*) is much more extensive in the Long Text.<sup>104</sup> About the absence of direct mention of the anchorhold I observe that a holding environment must be sufficiently trustworthy, if it is to function as such, as to be taken for granted by the infant -- particularly in its first symbiotic stages.<sup>105</sup> The absence of direct mention of the anchorhold might, in that sense, reflect the power of its symbolism for her experience of dying and transformation into joy in Christ in the early showings.

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<sup>101</sup> See WINNICOTT, D. W., "The capacity to be alone", *International journal of psychoanalysis* 39, 4, 1958, pp. 416 - 420, reprinted in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, [1958] 1965, pp. 29 - 36.

<sup>102</sup> WINNICOTT, [1958] 1965, p. 36, emphasis added.

<sup>103</sup> MEISSNER, 1992, p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> McINERNEY, Maud Burnett, "'In the meydens womb': Julian of Norwich and the poetics of enclosure", in *Medieval mothering*, eds., PARSONS, John Carmi and Bonnie WHEELER, N.Y., Garland, 1996, pp. 157 - 182.

<sup>105</sup> Winnicott held that when it goes well, good-enough mothering is not noticed. WINNICOTT, W. D., "The theory of the parent-infant relationship", in *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, [1960] 1965, p. 52.

#### 4.2.3 Seizing Christ within

To the extent that the symbolic tradition of the anchorhold is intended to assist the anchoress to *seize Christ within* and to experience this as a joyful crucifixion, Julian could be retrieving from that same tradition what she needed for Christ symbolically to fulfill that mirroring function. What is very clear is that Julian, like the readers of the anchoritic literature, only identifies with Christ in her showings, and only with his suffering at point of death, not with the other scenes or participants of the Passion. There is contained in this identification the quality of a fused relationship, an interpenetration of the image of her suffering and Christ's suffering, which is encouraged in the anchoritic practice.<sup>106</sup> It could likewise be said to reflect her engagement with the Christ of her showings in a merged mirroring transference and her interiorizing of that missed parental mirroring function by means of transmuted internalization. If so, perhaps this also had an effect on how she appropriated a soteriology which responded to the contours of the human predicament of neglect and vulnerability in her social location as a woman.

Once the showings began, the crucifix seems to have functioned as a transitional object for Julian because the anchorhold and its imagery of union with Christ in death was a preparation for experiencing Christ as a trustworthy empathic presence in the transitional realm. As such, the anchoritic context and practice of seeking to seize Christ within in a joyful crucifixion would better account for the transformation in Christ's face and her merged response to it, which occurred in the limit situation of Julian's near-mortal suffering. If this were Julian's context, then *the showings themselves brought about the longed for anchoritic mystical experience of concretion in "seizing Christ within"*. It would help to account for the profound visceral transformation which occurs in Julian as she beholds this change in Christ's *chere*.

If this were so, that the showings brought on this anchoritic mystical experience of seizing Christ within, then the link between Julian's retrieval from the methods and objectives of that tradition to resolve her soteriological contrast experience would be significant. The transformation of suffering "which deserves spiritual reward" resonates with Julian's whole reversal of the satisfaction theory's understanding of debt, reward and satisfaction in Christ's saving work. Moreover, the symbolism of the anchorhold as

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<sup>106</sup> See Andrew SPRUNG "'We nevyr shall come out of hym': Enclosure and immanence in Julian of Norwich's *Book of showings*", *Mystics quarterly* 19, 1993, pp. 47 - 62, who argues, using Winnicott, that the image and concept of enclosure functions as the means for Julian's understanding of the union of God and the human soul.

Christ's tomb and as Mary's womb of Christ's Incarnation would not be lost on Julian in her death experience united in Christ and the "double" anthropology which emerges out of her experience.<sup>107</sup>

#### 4.2.4 The anchorhold as lieu for the emergence of self

In the context of Julian's engagement with the visions, and specifically her working through a process of disillusionment and mourning a false self (perfectionistic, isolated, grandiose, yet shamefilled self) and also the mourning of a distorted understanding of sin and salvation as that had been transmitted to her, the anchorhold served as the lieu for transformation in self understanding as relationally constituted through a mirroring transference with the transforming face of Christ. This relationality is not exactly mutual; there is no bridal mysticism in Julian. The relationality is familiar (*homely*) and familial. As Julian understands it, she has everything to learn about who she really is in the eyes of God from the *chere* of Jesus of her showings, and in this sense she accepts dependence and trust as intrinsic to the nature of the relationality. In Julian's case, I argued that this acceptance of dependence entailed a coming to terms with powerlessness in the experience of actually consenting to die, which brought on grief and loss, a death to a former ego and to a whole cultural universe of meaning around the Church's notion of sin, suffering and salvation.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Nancy Coiner concludes her article with a comment on the anchorhold as providing interesting symbolism for Julian's activity in the *Showings*, and so in another way, is arguing that Julian retrieved what she needed psychoanalytically from the anchoritic tradition. Coiner observes that Freud analyzed the fear of being buried alive as, for many people, "'the most uncanny thing of all' because it evokes their repressed desire to rest inside the maternal body". COINER, Nancy, "The 'homely' and the 'heimliche': The hidden, doubled self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Exemplaria: A journal of theory in medieval and renaissance studies* 5, 1993, p. 323. Coiner's Kristevan conclusion is that

Julian's path is to confront the odd and disturbing images of Christian religious life, to immerse herself in the uncanny as a way of generating insight. Furthermore, Julian's text moves from a concern with death and pain to a concern for transformation, rebirth, renewed life -- from images of the Passion to images of the maternal body. With all Julian's imagery of motherhood as loving enclosure [which comes later in the LT 58 - 63], that anchorhold might have looked to her not so like a tomb as like a womb. COINER, 1993, p. 323.

<sup>108</sup> This is not quite the same thing as the Hegelian notion of selfhood as emerging out of an acceptance of dependence as *subjection*, as one recent critic has proposed. Cannon argues that Julian's *Showings* are "the culmination of a literature in which enclosure is the paradigm of the making of any self". Cannon shows how the anchoritic literature bears on work of the modern philosophers of the subject (Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan etc.). He introduces a critical hermeneutic which underlines that a sense of self emerges as a power from a powerful other. Insofar as this leads back into a domination system (after Wink), and away from Julian's stress on the surprising character of the other revealed, that is, the homeliness and intimacy of the Christ of her showings, I sense that this argument only applies to Julian in a limited way. CANNON, Christopher, "Enclosure", in *The Cambridge companion to medieval women's writing*, eds. DINSHAW,

Julian's experience of conversion and maturation into a new centre of selfhood mirrored in Christ's *chere*, implies a transformation from a former and inadequate understanding of selfhood (defined by sin and suffering), which understanding was also part and parcel of the then ideal of the anchoritic tradition. As Bradley puts it,

Julian's teaching... needs to be assessed against the background of another dominant part of the Western tradition -- the position that the self is a hierarchy, split between reason and passion, and between soul and body. Rooted in a patriarchal view of the self, this concept assigns reason to the male part of the soul and passion to the female part. Order is restored only when the dominance of the male over the female is finally asserted. But for Julian, while there is indeed a lower and a higher part, there is no male-female hierarchy.... Nor are the parts in Julian's teaching reason and passion, or body and soul. Rather, they are substance and sensuality....<sup>109</sup>

The actual contours of the self in relation to Christ which emerge in Julian's living the anchoritic life are characterized by and made possible in a relationship of trust in that condition of vulnerability while dying with Christ, and being changed into a shared joyful crucifixion. The dependency in the relationship is nonetheless homely, non-hierarchical. The point I want to stress here is that perhaps it was the concrete, non-ascent oriented praxis of the symbolic daily dying and rising in the anchorhold which was being retrieved and employed in the emergence of Julian's non-hierarchical and capacious sense of self, utterly contained in God.

The evolution of Julian's showings into an anthropology involving a double understanding of self that was always knitted to Christ in substance, and which Christ's humanity reveals and mirrors in human sensuality as well, could have reverberations with the anchoritic methods and objectives. Take the sixteenth showing for example, of Julian beholding Christ reigning in her soul, and set that beside the anchoress' objective in transforming the anchorhold into being a symbol of the soul in which Christ is present. This last showing, a visual image of the true self united to Christ in substance and sensuality, would be essential for the transformation and fulfillment of her humanity. Julian's experience in the anchorhold would be a kind of symbolic experience of the incarnation of Christ in the human soul.

Julian's understanding of the self and the immanence of Christ in human creation and salvation is in some ways a distinctive departure from what anchoritic or other medieval spiritualities had intended to produce, particularly in the way that it responded to

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Carolyn, and David WALLACE, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 119.

<sup>109</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Perception of self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *The downside review* 104, 1986, p. 238. Certainly it is easy to see comparisons of that other, dominant tradition with the self of the modern philosophers Cannon cites.

the needs of one on the underside of medieval history. I suggest that in the context of her reception of the showings, the anchoritic methods and objectives were retrieved in these ways to promote the healing and maturation of Julian's authentic self into full humanity (in a family and society which did not recognize her capacity for full humanity), and that the clues for this retrieval can be found in her forming of an intelligible anthropology in identification with the kenotic Incarnate One.

### 4.3 The medieval mysticism of the mirror

For insights into Julian's maturation in the mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings and into the problem of sin, another source from the medieval mystical tradition may be helpful.

Ritamary Bradley describes the analogy and more specifically the *function* of the mirror in early Christian and late medieval English mysticism, as this draws on two Biblical texts of 1 Cor 13: 12 and 2 Cor 3: 18.<sup>110</sup> Her thesis is that

the mirror image in the English mystics stays quite close to a single theme: the maturing process within the mystical life. Hence it conveys a general sense of moving from what we see in the mirror to what we shall become. This sense frequently links with the appropriate kinds of food on which the maturing soul is nourished, and sometimes on being fed, according to childhood's changing need, by mother Christ or mother Church.

In all cases the influence of Platonism is minimal or non-existent. The image in the mirror... is Jesus Christ. Occasionally, the image is Jesus Christ united with all the redeemed, and in this vision we see what humanity is to become.<sup>111</sup>

Bradley devotes a whole section of the article to Julian. And although Bradley observes that in Julian's showings the "direct allusions to the mirror analogy are obscure and almost negligible, the intent of the Biblical mirror passages is emphatic and clear".<sup>112</sup>

I cannot here go into all of Bradley's insights. Bradley integrates Julian's later reflections on the Trinity and on Christ as mother into her article, as she did with the one on *asseth making*. The present chapter acknowledges this but again subdues it, partly because the connection between the pre-oedipal mirroring function and the mother-infant

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<sup>110</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamary, "The speculum image in medieval mystical writers," in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer Press, 1984, pp. 9 - 27. She draws on HUGEDÉ, Norbert, *La métaphore du miroir dans les épîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Paris, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1957, 206 p.

<sup>111</sup> BRADLEY, 1984, pp. 23 - 24.

<sup>112</sup> Bradley concludes that, unlike the neo-platonists for whom the "pure of heart' could see perfectly in the divine mirror" (p. 11), for Julian "[i]n heaven indeed we shall know the fullness of joy; but meantime, on earth, all is by faith, and only in part". BRADLEY, 1984, p. 24.



relation (at least in relational psychoanalysis) is by now self-evident, but also because I am attempting to stay close to the soteriological function of mirroring in Julian's accounts of the showings as that develops in the Short Text and the Long Text.

But Bradley's attentiveness to the function that the allusions to Jesus as mirror play in Julian's showings is fascinating, in the significance it lays on the human face and eye contact as the locus for this analogical activity. She links it to Julian's understanding of sensuality and substance, and how knowledge of God and even the Passion is only "in part" in this life. "Full knowing of God", says Julian, would require "that our sensuality be brought up in the substance", that is, that the human temporal condition be fully united with our nature in Christ. (LT 56.) Sin is what keeps us from clearly seeing the blessed face of God; however, the "more clearly that the soul sees the blessed face by the grace of loving, the more it longs to see it in fulness, that is to say in God's own likeness", which, as Bradley adds, is in the humanity of Christ. (LT 72.)<sup>113</sup> The vision "in part" in this life grows under the guidance of grace, linked as it is to our partial knowledge of the substantial self which is never separated from Christ.

The influence of Julian's *exemplum* on her retrieval of the function of Christ's face as the mirror for maturation will be examined in the next diptych. But here in this context I note already Julian's development of the notion of the three *cheres* in Christ which she correlates with her lifelong request for the three wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God.

The first [*chere*] is that of his Passion, as he revealed when he was with us in this life, dying; and although to contemplate this be sorrowful and grievous, still it is glad and joyful, because he is God. The second is pity and ruth and compassion, and this he reveals to all his lovers, with the certainty of protection which necessarily belongs to his mercy. The third is that blessed *chere* as it will be without end, and this was most often revealed, and continued the longest time. And so in the time of our pain and our woe he reveals to us the *chere* of his Passion and his Cross, helping us to bear it by his own blessed power. And in the time of our sinning he shows to us the *chere* of ruth and pity, mightily protecting us and defending us against all our enemies. And these are the two usual *cheres* which he reveals to us in this life, *mingling with them the third*, and that is his blessed *chere*, partly like what it will be in heaven; and that is when through grace we are touched by sweet illuminations of the life of the Spirit, through which we are kept in true faith, hope and love, with contrition and devotion and also with contemplation and every kind of true joys and sweet consolations. *The blessed chere of our Lord God works this in us through grace.* (LT 71.)

Bradley speaks of these three "expressions of the divine countenance" as "special mystical gifts" which are to be distinguished from the "ordinary ways God is present to

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<sup>113</sup> BRADLEY, 1984, p. 22.

us".<sup>114</sup> I suggest that, in terms of Julian's understanding of grace, shaped as it was by the concrete, non-ascent spirituality of the anchorhold and engaging both atonement and sanctification in one whole salvific work, Julian would not necessarily have seen her showing in such exclusivist terms. Rather, I suggest, these three *cheres* are a way for her to describe the process by which *she* -- that is, the soul which has been wounded (familially, societally) -- has come to know herself to be a beloved self, and to appropriate her salvation in conditions of wellbeing and woe. Just as she has reversed the traditional roles and reasoning in soteriology, so here, I suggest, her understanding of the maturation of the sensual condition of the self in its relationship to Christ is adapted according to the need of the wounded pre-oedipal self.

I am suggesting that Julian's mirror of Christ's *chere* functions to reveal itself in its three aspects in the soul or self of the pre-oedipally injured, systemically victimized person, depending on her variable, sensual condition of healing and salvation before God.

1) Crysedale spoke of the first movement toward the appropriation of a soteriology, which works for those who have been wounded on the underside of history, as one of grief and healing of wounds rather than of contrition and forgiveness of sins of pride. So also Julian's sight of the first *chere*, that is of Christ's Passion, reveals the existence of the lost, true self in a condition of merged suffering and with Christ's suffering. *It is a mirror of Christ's utter, compassionate identification with such a wounded, grieving soul without reserve.* This is the mirror of Julian's first four showings of Christ in his Passion. It is the condition of unbearable and unintelligible suffering, which, as Bynum, Ruether and others have pointed out, *is* the condition in which medieval women were given to appropriate their salvation in Christ, as we saw earlier. This is the movement in which the mirror of Christ's *chere* reflects the background of medieval devotion to the humanity of Christ and which led, as Bynum observed, to the belief by women that "*Christ is what we are*".<sup>115</sup>

2) Once the identification of Christ with the true self's abject condition of suffering long abandonment and neglect has been appropriated, the mirror of Christ's *chere* begins to allow to be seen the complicity of the soul in the effects of sin. This is the movement toward the empathic *exposure* of the false self (or as Moore puts it the "early ego") and growth into a greater capacity to discern the effects of sin and turn from them, always

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<sup>114</sup> BRADLEY, 1984, p. 22.

<sup>115</sup> BYNUM, Caroline Walker, *Jesus as mother: Studies in the spirituality of the high middle ages*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1982, p. 130.

under Christ's compassionate regard. What Julian sees in herself while she is "working through" this healing and exposing process are the shame-based sins of impatience and despair, which underlie the introjected anger of the God of the Church's teaching and keep her from knowing herself to be loved compassionately by Christ and joyfully united with Christ in sensuality as well as substance. Here in the mirror of Christ's *chere* she sees the reversal of the traditional meaning of sin, to correspond better to the social location and pre-*oedipal* need and condition of her soul. Thus the mirror functions at this point to reveal in effect how the soul has appropriated that *Christ is what we are not (in our sensual condition at that time) but also mirrors who we are to become in sensuality and substance* -- ie, fully human. However, although Christ mirrors her lack, there is no wrath in God. Christ mirrors compassion which alone can reveal to the beholder her interior condition of impatience (wrath) and despair as a lack of trust: "For we through sin and wretchedness have in us a wrath and a constant opposition to peace and to love; and he revealed that very often in his lovely look of compassion and pity". (LT 48). We'll see more clearly in the next dyptich how this exposure is necessary for Julian to grow into her full humanity in God's sight.<sup>116</sup>

3) Julian's third *chere* is that of union with Christ in joy, as it will be in heaven but can be beheld "in part" from time to time in this life by the soul so disposed. One early image of this is in her sixteenth showing where she sees Christ reigning in her soul. Another way of putting this would be to see this union as mirroring Christ's Incarnation in the soul: in effect it says "*we are what Christ is*", in sensuality and substance.

Bradley observes that for Julian full knowing in God is reserved for heaven, as the revealing of the mysteries now hid to us. As Julian says, "[t]herefore when the judgment is given, and we are all brought up above, we shall then clearly see in God the mysteries

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<sup>116</sup> Concerning the full humanity into which Christ's exposing and empathic *chere* calls Julian, Bynum provides an elegant argument. Unlike medieval men whose use of religious (female) imagery was in order to respond to their need for renunciation (self-denial) and role reversal such that they developed "conceptions of gender", women transformed the meanings of the same religious images to respond to their need to "develop conceptions of humanity", that is, to see themselves as *fully human* despite the status of inhumanity to which the religious culture had relegated them. BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone, 1992, p. 156. However, Bynum holds that "women's stories are less frequently told as stories of crisis and change, regardless of the sex of the narrator, and women writers seem less interested in stories of conversion than in stories of constant and courageous suffering". See BYNUM, 1992, p. 154. Given the developmental thesis being developed here, that these mirroring images were in fact how Julian experienced her conversion from the pattern of relentless suffering, and that Julian exploited her original reversals of meaning so that the religious symbolism could respond to her condition, I can't agree with Bynum's global judgment in Julian's case.

which are now hidden from us". (LT 85.) Interestingly Julian says this in another way, which to my mind amplifies the mirroring function of Christ's third *chere* when she says that Christ "will draw our outer *chere* to the inner, and will make us all at unity with him, and each of us with others in the true, lasting joy which is Jesus". (LT 71.) It suggests a unitive vision of restoration in the coherence of the self and of true knowledge of self, other and God in the mirror of Christ's *chere*.

## 5.0 Conclusion

To conclude, in Julian's reformation of the satisfaction theory as *asset making*, there is a reversal of roles and reasoning. I suggested that this could have helped her in the work of understanding her predicament of vulnerability and abandonment and finding satisfaction of her need for mirroring in the Christ of her showings and in the challenge to name correctly what sin in her predicament was. Likewise, in the influence of the methods and objectives of anchoritic spirituality, born, as that spirituality is, as though from the dead, there is a reversal in perspective from other more active spiritualities which Julian brings to her soteriology. Rather than transcending the concrete, Julian's double self is anchored in her daily practice of seeking union with the non-hierarchical, sensual and joyful crucifixion of Christ through the prayer of beholding. I argued that she retrieved from the anchoritic tradition, and shaped into her double anthropology, the symbolism of the enclosed self as lieu for the kenotic Incarnation. In the influence of the mirror analogy, as describing how the mirror functions differently at different points in the maturation of the spiritual life, there is a revelation first of identity and only later difference. The exposure to the self which Christ as mirror provides Julian, particularly in the early stages of that encounter as represented in her experience of comfort in Christ's intimacy with her in the first showings of his Passion, is the opposite of what the traditional experience of purgation for sin was understood to be. But it coheres with Crysdale's grasp of how salvation begins to be appropriated by those on the underside of history not in guilt but rather in grief and compassion. Only subsequently does a reverse understanding of complicity in sin become intelligible. This process hints at a way through the feminist defensiveness toward a renewed meaning for the concept of Jesus' *kenosis* in women's experience of salvation.

These reversals of order and expectation all move in the same direction: that the fundamental encounter with God mediated by Christ for Julian moves away from the traditional one of recognizing her guilt and being moved to contrition and forgiveness of sins. It becomes, rather, an encounter in grief with Christ's overwhelming compassion for

the suffering endured till now, in his disarming intimacy of regard and healing love. This strikes a profound resonance with Crysdale's observation that for those on the underside of history and who have internalized dysfunctional familial system patterns, *transformation works in the opposite direction* from what the traditional understanding of redemption in Christ's Passion has understood.<sup>117</sup>

This parallel of reversals in Julian and Crysdale, recognized in principle by Nuth, Bradley and other feminist Julian scholars, but developed at more length here is a significant piece of evidence which supports the psychobiographical and soteriological hypotheses of this research on Julian. It highlights to what extent Julian's soteriology is an authentic and brilliant response to her social location, her personal need and her compassion for others in such need. Articulating the correlation in this way, I believe, can help women and others who intuitively resonate with Julian's writings to understand better, in terms of soteriological discourse, why this may be so.

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<sup>117</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 10.

DIPTYCH 3

## CHAPTER 11

### DIPTYCH 3.1      MIRRORING IN THE *EXEMPLUM*

#### 1.0 Introduction

In this first chapter of the third and final diptych I explore the third phase of Kohut's therapeutic process of maturation of mirroring need as applied to the Long Text. In particular, this exploration will focus on the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant in LT 51, the most developed and dynamic expression of Julian's soteriology, to explore Julian's resolution of the tension between fusion and isolation in the separation-individuation process of maturation of narcissism by means of the mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings. I will also look at her references to Jesus as mother insofar as they speak of how the Jesus of her showings is invested with particular mirroring functions which bring about maturation, although I will not attempt to provide any comprehensive account of her Christological and trinitarian theology along these lines.

One of the amazingly clear psychobiographical pieces of evidence Julian gives us is to be found in the differences between the Short and the Long Texts. Julian tells us that after the fifteenth showing she doubted the truth of the showings, telling the man of religion that she had been raving. (ST 21; LT 66.) At this point in the Long Text she describes in greater detail that "at the end all was hidden, and I saw no more"; her sickness returns, though she senses that she will go on living, and "I was as barren and dry as if the consolation which I had received before were trifling...." (LT 66.) Panichelli has made the psychobiographical point that this loss of the immediacy of the showings and the condition of denial and self-doubt which ensued was not resolved in Julian's writing of the Short Text and that Julian's understanding of the meaning of the showings only came as she came to terms with her own human nature.<sup>1</sup> The Short Text ends heavily with the note of doubt and despair at hand. Its final, twenty-fifth chapter describes the four kinds of fear. Panichelli's point is that through the rewriting of the *Showings* so many years later "the centre of the short version, which is the area of human doubt and denial, eventually dissolves as the centre of the conflict".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PANICHELLI, Debra Scott, "Finding God in the memory: Julian and the loss of the visions", *The Downside review* 104, 1986, pp. 299 - 300.

<sup>2</sup> PANICHELLI, 1986, p. 302. See also BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian's 'doubtfull drede'", *The month*

I agree with Panichelli that what is described in Julian's reactions to the "loss" of the immediacy of the showings is her primary fear of abandonment by God to a condition of isolation, self-hate and despair. And I have no doubt that the *writing* of the Long Text had its own performative effect on Julian. But what happened in the twenty years or more prior to the composition of the Long Text? I am proposing that Julian negotiated the loss of the experience of immediate, fused union with the Jesus of her showings in the ongoing transitional space of meditation in which the mirroring transference had come into being. In particular, she meditated on the *exemplum*, whose meaning was so unclear to her that she could not even include it in the Short Text. It is in the *exemplum*, I suggest, that we can see the main lines of Julian's long term healing and resolution of her separation anxiety with its concomitant patterns of self-hate and despair, and observe her maturation of mirroring need into mature self worth and object love.

Julian herself gives a kind of description of the time line in which her self-understanding and mirroring transference changed. She describes the three stages of understanding of the *exemplum* which were given to her over time:

The first is the beginning of the teaching which I understood from it at the time. The second is the inward instruction which I have understood from it since. The third is all the whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which our Lord God of his goodness freely and often brings before the eyes of my understanding. (LT 51.)

Julian explains that

these three are so unified, as I understand it, that I cannot and may not separate them. And by these three as one I have instruction by which I ought to believe and trust in our Lord God, that out of the same goodness and for the same purpose as he revealed it, by the same goodness and for the same purpose will make it clear to us when it is his will. (LT 51.)

While I respect Julian's *a posteriori* understanding that the three are unified, I propose to follow Julian's own historical process of meditating on and coming to understand the meaning of the *exemplum*, and to interpret each phase of understanding in terms of her experience of negotiating the separation-individuation process. It is this process which, I suggest, allows her to relinquish or mature through the need for the fused or merged mirroring transference with the Jesus of her early showings to one of mirroring proper. As this takes place, I suggest, Julian is moving toward interiorizing the mature function of the maternal mirroring need.

My evolving hypothesis is that Julian's maturation in mirroring need manifests itself in a clear shift from what I am calling merged subjectivism in the Short Text



description of the showings, to relational realism in the *exemplum* and her later theological reflections in the Long Text. *I use the phrases merged subjectivism and relational realism to help describe the shift in the quality of the experience of herself, her experience of God, and her relation to others* which seems to obtain through the evolution of her mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings.

After Koenig, I propose that the single most significant factor in this process as it manifests itself in Julian's *exemplum* is the mirroring function of the face of the lord in the *exemplum*.<sup>3</sup> The present chapter will attempt to sketch the process and fruits of this growth in narcissism and object relations psychological maturation and their relation to her spiritual maturation through the particulars of her account of the mirroring dynamic in the lord - servant relationship in the *exemplum*.

## **2.0 A brief review of the third phase of mirroring transference in Kohut and the signs of maturation in mirroring need**

As we have said before, Kohut describes the process of maturation in the therapeutic context as having three distinct phases. Having overcome resistance to entering into a mirroring transference and having worked through the mirroring transference to the point where new self structures of a more authentic or true self are being laid down, the individual is enabled to begin to *relinquish* the mirroring transference in the third and final phase of the therapeutic transference. The movement toward relinquishing the early, fused mirroring transference requires that self and other become sufficiently distinguished that the client can begin to interiorize the mirroring function herself.

This is seen in the mirroring transference of "mirroring proper" which, according to Kohut, allows for more differentiation in one's sense of self and other.

In the most mature form of the therapeutic mobilization of the grandiose self the analyst is most clearly experienced as a separate person.... In this narrower sense of the term the mirror transference is the therapeutic reinstatement of that normal phase of the development of the grandiose self in which the gleam in the mother's eye, which mirrors the child's exhibitionistic display, and other forms of maternal participation in and response to the child's narcissistic-exhibitionistic enjoyment confirm the child's self esteem and by a gradually increasing selectivity of these responses, begin to channel it into realistic directions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The "Book of showings" of Julian of Norwich: A testcase for Paul Ricoeur's theories of metaphor and the imagination*, Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, ch. 7.

<sup>4</sup> KOHUT, Heinz, *The analysis of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1971, pp. 115 - 116.

According to Kohut, a critical element in the successful therapeutic process is object constancy.

### 2.1 Object constancy in relational psychoanalysis

Within the therapeutic mirroring transference, object constancy begins as a capacity on the part of the therapist which the client comes to develop and interiorize as a result. Let us look at object constancy as this is manifested in the therapist first, then as it is interiorized in the client.

Object constancy in the therapist is essential. In Kohut's understanding of the therapeutic process,

therapeutically most important is the fact that a workable *object constancy* in the narcissistic realm can be attained. The crucial function of the mirror transference is, in other words, that it brings about a condition which maintains the momentum of the therapeutic process.<sup>5</sup>

In the way that Kohut describes it here, object constancy in the mirroring transference can be seen to be critically important for the work of therapeutic healing and maturation of the mirroring transference to be possible in the client.

What is object constancy and why is it so essential in the mirror transference? Object constancy could be described as a quality of relational acceptance which the therapist offers the client which guarantees that the client *feels* that his or her interior life is understood. Kohut gives his reasons for the importance of the analyst's object constancy within the mirror transference:

In order to actuate and to maintain in motion the painful process which leads to the confrontation of the grandiose fantasies with a realistic conception of the self... a mirror transference in one of its forms must be established. If it does not develop, however, or if its establishment is interfered with by the therapist's rejection, or by his premature or prematurely massive transference interpretations, then the patient's grandiosity remains concentrated upon the grandiose self, and the therapist is experienced as foreign and inimical and thus excluded from meaningful participation. Under these conditions, the ego's defensive position remains rigid and ego expansion cannot take place.<sup>6</sup>

In effect, object constancy is directly related to Kohut's therapeutic method of empathy. If the therapist is unable to sustain object constancy such that the client *feels* empathically understood, then the mirroring transference is aborted. Winnicott and Kohut are alike in emphasizing the importance of empathy as the necessary constant in the therapeutic method. Kohut makes it his therapeutic method explicitly. Winnicott does this by keeping

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<sup>5</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 192, emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup> KOHUT, 1971, pp. 192 - 193.

always in the forefront of therapy the ever-present image of the infant. As Amy Martellock puts it, Winnicott's

image of the infant lost in unthinkable anxiety inspires sympathy for the struggles of the psychotic adult seeking safety when the possibility of a return to that state threatens.... In looking at any individual through a Winnicottian lens, we do not start with the pathology of the adult but with the baby, full of potential but vulnerable and entirely dependent on the environment for how that potential will be realized.<sup>7</sup>

According to Kohut the mirroring (proper) transference represents a later stage in the infant's negotiation of separation from the mother. Earlier theorists understood object constancy to refer to the infant's development of a representation of the mother at around eight months of age. But more recent theorists have revised this to be a later development around 18 months, and see it, not as the internalization of the mother, but rather, as the internalization of a *particular kind of experience of being seen by the mother*. Kohut and Winnicott would agree with this latter view that "[t]he real theme of object constancy is self constancy" and that this is foundational for the child [or client] to develop a separate identity.<sup>8</sup>

Object constancy interiorized manifests itself in self esteem. Kohut describes this in terms of the move from

an insecure existence dominated by rapid emotional oscillations -- between unbridled ambitions and a sense of failure, and between grandiose vanity and searing shame -- to that increased equanimity, inner peace, and security which result from the transformation of archaic narcissism into... self esteem.<sup>9</sup>

Kohut emphasizes the maturation of narcissism in the emergence of a cohesive self expressed in realistic and effective goals and ambitions. As the client grows in tolerating the experience of the authentic self first as deprived and empty, that is, the experience of neither grandiosity nor shame fragments of false self structure, she makes room for the recognition and acceptance by the reality ego of appropriate mirroring and idealizing needs within the authentic self.<sup>10</sup> Over time in a successful therapeutic situation, the authentic self is experienced with increasing cohesiveness and as continuous in time. Self esteem, as Kohut describes it, is about this experience of self as cohesive and continuous through

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<sup>7</sup> MARTELLOCK, Amy King, *She who is not: A psychobiography of Catherine of Siena using the theories of D. W. Winnicott*, Ps.D. dissertation, Massachusetts school of professional psychology, 2003, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup> SHERWOOD, Vance, "Object constancy: The illusion of being seen", *Psychoanalytic psychology* 6, 1989, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 192.

<sup>10</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 186.

time. Thanks to therapeutic object constancy, the transitional creative illusion of being seen and affirmed, self constancy becomes more prevalent. In its maturity the authentic self, according to Kohut, is characterized by a consistent capacity to "have empathy for oneself", i.e., the capacity for consoling, soothing oneself, and for affect mentalization, which signals the point at which the mirroring function of the analyst has undergone transmuted internalization by the client, thus allowing the transference relationship with the analyst to be relinquished.

## 2.2 Maturation in narcissism and object relations

There are several other characteristics of the authentic self and its relational character emerging from a successful therapeutic mirroring transference, as understood by relational psychoanalysts such as Winnicott, Meissner, etc., as well as theologians, such as McDargh, who draw on this school, which are significant to recall here before exploring Julian's *exemplum*.

This therapeutic phase would correspond to what Winnicott understood to be at stake in the infant's negotiation of separation from the mother. Kohut sees narcissism as maturing independently of object relations, and is focused primarily on maturation in the cohesion of the self as that is manifested in the realism of the individual's goals and ambitions. Other signs of psychodynamic maturation include empathy for others, creativity, humour, etc. Winnicott, on the other hand, sees narcissistic maturation in self esteem as essential for growth in self and reality acceptance. Winnicott sees the maturation of mirroring through disillusionment as essential not just for the maturation of narcissism in a cohesive sense of self but also for the creative work of relating inner and outer reality, for the development of a creative and durable sense of both self and external reality. Having in effect thus successfully reparented herself to accept her own humanity in this empathic, realistic way, the individual is also freed to see the analyst, and others with whom mirroring transferences are developed in the vicissitudes of life, in a way which is accepting of their humanity as "good enough". Thus as Winnicott regards the progress of maturation, there is a shift from "object relating" (where the other is experienced as an extension of the self) to what he calls "object use", a phrase which refers to the sense of the durable reality of the other.<sup>11</sup> In Kohut's terms, the other shifts from being experienced as an extension of oneself to becoming an "independent centre of initiative". It is this

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<sup>11</sup> Object use as Winnicott means it has therefore nothing to do with manipulation. See WINNICOTT, D. W., "The use of an object and relating through identifications", in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, [1969] 1989, pp. 86 - 94.

experience of the durability of the other which, for Winnicott, makes possible the capacity for object love.

Relational psychoanalysis, such as I am drawing on in the work of Kohut and Winnicott and others, regards the self as relational throughout life, from less mature forms of narcissistic, resistive, fusional and fragmented forms of dependence to more mature, cohesive and differentiated forms of interdependence. This is significant for the development of both women and men in their different ways of experiencing the separation from the mother. With regard to the religious godobject of the mirroring transference, therefore, Winnicott, Meissner, McDargh and others are clear that it is not the case that the transference is ultimately “relinquished” for some condition of presumably more mature “autonomy” of self. Rather, in line with this psychoanalytic school, I will be looking for signs of mature relational dependence, expressing greater flexibility and differentiation in relationship. Relational dependence can, in that sense, move toward mutuality.

### 2.3 Narcissism, object relations and faith maturation

How does maturation in narcissism and object relations manifest itself in the experience of faith? Although this is a question which can only be touched on, it is significant for the present work insofar as the *Showings* are an account of both psychological healing and Christian spiritual and theological maturation. It may be possible at least to correlate some elements of the development of trust in the maturation of Julian’s sense of authentic self with aspects of the development of trust in her faith experience. Theologian John McDargh has drawn extensively from Meissner and object relations theory in his work, privileging the earliest childhood experiences of trust, trauma, loss and separation, and thus rooting the exigency of faith in narcissism.<sup>12</sup> I draw on McDargh’s six developmental indices of maturation in faith experience. He names four of these as the “from whence of faith”: the sense of being real, the sense of being in relationship to a real and meaningful world, the capacity to be alone, the capacity to tolerate dependence. Two others he calls the “to where of faith”: the capacity to tolerate ambivalence and the sense of oneself as available for loving self-donation.<sup>13</sup> Some of these are oriented more toward male psychological development than female, such as “self-donation”, for example. It is

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<sup>12</sup> McDARGH, John, *Psychoanalytic object relations theory and the study of religion: On faith and the imaging of God*, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1983, ch. 3. On page 71 McDargh defines faith as that “human dynamic of trusting, relying upon, and reposing confidence in, which (1) is foundational to the life-long process of becoming a self, and (2) is fulfilled in the progressively enlarged capacity of that self for love and self-commitment”.

<sup>13</sup> McDARGH, 1983, pp. 72 - 102.

not self-evident from the term that self-donation is a sign of maturation in women. I am encouraged by the quote McDargh includes on the subject of self-donation that “[o]nly to what fulfills our being can we give ourselves without despair”.<sup>14</sup> Again, some of what he calls the “from whence” capacities, might be better described for women as the “to where” capacities. I am thinking, for example, of the capacity to be alone. So in recognizing any of these as they manifest themselves in Julian’s later work, I will be filtering them through the lens of the more difficult challenges facing this woman seeking full and flourishing selfhood in her faith.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.0 The *exemplum* of the lord and the servant

The *exemplum* is virtually universally agreed to be the core of Julian’s soteriology by Julian specialists,<sup>16</sup> although Julian’s theological reflections on the motherhood of Christ have tended to overshadow this in feminist and lay appropriations of Julian’s spirituality. The *exemplum* can be said to include and subsume in one form or other, all of the showings of the Short Text, and it dynamizes Julian’s subsequent Christological and trinitarian explorations.<sup>17</sup> So in this final chapter of the psychoanalytic examination of

<sup>14</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 98, quoting Daniel Day Williams.

