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**RESISTING OPPRESSION THROUGH THE MEDITATIVE BODY:  
A THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF  
TRANSFORMATIONAL ANGER IN JUDITH BUTLER  
AND JULIAN OF NORWICH**

a dissertation

by  
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## **Abstract**

### **Resisting Oppression through the Meditative Body: A Constructive Theology of Transformational Anger in Judith Butler and Julian of Norwich**

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This dissertation offers a constructive theological reflection on transformational anger. It proposes two theories of transformational anger that aim to contribute to the alleviation of suffering in marginalized communities, especially those marginalized by sex, sexuality and gender. First it proposes a theory of the transformational power of anger drawn from the work of Judith Butler; second, it demonstrates that there is also a theory concerning the transformational anger of the meditative body in the work of Julian of Norwich. While Julian's and Butler's theories have distinct merits, I fuse the two in order to propose a third theory of transformational anger that integrates Butler's theories with Julian's meditative training of the mind and body.

Chapters 1 through 3 investigate the work of Judith Butler to show how she articulates new relationships between anger and subjectivity, ones that alleviate suffering. Chapter 1 outlines several important concepts as background for Butler's theories of anger. These include her ideas about gender binaries, genealogy, the materialization of reason, and scenography. Butler shows that a series of binaries—which may seem at first sight unrelated to gender—establish the cultural acceptance of inequality. Matter and Reason prove to be especially important among those binaries. They function like a root system that predetermines the shapes of the leaves that gender will take. Consequently,

the investigation of those binaries is a radical investigation into gender. Chapters 2 and 3 explain how the root system of binaries moves into psychic life through a consideration of Butler's account of melancholic anger and her ethics of survival. These investigations show that although people feel anger towards the demands of this root system, Western culture provides no outlet for their expression, which causes them to psychically redirect that hostility inwards as self-punishment. I then propose a theory of anger and its role in the alleviation of suffering by introducing a new category—transformational anger—that is not present in Butler's account of melancholy, but that takes its direction from her account. In my account of transformational anger I suggest a role for public mourning of the loss of fluid relationships, those that would operate outside of the demand for rigidly opposed ideals of masculinity and femininity. Mourning loosens the rigidity of internalized anger. This results in a more fluid and less violent relationship between parts of the self. Applied to communal dynamics, public mourning creates more fluid and less violent relationships between classes of bodies that are marked by masculinity and femininity, and hence a method of survival for those bodies most vulnerable to violence.

The second part of the dissertation applies the theory of transformational anger to a reading of Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*. In chapters four through seven Butler's lens reveals the previously unexamined role of anger in Julian's text. It allows us to see that Julian's project is systematically directed by her scandalized grief: she is scandalized and grieved that she feels sensitivity to divine and human suffering, but that the all-powerful deity's failure to prevent suffering shows that he does not feel sensitivity to her human suffering. She therefore questions whether the deity is responsible for suffering. While Julian initially rejects her sense of scandal and outrage as sinful,

thinking about Julian together with Butler's method of genealogy enables us to see that Julian's anger is at work throughout *A Revelation* and its insistent return to her experience of outrage at God's seeming indifference to human suffering. As Julian repeatedly returns to her own feeling of outrage, she gradually converts the role of her scandal from a sinful act into the guiding message of her theology. Through these returns she progressively revises the root system of traditional Western binaries that would exclude her anger towards the deity as unintelligible. Julian's reiterations of outrage model an extensive training of awareness and bodily sensation that seek out tensions in her background thoughts and feelings, which are at odds with each other about basic human categories. Through her mature meditative awareness she sees the inconsistency of the Western binaries that frame categories of meaning; this then allows her to revise these binaries and to replace them with new theological ideas. Because these new ideas erode authoritative binaries in the Western imaginary, they also oppose common church teachings about the responsibilities that the deity and human beings hold for suffering, replacing traditional sources of authority with new ones that encourage her anger rather than exclude it. This dissertation therefore emphasizes more than previous scholarship the shifts in sources of authority that occur across Julian's *Revelation*. Her revision of binaries, her new theological ideas, and her changing patterns in relation to authority model a melancholic anger that turns into transformational anger enabled by the meditative body.

Butler's framework reveals that Julian's idea of mother Jesus plays two key roles in the transformational anger at work in the *Showings*. According to the first role, Julian calls the motion of this transformational anger mother Jesus—a term that is shown to be a

practice rather than a personified ideal. Further, reading Julian against the framework provided by Butler suggests that before Julian introduces the idea of mother Jesus late in the text, the revisions that she previously made to Western binaries have already evacuated the feminine and the masculine of their usual meanings. As a result, mother Jesus occupies a third position to which the Western imaginary cannot easily apply categories of femininity or masculinity. According to the second role, mother Jesus is a practice that answers Julian's anger towards the unequal sensitivity that she perceives between divine and human sensitivity to suffering. The dissertation suggests that in this role Julian uses aspects of motherhood as an ideal in the Western imaginary to represent sin or debt. She provisionally uses the maternal ideal in order to erode the boundary between blameworthy human beings and the innocent deity. Motherhood serves to transfer responsibility for suffering from human beings to the deity in the form of divine motherhood. As a result, mother Jesus may owe human beings salvation, for in the Western imaginary femininity is an imperfection, and so may be considered a debt.

Through these investigations I show that Butler and Julian use transformational anger through different skill sets to expose the arbitrary nature of binary social ideals. I propose their combination as a contribution to studies in Butler and in Julian as well as to the theologies of marginalization, especially in relation to sex, sexuality and gender, that those two may inform.

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## **Introduction: Scandalized Grief in *A Revelation* alongside Melancholic Anger in Butler**

At the outset of this project, I would like to explain the affinity that Butler has with Julian that makes a dialogue between them useful and fitting. I hope to show that the trajectory that Butler follows finds a like-minded path in Julian. This is important because to combine Julian's thought and Butler's thought might not feel intuitive to readers of Julian or to readers of Butler; the combination might seem strange at first glance. It might therefore seem an inefficient use of analysis if they do not hang together naturally or if they do not have enough in common. Additionally, because scholars have not yet read Julian through Butler's lens, Butler's methods may guide the reader's eye to elements of Julian's text that strike the reader as unexpected because of their novelty.

In an effort to dispel the impression that Butler and Julian have insufficient common ground, and more importantly to show that they have a useful affinity, I begin with the order in which I discovered their combination. By sharing the order of my discovery I hope to show their natural affinity and to render the unexpected elements of their combination more compelling.