<sup>15</sup> Because the Kohutian orientation of this psychoanalytic study of mirroring is concerned with the genetic effects of the earliest period of human life, I have not drawn explicitly on Liebert’s structural-developmental study of stages of maturation through the whole life cycle in “symbolic communication” and “self-other perspective” which she has developed from Piagetians Jane Loevinger and Robert Kegan. See LIEBERT, Elizabeth, *Changing life patterns: Adult development in spiritual direction*, NY, Paulist, 1992, ch. 4. For these two indices of maturation Liebert is drawing on the thesis of IVY, Steven, *The structural-developmental theories of James Fowler and Robert Kegan as resources for pastoral assessment*, Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist theological seminary, 1985, pp. 147 - 151. Interestingly, Liebert recognizes Kegan’s appropriation of Winnicott’s notion of “holding environment” to describe what is needed for development from one stage to another to occur. See also LIEBERT, Elizabeth, “The thinking heart: Developmental dynamics in Etty Hillesum’s *Diaries*”, *Pastoral psychology* 43, 1995, pp. 393 - 409. Joann Wolski Conn has recently done a similar type of assessment with regard to Thérèse de Lisieux. See WOLSKI CONN, Joann, “Thérèse of Lisieux: Far from spiritual childhood”, *Spiritus* 6, 2006, pp. 68 - 89.

<sup>16</sup> ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich’s nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, pp. 151 - 152; BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, ch. 4; HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Colleagueville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, p. 33; KOENIG, 1984, p. 112; NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom’s daughter: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, pp. 27 - 39; PELPHREY, Brant, “Leaving the womb of Christ: Love, doomsday and space/time in Julian of Norwich and Eastern Orthodox mysticism”, in *Julian of Norwich: A book of essays*, ed. McENTIRE, Sandra, NY, Garland, 1998, p. 315.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, for example, while I find her study quite stimulating in other ways, I disagree with Donohue-White who claims that “[w]hereas the symbol of lord and servant responds to Julian’s anxious questioning on the universal level of salvation history, the symbol of mother and child dramatizes the divine-human

mirroring in the *Showings*, my attention will be largely focused on Julian's *exemplum* in her Long Text 51.

Julian's fourteenth showing, in which the *exemplum* is embedded in the Long Text, reflects on her various conditions in prayer. (ST 19 and LT 42.) In a condition of union there is no need to pray, Julian says, because we have what we desire. But in the condition of absence of union with Christ in prayer, Julian is chronically vulnerable to self-condemnation, doubt and despair, expressed as her preoccupation with sin and self-blame. It is this preoccupation with the Church teaching and her own introjection of blameworthiness for sin which leads into Julian's account of the *exemplum* of the lord and the servant in the Long Text, which is only alluded to, in the Short Text.

Julian longs for union with Christ. In her early requests for the three wounds, the final one was of longing for union with Christ. Perhaps it could be inferred that at that early point in her life, union in death seemed to her to be the ambivalent solution to her preoccupation with sin and her unacknowledged fundamental doubt of the possibility of salvation.

In the Long Text the fruit and end of prayer, she says, "is to be united and like to our Lord in all things". What she means is that prayer "makes us like to himself in condition as we are in nature" (LT 42), i.e., in sensuality as in substance. The Lord is the ground of our beseeching and so the one who prays does not do this alone. Rather she is first drawn to the activity of prayer by the Lord. The goal of praying is to be "united [on]y[d] into the sight and the beholding of him to whom we pray". (LT 43.) Her description of the condition of human sensuality united to its substance in Christ, the ground of our prayer, includes all possible feelings and senses:

And so we shall by his sweet grace in our own meek prayer come into him now in this life by many secret touchings of sweet spiritual sights and feelings, measured out to us as our simplicity may bear it.... And then [when we die] we shall all come into our Lord, knowing ourselves clearly and wholly possessing God, and we shall all be endlessly hidden in God, truly seeing and wholly feeling, and hearing him spiritually and delectably smelling him and sweetly tasting him. And there we shall see God face to face, familiarly and wholly. (LT 43.)

The goal of prayer is unity of body and soul, and of the human being with God. And she says, "God beholds us in love and wants us to be partners in his good will and work..."

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encounter in the everyday life of the believing Christian". DONOHUE-WHITE, Patricia, "Reading divine maternity in Julian of Norwich", *Spiritus* 5, 2005, p. 27. This division would seem to me to be an example of the effect of the contemporary problem of the incredibility of the tradition's soteriological narratives, such that no assumption is made that the everyday life of the believing Christian and the grand story of salvation history connect.

(LT 43.) So human prayer in this life is part of God's work of union or, to use her word, oneing (*onyng*).

But despite this, despite her life consecrated to prayer, and despite the first thirteen showings which spoke to her of the capaciousness and unconditional quality of God's love and immanence, Julian is blocked from experiencing "confident trust" (LT 41) in the possibility of unity with God, because of sin.<sup>18</sup> Julian's narrative becomes intense as she cannot reconcile her showings with what she has learned from Church teaching and from her own introjected feelings that "the blame of our sins hangs continually upon us". (LT 50.) This acknowledgement of the teaching and feeling of "blame" is explicit in the Long Text (although it was certainly implicit in the Short Text), and speaks of Julian's ongoing preoccupation with this issue in the intervening years.

Julian cries out for an answer as to how to be appropriately present to her sin, in the self-knowledge of it which God desires of her, yet without blaming herself for it and absorbing herself in despair. (LT 78.) She asks her question, what is sin, posed this time with a clearer focus. Now Julian asks, not "what is sin?" but, "how does *God* sees sin?" so that she might know how it is fitting for *her* to see sin. (LT50.) She receives from the Lord the *example* of the servant and the lord which, she tells us, was the only response to her question she received. (LT51.)<sup>19</sup>

Julian relates the *exemplum* very briefly at first:

...I saw two persons in bodily likeness, that is to say a lord and a servant; and with that God gave me spiritual understanding. The lord sits in state in rest and peace. The servant stands before his lord, respectfully, ready to do his lord's will. The lord looks on his servant very lovingly and sweetly and mildly. He sends him to a

<sup>18</sup> In the Short Text she says that Christ rebukes her for thinking that it could be "that you would not have what you beseech... because we have not the firm trust which we need". (ST 19.) This is revised in the Long Text where Julian writes "But let us do what we can... and everything which is lacking in us we shall find in him... And... with the revelation I saw a complete overcoming of all our weakness and all our doubting fears". (LT 42.)

<sup>19</sup> COLLEDGE, Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, p. 513 fn. 3 clarify that Julian and her contemporaries used this word as a "technical term of rhetoric to mean a preacher's *exemplum*". I prefer to use this word *exemplum*, rather than "parable", which is a popular way of referring to the genre of narrative in Julian's LT 51. Watson and Jenkins observe that Julian's *exemplum* is

a genre of narrative associated with Anselm and especially common in *Ancrene wisse*, in which divine truths are described in closely analogous human terms. Significance is generated not by the gap between vehicle and tenor, story and meaning -- as is the case in some of Jesus' parables, whose improbability is their point -- but by their contiguity. Here, the result is as close to algebra as a narrative mode can be...

WATSON, Nicholas and Jacqueline JENKINS, eds., *The writings of Julian of Norwich: "A vision showed to a devout woman" and "A revelation of love"*, University Park PN, Pennsylvania State University, 2006, p. 272. (Recall Anselm's *exemplum*, noted above in chapter 10.)



certain place to do his will. Not only does the servant go, but he dashes off and runs at great speed, loving to do his lord's will. And soon he falls into a dell and is greatly injured; and then he groans and moans and tosses about and writhes, but he cannot rise or help himself in any way. And of all this, the greatest hurt which I saw him in was lack of consolation, for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very close to him, in whom is all consolation; but like a man who was for the time extremely feeble and foolish, he paid heed to his feelings and his continuing distress.... (LT 51.)

The rest of LT 51, which is much longer than any other chapter in the Long Text, elaborates the details of the *exemplum* and offers reflection on its theological meaning. Thus, although the *exemplum* may include what Jonte-Pace calls "borrowed units" of rhetoric, the fact that the *exemplum* was not written in the Short Text, and that it took so many years for Julian to understand its meanings, suggests that the manner of her coming to record it may be psychobiographically revelatory.

Julian tells us in LT 51 that this *exemplum* was "misty", that is, both obscure in its meaning and mystical. It took her twenty years of meditation on it for many of the details of this *exemplum* to become clearer to her, and even then it is still mysterious. In other words, she is telling us that she had the *exemplum* at the time of the showings, but only wrote about it much later because of its misty meaning. Thus, I suggest, we can see something of Julian's process of maturation as her thoughts in ST 19 (on how she experiences herself in union in prayer, then separated from God in desolation and then reunited to God in prayer) connect to the initial meaning of the *exemplum* and subsequently, to its "mistier" meaning.

Although the *exemplum* is itself short, Julian goes on at length to understand every aspect of its meaning. For the purposes of this psychobiographical study however some aspects will be seen to be more significant than others. I have observed that Julian's fourteenth showing on prayer, her longing for union and her struggle to understand her conflicting feelings, are to be considered the context in which to read the *exemplum* of the servant and the lord. Following the *exemplum*, Julian glides into the chapters where she expands on the activity of the Trinity and introduces the work of Mother Christ. Koenig observes that throughout this section of the Long Text, the references to the face of the lord are more frequent than in the Short Text or anywhere else prior to this in the Long Text.<sup>20</sup> Thus I follow Koenig in postulating that the image of the lord's face plays a "compensatory function in her own personal development".<sup>21</sup> For that reason, this chapter will have a

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<sup>20</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p.191.

<sup>21</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 185.

sustained focus on the dynamic relationship between the servant and the face of the lord which was the focus of the showing she received initially, and will have to ignore many of the other details in the *exemplum* which Julian identifies in her later reflection in the chapter.<sup>22</sup>

And at this point the example which had been shown vanished, and our good Lord led my understanding on to the end of what was to be seen and shown in the revelation. But despite this leading on, the wonder of the example never left me, for it seemed to me that it had been given as an answer to my petition. And yet at that time I could not understand it fully or be comforted. For in the servant, who was shown for Adam, as I shall say, I saw many different characteristics which could in no way be attributed to Adam, that one man; and so at that time I relied greatly on three insights, for the complete understanding of that wonderful example was not at that time given to me. (LT 51.)

Julian describes very deliberately the three insights concerning the attributes of the servant which she understood over time.

The first is the beginning of the teaching which I understood from it at the time. The second is the inward instruction which I have understood from it since. The third is all the whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which our Lord God of his goodness freely and often brings before the eyes of my understanding. (LT 51.)

I propose to follow Julian's own interpretive process, but adding my interpretation of the psychobiographical significance of each element to hers.

### **3.1 "The beginning of the teaching which I understood from it at the time": The servant Adam and the mirroring face of the lord**

Julian studies the servant fallen into the ditch: "I looked carefully to know if I could detect any fault in him, or if the lord would impute to him any kind of blame; and truly none was seen, for the only cause of his falling was his good will and his great desire". (LT 51.)

She also observes the face of the lord beholding the fallen servant:

And all this time his loving lord looks on him most tenderly, and now with a double aspect [*chere*], one outward, very meekly and mildly, with great compassion and pity, and this belonged to the first part; the other was inward, more spiritual, and this was shown with a direction of my understanding towards the lord, and I was brought again to see how greatly he rejoiced over the honourable rest and nobility which by his plentiful grace he wishes for his servant and will bring him to. (LT 51.)

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<sup>22</sup> Koenig's thesis examines several attributes of the servant including the fall, the clothing and the toil. See KOENIG, 1984, ch. 6.

Julian says that when she first had the vision she understood the servant to be Adam. The fall of the servant Adam is the fall of humankind, visually represented as the sin state of despair or shame. Of all his pains the servant's greatest hurt is

lack of consolation for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very close to him, in whom is all consolation; but like a man who was for the time extremely feeble and foolish, he paid heed to his feelings of continual distress... [F]or he neither sees clearly his loving lord... nor does he truly see what he himself is in the sight of his loving lord. (LT 51.)

In this brief description is etched both Julian's central concern around the sin of despair and self-hate and the primordial human experience of the infant's archaic false self who has learned not to expect the maternal selfobject to be *able* to mirror the child's need to see himself as beloved. Both the servant's lack of eye contact with the face of the lord and the servant's feelings are powerful expressions of this learning.

Julian's image of the servant would seem to be a picture of her own unrelenting condition of self-preoccupied suffering in isolation, her archaic fragmented self, in both its despairing and grandiose fragments. The despair is evident. But there is a kind of grandiosity, easily overlooked, which is implicit both in the servant's futile desire to get out of the ditch without help, and behind that, in the impotence invested in the lord by the servant's *imagining* the lord to be absent, unavailable and unsympathetic. By now it should be evident that with respect to Julian's servant, this grandiosity must be understood in a feminine form, focused on feelings related to an overdeveloped sense of responsibility for relationships rather than on self-aggrandizement, and so related to systemic societal as well as familial neglect.

But compare Kohut, particularly in the fear of destroying the mother by the gaze:

Patient E., ...whose mother had been chronically ill and depressed during his childhood was afraid of looking at the analyst for fear of overburdening him by his gaze. The gaze, however, was the carrier of the wish to be held and carried by the mother (and most likely also to suck at her breast), and he feared that the fulfillment of this wish would be the sick mother's undoing.<sup>23</sup>

By contrast, in the *exemplum* the lord's face does not correspond to what the servant imagines it would be, and Julian observes in amazement: "And the loving regard [*chere*] which he kept constantly on his servant, and especially [*namely*] when he fell, it seemed to me that it could melt our hearts for love and break them in two for joy". (LT 51.) What is amazing to her is the constancy of the compassionate *chere* of the lord toward the servant in his predicament.

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<sup>23</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 119.

Psychoanalytically it is highly significant that the *exemplum* distinguishes between the condition of the servant suffering in his self-preoccupation with abandonment and despair, and the condition of the face of the lord. The despairing condition of the servant would seem to be identical to the suffering which I have suggested that Julian experienced as the psychobiographical backdrop of the showings and as a pattern in her life and prayer.

I suggest that Julian's meditative attention to the *exemplum* for twenty years could reflect her process of negotiating a history of separation anxiety in having missed the mirroring function of the maternal parent, both as her mother and as Mother Church, and in the more immediate loss of the Christ of her merged or fused union after her recovery from her illness. What her initial understanding of the *exemplum* inadvertently describes is a move toward greater differentiation between self and other, a new tolerance of the *otherness* of the face of the lord than what Julian (the servant) had learned to expect. Notably, in the *exemplum* there is no bodily fusion or sign of enclosure as there was in her earlier showings described in the Short Text. This new knowledge of the other has an effect on her self-knowledge.

### 3.1.1 Object constancy in the *exemplum*

Julian, I hold, is in the process of relinquishing her fragments of archaic self invested both in the bliss of fusion experienced in the merged mirroring transference and in the despair of isolation and abandonment. The core of what I will call her negotiation of the separation-individuation process in the *exemplum* of the lord and servant is to be located in her focus on the *constancy of the loving regard of the lord*, which shows itself in two different *cheres* depending on the changeable condition of the soul's sensuality. (LT 51.) I observed that this function of mirroring proper (as distinct from the merged state of bodily fusion with Christ in suffering in the early showings) begins to emerge in the eighth to ninth showing (ST 12; LT 21) with her experience of engaging in eye to eye contact and finding herself changed by the change of Christ's *chere*. But the flowering of this mirroring transference narrowly speaking, I suggest, is to be found in the *exemplum*. I explore this by asking two questions.

First, how does Julian's *exemplum* reveal object constancy in the face of the lord? Object constancy in the mirroring other is essential for her to sustain a long-term mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings. This is particularly so once the exalted experience of the showings passed from immediacy into memory and potential loss or denial, as she herself says: "the wonder of the example never left me". As we witness this

in Julian's *exemplum*, the mirroring transference with the Christ of her other showings is engaged and maintained in the face of the lord. The face of the lord in Julian's *exemplum* seems to have sustained a focus for object constancy in Julian's transitional space of prayer, enabling her to maintain the mirroring transference for twenty years and more and therefore enabling Julian to interiorize object and self constancy as she practises beholding that face in meditation. All this confirms Koenig's hypothesis that the face of the lord compensated for a lack in Julian's own history, and functioned to provide that mirroring.<sup>24</sup>

The consistent meaningfulness of the mirroring transference, and its "maintenance" over the rest of her meditative life, hinges on Julian's capacity to identify with the human condition of the servant Adam and to trust that the *chere* of the lord in her *exemplum* will recognize and affirm her and also challenge her, but not change in such a way as to signify rejection of her.

In psychobiographical terms I suggest that the evolution in Julian's visionary mirroring transference would also argue forcefully for the pre- and post-visionary Julian's having had some form of long-term relationship with a spiritual counsellor who mirrored these mature qualities and so provided a source of confirmation, for Julian to internalize

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<sup>24</sup> Contemporary examples of this transformation of interior conditions to new states of cohesion and self-esteem, through meditative exercises that favour encounters with the Godobject Jesus, are numerous in literature on meditation in the Ignatian tradition. Barbara Newman has put a comparative interpretation on such practices in her article on medieval scripted visions. See NEWMAN, Barbara, "What did it mean to say 'I saw'?: The clash between theory and practice in medieval visionary culture", *Speculum* 80, 2005, pp. 25 - 27. But here I prefer an interpretation that leaves open the possibility for psychodynamic maturation. See for example Justin Kelly's description of three such encounters. Although he does not draw attention to this, what is significant in each case is that the Jesus of the meditation makes eye contact with the meditator. His third example is of a woman who had been "struggling with feelings of shame, guilt and anger stemming from her early childhood". In this guided meditation she was to imagine that a sculpture of her had been made and she was looking at it. "It was the pose which startled and appalled her: she was standing there with her hands over her eyes, covering her face". Near the end of the meditation, she was to imagine Jesus coming into the room and standing in front of her statue.

But she could not see him, much as she wanted to. What would he say to her? Unmistakeably, she heard him say the words she had often heard from her director: "Ann, look at me". And he gently touched her stony hands and took them away from her face.

In that instant, she began unmistakably to feel differently about God and herself. This change could not have happened, I am convinced, without the years of therapy and spiritual direction that preceded it. Nevertheless, it needed this imaginative encounter with God to bring it about. Something that was known before more imperfectly and abstractly -- her being loved and accepted as she was by a personal other, by Christ -- became suddenly conscious and effective through an act of imagining; what was absent (a significant part of herself) became present.

KELLY, Justin, s.j., "Absence into presence: A theology of the imagination", Warren lecture 16, Tulsa, University of Tulsa, 1991, p. 12.

them as self constancy.<sup>25</sup> This is the “assise anthropologique” which is suggested by the constancy of the *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum*. Of course, the *exemplum* takes on a life of its own in the potential space of Julian’s ongoing meditation on it.

The most significant feature of the *exemplum* for this mirroring function is Julian’s insistence on the “loving regard [*chere*] which [the lord] kept *constantly* on his servant” (LT 51.)

And all this time his loving lord looks on him most tenderly, and now with a double aspect, one outward, very meekly and mildly, with great compassion and pity, and this belonged to the first part; the other was inward, more spiritual, and this was shown with a direction of my understanding towards the lord, and I was brought again to see how greatly he rejoiced over the honourable rest and nobility which by his plentiful grace he wishes for his servant and will bring him to. And this belonged to the second vision. And now my understanding was led back to the first, keeping both in mind. (LT 51.)

The constancy of the lord’s regard is developed in her detection of two *cheres* in the lord, one outward and compassionate, the other inward and joyful. In this early interpretation Julian sees that the two *cheres* of the lord are appropriate responses to different conditions of human sensuality. The lord’s inward *chere* of joy is recognized, but at the point at which Julian was as yet too confused about the *exemplum* to include it in the Short Text, the lord’s inward *chere* of joy seems to remain “misty” for Julian, in comparison with the compassionate one. Julian discovers that the servant is Adam, all humankind. And Adam

was injured in his powers and made most feeble, and in his understanding he was amazed, because he was diverted from looking on his lord, but his will was preserved in God’s sight. I saw the lord commend and approve him for his will, but he himself was blinded and hindered from knowing this will. (LT 51.)

So the lord in the *exemplum* looks on the servant, as Adam, with an outer *chere* of compassion, and an inner *chere* of joy. This, Julian tells us, is the beginning of the answer to the dilemma about how God sees sin which she received from the *exemplum*.

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<sup>25</sup> Compare Jeanne Leber’s life long relationship with her spiritual counsellor François Séguenot who first encouraged her in her intuition of a call to solitude in an anti-mystical Montreal in the early years of its foundation in 1677:

Ce n’est pas facile de vivre hors normes, ni d’accompagner quelqu’un dans une voie inédite. François Séguenot dans son rôle de conseiller est aussi étonnant que Jeanne dans sa détermination de vivre dans la solitude. Il sort délibérément des sentiers battus en ce qui concerne les conseils aux femmes. Et s’avère, dans son genre, aussi original que Jeanne. Malheureusement, cet homme modeste est passé aussi inaperçu dans la grande Histoire que dans celle de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice qui n’a rien conservé à son sujet. DERROY-PINEAU, Françoise, *Jeanne Leber: La recluse au coeur des combats*, Montréal, Bellarmin, 2000, p. 72.

At the same time, I would argue, it is the key to her long term transmuted internalization of a sense of her authentic self.

Secondly then, how may we see Julian's internalization of the capacity for object constancy as a work of separation from the mirroring other?

This is where, it seems to me, the *exemplum* as she has written it leaves open a magnificently meaningful gap. She describes to us how the servant, having fallen and hurt himself in his rush to carry out the lord's request, is preoccupied with his own changeable, and indeed, despairing, condition. Again,

...the greatest hurt which I saw him in was lack of consolation, for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very close to him, in whom is all consolation; but like a man who was for the time extremely feeble and foolish, he paid heed to his feelings and his continuing distress.

And this is a great sorrow and a cruel suffering to him, for he neither sees clearly his loving lord, who is so meek and mild to him, nor does he truly see what he himself is in the sight of his loving lord. (LT 51.)

Significantly what she does not actually describe in the text is the moment at which the servant presumably *does* turn his face to the lord to discover how he is really seen by the lord. Using Anderson's terms, this is a point in the narrative in which all four "trajectories for reading Julian" converge. It is a gap in the narrative which is integral to the meaning of the *exemplum*; it is meditative in that the reader returns again and again to reflect on it or imagine it as did Julian; it is contrapuntal in that the narrative omits this significant point and rather darts back and forth between the perspectives of the servant and the lord; and it is performative in the sense that it recreates the dynamism of the eye movement and change in *chere* in the reader which Julian sought to communicate of her own experience.<sup>26</sup> But we know that in her showings, and then again repeatedly in her life of meditation on them, Julian has experienced this turning of her eyes in meditation toward the *chere* of the lord. She has told us that what she learned from Christ's change of *chere* in the eighth to ninth showing was that

...we are now on his cross with him in our pains... until the last moment of life. Suddenly he will change his *chere* for us, and we shall be with him in heaven. Between the one and the other all will be one time; and then all will be brought into joy. (LT 21.)

What is new in the context of the *exemplum* is that she describes this transformative moment *from the new perspective of one who is beholding the lord beholding the servant*, i.e., with the added contrapuntal distance of being an observer as

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<sup>26</sup> See ANDERSON, 2005, ch. 2, on these four trajectories for reading Julian of Norwich.

well as the servant. She describes this as the sight which she understood from the beginning of the teaching, i.e., as what she received at the time of receiving the showings. It remains the potentially transformative moment in the *exemplum* until it is actually interiorized by Julian the beholder - servant in the act of turning to behold the lord: "The loving regard which [the lord] kept constantly on his servant, and especially when he fell, it seemed to me that it could melt our hearts for love and break them in two for joy". (LT 51.) Thus Julian leaves us with the sense that, for her, the act of interiorizing the object constancy of the loving *chere* of the Lord is of paramount significance, but also a changeable thing, like our sensual nature itself.

During our lifetime here we have in us a marvellous mixture [*medlur*] of both well-being and woe.... Dying, we are constantly protected by Christ, and by the touching of his grace we are raised to true trust in salvation. And we are so afflicted in our feelings by Adam's falling in various ways, by sin and by different pains, and in this we are made dark and so blind that we can scarcely accept any comfort. But in our intention we wait for God, and trust faithfully to have mercy and grace; and this is his own working in us, and in his goodness he opens the eye of our understanding, by which we have sight, sometimes more and sometimes less, according to the ability God gives us to receive.... And this mixture is so marvellous in us that we scarcely know, about ourselves or about our even Christians, what condition we are in, these conflicting feelings are so extraordinary....(LT 52.)

Indeed, she intimates that it is only eschatologically that beholding the face of the lord will become the human's constant response, when the servant will see clearly his loving lord and see truly what he himself is in the sight of his loving lord. "And I know well that when these two things are wisely and truly seen, we shall gain rest and peace, here in part and the fulness in the bliss of heaven, by God's plentiful grace". (LT 51.)

The interiorization of object constancy is significant for the dilemma which provoked the *exemplum* in the first place. As Julian herself sees,

...this was a beginning of the teaching which I saw at the same time, whereby I might come to know in what manner he looks on us in our sin. And then I saw that only pain blames and punishes, and our courteous Lord comforts and succours, and always he is kindly disposed to the soul, loving and longing to bring us to his bliss. (LT 51.)

Julian's deepest need is to know how -- with what kind of face -- the Lord looks on her sin, so that she might know how she is to see it within her. The constancy of the lord's loving regard recognizes and does not deny or neglect the servant's experience of despair. It is this image of the fallen servant Adam in the *exemplum* which teaches her what her sin is in the sight of God: she learns that her despair "makes us afraid to appear before our courteous Lord". The constancy of the *chere* of the lord teaches her that it is precisely in those moments of being in a despairing condition of sensuality that she is to flee *to* the



Lord whom she will recognize because he speaks *compassionately* to her: "Do not accuse yourself that your tribulation and your woe is all your fault, for I do not want you to be immoderately depressed or sorrowful". (LT 77.) Julian had interpreted the interior condition of despair as evoking the threat of real relational abandonment (damnation) by her godobject. Now she sees that while despair is her interior (sensual) condition, the relational (substantial) reality is not that she has been abandoned, but that she is loved compassionately. Her despairing condition is a condition in which the *exemplum* helps her to gain some distance on that condition, and to know herself lovingly related to by God in it. I propose that Julian's practice of beholding the *exemplum* over the years helps to bring about the transmuted internalization of object constancy in her and so bring about the healing and transformation of her core sense of identity and self worth.

Kohut emphasizes that the mirroring transference proper, in the "third and narrow sense", like the mirroring mother who supports the child's normal narcissistic development at the appropriate phase, allows the development "from the stage of the fragmented self... to the stage of the cohesive self - i.e., the growth of the self experience as a physical and mental unit which has cohesiveness in space and continuity in time".<sup>27</sup> The manifestation of self-cohesiveness is in "the sense of the reality of the self" as opposed to the sense of its unreality and fragmentation.<sup>28</sup>

In regard to this, notice the distancing effect of the "two persons" in the *exemplum*, upon Julian's third presence as both observer (studying both the lord and the servant) and participant (identifying with the servant in his fallen condition). Unlike the other showings in which Julian was herself bodily, visually or viscerally enmeshed with the Jesus of her showings, this distancing effect allows for greater differentiation in Julian's self understanding in the sight of, or in relation to, the God of her showings from what she had previously assumed. In particular, in place of the self fragments of impatient, bliss-seeking grandiosity and self-blaming, self-accusing shame and despair, Julian's mirroring transference with the servant-in-the-sight-of-the-lord in the *exemplum* establishes a visual relational image which allows her to interiorize the capacity for empathy for herself. It gives her a means to objectify her condition of self-preoccupied despair and impatience and to interiorize the capacity for consoling and soothing herself, as well as for affective mentalization of such a condition. Moreover, it enables her to have empathy for the rest of humankind contained in the image of the servant. All of this reflects, in Kohut's terms, a

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<sup>27</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> KOHUT, 1971, p. 119.

greater “sense of the reality of the self” (and, Winnicott would add, the reality and alterity of the world) which Julian is discovering and creating within the mirroring transference.

Kohut’s description of the self as continuous in time is likewise represented in the *exemplum*, by means of the constancy of the regard of the lord for the servant. Julian takes from the *exemplum* that sin is not seen in God’s sight; God only sees the godly will of the servant. The godly will in the servant is continuous, though not conscious, in the servant’s fallen condition. The servant’s godly or substantial will will become more conscious, and the sensual will become more continuously united with the godly will, as the servant increasingly practises seeing himself as he is seen.

If it is the case, as Winnicott holds, that in early infant-maternal relations what the infant sees in the face of the mirroring mother is not initially the mother as a separate person but rather the child’s own nascent self, then, in this face of the lord, we can take it that Julian is being given an inkling of her own true identity in God’s sight. This could be described as the servant’s potential for becoming conscious of the godly will, in experiencing continuity or union between the godly and the sensual wills at times in this life. This internalization of object constancy in the successful therapeutic mirroring transference of Julian’s *exemplum* depends on the mirroring dynamic of the face of the lord. Like the servant, she cannot give it to herself. Julian expresses the self constancy which is born of this mirroring dynamic in the revelation or discovery of the full, double identity of the servant.

### **3.2 “The inward instruction which I have understood from it since”: The double identity of the servant as Christ and Adam**

In chapter 9, which explored Kohut’s stage of working through the mirroring transference (in the accounts of the showings which are common to both the Short and the Long Texts), I argued that Julian’s double anthropology of substance and sensuality plays a fundamental role in healing and encouraging her to revise a deeply engrained pattern of doubt or despair of her self worth and her human acceptability, of her inclusion among the saved. It helped her to be delivered from the unconscious grandiosity of overresponsibility for Christ’s suffering. I proposed there that the anthropology which Julian draws from these showings serves to foster in Julian the *transmuting internalization of the function of the mirroring mother* and to allow her to interiorize the capacity for soothing, affect regulation, perduring self and reality acceptance and self esteem.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>KOHUT, 1971, p. 199; KOHUT, Heinz, *The restoration of the self*, Madison CN, International Universities Press, 1977, p. 53.

In particular, I argued that the substantial union of Christ with humankind in our godly will, would *need* to be kept intact in fallen humanity, if that humanity is identified explicitly with that of those whose early child neglect or abuse and social location would put them in peril of self-fragmentation, having introjected that they are intrinsically sinful, fundamentally flawed as humans and so constitutionally incapable of union with God.

It seems to me that the source and perduring dynamism of Julian's double anthropology is the *exemplum*, and that this is not unrelated to her psychodynamic need. What is significant about the servant's fall is the loss of consciousness of his godly will which nonetheless remains intact (in the sight of the lord), which loss keeps his sensual will oppressed in despair. The servant lives in disunion with his two natures until, by grace, God gives him sight of himself in beholding the face of the lord.

I propose that we can see the flourishing of Julian's true and intrinsically relational sense of self in her mature reflections on the double identity of the servant in the sight of the lord.

In LT 51 Julian notes that this servant had characteristics which could not be attributed to Adam and that the fulness of the revelation came only in the course of the twenty years that followed. During that time Julian was instructed to "take heed to all the attributes, divine and human, which were revealed in the example". She asks "I wondered where the servant came from". (LT 51.) What takes her twenty years minus three months to sort out is that the servant's identity is double.

In the servant is comprehended the second person of the Trinity, and in the servant is comprehended Adam, that is to say all men. And therefore when I say "the Son", that means the divinity which is equal to the Father, and when I say "the servant", that means Christ's humanity, which is the true Adam.... When Adam fell, God's Son fell.... (LT 51.)

Julian's "godly will" of the servant is not unlike Kohut's repeated positive evaluation of the needs of the archaic grandiose self as phase appropriate in the mirroring transference: there is nothing morally wrong in itself with the need to be seen and affirmed; there *is* something morally wrong when that need is systematically unfulfilled. Kohut would say it is a need which is part of our earliest human psychological constitution and which matures into a true sense of selfhood. In its mature form, self esteem gives purpose to one's goals and ambitions. Julian puts it like this, that the servant's fall is not due to some sinful cause in itself, but rather because of the very eagerness of the servant to do the lord's will. "The man was injured in his powers and made most feeble... but his will was preserved in God's sight.... [H]e himself was blinded and hindered from knowing this will". (LT 51.)

Julian expresses the mixture of human fallenness and human goodness in the image of the servant in simultaneously identifying the fall of Adam *as* the fall of Christ into the womb of the Virgin, that is, the fall of divinity into humanity: “When Adam fell, God’s Son fell”. (LT51.) Humankind is double. (LT52.) Our two natures are joined in Christ:

[F]or our nature [substance] is joined to God in its creation, and God is joined to our nature [sensuality] in taking flesh. And so in Christ our two natures are united, for the trinity is comprehended in Christ....

And so in our substance we are full and in our sensuality we are lacking [*we feyle*], and this lack [*feylng*] God will restore and fill by the operation of mercy and grace....” (LT 57.)

To identify the fall of humankind with Jesus’ Incarnation may seem at first blush doctrinally heretical. How is it that these two very different realities, of the fall of humankind in sin and the fall of divinity into humankind, can, for Julian, be contained in the one image of the servant? How Julian sorts out this identification of Adam’s fall into sin with Christ’s fall into humanity is by means of her double theological anthropology of substance and sensuality, which both humankind and Christ share, although humankind is variable in our sensuality.

However, I emphasize that in the *exemplum* narrative the dynamism of the double nature of the servant image comes from the constancy of the loving regard of the Lord as he looks upon the servant. “[H]is will was preserved *in God’s sight*”. (LT 51.) The double identity of the servant is seen and recognized, one might say found and created, in the double aspect of the loving *chere* of the lord. “The loving regard which he kept constantly on his servant and especially when he fell, it seemed to me that it could melt our hearts for love and break them in two for joy”. (LT51.) As *mirrored* in the lord’s compassionate and joyful regard, the difference between the servant as Adam and the servant as Christ, has to do with where the servant’s eyes are focused. Although nowhere does she actually describe this, it is clear that the eyes of the servant (as Christ) are “inwardly” in constant relation to the lord even as the servant Christ suffers compassionately with humankind. It is the changeability of the servant Adam’s sensuality which is so poignantly described as the servant’s downcast *chere* (eyes and mood) in self-preoccupied feelings of isolation and distress.

The work of healing or transforming or fulfilling her human sensual identity is at once interior and a function of the therapeutic mirroring relation or transference which the *exemplum* maintained in her. As Koenig also concludes, “Julian’s preoccupation with the image of the lord’s face seemed to be an effort on her part to receive back a part of herself”, and “there were significant indications that the vision of his face confers self-knowledge on

the beholder".<sup>30</sup> In her earlier, reverse images of mutual enclosure, cohesion in space and continuity in time expressed something of the union in self experience that each signified for her. In the *exemplum*, however, these dynamics are expressed simultaneously in the bodily co-identity of the servant. The face of the lord is separate from the servant but it functions polysemously in relation to the servant. Inwardly in joy, it affirms the union of the double humanity of Christ, and the eschatological restoration of Adam. Outwardly in compassion it mirrors Christ's activity of suffering-with the suffering sensuality of Adam. It is the unseen movement to eye contact which functions to bring the servant Adam (humankind) out of his vascillation (despair, unreal sense of himself in his sensual condition) into object constancy, or conscious union with his true identity in Christ, in the lord's constant loving regard, in part already in this life. All this in an image in the *exemplum* which is left to the beholder to imagine, and yet which moves or dynamizes the text toward its fulfillment.

I hold that the thrust of the *exemplum* and what Julian learns from it derives from the creative, transformative effect of discerning the *double regard of the lord* for the servant on her perception of the identity of the servant, and hence of herself. The double nature of the *whole self* of the servant is recognized and contained without contradiction in her discernment of the two *cheres* of compassion and joy of the beholding lord.<sup>31</sup> This discernment of the two *cheres* of divine love quite directly transforms her perception of the servant's Adamic humanity as fragmented in disconnected and illusorily perceived despairing (sinful) and grandiose (sinless) segments, and, creates in its place her perception of the servant's humanity as both fallen and graced in one person.

It is this work of discernment which takes the twenty years of meditation on the original vision. The *exemplum* expresses visually her increasing capacity to contain two meanings or conditions of self understanding at once: the meaning of her experience of self-knowledge (the exposure of its peculiar pain, which is not to be confused with despair) together with the meaning of the experience of being beloved (not to be confused with being sinless) in this state. If cohesiveness and continuity in time are signs of the mature

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<sup>30</sup> KOENIG, 1984, pp. 217, 218.