I first read Julian as a young teenager and continued to revisit her as I aged. As I read Julian when I was young the depth of grief in Julian's narrative struck me. However, the elusive appearance that it made in her text baffled me even more. I sensed that it continued even when it receded from view. I felt her scandalized grief at the enormity of human suffering and the failure of her beloved deity to prevent it, when it seems to her that he could have, even though she only explicitly states her grief over divine failure once and then rejects it.

The scandal stood out to me in the tenuousness of her language. The ‘ah,’ before “lord god, how can all be wel?” She seems to mourn her powerlessness, on the one hand. Yet, on the other, she rejects the divine answers addressed to her as inadequate and demands better ones even when the deity asks her that she “let it alone.”<sup>1</sup> The fragility and the force hung together strangely for me, like two poles that could not integrate. They made the brief moments when I saw her sorrowful bewilderment as the deity failed her poignant and almost embarrassing; such powerlessness and determination. I felt that she was never able to pull back the curtain to expose the wizard. I heard the desire to pull it back in her grieving “ah.” When she condemned her suspicions as sinful in the following lines I did not believe her. I trusted her “ah” more than any of the other words in the text and felt that she may have designed her words to affect the reader that way. I felt that she engaged me in code, and told me to listen to her scandalized grief more than her self-deprecation. I was further baffled by the way that she muted, shamed and seemed to move over her grief only to recursively surface it again and again in different guises. I could never quite get my hands around it, and certainly not reconcile it with other elements of her text. Her scandalized grief solicited indignation, pity and tenderness in me, while also strangely consoled me. For this reason I felt it was the most important part of her code.

The experience that I had as I read Julian helped me to realize that I harbored fear and distaste towards the intentional observation of my own grief that her text unleashed for me. The “embarrassment” of a few paragraphs ago played a role in my distaste. I was embarrassed by my grief somehow. She solicited an uprising of grief in me that

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<sup>1</sup> Watson, Nicholas and Jacqueline Jenkins. *The writings of Julian of Norwich : a vision showed to a devout woman and a revelation of love.* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

ordinarily hid from my view and still tried to hide from view, even as I read her. I saw a similarity between Julian's own navigation of grief in her text and the navigation of my own grief that I had to make when I read her.

I first read Butler as a graduate student. Butler drew my attention to the social nature of feelings of turmoil that she interprets to be buried grief. As the previous chapters showed, while turmoil may seem an individual affair, societal demands produce turmoil in the individual. I immediately wanted to bring Butler's insights about grief to bear upon the immediate, intuitive way that Julian's text forced my grief to the surface of my awareness. I wanted Butler to explain to me why I was embarrassed by it. Butler's insights about grief related that grief patterns individual conscience. The conscience of the individual is the vanishing point for societal threats of punishment if one grieves the loss of relationships that do not meet the normative expectation for relationships. These threatening norms "vanish" when people internalize them as conscience. However, conscience is the more effective way to enforce the threat of punishment for the expression of grief than mere external threats of coercion. Further, the forces that cause the threatening conscience resist analysis.<sup>2</sup> They are hidden when Western culture habituates people to pay attention to everyday awareness and to fail to pay attention to the realm of background awareness. Background awareness holds a space where norms powerfully threaten punishment for deviant behavior and so prevent grief over deviant relationships. Therefore, the habit to avoid paying attention to background thoughts

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<sup>2</sup> As is evident from early chapters about Butler, and the synthesis of Butler and Julian that comes later, "root" is a problematic term in relation to Butler. It suggests priority in time, as if one could pass from the tip of a root up to its bloom. Butler resists analogies that focus upon prior causes and prefers to focus upon the experience that happens in the moment of repetition. I promise to redeem my use of the term in Butler's eyes when I consider Butler and Julian in more detail later.

makes their very existence resist analysis. Additionally, according to Butler, the grief which everyday awareness accesses is a stale remnant by comparison to the grief that background though may unleash, which is more freshly felt. I felt splinters of freshly felt grief that Julian's text provoked in me, and Butler's ideas began to help me to understand why. I began to understand why my feelings of grief involved a feeling of scandal and a wish to avoid them altogether, as well as a consolation in the midst of that scandal and avoidance.

As I turned to Julian's text, I also hoped through Butler to explain why Julian's textual account of the importance of her grief evaded my earlier grasp. Butler's methods lift Julian's scandalized grief from the background to the foreground. They listen to the inflection that her scandalized grief gives to the rest of Julian's work. Butler made sense of a kind of grief that only surfaces indirectly through a ruse. More importantly, Butler showed how such a forbidden grief may be the most valuable clue to a more liberating form of relationship, one that is more freshly felt. This made sense of the strange consolation I received from Julian's muted reappearances of scandal and of grief. And so I read Julian through Butler for the relationship that her ruse grieved.

As I read Butler and Julian together I began to find a way to understand something that baffled me before. I saw themes that others had not clarified for me; a problem in Julian that she is trying to figure out herself. There was something important that I could not understand about the complexities of her psychological journey in relation to grief. It seemed to revolve around her ambivalent internal feelings about her power to assuage blame and suffering and the role of divine power in that. Her

ambivalence both condemned her own actions and then covertly valorized them. In that process her scandalized grief disappeared and reappeared.

### I. Butler's Lens Honed the Path of Scandalized Question

Having described the order of my discovery that led me to combine Julian and Butler, I will now briefly recapitulate in advance some of the paths that my fuller analysis of Julian through Butler will plunge into and some of the conclusions that it will move towards. As mentioned before, I do this because Butler highlights novel elements of Julian's text that may feel unexpected; therefore I wish to give readers more places to find their footing in unexpected territory before I begin. Butler's lens hones the path that Julian's question in chapter 27.1-8, where she clearly expresses scandalized grief, travels through the rest of the text. In 27.1-8 that question expresses the only place in *A Revelation* where Julian's scandalized grief straightforwardly asks why the all-powerful deity did not prevent sin. There she "often" wondered "why, by the grete forseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sinne was not letted"? Sin produced suffering that made creation unwell. Julian feels scandalized by a failure in the deity who could have prevented sin but did not. She is scandalized and grieved that divine wisdom fails human beings and proves itself to be unwise to the degree that it is insensitive to human suffering, or cruel. Thus Julian is scandalized that she as a finite creature has sensitivity to suffering when the deity—who should have it to a superlative degree—does not.

### II. Julian Asks Her Question Under Her Breath

However, she makes her question under her breath, looking away from the direct address to God. Before Julian says these words, she is in the midst of a vision. In that

vision “oure lorde brought to my minde the longing that I had to him before. And I saw that nothing letted (prevented) me but sinne.” The revelation continues, telling her that all people share in the vision’s news: nothing “letted” any human being from their desire for divine love but sin.