<sup>31</sup> Contrast Koenig who does not clarify the effect of these two regards of the lord's loving face. She holds that the image of the lord's face does *not* change from one state to another. "A constant image of the lord beholding his fallen servant in love, it is not, however, on account of its constancy, less powerful than those images in which two meanings are held in tension (as in the servant's fall)...." KOENIG, 1984, p. 216.

self, then Julian seems to reflect that integration in her twenty year meditation on the *exemplum*'s meaning.

The extent to which the twinned divine-human person of the servant functions to help objectify her interior condition is extraordinary. Later in LT 80 Julian describes a reverse image of the servant as *Christ* suffering alone, mirroring exactly that condition in the despairing servant.

[W]hen we fall into sin, and neglect recollection of him and the protection of our own soul, then Christ bears all alone the burden of us. And so he remains, moaning and mourning. Then it is for us in reverence and kindness to turn quickly to our Lord, and not to leave him alone. He is here alone with us all; that is to say, he is here only for us. And when I am distant towards him through sin, despair or sloth, then I leave my Lord to remain alone, inasmuch as he is in me. And this is the case with us all who are sinners.... (LT 80.)

This image has the effect of empathically exposing her to the fallacy of her isolative and despairing self-fragment and is a brilliant example of how her mirroring transference has been instrumental in helping her work through to maturation in having empathy for herself and redefine the meaning of suffering.

Our Lord in his mercy reveals our sin and our feebleness by the sweet gracious light of his own self.... It is his will that we have knowledge of... how steadfastly he waits for us, and does not change his *chere*, for he wants us to be converted and united to him in love, as he is to us.... And so by knowledge and grace we may see our sin, profitably, *without despair*.... And so by this meek knowledge, through contrition and grace we shall be broken down from everything which is not our Lord. And then will our blessed saviour cure us perfectly and unite us to him. This breaking and curing our Lord intends for men in general, for he who is highest and closest to God may see himself sinful and needy along with me. (LT 78.)

In Kohut's terms, Julian's beholding the *exemplum* allows her to interiorize the consistently empathic mirroring of the maternal selfobject which alone can provide the basis for the maturation of her narcissistic needs and the development of a cohesive sense of self, the authentic core self which is intrinsically relational. This could be said to constitute the transformation of the archaic prestructural self-fragments into the domain of the reality ego -- the "breaking and curing" which allows Julian to embrace the self-knowledge of her sensual self as a whole, in God's sight. Although in Julian's mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings there is no ultimate relinquishing of the transference, the later chapters of the Long Text show us how increasingly flexible, adequate and creative this transference has become.

In its totality, the *exemplum* of the servant and the lord reveals a greater degree of self acceptance in Julian, as seen in the way in which it mirrors her in Jesus' humanity, and Jesus in her humanity. I would call it a kind of double vision, of the person of the servant

containing the two humanities of Adam (fallen) and Christ (incarnate, kenotic, saving, restoring) which Julian sees as one. It could be said to represent a shift from a merged mirroring transference to one of twinship of the two humanities in one.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the distinctive aspect of her vision of the servant and the lord for the purposes of discerning her progress in this mirror relationship is that in it she reveals herself merged or twinned in the double identity of the servant, and *at the same time* distinct from and beloved (mirrored proper) in the face of the lord, i.e., *the face of the lord is separate from, but in relation to, the servant*. This is to be contrasted with all of the showings recounted in the Short Text in which Julian and the Jesus of her showings were bodily or visually merged exclusively. This distancing of the image of the face paradoxically begins to make space for the whole spectrum of humankind's changeable sensual condition in the servant, and the whole of the Trinity in the lord's *chere*.

### **3.3 "All the whole revelation from the beginning to the end": "Where Jesus appears, the blessed Trinity is understood"**

Julian never explicitly identifies what she means by this third perspective on the *exemplum*. But as the *exemplum* and subsequent chapters unfold, it is clear it has to do with the creative, saving and uniting work of the Trinity. It would seem to include all her showings taken together.<sup>33</sup> The psychoanalytic focus of the present chapter means that I will be searching within her *exemplum* and the exalted theological reflection inspired by it for signs of continuity and development in her sense of self and reality.

#### **3.3.1 Self and reality acceptance**

Self esteem is one half of the double sided coin of self acceptance and reality acceptance. Not only is her self-knowledge changing. So also is her knowledge of God changing. The development of the identity of the servant *and* of the lord in the *exemplum*, found and created as it is in the transitional space of Julian's meditative beholding, could be seen as a creative work of negotiating self *and* other, inner *and* outer worlds, and their relations in more coherent and flexible ways. Perhaps the fact that Julian remained silent about the *exemplum* in the Short Text, and that she meditated continuously on it until she had internalized the multivalency of its significance to write about it (and probably long

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<sup>32</sup> Kohut describes the twinship or alter ego transference as one in which the object is experienced as being like or very similar to the grandiose self. KOHUT, 1971, p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> COLLEDGE and WALSH, 1978a, p. 519.

after as well), is the strongest evidence for the argument that the *exemplum*, as transitional object, was the locus of a long work of psychotherapeutic maturation in Julian's mirroring needs.

### 3.3.2 Distinguishing projection from reality

In discussing the change of *chere* in the eighth to ninth showing, I spoke of how this inaugurated a sense of the durability of the Jesus of her showings beyond Julian's assumed omnipotent control. In Winnicott's terms, this would make the Jesus of her showings more available for object use, i.e., to function as an independent centre of initiative in the showings. What is evident in the *exemplum* is that Julian further differentiates the reality and relationality of Christ and the Trinity, in the figure of the lord in relation to the servant/humankind, in a way that her other showings do not.

One area in particular where this has major ramifications is in Julian's insight into the difference between God's judgment (as constant, having no wrath) and human judgment (as variable, sometimes lenient, sometimes wrathful). It is a significant example of how Julian's internalization of object constancy and object use has been made possible by, and perhaps also contributed to, the extraordinary constancy of her vision of God as peaceful, incapable of wrath, and her discernment that all wrath is on the human side. (LT 45 - 49.) I suggest that the maturity of recognizing that wrath is a human projection onto God is only possible once Julian has interiorized her real human limits in relation to the "independent centre of initiative" she encounters as God in the transitional space of her meditation on the showings. It is her impatience and despair which had previously blinded her from knowing these creaturely limits.

One can identify here the locus for a great deal of Julian's preoccupation with sorting out where to locate wrath and how to understand her own and the Church's changeable judgments on sin. Her maturity in distinguishing the products of human projection (and introjection) from divine object constancy in the Long Text are powerful evidence of her internalization of self constancy.

Thus the face of the lord in the *exemplum* is the constant symbolic reference for Julian's insight into God's judgment. Recall that in LT 45 Julian observes that God's judgment is different from human judgment, the latter being based on "our changeable sensuality", and so, sometimes good and lenient, sometimes hard and painful. As Nuth puts it,

[t]o the extent that they are hard and painful, they cause humans to experience something they describe as the wrath and forgiveness of God. As such, they [the



human judgments] need to be reformed by God's mercy and grace and brought into harmony with God's justice.<sup>34</sup>

We may assume Julian is taking this to herself, and that her own harsh judgments of herself and others are to be seen in this exposing light.

Moreover, without entering into a wrathful condition herself Julian exposes in a compassionate and magisterial way the fragile sensual condition of Church authority as she experienced it in its harsh judgments. Not only does she gain object constancy through beholding the constancy of the regard of the lord for the servant in her fourteenth showing, but she is able to distance herself from her conflicted emotional enmeshment in interpersonal relations, as well as from Church teaching (and even the *Ancrene riwle*) on this point, whose judgment as to God's wrath is at odds with the truth of this showing. It is here that she reveals her long term and hard-won interiorization of object constancy through the beholding of the *exemplum*, in a world in which this was so evidently lacking.

### 3.3.3 *Oneing*: union in differentiation

Julian's prayer for the wound of longing for God was her lifelong desire for union with Christ. This longing for union runs through the pre-visionary Julian's relentless desire to suffer as a means of coming into union with the suffering Christ, and through all the earlier showings, in the form of bodily fusion in extreme suffering, eye to eye contact and transformation from death to life, and mutual enclosure. The *exemplum* and what she draws from it, however, transform Julian's understanding of what this union is. It is no longer union as fusion. Rather, the *exemplum* takes up her earlier showings and introduces a new dimension of relational distinctness. Union becomes union in differentiation.

For example, both of the earlier showings of mutual enclosure (the tenth vision of the suffering risen Christ inviting Julian's understanding to enter into the side of Christ, and the sixteenth vision of of Jesus seated, reigning in her soul, fully distinct, yet fully realized interiorly) are incorporated into the double identity of the servant of the *exemplum*. I suggested above that the tenth showing had the effect of assuring Julian of her enclosure among the saved in Christ's Body. The sixteenth showing confirmed her experience of all the showings, that her sensual humanity was a worthy enclosure for Christ through knowledge of herself in the sight of God.

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<sup>34</sup> NUTH, 1991, p. 80. drawing on LT 45.

In the *exemplum* the meanings of each of these showings coincide in the one image of the double identity of the servant. Christ's double humanity encloses humanity in our substance and in our fallen sensuality. But human sensuality becomes Christ's place of union as the servant is restored to his true self in beholding the face of the lord. I suggest that her understanding of the image of the *servant* includes her earlier showings of mutual enclosure and yet, that the *exemplum* allows for still more distinct and multivalent visionary meanings than either her tenth or her sixteenth showing, by separating out the face of the lord.

Thus in the Long Text the sixteenth vision of Christ reigning in her soul, which might be considered to be the ultimate image of mystical union, comes much later (LT 67 - 68.) In fact, it pales in comparison with the space which Julian devotes to the careful narrative of, and reflection on, the *exemplum*. I suggest that this is because the sixteenth showing, while it had been critically significant to Julian as a confirmation to believe the showings she had received in the face of her doubt and demonic assault during sleep, did not show Julian the *relational differentiation in union* which the *exemplum* afforded her. On its own the sixteenth showing did not help her to know how God sees sin. In that sense, the *exemplum* reflects maturation in her mirroring need toward relinquishing the early merged mirroring transference for more realistic or adequate relations.

In fact, I suggest that we might see her sixteenth showing (LT 67 - 68) of Christ reigning in her soul, and that later image of the servant as *Christ* suffering alone in her (LT 80) as complementary images of differentiation in oneing in her sensuality which the *exemplum* affords. Recall Julian's description of this latter image:

[W]hen we fall into sin, and neglect recollection of him and the protection of our own soul, then Christ bears all alone the burden of us. And so he remains, moaning and mourning. Then it is for us in reverence and kindness to turn quickly to our Lord, and not to leave him alone. He is here alone with us all; that is to say, he is here only for us. And when I am distant towards him through sin, despair or sloth, then I leave my Lord to remain alone, inasmuch as he is in me. And this is the case with us all who are sinners.... (LT 80.)

The *exemplum*, and the learning which Julian interiorized from beholding it, has enabled her to see sin in herself as God beholds her. She has become much more self-accepting of the various conditions of her sensuality (despair and self-neglect) which formerly led her to feel isolated because, as the later image reveals, Christ is still in love-longing relationship with her. Indeed, she sees only Christ, mirroring her condition.

Julian's theological and experiential understanding of oneing or union, as this is evidenced in its use in the *exemplum* and later chapters of the Long Text, is therefore not to

be confused with our contemporary popular tendency to reduce union to some undifferentiated fusion with the divine. This latter tendency is rather psychological evidence of an undeveloped sense of self.<sup>35</sup> Rather, as Kerrie Hide observes, Julian's word *oneing* is virtually untranslatable:

To be oned in Middle English means to be one, united, joined, blended, or fused, yet none of these words conveys the sense of this primordial interpenetration of the divine and the human *that preserves difference in identity*. The concept is so extraordinary that Julian uses *oneing* to describe the union between Christ's humanity and his divinity.<sup>36</sup>

Anderson further acknowledges that this

uniting of humanity and divinity in Christ is the model for all other instances of the *oneing* of humans to God. In this respect, *oneing* must imply for Julian a profound, loving intimacy that does not admit of division, yet where the two natures being united remain distinct and are not blended or combined to form a third thing. In the *oneing* of humankind to God, humans are granted to partake of the peaceful, loving relationships that exist eternally between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Julian has come to understand union in a way which preserves differentiation in identity in the human-divine relation in the *exemplum*. I correlate this development in Julian with Winnicott's identification of the later, and potentially creative, period of the infant's negotiating *separation* from the mother. Even as self and not/self become more clearly distinguished, Winnicott insists that illusion and reality are "interpenetrating, mutually inclusive categories".<sup>38</sup>

Thus I perceive that the merged subjectivism perceived in the mirroring transference reflected in her early showings, in which there was no place for differentiation between her condition and that of the Jesus of her showings, shifts to a more mature relational realism in the later transference of mirroring proper. This realism expresses itself in her greater self-knowledge in relation to the God of her *exemplum* in terms of both dependence and mutuality.

Julian negotiates creatively the disillusionment of her grandiose self-preoccupation and the loss of immediacy of the showings, and develops a flexible distinction between inner and outer worlds, specifically between her inner and outer reality and God's. The

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<sup>35</sup> See WOLSKI CONN, Joann, "Horizons on contemporary spirituality", *Horizons* 9, 1982, pp. 60 - 73.

<sup>36</sup> HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, p. 53, emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 176 - 177.

<sup>38</sup> JONTE-PACE, Diane, "Object relations theory, mothering and religion: toward a feminist psychology of religion", *Horizons* 14, 2, 1987, p. 323.

separating out of the image of the servant from that of the face of the lord could be said to symbolize Julian's hard-won acceptance of, and trust in, the independent centre of initiative in God, and so of real relational dependence in the human-divine relation. This will be explored below in Julian's understanding of Christ as Mother, and of herself as one of Christ's children.

### 3.3.4 Mother Jesus

Kohut identifies the mirroring selfobject as normally the figure of the infant's mother, who adapts herself to the needs of the infant. Julian's *exemplum* leads her into the striking parallel of the image of Christ as Mother, found only in the Long Text after the *exemplum*. (LT 58 - 63.) Specifically it is Christ who is our Mother, says Julian, because it is Christ who took on our double nature, who in effect incarnates our whole being. (LT 58.) It is Mother Jesus who leads us into his breast through his "sweet open side" and shows us there a part of the Godhead and says "see how I loved you". (LT 60, 84.) The soul can approach the Christ who mirrors human sensuality in likeness (as well as empathically exposing conditions of unlikeness), as he does in all the previous visions, and particularly in the tenth showing recalled here.

Julian goes on to distinguish the way of the good Mother Jesus with her maturing children in a description which is more significantly like the face of the lord in the *exemplum*, reflecting the two *cheres* of love -- compassion and joy. The mother's behaviour changes according to the need of the child, but is constant in her love for the child. Kohut's description of how the maturation of the narcissistic needs of the individual is effected, through the natural or therapeutic mirroring transference and the use of optimal frustration to encourage the gradual internalization of these needs, finds an easy parallel in Julian's language:

The kind loving mother who knows and sees the needs of her child guards it very tenderly as the nature and condition of motherhood will have. And always as the child grows in age and stature she acts differently, but she does not change her love. And when it is even older she allows it to be chastised and to destroy its faults, so as to make the child receive virtue and grace. This work... our Lord performs. (LT 60.)

For Kohut, only the breakdown of identification with the archaic self-structures will allow the individual to search for a new focus in the experience of a more authentic self.

Julian could be said to have come to value the importance of that breakdown of identification with the archaic self-structures of despair and grandiosity that leads to greater

relational realism, when, having internalized the double vision of the servant, Julian says that

[w]e need to fall and we need to see it for if we did not fall we should not know how feeble and wretched we are in ourselves, nor too, should we know so completely the wonderful love of our Creator. (LT 61.)

This is one way of describing how Julian has come to understand that sin is *behovely*, necessary and actually beneficial.<sup>39</sup>

For Kohut the empathic mirroring analyst exposes the client's archaic self fragments to a confrontation with reality. Likewise, for Winnicott the good-enough mother allows the child to move out and begin to learn the limits of her grandiosity through the bumps and scrapes of encountering the world. Just so, Julian sees Mother Jesus as fulfilling this wise and necessary but painful aspect of the mirroring role in the best interest of her children's maturation:

The mother may sometimes suffer the child to fall and be distressed in various ways for its own benefit, but she can never suffer any kind of peril to come to her child, because of her love...<sup>40</sup>

And if we do not feel ourselves eased, let us at once be sure that he is behaving as a wise mother. For if he sees that it is profitable for us to mourn and to weep, with compassion and pity he suffers that until the right time has come, out of his love. And then he wants us to show a child's characteristics which always naturally trusts in its mother's love in well-being and in woe. (LT 61.)

### 3.3.5 A little child: the challenge to trust

After discussing the relation of the mother and child in these chapters culminating in her understanding that "all his blessed children who have come out of him by nature ought to be brought back into him by grace" (LT 64), it is fascinating that then, in the Long Text's version of the fifteenth revelation, Julian receives a brief image of a child, who

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<sup>39</sup> Simon Tugwell puts it another way which, although a good logical description of sensuality, seems to lack the urgency of Julian's need to make sense of *her* sin:

[S]in is 'necessary' because without it there would not be sensuality" which is our whole bodily, temporal life. Sin is part of what it means to live in time, with a history, as a changeable being. Time is of no concern to substance, it is only sensuality which has a history, and this history represents a genuine 'increase'.

TUGWELL, Simon, *Ways of imperfection: An exploration of Christian spirituality*, Springfield IL, Templegate, 1985, p 197. It is our changeable sensuality which God takes up into Godself in Christ's Incarnation, such that sensuality is restored "by process of time". (LT 57, 63 .)

<sup>40</sup>Here Julian specifically distinguishes Mother Jesus from human mothers who may well suffer peril to come to their children. The healing capacity of these visions emerges as providing an alternative to the self-definition learned in early childhood maternal selfobject interactions.

springs out of a shapeless body in a pit of mud. This little child, she says, is the soul raised from pain to heaven, now beautiful, fully shaped and lively. (LT 64.)

I find it interesting that Julian's images would become clarified in this way. Her earlier images were of identification with Jesus in terms of merging, in mirror reversals of containment, and later in twinning Christ's double humanity with hers explicitly in God's mirroring sight. They all served the important purpose of allowing her an unprecedented homeliness and approachability to Christ.

In these images of Mother Jesus and the child one detects a new relational distinctness, which assumes the background of that earlier merged identification, but which develops both the maternal function of the mirroring *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum* and the fulness of the sensual condition of the child, as fallen (in despair) *and* restored to trust, whole in the *imago Dei*.

Many feminists have seen in this image of the child rising from the pit of mud a return to a neo-platonism, a dualism which Julian has otherwise abandoned,<sup>41</sup> or worse, a failure to exemplify the western feminist ideal of maturity.<sup>42</sup> While I certainly see the point, I view this text rather as another example of Julian's contrapuntal trajectory. The image of herself as child is a recognition of real dependence, to be sure. But Julian's

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<sup>41</sup> "Simon Tugwell has correctly identified a decided shift in sensibility between the two versions [of the ST and the LT] which can be summed up as the evolution from a neoplatonic spirituality of ascent to an incarnational spirituality whereby redemption is a redemption *of* this life, not a redemption *from* it". DAVIES, Oliver, "Transformational processes in the work of Julian of Norwich and Mechthild of Magdeburg", in *The Medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1992, p. 41. Exeter Symposium V. Davies is quoting TUGWELL, 1984, p. 201, emphasis in text.

<sup>42</sup> See for one example, WATKINS, Renée Neu, "Two women visionaries and death: Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich", *Numen: International review for the history of religions* 30, 1983, p. 194, who finds this image of the child rising from the pit an example of Julian's "rejection of the maternal body and idealization of the child-soul" which shows "severe dualism, ...contempt for the body".

I observe the abhorrence of the childhood image of trusting dependence in the fact that whereas there are hundreds of articles on Julian's understanding of Christ as Mother, I have located only one article from a feminist position on spiritual childhood in Julian. LINDSTROM, Mary, "Julian of Norwich and the motherhood of God", *Sisters today* 54, 1982, p. 211:

This concept is critical for feminine spirituality because it can easily be misunderstood and manipulated.... [Julian] showed how this condition of childhood, basically a sense of trust, arises out of self autonomy, which is a prerequisite and ongoing condition essential to spiritual maturity. However, more recently Donohue-White's conclusion connects childlike trust with Julian's eschatological orientation, and with motherhood itself. See DONOHUE-WHITE, Patricia, "Reading divine maternity in Julian of Norwich", *Spiritus* 5, 2005, pp. 31 - 32. There are two older articles on the subject. See MONSTIER du, Benoît, "Spiritual childhood and dame Julian of Norwich", *Pax*, 1935, pp. 281 - 284; and S.M.A., [Sr Mary Albert] o.p., "Spiritual childhood and mother Julian", *The life of the spirit* 2, 1945, pp. 81 - 83.

acknowledgement of relational dependence is not in itself a sign of immaturity.<sup>43</sup> It could be a sign of realism: The preoccupation with despair, which Julian now knew to name as sin, could be well described by her image of the stinking pit of mud. The image of the child rising, at once this-worldly and eschatological, would then not signal a blanket rejection of her sensuality in this world so much as it would be a sign of the fruit of her learning to trust in a trustworthy Mother Christ who shares that sensuality, exposes her to the pain of her despairing condition, and liberates her to abandon that sensual condition instead of pursuing it.

In Julian's democratizing way, however, our customary assumptions about any hierarchy in the relational dependence of the child on the Mother, which could keep the child in an infantile state of maturation, are exploded.

Our saviour is our Mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come.... And it is spoken of in the sixteenth revelation, where he says that he sits in our soul, for it is his delight... to dwell endlessly in our soul, working us all into him. (LT 57.)

Even when described in terms of motherhood, the paradoxical mutual enclosures of Christ's double humanity in humankind in the *exemplum* ensure that Julian's acknowledgement of childlike dependence on Mother Christ can therefore also be seen as a sign of the interior wholeness of Christ reigning in her soul which Julian had come to experience through repeatedly beholding the face of the lord in the *exemplum*. Perhaps as she was enabled to love herself in her humanity, she could also recognize Christ more distinctly as her *trustworthy* Mother *within*, in this life and as her destiny. Julian's longing for God is no longer the desire for redemption from this world and from herself, but rather the desire to see her true self and to see her wounds become honours in God's sight, the desire to see God rejoicing over her. She trusts that it is God who wants to give her this sight. As Sebastian Moore would put it, the desire to trust only increases. I suggest that we understand her description of childhood in light of how far she has come (from what I have argued was a basic childhood stance of abandoned isolation) in her gain in "confident trust" in the trustworthy reality of the God of her showings and in her self acceptance of her creaturely sensuality.

For the child does not naturally despair of the mother's love, the child does not naturally rely upon itself, naturally the child loves the mother and either of them the other.... I understood no greater stature in this life than childhood, with its

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<sup>43</sup> Compare McDargh's sign of maturation in the faith as the capacity to tolerate dependence. McDARGH, 1983, pp. 83 - 87. For women this of course needs to be balanced by signs of the capacity for mutuality and creativity, etc. But wealth and privilege in the West tend to inure men *and* women to admitting, let alone valuing, dependence.

feebleness and lack of power and intelligence, until the time that our gracious Mother has brought us up into our Father's bliss. And there it will truly be made known to us what he means in the sweet words when he says: All will be well, and you will see it yourself, that every kind of thing will be well. And then will the bliss of our motherhood in Christ be to begin anew.... (LT 63.)

Perhaps it is in this light too that Julian's vocation to the anchoritic life, the strange combination of radical chosen dependence on her symbol-laden environment and relatively radical autonomy for contemplative solitude, could be seen as her coming to embrace her relational dependence on Christ in a relatively mature way, particularly if she had so unconsciously resisted dependence from her youth. It is clear that her creative retrieval from the anchoritic life and symbolism (explored in chapter 10) sustain Julian in the therapeutic development I am suggesting, and that her own vocational work as anchoress has become a joyful crucifixion, self-identified in Christ's restorative work of salvation as a joy. And, as Donohue-White puts it, "Julian's representation of divine mother-work [is] a model for adult human spiritual practice, for if, as Julian believes, Jesus both reveals divinity and models the perfection of humanity, 'our mother Jesus' instructs both in his teaching and by his example".<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, for Kohut, through the mirroring transference the individual gains a new, more durable centre of selfhood, characterized by self acceptance, self esteem, inner peace, humour and a sense of wisdom which allows the individual to look kindly on her own impermanence. For Julian this wisdom is humility: "We do not fall in the sight of God and we do not stand in our own sight... It is most profitable that we see these two together." (LT 82.)

### 3.3.6 The Mother's face

The face of the lord in the *exemplum* exerts a powerful influence over the whole of Julian's theology of Mother Jesus. I agree with Koenig that that face became for Julian a means of internalizing the missed parental function of mirroring. Thus it enabled her to develop object constancy, grow in a cohesive and authentic sense of self, and mature in her mirroring needs. As Koenig has observed, Julian's theological description of Christ as Mother "was motivated in part by her need to compensate for what she had failed to receive from her own mother".<sup>45</sup> Koenig explores the question that if Julian had had a satisfying

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<sup>44</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 218. This could provide a different source of evidence for the "sparseness" which Aers finds in Julian's appropriation of the theme of Christ as mother, as distinct from the physicality which other medieval women associated with the theme. AERS, David, "The humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", in AERS, David and Lynn STALEY, *The powers of the holy*:



relation with her own mother, as so many commentators tend to assume, “why does [Julian], in every statement she makes about God as Mother, say in one way or another that motherhood is an office that *no human person* could hope to fulfill entirely, that only God or Christ could do so?<sup>46</sup>

But given the importance of the face of the lord for this therapeutic work, Koenig raises a significant question:

In her description of God or Jesus as Mother, nowhere does Julian mention the mother’s *face*. Given that the face of the lord in the parable and the face of God in other chapters play such a salient role in the evolution of her meaning, and given what we have learned from Winnicott about the significance of the mother’s face in individual emotional development, is it not strange that Julian’s Mother God has no face?<sup>47</sup>

Whether this is for the psychobiographical reason Koenig gives, that Julian’s unsatisfying relation with her own mother was so completely satisfied in her contemplation of the lord’s loving face over twenty years, that she no longer needed the face in her theology of the motherhood of God, is an open question.<sup>48</sup> Julian certainly does not abandon the need to speak of the “*chere* of the lord” in the chapters following the *exemplum*. Rather, as Koenig observes, she increases her language of the *cheres*. Indeed, Julian uses language which alludes to the maternal nature of Christ’s double humanity and, at the same time, is reminiscent of Winnicott’s description of the mirroring role of the good-enough mother in giving the child the sense of her nascent selfhood. The vision of Christ abandoned in the soul (LT 80), waiting and suffering patiently the return of the soul to Christ within, effectively exposes her to her soul’s sensual predicament in relation to Christ, and enables her to respond. That late vision in LT 80 is strikingly parallel to the good enough mother who waits as the child explores, and then delights in the child’s return. If we recall that, for Julian, Mother Jesus is within, as in her sixteenth showing, it gives shape to her writing that “by his grace he lifts up and will draw our outer *chere* to the inner.... The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us by grace”. (LT 71.)

So, it could be argued that because of her genetic history of not being mirrored by her mother, Julian could never put a face on Mother Jesus. Aware of her human

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*Religion, politics and gender in the late medieval English culture*, University Park PN, Pennsylvania state University Press, 1996, p. 97, after WATSON, Nicholas, “The trinitarian hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of love*”, *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, ed. GLASSCOE, Marion, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 85. Exeter symposium V.

<sup>46</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 212, emphasis in text.

<sup>47</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 218, emphasis in text.

<sup>48</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 218 - 219.

changeability, Julian writes that “as long as we have anything to do with any kind of sin, we shall never clearly see the blessed *chere* of God”. (LT 72.) But it is also the case that Julian’s Motherhood of God embraces the mistier joyful *chere* of the lord. This theme comes to take on many theological roles, most significantly situating Christ’s motherhood within the soul, and also becoming co-extensive with her trinitarian theology.

Recall that in LT 71 Julian sees not two but three *cheres* in the Lord, each responding to a condition or *chere* in human sensuality: the *chere* of Christ’s Passion (pain, suffering), the *chere* of compassion (sin) and the *chere* of joy. The *chere* of joy, the inward *chere* of the lord, which in LT 51 was seen spiritually “without bodily likeness”, is “his blessed *chere*, partly like what it will be in heaven; and that is when through grace we are touched by sweet illuminations of the life of the Spirit...” (LT 71.) The closest we get to seeing that *chere* in Julian’s other showings is in the sixteenth showing, where it is interior: Julian sees her soul in the middle of her heart, with Jesus sitting at rest contained within it. (LT 68.) It is an image of the *imago Dei*, the mystical union of both human substance and sensuality in Jesus’ double humanity. The movement from outer to inner *chere*, more explicitly worked out in LT 71, may be Julian’s mature way of describing the truth of the sixteenth showing as the work which Christ does in her of mirroring her true self into being and union, where the inner *chere* is without bodily likeness.

Whether for theological, psychobiographical, or other reasons, I would tend to argue that Julian’s omission of any reference to the face of Mother Jesus which Koenig has observed is another magnificent and somehow intentional gap in Julian’s text, to be read, according to her “contrapuntal” and “performative” trajectories, as an “apophatic image” which invites the act of imagining that face but leaves the act itself up to the beholder. Set beside the unseen image of the servant’s *chere* lifted from despair to beholding the lord, these two unseen *cheres* are an apt image of Julian’s longing for total self-knowledge and knowledge of God in union. I hold that this dynamism of the mirroring function of the face runs throughout the *exemplum* and her theology of Jesus as Mother. “And this makes the soul which so contemplates like to him who is contemplated, and unites it in rest and peace”. (LT 68.) “The blessed *chere* of our Lord works this in us through grace”. (LT 71.) But for Julian such knowledge is known here in this life only in part.

### 3.3.7 Sharing in the Trinity

In the *exemplum* the servant shares in both humanity and divinity. This means that even as the servant cannot be separated from humankind, neither can the servant be separated from the image of the lord as the whole Trinity at work in the substantial nature of the servant as Christ.

And our substance is in our Father, God almighty, and our substance is in our Mother, God all wisdom, and our substance is in our Lord God, the Holy Spirit, all goodness, for our substance is whole in each person of the Trinity, who is one God. And our sensuality is only in the second person, Christ Jesus, in whom is the Father and the Holy Spirit.... (LT 58.)

This subtlety insures that Julian's true or core sense of self is relational, located in the sight of God, who is also relational.

The counterpoint to the mature dependence I have described above is the relational mutuality which Julian discovers in the union of prayer. God "teaches us to pray and to have firm trust... for he beholds us in love, and *wants to make us partners in his good will and work*". (LT 43.) This is the inward work of the Mother, as "it is spoken of in the sixteenth revelation, where he says that he sits in our soul... working us all into him. In this working he wants us to be his helpers... truly trusting in him, for I saw truly that our substance is in him". (LT 57.) This relational mutuality is effected in Julian's differentiated understanding of union with God's trinitarian self. As Anderson puts it, "[i]n the *oneing* of humankind to God, humans are granted to partake of the peaceful, loving relationships that exist eternally between Father, Son and Holy Spirit".<sup>49</sup> The mirroring function active in the *exemplum*, which helps Julian internalize her authentic sense of self, bears fruit in the dynamic relational mutuality of love within God and between God and the creature at the core of her trinitarian theology.

This mutuality is seen in the *exemplum* where it is hinted at in her account of the restored condition of the double self of the servant in the sight of the inward, more exalted *chere* of the lord in joy. She writes that

the life and power that we have in the [sensual] part is from the [substantial], and it comes down to us from the *substantial love of the self*, by grace. In between the one and the other is nothing at all, for it is all one love, which one blessed love now has a double operation in us. (LT 52.)

In those exalted moments Julian is inspired to write that

I saw no difference between God and our substance, but, as it were, all God; and still my understanding accepted that our substance is in God, that is to say that God is God, and our substance is a creature in God. For the almighty truth of the

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<sup>49</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 176 - 177.

Trinity is our Father, for he made us and keeps us. And the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, in whom we are enclosed. And the high goodness of the Trinity is our Lord, and in him we are enclosed and he in us. We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enclosed in us, the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Spirit is enclosed in us. (LT 54.)

What makes this knowledge possible in the sensual self is faith, exercised in trust.

And our faith is a power which comes from our natural substance into our sensual soul by the Holy Spirit, in which power all our powers come to us, for without that no man can receive power, for it is nothing else than right understanding with true belief and certain trust in our being, that we are in God and he in us, which we do not see. (LT 54.)

As the identities of the lord and the servant of the *exemplum* become differentiated, the servant into his double incarnational identity, and the lord into the Trinity, I suggest that Julian is articulating a greater flexibility in creatively negotiating and differentiating inner and outer worlds. It is as if the relationship of the lord with the servant, reverberating with the function of mirroring, becomes imbued with the transitional quality of being both subjective and objective. Her sustained focus on obtaining such a variety of loving and paradoxical relationships within and among these divine and human persons (liberating them to enclose and be enclosed by one another -- and her) allows for relational dependence and mutuality to coincide, and enhance her relational realism.

### 3.3.8 Mother Jesus, her *even* Christians and Mother Church

The mirroring function active in the *exemplum* also bears fruit in Julian's love and empathy for others. A sign of the maturity of narcissism in self esteem for Kohut is the capacity not only to have empathy for oneself but to have empathy for *others*, being able to see oneself in another person. With this capacity, presumably the possibility is opened of becoming oneself the object of another's mirroring transference. Just as Julian has needed to be empathically "reparented" in the mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings, Julian becomes a trustworthy, empathic parent for her *even* Christians. For Julian the capacity to see herself in her *even* Christians is an important fruit of all the visionary experience given to her. "Then I saw that every kind of compassion which one has for one's *even* Christians in love is Christ in us". (ST13; see LT 28.)

The arduous spiritual and psychological journey Julian has made toward becoming emptied of false selves and deepening her sense of identity with the humanity of Jesus and of sharing in the humanity of others through Christ certainly strikes me as a developed internalization and maturation of the mirroring need into self esteem. It has given her a

centre of authority and integrity in her own time and through the centuries as spiritual director and theologian, which has stood vastly at odds with, for example, the misogynist judgment of women by the ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>50</sup>

Bradley observes that “[a]s it is harder to know oneself than to know God, it is also harder to feel compassion for all others than for the innocent sacrificing Christ”.<sup>51</sup> This I suspect would be most true for Julian with regard to those *even* Christians in Holy Church who seemed bent on teaching the wrath of God. Julian is quite conditioned not to express her anger with others’ sins, which anger she admits only once she has come to some distance from it. (LT 76.) Among these objects of her anger surely are those she is so evidently frustrated with who think they know God’s privy counsel. (ST 14; LT 30.)<sup>52</sup> Anderson has observed that it is one of the significant signs of Julian’s contrapuntal trajectory that she never tries to reconcile the real difference between what her showings have taught her and what Holy Church teaches.

However and at the same time, Julian envisions that the whole of humankind is enclosed within Mother Jesus -- who for Julian is also Mother Church. This enclosure, like the *exemplum*, allows for the variability of human sensual judgments to be seen as empathically accepted. It is the “bridge of similarity” among humankind in which Kohut trusts, yet cannot name.<sup>53</sup>

Here we can see that we do not need to seek far afield so as to know various natures, but to go to Holy Church, into our Mother's breast, that is to say, into our own soul, where our Lord dwells. And there we should find everything, now in faith and understanding and afterwards in himself, clearly, in bliss...

But let no man apply this particularly to himself, because it is not so. It is general because it is our precious Mother Jesus. (LT 62.)

It is likely that Julian had earlier in her life been angry at Mother Church (as an object of projection) for its incapacity to respond to the needs of its suffering children. Julian’s capacity, as witnessed in the Long Text, to live with the ambiguity of embracing the

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<sup>50</sup>Watson draws on Irigaray to examine how Julian “converts subordination into affirmation” by turning medieval misogynist assumptions about the doubleness (weakness etc.) of women into assertions about humanity. WATSON, Nicholas, “‘*Yf wommen be double naturelly*’: Remaking ‘woman’ in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of love*”, *Exemplaria* 8, 1, 1996, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup>BRADLEY, Ritamary, *Julian’s way*, London, Harper Collins, 1992, p. 175.

<sup>52</sup> I hear echoes of this frustration in Roger Haight’s conclusion that “in the measure that trinitarian theology gets completely absorbed in defining and working out the distinctions in God’s inner life, in the same measure it misses the point”. The point, he says, is that “*God... is a saving God*”. HAIGHT, Roger, “The point of trinitarian theology”, *Toronto journal of theology* 4, 2, 1988, pp. 202 - 203, emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup>MOSS, David, “Narcissism, empathy and the fragmentation of self: An interview with Heinz Kohut.” *Pilgrimage* 4, 1, 1976, p. 32. I would add that for Julian, this bridge of similarity includes difference.

teaching of her visions and the teaching of Holy Church together in Mother Jesus must be a sign of psychological and spiritual maturation, of withdrawing projections.

I do not mean this to suggest that this acceptance of ambiguity is equivalent to complacency or compromise on her part, though it does signal great patience. Julian located that patience in Christ's willing and generous ongoing suffering "which transforms sin into love".<sup>54</sup> But Julian's capacity to live with the separation between her showings and the teaching of the Church is very reminiscent of Winnicott's comment on originality as related to the play of the trusting child in the transitional realm, but translated into the cultural realm as the (potentially) creative negotiation of tradition. He says that in

any cultural field *it is not possible to be original except on a basis of tradition....* The interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness seems to me to be just one more example, and a very exciting one, of the interplay between separateness and union.<sup>55</sup>

Julian's identification of Christ's incarnational suffering-with humanity as the location of union, even while that human sensuality is in a condition of separation, became the means for her growth in a trustworthy God in the transitional realm of her showings. I will explore below the idea that it also allowed her to "benefit" creatively from the tradition and from her experience of separation from it.

The fruit of Julian's originality and her empathy for others is in the fact that the written texts of the *Showings* exist at all. Julian desired that, mirrored through her writing, others might be given to know the love which Christ has for them. The creative act of writing of them has made Julian's *Showings* a locus for cultural meaning within the Church. Perhaps she trusted that her writing might help to enable that reconciliation to come about in some future time, beyond her own lifetime, as we'll explore in the final chapter. This, to my mind, would amount to a real sense of self-donation (after McDargh and Williams), as Julian's giving herself to what fulfills her being -- without despair.

For any woman, mature self-donation must also be self-loving. I wonder whether at another level perhaps, both Julian's writing and her invisible yet powerful symbolic presence as the anchoress in the Norwich community could be seen as a remarkable, (apophatic? kenotic? contrapuntal? performative?) way of having her need to be seen, affirmed and creatively fulfilled. As an anchoress Julian was never seen. Everything about

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<sup>54</sup> BALDWIN, Anna, "The triumph of patience in Julian of Norwich and Langland", in *Langland, the mystics and the medieval English religious tradition*, ed. PHILLIPS, Helen, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1990, p. 76.

<sup>55</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., "The location of cultural experience", *International journal of psycho-analysis* 48, 3, 1967, part 3, reprint in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, [1967] 1989, p. 99, emphasis in text.

her was shrouded. But her presence in the community and her contribution to the spiritual health of its people, as well as being a satisfying form of self-donation, perhaps also contributed to the satisfying “illusion of being seen”. Her *Showings* were almost unknown in her lifetime, were likely never copied in great quantities, and came close to being lost in the time of the Reformation. She wrote them for others, her *even* Christians. But surely, as Homans would argue, the very composition of the *Showings* exemplifies the relation between narrative and narcissism:

What might the relationship be between narcissism and narrative? It seems reasonable to suppose that the work of narrative building transforms some bits and pieces of the self's original, archaic narcissism (Kohut) and its residual, unconscious memories of maternal and infantile omnipotence (Winnicott) into a conversation with the social order. This supposition is grounded in the social character of all narrative, on the one hand, and its roots in depth-psychological personal experience, on the other hand. The most common examples are the keeping of a diary, the reading or writing of an autobiography or novel, and the viewing (or writing) of a play or movie. Complex as such experiences are, all of them include a fundamental transaction or interchange between individual, unconscious fantasy processes and socially and historically grounded and shaped events and figures which play out human relations, situations and predicaments, over a set time span. In imaginatively entertaining such experiences, persons work out and over and build up relations between their inner worlds and the world of shared collective meaning and memory. As old meanings are sorted out and discarded and new ones entertained and formed, the distance between the ego and the social order at first lessens but then also deepens. Such activities facilitate transformations in persons' narcissistic organization.<sup>56</sup>

Further below I will explore these thoughts in more detail.

#### **4.0 Summary of the therapeutic mirroring function in Julian's *Showings***

In this psychobiography of mirroring in Julian of Norwich I have hypothesized that Julian suffered a chronic lack in early infant mirroring, both in her family and in her culture as a female, and that this lack had severe consequences for her capacity to mature to a true core sense of self in mature narcissism and object relations. The study argued that there are signs in the Short Text rather of a false bipolar self structure, represented in fluctuating extremes of grandiosity and despair. Although Julian spoke of “trusting in salvation” on her deathbed, the study revealed that the pre-visionary Julian did not show signs of a capacity for relational trust but rather that she struggled with interior resistance, ambivalence and conflicting feelings, and that the trust she spoke of at that time was of a

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<sup>56</sup> HOMANS, Peter, *The ability to mourn: Disillusionment and the social origins of psychoanalysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 335 - 336.

conventional nature. The study argues that in fact Julian dreaded death because of a profound fear of abandonment and neglect, which translated into a fear of damnation.

The application of Kohut's stages of maturation through the therapeutic mirroring transference, and of Winnicott's concept of transitional space to Julian's Short Text and Long Text brought out how Julian entered the mirroring transference with the Jesus of the crucifix set before her, how she worked through the empathic exposure to the reality of those false self fragments which the mirroring transference allowed, and came to internalize the missed parental function of mirroring. Her *exemplum* and the later chapters of the Long Text reveal a more cohesive sense of Julian's true self in the continuous loving sight of the Other. I argue that Julian in effect tells us (through her account of coming to understand the meanings of the *exemplum*) that this long-term therapeutic process was maintained by the overwhelming significance of the mirroring function of the "constant regard [*chere*] of the lord" beholding the servant in her *exemplum*. I suggest that this served to maintain and promote object constancy in the visionary relationship. This was particularly significant after the comforting immediacy of the experience of the merged or fused mirroring transference with the suffering - joyful Christ passed, and she went back to her despairing self-preoccupation. Julian's understanding of human anthropology is double, and I believe it derives its distinctiveness from her years of beholding the *exemplum*. Human substance, never separated from Christ's substance, was engaged in the mirroring transference: each and every showing revealed the immanence of God in humankind. Her distinction of the two conditions of human sensuality in the discovery that the servant was both Adam and Christ, fallen (despairing) and restored (united with Christ), further oriented her toward the internalization of a true sense of herself as cohesive and continuous in time. This gave Julian the means to identify sin correctly (in the sight of God) and so to distance herself from the suffering self-preoccupation and despair of her false self-fragments. Indeed, her mature understanding of the work of Mother Christ, bringing human changeable sensuality into Christ's own constant sensuality by grace in this life, persists in her mysterious use of the facial language which reverberates with the gracious activity of internalizing the mirroring function: "[b]y his grace he lifts up and will draw our outer *chere* to the inner, and will make us all at unity with him, and each of us with others in the true, lasting joy which is Jesus.... The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us". (LT 71.)

I have sought to describe this process of maturation as a shift from merged subjectivism to relational realism. The early Julian, in her fragmented self structures, seems to have assumed that if she was not fused with Christ in a condition of unrelenting



suffering or undifferentiated bliss, she was condemned to isolation. In her mature development she understands that her selfhood is relationally constituted in the sight of God and that this is the case both in well-being and in woe. Whereas her pre-visionary concern was for her own salvation exclusively, her compassion comes to include all humankind as found in the servant Christ of her *exemplum*. Whereas the early Julian was riddled with doubt as to whether God was trustworthy, in her maturity she was convinced that God wants her and her *even* Christians to know that God's meaning is love, and, as a trusting child, to flee to God who has the best interests of human flourishing maturation at heart.

### 5.0 Trust and faith maturation

Winnicott would say that the holding environment is essential for the internalization of the mirroring function, which enables the child to take the risk of *trust* in a relationship with a reliable, mirroring other, while negotiating a nascent sense of self, and for its many fruits of mature self esteem, self acceptance, reality acceptance, empathy and object love. Julian's early, conventional trust in salvation appears, in hindsight, rigid, fragile and debilitated by doubt and fear. John McDargh's definition of faith as that

human dynamic of trusting, relying upon, and reposing confidence in, which (1) is foundational to the life-long process of becoming a self, and (2) is fulfilled in the progressively enlarged capacity of that self for love and self-commitment<sup>57</sup>

allowed the present study to draw connections between the psychobiographical portrait of Julian thus sketched, and signs of maturation in her life of faith which correlate with maturation in mirroring needs. I observed how McDargh's signs of maturity in faith are present in Julian's *exemplum*.

Taken together, Julian's *Showings* reveal the evolution of a religious mirroring transference to which we can look as a model for how narcissistically wounded persons might mature psychodynamically and spiritually and which can give us help in discerning religious narcissistic immaturity and pathology in our own day.

This is not to diminish the distinction between psychological maturity and the life of grace. Each of these maturational processes -- modern relational psychoanalytic and fourteenth century English mystic -- speaks different languages and understands its goals in very different terms. These differences cannot be levelled without loss. At the same time, however, I hope to have shown convincingly that Kohut's three phases in the therapeutic mirroring transference do parallel the evolution of mirroring activity which pervades

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<sup>57</sup> McDARGH, 1983, p. 71.

Julian's *Showings* in this study, and that these parallels suggest a fresh way of seeing "the mysterious working of grace with nature".<sup>58</sup> I suggest that in terms of dynamic movement and transformation of self understanding and of relation to otherness, the parallels between these two processes are significant, perhaps even diagnostic, and thus may be helpful in further applications. It is hoped that this study can be a useful contributing to the critical correlation of the work of Christian spiritual writers and mystics with relational psychoanalysis.

In the final part of this chapter I return to two of the areas which Meissner identifies as areas for exploring religion through the transitional lens of object relations theory, as these suggest themselves in this study of Julian of Norwich. (See the chapter on the psychology of mirroring above.) The maturation I have traced in this psychobiography of mirroring in Julian's *Showings* gives us privileged material to explore the transitional quality of 1) her experience of prayer and 2) her experience of the religious tradition, that is, how religious symbolism is appropriated and functions in her *Showings*. My hope is that this will help bring the relational psychoanalytic conversation into dialogue with the soteriological in the final chapter of this diptych.

### 5.1 Mirroring, transitional space and prayer

Meissner's observation, that Winnicott's notion of transitional space can help us understand the nature of the experience of prayer, has been an essential premise for the present study.

One might say that in prayer the individual enters the transitional space where he meets his God-representation. Prayer thus can become a channel for expressing what is most unique, profound and personal in individual psychology. All the elements of transference... can enter into the prayer experience and come to shape the individual's experience both of God and of himself in its context.<sup>59</sup>

Virtually all of what Julian tells us about herself and God is given and sifted through the transitional space of her showings and her continued practice of beholding them for the rest of her life. We might say there is a transitional quality to everything she writes. Medieval

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<sup>58</sup> WOLSKI CONN, 2006, p. 70. Although her method differs somewhat from that of the present work, Wolski Conn is right in arguing similarly that "the great spiritual teachers promote cooperation with grace by choices for greater self-knowledge, and surrendering love...." See also MEISSNER, W. W., *Ignatius of Loyola: The psychology of a saint*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, ch. 20.

<sup>59</sup> MEISSNER, W.W., *Psychoanalysis and religious experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, p. 182

affective devotional practices, spiritual counsel, anchoritic symbolism and the symbolism of Christ as mirror must be seen as sources of nurture of that transitional realm in Julian.

In Julian's case, her encounter and identification with the suffering Christ which began her early showings led her, through his change of *chere* to joy which transformed her interior condition mid-way through the showings, to identify both conditions of desolation and consolation simultaneously in the identity of the servant, mirrored in the two *cheres* of the lord in the *exemplum*. In this life long process, the prayer of beholding led her into a deepened sense of trust in the reliable compassion and joy of God for God's creatures, where a rooted sense of her own self's worth and delight in God's sight could develop. Far from pathological, Julian's showings, her life long practice of writing and meditating on them lead her to greater integration and maturity. The illusory nature of her showings, so revelatory of her personal history and subjectivity, her inmost desires and wishes, are also a creative negotiation of her culture and tradition.

The potential space of her showings, which she sustained through her whole life in the prayer of beholding, *and which she recreates so skillfully for the reader*, supplies for her and for her readers what may have been missed in infancy: "the baby's trust in the mother experienced over a long-enough period at the critical stage of the separation of the not-me from the me, when the establishment of the autonomous self is at the initial stage".<sup>60</sup> Meissner argues that "[w]ithin this potential space... man must revive the roots of his capacity for creative living and for faith experience".<sup>61</sup> In the case of Julian of Norwich I believe he would agree that the mirroring transference, in which her experience of faith *as trust* was nurtured, "carries with it a transcendent element".<sup>62</sup> Julian ultimately identifies Christ as Mother and seems to imbue him with the function of enabling her to interiorize a core sense of herself. Meissner would likely agree that this is a profound appropriation of faith as trust and that it constitutes a brilliant example of "the creative moment in the illusion of faith".<sup>63</sup> Citing Erikson he concludes:

[M]ust we call it regression if man thus seeks again the earliest encounters of his trustful past in his efforts to reach a hoped-for and eternal future? Or do religions partake of man's ability, even as he regresses, to recover creatively? At their creative best, religions retrace our earliest inner experiences, giving tangible form to vague evils and reaching back to the earliest individual sources of trust; at the same time, they keep alive the common symbols of integrity distilled by the generations.

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<sup>60</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W., *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, 1989, p. 110.

<sup>61</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 183.

<sup>62</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 183.

<sup>63</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, pp. 183 - 184

If this is partial regression, it is a regression which, in retracing firmly established pathways, returns to the present amplified and clarified.<sup>64</sup>

That Julian's *Showings* should seek to "perform" this work by grace, in her own soul and in the souls of others whose past and present was anything but "trustful", is already extraordinary. That she should seek to enliven those "common symbols of integrity" of the teaching of Mother Church by those same showings, places courageous paradox and prophetic ambiguity at the heart of her creativity.

## 5.2 Separation and creativity in the religious tradition

Meissner identifies the transitional quality of objects of religious symbolism (such as the crucifix) as another fertile area for an object relations exploration.

[O]bjects as religious symbols are neither exclusively perceived in real and objective terms, nor simply produced by subjective creation. Rather they evolve from the amalgamation of what is real, material, and objective as it is experienced, penetrated, and creatively reshaped by the subjective belief and patterns of meaning attributed to the object by the believer.<sup>65</sup>

Just as an abstract religious belief system would not be able to be sustained without sensory concretization,

[b]y the same token, the religious symbols would not be able to serve their function if they were not received into the transitional realm of experience of each participating believer who brings to the reality of the crucifix, for example, his own creative impulse expressed in and through his belief and its attendant faith. Consequently, their meaning and significance are achieved only to the extent to which such symbols become part of the transitional realm of the believer's illusory experience.<sup>66</sup>

Like Winnicott, Meissner holds that a positive, and not just deceptive, relation may obtain between religious tradition and creativity.

We cannot ignore the creativity with which Julian appropriates the symbolism of the Christian Biblical, theological and mystical traditions to serve her needs. Creativity is one of the key signs of mature narcissism.<sup>67</sup> But it also cannot be ignored that this creativity

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<sup>64</sup> ERIKSON, Erik, *Young man Luther*, NY, Norton, 1962, p. 264.

<sup>65</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 181.

<sup>66</sup> MEISSNER, 1984, p. 181.

<sup>67</sup>By contrast, Kohut's judgment of the relationship between religion (as a corporate, symbolic tradition) and mature narcissism seems fettered, clogged with old, unresolved relational issues, or, in Kohut's own word, "archaic". Perhaps Kohut's fear of "tradition" as destructive of individual creativity can even be seen in his unwillingness to acknowledge the parallels between his work and that of other object relations theorists? Compare Bacal and Newman's similar observation suggesting that in so doing Kohut was

came into play as Julian seems to have experienced a real disorientation with regard to the meaning of Christ's suffering and her sin, indeed, a crisis of meaning. The *exemplum* became her focus of sustained desire to understand the misty meaning of what she was seeing. Homans' Kohutian study of how mourning the loss of meaning in Christian religious symbols can lead to the creation of new meaning broadens the significance of Julian's negotiating separation through her showings.

The transitional space of her practice of beholding the *exemplum* became for Julian the lieu for working out her most urgent concern that the god of the common teaching of Holy Church was not a saving God, but rather was implicated in her psychodynamic abandonment anxiety and confusion around sin. What began as a devotional practice of meditating on the crucifix led Julian into an identification with that suffering Christ, which was a mirror for her own dying condition. I have suggested that the bipolar false self structure which I found reflected in the merged mirroring transference in those early showings revealed a personal and social history of neglect and abandonment. Julian, I suggested, had introjected a desperate feeling of responsibility and blame for Christ's suffering, and expressed this in her pre-visionary life as a spirituality based on suffering relentlessly, longing ambivalently for the pains of death, which nonetheless did not seem to assure salvation. Although the cross is the Christian symbol of salvation, what the early Julian seems to reveal is that the meaning of suffering which she had introjected was very ambiguous. Thus it was necessary to argue that Julian underwent a process of "noughting" or dying to this false self structure, and to the meaning of Christ's and her suffering as she had understood it.

Homans argues, following Winnicott's lead, that in the process of disillusionment or mourning

the response to loss opens up the transitional space, which is both social and historical, and in this space persons construct a bridge of symbols between inner and social worlds through fantasy and its implicitly narrative character.<sup>68</sup>

In the process of that mourning, individuation and the creation of new meaning, Homans argues, the ego comes increasingly to recognize both its separation from the past and its dependence on the past for the cultural symbols it has been "given" as well as "created" in that transitional space between self and social other.<sup>69</sup> "The reality and recognition of interdependence is the point at which a structure within the organism deeper than the ego

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avoiding an "anxiety of influence", in BACAL, Howard and Kenneth NEWMAN, *Theories of object relations: Bridges to self psychology*, NY, Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 205, n. 2.

<sup>68</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 333.

<sup>69</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 334.

begins to take shape. It is best to call this structure the self."<sup>70</sup> Julian's holding both the teaching of the showings and the teaching of Holy Church to be in Mother Jesus is just such an indication of her awareness of Homans' "interdependence".

The emergence of Julian's authentic self as a process of *noughting* or emptying of the false selves is also the *noughting* of Christ's humanity in her showings. From her early identification with Christ in his suffering, wounds and *chere*, and his with hers, through to the *exemplum* of the servant as both Adam and Christ in the sight of the lord, to the vision of Mother Jesus, what Julian sees mirrored in these images is the God who is transfigured through dying to the old, distant, abandoning, unapproachable -- "divine" -- self.

Julia Gatta observes this explicitly about the *exemplum*:

The parable represents an imaginative reconstruction of the self-emptying described in Philippians 2, the systematic divestment by Christ of his divine prerogatives and even his human dignity: 'He...did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant'.<sup>71</sup>

What Kohut describes empirically as the feeling of "emptiness or deprivation" which a person encounters and needs to learn to tolerate as she begins to get some distance from her archaic self-fragments, and, what Homans calls the "resignation" or "renunciation" which he associates with the "sad peace" achieved through disillusionment and mourning, is for Julian not just a feeling to be tolerated or a reality to which she becomes resigned. It is a desolation which comes to be experienced *simultaneously* as

<sup>70</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 334.

<sup>71</sup> GATTA, Julia, *Three spiritual directors for our time*, Cambridge MA, Cowley, 1986, p. 66.

Julian specialists think differently about how this kenotic Christ is expressed in Julian's motherhood of God. Carolyn Walker Bynum observes that

[t]o Julian, God's motherhood, expressed in Christ, is not merely love and mercy, not merely redemption through the sacrifice of the cross, but a taking on of our physical humanity in the Incarnation, as a mother gives herself to the fetus she bears...

BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone Books, 1992, p. 163. Bynum goes on to say on p. 164 that "mothering was associated most clearly with eating and feeding, and with *passio* (suffering, which was in some sense childbirth).

David Aers, however, argues against Bynum that in Julian's use of the Christ as mother theme "Julian has not, emphatically not, confined the figure of mother to the realm of the stereotypically feminine, the flesh, the dying and nutritive body of Christ: she has exalted it into the mysterious realm of the Trinity". He sees Julian's sparseness in her treatment of this theme as going against the pull of her culture. AERS, 1996, pp. 96 - 97. In a similar vein, Watson says of Julian's understanding of the motherhood of God that it can be

defined as a divine equivalent of the sensuality, which bears the same relation to the fatherhood as does the sensuality to the substance. While it partly functions as a figure for Christ's human nature, the motherhood is most importantly the principle of self-emptying (*kenosis*) within the godhead itself, represented by God the Son, which brings about the Incarnation". WATSON, 1996, p. 26.

consolation, as the place which Christ encloses and in which he is enclosed, regardless of our sensual condition. The outward, compassionate *chere* of the lord draws the changeability of her sensual conditions inward to the constant *chere* of joy.

Significantly, Julian's disillusionment around the meaning of relentless suffering (which the crucifix seems earlier to have symbolized for her) becomes for her an experience of sacred emptiness or exposure to be sought after, in which to see clearly how differently the loving mirroring face of God beholds her to be from how she would define herself (and Christ) in suffering. The process of her mourning the loss of her old self-understanding is seen in the *kenosis* or self-emptying of the servant. This self-emptying or exposure *as an experience to be sought* is a sign of her becoming both more familiar with the work of dying to false ego in union with Christ, as well as more whole in her self-knowledge. So far from being a kind of self-denial which compromised her human flourishing, it is rather a source of liberation for her flourishing and mirrors a new knowledge of herself as beloved in the sight of God. The effect of this on her understanding of the meaning of the cross, of Christ's Passion, suffering and death, is no less revolutionary. No longer is it seen as something for which Julian is endlessly to blame. Rather, beholding Christ in the condition of suffering becomes a signal to her that she has abandoned Christ (LT 80) for suffering which is conducive to sin, i.e., despair. Christ, she learns, has other *cheres* which mirror her other sensual conditions, including and ultimately, joy.

It is clear that Julian's individuation was hardly secularist, in Homans' terms. It is evident in her *Showings* however that through that mourning process "[w]hat was first experienced phenomenologically to have been 'on the outside' (cosmology and myth) was returned to its proper and natural place 'on the inside' (psychology)."<sup>72</sup> This is clearly the case with Julian's mature understanding of the nature of projection of wrath in the changeable judgment of Holy Church, as well as in her understanding of the work of Christ's drawing the outer *chere* to the inner. Julian's showings reveal just such a sense of coherence and flexible interaction between inner and outer worlds. Taking Homans' lead, I suggest that this is the fruit of that process of mourning the lost meaning of Christ's suffering and her sin.

I suggest that Homans' theoretical formulation can assist us to understand the significance of what is going on in Julian's transitional space for her own therapeutic

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<sup>72</sup> HOMANS, 1989, p. 320.

process *and* for her resolution of what I have described as her pre-oedipal soteriological crisis.

Julian's written record of the transitional space of beholding her showings, especially the *exemplum*, transcends the intrapsychic symbolic realm of traditional psychoanalytic categories, and as Winnicott believed, becomes the lieu for the creative work of "object gain" in the formation new symbolic understanding. For Julian this involves an "object gain" with regard to the place of Christ's suffering in the whole of his work of salvation. I hold that the function of mirroring, so central to her own therapeutic process, pervades Julian's saving God who, above all things, is trustworthy, and wants us to know it and practise it by beholding God's *chere*.

At this point this psychobiography of mirroring converges with the soteriological correlation I have been pursuing in the second half of each diptych.



## CHAPTER 12

### DIPTYCH 3.2 JULIAN'S SOTERIOLOGY OF MIRRORING

#### 1.0 Introduction to the chapter

These three diptychs have made thus far a close reading of Julian's two versions of her *Showings* and identified the contours of Julian's healing and maturation in her pre-oedipal need for mirroring alongside her conversion process of working through a pre-oedipal soteriological crisis. This chapter will extend the reading of her soteriological crisis to its resolution in the *exemplum*. Throughout the study I have remained close to her evolving understanding of sin, suffering and human anthropology as these are related to the way in which the Jesus of her showings is seen to function, psychodynamically and soteriologically, as a mirror to reflect back to Julian what she most needs to see in her sensual condition in order to be healed and restored in her self-knowledge in God's sight and to mature in her human flourishing in union with Christ and her *even* Christians.

It must be said, however, that Julian's *exemplum*, which takes up and subsumes all the other showings, leads Julian to articulate a whole Christology and a theology of the Trinity in active relation to human creation. This final chapter cannot attempt any systematic correlation with these areas which nonetheless bear on Julian's mature soteriology. That is another project waiting to be written, that is, to correlate Julian's rewriting of these areas of theology out of her mature soteriological vision with, say, the three final chapters of Elizabeth Johnson's feminist constructive theological project.<sup>1</sup> All

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<sup>1</sup> See JOHNSON, Elizabeth, *She who is: ~ The mystery of God in feminist theological discourse*, NY, Crossroad, 1992, chapters 10 - 12, where she works through the contrast situation of the theological tradition's doctrine of God to appropriate a more credible feminist trinitarian theology and theology of Christ's suffering. Johnson's theological project responds to a number of the exigencies driving contemporary soteriology identified by Haight, and there are many parallels to be made between her project and Julian's maternal trinitarian theology and Christology. Briefly, Johnson examines the patriarchal influences on the doctrine of the Trinity and then recasts the primary intention of the doctrine in terms which are more credible to, and lead to the flourishing of, women. Thus, in chapter 10 she argues, with Rahner, but using women's experience to frame the symbol, that the Trinity must be driven soteriologically, that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, a saving God. In chapter 11 she identifies the problem that there is no real relation between the Trinity and creation in the theological tradition we have inherited, and develops a Trinitarian theology which, in privileging women's relationality, is constitutively related to creation. Both of these problematic doctrinal trinitarian concerns, as they express themselves in Julian's *Showings*, have been taken up by NUTH, Joan, *Wisdom's daughter: the theology of*

that can be attempted here in the final section of this chapter is to focus on one theme which is particularly pertinent to the present study, and reflect briefly on some of the other themes in soteriology raised by Haight (in chapter one) with the insights into Julian's own theological responses which the present study has made possible.

In a sense then, this final chapter can only be an abbreviation, since the third movement in Johnson's feminist liberation dynamic of conversion leads to the appropriation of a contemporary soteriology which transforms and gives new meaning and intelligibility not only to women's suffering and to Christ's saving work, but also and necessarily to the whole Christian theological enterprise.

### 1.1 Outline of the chapter

The primary focus of the present chapter will explore one issue in Julian's appropriation of a liberative soteriology which seems to have escaped attention in contemporary feminist and liberationist theological projects, however. *By means of the phenomenon of mirroring I wish to examine how Christ's saving work (objective soteriology) is related to Julian's and her readers' appropriation in the present time of that saving work (subjective soteriology).* It addresses the theme of soteriology as revelation, that is, how soteriology is real and can be experienced in the present time. It is this question which I will attempt to address in this final chapter.

After looking at the work of two Julian specialists who have approached this question, the chapter will proceed in two parts.<sup>2</sup> First, I explore the mirroring process as

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*Julian of Norwich*, NY, Crossroad, 1991, 217 p. Bauerschmidt and Derek Anderson also address these questions head on, although not from an explicitly feminist perspective. See BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, *Julian of Norwich and the mystical body politic of Christ*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1999, ch. 4; and ANDERSON, Derek, *Julian of Norwich's nonviolent account of salvation*, Ph.D. thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, 2005, ch. 4. See also DREYER, Elizabeth, "The trinitarian theology of Julian of Norwich: Mysticism and theology - a test case", *Studies in spirituality* 4, 1994, pp. 79 - 93. Chapter 12 of Johnson's study addresses the tradition's view of impassibility in God and the legacy of problems which that has raised with regard to the meaning of human suffering in relation to Christ's suffering. Not unlike Crysdale, Johnson argues for a new understanding of women's symbols of suffering (grief, travail and birth, degradation and anger for justice) as evoking the mystery of God as *capax passionis*, for the bringing forth of new life. See BAKER, Denise N., *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From vision to book*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, 215 p; and HIDE, Kerrie, "The parable of the lord and the servant: A soteriology for our times", *Pacifica: Australian theological studies* 10, 1997, pp. 53 - 69. Thus, all three of Johnson's chapter subjects find direct parallels in Julian's late theology. But given the limits of the present chapter, I will only be able to touch on them as they relate to the functionality of mirroring in Julian's soteriology, which is the focus here.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike Anderson who discusses objective soteriology and then its subjective appropriation in Julian, the theological method I use works the other way, from Julian's experience of appropriation to her understanding of what that saving work in God is. See ANDERSON, 2005, chs. 4 and 5.

that bears on her practice of the prayer of *beholding*, or contemplation. I argue that it describes a fundamental dynamism in her subjective soteriology, and by means of her “performing” the *exemplum* over time, she and her readers are enabled to enter into the same process of appropriating healing and restoration in God’s sight. With Anderson I hold that appropriation, understood as the graced fruit of an ongoing practice of contemplative beholding or, as I put it, mirroring, is Christ’s saving work in the present tense. Second, I explore the mirroring function of the face of the lord in the *exemplum*, as, in effect, her way of coming to a more fully adequate understanding of what her objective soteriology is, in past and future tenses, given her human predicament.

*My evolving hypothesis will be that in Julian subjective and objective soteriology find a coherent meeting point in the dynamic of mirroring. I propose that the psychobiographical analysis of Julian’s maturation in mirroring need into relational realism, enabling her to see differentiation in union in the human divine relation, finds a correlation with the maturation of Julian’s soteriology into a trinitarian relational activity intrinsically engaged in human creation and restoration.* I hold that the mirroring dynamic in the *exemplum*, as this is expressed in Julian’s later trinitarian soteriological reflection, gives rise to the thought of the Trinity in Christ as Mother. The Trinity’s mirroring activity in humankind describes the dynamic *quality of relationality* of God as Mother with which Julian invests all the maternal activity of the Trinity engaged in humankind in Christ, past, present and future. This activity, in the present tense, enables Julian’s appropriation of the satisfaction and healing of her deep wound of lack of self love and her maturation and fulfillment in learning to desire to behold herself (and humankind) beloved as God desires and beholds Christ in her. These observations confirm the psychobiographical and feminist liberationist reading of her transformation of the meaning of suffering, sin and the Passion, and her conversion through maturation in mirroring need. But the mirroring dynamic also helps to put flesh on the relation between human desire or affections, freedom and grace in Julian’s double anthropology. For Julian, appropriation is not only an epistemological activity; as Anderson argues, it is also the fruit of practices which have relational and ontological consequences.

Reading her soteriology as a soteriology of mirroring furthers the work of Koenig and Anderson in their reading of the relation between objective and subjective soteriology in Julian. It confirms their argument that Julian seeks to enable God’s saving activity to be performed in her readers’ lives. I conclude, therefore, by proposing that Julian’s

soteriology of mirroring can help to offer a coherent spiritual and theological response to the contemporary search for a credible soteriology.

## 1.2 Contemplative action

Before proceeding, I need to make a comment about the way in which I will be approaching the discourse of contemplation in Julian (as linked to that of mysticism). The sustained focus of this thesis on the psychodynamic and the soteriological dimensions of the phenomenon of mirroring in Julian of Norwich's *Showings* has required an attention to the historically mediated contemplative practices which assisted her in her psychodynamic healing and maturation as well as her in appropriation of a credible saviour. I observe that the prophetic, activist nature of much contemporary feminist and liberationist theology is not mutually exclusive of a prophetic, contemplative theology, but one frequently gets the impression that it is. Roger Haight, in a section on participation in the process of salvation, is critical of spirituality, as a domain in practical theology, for its diffuseness and multiplicity of methods which do not emphasize that the appropriation of salvation and the ground of spirituality is in action which takes place in and is a response to society. He argues that

salvation is finally mediated through a form of human action.... Where there is no liberating practice in the face of social oppression, then it is nonsense to speak about salvation in this world. The language of salvation is precisely a language that appeals to freedom to *make salvation happen*....<sup>3</sup>

Compare Frederick Bauerschmidt's criticism of the contemporary discourse of mysticism, as constructing a space that is protected from the "political" and as such removing itself from the realm of the historical, the social and ultimately, "from the sway of Christ's reign".<sup>4</sup>

Clearly there is no intent to exclude spiritual practices from the domain of liberative social action, but Haight gives the impression in this passage that it does, or at least that salvation is to be identified with activism that changes the world, and "makes salvation happen". To be sure, Haight acknowledges that "[r]eligious salvation does not lie in the degree of the the success of this action, but in the action itself".<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, in a culture which prizes activism and abhors contemplation as passive, Haight's text could be construed to mean that the latter does not constitute an "action" in this sense.

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<sup>3</sup> HAIGHT, Roger, *Jesus, symbol of God*, Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1999, p. 388, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, Frederick, "Julian of Norwich - incorporated", *Modern theology* 13, 1, 1997, pp. 96 - 97.

<sup>5</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 388.

Even more to the point, Lanzetta observes that

feminists have been cautious of mysticism if it is used to mask differences, make universal claims about women's spirituality, avoid social ills, or confine women to gender stereotypes. Feminists also contend that the characteristics usually associated with mysticism, such as passivity, selflessness, silence, and absence of desire, further women's oppression by assigning normative expectations to their behavior.<sup>6</sup>

But the contribution of Julian of Norwich toward the shaping of a credible soteriology is not least in the witness she provides as to the imaginative contemplative prayer practice of beholding which undergirds her own mature appropriation of that soteriology, and which she offers her *even* Christians by means of the written text of the *Showings*. Historically speaking, contemplation for Julian the anchoress was clearly a prophetic action in the world. As Anderson observes, Julian's soteriology does not engage an epistemological appropriation (of consciousness raising) alone. It does do that to be sure, but it also engages a relational and ontological appropriation, by means of the performing of the text by her readers.<sup>7</sup>

In 1984 Koenig observed the ethical thrust in Julian's work which in its heuristic function as a redescription of reality... discloses a possible world in which to live, and in so doing it demands a re-reading of reality. It communicates a vision of unconditional love and acceptance that challenges every condemnatory judgment human beings make against one another, especially those judgments pronounced in the name of God and/or scripture.... Ricoeur believes that the acts of imagination which... produce new meanings also engender analogous acts of imagination on the part of the reader. These imaginings then enable the reader to see and create new possibilities for his or her individual and social life.<sup>8</sup>

More recent Julian specialists such as Anderson and Bauerschmidt should be seen as following Koenig's call for further studies which link an emphasis on subjectivity in self-understanding with community and history in human reality in a non-solipsistic way.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Anderson's thesis is that Julian's soteriology is non-violent in its content, its structures, and in the performative trajectory engaged in reading Julian.<sup>10</sup> And

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<sup>6</sup> LANZETTA, Beverly, *Radical wisdom: A feminist mystical theology*, Minneapolis MN, Fortress Press, 2005, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 45 - 57.

<sup>8</sup> KOENIG, Elisabeth, *The "Book of showings" of Julian of Norwich: A test case for Paul Ricoeur's theories of metaphor and the imagination*, Ph.D. dissertation, NY, Columbia University, 1984, pp. 222 - 224.

<sup>9</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 231. To her comment that the possible world Julian describes "challenges every condemnatory judgment human beings make against one another" I would add "or introject".

<sup>10</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 152.

Bauerschmidt's whole point is that Julian "imagines the political", and breaks down such distinctions between inner and outer, private and social, worlds. Thus we must approach her contemplative practice, her "mysticism" if you will, cognizant that it is intended to effect change outwardly, in temporal, historical social relations, in the Church and its theological tradition, as well as inwardly in conscious self-knowledge and union with God.

In effect, the Winnicottian notion that the negotiation of inner and outer worlds is a continual play of finding and creating reality would help us to grasp that the terms subjective soteriology and objective soteriology are themselves much more dynamically interrelated than they would seem in the history of the soteriological tradition. Appropriation (subjective soteriology) is never simply a "subjective" creation, as it creatively engages the found, or given social realm of religious symbolism, historical tradition, practices and community. Objective soteriology, that is, the saving work of Christ, is never simply "objective" as if it were simply "found", "out there" in the tradition, and not also imaginatively reworked and created by persons and communities (with and without voice) within that historical and ecclesial tradition of Biblical and soteriological reflection.

Moreover, I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis that a major problem of the credibility of soteriological narratives in our contemporary situation is that, between the account of the saving work of Christ received from Christian tradition and our appropriation of it, there is, at best, meaninglessness and at worst, abuse. "If it doesn't save, don't call it salvation". The problem of the credibility of the soteriological narratives we have inherited is to some degree perhaps a function of the historical division between these two realms of subjective and objective soteriology in the theological tradition. Homans' exploration of this historical loss of meaning of these mediated cultural symbols, and the process of disillusionment, mourning and creative negotiation by which symbols return with object gain has helped us to address this crisis of soteriological incredibility in Julian and in contemporary theology in correlation with object relations theory. Because the soteriology of Julian's *Showings* emerges in and through the transitional space of her ongoing meditation, it is possible to see there a negotiation not only of her self-understanding, but also of her relation to Mother Church and its soteriological tradition.