Her language then moves away from the scene of new information that the vision provides and into her own immediate response to it. “And methought,” she continues, ““If sinne had not be, we shulde alle have be Clene and like to oure lorde as he made us.”” She then moves further away from the direct address of the vision and into her reflection and memory, explaining that “in my folly before this time, often I wondred why, by the grete forseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sinne was not letted. For then thought me that alle shulde have be wele.” In this turn to her reflection and memory, she mentions her scandalous question outside of direct address to the deity, a form of address that characterizes her other questions that relate to suffering. She reflects upon her question as if under her breath by comparison to the other questions about suffering that she poses very directly to the deity.

Still lingering in her reflection separate from direct address to the deity, she addresses her reflection about the failure of the deity to prevent sin in a harsher tone. She denounces the very entertainment of the question as contrary to reason and discretion,<sup>3</sup> as if to absorb the energy that she released earlier through that deviant question. When she calls the entertainment of her question against reason and discretion, she shows that she increasingly feels a different scandal, one that she turns towards herself as the offender. She is scandalized by her inappropriate hubris. She failed to appropriately subordinate

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<sup>3</sup> Watson, *Writings of Julian*, 27.1-8 and 27.30.

her human suspicion to the superior wisdom of the deity. “This stering was mekille to be forsaken,” she regrets, “and neverthelesse morning and sorow I made therfore withoute reson and discretion.”<sup>4</sup>

After the foregoing denunciation of herself outside of the vision’s direct dialogue, she returns to the vividness of direct address. The vision suddenly returns, as the deity speaks to her. “But Jhesu, that in this vision enformed me of alle that me neded, answered by this worde and saide: ‘Sinne is behovely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wel.’”<sup>5</sup> The deity, too, seems to gloss over her scandalous question, allowing it to remain recessed in the margins outside of direct conversation. The divine response gives generalized divine assurance that sin is fitting and that “all shall be well.” It thus fails in its answer to acknowledge Julian’s question since it does not offer particular reasons why the deity did not prevent sin. It seems to tell Julian that she should trust that sin is good and that all is well despite her question, thereby marginalizing her particular concerns.

Julian persists in pressing her question to the margins as *A Revelation* unfolds, referring back to it with increased disdain to underscore how she and her readers should renounce it. Verse 27.30 remembers her “wondering” as “unkindness” or sin: “Then were it a great unkindness to blame or wonder on god for my sin...”<sup>6</sup> Here she calls her suspicion sinful, a stronger condemnation than her previous description of it as an exercise in folly.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.1-8

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.1-10

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.31-32. Julian makes an idiomatic usage of the noun “unkindness” using it as synonym for sin. See her similar use in 66.23 (this was a gret sinne and a gret unkindness “). However, it may be taken in the context of her other use of “unkinde” in 63.13 where it conveys a harsher sense of perversity. See Watson, 320, 63.13.

III. Back to the Path of Her Scandalized Grief: Julian Returns to Her Scandalized Grief  
After She Mentions It Under Her Breath

Despite the persistent recommendation that Julian makes to forsake her question under pain of sin, she not only does the opposite and revives it, but also does so with remarkable regularity. Her recursive relationship to the question suggests that she is centrally concerned about it, which belies her instruction to forsake it. The scandalous question resurfaces in less direct but still essentially related inquiries. All of them appear in direct address and she valorizes them rather than condemns them as she did in the first instance.

It resurfaces in Chapter 29.1-5 where she doubts the previous divine answer that all will be well. She asks “mourningly,” how all may be well when sin devastates human beings: “A, good lorde, how might alle be wele for the gret harme that is come by sinne to thy creatures?” She dares to pose the question again because she wants better answers, explaining “And here I desyered as I durste to have some more open declaring wherwith I might be esed in this.”<sup>7</sup> Here she again suggests her earlier suspicion in chapter 27.1-8 that a loving deity who wishes all to be well for creatures would not have allowed the world to be subjected to the suffering of sin. She implies that the last showing was not “open” enough to ease her; in other words the response of that showing did not supply her with information to satisfy her question, so she remains ill at ease. In these verses of chapter 29, however, she significantly does not cast aspersion on her concern as she did earlier in chapter 27.

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, 29.1-5.

While her divine interlocutor assures her again that all will be well, she later poses the same question in chapter 37 with an even more precise focus. She asks how all may be well if anyone suffers, and especially if anyone must suffer the ultimate pain of damnation?<sup>8</sup> She cannot see how all can be well, echoing her feeling that there is no way that all be well because of the great harm that comes to creatures as a result of sin. It implies her earlier “sinful” question about why the deity that wishes that “all be well” did not prevent sin and suffering. It suggests that things cannot be “well” when humans are blamed for sin and have to suffer, especially when they suffer damnation. Her “wondering” in these recurring questions suggests that to blame humans for sin, which is the justification for suffering that her contemporaries use, is inadequate. Insofar as she unmasks a false cause, she implies a further inquiry into the actual cause. The implied question asks, who aside from finite creatures is responsible for sin? The answer, of course, would be an omnipotent source. Thus she implies the first type of scandal that she has in response to the insensitivity of the deity in her later questions about suffering. However, she poses questions that imply it and do not as directly state the terms that scandalize her.

#### IV. Julian's Agitation At the Deity's Failure

She is agitated by the deity's failure to give her a satisfactory answer more than she “can” or “may” tell.<sup>9</sup> The deity responds with reassurances of divine benevolence. Nevertheless, she comes back to her question in chapter 45.1-27. She presses her question about damnation again, asking how all may be well if she is a sinner and

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 32.31-50.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 45.10-16.

according to church teaching she is blameworthy and divine wrath may righteously damn her.

Despite the deity's reply that it does not blame human beings, and the implication that no one will go to hell, she repeats her concern again in chapter 50. With "all the diligence of her soul" she asks for the deity to reveal to her whether humans are blameworthy or not, since church teaching says that they must be and that the deity must therefore damn some of them:

"Goode lorde, I see the that thou arte very truth, and I know sothly that we sin grevously all day and be mekille blamewurthy. And I may neither leve the knowing of this sooth, nor I se not the shewing to us no manner of blame. How may this be?"<sup>10</sup>

In asking her question Julian is acutely distressed, "my reson was gretly traveyled by my blindhede and culde have no rest, for drede that his blessed presens shulde passe fro my sight, and I to be lefte in unknowing how he beholde us in oure sinne."<sup>11</sup> Although she blames her blindness, the reader can see that she wrestles with irreconcilable contraries and that the divine interlocutor has not shown her a satisfying third way. Her situation invites the reader to enter into her distrust of the showing. She exhibits persistent fear that the vision will abandon her without showing her a compelling answer.<sup>12</sup>

Julian will provide the closest thing to a satisfying third way, or an answer to her acute agitation about whether she should reject the lower dome in light of the disagreement that it has with the higher dome, through the new theological ideas that emerge later in *A Revelation*, especially the idea of mother Jesus. While I will turn to

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 50.1-15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 50.1-15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*. Fear of not being "enformed...of alle that me neded" (27.9) has already been mentioned (in 47.26-27) as haunting her charges.

those ideas in a moment, I first want to consider how Butler's theories help to understand the agitated struggle that is bound up with Julian's return to the questions that express her scandalized grief.