## **2.0 Two recent attempts to link objective and subjective soteriology in Julian's *exemplum***

I draw now on the work of Derek Anderson and Elisabeth Koenig to help me frame the primary contribution which this last chapter makes to understanding Julian's *Showings* as a resource for a credible soteriology in our own day.

Anderson has begun to explore a major gap in contemporary soteriology as that manifests itself in a failure to treat Julian's showings seriously "as a resource for addressing contemporary concerns for the violent implications of Christian teaching about salvation".<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Anderson argues that in Julian there is a relationship between Christ's saving work and Julian's (and our) appropriation of it.

Briefly, Anderson sees in Julian's soteriology of Christ's saving work a recapitulation theory of salvation. He identifies the Incarnation as the saving work of Christ; it is Christ's identity (as the double identity of Christ the servant in the *exemplum*) which is salvific, and pacific, according to Anderson. Our appropriation of this mystery of salvation, he argues, is not simply epistemological, by means of consciousness raising, however important that is. The cognitive recognition "that in Christ the reintegration has already taken place, and [human beings are to] live in that growing realization" is important, but not sufficient for Julian's appropriation of its truth, according to Anderson.<sup>12</sup> For Julian, our *oneing* in Christ also requires the practice of beholding Christ, so that the work Christ is doing is contemplatively "performed" in us.

Julian envisions a process through which the work performed in Christ becomes actual in human beings in the present life. That is to say, the saving work of Christ does not remain abstract in Julian's view, performed by God in some distant time and place; the healing of fallen sensuality and the *oneing* of that sensuality to substance is performed by God's grace in the lives of each subsequent generation of Christians....

[T]here is evidence from the way Julian has structured her *Revelation* that this contemplative activity is just the sort of exercise that she is trying to teach her reader to perform as they learn to read and to understand her book.<sup>13</sup>

Later in his thesis, Anderson explains more explicitly how he sees Julian to be consistent in her understanding of Christ's saving work and in her (and our) appropriation of it. In his terse account Anderson writes that if

Julian's account of salvation in the present life entails the healing and restoration of human sensuality and the gradual transition to Christ-likeness, then her this-worldly soteriology is consistent with her recapitulation-type account. The healing of the sensuality that is entailed in receiving grace to live authentically Christian lives is likely also the starting point of the reunion of substance and sensuality that has been accomplished in Christ's representative humanity. *This point of contact is a reminder that Julian produces only one account of salvation in A revelation of love, but that this account occupies more than one temporal dimension.*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 181, quoting JANTZEN, *Grace, Power, gender and Christian mysticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 151.

<sup>13</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 180, 182.

<sup>14</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 223 - 224, emphasis added.

In effect, Anderson seems to be saying that the *past* and *future* tense of Christ's (trinitarian) saving work are Christ's identity in our creation and in the Incarnation (including Jesus' life, suffering, death on the cross and Resurrection), and in the eschaton, respectively. But what about the *present* tense? As Anderson puts it, "the great majority of Julian specialists fail... to pay sufficient attention to Julian's account of salvation in the present time".<sup>15</sup> Anderson is at pains to connect what Julian is saying about humans sharing in the pacific relations of the Trinity with how humans appropriate salvation in the present tense. His point is that *the present tense of Christ's saving work, it would seem, is Julian's and our appropriation of this saving work*. This is the first time I have seen Julian's soteriology understood in this way as embracing all time, yet differentiating the past, future and present forms of that saving work in such a way as also to embrace both objective and subjective soteriology. It is coherent with what she herself came to learn that "between the one and the other all will be one time; and then all will be brought into joy". (LT 21.)

I draw on Anderson's theological rigour in identifying the link between Christ's saving work and our subjective appropriation of it in the present tense as Julian understands this, because I believe that Anderson's insight, that "Julian envisions a process through which the work performed in Christ becomes actual in human beings in the present life", will help the present thesis to pinpoint the relationship between Julian's subjective and objective soteriology in the discourse and dynamic of mirroring.

I take as my other starting point for this soteriology of mirroring in Julian's *Showings* a comment made by Elisabeth Koenig in her doctoral thesis, to which thesis the present study has been significantly indebted. In the seventh chapter, Koenig abandons Ricoeur temporarily to use Winnicott and Alice Miller for a relational psychoanalytic understanding of the significance of the face of the lord in the *exemplum*. At one point Koenig says that Julian's description of the image of the lord's face "*reveals not only its affective power, but her understanding of its objective salvific power*".<sup>16</sup> To my knowledge, Koenig is the only Julian specialist who has noticed this contiguity in imagery, between the objectivity of the saving work of Christ and the subjectivity of its appropriation in the image of the face of the lord beholding the servant in the *exemplum*, in terms of its mirroring function. However, in her final chapter, Koenig backs off from this intuition.

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<sup>15</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 190, emphasis added.



She is prepared to see the image of the face of the lord as having a “pre-verbal and compensatory effect”, but says that its influence “does not operate so exclusively in the objective realm of the text”. Rather,

[i]ts primary thrust is subjective. We have shown how this image moves the reader back to a prior stage of emotional development and thereby assists in the redistribution of psychic energy. Julian’s contemplation of the lord’s face enabled her to *feel* herself worthy of love. A similar awareness may arise in the attentive reader.<sup>17</sup>

In this final chapter I argue from Koenig’s original intuition, that the face of the lord engages Julian and her readers *both* in an active subjective appropriation of the salvific work of Christ, but further, that the mirroring function of the face serves to dynamize all that the other showings point to as the objective salvific work of the Trinity through Christ, as well as her later theological reflections on the work and nature of Christ our Mother. The mirroring function I propose does have a regressive, compensatory effect, as this thesis has amply developed. But I am arguing that the maturational development of the mirroring function, which I suggest the *exemplum* represents in Julian’s psychobiography, also expresses a maturation in her appropriation of an objective soteriology of Christ’s saving work as the empathic, object constant *quality of relationality* of the Trinity at work in creation -- in other words, as the work of mirroring. Are there signs of this mirroring dynamic in God’s relation to creation through Christ reflected in her creative integration of aspects of more traditional elements of Christ’s saving work in history, and in the end time? The next two major sections of the chapter will examine each of these questions in turn.

### **3.0 Appropriation as objective soteriology in the present tense:**

#### **Beholding as mirroring**

Anderson identifies aspects of Julian’s understanding of Christ’s saving work in the past, present and future. He is the first Julian specialist to propose that

Julian envisions a process through which the work performed in Christ becomes actual in human beings in the present life. That is to say, the saving work of Christ does not remain abstract in Julian’s view, performed by God in some distant time and place: the healing of fallen sensuality and the *oneing* of that sensuality to substance is performed by God’s grace in the lives of each subsequent generation of Christians.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 229, emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 180.

Anderson, extending Hide's notion of Julian's hermeneutic of beholding, proceeds to identify Julian's practice of beholding as how she appropriates Christ's saving work of *oneing* in the present tense, and enables others to appropriate that same work through the performative trajectory engaged in reading her text. He argues that, in Julian, appropriation *is* Christ's saving work in the present tense. The effect of this is that Julian and her readers' affections are transformed over time: "the activity of the Trinity in the world ... trains human beings to love trinitarianly". Anderson argues here that "this training occurs as humans learn to desire the way the Trinity desires" and that "the outcome of this training is nonviolent habits that mirror the character of God's own nonviolent acting".<sup>19</sup>

The present chapter applies Anderson's insights into Julian's practice of beholding and how this enables her to appropriate God's saving activity, but correlates Julian's contemplative practice with the therapeutic process of mirroring.

Applying the psychoanalytic understanding of the mirroring process to Julian helped us to grasp Julian's early entry into her intense experience of beholding the face of the crucifix as her assent to engage in a mirroring transference with this face in her condition of extreme pain and unthinkable anxiety. And we saw how she worked through the transference to receive healing of her fundamentally wounded sense of selfhood. In the last chapter we saw how her continued practice of beholding the *exemplum* enabled her to mature into a very profound sense of union with Christ which allowed her to understand and accept her variable sensual conditions as enclosed in the mirroring transference proper.<sup>20</sup> Throughout, we argued that this mirroring transference compensated for and assisted Julian in interiorizing the missed parental and societal function of mirroring. Julian

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<sup>19</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> Unlike some who argue that in Julian there is no sense of transformation of human anthropology, only fulfillment, I argue for a both/and position. In arguing thus, I repeat that it is essential to revise our customary understanding of what sin is, i.e., what it is that is in need of being transformed. I have suggested that Julian's process of appropriation is a conversion process which begins in healing transformation of both false self structures and of a distorted understanding of the symbolic meaning of Christ's suffering. I argue also however, with regard to the *exemplum*, that this process of appropriation matures in fulfillment. Over time there is resolution in Julian's mature appropriation of a soteriology which responds to her needs. For some examples of those who see only fulfillment in Julian's anthropology see ANDERSON, 2005, p. 158, drawing on BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Perception of self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*", *Downside review* 104, 1986, p. 236; HIDE, Kerrie, *Gifted origins to graced fulfillment: The soteriology of Julian of Norwich*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2001, 233 p; BYNUM, Carolyn Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion*, NY, Zone, 1992, p. 175: "Women's religiosity was less characterized by conversion and inversion; their sense of self and of Christ as physical stressed continuity between their social and biological experience, on the one hand, and the experience of encounter with God, on the other". It should be clear, however, that I use the word conversion, after Johnson, to describe what I perceive to be a liberation hermeneutic at work in her *Showings*.

received bodily sights, spiritual sights and words formed in her understanding. The bodily feelings and fusion, the eye contact, the words spoken to her, and her working out the meanings of her feelings all speak of the therapeutic function of the mirroring transference, engaging movement responses of a narcissistic order.

Julian's language is far from psychoanalytic. And in the present context, a leap in the discourse is being made, from the language of Kohut and Winnicott to that of Moore, Crysedale and Koenig. In this context, Julian's practice of beholding the showings can be said to be a practice of assenting to divine therapy. Julian's method of beholding is a prayer practice which fosters in her the healing of her archaic false self, the interiorization of her mirroring need and the restoration and maturation of her authentic sense of selfhood in relation to Christ who is also revisioned as responsive to her need. Interpreting beholding as a process of receiving therapeutically satisfying mirroring through the face of the crucifix helped us grasp how it helped her heal her profound condition of self-hate and sort out the meanings of her and Christ's suffering. Likewise, I suggest, Julian's beholding the *exemplum* over the years can be interpreted as enabling her to mature in her sense of authentic selfhood as she can see all her sensual conditions mirrored in the servant, beheld in the constant, loving *chere* of the lord. Interpreting her practice of beholding as a process of receiving satisfying mirroring can help us understand *how* she is appropriating Christ's saving work over time in a way which is dynamic, existential and profoundly responsive to her need.

I believe this leap of discourse is a very significant one to make if, as Anderson and Koenig would argue, what is going on in Julian is transferable to our contemporary situation, and is to speak to feminist issues. Kerrie Hide, in principle, believes this too. Speaking of beholding as the means by which Julian's theology is communicated, Hide writes that

in order to interpret this literature we must be aware of how theology was communicated to Julian and the way she gave concrete expression to understanding. This awareness enables the reader to engage in Julian's way of interpretation and facilitates interpretation in this generation.<sup>21</sup>

Hide discusses Julian's way of interpretation as a "hermeneutic of beholding".<sup>22</sup> Hide

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<sup>21</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Hide draws on Lonergan's transcendental method arguing that the theology that emerges from the subjectivity of her visionary experience is not some intrusion into theology of alien matter from an alien source, but rather simply makes transparent "the fact that theologies are produced by theologians, that theologians have minds and use them, that their doing so should not be ignored or passed over, but explicitly acknowledged in itself and in its implications". HIDE, 2001, p. 20. See LONERGAN, Bernard, *Method in theology*, NY, Seabury, 1972, pp. 24 - 25.

gives the Middle English Dictionary definition for beholding as “looking, gazing, or seeing a visual appearance, applying the mind in thought, meditation or contemplation, and being in a state of relationship or connection”.<sup>23</sup> Hide observes that Julian expands its meaning to its limits: Beholding involves seeing but also all the other senses. Hide observes that “[s]eeing and *beholding* God involves ‘truly seeing, wholly feeling, spiritually hearing, delectably smelling’ and ‘sweetly tasting’. Thus for Julian the more complete the *beholding*, the more all the senses are involved”.<sup>24</sup> But instead of exploring the potential implications for this embodied prayer for its potential clues as to Julian’s human predicament of narcissistic need for mirroring as that would dispose her to need to be fed bodily and visually by the face she beholds, Hide quickly goes on to say that “Julian’s reference to the senses, however, includes more than bodily knowing. The senses are ‘organs of mystical knowledge’”.<sup>25</sup>

Hide sees that for Julian beholding is a way of interpreting revelation; beholding needs time to contemplate beyond bodily sight into spiritual sight, and so enables Julian to interpret meaning, to create theology and to articulate her soteriology. Thus, beholding is Julian’s theological method as well as being her method of prayer: a contemplative hermeneutic of *beholding*.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately Hide says that “beholding creates what might be called a mystical rather than systematic soteriology”.<sup>27</sup> Julian, she says, associates beholding with being *oned* into the Godhead. The deepest knowledge of God which human beings can have is the face-to-face beatific vision which involves intellectual vision and a non-cognitive experience of love engaging felt knowledge with all the senses.

Unfortunately, Hide’s decision to remain within the language of mysticism to articulate Julian’s theological method seems to me to leave out a whole world of Julian’s concrete, psychodynamic and sociocultural experience which might give us clues as to what prompted the showings to take the form that they did, and how we might relate to them in an embodied way. With all the language about *oneing* into God, Hide gives little or no attention to Julian’s growth in self-knowledge by means of the practice of beholding, and even there, where Hide discusses *oneing* in the Holy Spirit, there is no sense given

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<sup>23</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 23, drawing on KURATH, Hans, Sherman KUHN and Robert LEWIS eds., *Middle English dictionary*, Ann Arbor MI, University of Michigan Press, 1954-, pp. 835 - 838.

<sup>24</sup> HIDE 2001, p. 25, emphasis in text. Hide is quoting LT 43.

<sup>25</sup> HIDE 2001, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 26

that Julian is experiencing or resolving a soteriological crisis.<sup>28</sup> The mirroring process as Julian's way of appropriating Christ's saving work of *oneing* in the present tense can describe what is going on in Julian's prayer of beholding in a way that also enables the possibility of a contemporary correlation.

The contemporary psychoanalytic language of mirroring may be foreign to Julian. But the medieval symbol of the mirror of Christ, reflecting maturation in the spiritual life, is not. In the second diptych I explored Julian's retrieval of the medieval symbol of the mirror, which Bradley has identified as articulating the process of maturation in the spiritual life. In that context I identified that the mirror of Christ reflected three different conditions of Julian's interiority in the process of the maturation of the sensual condition of the self in its relationship to Christ. I correlated this process with Julian's account of the three *cheres* in LT 71. I argued that in Julian we find this process adapted according to the need of the wounded pre-oedipal self, and culminating in her psycho-spiritual maturation into flourishing self esteem and healthy love of others, a relational realism. In the present chapter, I revisit the threefold function of the symbol of the mirror to reflect her appropriation of salvation as a mirroring process of conversion and maturation in the faith, this time with the added perspective of the *exemplum*. Julian's appropriation of the medieval symbol of the mirror offers some historical and Biblical basis for the present correlation.

### 3.1 Mirroring, beholding and Julian's appropriation of the *exemplum*

Julian's appropriation of the *exemplum* endows a new *flexibility* to Julian's psychological and theological understanding of herself in relation to the God of her showings. Indeed, it allows her access to a new perspective, which is no longer framed simply from the side of the human situation in a condition of suffering vulnerability and powerlessness, although it never abandons that situation. Mediated by her years of meditative beholding and reflection, Julian's visionary experience of the *exemplum* opens to Julian a glimpse into God's perspective, how the God of her showings sees sin and suffering, the situation of humankind and its liberation. Beholding the relationship between the lord and the servant in the *exemplum* over time allows Julian to come, I suggest, to a profounder understanding of the human predicament she was suffering, in its

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<sup>28</sup> HIDE 2001, pp. 163 - 174. Anderson makes a similar observation of this gap in Hide's study, in ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 183 - 184.

psychoanalytic and systemic social dimensions, though these are not discourses she uses. By reflecting back to her how her every interior condition of sensuality is seen lovingly in God's sight and enclosed in the servant, Julian's beholding the servant in relation to the constant *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum* helps her to interiorize the message or meaning of the variable *cheres* (dispositions, conditions) of her sensual selfhood and come to more consistent consciousness with regard to the unbroken union of her substantial will with Christ, and greater sensual constancy in Christ's sensuality. We might use the language of object constancy here, such that the effect on Julian of beholding the face of the lord in relation to the servant is the interiorization of a sense of self constancy. Beholding the *exemplum* enables Julian to gain new understanding as to the meaning of her sensual subjectivity (affective mentalization), enabling her mirroring transference to evolve from its merged subjectivist beginnings with the suffering Christ. It helps her interiorize the mirroring function of the loving *chere* of the lord. To extend the psychoanalytic language of Kohut, the practice of beholding the *exemplum* becomes the *locus for Julian's appropriation of the saving work of Christ, both in his suffering condition and in his participation in the loving relations of the Trinity engaged in creation, as a work of enabling in Julian the transmuted internalization of the beloved goodness of her creation*. This saving work dynamizes the distinctive complexity of Julian's understanding of the doubleness of that creation by means of Christ's Incarnation in the relation between substance and sensuality: Julian comes by a different way from Augustine to see that the whole uncreated Trinity is at work in her created trinity. (LT 55.)

This leads her to a lively sense of participating in that saving work in her vocation to mirroring others in her contemporary world. *In effect, it enables her to develop a dynamic understanding of Christ's saving action which correlates with the function of mirroring, not only for her own appropriation and maturation in trust, but with the result of engaging her in Christ's saving work in her vocation with others in this world, and through her composition of the Showings*. In the visionary experience of the *exemplum* and in her years of meditation afterward she comes to be able to see her own condition and the situation of humankind with God's suffering compassion and God's joy, interiorized from beholding the *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum*. In short, God's *chere*, beholding humanity lovingly in its variable sensuality, becomes her own, by a process akin to transmuted internalization. This is God's saving work in human creation, drawing our outer, sensual *chere* to the inner: "The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works it in us by grace". (LT 71.) The ramifications of this are great, I suggest, both theologically and

pastorally as Abbott has observed, or as Anderson puts it, in the structure, the content and the practice of her theology.

There is the obvious pastoral implication that in the years following the showings Julian practises this work of mirroring in the pastoral dimension of her vocation as anchoress. Julian can respond to the situations to which humanity, coming to her window for counsel, exposes her. Julian can mirror the empathic, exposing, yet compassionate regard of the lord to those who come to her in blind suffering or sunk in despair, blind to whatever is keeping them lost in their self-preoccupation and isolation. She can also mirror to others, (like Margery Kempe) seeking to live the life of grace, the joy of union that the lord *already* has in their human nature and condition, enabling them to see for themselves how it is Christ's substantial union and Christ's sensual thirst in them which is at work already here and now in the exigencies of their present condition. To this effect, Julian says that we are to be in effect co-workers with Christ: "In this working he wants us to be his helpers... desiring everything to be done which he does, truly trusting in him, for I saw truly that our substance is in him". (LT 57.)

From these observations about the access Julian is given by means of the *exemplum* to understanding sin, the human situation and its liberation from God's side, I suggest that Julian's long process of learning to see the human situation through the eyes of the lord of her *exemplum* dynamizes the mirroring function of the face of the lord beholding the servant in such a way as to elicit her participation in that relational dynamic. If this is so, then Julian's appropriation of the mirroring function of the face of Christ may be an adequate description of the temporal process of conversion of her changeable human sensuality into Christ's constant human sensuality beheld in the Trinity.

### 3.2 Beholding the three *cheres*

#### 3.2.1 The *chere* of the Passion

The face of the lord in the *exemplum* as it is fully articulated in LT 51 may seem a long way from Julian's bodily sight of Christ's Passion in the opening chapters of both texts. Yet it is Julian's experience of suffering, both alone and then united with Christ in that early mirroring transference (of a fused or merged nature) of her bodily sight of Christ in his suffering humanity, which motivated and shaped the rest of the showings. And it is the *exemplum* which helped her over time to appropriate her early experience of the bodily sight of the face of the crucifix, and the change of *chere*, meaningfully, in a more flexible and differentiated mirroring transference (narrowly understood as mirroring proper). So,

in exploring Julian's appropriation of the *exemplum* as the maturest expression of her interiorization of a process of mirroring, we are bound to ask *where is the Passion, that is, the face of the crucifix, in the exemplum?*

Hide observes that early on, in LT 20, "Julian sees *oneing* take place in three manners of beholding the cross that arise in her understanding: beholding suffering, beholding love, and beholding joy".<sup>29</sup> This seems to anticipate Julian's later description of the three *cheres* in LT 71.

The double regard of the lord for the servant in the *exemplum* in Long Text 51 is expanded in Long Text 71 into three *cheres* or regards (as we saw above in discussing Julian's use of the medieval symbol of the mirror). I suggest that this expansion of the double regard of the lord in the *exemplum* to three *cheres* in LT 71 is a recurrence of the threefold beholding in LT 20 but with the explicit emphasis on the face or *chere* of each condition of Christ in her beholding of the cross. These three *cheres* reflect the sorting out of Julian's confusion around the meaning of suffering and sin, as this confusion was itself associated with the Passion.

The first [*chere*] is that of his Passion, as he revealed when he was with us in this life, dying; and although to contemplate this be sorrowful and grievous, still it is glad and joyful, because he is God.... And so in the time of our pain and our woe he reveals to us the *chere* of his Passion and his Cross, helping us to bear it by his own blessed power. (LT 71.)

Recall that the context of the emergence of Julian's showings is, I suggest, her crisis of unintelligible suffering. This is the confusion in suffering which Sebastian Moore has identified in the tradition of soteriology. And Cynthia Crysdale has put a finer point on it in identifying the first movement toward the appropriation of a soteriology, for those who have been wounded on the underside of history, as one of grief and healing of the wound of self-hate rather than of contrition and forgiveness of the sins of pride. But even the desire to appropriate one's grief requires a context of nurture and trust and, as Moore observes, it can be resisted. This, I believe, is what we saw in Julian's resistance to beholding the crucifix, in the eighth showing. "At this time I wanted to look away from the cross, but I did not dare". (LT 19.) As Bauerschmidt points out, there is a connection between Julian's choosing against the temptation to "look up to heaven to his Father" at that point and assenting to behold Jesus in pain, and her coming to her unique understanding of

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<sup>29</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 99.



substance and sensuality. He observes that Julian describes the simultaneous opposition within her between the two choices “as one between outward and inward”:<sup>30</sup>

The outward part is our mortal flesh, which is now in pain and distress and always shall be in this life, of which I was very aware at this time, and this was the part that repented. The inward part is a high and most blessed life, which is entirely in peace and love, and this is more secretly felt; and this is the part by which, with full power, wisdom and will, I chose Jesus as my heaven. (LT 19.)

So Julian’s sight of the first *chere*, that is of Christ’s Passion, provokes a crisis of choice. Having made her choice, “to choose Jesus for my heaven, whom I saw only in pain at that time” (LT 19), Julian is also in effect making a choice that goes against the experience of her feeling life thus far: the inward choice was not consciously, but rather “secretly”, felt. She chooses not to resist new knowledge of herself in her sensual condition as that may be mirrored back to her by the *chere* of Jesus in his Passion, but rather to embrace it, entering into a *noughting* of her false ego. As Crysedale observed of those on the underside of history, Julian’s appropriation of salvation began with an identification with the Crucified. Julian’s powerlessness and confusion in her critical state of suffering were mirrored symbolically in her bodily fusion with the Jesus of her early showings. As we explored earlier, this reveals to Julian the existence of her lost and wounded true self in a condition of merged suffering with Christ’s suffering. The *chere* of Christ’s Passion which Julian beholds is a mirror of Christ’s utter, compassionate identification with such a wounded, grieving soul without reserve. This *chere* is the mirror of Julian’s condition of unbearable and unintelligible suffering, which, as Bynum, Ruether and others have pointed out, *is* the condition in which medieval women were given to appropriate their salvation in Christ, as we saw earlier. It is the movement in which the mirror of Christ’s *chere* reflects the background of the medieval devotion to the suffering humanity of Christ by women, and which led, as Bynum observed, to the belief that “*Christ is what we are*”.<sup>31</sup>

As Bradley pointed out, this is the function of the mirror in the earliest steps of growing in the experience of God, where Julian’s knowledge of the substantial self (and, I would add, the meaning of her sensual condition) are undeveloped.<sup>32</sup> Correlating this with the psychoanalytic interpretation given above, this first *chere* reflects Julian’s

<sup>30</sup> BAUERSCHMIDT, 1999, p. 145.

<sup>31</sup> BYNUM, Caroline Walker, *Jesus as mother: Studies in the spirituality of the high middle ages*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1982, p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> BRADLEY, Ritamar, “The speculum image in medieval mystical writers”, in *The medieval mystical tradition in England*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer Press, 1984, p. 22.

unconsciousness of her fragmented self. In assenting to behold this first *chere*, Julian is letting go of her resistance to experiencing union (in her sensual condition of extreme pain) with Christ's sensuality in pain, and to the eventual undoing of her sensual confusion (or ignorance of love, as she puts it) around the meaning of suffering and sin.

As the two *cheres* of the lord (i.e., compassion and joy) in the *exemplum* are expanded to include this first *chere* of Christ's Passion, I suggest we see Julian integrating, into the mirroring function of the *cheres*, her initial, confused understanding of her suffering which was beyond what the human creature in her fragility could be responsible for. For one like Julian coming from the underside of history and a victim of systemic and familial sin which had beleaguered her sense of self worth, the first *chere* of the Lord in his Passion was experienced as an initially ambivalent choice to identify with Christ in his kenotic suffering. As Julian relates it, the reason for her suffering was obscure, but the comfort of sharing in identity with Christ was healing and transformative, leading her to experience inwardly Christ's Resurrection in their mutual change of *chere*.

Julian found it necessary to expand the two *cheres* of the Lord to three, to include the Passion. Perhaps this first *chere* of Christ's Passion could be described as the sensual *chere* of the servant, overtaken by despair, in the *exemplum*. This would consolidate the identification of the sensual condition of the servant's will which Christ assumes in his Incarnation. Seen in this light, appropriating Christ's Passion remained vital and indispensable, as the *chere* of the Passion was integral to her initial experience of her human predicament which brought about the showings. For this anchoress, leaving the Passion behind in some mystical "ascent" from the sensual life was out of the question.

### 3.2.2 The outward *chere* of compassion

The other two *cheres* of the three *cheres* described in LT 71 correspond exactly with the two *cheres* of the lord in the *exemplum*. Julian tells us that the *exemplum* was the only answer she received to the question how sin is seen by God, and in it the lord's *chere* of compassion, as he looks on the fallen servant, is what dominates her early understanding of its meaning. As this is taken up into her discussion of the three *cheres* in LT 71 she writes

[t]he second [*chere*] is pity and ruth and compassion, and this he reveals to all his lovers, with the certainty of protection which necessarily belongs to his mercy.... And in the time of our sinning he shows to us the *chere* of ruth and pity, mightily protecting us and defending us against all our enemies. And these are the two usual *cheres* which he reveals to us in this life.... (LT 71.)

The *chere* of compassion is what the Lord shows Julian in the condition of sinning, which is to be taken to mean here the condition of suffering the effects of her fragmented self in perpetual isolation, shame and despair and in the impotent impatience of not recognizing her helpless condition on her own. This is the exposing yet ever empathic *chere* which reveals to Julian the secret sins by which she has patterned her false self (Moore's early ego) in complicity and opens them to God's healing and transforming grace. This second *chere* corresponds well to Crysdale's understanding of the need for those on the underside of history to come to understand the particular, self-hateful and self-victimizing nature of their complicity in structures of systemic oppression. Only then can persons such as these begin to respond with a sense of limited responsibility, in ways that are more truly loving of self and other.

We saw above that what Julian sees in herself, while she is "working through" this healing and exposing process, are the shame-based sins of sloth and despair. These sins describe well the effects of the introjected anger of the God of the Church's teaching as well as her fear of familial abandonment. They effectively keep her from knowing herself to be loved compassionately by Christ and joyfully united with Christ in sensuality as well as substance. Here Koenig's recognition of the compensatory dynamic of the face of the lord is so helpful. In the mirror of Christ's *chere* Julian sees the reversal of the traditional meaning of sin, which corresponds better to the social location and pre-oedipal need and condition of her soul. Thus the mirror functions at this point to reveal in effect how the soul has appropriated that *Christ is what we are not (in our sensual condition at that time) but also mirrors who we are to become in sensuality and substance* -- ie, fully human, in Christ's humanity. Where Julian experiences herself as suffering the old patterns of despair and impatience, beholding the servant beheld in compassion by the *chere* of the lord enables Julian to learn over time that her union with Christ is not dependent on her variable conscious feeling life. The compassionate *chere* of the lord regarding the servant in the *exemplum* reflects back or mirrors Julian's condition in such a way as to enable her to objectify her interior conditions of distress and fear of being left to herself. This enables her to appropriate the compassion of Christ's loving regard, which then becomes itself a locus for transforming the meaning of shame and despair into an occasion for *oneing* of her sensuality with her substance, in Christ's. Julian's appropriation of the *chere* of compassion is strongly identified with her maturing sense of her authentic relational selfhood in Christ, united with other human souls, as beloved in their variable sensuality in the sight of God.

### 3.2.3 The inward *chere* of joy

The third [*chere*] is that blessed *chere* as it will be without end, and this was most often revealed, and continued the longest time.... [Mingled with the two usual *cheres*] which he reveals to us in this life [is] the third, and that is his blessed *chere*, partly like what it will be in heaven; and that is when through grace we are touched by sweet illuminations of the life of the Spirit, through which we are kept in true faith, hope and love, with contrition and devotion and also with contemplation and every kind of true joys and sweet consolations. *The blessed chere of our Lord God works this in us through grace.* (LT 71.)

In his account of Julian's appropriation of Christ's saving work in the present tense as an account of how "human character is formed through participating in the peaceful and loving relationships of Father, Son and Holy Spirit", Anderson moves into trinitarian language.

Humans receive training through the salutary presence of the Trinity within the economy of creation so that human affections take on the peaceful character of the love of God. Not only does human participation in this school of charity allow humans to be *oned* to God, but it also accounts for a gradual change in the quality of human acting. Learning to love trinitarianly, Julian thinks, means that human acting will begin to reflect the nonviolent quality of God's own peaceful and loving action.<sup>33</sup>

Anderson claims that his is the "first sustained examination of the anchorite's vision of how humans begin to receive Christ's gifts of healing and wholeness in the present, earthly life".<sup>34</sup> Clearly, however, Koenig's account of the mirroring function of the face of the lord in the *exemplum* seeks to examine this same vision, and with the same purpose of extending that vision into the capacity for Julian's texts to engage present day readers in a similar process of appropriation. Koenig described magnificently Julian's appropriation of the compensatory mirroring function which beholding the face of the lord had on Julian. But Koenig, observing the constancy of the loving regard of the lord, did not distinguish between the lord's compassionate *chere* for Adam and his blissful *chere* for Christ in the servant.<sup>35</sup> I would like to advance a further step. I want to suggest that Julian gives here in LT 71 an account of how the *chere* of joy, which is constant, though inward, in the face of the lord beholding the servant in the *exemplum*, is also appropriated in time. The mirroring function in this latter *chere* is not so much compensatory, I suggest, as unitive. As such, it suggests that Julian may have come to invest her objective soteriology of the

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<sup>33</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 184.

<sup>34</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 184.

<sup>35</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 216.

Trinity's loving relation with creation through Christ with this mirroring function. But I will return to this further below.

In Julian's articulation of these three *cheres*, she is drawing on two Pauline texts. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known". (1 Cor 13:12.) This text supports her belief that through the showings she has been shown something of her true identity in Christ, as God is beholding Christ in her in this life, albeit in part. The other text helps ground her eschatological trust in the meaning and transforming work of the showings. "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit". (2 Cor 3:18.)

The third *chere* of joy, as humans shall know it fully in heaven, is mingled with the other two in this life, insofar as humans embrace their true selfhood as constituted in the mirroring *chere* of Christ. Indeed, we can see the extent to which this mode of beholding has enabled Julian to internalize and mature through the mirroring function of the *chere* of the lord, where Julian says that this third *chere* "was most often revealed, and continued the longest time". (LT 71.) Julian describes that the Lord "lifts up and will draw our outer *chere* to the inner, and will make us all at unity with him and each of us with others in the true, lasting joy which is Jesus". (LT 71.) Her own experience of the change of *chere* of the Crucified in the eighth to ninth showing becomes transposed into the *exemplum*.

The understanding of sensuality and substance as outward and inward *cheres* of the human person, which Julian began to gain through that earlier transformative showing, is now seen as a movement of appropriation: the outer *chere* of her variable sensuality is drawn inward to the constancy of her substantial *chere* or disposition in Christ, both in body and soul. "The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us by grace". (LT 71.) It is not difficult to interpret this maturation in Julian's practice of beholding, enabling her to interiorize profoundly the mirroring function of the *chere* of the lord beholding the servant in joy, as her appropriation of what Anderson calls "human acting [which] reflect[s] the nonviolent quality of God's own peaceful and loving action".<sup>36</sup> However, as well as being intrinsically nonviolent, Julian's affections and actions, as they mirror the God she beholds, also become less and less marked by despair and increasingly reflecting "true trust in salvation".

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<sup>36</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 184.

Far from remaining fixed on suffering (least of all suffering which is falsely interpreted as virtuous), Julian's appropriation of the mirroring dynamic in the *exemplum* educates her in developing a Resurrection or paschal imagination in this life. The inward *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum* enables her to orient her life toward the appropriation of mature and authentic relational selfhood as that which brings her sensuality into union with Christ's sensuality in the loving sight of God. It suggests that Julian's unitive vision of the healing and restoration of the double human nature of the self, and of mature knowledge of self, other and God, is dynamised in the relational mirror of the loving inner *chere* of God. And, as Anderson underlines, this is not simply an epistemological insight. Because Julian is engaged in a daily practice of *beholding* which fosters this attentiveness, her appropriation is relational and ontological as well, reforming her old patterns of understanding, relating to, and being *oned* in, her God -- and her *even* Christians. It works on training her affects to love trinitarianly.

Union with Christ in joy, as it will be in heaven, can be beheld "in part" from time to time in this life by the sensual soul so disposed. The image of this union in her sixteenth showing, where she sees Christ enclosed and reigning in her soul, enables Julian to speak of self-knowledge and knowledge of God in such moments as distinct, yet *oned*, ontologically and relationally. Another way of putting this would be to see this union as mirroring Christ's Incarnation in the soul: in effect it says "*we are what Christ is*", in sensuality and substance, at least in part.

But there is more, if Anderson is right in drawing attention to the Trinity in Julian's (mature) appropriation of Christ's saving work (which I believe he is), in that it corresponds to Julian's late understanding of the identity of the lord in the *exemplum*. Just as we saw in the last chapter that the distancing effect of the *exemplum* enabled Julian to develop a greater capacity for object constancy, so also it could be argued that the constant, though inward *chere* of joy of the lord beholding the servant functions to engage the whole Trinity in Julian's mature appropriation of Christ's saving work. Not only does beholding the *exemplum* engage her anthropology of two natures shared in Christ which enables her to flourish in the *oneing* of her double self in Christ (as in the sixteenth showing), but it also draws her into the loving relations of the Trinity as these extend to all creation. That this is effected through the function of mirroring, with which the lord's inner *chere* of joy is invested, would seem to be evident in Julian's exhortation that the Lord "lifts up and will draw our outer *chere* to the inner, and will make us all at unity with him and each of us with others in the true, lasting joy which is Jesus". (LT 71). The

function of mirroring at this level animates in a very direct way the loving relations of the Trinity for humankind in Christ which Julian is so adamant to convey to her readers. God wants her -- and us -- to know that humankind is enclosed in the loving relations of the Trinity, and that the Trinity is enclosed in humans' substantial nature. And God wants her to know that "where Jesus appears, the blessed Trinity is understood". (LT 4). Being given to behold the joyful *chere* of the lord beholding the servant in the *exemplum* assists Julian, and her readers I suggest, in appropriating the intimate engagement of the whole Trinity in Christ's saving work of healing and restoring humans to full flourishing in this life.

It seems to me that Julian's mature self-knowledge, as constituted in seeing and being seen by the Trinity in Christ, is summed up in the mirroring action in the *exemplum* which has a perduring, transformative quality. It enables her to see and know herself enclosed in the holding environment of trinitarian trusting, loving relationality. It keeps her practising a daily contemplative prayer form of beholding Christ in her for the rest of her life, in order to recognize her changeable sensual condition at that time in the *chere* of Christ she beholds, and so to be able to respond accordingly. She cannot know God except through knowing herself, and this is to know all the variability of her sensual condition and her substance in Christ, as beheld in God's loving sight.

Particularly since Julian learns that humankind is to participate in this saving work of Christ, the contiguity between the saving action of mirroring or beholding, as that which enables the creature to consent to be beheld in her sensuality and brings the creature into her true selfhood in relation to Christ, and the human capacity to engage in this saving work in mirroring and beholding others, makes this participation a real human possibility.

#### 3.2.4 The three *cheres* and the three wounds

Julian's reflection on the three *cheres* of Christ beholding humankind in different conditions and situations of suffering and union connects with her initial three requests for the wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for or union with God. However, I suggest that we can see the effect of her mature appropriation in the new way in which she comes to understand these wounds, that is, as *Christ's activity in her*. In each instance, what the previsionary Julian seems to have taken for granted as a devotional act on her part, which was intended to produce certain prescribed results (although in fact producing ambivalence), becomes transformed into accounts of spontaneously experiencing Christ's saving action within her.

Contrition, for example, becomes an inappropriate response to her pattern of feeling blame, since Julian has come to recognize the feeling of blame, thanks to the *exemplum*, as itself the temptation and not a true understanding of her confused sensual condition of suffering. In God's sight there is no blame. Thus Julian comes to appropriate a truer meaning of contrition as Christ's activity which occurs spontaneously in her as she is given to behold her condition of feeling blame as a blindness to her true condition of substantial union in Christ.<sup>37</sup> Contrition, she learns, is not an act on her part alone. It is actually in Christ. "It is God's will, as I understand it, that we behold his blessed Passion in three ways. Firstly, that we behold the hard pain he suffered with contrition and compassion". (LT 20.) Hide observes that

it is not usual in our contemporary use of the word to associate contrition with Christ. The Middle English text is clear, however. It is *Christ's contrition and compassion, his sorrow for the incompleteness of humanity* that Julian observes in her experience of beholding.<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, compassion is no longer a deliberate act of prayer intended to increase her desire to have compassion for others. Compassion for her even Christians becomes a spontaneous response to seeing Christ's *cheres* of Passion and compassion at work in her and others' suffering, as that encloses the whole of humankind. (LT 28.)

Julian's understanding of the wound of longing for union with Christ has changed, too. That longing for union with the suffering Christ, which was Julian's previsionary attempt to resolve her extreme condition of feeling unending responsibility for his suffering, also kept her self-preoccupied and ambivalent about living or dying. As a result of her appropriation of the *exemplum*, her mature understanding of the wound of longing for union with Christ is rather more oriented to the desire to see the inward *chere* of the Lord reigning in her soul in peace and joy and at work drawing her every outward sensual condition spontaneously to itself, in well-being and in woe. It is the constant regard of the lord in which, regardless of her sensual condition, she sees mirrored glimpses of her true relationship of sensuality and substance at one within herself and united with Christ's double nature as that is *oned* in the Trinity. It is the mysterious regard of the lord, too, which is spontaneously changed in the process, from compassion to joy, and empowers her and her *even* Christians' human flourishing in this life, and in their destiny in God.

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<sup>37</sup> Likewise as we saw earlier, penance, which she initially understood to be a practice which would increase compunction, becomes Christ's work in her.

<sup>38</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 99, emphasis added.



The shift toward the spontaneous attribution to Christ in each instance of these three wounds suggests that where before there was unresolved ambivalence and incoherence, now there is an energetic coherence between Julian's appropriation of Christ's saving work and the activity of that saving work in her.

### 3.3 Julian's enabling the reader's appropriation of the mirroring face of the lord

Elisabeth Koenig and Derek Anderson come the closest of any Julian specialists to grasping the mirroring dynamic in the *exemplum* which Julian makes available for the reader to appropriate, such that the reader is drawn into a mirroring transference with the face of the lord something like Julian herself had, and which she explicitly desired for others to share.

In Anderson's language, the *exemplum* best exemplifies the "performative trajectory" in reading Julian. Drawing on performance studies, influenced by linguistics and the philosophical hermeneutics of J. L. Austin, he writes that

the idea that a text might somehow act out its own meaning as it is read is quite close to what we will be looking for in Julian's writing.... Performance, as it occurs in Julian's writing, is an expression of her apparent attempt to enact her own understanding of her encounter with God within her reader's understanding.<sup>39</sup>

His intent is to show how "Julian seeks to draw her reader into the 'performance' of her showing by enacting the deflections of her own attention that occurred as she received the revelation and as she subsequently sought divine aid in understanding its meaning".<sup>40</sup> His identification of every deflection or shift in focus in the *exemplum* covers the whole of the extended chapter 51, and although he acknowledges that only a few of the 21 paragraphs of LT 51 are usually ever studied, this he says is because of the "frequent interruptions and changes of perspective [which] seem to mimic the darting of Julian's gaze between different features of the image she holds in her memory".<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, however, in this section of Anderson's thesis, he uses the verb "mirror" several times, and in the end likens Julian's performative trajectory to the act of meditating on the Rublev icon of the Trinity, as it draws the viewer's gaze into the exchange of love eternally occurring within the shared

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<sup>39</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 96 - 97. He distinguishes this mystical register of performative language from the philosophical register of language which is used to convey information. See also MÜLLER, Catherine, "How to do things with mystical language: Marguerite D'oingt's performative writing", in *Performance and transformation: New approaches to late medieval spirituality*, ed. SUYDAM, Mary, NY, St Martin's Press, 1999, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 105.

<sup>41</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 98.

gazes of the three persons of the Trinity. He is arguing in effect that Julian's prayer of beholding is taught to the reader by means of "performing" the mutual regard of the lord and the servant in the *exemplum*.<sup>42</sup>

Koenig is one Julian specialist whose doctoral thesis did study virtually every paragraph in LT 51, and I find her reasoning, for the fact that this chapter is the core of Julian's teaching, even more explicit and compelling than Anderson's. In fact, she found that the mirroring function of the face of the lord in Julian's *exemplum* (or parable, as Koenig calls it) so transformed the reader's meditation on the rest of the parable as to warrant a shift in her theoretical approach. Koenig found Ricoeur inadequate to plumb the preverbal and compensatory nature of this function and so turned to Winnicott. "Perhaps this image of the face of God which, we remember, we discovered in a text, can educate us as to how the verbal is at the service of the non-verbal".<sup>43</sup> Koenig writes:

Although both Julian's Short Text and her Long Text begin with the vision of Christ crowned with thorns and Julian dwells in both texts on changes in the face of Christ as she sees him suffer his passion, it is significant that in the Long Text before and after the parable, there are proportionally many more references to God's face, or his desire to be seen, or Julian's experience of seeing herself reflected in God's face than there are in the Short Text. We may draw from this that her long contemplation of the lord's face in the parable has, through the phenomenon of intertextuality, transformed the entire narrative in a most meaningful way. *The mirroring effect of the face image and its contribution to self-knowledge or identity have caused the text to come alive with a dynamism of reciprocity between God, or transcendent reality, and the human being.*<sup>44</sup>

Koenig is adamant that the image of God's face

affects Julian and the reader in a way that is truly preverbal. Here, the image is communicated by means of the word, to be sure, but it is the *image*, not the word that governs the transformation. In the image of God's face metaphoric 'seeing as' is not what new resemblance has been effected in the *text*, but oneself *seen as* beloved, not blamed.... If this fact can be shown to be true, it will account, perhaps in fuller ways than Ricoeur has in his semantic theory, for his belief in the possibility of a genuine transfer of meaning from text to life.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Anderson frequently describes Julian's intent and method as one of "wooing" her readers. ANDERSON, 2005, p. 220. While I agree entirely with Anderson's strategy that this is to be contrasted with the "logical force" of scholastic writers' discourse, I find myself uneasy with the erotic implication of "wooing" with regard to the *Showings*. Julian is not a bridal mystic. I strongly suggest that the psychic energy in her own appropriation of Christ's saving work, which she senses that others in her condition might also find urgent, might be more clearly identified as dynamized by a profound pre-oedipal soteriological need to be seen, recognized, affirmed and mirrored in her humanity, than to be wooed.

<sup>43</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 195 - 196.

<sup>44</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 191, emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 199, emphasis in text.

Koenig is speaking here of how this mirroring function of the face of the lord can be appropriated by the contemporary reader of Julian such that a similar compensatory function as that in Julian's own personal development "may begin to take place in his or her life".<sup>46</sup>

What Koenig does not engage (nor Anderson for that matter, though I believe it to be implicit in both of their arguments), is a feminist examination of the human situation for which Julian sought intelligibility and for which a soteriology of mirroring would be credible. Koenig does identify that weeping and mourning, which Julian sees

as the inevitable outcome of blindness to God's presence, is especially important for our understanding of the profound effect of the face image because, as she describes it, this weeping comes from a despair so deep that nothing on heaven or earth can take it away.<sup>47</sup>

The present study confirms and enlarges the meaning of this despair for soteriology by understanding it both in its psychoanalytic and in its feminist dimensions. In this respect, using Anderson's language, the most significant "deflection" in this part of the *exemplum* is the face of the servant, turned away from the lord in despair.

It is the face of the lord which teaches Julian to recognize the symptoms of suffering associated with an identity (sense of selfhood) that is alienated from any understanding of the ontological or constitutional relationality between herself and Christ. In contrast to that despairing, blind suffering, suffering experienced from a true sense of selfhood in relation to Christ is experienced very differently: "And if we were in all the pain that heart can think or tongue can tell, if we could at that time see his blessed *chere*, all this pain would not grieve us". (LT 72.) In effect, it is the face of the lord who teaches her to distinguish between suffering which is resistance to dying to sin (as in the pattern of accusing herself and sinking into despair), and the necessary paschal suffering, dying to false ego which brings her into union-in-differentiation in Christ's humanity. It is this latter suffering, which amounts to Moore's understanding of the liberation of human affection or desire, to become the fundamental desire to be in trusting relationship with Christ. It is this latter, paschal, suffering which Crysdale can see is necessary as the victim sees herself on the underside of history and accepts to undergo the conversion process which requires her to reverse the roles and meanings of the cross, grieve the self she never had, see and be emptied of the false self's patterns of complicity in her own suffering, and become empowered to embrace a truer understanding of her whole self constitutively

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<sup>46</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 186.

<sup>47</sup> KOENIG, 1984, p. 196

related to Christ. Julian's performative text provides what Crysdale's lacks: a soteriological praxis. Julian's beholding of the *cheres* of the lord enables, over time in the present life, a practice of healing transformation in the patterns of affection that lead to despair, the restoration of human flourishing and the training and maturation of her desire to act in trusting ways that mirror the loving character of the relations of the Trinity in Christ. I turn now to Julian's objective soteriological vision of the empathic, object constant *quality of relationality* of the Trinity engaged in mirroring the incarnate Christ in humanity.

#### 4.0 The mirroring function of Christ and the Trinity in the past and future aspects of Julian's objective soteriology

This second part of this chapter examines more closely what the saving work of Christ is in Julian's *Showings* in its past and future expressions, to see whether, or to what extent, Julian also invests these aspects of her objective soteriology with the function of mirroring.

Anderson is correct in identifying past and future as well as present dimensions of this saving work in Julian's *Showings*, although "past" and "future" must be understood as limited expressions. Anderson describes his distinction in this way:

Given that it has its basis in the union of humanity and divinity in Christ, *oneing* must already be accomplished from the point of view of Julian's readers. As we have seen, Julian's recapitulation-style soteriology envisions Christ restoring humans to wholeness by uniting sensuality and substance in his own representative humanity and bringing that restored humanity into union with God in his resurrection. Likewise, from the point of view of Julian's readers, *oneing* must also be a future event. The past and future reality of *oneing* share the status of being, as it were, out of reach for humans presently engaged in the mundane reality of earthly life. Yet the past and future aspects of *oneing* are both completed from the perspective of God's eternal regard of humankind.<sup>48</sup>

Anderson sees the present dimension of *oneing* as standing

in a contrapuntal relationship with the past and future dimensions. Julian is untroubled by the seeming contradiction between saying that the uniting of humans to God is fully accomplished in Christ and that this *oneing* must be made actual in those who are experiencing in this life the timebound process of receiving grace and newness of life from Christ in the midst of their present, earthly lives.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 177.

<sup>49</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 177.

Anderson describes the past and future dimensions as the Incarnation and the eschaton respectively.<sup>50</sup> The present study draws on Anderson's first rate account of Julian's nonviolent soteriology, but with a slightly different focus. Anderson, to my mind, succeeds in his strictly theological argument that Julian's soteriology is nonviolent because the loving relations of the Trinity with created humanity are pacific. He draws on quotations from Julian's Long Text which make this abundantly clear. And, as we'll see, he understands the complexity of Julian's double anthropology and how Christ's saving work is a work of identification with humankind. Like Nuth, he is concerned to understand how Julian conceives of God as incapable of wrath.

However, I note that Anderson approaches the human predicament as that of wrath, which by now will be understood as having the same limitation which Crysedale observed in Wink's domination system. Anderson does not linger over the human predicament of sin, as it is represented in the *exemplum*, as one of fundamental despair. Nor does he explore how Julian's understanding of the Trinity engaged in creation evolved out of a soteriological crisis around the meaning of sin. His view of Christ's saving work in the past, in the future and as the work of appropriation in the present tense is not insensitive to that predicament as experienced by those on the underside of history, those whose very sense of selfhood has been beleaguered by a chronic and systemic lack of mirroring, familiarly and/or socially. Indeed, he spends considerable time in identifying the problematic of violent soteriologies as urgent because of their effects on women.<sup>51</sup> However, his reading does not address directly the predicament of internalized despair, self-hate, shame and grief which Crysedale and others have described as more accurately the situation or soul wound for which salvation is needed by women, and which would seem to have been the case for Julian in her lifetime.

The present study has attempted to address this dimension of the human predicament as constitutive of Julian's psychobiography and of the urgency of her soteriological crisis. As such, I propose to explore Julian's understanding of Christ's saving work, represented in the *exemplum* and as that extends to her reworking of other traditional expressions to describe that work in the past and future tenses, as a clear response to her predicament.

In this section I will show how Julian invests the saving work of God with the *function* of the mirroring face beholding creation in Christ in her reworking of those traditional expressions. I hope to show how approaching her objective soteriology in this

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<sup>50</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 183.

<sup>51</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 6 - 12.

fashion helps avoid some of the pitfalls of traditional theological language and keep the focus on the quality of relational dynamics among humans, Christ and the Trinity which animates her soteriology. It also reveals that the mirroring function plays more than a compensatory role in Julian's soteriology.

#### 4.1 Christ's saving work in the past

In this section I outline two aspects of Julian's understanding of salvation, already accomplished in Christ, as others have described them. First in appearance (though not necessarily in time) is the saving work of Christ's Incarnation, our "flesh taking" or our "making again". But Julian's post-*exemplum* soteriology turns markedly trinitarian, and in effect she describes the work of the Trinity in our creation or "first making", as involved in our salvation too. After these two accounts, I offer a third, describing the function of mirroring as that which could be said to hold them together relationally in Julian's visionary account of the *exemplum*. Lastly, I draw on Koenig to explore Julian's revision of the theme of the harrowing of hell as a case in point of the use of the theme of Christ's *chere* beholding creation as investing her objective soteriology with the function of mirroring.

##### 4.1.1 Incarnation (our making again)

Anderson sets out to argue that the Incarnation is the saving work of Christ.

Attending to what Julian says about the servant in the *exemplum*, Anderson writes that

Julian proposes that the servant's identity is itself salvific. Because the servant is Adam, whose humanity is united to all humans, and because the servant is Christ, in whom humanity and divinity are united, Christ is able to raise all humanity from its sinful fallenness.<sup>52</sup>

Anderson observes that, in Julian's early showings of the face of the crucifix caked with blood, Julian wonders why that face could be so discoloured and ugly when Christ is the most beautiful instance of humanity. (LT 10.) He shows that Julian appeals to the meaning of the Incarnation to answer her own question. In Anderson's words,

[i]t is because Christ wishes to make himself like the human beings he loves that his beauty is obscured in Julian's vision.... It seems that the loss of beauty that results when Christ unites humanity to his divinity in the incarnation is the causative event in humanity's 'making again' into the image of Christ.... According to this passage, it is not Christ's passion and death that restores humankind to the likeness of Christ, although this is clearly part of the story, but the event considered more broadly of Christ effecting in himself the likeness of humanity.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 152.

<sup>53</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 150.

Anderson stresses Julian's key soteriological statement in LT 51 that "when Adam fell, God's Son fell". The true union between the Son and humanity is not conditioned by time or space. "What is decisive for salvation in Julian's view is the intimate and permanent solidarity between humanity and divinity in Christ that occurs in (and throughout) the incarnation".<sup>54</sup> The harrowing, or bringing Adam out, of hell is the ultimate implication of this union, which includes "the whole of Christ's life, from conception to resurrection. To be sure, Christ's suffering and death is a part of his incarnate life, but it is not a matter of particular emphasis in this part of Julian's account of salvation".<sup>55</sup>

How Christ saves is related to the double nature of Julian's human anthropology. "The servant's injuries are such that he is estranged not only from God, but also from himself" and "Christ is able to heal the injuries caused by sin in his own humanity".<sup>56</sup> The loss of unity between human substance and human sensuality is remedied by reuniting substance and sensuality in Christ's own humanity. Christ's incarnational activity works the healing of that self-estrangement and the restoration of humans to their true self in Christ. However, Anderson then begins to stress less the sensuality which Christ reunites in himself than the substance which is eternally knit in the Trinity. For Julian, as we have seen, it was never the case that human substance or godly will was harmed in the servant's fall. Anderson sees this as significant for his thesis because it explains how there is a fit between the human condition and God's own pacific life. In fact, he sees Julian's understanding of substance as the principle of likeness or compatibility between human creation and the Trinity, regardless of the sensual condition humankind is in.<sup>57</sup>

Anderson argues that the positive role Julian assigns to the Passion complements both the recapitulation shape in her teaching and the nonviolent character of her theology as a whole. Christ takes into his own humanity every pain of broken human sensuality (sin) so that he can heal it and restore humans to wholeness. The enclosure of all humanity in Christ ensures that God does not blame humankind for sin any more than God blames Christ. There is no appeasing an angry god, since it is humans whom Christ seeks to satisfy through his suffering and death, not God. Christ's solidarity with those he seeks to save means that he refuses to avoid suffering by exercising divine power. It also means that his death was his undertaking to embrace every condition of Adam's humanity in his

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<sup>54</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 153.

<sup>55</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 153.

<sup>56</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 155.

<sup>57</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 189 - 190, drawing on LT 44.

own. "The harrowing of hell symbolizes the ultimate identification of Christ with injured humanity".<sup>58</sup>

Anderson takes Dearborn's point that

Julian considers Christ's death to be continuous with the saving work he accomplishes by his incarnation and not the *real* saving event, as it were, for which the rest of Christ's life is merely props and scenery: 'the incarnation is not a means to the end of the atonement. Rather, the atonement secures the end of the incarnation, which is the ontological recreation of our humanity in and through Christ'. The only problem with Dearborn's expression is that it is becoming clear that Julian's account of salvation bears little resemblance to the expiation-satisfaction type soteriology....<sup>59</sup>

The death of Christ is not the end but the "starting point of new life for humankind".<sup>60</sup>

Anderson, along with many other Julian specialists, relates the power of Christ's Passion to save to Julian's treatment of the motherhood of Christ, likening the pains of Christ's Passion to the labour pains of childbirth. That new life is the life of human sensuality united to substance.

[S]o our Mother is working on us in various ways, in whom our parts are kept undivided; for in our Mother Christ we profit and increase, and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and by the power of his Passion, his death and his Resurrection he unites us to our substance. (LT 58.)

As I read him, Anderson sees Christ's saving work in the "past" as twofold. We have seen how in Julian's *exemplum* Christ heals and restores human sensuality to human substance in his own representative humanity. In effect, this is to restore human beings to union with our true or authentic selfhood in Christ. What is left for Christ to do is the *oneing* of those he has restored to wholeness -- to God.<sup>61</sup> However, this is where it seems to me that Anderson's naming the Incarnation as *the* saving work seems to fail him.

Anderson goes on to focus on the *oneing* between the *Trinity and creation* which is indissolubly and eternally united in Christ, but which is worked out in past, present and future tenses such that "humans are granted to partake of the peaceful, loving relationships that exist eternally between Father, Son and Holy Spirit".<sup>62</sup> Anderson describes Julian's trinitarian theology at length, not only to account for God's saving action in the past and

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<sup>58</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 168 - 169.

<sup>59</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 169 - 170, emphasis in text. He is quoting DEARBORN, Kerry, "The crucified Christ as the motherly God: The theology of Julian of Norwich", *Scottish journal of theology* 55, 2002, p. 292.

<sup>60</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 170.

<sup>61</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 176.

<sup>62</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 177.



future only, but also to anchor his argument that that saving action is ongoing in human appropriation of salvation in the present moment. In this context it seems to me, the language of Incarnation takes on a more relative status as Anderson proceeds to focus on human *oneing* or participation in the relationships of trinitarian love.

It is universally agreed that what Julian has to say about the Trinity is only as it concerns lived Christian experience rather than with abstract intratrinitarian life. That this derives from her *exemplum* is less universally remembered. It is Julian's determination of the *identities of both the servant and the lord* which dominate the *exemplum*, and describe her own hermeneutical process of appropriating the meaning of the *exemplum* over the twenty years following. (LT 51.) As Anderson observes, "the important comments are both christological and trinitarian".<sup>63</sup> Julian writes that "the lord is God the Father, the servant is the Son, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is the equal love which is in them both". (LT 51.) Again, as Anderson notes,

this is the first time she has produced a trinitarian interpretation of the lord's love for the servant. (The loving relationship between the lord and the servant is a detail of the story that is available for such an interpretation: in Julian's first account of this narrative she observes that "the lord looks on his servant very lovingly and sweetly and mildly", and she mentions the lord's love frequently when describing the lord's compassion for the servant's injuries.)<sup>64</sup>

It is curious that Anderson should put in parentheses what is, in effect, the basis for Julian's whole shift in the *Showings* to the new perspective on the *exemplum* gained over time, which I noted in the previous chapter. What Anderson puts in parentheses is what so powerfully affected Koenig to speak of the compensatory mirroring effect of the face of the lord on the servant. It is also what allows Anderson subsequently to argue that the loving, peaceful relationships in the Trinity also enclose humanity in the Incarnation. This quality of trinitarian relationality engaged in creation is the basis on which he goes on to speak of appropriation of salvation as how those relationships are participated in and practised in the present tense. It would seem that what Anderson puts between brackets is the "detail" which may be critical for his, as well as the present, project of relating objective and subjective soteriology in Julian's *Showings*.

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<sup>63</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 198.

<sup>64</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 199, quoting LT 51.

#### 4.1.2 Creation in the Trinity (our first making)

Anderson discusses our *oneing* to God, as this is an event that has already taken place in the past, as Julian's understanding of the "original act of creating".<sup>65</sup> This would amount to that union in substance between the Trinity and the creature's godly will which enables humans to have a capacity for at-one-ness with God.<sup>66</sup> Hide describes it as the *imago Trinitatis*, that humankind, as Julian says, "was made like the Trinity in our first making".<sup>67</sup>

Even so, the Incarnation (that second past event), was needed to bring humans into union with God (in humans' sensual condition *oned* with substance). This is humankind's making again, in the *imago Christi* as Hide puts it. "Our Creator wished us to be like Jesus Christ our saviour in heaven forever, through the power of our making again". (LT 10).

Anderson's initial statement that the Incarnation is the saving act doesn't say all that Anderson wants to say about the trinitarian implications of Julian's soteriology. It would appear that Julian's soteriology does not stay in the neat categories of the tradition's theological discourse. Anderson even recognizes this in noting Hide's observation that, in Julian's *exemplum*, unlike theologies of the "missions" of the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is all three persons of the Trinity who are at work simultaneously in human salvation. The example is the image in the *exemplum* of the lord seated in a barren place (that is, in the human soul) awaiting the return of the servant.

[T]he anchorite envisions the saving activity of the Father within the economy along with the Son and the Spirit, who are usually thought to be those who are 'sent' to work in the world. If in Julian's view the Father, too, is present and working in the world to save human beings, then there is effectively no distinction in her thought between the economic and the immanent Trinity. If this is true, it serves to underscore the urgency of the recluse's insistence upon human sharing in divine patterns of relating.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 177.

<sup>66</sup> PALLISER, Margaret, *Christ, our mother of mercy: Divine mercy and compassion in the theology of the Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, NY, Walter de Gruyter, 1992, p. 48.

<sup>67</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 64, quoting LT 10. Hide elsewhere argues that Julian's whole soteriology is encapsulated in the first showing, which revealed that humans are enclosed in, and cannot live independently of, the love of God. See HIDE, Kerrie, "'Only in God do I have all': The soteriology of Julian of Norwich", *Downside review* 112, 2004, pp. 43 - 60.

<sup>68</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, pp. 195 - 196. See HIDE, 2001, p. 122. See also HIDE, 2004, p. 59, fn. 48, where she writes, "for Julian, trinitarian properties are actually appropriations that can be applied to each person of the Trinity in turn. Maker, lover and keeper, while specific to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equally belong to each person". Hide is expanding on a note in Colledge and Walsh, which is their take on Julian's reference in LT 83 to the three properties of "life, love and light" in God, and which they describe as a "recapitulation of her Trinitarian teaching". COLLEDGE Edmund and James WALSH, eds., *A book of*

This aspect of Julian's soteriology buzzes with the relational movement or *perichoresis* of divine love *oneing* humans in the trinitarian relationships. As Hide puts it, through the "emphasis on mutual enclosure between the Trinity and humanity... Julian creates an ontology of being-in-relationship".<sup>69</sup>

#### 4.1.3 The saving action in the past redescribed as the mirroring relation in the *exemplum*

The discourse of mirroring, I believe, can assist us to bring together the language of trinitarian and Christological soteriological motifs in the *exemplum* in a way which is simple and highlights the *quality of relationality* which is uppermost in the dynamism of Julian's soteriology.

Julian's initial understanding of the meaning of the *exemplum* corresponded to her experience of prayer in ST 19. In LT 51 the servant who leapt to do the lord's will and consequently fell into the ditch, injured himself and became helpless to get himself out, is a description of the situation for which she was most in need of a response which would be salvific. She spends a substantial amount of time describing the distress the servant finds himself in; we may assume that she likewise spent a substantial amount of her life in that distress herself, feeling abandoned in prayer, as in life. It was precisely the lack of knowledge of any substantial union between herself and Christ, in this condition, which led her to despair.

Julian's coming to identify that unbroken substantial union between the creature and Christ in the Trinity was significant for her receiving a response which could make sense of her predicament. In the performative allusion to the servant's act of looking up into the loving face of the lord, Julian receives that salvific response. The substantial union of humanity and Christ is secured by the lord's constant beholding of the servant. This visual image of the lord mirroring the servant communicates to Julian that it is God's will that she know this. In this she sees that the desire to give creation what creation most desires is in God and in creation. The conscious knowledge of this desire (which enables the servant to

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*showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978a, p. 722, fn. 5. Compare LaCugna on contemporary rethinking on the Trinity: "There is a lot to be said... for any approach which resists easy correlation of Father, Son and Spirit with creation, redemption and reconciliation, since the biblical and patristic records on this score are mixed". LaCUGNA, Catherine Mowry, "Re-conceiving the trinity as the mystery of salvation", *Scottish journal of theology* 38, pp. 18 - 19.

<sup>69</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 56.

relinquish the desperate blindness that keeps him from beholding the lord), draws the sensual self toward union with the substantial in Christ.

Her meditation on this *exemplum* over the course of twenty years produces an astonishing message. The image of the servant in the ditch, who buzzes with vacillation between self-preoccupied despair and half-seen moments of mysteriously anticipated looking up into the face of his loving lord, represents more than just a narrative account of her subjective appropriation of its salvific meaning, that is, that her humanity in all its vulnerability, helplessness and dependency in that condition is beloved. This same narrative image dynamizes the objective work of salvation. Christ's Incarnation in relation to the constant *chere* of the lord, is understood as the Trinity engaged in creation. This trinitarian relational activity enables humanity to come to sensual self-knowledge in the mirror that Christ is for humankind, and in the same process to be *oned* in the constant, loving regard of the Trinity. Together, the quality of relationality between them is raised to the status of objective soteriological narrative.

*What makes Julian's learning from the exemplum so powerful is not the servant by himself, but the servant as beheld by the lord. So the servant's identity in the exemplum, which takes Julian the twenty years to come to understand, is constitutively related to the face of the lord. The servant's identity, as Adam, is integrally bound up with the identity of the servant, as Christ. And the servant's identity, as Christ and Adam, is integrally bound up with the identity and activity of the face of the lord: Rather than locating the saving work in Christ's suffering or even Christ's Incarnation alone, Julian tells us that "where Jesus appears, the blessed Trinity is understood, as I see it". (LT 4.) As well as the person of Christ enclosing humankind, the loving chere of the lord in the exemplum determines the constant, loving quality of relationality within the whole Trinitarian community enclosing humanity, which functions as the saving work. Christ's humanity and servanthood, regarding and being regarded by the Trinity in love, enables the human condition to participate in that action in time and space, and so enables Julian and her even Christians to regard and behold the Trinity beholding their predicament in Christ.*

I propose to call this quality of relationality in her vision of the economic Trinity engaged in creation, Julian's objective soteriology of mirroring. We are no longer speaking simply of the compensatory function which the *compassionate* mirroring face of the lord played in Julian's psychobiography. The mirroring function of the lord's inner *chere* of joy reveals to Julian the work of the Incarnate Christ and of the Trinity through

their relational differentiation in the restoration of humankind, although humans are only able to recognize and appropriate this work in part in this lifetime.

#### 4.1.4 The mirroring function of the Trinity's saving work focused in the three *cheres* of the lord

According to Anderson, Julian's soteriologically and relationally driven trinitarian theology of engagement in creation enables humans to know God as pacific, and to become more pacific in their desires and actions in the world. For women, we have seen that the human predicament in need of salvation is despair, not wrath *per se*, as Anderson would have it. Thus, as I see it, Julian's soteriologically and relationally driven trinitarian theology, engaged in creation in mutual beholding, enables humans on the underside of history to know God as *trustworthy* and to desire to practise trust in God, in themselves and in human relations in the present time, in well-being and in woe.

In the later chapters following the *exemplum* the whole Trinity takes on the language of the Passion and the *exemplum*. In particular I note that Julian uses with much greater frequency the word *chere* to describe what she beholds. This leads her, as we have seen, to expand the two *cheres* of the lord in the *exemplum* to the three *cheres* of the Passion, compassion and joy. (LT 71.) Julian is in the pattern of gaining self-knowledge through beholding her sensual condition mirrored variously in the Passion and the *exemplum*. In LT 71 it is as if she is identifying the face or *chere* of Christ as doing the work of empathically mirroring her, comforting her, exposing her, transforming her or rejoicing over her, feeding back to her what she needs to know in order to respond faithfully depending on her condition. Here in Julian's late, mature reflection, it is the first two of the three *cheres* which work the salvation of humankind through nature and mercy. The third *chere* works too, to draw the soul on to Resurrection joy in union with God in sensuality as well as substance through those moments of grace when it mingles with the other two. "What can make us to rejoice more in God than to see in him that in us... he has joy?... This makes the soul which so contemplates like to him who is contemplated, and unites it in rest and peace". (LT 68.) What Julian describes here is a fulfillment or flourishing of her humanity through her participation in the mirroring quality of relationality in the economic Trinity engaged in creation in Christ's humanity. These three *cheres* taken together could be described as the saving work of the loving relationality of the economic Trinity beholding creation in the Incarnation. This saving work is thus described in its largest sense as the Trinity's work of empathically mirroring humanity toward the

sight of itself in Christ in every sensual condition and therein to glimpses or touches of being beheld by God in sensuality as well as substance. Julian describes this saving, *oneing*, mirroring “activity” well where she writes that “he will lift up and draw our outer *chere* to the inner” and that “the blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us by grace”. (LT 71.)

It is then this same work of mirroring, as the Trinity beholds and encloses humankind in Christ in these three conditions, which renders the creative work of the Trinity, the saving work of Christ’s Incarnation and the sanctifying work of their loving union in the Holy Spirit one coherent, contiguous work in Julian of Norwich’s soteriology. The divine works of human creation, preservation and keeping all become the saving works through Christ in the Trinity. In her later reflections as we’ll explore briefly below, Julian calls these the Mother’s work. (LT 58 - 63.) Her recasting of the *quality* of relationality in the economic Trinity in terms of maternal-offspring relationality could be said to be the development to its coherent conclusion of what I am describing as her psychobiography and soteriology of mirroring. It resonates with the satisfaction of the psychodynamic need for mirroring, at both a familial and systemic, communal -- ecclesial -- level. One might put it this way that Julian’s flourishing depended on coming to terms with the common soteriological teaching of Mother Church, as well as her familial history.

#### 4.1.5 The harrowing of hell

Another aspect of Christ’s saving work in the past is the medieval and Eastern tradition of the harrowing of hell, which, as Anderson observed, underlines the radical nature of Christ’s solidarity with the human condition. My focus here will be to trace Julian’s reworking of this aspect of Christ’s work by using the *chere* image. Recall that it is with reference to the tradition of the harrowing of hell that Koenig makes her observation concerning the objective saving power of the mirroring face of the lord. Koenig quotes Julian:

The compassion and the pity of the Father were for the falling of Adam, who is his most beloved creature. The joy and the bliss were for the falling of his dearly beloved Son, who is equal with the Father. *The merciful regard [beholding] of his lovely countenance [chere] filled all the earth, and went down with Adam into hell, and by this continuing pity Adam was kept from endless death.* (LT 51.)

Karl Tamburr shows how Julian transforms the traditionally violent depiction of the harrowing of hell as a liberation from prison into a nonviolent one as a birth from our old

life of wretchedness into a new spiritual life.<sup>70</sup> He identifies in this the maternal work of Christ the mother who reforms and restores all his obedient children, quoting LT 58:

and in our mother of mercy we have our reforming and our restoring, in whom our parts [natures] are united and all made perfect man... and in him and by him we are powerfully taken out of hell and out of the wretchedness on earth, and gloriously brought up into heaven, and blessedly united to our substance.... (LT 58.)

As the Incarnation united Christ to our sensuality, so the harrowing is a kind of birth into new spiritual life within the mystical body of Christ because by it we are joined in substance to Christ.<sup>71</sup> Tamburr emphasizes Julian's reference in the Long Text account of her fourth showing to Christ's *blood* descending into hell as medicine for the sin of Adam and the nourishment to sustain us spiritually. Julian declares:

Behold and see the power of this precious plenty of his precious blood. It descended into hell and broke its bonds, and delivered all who were there and who belong to the court of heaven. The precious plenty of his precious blood overflows all the earth, and it is ready to wash from their sins all creatures who are, have been and will be of good will. The precious plenty of his precious blood ascended into heaven in the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is flowing there in him, praying to the Father for us, and this is and will be so long as we have need. And furthermore, it flows in all heaven rejoicing in the salvation of all mankind which is and will be there, and filling up the number which is lacking. (LT 12.)

On the basis of this, Tamburr links the sacrifice of Christ's blood with Julian's development of the motherhood of Christ.<sup>72</sup> This, he shows, is in stark contrast to the consistently violent iconography associated with the harrowing of hell in the western tradition.

It is important to remember how traditional and resistant to change was the depiction of the Harrowing by the later Middle Ages. In the West, the iconography of the Descent shows little of the variety given the Anastasis in Byzantine art.... For Julian to have reshaped the Descent shows the comprehensiveness of her vision of salvation.<sup>73</sup>

Tamburr associates this comprehensiveness with the permeation of Julian's Long Text by the motherhood of Christ theme. But extraordinarily, he neglects the very text Koenig cites concerning the descent of the compassionate *chere* of the lord to hell in LT 51. In the end, Tamburr is unable to link Julian's radical reshaping of the theme of the harrowing of hell to the *exemplum*: "Julian's images of masculine power such as the lord of chapter fifty-one

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<sup>70</sup> TAMBURR, Karl, "Mystic transformation: Julian's version of the harrowing of hell", *Mystics quarterly* 20, 1994, pp. 60 - 67.

<sup>71</sup> TAMBURR, 1994, 63, 65

<sup>72</sup> TAMBURR, 1994, p. 64.

<sup>73</sup> TAMBURR, 1994, p. 65.

are kindly and are finally subsumed by her vision of Christ as mother that dominates the end of the work.”<sup>74</sup>

Now, I have no problem with Tamburr’s conclusion that “Julian proposes a vision of redemption that is ultimately more tolerant and universal”. However, I would hold that her soteriology is driven by the *exemplum* and the trinitarian ramifications of its significance, and that this leads her into motherhood theme.