*V. Through Butler's Lens, Julian's Agitation Fuels the Return to Her Question; It Can Be Interpreted As Melancholic Anger*

Butler's lens suggests that Julian's agitation fuels the return to her question; Julian returns to her question because throughout the narrative she has her own anger; it is at work in the return. Butler also shows that Julian's scandalized grief not only resurfaces in these instances, but progresses. Julian revises her story about her scandalized grief from her first telling of it in which she calls it an unnatural sin. Butler's theory of melancholic anger shows that when Julian returns to her questions that raise the same issue indirectly, Julian does not call them contrary to reason (as she did at first) but rather frames them so that the reader may see how they are reasonable. In this way Julian's scandalized grief makes a progressively stronger appearance throughout the text. It finally reappears as Julian's internal cooperation with divine inspiration. Butler is able to show that even while it seems that Julian shames her question since she calls it sinful and never brings it up again in a direct way, she actually articulates it with more credibility as the text progresses. On the surface, Julian makes the revivals of her original suspicion less direct because she never again directly asks why the deity did not prevent sin. However, her questions pursue issues that are essentially related to the deity's failure to prevent sin, even if they are indirect. More importantly, as mentioned above, she revives them as valid questions and eventually as the divine will, rather than as sinful actions that

one should forsake. Through that valorization she divests these questions of shame and infuses them with value.

According to Butler's theories, even indirect expressions of anger that was silent because it was buried through shame change the character of that anger. Her idea of melancholic anger shows that shame can be displaced anger. One is mad at something out there but something makes her turn that anger towards herself as shame. A direct expression of anger towards something outside in the world would call her out so that she feels exposed to a world that does not care for her question. Anger that she reroutes and turns inwardly as shame avoids that danger. The proximity of anger and shame in this situation is intense.

Melancholic anger forms the conscience and shows the close proximity of anger and shame. Anger that one feels toward external objects, but which one can find no cultural outlet through which to express, turns inward and preys on the self. When Butler's idea of conscience is applied to the path that Julian's scandalized grief takes, Julian's conscience directs hostility towards herself internally because it compares her scandalized grief to a societal standard of rectitude that she fails to meet. She has no cultural outlet that would receive her scandalized grief. A finite woman should not question the reasonableness of the deity, therefore Julian should trust that the deity should not have prevented suffering as divine wisdom. The merciless conscience shames her expressions into zones of background thought that elude her everyday awareness.

However, according to Butler those zones may erupt in insurrections that bring traces of the shamed expression to awareness. The self may revolt against the conscience and its criticism. When it does, it may lessen the suffering of internal criticism in the

individual. Thus, when words that were previously routed by shame into silence move into more visible expression, even if indirectly, they express a change from rigid melancholy into transformational anger.<sup>13</sup> Julian's return to her question may be considered a progressively more visible expression of her scandalized grief that changes the character of her shamed anger in her first mention of it into another type of anger that harbors less shame and constitutes an insurrection against conscience, or a reterritorialization of conscience.

*VI. Julian Progressively Valorizes Her Charge By Pressing for a Consistent Message From the Two Domes Rather Than Submitting to the Teachings of the Lower Dome That Inform the More Obvious Rules of Social Rectitude for Conscience*

As I analyze Julian's text, I will claim that Julian's contemplative method is a unique resource in this transformation from one type to another. Her contemplative method allows her to uniquely observe traces of her background thought that might escape someone without her contemplative focus and which provide her with resources for this insurrection. Through her contemplative focus she observes sources of knowledge that operate within her internally; these knowledges disagree with the judgment of her conscience about the standard of rectitude that she must meet. Conscience requires she respect divine wisdom through a recognition that, as a finite woman, she should abandon her suspicion that the deity should have prevented sin. When she pursues these sources of knowledge instead of abandon one in response to the

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<sup>13</sup> Here I use transformational anger as the synthesis that I make between two theories of melancholic anger that Butler describes. This name and process is one that I create by a combination of her two accounts, rather than one account that Butler articulates. I make generalizations about it here that are not accurate until they are qualified. I made such needed qualifications in the chapter about Butler's theory of melancholic anger, and will do so again in the final chapter.

commands of conscience, she takes the opportunity for an insurrection against these rigid commands. In so doing she pursues speech about her scandalized grief rather than acquiesces to the shame that would exile her speech to silence.

Chapter fifty provides an example of her decision to pursue them. There she describes her internal sources of knowledge as messages delivered from the “higher” dome that come from the showings and from the “lower” dome that come from common church teaching. The lower dome of common church teaching reflects the more obvious popular rules of social rectitude for conscience in her time. Chapter fifty presents her bewilderment at the disagreements between the messages from the two, both of which she feels that she must internalize. In chapter fifty she inquires about whether she deserves to suffer, and whether humans generally deserve blame. It is important to her that she know how she relates to sin in the “lower dome” or the realm of common church teaching. She writes that in “the furst dome, which is of Goddes righttullhede, and that is of his owne high, endlesse love—and that is that fair, swete dome that was shewed in alle the fair revelation” she sees the deity “assigne to us no maner of blame.” However, while the showing was “swete and delectable” the beholding of it prevents Julian from being “full esed.” This is because the lower dome of church teaching claimed the opposite: “[By] the dome of holy church, which I had before understonde and was continually in my sight...methought that me behoveth nedes to know myselfe a sinner. And by the same dome I understonde that sinners be sometime wurthy of blame and wrath.” Nevertheless, Julian repeats that she could not see blame or wrath towards human beings in the higher dome of her visions. She is unwilling to abandon the vision of the higher dome, and also is unwilling to simply accept an unexplained contradiction between the

higher dome and church teaching in the “lower dome.” As will be seen shortly, she decides to pursue the sentiments of the higher dome rather than abandon them because they conflict with common church teaching in the lower dome. Her decision itself is an insurrection against the commands of conscience.