All her reflections on the works of the Mother Jesus in LT 58 - 63 taken together are very moving. But their power, I suggest, derives from the *exemplum*. Alone these reflections do not have this same dynamic energy, to my mind, as the relational activity driving the *exemplum* which is engaged in the constant regard of the lord for the servant. Rather, I would argue that the blood of Christ’s saving Passion which harrows hell is subsumed into the image of the beholding *chere* of the lord *because* Julian invests that *chere* with the work of mirroring humankind into new spiritual birth in the likeness of God’s own self, even and especially here in hell, the situation of the damned. It seems to me that the greater comprehensivity of the saving work of the mirroring face can be inferred from the passage Tamburr quotes from LT 12. The ascent of Christ’s blood to heaven and the work that the blood does there of “rejoicing” anticipates the resurrection *chere* of the lord which mirrors joy and bliss in the restoration of the union of human sensuality and substance in Christ in the Trinity.

#### 4.2 Christ’s saving work in the future

Anderson speaks relatively briefly of Julian’s understanding of *oneing* as a future event. *Oneing* as a past or future event, he says, “share[s] the status of being, as it were, out of reach for humans presently engaged in the mundane reality of earthly life. Yet the past and future aspects of *oneing* are both completed from the perspective of God’s eternal regard of humankind”.<sup>75</sup> More particularly, he aligns the future aspect of *oneing* with the sense in which Christian authors often think of salvation as a future event. “Although salvation is already completed in Christ, the effects of Christ’s work are obviously not yet fully enacted in the lives of those immersed in earthly life”.<sup>76</sup> But Anderson gives the impression that for Julian what defines the incompleteness of salvation in this life is the human condition of “having within us a marvellous mixture of both well-being and woe.

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<sup>74</sup> TAMBURR, 1994, p. 66.

<sup>75</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 179.



We have in us our risen Lord Jesus Christ, and we have in us the wretchedness and the harm of Adam's falling". (LT 52.) As Anderson goes on to put it, drawing on Julian's first showing of the little thing like a hazelnut, Julian "means that she is not wholly and actually united to God as long as she is subject to mixture of well-being and woe that characterizes earthly life".<sup>77</sup> The future eschatological image which corresponds to Anderson's point is that of the little child who rises from the pit of mud.

The pit which was the body signifies the great wretchedness of our mortal flesh; and the smallness of the child suggests the cleanness and the purity of our soul.... [Our Lord] wants us to be comforted in surpassing joy. And that he revealed in these words: and you will come up above, and you will have me for your reward, and you will be filled full of joy and bliss. (LT 64.)

Since the soul is both sensual and substantial, Julian's account of the body is not dualistic. Her account of this future aspect of *oneing* is profoundly conditioned by the radical, wretched experience of suffering she has known in her life. I simply observe that the image of the child rising occurs directly after Julian's chapters on the motherhood of Christ, and so, to that extent, it emphasizes the return of human nature to the matrix of relationality from which humans come forth, and to full self-knowledge in the beatific vision: "This makes the soul which so contemplates like to him who is contemplated, and unites it in rest and peace". (LT 68.)

Julian also however speaks of a great "deed which the blessed Trinity will perform on the last day, as I see it, and what the deed will be and how it will be performed is unknown to every creature who is inferior to Christ, and it will be until the deed is done". (LT 32.) Anderson omits all reference to this. It is interesting that Julian's concern in mentioning the deed is that God wants us to know that this deed will be performed, and that through this deed "he will make all things well", but also that we know nothing of the particulars, "because he wants us to be at ease in our souls and at peace in love, disregarding every disturbance which could hinder our true rejoicing in him". (LT 32.) This is the one chapter in which Julian speaks of the damnation of many creatures as "an article of our faith", which had led her to think "it was impossible that every kind of thing should be well, as our Lord revealed at this time". (LT 32.)

Nonetheless, Julian's attention is on seeing how God judges differently. Shortly after she writes that

so long as we are in this life, whenever we in our folly revert to the contemplation of those who are damned, our Lord tenderly teaches us and blessedly calls us, saying in our souls: Leave me alone, my beloved child, attend to me. I am enough for you, and rejoice in your saviour and in your salvation. And I am sure that this

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<sup>77</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 180.

is our Lord working in us. The soul which is pierced with this by grace will see it and feel it. And even though this deed may truly be accepted as done for men in general, still this does not exclude particular men; for what our good Lord wishes to do with respect to his poor creatures is not known to me. (LT 36.)

What she takes from this is that “we ought to rejoice in him for everything which he reveals and for everything which he conceals; and if we do so, willingly and meekly, we shall find great comfort in it, and we shall have endless thanks from him for it”. (LT 36.)

It would seem that Julian allows God a large capacity for saving work which has a future and unknown aspect. In a sense, where she hears her Lord say, in response to her preoccupation with the damned, “leave me alone, my beloved child...”, this work also bears similarity to Julian’s reworking of the image of the harrowing of hell, since it would seem that Christ is identifying with the damned. The “disturbance” in LT 32 that she would have humans avoid is at the level of human sensual judgment, not at the level of God’s eschatological deed which, although kept in God’s privy counsel, will be consistent with the character of God’s saving work which is begun in the present life.

### 4.3 Mutual joy: The eschatological face of God

It is the contiguity of the future aspect of Christ’s saving work with *oneing*, as humankind can experience it in this lifetime, which commands Anderson’s attention.

The future dimension of *oneing* raises the question of what must happen in the present life to prepare humans to be united to God. Julian envisions a process through which the work performed in Christ becomes actual in human beings in the present life.<sup>78</sup>

In our creation Julian says that we are enclosed in the trinitarian life of God. Because of this, “our falling cannot hinder [God] in loving us”. (LT 39.) But we are to increase and be fulfilled in this trinitarian life here in this world in part, and fully in heaven. This process involves two aspects. In order to participate in trinitarian loving, as Anderson puts it, humans must undergo a “transformation of human affections” and a life-long process of “salutary training” of those affections to desire what the Trinity desires.<sup>79</sup> It is this work which, as Julian always notes, is begun in this life, but is known in full only in heaven.

Anderson argues that in the *exemplum* the servant’s “longing and desiring” to do the lord’s will, indicates that Julian sees the role of human affections (desire) and their transformation, as essential to *oneing* in the Trinity.<sup>80</sup> Substance unbroken in the

<sup>78</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 180.

<sup>79</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 208.

<sup>80</sup> ANDERSON, 2005, p. 210, where he gives the antecedent for this idea in Augustine and finds a

trinitarian - human relation allows for the likeness or compatibility between human and divine loving, without which, Anderson writes “there would be no basis for human sharing in God’s loving, trinitarian relationships.... God’s longing for humankind expressed in Christ inspires humans to respond with loving longing for God”.<sup>81</sup>

Sebastian Moore’s positing of the pre-religious human desire “to know ourselves as loved, valued and the source of delight to a beloved other” comes quite close to Julian’s description of that godly desire in the substantial will of the servant to do the lord’s will. As I read the *exemplum*, the human problem of estrangement and despair arises when the servant is unconscious of that will in his sensual condition of distress. “I saw the lord commend and approve him for his will, but [the servant] himself was blinded and hindered from knowing this will”. (LT 51.) But the likeness or compatibility of human desire for growth in patterns of loving and *oneing* with God is nonetheless unbroken in Christ’s double nature.

The servant’s double identity as mirrored in the *exemplum* actually allows Julian to see the doubleness of her desires in terms of a coincidence of substantial desire or “love-longing” and sensual *despair*. It also allows her to see how they are to be tutored or trained so as to become *oned* in the Trinity, here in part and fully in heaven.

Does Julian give any sign that the future aspect of *oneing* engages the mirroring dynamic of the beholding *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum*? I believe she does. Julian has negotiated a transformation in her understanding of the meaning of certain kinds of affections which are related to her predicament of basic self-hate. She has identified hell as despair. (LT 17.) She has become trained and tutored in the practices of beseeching and beholding the constant *chere* of the lord, for true knowledge of herself in that sight. The future aspect of Christ’s saving work, described here as the sight of the Creator’s blessed *chere*, enters into the present time (and is notably unrelated to whether the creature is in well being or in woe), where she writes for example that

if all the nobility which God ever created in heaven and on earth were given to us for our joy and our comfort, if we did not see his own fair blessed *chere*, still we should never cease to mourn and to weep in the spirit, because, that is, of our painful longing, until we might see our Creator’s blessed *chere*. And if we were in all the pain that heart can think or tongue can tell, if we could at that time see his blessed *chere*, all this pain would not grieve us. So is that blessed vision the end of every kind of pain to loving souls, and the fulfillment of every kind of joy and bliss.... (LT 72.)

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contemporary to Julian’s idea in the “less sophisticated and less insightful” *Cloud* author on this point.

<sup>81</sup> ANDERSON, 2005. p. 212.

The closest Julian gets to describing the future aspect of this saving work, where Julian sees it in one of her moments of partial beholding its completion in God in this life, is again her description of the third *chere* of joy in LT 71, “that is his blessed *chere*, partly like what it will be in heaven....”

Glad and merry and sweet is the blessed and lovely *chere* of our Lord towards our souls, for he sees us always living in love-longing, and he wants our souls to be gladly disposed towards him, to repay him his reward. And so I hope that by his grace he lifts up and will draw our outer *chere* to the inner, and will make us all at unity with him, and each of us with others in the true, lasting joy which is Jesus.... The blessed *chere* of our Lord God works this in us by grace. (LT 71.)

The future action here is, in effect, the bringing about of the beatific vision: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known”. (1 Cor 13:12.) The Lord’s *chere* of joy, enjoying humanity, will bring about *oneing* with Christ’s humanity in the double human soul, lifting up and drawing all humans’ variable sensual *cheres* or dispositions to the inner, constant disposition of sensuality in union with substance in Christ: “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit”. (2 Cor 3:18.)

The conclusion being drawn here is that these *cheres* of Christ, lovingly mirroring the variable condition of the beholder, yet united in substance in the soul and drawing the sensual condition of the beholder to that interior union, where the human person is restored both to herself and to God, function as Julian’s objective soteriology of mirroring in past, present and future expressions. What I am calling Julian’s soteriology of mirroring is akin to what Pezzini calls Julian’s “real theology of Jesus’ face” in LT 71 - 72.<sup>82</sup>

## **5.0 The satisfying mirroring face gives rise to the thought of the Mother**

In this section I argue that Julian’s further development of the trinitarian theology of the motherhood of God, unique in the history of Christian theology,<sup>83</sup> is the coherent trinitarian and Christological outcome of the mirroring function which dynamizes the saving action in human and divine relationships in the *exemplum*.

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<sup>82</sup> PEZZINI, Domenico, “The vocabulary of joy in Julian of Norwich”, *Studies in spirituality* 4, 1994, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup> Carolyn Walker Bynum describes Julian’s “vision of God as mother [as] one of the greatest reformulations in the history of theology”. BYNUM, 1982, p. 136.

Haight has observed that in the historical evolution of doctrine, Christology depends on soteriology. It is clear from the history of Christian doctrine that trinitarian theology depends on soteriology too. In other words, who Christ and the Trinity *are* follows on the appropriation of what God in Christ through the Holy Spirit is *doing* that is salvific. The present study leads me to see Julian's exploration of the motherhood of God as the Christological and trinitarian theological reflection on the soteriology of mirroring which animates her *exemplum*.

Joan Nuth uses Ricoeur's analysis of the process whereby "symbols give rise to thought" to distinguish the "primordial symbol" from the "mythic phase" and "fanciful history" in Julian's showings. The "primordial symbol" is found in the Short Text in Julian's experience of the suffering Christ, a symbol of the love of God meant to give comfort. It is clearly the Passion which becomes alive to her as Julian beholds the face of the crucifix, drawing her into the visionary experience of identification with Christ's suffering. It is her bodily sight of the face of the crucifix in its transformations which remains the point of departure for all of her showings. However, Nuth goes on to say that "[t]he image that dominates the Long Text is no longer the Crucified, but the more elaborate parable of the lord and the servant... [which] places the symbol of the crucifixion within the larger context of the whole scriptural story of God's work of redemption".<sup>84</sup> It is the parable (*exemplum*) which also gives rise to the fanciful history which "gives rise to thought", providing answers to the perplexing questions Julian had about the inconsistency between her showings and Church teaching, according to Nuth. Subsequently, Nuth describes Julian's reflections on the motherhood of Christ as Julian's "summary symbol of soteriology".<sup>85</sup>

Nuth speculates that "[a]fter recounting what the parable revealed about the love of God for humanity, it is as though Julian searched for an image to sum up her reflections on the salvific work of Christ, and the image of mother seemed to suit her purposes best".<sup>86</sup> Julian's use of the maternal imagery is unlike what women's devotional practices of that period were expected to produce. But to my mind, Nuth's comment makes Julian's theological reflection and method of interpretation sound very "second order", cerebral and disinterested, far from the suffering and confusion that catapulted her into the visionary

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<sup>84</sup> NUTH, 1991, pp. 37 - 38.

<sup>85</sup> NUTH, 1991, chapter 3, pp. 65 - 69.

<sup>86</sup> NUTH, 1991, p. 66. The devotional tradition of Christ as Mother was very alive in Julian's day. For accounts of that tradition see CASSABUT, A., "Une dévotion médiévale peu connue: La dévotion à Jésus notre Mère", *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 25, 1949, pp. 234 - 245; BYNUM, 1982, pp. 110 - 169.

experience, far from that rivetted gaze upon the crucifix which resulted in the first surprising meanings of the bodily sight, and far, too, from the experiential constancy of the *chere* of the lord for humanity in Christ which so dynamized her long-term learning from the *exemplum*.

The psychohistorical question would be why didn't Julian pick up the theme of the motherhood of Christ much earlier in the Long Text or even in the Short Text, seeing as it was so closely associated with Christ's suffering and Passion in medieval devotion? The absence of the more conventional function of Mother Jesus in Julian's *Showings* suggests to me that she had difficulty praying with that image and that that difficulty stemmed from the familial and societal absence of mirroring.<sup>87</sup>

This study proposes, rather, that the work of mirroring which dynamizes Christ's and the Trinity's salvific action in Julian's *exemplum* soteriology, resonated for Julian in the primordial symbol of the face of the suffering Christ, and in all her subsequent insight, maturation and reflection on the quality of the loving relationality radiating between the *chere* of the lord and the servant in the *exemplum*. I observe that the fact that Julian's economic Trinity is totally occupied with the needs and exigencies of creation suggests that this economic Trinity, enclosing and enclosed in humanity, is functioning to respond to that pre-oedipal psychobiographical and soteriological need which I have suggested dominated Julian's life. Writ large, Julian's economic Trinity engaged in creation in the *cheres* of Christ's Incarnation is a profoundly pre-oedipal, therapeutic soteriological response to the creature's early narcissistic condition of neglect, to her need to heal and mature in self worth through a trustworthy mirroring relation.

But more than this, what God does that is saving in the *exemplum* leads Julian to a fresh understanding of who God is. The mirroring function, as transposed into Julian's trinitarian Mother Christ, is her description of the constancy of God's loving relationality engaged in creation -- expressed as God's own *nature*. In the *exemplum* Julian saw the mirroring activity in the mysterious divine - human relation from the human side, that is,

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<sup>87</sup> Compare Roberta Bondi, writing about the relation between the effect of the healing of her own lack of familial and societal mirroring and its effect on her prayer life:

I had read a great deal of modern writings about God as mother and I was committed to speaking this way on principle. It had not been clear to me, however, why such language had not helped my prayer, but rather, had filled me with a sense of grief and loss. Now I understood the reason for my grief. To know myself as a woman in the image of God, to know God as Mother, and to know my own mother as a window into God: these three are inseparable. If one is implausible, to the heart, the other two are, as well.

BONDI, Roberta, *Memories of God: Theological reflections on a life*, Nashville TN, Abingdon, 1995, p. 108.

with great sensual variability. The *exemplum* visualizes in an empathic way both the contrast situation and its potential resolution. It is this which engaged her (and her readers') desire in a process of self-identification or mirroring transference with the servant.

In beholding Christ as Mother however, Julian is practising seeing how *God* constantly sees human nature and the sin in the contrast situation, as they are restored in Christ. Her problem with the Church's judgment and teaching was that it smacked so much of the very sensual variability which Julian found so troubling, and which rendered its doctrine of God schizophrenic. The nature of God which she received from Church teaching was precisely not constant, and certainly not constantly loving. But the problem of inconstancy, indeed of wrath and blame, as Julian saw, is not in God. The problem is a lack of "object constancy" on the part of humans in their relationship with God.

Seen in this light, the emergence of the theme of the Trinity as Mother in Christ in Julian's comprehensive vision resonates as a profoundly coherent theological response to the psychobiographical *and* soteriological predicament presented here in this reading of Julian of Norwich. Just as in the history of the mystical tradition of Christ as mirror, in which Christ was described as taking on maternal qualities of nurturing the spiritual maturation of the Christian, so now Julian's soteriology of mirroring matures into a trinitarian reflection on the motherhood of God in Christ with many of these same nurturing qualities which enable the believer to grow out of ambivalent suffering into adult childlike trust in salvation.<sup>88</sup> The mutual enclosure of humanity in the maternity of Christ also becomes a study in transforming affections and actions into those of Mother Christ.

Perhaps a closer correlation may now be fashioned between the psychoanalytic function of mirroring in the good enough mother, and the function of mirroring in Julian's

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<sup>88</sup> Bradley notes that the connection between Christ as mirror and Christ as Mother is present already in Clement. Echoing Paul, she says, Clement

presents imperfect mirror knowledge in the context of stages of instruction. He goes even further, by attaching the mirror image, thus understood, to the metaphor of Christ, the Mother, who first feeds at the breast, then gives himself as milk, and finally proffers solid food to the mature. This consuming of solid food corresponds to the union of face-to-face vision....

The mirror knowledge which Clement speaks of is not only inward but is also outward looking, to the neighbour, and to Christ in the flesh.... Thus Jesus, visible to us, becomes the mirror in which we discern what we should become. As Mortley has shown... Clement [makes] the divine element in us equivalent to Christ: 'We have here a christological interpretation of the idea of self-knowledge through a mirror....' BRADLEY, 1984, pp. 11 - 12, citing MORTLEY, Raoul, "The mirror and 1 Cor 13:12 in the epistemology of Clement of Alexandria", *Vigilae Christianae* 30, 1976, p. 117. On p. 14 Bradley also notes Augustine's use of the mirror image and his correlation of it with the "motherhood of the Church, as she is now in labour and will later give birth".

objective soteriology, which might have contributed to her trinitarian theological reflection on Christ as Mother.

First I will observe how Julian's maturation of mirroring, i.e., her psychodynamic and soteriological conversion process, affects her theological maturation. Second, I will explore briefly the points along the cycle of mother infant relations facilitating the maturation of the mirroring function, as Julian takes this up into her vision of the nature of maternal God-creature relations.

### 5.1 Theological maturation in the mirroring function

Relational psychoanalysis has taught us that the maturation of the mirroring need is recognized in the individual's internalization of the mirroring function and concomitantly, in the capacity for what Winnicott called object use, or what Kohut described as the capacity to recognize the reality or independent centre of initiative of the other. This maturation, enabled by the object constancy of the mirroring other in the mirroring transference, allows the individual to internalize self constancy, and develop a cohesive sense of having an authentic self, and endowing her with greater flexibility in creatively negotiating inner and outer worlds.

This maturation in her internalization of the mirroring function of object constancy, through her mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings, has an effect on Julian's practice of theology. It is evident in Julian's long and intense process of learning to recognize the activity and nature of the God of her showings in human life. Julian has reflected long and hard on the sensual condition *she* was in when the Jesus of her visions was revealed to her through a merged mirroring transference with him in his Passion. As her own sensuality has been reformed in the mirror of Christ's suffering and joy, and become more constant in the mirror of the constant, loving regard of the lord in the *exemplum*, so also she has relinquished the need for the merged mirroring transference with Christ in his suffering condition and internalized a maturer psychodynamic and theological grasp of the object constancy of the Trinity's relations with creation in Christ. Even though human sensuality is never totally constant in this life, mature human *oneing* into God as differentiation in union is possible, and this is at the core of the anthropology in Julian's objective soteriology. Her early understanding of the Christ of her showings, experienced as merged subjectivism, has given way to a relational realism in which she knows the Trinity in Christ to be constant toward creation, even though created sensuality is not constant toward God.

For our courteous Lord does not want his servants to despair because they fall often and grievously; for our falling does not hinder him in loving us. Peace and love are



always in us, living and working, but we are not always in peace and in love....  
(LT 39.)

As Julian comes to understand the active, working nature of God as Mother, it seems to me that we are witnessing the effect, in her theology, of the maturation of her mirroring need in her object relations into the capacity for object use. In other words, she has internalized the capacity to recognize in the Trinity the independent centre of initiative of love, working both in ways she knows and in ways that are hidden from her knowing, but always revealing that constancy of loving relation to creation.

And from the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love. Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end.  
So I was taught that love is our Lord's meaning. (LT 86.)

As well as signifying a psychodynamic maturation, Julian's naming of the God of her showings as Mother reflects a negotiation of her ambivalent relation with tradition, that is, Mother Church. Julian exposes in a compassionate and magisterial way the fragile sensual condition of church authority committed with transmitting the true faith. What Julian seems to be doing is practising a soteriology of mirroring from the perspective of the mirroring God with regard to the common teaching of Holy Church. Thus she confides to the privy counsel of Mother Christ all her "disturbance" about the common teaching of Mother Church.

At the same time, Julian's linking Mother Christ with Mother Church as *within* enables her to mature in adult relational dependence on the tradition in which she is embedded. Thus she writes in LT 62 that

[h]ere we can see that we do not need to seek far afield so as to know various natures, but to go to Holy Church, into our Mother's breast, that is to say, into our own soul, where our Lord dwells. And there we should find everything, now in faith and understanding and afterwards in himself, clearly, in bliss....  
But let no man apply this particularly to himself, because it is not so. It is general because it is our precious Mother Jesus.

Her maturation in theological object constancy enables her to see through false teaching to the spiritual and psychological relational lack which fuels it, but, rather than judge it herself, humbly to mirror or expose, to any who were willing to see, what she sees as Christ's own maternal response to it.

A key element which drives Julian's psychodynamic and theological maturation in her soteriology of mirroring is her grasp of what the most profound human *desire* is, whether or not humans are in a condition of being consciously directed toward its fulfillment. Moore's description of the pre-religious desire "to know ourselves as loved, valued and the source of delight to a beloved other" is an apt description of the kind of maturation into relationally constituted self-knowledge which, in Julian's soteriology, is a reflection of the true self restored in Christ's union of substance and sensuality beheld in the Trinity.

The challenge, which variability in human consciousness of desire presents, is great. Crysdale rightly wonders: "Given the pain and difficulty of negotiating this travail [of conversion], of sustaining the Self, what can possibly be the incentive for accepting the pain and working on the birth?"<sup>89</sup> Crysdale's answer is that the psychological incorporates a spiritual process, engaging us in an encounter with a transcendent Other, God in the Resurrection.

And though one's glimpse of this resurrection reality, one's sense of being divinely embraced, is not always immediately present, the undertow of one's deepest desire for God nevertheless carries one forward in what we have usually called the life of *faith*.<sup>90</sup>

As Crysdale proceeds in her account of this process, the dynamic element of desire, the desire for self worth and self-knowledge in relation to the Risen Other, is liberated by the "operation of grace". Particularly as this is experienced by those on the underside of history, "[a] taste of fulfillment of this deep Desire stirs up power, courage, deeper yearnings, willingness to pursue fulfillment of Self at all costs. Hunger overtakes fear".<sup>91</sup>

In Julian's soteriology this desire is seen likewise to mature, increase and be fulfilled by the operation of grace, and throughout, the mirroring activity is, as I see it, what gives it its dynamism. The human desire for self worth, thus engaged in that mirroring activity of being beheld by God in the transitional space of prayer, describes well, from the human side, Julian's motivation for appropriating Christ's saving activity as the *quality of loving relations* among the Trinity engaged in creation. I acknowledge that this saving activity of beholding or mirroring the creature lovingly, which engages Julian's desire for the fulfillment of self worth and relational self-knowledge, may seem to many to be a non-activity. This perhaps is a signal simply that it is associated with maternal

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<sup>89</sup> CRYSDALE, Cynthia, *Embracing travail: Retrieving the cross today*, NY, Continuum, 2001, p. 27.

<sup>90</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 27, emphasis in text.

<sup>91</sup> CRYSDALE, 2001, p. 35.

activity, and taken for granted. Anderson observes of Julian's exploration of the nurturing quality of Mother Christ in human spiritual rebirth that

[a]lthough the particular graces that Christ imparts to humans may appear at first sight to have the quality of static, infused excellences, Julian's comments about the transformation of human loving makes it clear that humans are actively engaged in the reception of these gifts. It is likely that the divine mother tutors her spiritual offspring, improving their affections by allowing them to participate in the patterns of her own loving.<sup>92</sup>

Describing Julian's soteriology in terms of mirroring enables us to explore how this deep human desire is engaged, worked through and brought to maturity and fulfillment in the saving work of the Trinity beholding humankind in Christ. In Anderson's terms, by practising beholding Christ, Julian's sensuality, the seat of her desire, is transformed and trained in the trinitarian pattern of loving relations. It is this maturity which Julian brings to her theological reflection on the Trinity engaged in creation through the works of Mother Christ.

## 5.2 Mother-child relations in God's relation with creation

It is in the quality of loving relationality between the lord and servant in mutual regard which, translated into the mother-child relation in Julian's economic Trinity beholding Christ enclosing our humanity, engages Julian in describing the different ways the Mother Jesus behaves toward his<sup>93</sup> children, depending on the child's need and state of maturation. The practice of beholding that relationality engaged in Christ's double nature in humankind elicits her desire to participate in those loving trinitarian relations in Christ because it will reveal to her knowledge of herself and God, and also because it will disclose to her how she is to relate to others, including the religious tradition in which she was embedded. This practice over time transforms her despairing, self-hateful affections, helps her know herself beloved, trains her in those loving patterns, disillusion her of the false humility of her old despairing patterns, humanizes the face of Church teaching, and moves her toward fulfillment and flourishing in this life in spiritual maturation. In this spiritual progress Julian discovers that the human soul encounters Christ in his maternal works of gestating, birthing, nursing, disciplining, suffering-with in dying, and rebirthing the soul. Christ, the mirroring Mother, reflects back to her what, and how, the Trinity is working in her soul.

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<sup>92</sup> ANDERSON, 2005. p. 212. See LT 61.

<sup>93</sup> Julian retains the masculine pronoun in her language of Christ as Mother.

Julian's accounts of the "mother's service" in the Trinity's engagement with humankind in Christ, engage the Mother's work "in a complete, connected cycle of the life from before birth through after death".<sup>94</sup> The quality of trinitarian loving relations engaged in creation, when that is seen to be dynamized by the constant, loving *chere* of the lord beholding the servant, correlates easily with the maturation process of the mirroring function of the mother in early infant relations, from birth and fusion, through the trauma of separation and disillusionment, to maturation in adult identity and relational dependence. In the following paragraphs I explore a brief correlation of Julian's identification of the Mother's works with the relational psychoanalytic description of the good-enough mother's facilitation of the maturation and internalization of the mirroring function in the child.

Julian's consistent emphasis is on what is needed for human maturity and flourishing to be possible in the present life. Bynum would put the point on it that, in contrast to male medieval use of the motherhood symbol as a reversal and renunciation of their maleness, Julian's emphasis expresses women's spiritual aspiration to be *fully human*, as Christ was human.<sup>95</sup> Julian's trinitarian Mother Christ is simply responding to the maturing needs of his human creatures at every point in the human's life. In the same dynamic of identifying with the humanity of Christ enclosing humankind, Julian is also negotiating her relationship with the ambivalent, human face of the common teaching of Mother Church. Perhaps this helps to account for why Julian's imagery does not evoke the maternal "physicality" Bynum associates with medieval women's understanding of Christ's humanity,<sup>96</sup> however, so much as it seems to engage the maturational dynamic of the mirroring maternal presence.

Donohue-White reflects the concern of many feminists to critique interpretations of "the maternal" which are "conventional, sentimentalized" and "essentialist, ahistorical

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<sup>94</sup> HEIMMEL, Jennifer, "'God is our Mother': Julian of Norwich and the medieval image of Christian feminine divinity", *Salzburg studies in English literature* 92, 5, 1982, Salzburg, p. 54.

<sup>95</sup> Bynum writes:

In the dominant theological tradition inherited by the later Middle Ages, *male* and *female* were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as soul and body. Such values suggested that men were like God in a sense that women could never achieve, that women ought to slough off femaleness in rising to meet the divine.... [N]either maleness nor femaleness could serve for [women] as an image of renunciation.

Women thus asserted and embraced their humanity.... To medieval women humanity was, most basically, not femaleness, but physicality, the flesh of the 'Word made flesh'. BYNUM, 1992, p. 177 - 179, emphasis in text.

<sup>96</sup> Aers critiques Bynum on this point with regard to Julian. AERS, David, "The humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of love*", in AERS, David and Lynn STALEY, *The powers of the holy: Religion, politics and gender in the late medieval English culture*, University Park PN, Pennsylvania state University Press, 1996, p. 85.

constructions of maternity”.<sup>97</sup> She assesses Julian’s “divine mother-work” as a praxis and concurs that Julian’s understanding of motherhood in the Trinity does not function to retard individuation and maturation, that it does not rest exclusively on the imagery of the maternal (witness the *exemplum* and her engagement of the Wisdom tradition), and that it counters patriarchal models of God.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, she describes the quality of mother-love in Julian’s divine maternity as “engaged responsiveness”.<sup>99</sup> I want to extend Donohue-White’s reading of divine maternity in the *Showings* by introducing into it the neglected work of mirroring.

What Donohue-White calls the “Trinitarian womb-work” is God’s work of creation which culminates in the Incarnation. She cites Julian’s enclosure language, that “our saviour is our Mother in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come” (LT 57) to underscore “the radical dependence of all things on God, but in an internal rather than an external fashion [allowing us to] understand the world as in some fashion ‘in’ God rather than God as ‘in’ the world”.<sup>100</sup>

The only problem with the language of womb-work for soteriology is that, even when Julian’s insistence on mutual enclosure is recognized, the symbol can become very quickly literalized, and the relational work of the Trinity engaged in creation in the present time can be obscured. Moreover, if we are to take seriously the idea that Julian’s soteriology in the present tense *is* the appropriation of it, the viscerality of the womb symbolism to describe the Mother’s creative work must be held in tension with the awareness that this work is active in the present time, i.e., being appropriated, which means that there is someone actually beholding or experiencing this work going on in her life, in the context of a corporate religious tradition. For Julian, living the anchoritic vocation, enclosed in a womb-tomb, gave meaning to this symbol. Recall, too, that Julian’s “birth” into the transitional space of the showings came by way of such a merged bodily communication with Christ, which she called her “bodily sight”.

Our saviour is our true Mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we will never come. Plenteously, fully and sweetly was this shown; and it is

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<sup>97</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, Patricia, “Reading divine maternity in Julian of Norwich”, *Spiritus* 5, 2005, pp. 20 - 21.

<sup>98</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, 2005, p. 24.

<sup>100</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, 2005, p. 27, citing McFAGUE, Sally, “Mother God”, in *Motherhood: Experience, institution, theology*, eds. CARR, Anne and Elisabeth SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1989, p. 140. As Bynum puts it, for “Julian of Norwich, God was mother exactly in that our humanity with its full sensuality was not merely loved and saved, but even given being by and from him”. BYNUM, 1992, p. 172. See also LT 58.

spoken of in the first revelation, where it says that we are all enclosed in him, and he is enclosed in us. (LT 57.)

The perspective of a soteriology of mirroring keeps before us the visual tensiveness of her image of the loving relations of the Trinity as Mother as these are engaged in the work of human creation in the present tense. **Just as** the good enough mother is already actively relating to, accommodating, and bodily communicating with the child even before the child's birth, **so also** the work of the trinitarian Mother in Christ, gestating and birthing us in our creation, is a relational overflow of loving activity.

Julian's vision of the creative womb-work of the Trinitarian Mother Christ, bringing humanity into creation and culminating in the Incarnation, is kept visually dynamized if we keep in mind the mutual beholding of the lord and the servant. It might even be possible to speak of her "preverbal" reworking John's hellenistic mystical gospel of the Incarnation as "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1: 14), for a more pre-oedipal, visual-visceral relational mysticism, like "The *chere* was made flesh and we beheld God beholding us".

Donohue-White then speaks of the work of birthing/dying on the Cross. Julian distinguishes between "our first making", that is, the Mother's work of creation and "our making again", that is, the Incarnation, although they are not necessarily distinguished in time. This work of the Incarnation is the hard labour of Jesus' Passion, suffering and death on the cross as a giving birth. "But our very Mother Jesus, he alone births us to joy and to endless living, blessed might he be. Thus he sustains us within him in love and travail until the fullness of time when he would suffer the sharpest thorns and grievous pains..." (LT 60.) Donohue-White observes that while Jesus as Mother suffers and dies, and this reflects mother-love which is "self-sacrificing-unto-death", the dying is not an end in itself. "Julian presents self-sacrifice as expressive of both need and gift love and as aiming at... reciprocal satisfaction and joy".<sup>101</sup>

Read in terms of a soteriology of mirroring, I find this allows us to linger meaningfully with the suffering which Christ, enclosing suffering human sensuality, undergoes in an ongoing way, but without fear of it engendering false martyrish self-sacrifice. This is because it helps us grasp how Julian has sorted out the pattern of suffering which is a form of harbouring the secret sin of despair from that which is the *noughting* of all that is not Christ; the *noughting* of all that inhibits her from coming to true self-knowledge. To behold Christ as Mother in this latter way is to behold, both in times of crisis and in day to day living, the suffering which Christ mirrors back when Julian is

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<sup>101</sup> DONOHUE-WHITE, 2005, p. 28.

distancing herself from him. The mirroring mother exposes Julian to her absence of relationality, which condition Christ as Mother suffers and compassionately mirrors for her learning. The patience which Julian beholds, in Christ's kenotic suffering-with humans' abandonment of Christ in them, enables her to have patience and courteous acceptance of her and others' limits, including those of Mother Church.

Winnicott speaks of the years it took him to withhold expressing his psychoanalytic interpretations to his patients and to learn simply

to wait and wait for the natural evolution of the transference arising out of the patient's growing trust in the psychoanalytic technique and setting.... If only we can wait, the patient arrives at understanding creatively and with immense joy, and I now enjoy this joy more than I used to enjoy the sense of having been clever.<sup>102</sup>

Just so, in LT 80 Julian acknowledges how painful it is for Mother Jesus to suffer alone and patiently those periods in the creature's spiritual growth in which the human leaves the beholding of her true self in the Mother behind.

When we fall into sin and neglect recollection of him and the protection of our own soul, then Christ bears all alone the burden of us. And so he remains, moaning and mourning. Then it is for us in reverence and in kindness to turn quickly to our Lord, and not to leave him alone. He is here alone with us all; that is to say, he is here only for us. And when I am distant towards him through sin, despair or sloth, then I leave my Lord to remain alone, inasmuch as he is in me. And this is the case with us all who are sinners; but though it may be that we act like this often, his goodness never allows us to be alone, but constantly he is with us, and tenderly he excuses us, and always protects us from blame in his sight. (LT 80.)

And the joy of the creature's return *is* Christ's resurrection in humans. First encountered by Julian in the mysterious change of *chere* from the dying Christ to joy, later anticipated in the lord's *chere* of joy in the *exemplum*, Julian describes this as a return to beholding the *chere* of our Lord God in oneself: "The highest bliss there is, is to possess God in the clarity of endless light, truly seeing him, sweetly feeling him, peacefully possessing him in the fulness of joy; and a part of this blessed *chere* of our Lord God was revealed". (LT 72.) "What can make us to rejoice more in God than *to see in him that in us... he has joy?... This makes the soul which so contemplates like to him who is contemplated, and unites it in rest and peace.*" (LT 68.)<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> WINNICOTT, D., W., "The use of an object and relating through identifications", reprinted in *Playing and reality*, NY, Routledge, [1969] 1989, p. 86.

<sup>103</sup> Compare 2 Cor 3:18, one of the two mirror texts identified by Hudedé as primary for interpreting the mirror images in the mystical tradition. The other is 1 Cor 13:12. HUGEDÉ, Norbert, *La métaphore du miroir dans les épîtres de saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Paris, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1957, 206 p. See BRADLEY, 1984, p. 11.