The insurrection that her decision creates is also connected to her original scandalized grief. The knowledge from the higher dome where she sees no blame towards human beings maps onto her original concern that finite humans receive no blame for sin because their finite efforts cannot prevent it (while because the deity is infinite, it could). Human beings undergo mass suffering and yet there is a more perfect being who is also more powerful and who could have prevented it. The vision in chapter fifty maps onto this concern insofar as it does not divert blame from the deity onto the human being, which common church teaching does. As Julian removes humans as the blameworthy cause of sin she opens the space to inquire who is to blame for allowing suffering to come to pass.

In chapter fifty, as a result of the disagreement between the “higher” and the “lower” dome about whether she is blameworthy and therefore deserves punishment, her agitation and her desire to know if she deserves suffering is acute:

And therefore my desyer was more than I can or may telle. For the higher dome God shewed himselfe in the same time, and therfore me behoved nedes to take it. And the lower dome was lerned me before time in holy church, and therfore I might not be no weye leve the lower dome.<sup>14</sup>

She seeks to resolve her agitation by pressing her question about how the dome of holy church is true in divine sight, given the disagreement between the two domes, “For either me behoved to se in God that sine were alle done away, or els me behoved to see in God

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<sup>14</sup> Watson, Writings of Julian, 45.10-16.

how he seeth it, wherby I might truly know how it longeth to me to see sinne and the manner of oure blame.” Julian tensely registers these questions right in the midst of her experience of the vision. “The experience of My longing endured, him continually beholding,” she continues,

And yet I culde have no patience for gret feer and perplexite, thinking: “if I take it thus, that we be no sinners nor no blamewruthy, it semeth as I shulde erre and faile of knowing of this soth. And if it be tru that we be sinners and blamewurthy, good lorde, how may it than be that I can not see this sothnes in the, which arte my God, my maker, in whom I desyer to se alle truth?”<sup>15</sup>

She goes further, lamenting that her need to know clearly how she stands in relation to sin is a matter of survival, “it nedeth me to wit—as me thinketh—if I shall live here, for knowing of good and evil, wherby I may by reson and by grace the more deperte them asonder, and love goodnesse and hate evil as holy church techeth.”<sup>16</sup> She explains that she must have a coherent intellectual and emotional knowledge of herself in order to “live here.” She must have such a coherent knowledge in order to distinguish good from evil through her reason aided by grace, as well as to love good and to hate evil. The answer to her question now looms as a basic requirement for the continuation of her life. As will be seen in a moment, Julian’s claim that she must have consistency in her own understanding and feeling is in itself an insurrection. The commands of social rectitude for conscience in her time dictate that she appropriately uses her conscience when she follows the direction of another conscience wielded by a male body or a deity, rather than wield it herself.

Despite her awareness that a coherent understanding of sin is necessary for her survival, even in the midst of the vision she feels the inability to know whether she

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 50.16-24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 50.25-30

should love or hate the messages about sin in the lower dome. The affective weight of her bewilderment lies there in the incoherent messages that she receives from the higher and lower domes. She experiences the navigation of her bewildered state in multiple registers as both an act of will and as that of a felt embodied experience.

This look at Julian's bewilderment, as well as the previous look at the ways that her question resurfaces, illustrate the scandalized grief that propels her to return to it over and over again.

### *VII. The Order of Chapters*

The chapters of the dissertation will analyze the movement of scandalized grief that may be read as the transition from melancholic to transformational anger according to Judith Butler.

The first chapter will analyze Judith Butler's views of sex, sexuality and gender that underpin her theory of melancholic anger. It will consider her philosophical sources in ancient Greece, modern thinkers of process, and Michel Foucault. It will finally consider her criticism of Foucault through Luce Irigaray.

The second chapter will consider Butler's views of sex, sexuality and gender through psychoanalysis, which also underpin her theory of melancholic anger. It will consider her philosophical sources in Freud and Lacan.

The third chapter will consider criticisms of Freud and Lacan from theorists of sex, sexuality and gender. In this chapter I will develop a hybrid idea from Butler's considerations of melancholic anger and survival that I call transformational anger.

The fourth chapter will provide context for the terms that I use to analyze Julian and will situate her key ideas that I consider historically. It will also offer a theoretical

framework through which to understand the layers of phenomenon, understanding and interpretation that happen in Julian's new ideas that occur in the midst of visions.

The fifth chapter considers the text of *A Revelation* from Julian's initial expression of scandalized grief till her third return to it. It will track the movement through these returns that gradually reverses from shame to valorization, and it will track the new ideas that support that transformation.

The sixth chapter considers the text of *A Revelation* from Julian's fourth return to her scandalized grief till her seventh, the fullest valorized expression of her grief in mother Jesus. Conflicts and residual shame will be examined as an ambiguous movement away from key church teachings and toward the opposed teachings in the showings takes place.

The seventh chapter reads the transitions in Julian's scandalized grief that chapters five and six recount through the lens of melancholic anger and survival from Butler. It suggests that Julian methodically overshadows key church teachings that align with the norms of compulsory heterosexuality in order to emphasize new ideas that oppose those norms. It suggests that mother Jesus, considered as the divine thirst of mother debt, offers a hybrid figure that may be used to alleviate gendered suffering or to increase it depending upon how completely the idea is employed.

A short conclusion offers suggestions for the ethical use of the idea of mother Jesus and the usefulness of Julian's contemplative method for the project of survival that Butler describes.

### VIII. The Position of This Project Within the Horizon of Interpretation of Julian

In order to clarify the distinctive reading that I make of Julian, I position it here in relation to some other representative major treatments of Julian. Butler's method asks very different questions than appear in major works to this point, and those questions result in a unique frame for Julian's text. Since my primary lens uses gender theory, I will especially consider representative volumes that have considered Julian in relation to gender, which have been from feminist perspectives. In addition, I will also consider representative authors that use a creative, constructive theological approach within traditional theological boundaries as well as some that use a historical-critical method. My intention is not to review each of these works, but rather to clarify some general differences between this project and those in order to highlight how this project offers a distinctive reading. And, as I mentioned, I will give more attention to some representative works that consider gender since gender defines my method.