Donohue-White's third stage of mother-work is what she calls the work of sanctification. By now we know that this is not Julian's effective theological language, since all the works of Mother Christ are part of the work of *oneing* and Julian never speaks of sanctification, only salvation. Rather, fostered by Julian's grasp of the mystical image of Christ as mirror reflecting back the variable sensual condition of the maturing soul, and by her daily practice of anchoritic methods and objectives, Julian's understanding of *oneing* stays close to her day to day negotiation of her sensual variability. Breastfeeding, nursing and training are all works in Julian's trinitarian Mother Christ, but always, with a view to providing what the Christian needs to increase and flourish in mature relational trust. The constantly loving, though changing, *cheres* of the lord toward the servant in the *exemplum* form the basis for Julian's identification of the different ways the mother acts according to the child's level of maturation.

The kind, loving mother who knows and sees the need of her child guards it very tenderly, as the nature and condition of motherhood will have. And *always as the child grows in age and in stature, she acts differently, but she does not change her love*. And when it is even older, she allows it to be chastised to destroy its faults, so as to make the child receive virtues and grace. This work, with everything which is lovely and good, our Lord performs in those by whom it is done. (LT 60.)

The medieval devotional focus on spiritual nourishment which connected breastfeeding and the Eucharist is present in LT 60: "the mother may give her child suck of her milk, but our precious mother Jesus, he may feed us with himself, and does full courteously and full tenderly with the blessed sacrament, that is precious food of very life..." But it is the office of the nurse who "has nothing else to do but attend to the safety of her child" which is more pronounced in Julian's account of how Mother Christ behaves as the mirroring (m)other with the maturing child. (LT 61.)

The face of the lord in the *exemplum* could be said to be invested with the function of the mirroring (m)other who, as Winnicott saw, enables the child to develop the necessary sense of trust for the process of maturation of the true self and the creative negotiation of reality. **Just as** this beholding, mirroring "action" and its reception by the beholder may seem like a non-activity, **so also** Winnicott observes the tendency not to notice what is going on in the mirroring activity between good-enough mothers and infants -- until it breaks down. Similarly, Anderson points out that the nonviolent, peaceful nature of the Trinity's patterns of loving in Julian's understanding of God is the reason for this seeming "non-activity" in Julian's vision of salvation, and that the manner in which humans are trained in the peaceful loving relations of the Trinity is likewise, peaceful. I am surprised that, unlike Donohue-White, Anderson does not draw on Sara Ruddick who



defines maternity as a distinctive praxis which gives rise to distinctive modes of thought and acting.<sup>104</sup> Ruddick's work is important because, among other things, it highlights the active agency of mothers in those areas of attentiveness, protection, nurturance and training, which, by other criteria, might be neglected as passive or non-productive activities. Moreover, Ruddick draws out the implications of maternal thinking for a praxis of peace.<sup>105</sup>

**Just as** what is intrinsic to the quality of good mirroring is that it be effectively internalized over time by the child so as to enable the child to experience and develop into her core, or authentic, sense of selfhood as relational, **so also** what is intrinsic to Julian's trinitarian economy, in its loving relational activity of beholding and enclosing creation in Mother Christ, is that it enables Julian to come to self-knowledge in her variable sensuality reflected in the mirror of Christ in us. Christ, from this perspective, mirrors in his double nature what Julian's true, double, relational self is, and is to become, in God's sight.

**Just as** the good enough mother enables the older child to internalize the mirroring function in order that the child may mature in object relations, such that the transmuted internalization of the mirroring function necessarily requires the good-enough mother to disillusion her child of its grandiosity, **so also** the loving quality of relationality in the economic Trinity becomes objectivized in the Mother Jesus who gradually enables the older child to recognize its limits. Taking up the theme of human "fallenness" so poignantly expressed in the *exemplum*, divine maternal "chastisement" in LT 60 is anything but divine anger.<sup>106</sup> It is, as the *exemplum* first revealed to Julian, simply what the creature initially experiences as the fall into despair before recognizing the Mother's patient loving presence:

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<sup>104</sup> Ruddick defines maternal thinking in the following way.

The agents of maternal practice, acting in response to the demands of their children, acquire a conceptual scheme -- a vocabulary and logic of connections -- through which they order and express the facts and values of their practice. In judgments and self-reflection, they refine and concretize this scheme. Intellectual activities are distinguishable but not separable from disciplines of feeling. There is a unity of reflection, judgment, and emotion. This unity I call "maternal thinking".

RUDDICK, Sara, "Maternal thinking", in *Mothering: Essays in feminist theory*, ed. TREBLICOT, Joyce, Totowa, NJ, Rowman and Allanheld, 1983, p. 214.

<sup>105</sup> RUDDICK, Sara, *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace*, Boston MA, Beacon Press, 1995, 291p.

<sup>106</sup> Bradley acknowledges that many commentators draw similarities between Anselm and Julian, particularly around her motherhood metaphors, but cautions that there are major differences as well. "It does not matter much which writer may first have thought of Christ Incarnate as mother. It does matter, greatly, how a writer uses this metaphor and how this usage integrates with the story of salvation". BRADLEY, Ritamary, "Julian of Norwich: Everyone's mystic", in *Mysticism and spirituality in medieval England*, eds. POLLARD, William and Robert BOENIG, D. S. Brewer, 1997, p. 154, emphasis added. For example, the *Ancrene riwle* is sometimes cited as a source for Julian's motif of divine motherhood, and in it Anselm

The mother may sometimes suffer the child to fall and to be distressed in various ways, for its own benefit, but she can never suffer any kind of peril to come to her child, because of her love. And though our earthly mother may suffer her child to perish, our heavenly Mother Jesus may never suffer us who are his children to perish, for he is almighty, all wisdom and all love, and so is none but he, blessed may he be.

*But often when our falling and our wretchedness are shown to us, we are so much afraid and so greatly ashamed of ourselves that we scarcely know where we can put ourselves.* But then our courteous Mother does not wish us to flee away, for nothing would be less pleasing to him; but he then wants us to behave like a child. For when it is distressed and frightened, it runs quickly to its mother; and if it can do no more, it calls to the mother for help with all its might....

*And if we do not then feel ourselves eased, let us at once be sure that he is behaving as a wise Mother. For if he sees that it is profitable to us to mourn and to weep, with compassion and pity he suffers that until the right time has come, out of his love.* And then he wants us to show a child's characteristics, which always naturally trusts in its mother's love in well-being and in woe. (LT 61.)

Julian tells us that the *exemplum* gave her the only answer she received to her soteriological crisis concerning the meaning of sin and suffering. In the years which followed Julian's reception of the showings, Julian's eye was on the servant, identifying with him in his condition of despair, and glimpsing the *chere* of the lord. This work might be called the reparenting of Julian's *spiritual childhood*, her internalization of the mirroring function which taught her how to trust.

In her later, theological recasting of the mirroring dynamism in the *exemplum*, Julian's eye is fixed on the whole Trinity, now internalized, at work restoring human sensuality and uniting it to substance in Christ our Mother, whom she invests with the quality of engaged responsiveness to the needs and desire of her human condition in a process of maturation in self worth and relational self-knowledge. As Hide puts it

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is cited considerably. But as the *Ancrene riwle* shows, in Anselm the motif of Jesus as mother is conjoined with the notion of divine wrath: Jesus "put Himself between us and His Father who was threatening to strike us, as a mother full of pity puts herself between her child and the stern angry father who is going to strike it". SAVAGE, Anne and Nicholas WATSON, eds., *Anchoritic spirituality: Ancrene wisse and associated works*, NY, Paulist, 1991, p. 182. The classics of western spirituality 74, cited in BRADLEY, 1997, p. 153. In Julian's portrayal of Christ as mother, the child is about to be chastened, rather than chastised, but there is no angry father in the picture. Rather, as Julian's maternal trinitarian economy develops, the Father too is motherlike and all loving.

Interestingly, Sprung's (initially) lacanian analysis of Julian's *Showings* argues that "the aspect of Julian's revelation that she herself finds most troubling, because apparently heretical, might be stated quite plainly in psychoanalytic terms: *there is no Law of the Father*", in SPRUNG, Andrew, "The inverted metaphor: Earthly mothering as *Figura* of divine love in Julian of Norwich's *Book of showings*", in *Medieval mothering*, eds. PARSONS, John Carmi and Bonnie WHEELER, NY, Garland, 1996, p. 185, emphasis in text. Sprung ultimately finds Winnicott a more adequate theorist when it comes to accounting for mirroring in Julian.

Although sensuality is where we experience the effects of incompleteness due to the Fall, more fundamentally sensuality is where we encounter the effects of *oneing*. Sensuality is where we are open to the presence of divine life in human lives through Christ and are drawn into the process of growth or *increasing* until we become fully Christlike.<sup>107</sup>

This might be called Julian's appropriation of mature *spiritual motherhood*, such that she was able to mirror this Mother Christ to her *even* Christians who needed to know themselves beloved in God's sight.

Not without some growing pains, which engaged Julian in a profound patient acceptance of the ambiguous limitations of human society and the teaching tradition of the Church, Julian appropriated the pattern of returning from the temptations to isolation and despair in her chosen solitude into the social relationality of Mother Christ known sensually and, at least in part, substantially, in the body of Holy Church:

And he wants us to commit ourselves fervently to the faith of Holy Church, and to find there our beloved Mother in consolation and true understanding, with all the company of the blessed. For one single person may often be broken, as it seems to him, but the entire body of Holy Church was never broken, nor ever will be without end. And therefore it is a certain thing, and good and gracious to will, meekly and fervently, to be fastened and united to our mother Holy Church, who is Christ Jesus. (LT 61.)

### 5.3 The appropriation of her soteriology of mirroring by Julian's readers

Julian understands that God desires humans to appropriate the soteriological good news embedded in her showings. What Julian has recorded in her *Showings* she hopes will be appropriated in the lives of her readers in every generation.

Irene Leicht argues that Julian's soteriology answers the theological question not "*Why* did God become human?" but rather "*How* did God become human?"<sup>108</sup> Julian's soteriology in the present tense, if it is to be appropriated in ways that encourage human flourishing, could also be said to ask the further question "*How does* God become human?" This engages the question how Christ's saving work is ongoing, how it is revealed and experienced as real, and how humans can participate in and appropriate it in

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<sup>107</sup> HIDE, 2001, p. 86.

<sup>108</sup> "Sie fragt weniger, *warum* Gott Mensch wurde, also nach den Bedingungen für die Notwendigkeit der Inkarnation, als danach, *wie* Gott Mensch wurde". LEICHT, Irene, "Die Vorstellung von Erlösung im theologischen Denken der Julian of Norwich", in *Denkmodelle von Frauen im Mittelalter*, Freiburg Switzerland, Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1994, p. 203, emphasis added.

the present time. In other words, how do even Christians like Julian become *both* mature in childlike dependence on God, *and* like Mother Christ in mature human relations? How does Julian envisage herself and others mirroring the quality of loving relations among the Trinity in the quality of their relations with their even Christians? This is where the performative trajectory in Julian's *Showings* is intended to enclose her readers in the mirroring dynamic of the quality of relationality of the Trinity as Mother Christ intimately engaged with raising her offspring to maturity and trust.

Moreso than any of the other maternal works the Mother does, I suggest that it is the neglected work of mirroring which bears the weight of this performative dynamic. Emerging most powerfully in the *exemplum*, traced through Julian's treatment of the trinitarian Mother Christ, and highlighted in LT 71 in her description of the three *cheres* of the Lord, it is the *face* of the mirroring (m)other which teaches Julian, and her readers, "to know ourselves as loved, valued and the source of delight to a beloved other". Although she does not call these *cheres* the Mother's face, they emerge subsequent to the chapters on the motherhood of Christ. And as they are invested with the work of drawing humans' outer sensual *chere*, that changeable face of human desire, into the inner *chere* where Christ reigns, they describe the objective saving work of the Trinity lovingly and actively engaged in *oneing* the human condition in the present time.

*This work of mirroring in Julian's theology, I propose, is to bring into being, nurture, reveal, heal, liberate, train and transform (particularly, though not exclusively, in those on the underside of history), that pre-religious human desire to be seen, loved and known by the beloved Other and to know ourselves as we are known. We are to know its fulfillment in this life, in part, and in fulness in the eschaton. As Koenig observed, Julian never mentions the Mother's face. The reason Koenig gave was that Julian had negotiated her relationship with her birth mother. By the same token, it is possible that this was because Julian was negotiating her relationship with tradition in the Church's teaching. Then again, perhaps this was because the Mother's face is the face of Christ's humanity revealing the loving relations of the uncreated Trinity engaged in all these human, ambivalent relationships -- then and now -- and as such is an "apophatic image", better left to the working of the chere of Christ in the imagination of the beholder.*

## 6.0 Summary

The present chapter confirms that the *exemplum* is the core of Julian of Norwich's soteriology, and argues that it is dynamized by the neglected, yet essential function of mirroring.

This mirroring function of the *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum*, as Koenig observed, plays a compensatory role in Julian's appropriation of the meaning of her *Showings*. I identify this mirroring function as one of object constancy. Not only is this a reflection of psychodynamic negotiation of her ambivalent maternal relationship. It is also a sign of negotiation of her ambivalent relationship with the teaching tradition of Mother Church on matters of soteriology.

But this thesis also extends and confirms Koenig's intuition that the *chere* of the lord in the *exemplum* has objective salvific power in Julian's mature *exemplum* soteriology. It dynamizes Julian's mature understanding of the *exemplum* as revealing the quality of the constant exchange of loving relationality among the persons of the economic Trinity engaged in creation. I have linked Anderson's attention to the quality of loving relations among the economic Trinity engaged in creation with the function of mirroring and correlated it with Julian's objectification of the work of the loving *cheres* of the Lord in LT 71 as a mature development of medieval mirror symbolism into an objective soteriology of mirroring. Drawing on Anderson's temporal distinction of soteriology in its past, present and future dimensions in Julian, I have shown that Julian's objective soteriology of mirroring has past and future "*cheres*", in her retrieval from the tradition. And her understanding of objective soteriology in the present time matured over many years into simple but powerful insights into the Trinity's constant loving activity mirrored in Christ's Incarnation, healing and restoring human anthropology to its true self in Christ. Julian's retrieval of the medieval symbol of Christ as mirror, in whom God's constant regard and humans' variable desire for self-knowledge meet in the human mixture of sensuality and substance, helps to anchor this understanding of her objective soteriology of mirroring in a historical context of socially shared symbolism. I argue, therefore, drawing on both Anderson's thesis on the convergence of objective and subjective soteriology in Julian's *Showings* and Koenig's intuition about the objective salvific power of the mirroring role of the face of the lord in the *exemplum*, that the function of the mirroring *chere* of the Lord "works" this convergence in the present time. For Julian, this is how Jesus saves.

Further, I show how this mirroring function is carried into Julian's subsequent theological reflection on the works and nature of Christ as Mother. Her choice of Mother as her dominant Christological name for God is made a much denser symbol to appropriate

when it is recalled that, for Julian, the work of Mother Jesus is embedded in and mediated by that of Mother Church. Julian's vocation as anchoress demanded profound self-knowledge in creatively and patiently negotiating her radical dependence on the Church, for her life of relative spiritual independence.

The psychobiographical and soteriological parallel correlation over the three diptychs has shown how Julian's soteriology mirrors and answers to her human predicament, in both its psychoanalytic and its socio-religious dimensions. This human predicament is characterized by a fundamental lack of mirroring, in which her (and others') needs and conditions on the underside of history were systemically ignored, neglected or even abused, whether in family systems and/or larger societal ones. This predicament was, for Julian, and continues to be, compounded by the common teaching of the Church, which created a profound confusion as to what sin and the purpose of suffering are. The trusting facilitating environment which could give rise to maturation in mirroring need was lacking at every level.

Thus, healing and maturation of her very capacity to grow into a cohesive and true sense of selfhood in mature dependence on God was, for Julian, salvific. I observed this process as a shift in the nature of her mirroring transference with the Christ of her showings from merged subjectivism to relational realism to help describe the shift in quality of the experience of herself, her experience of God, and her relation to others which seems to obtain through the evolution of her mirroring transference with the Jesus of her showings.

The form that this process took, once the occurrence of the showings had passed, is by means of Julian's ongoing contemplative practice of beholding the *exemplum* and her other showings. I have described this as a conversion process, her appropriation of a liberative soteriology. This conversion is clearly an epistemological conversion of her self knowledge or consciousness as beheld constantly and lovingly over time, and it is also a conversion to knowing her core sense of self as being constituted relationally in the sight of the Christ of her showings. What becomes clear as well is that, as Julian reflects more and more theologically on the nature of the God at work in her showings, the function of mirroring is seen to determine her understanding of the quality of loving relations of the Trinity engaged in creation through Christ our mirror-Mother.

Finally, seeing the performative trajectory of her *Showings* as Julian's extension of the mirroring dynamic into the lives of her readers, I hold that Julian desires her readers to appropriate this mirroring dynamic as Christ's saving work in the present time.

## 7.0 Is Julian's a soteriology of mirroring for our time?

Julian's theology has had a history of being criticized as asserting an unorthodox doctrine of unbroken union in the divine-human relation, represented by her concept of the godly will which never assented to sin, which is thought to be inadequate to account either for unintelligible evil in the world or for human freedom.<sup>109</sup> But a growing number of theologians are finding in Julian's soteriological narrative of the *exemplum* a powerful response to the contemporary soteriological crisis of credibility.<sup>110</sup>

I return to Haight's identification of themes in contemporary soteriology responding to postmodern exigencies, which I described in Chapter one. I identify Julian's response to several of these themes, insofar as they link with the present study.

First, there is the question what Jesus did for our salvation. This is the problem of the meaning of Christ's death on the cross, which is core to the contemporary problem of the credibility of soteriological narratives.<sup>111</sup> It must be admitted that Julian's preoccupation in the fourteenth century with the humanity of Christ is not the same thing as ours in the twenty-first century with the life of the historical Jesus.<sup>112</sup> Julian nonetheless understands, like contemporary soteriologists, that the cross is revelatory of the love of God by symbolic causality (not efficient causality).<sup>113</sup> Julian and we can see revealed in

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<sup>109</sup> There are the historical voices such as the Anglican bishop Edward Stillingfleet in 1673, reprinted in section E.5 of the appendix in WATSON, Nicholas and Jacqueline JENKINS, eds., *The writings of Julian of Norwich: A vision showed to a devout woman and A revelation of love*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania State University, 2006, pp. 448 - 455; and Deryck Hanshell observes this judgment in two of Julian's translators, HUDLESTON, Roger, ed., *Revelations of divine love shewed to a devout ankerss, by name Julian of Norwich*, London, Burns and Oates, 1927, 256 p., and WOLTERS, Clifton, transl., *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of divine love*, Harmondsworth England, Penguin, 1966, 213 p. See HANSHELL, Deryck, "A crux in the interpretation of dame Julian", *Downside review* 92, 1974, pp. 77, 87.

More contemporary voices are actually proponents of Julian of Norwich's writing. See for examples LEWIS, Muriel, "After reflecting on Julian's revelations of *behovabil synne*", *Studia mystica* 6, 1983, pp. 41 - 42. Irene Leight describes Julian's understanding of sin as "soft" ("ein 'sanftes' Sündenverständnis") in LEICHT, 1994, p. 199; Nuth holds that the weakness in Julian's soteriology is the lack of a formal treatment of human freedom, in NUTH, Joan, "Two medieval soteriologies: Anselm of Canterbury and Julian of Norwich", *Theological studies* 53, 1992, p. 638.

<sup>110</sup> As well as ANDERSON 2005, see for examples, HIDE, Kerrie, "The parable of the lord and the servant: A soteriology for our times", *Pacifica: Australian theological studies* 10, 1997, pp. 53 - 69; DREYER, 1994, pp. 79 - 93.

<sup>111</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 345.

<sup>112</sup> GALVIN, John, "From the humanity of Christ to the Jesus of history: A paradigm shift in Catholic Christology", *Theological studies* 55, 1994, pp. 252 - 273.

<sup>113</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 346.

the Christ of her *Showings* what God's love for humankind is like. There is no talk in Julian's *Showings* of Christ's death being a sacrifice or a satisfaction as traditionally understood. Rather, as we have seen, Julian's bodily sight of Christ's suffering taught her that Christ's work is about satisfying humankind's (admittedly narcissistic but real) longing to see and know ourselves beloved in the sight of God. The fact that Julian sees Christ's suffering as ongoing is an indication that she understands Christ's work of mirroring that love in variable human conditions to be available for appropriation by Christians in every generation. In her this-worldly incarnational soteriology the effect of Christ's humanity at work continues to have a real, symbolic effect on human consciousness in the present time.

Moreover, I would argue that examining the mirroring dynamic in Julian's method of presenting her soteriology renders the motivation for the historical evolution of her soteriology to her christological and trinitarian theology more transparent.

I have already adverted to the fact that Julian's soteriology is explicitly comprehensive, able to be interpreted socially as well as individually. It is here that the question of the nature of sin as understood in this study of Julian's *Showings*, is robust. We have seen that Julian's bodily sight of the suffering Christ begins as a response to her own experience of a context of unintelligible evil and suffering, and a condition of suffering bordering on unthinkable anxiety. What I am calling her soteriology of mirroring acknowledges that the systemic *absence* of mirroring in the sensual human condition is real and has grave consequences. If this is taken into account as a psychodynamic and systemic familial and social determinant in the context which forms the backdrop of Julian's showings as I have tried to show here, it reveals a robust account of sin as despair, located clearly on the human side, and having a systemic social quality. It is the whole of humankind who is identified in Adam's predicament.

Likewise, Haight holds that salvation must be integral, by which he means that salvation

cannot touch a so-called spiritual dimension of a person's life and not include his or her activity in this world.... Salvation today cannot be interpreted as salvation from the world.... The world is the full measure of the human body.... Salvation must incorporate the world insofar as the world, although in one respect over against the self, is also part of the self'.<sup>114</sup>

Julian sees that human freedom in this world to respond to Christ's saving work lies in the sensuality, the seat of variable human will, and is enabled by the individual's engagement with the mirroring function of Christ. Christ's union of substance and sensuality in his

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<sup>114</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 355.



humanity is the meeting place in the *exemplum* between the Trinity's beholding humanity in Christ, and human beholding of itself in sensual variability. The mirroring function of the Trinity enclosing humanity through Christ endows humans with the potential freedom to appropriate sin, understood as despair, and find it transformed into the locus of our true selfhood as relationally constituted in God's sight. The three *cheres* of Christ are, potentially, both a model and a mirror enabling humans to mature in patterns of loving relations in the world, thus mediating what God wants human beings to be. Thus for example, Julian is adamant that every act of compassion for others is Christ's compassion in us. Through practising or performing her soteriology of mirroring in the writing of her *Showings* Julian hoped to enable the wills and actions of her *even* Christians, then and now, to become transformed into the likeness of the quality of loving relations among the economic Trinity enclosing humanity in Christ. Julian understood that the loving and pacific effects of this in the world of human relations would be real.

Related to the theme of the cross, the Resurrection must be important to the saving action of Christ. The Resurrection experience is fundamental to Julian's bodily sight of Christ, and to her appropriation of the *exemplum*. Indeed, this transformation is core to the meaning of Julian's soteriology, giving hope to those who have suffered from an abused, beleaguered sense of selfhood in this world, and inspiring trust in the eschaton.

What I have called "object constancy" in the *chere* of the lord, which becomes the basis for the identity of Julian's trinitarian economy engaged in creation, clarifies Julian's stand on the question whether God's creative work and God's saving work are the same. Julian's soteriology of mirroring renders coherent the work of Christ with the activity of the Creator in the bond of the Holy Spirit as the loving community of the Trinity engaged in human flourishing. Julian was preoccupied in her time, as we are in ours, with the fragility of the human project and the unintelligibility of evil. In the face of this, Julian's soteriology enables the liberation and maturation of the desire of her readers to trust in the constancy of the love of the Creator as that was revealed to her in her *Showings*.

What can make us to rejoice more in God than to see in him that in us, of all his greatest works, he has joy? For I saw in the same revelation that if the blessed Trinity could have made man's soul any better, any fairer, any nobler than it was created, the Trinity would not have been fully pleased with the creation of man's soul. (LT 68.)

And by the same token, she hoped her soteriology would enable humans to appropriate the healing and restorative knowledge of their core self as constitutively related to God. Just as contemporary soteriology understands not only that God creates in order to save, but also

that “God saves in order to create”,<sup>115</sup> Julian is adamant that “sin is no shame, but honour to man”, and that “all shame will be turned into honour and into greater joy”. (ST 17; LT 38.)

With significance that is heightened in our context of ecological fragility, Julian even gives indication that the goodness of God overflows and fills not only humans who are empty enough to receive it.... Critically, in Julian’s view, this filling with divine goodness is not limited to human beings, it includes all God’s blessed works, all creation. The vision of the hazelnut reveals that the cosmos is being filled to overflowing with divine love eternally.<sup>116</sup>

Perhaps most significantly for the present study, Julian’s soteriology speaks to the contemporary concern that salvation be revelatory and transformative, not merely knowledge or explanation, nor just a past or future reality, but the experience of encountering God that is in some sense real in the present time. Julian’s soteriology of mirroring makes the whole Trinity’s activity in Christ present in a mediated, symbolic realist way that recognizes both the subjective and the objective dimensions of that encounter.

Anderson’s thesis is significant in pointing out that Julian’s objective soteriology is expressed in past, future and present tenses. When looked at in terms of mirroring, her subjective soteriology, that is, the appropriation of objective soteriology in the present tense, involves a practice of beholding Christ and seeing one’s sensual condition mirrored there, exposed, reflected and potentially transformed in God’s loving *chere* or regard.

Appropriation, as Julian’s *Showings* reveal, involves a process of being confronted with a contrast situation and then retrieving sources of symbolism in the tradition which help make sense of the meaning of sin and suffering. Julian was shown that *both* the condition of *oneing* and its *absence* needed in some way to be seen in her soteriological *exemplum* in order for the human predicament to be consciously identified and objectified in the human-divine relation. “We need to fall and we need to see it”. (LT 61.) This contrast experience and its potential resolution is precisely what the *exemplum* mirrored back for her integration.

But appropriation, for Julian, also necessarily engages an imaginative practice or act of self-recognition in relation to God, a life-long work of the transitional realm of prayer, which requires a facilitating, trustworthy environment if it is not to be hindered. This gracious work, transforming Julian’s affections and training her, over time, in the ways of

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<sup>115</sup> HAIGHT, 1999, p. 353.

<sup>116</sup> HIDE, 2004, p. 55.

trinitarian loving, is what Julian also seeks to enable in others, by means of the facilitating, trustworthy environment of her *Showings*. For Julian, the practice of beholding demanded that she behold her historical situation and sensual condition consciously in relation to God. It became part of the hermeneutical method of her theology. This study puts significant emphasis on the notion that the performative trajectory in Julian's *Showings*, by enabling her readers to engage in the practice of beholding Christ in a mirroring transference, helps us appropriate the saving work of Christ in the present time. Julian describes this as God's gracious activity of drawing human out, sensual dispositions toward a condition of inner self-constancy and *oneing*, by the working of Christ's *chere*.

In sum, the coherence between the saving work of the economic Trinity engaged in creation through Christ's Incarnation, in the past, the future and the present time, in what I am calling Julian's soteriology of mirroring, is, I believe, a significant response to the problem of soteriological credibility in our postmodern context. The objective and the subjective dimensions of Julian's soteriology of mirroring are coherent and contiguous, and respond effectively to a number of aspects of the contemporary crisis in credibility of soteriology.

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## CONCLUSIONS

First, this thesis gives substantial, new evidence for a psychobiography of Julian of Norwich. Clearly, this reading has limitations which are intrinsic to the psychobiographical enterprise. However, it has sought to remain attentive to the demand for historical consciousness in its application. Most significantly, the choice of relational psychoanalytic methodology, focusing on the dynamic of the need for mirroring, is found to be particularly fruitful in its application to this subject. To the extent that this psychobiography is believable, it gives new evidence for Julian's life which may be helpful for other historical and theological studies of her *Showings*. Certainly, it has served that function for the other correlations in this study.

The evidence that Julian suffered a chronic failure in the parental function of mirroring in her early childhood, which was compensated for to some degree by the presence of an empathic spiritual counselor, reveals itself already in the profile of her visionary aspirations and anxiety, and is supported, from the first to the last of her showings, by Julian's preoccupation with beholding the face of Christ and with seeing or knowing herself in relation to what that face or *chere* communicates to her. It suggests that the Jesus of her *Showings* functioned for her as a sustained means of therapeutic healing and internalization of the mirroring function.

The thesis has found that psychodynamic maturation in Julian's mirroring need is evidenced in her *Showings* over time in a developmental transformation or maturation from what I have called merged subjectivism to relational realism. This finding may be useful for correlating spiritual and psychodynamic maturation in mirroring need in other applications to historical and contemporary women.

The second hypothesis, that the missed parental function of mirroring was compounded at a systemic, societal level, and was codified in the common teaching of Holy Church, was confirmed by evidence that suggests that Julian was suffering a pre-oedipal soteriological crisis at the time of, and perhaps as the cause of, the illness during which she received the showings. The evidence for a conversion process bearing the marks of a liberation hermeneutic of appropriation, (as that is being articulated by feminist soteriologists Johnston and Crysdale), is substantiated, in the case of Julian's understanding of sin and suffering, by her reversal of the meaning and logic of Anselm's

satisfaction theory, by her practice of anchoritic methods which also engage reversals of customary soteriological assumptions, and by her retrieval of the medieval mystical symbol of Christ as mirror. This thesis finds the *exemplum* to be singular as a soteriological narrative that is responsive to her predicament, in that in its imagery it retains the contrast situation of Julian's human predicament of despair, as well as its liberative resolution.

This study finds that what dynamizes Julian's healing and restoration of her mirroring need is her appropriation of the meaning of the *exemplum* over time. The dynamic mirroring function of the *chere* of the lord in relation to the servant enables her to clarify for herself the meaning of sin and suffering, relinquish a preoccupation with Christ's suffering and discover the whole Trinity at work through Christ's Incarnation, in restoring creation. It gives her profound relational understanding of herself as beloved in God's sight in well being and in woe. The dynamic mirroring function of object constancy in the *chere* of the lord is found to be operative not only in Julian's this-worldly appropriation of salvation but also in her mature, trinitarian soteriology in its past and future expressions, such that it is appropriate to call it a soteriology of mirroring.

This finding confirms that, in the case of Julian's *Showings*, the correlation of relational psychoanalysis with feminist liberationist soteriology helps to advance the dialogue between these disciplines.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the growing conviction that the soteriology of Julian of Norwich's *Showings* has much to contribute to the crisis of credibility in contemporary soteriology.

This thesis' articulation of Julian's maturation in her understanding of Christ's suffering and Passion gives new meaning to the cross for women, which not only does not promote unjust suffering but also helps women face the darkness of our soul wound, heal from this patriarchal distortion in Christian soteriology and flourish in maturity.

Julian's *exemplum*, not her theology of the motherhood of Christ, is confirmed as the core of her soteriology. Nonetheless, the fact that her reflections on the *exemplum* should lead to a Christological assertion of Christ as Mother (and as Mother Church) is, first of all, another confirmation of the argument that the mirroring function of the Jesus of Julian's *Showings* enabled her spiritual childhood to receive healing from a familial and societal lack of mirroring, and to mirror in her affections and actions as mature spiritual mother in the Church, the patience, compassion, trust and joy that Christ's *chere* communicated to her.

The thesis shows, moreover, how the mirroring dynamic motivating Julian's soteriology can be seen to account for the comprehensive and integral nature of her

soteriology as well as the historical genesis of her theology of the Trinity and the motherhood of Christ. Julian's *exemplum* soteriology is also seen to respond to the contemporary demand for coherence between the creative and saving activity of God.

One of the most exciting findings of this thesis, developed in the final chapter, clarifies how objective soteriology in past, future and present tenses (the present tense being subjective soteriology) cohere in Julian's *exemplum*. It is here that Julian's *exemplum* soteriology of mirroring, understood as the Trinity's saving work in Christ's Incarnation in the present tense, touches a nerve in the postmodern exigency that soteriology be real, able to be experienced in this life. The relational psychoanalytic discourse of mirroring, which is experience-near to contemporary readers, is given a dynamism in this application which responds to an urgent contemporary need to appropriate salvation both in ways of thinking and feeling and in practices which transform relational knowledge of self and God in this life. The study highlights that Julian attributes to the *chere* of our Lord God the work of this mirroring activity in us by grace.

The historical divide between theology and the spiritual life, which so dominates the present situation, has been traced to theological trends in the late middle ages. This study, in both its psychobiographical and soteriological findings, helps to locate in Julian's life a prophetic historical voice, and to recognize her soteriology as a lost vernacular tradition, which was attempting to respond to that situation. One of the implications of this study would be to contribute in some small way to the contemporary search for soteriological and theological sources, and for methods in the study and practice of spirituality, which would help breach that divide in the present time.

This thesis hopes to contribute to the contemporary search for a credible soteriology. At the same time, if Julian's theology is to be taken seriously as a lost soteriological tradition, it begs for more in-depth examination of the strengths and weaknesses in her soteriology as a credible response to each of the themes in contemporary soteriology identified in chapter 1, and to the postmodern exigencies propelling them. Future Julian studies of this nature are needed.

The mirroring dynamic explored in this study invites further dialogue and possible correlation between the disciplines of relational psychoanalysis and liberationist soteriology, which respect both the soteriological demand for comprehensiveness, and the human subject as locus for maturation which enables greater freedom and responsibility in graced living. It may be that the study of other Christian mystics, using these two disciplines in tandem, can make a particularly helpful contribution to this dialogue.

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## APPENDIX 1

## Graph of population changes in 14th century England.

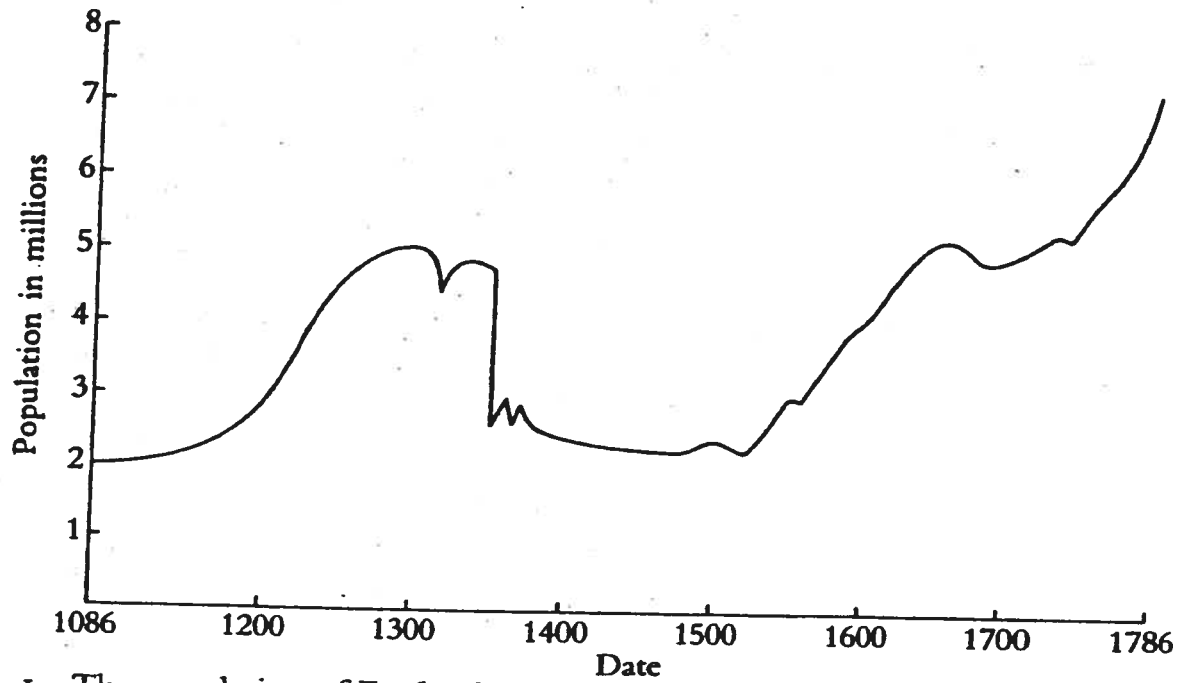


Fig. 1 The population of England, 1086-1786

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

I earned the B.A (1976) and M.A. (1982) in anthropology from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, completing a masters thesis in cultural anthropology on the epistemology of Edward Sapir's concept of culture. I earned the M.Div. (1986) from Trinity College, Toronto (one of the Anglican colleges of the Toronto School of Theology) and was ordained deacon (1986) and priest (1987) in the Diocese of Niagara. While serving as parish priest in the dioceses of Niagara, Oklahoma and now, Montreal, my continuing education has led to earning the S.T.M. (1997) from the General Theological Seminary in N.Y.C. (where my interest in the history of Christian spirituality, Julian of Norwich and relational psychoanalysis was awakened), and accreditation by the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Montreal in its six year programme in spritual direction (2000).