#### *A. Grace Jantzen*

Grace Jantzen in *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* uses a traditional feminist theological approach. She also represents a creative constructive theological approach working within the classic boundaries of theological discourse. As a philosopher of religion, Jantzen wished in *Julian* to do more than assume an "objective" analysis of mysticism. She intended the text as a preparatory exercise for a philosophical study of mysticism that exceeds those limits: "A Christian tries to pray, and to learn from the giants of prayer in her tradition. A philosopher tries to think, and to understand what is true. A Christian philosopher tries to pray thoughtfully and think prayerfully. In this

effort of integration, Julian is a splendid guide."<sup>17</sup> The experiential narrative in Julian's text alongside the sophisticated theological reflection allows diverse material for Jantzen's project of integration. Jantzen also showed that Julian's text has theological depth at a time when Julian was prominently known as a spiritual or mystical author more than as a theologian. Jantzen placed Julian's experience in more conceptual categories and related it to theological traditions.

Jantzen treats Julian's theological method as one that performs a practical psychology of integration: "True theology leads to true psychology and to wholeness of personhood, and vice versa."<sup>18</sup> Julian's "theology of integration" grounds itself in the passion of Christ. According to Jantzen, Julian's method strives to integrate three points of her experience: her reason, church teaching and the information that she receives from her visions. This task becomes extraordinarily difficult for Julian because of the disagreements between church teaching regarding hell and eternal condemnation on the one hand and Julian's experience of the deity as love and mercy on the other; furthermore, to prefer one side to the other would counter Julian's intellectual conviction that she must uphold both. Thus, Jantzen tracks the ways that she perceives Julian to intellectually integrate and uphold both church teaching and the visions. "In a situation of apparently irreconcilable teachings, she holds to both sides of the tension until by patient diligence she wins through to integration."<sup>19</sup> Since the disagreements between these two poles concern theodicy, or why the deity permits sin and suffering, Jantzen

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<sup>17</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

locates theodicy as central to the passion of Christ and to the integration that Julian performs.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly to Jantzen, who performs a psycho-theological reading of Julian, I consider psychology at work in the development of Julian's text. And, similarly to Jantzen, I consider psychology at work in the interrelation of the triad that Julian references as her source of knowledge: her reason, the information supplied by her visions, and common church teaching. However, Jantzen views Julian through a lens of "integration" that is more reflective of methods associated with modernity than with post-modernity.<sup>21</sup> She considers Julian as finding an integration of the conflicting messages from these three sources. I similarly consider the relationship of these three "sources of knowledge." However, I do not consider them through a lens of integration. Rather, I consider how they are linked to shifting sources of authority to which Julian appeals. I will claim that they do not so much integrate as displace each other, at least in important ways. Additionally, I make use of Judith Butler and psychoanalytic feminists who are more representative of post-modern approaches than modern ones.

Butler's use of melancholy that sustains the partitioned subject guides my consideration of psychology at work in Julian. I will use Julian's divisions between her

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

<sup>21</sup> In subsequent works, such as *Becoming Divine*, Jantzen traces shifts in her thinking. As she describes in the preface to the second edition of *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*: "If I were to write a book on Julian of Norwich today it would be a different book from the one published in 1987. The world has changed; we live in a different discursive and material reality from that of the last third of the twentieth century. I have changed too, and learned, I hope, from the continued study of medieval mystics and their contexts, from contemporary continental philosophy (often called 'postmodernism'), and from exposure to issues of gender, race and post-colonialism; and have written about these in subsequent books" (pp. vii-viii). In her new preface, Jantzen recommends that her readers embrace Julian's reliance on divine comfort as a prescription for healing. The post-modern reader, she says, will be interested in Julian's turn towards "new life" and away from the "death-dealing structures and practices of modernity" (p. xxii). Jantzen suggests that Julian's portrayal of Christ as maternal, nurturing, and the giver of birth to humanity speaks most powerfully to a post-modern reader of these texts.

sources of knowledge as a guide to consider how, through Butler's lens, those sources of knowledge partition Julian as a subject. Furthermore, I will consider how Julian allots authority to some of those parts and not to others, only to take the authority back and to grant it to others later in the text. Both Julian's allocation of authority, as well as her revocation of it, portray the intensity of the opposing forces at work in the partitioned self. The patterns systematically develop so that some parts emerge as authoritative even when they began in a subordinate position. Such opposition also highlights the contradictions at the root of the supposedly harmonious natural identities that Julian inhabits, for example, as a woman, as a creature, or as a divine figure. Thus, this project specifically considers the partitioned self and correlative sources of authority that inform its parts, but it does not argue for the "integration" of them as Jantzen does.

Butler's methods become especially relevant to mark the difference between Jantzen's project and this one when I consider Jesus as mother. Julian will be seen to attribute inherent debt to motherhood and to a larger set of terms that she associates with the feminine. I will make an investigation of the attributes of motherhood itself as an unstable representation. Jantzen, on the other hand, views Jesus as mother through a traditional feminist lens that considers Julian's use of maternal imagery for Jesus empowering because it connects the lives of ordinary women to the divine.<sup>22</sup> For example, she considers the possibility from a Jungian perspective that mother Jesus may be an archetype that supplies the figure of a loving mother to humanity who inevitably may only experience the partial or complete failure of real mothers to provide love to

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<sup>22</sup> See how Jantzen's thought on this has shifted in footnote 21.

children.<sup>23</sup> While her project remains an important consideration of Jesus as mother for anyone thinking about gender and Julian, mine is different insofar as I interrogate the categories of the feminine or masculine as social categories that may harbor arbitrary violence within them. Because of that violence, a feminine, maternal image of the divine may have a questionable affect on bodies that are labeled as feminine, female or maternal.

As a further difference, Jantzen writes to “believers,”<sup>24</sup> or to an audience who wish to know the extent to which Julian’s experience can “be taken seriously as evidence for the truth of religious claims.”<sup>25</sup> While Julian’s visions are important, Jantzen determines that she may only assess them as evidence for such claims if they serve to deepen a lifestyle of belief and devotion:

That lifestyle is itself based crucially upon the premise of religious belief, and is incomprehensible without it. What must be examined, therefore, is not the extent to which the visions taken on their own justify religious beliefs, but rather the extent to which the lifestyle as a whole lends credence to the premises upon which it is based, and the experiences which play a part in it.<sup>26</sup>

The investigation of whether Julian’s text accomplishes this requires “the weighing not only of the phenomena of the visions and voices, but, far more importantly, the spiritual insights and interpretation derived from them.”<sup>27</sup> Within this context, the reader should

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<sup>23</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 124.

<sup>24</sup> Among others such as Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother: Julian of Norwich, The Way of the Christian Mystics* 7 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989); Sheila Upjohn, *In Search of Julian of Norwich* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989); Joan Nuth, *Wisdom’s Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); and Ritamary Bradley, *Julian’s Way: A Practical Commentary on Julian of Norwich* (London: HarperCollins Religious, 1992). See Baker’s discussion of Jantzen, *Mystic*, 6-7, fn 9.

<sup>25</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

seek to understand the visions for themselves in order to determine whether they are “true and worthwhile.”

Unlike Jantzen, my primary concern is not to determine the extent to which Julian’s experience can be taken seriously as evidence for the truth of religious claims, although I intend this project to be helpful to those who engage that issue. Rather, I am most concerned to find unique tools through the combination of Julian and Butler that may alleviate suffering for marginalized groups of people. I analyze Julian for previously unconsidered themes that the methods of Judith Butler and studies in sex, sexuality and gender bring to light. My aim to reduce suffering is true to the roots of studies in sex, sexuality and gender in feminist liberation theology, which emphasizes orthopraxy as orthodoxy.

The systematic consideration that Jantzen makes of Julian successfully highlights the theological depth of her text. However, the success Jantzen achieves in terms of systemization also requires that she pay less close attention to the “contemplative recursive method” that Baker describes in Julian. My project also differentiates itself from Jantzen in this regard. It will link that recursive method to the definition of Mother Jesus, so that Julian’s recursive method becomes an important concern, while it is less visible in Jantzen.

The method of systematization that I derive from Butler also differentiates this project from Jantzen. As noted in chapter 3, Butler describes her engagement with melancholic gendered subjectivity not as a survey of psychoanalytic texts but rather as suggestions for some “productive convergences” between Freud’s thinking “on ungrieved and ungrievable loss” and the predicament of living in a culture that “can mourn the loss

of homosexual attachment only with great difficulty.”<sup>28</sup> Her account recommends thematic crossings that bring to light tools to alleviate suffering that would otherwise be overlooked. Relying upon Butler’s tools to direct my gaze while reading Julian, I also do not attempt a thematic survey of her text, but rather suggest “productive convergences” between Julian’s thinking and contemporary thought about gender that bring to light otherwise overlooked resources that may be used to alleviate suffering, especially for marginalized groups.

*B. Denise Nowakowski Baker*

Denise Baker, in *Julian of Norwich’s Showings: from Vision to Book*, also uses a traditional feminist theological approach. At the same time she represents a historical-critical theological approach, as she indicates: “Without assuming the stance of either a believer or a skeptic, I hope to provide the cultural frames of reference for *A Book of Showings* by investigating the affinity of Julian’s texts with various traditions of medieval spirituality and theology.”<sup>29</sup> Since I have already drawn from her extensively earlier in this chapter, I use this space to recall the foregoing references and to indicate the differences between her volume and this project.

Like Baker, my purpose is not to assess the ontological or epistemological validity of Julian’s showings. However, unlike Baker, neither is my primary purpose to place them in their historical context. While I draw from Baker (and others) in order to include a historical-critical approach to Julian, the aim of this project is to apply contemporary gender theory to Julian’s text in a mutually beneficial way. Thus I perform

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<sup>28</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 138

<sup>29</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 2.

a contemporary theology that uses gender theory as its primary lens. Further, this project prioritizes orthopraxis and aims to draw from both Julian and Butler to model practices that alleviate suffering through the resources of Julian's contemplative perspective and Butler's ethical recommendations for personal and communal transformation.

Baker is attentive to gender at work in the unfolding of Julian's interpretation of her visions. She considers Julian's "predicament as a woman writer within a discursive field dominated, at least in England, by men."<sup>30</sup> She also examines the ways in which Julian "elucidates these traditions to better suit the demands of her gender..."<sup>31</sup>

She analyzes the threats that Julian would face if she were to claim the role of female teacher and, like Jantzen, she suggests that feminine personifications of the divine empower women. Further, Baker indicates that representations of the deity through male and female images dignify all of humanity rather than the part of humanity that is male: "By creating God in the androgynous images of Father and Mother, Julian thus reconceives the essential self as the complete humanity of male and female, body and soul."<sup>32</sup>

Like Baker and Jantzen, I am particularly concerned to examine how gender is at work in Julian's text, and how she might offer models of gender that less subordinate feminine models to masculine models of the human and divine. However, unlike Baker and Jantzen, I am concerned to interrogate the categories of femininity and masculinity,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 134. See also, "But by extending the traditional familial analogies for the Trinity as Father and Son to include Jesus as Mother as well as Brother, Julian modifies the ontology and anthropology implied by this Augustinian commonplace into an original theory of an androgynous God who creates the soul in an asexual image. Humans, both male and female, can know themselves by knowing God because, as children of God the father and Jesus the Mother, and siblings of Christ, all individuals, regardless of their sex, have the potential for participating in the divine nature." *Ibid*, 113.

and male and female, as labels for bodies that are inadequate when they remain uninvestigated as fixed natural categories. As Butler manifested in the first chapters, history shows a great variation in the ways that labels that refer to sex, sexuality and gender were applied to the cosmos and to bodies. As a theorist using studies in sex, sexuality and gender, I am concerned to mine Julian's text for how she deploys markers associated with these categories, and to enlighten them through the history of sexuality.

One example of an important difference between Baker's consideration of gender and the consideration that this project makes may be seen in a comparison of the ways that Baker and Butler frame gender itself. While Baker considers instances where personifications of the deity or male or female bodies indicate gender, Butler considers the conditions for the emergence of gender as determinative of the instances where gender is applied to bodies. In other words, Butler considers the categories in the Western social imaginary that determine the conditions for the emergence of gender. Examples of such categories at work in Julian may be seen in the ways that Julian writes about the deployment of knowledge and ignorance, of authority that determines knowledge, of distance and closeness, highness and lowness, conflict and acquiescence, and of the sensations of changing flesh in relation to discursive thought. The history of sexuality shows dyads like these to be those that set the conditions for gender to settle into the places created for gender in the social imaginary. These dyads bleed across each other and into the gendered relations that Julian ascribes to the trinity.

An example where because of my investigation of these dyads my investigation of gender might differ from Baker's also shows through in Baker's assessment of the way that Julian treats sensuality and substance. Baker determines that Julian divides the soul

into substance and sensuality and maintains a hierarchical division between them in the essential self. However, she states that Julian “refuses to attribute gender to either part.”<sup>33</sup> While I would agree that Julian does not explicitly attribute gender to either part, the dyad of substance and sensuality correlate in Julian’s text with other dyads that she describes like high and low, which in turn correlate with the frame for the paternal deity and the maternal Jesus. These dyads set the conditions for more explicit attributions of gender to emerge. Therefore I would assess the way that Julian treats them as her agreement to attribute the rudimentary stages of gender to each part, rather than her refusal to attribute gender to either part, as Baker does. My investigation of mother Jesus will suggest that Julian works intricately with the conditions for the emergence of gender. I will claim that Julian strategically amplifies some subordinations of femininity in order to cross them with sources of masculine authority. According to my analysis, the result is an uneasy hybrid, rather than an inclusion of both alongside each other.

Since I intend to reduce the violent ways in which gender is deployed today, I am concerned to investigate those categories that allow gender to function in the way that it does. And, the categories that determine the emergence of gender in some ways determine gender itself. Therefore, if those categories go uninvestigated, important elements of gender go uninvestigated.

Thus, along with Baker and Jantzen, I investigate Julian for the models of gender she might suggest that less subordinate feminine models to masculine models of the human and divine. And, along with them I share many of the concerns of feminist theology and rely with gratitude upon the analyses that they have made. At the same

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

time, I make my investigation from the particular concerns of theologies of sex, sexuality and gender and the methods of Judith Butler, which bring unique investigations to the fore.

Baker's theoretical investigation of the stages of understanding through which Julian moves in her showings is also important for this project and also points out differences between Baker's project and this one. As her frequent appearances earlier in this chapter show, I rely upon Baker's thorough analysis of the progression of Julian's interpretation of her visions through different phases. Baker examines Julian's "reflected interpretation of the near-death experience and the assimilated interpretation she derives from it;" she "situate(s) the two texts of *A Book of Showings* within medieval religious culture and chart(s) Julian's transformation, over a quarter-century, from a visionary to a theologian."<sup>34</sup> In this process, she applies Peter Moore's categories to Julian's text. I adopt her analysis and the categories from Moore upon which it depends.

Unlike Baker, however, I also consider Julian's stages of awareness through the progressively different sources of authority to which she appeals. Through Butler's lens, the shifts in the sources of authority to which she appeals suggest that Julian's phases of understanding pass through another parallel process that involves changing stages of anger. I analyze this movement as a shift from melancholic anger to transformational anger. This leads me to consider the elements of Julian's contemplative method as new tools that may be used to provoke movement through these stages of anger in order to alleviate suffering.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

Baker also contends that the contradictions that Julian encounters between her visions and common church teaching find some resolution and remain within orthodox boundaries in light of what is now called the tradition of “mystical anthropology.” According to Baker, Julian draws from the Augustinian sources from which this mystical anthropology draws in order to counter other Augustinian sources at work in theological discourses among her contemporaries. Thus, for example, Julian uses discourses about the potential for deification in every human being to press against the boundaries of juridical views of atonement. She remains orthodox because she is drawing from an orthodox tradition, although it is in the tradition of mysticism rather than the tradition of speculative theology. Nevertheless, both these traditions are Augustinian. In this way, according to Baker, Julian uses the orthodox mystical tradition as a corrective to the orthodox theological tradition. Her critiques thus originate within the orthodox tradition even as they speak to it. My investigation is in agreement in some ways with Baker’s assessment, especially as I consider mother Jesus as a practice of discernment. However, when I use Butler’s methods to consider the relationship of flesh to spirit and that refraction in mother Jesus, that analysis will claim that Julian at least pushes against the boundaries of orthodox theology in relation to those categories.

While, as I mentioned, I give more attention to some representative works that consider gender since gender defines my method, I will also briefly place my work in relation to a few other representative examples that treat Julian.

### *C. Nicholas Watson*

Nicholas Watson represents a historical-critical theological approach. His recent translation of Julian, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout*

*Woman and A Revelation of Love*, presents a new edition of Julian's writings in Middle English. It makes a serious study of Julian's thought possible as well as an introduction to her for those who have no previous experience with the language.

In clear and accessible form he shows the important differences among the four manuscripts attributed to Julian. He also provides a succinct introduction to Julian and to the previous editions of her texts. This edition brings together the two different texts ascribed to Julian, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* that is extant in one manuscript and *A Revelation of Love* that is extant in two full manuscripts, Paris and Sloan, and one partial manuscript, Westminster. Watson hopes to present an "interpretive, hybrid edition" that allows for an easy comparison between the different texts.

While the volume is thus primarily a translation, Watson provides facing-page explanatory notes that form a line-by line discursive on the text. He provides translations of difficult words, cross-references to other parts of the text, and citations of biblical and other sources. Because his notes gloss individual lines of text, they are necessarily reflections about Julian that are not presented in the form of one united thematic analysis. At the same time, Watson's precise insights into Julian through these notes inform my study, especially as I track the shifts in sources of authority to which she appeals.

His insights reveal his historical-critical method that attends to the "specifically mundane" historical pressures that beset a mystical text and urge the creation of complicated and ambiguous statements about claims to embody truth.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

While the particular insights in Watson's notes and the cross-references that he makes across the text point to shifts in the sources of authority to which Julian appeals, my project separates itself insofar as I take these insights and thematize them.

#### *D. Denys Turner*

Denys Turner represents a creative, constructive theologian working within classic boundaries of theological discourse. Although he recently retired as a professor of historical theology at Yale, Turner began his career as a philosopher of Marxism who gradually shifted to systematic theology. Reflecting his intellectual path, he applies analytic philosophy and systematic theology to his consideration of Julian.

Turner's preface indicates that his purpose is to determine "whether Julian's theology meets a minimum condition for qualifying as systematic, the minimum condition for which being that it is at least not formally inconsistent."<sup>36</sup> He is more interested in whether Julian's intellectual apparatus fills this requirement. He does not consider Julian a "mystic," although he uses James as a measure by which to exclude her from that category.<sup>37</sup>

He is particularly concerned to explore "tensions internal to Julian's theology" and "to confront formally the objection that rather than being theologically constructive inducements to deeper reflections, they amount to obstructive inconsistencies and incoherent dead ends such as would subvert any possible case for the systematic character of her theology, or even any value to her work on an terms at all"<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich: Theologian*. (Hartford: Yale University Press, 2011), xvi.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 28, 29, 75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

Despite Turner's desire to prove the systematic viability of Julian's text, he admits that his engagement with her is less of a systematic investigation of her theology and more of a series of variations on a theme that she addresses: "I suppose, then, I could say that this is less a book about Julian's *Revelation* and more a set of reflections occasioned by it, a set of variations on a theme of Julian."<sup>39</sup> His riff may be occasioned by his admission that "it is not easy to write about Julian's theology in the accepted styles of the academic theologian."<sup>40</sup>

To perform the foregoing variations on a theme he places Julian in dialogue with several perspectives: analytic philosophical, medieval scholastic theological and patristic. Thus, for example, he uses Aquinas, Bonaventure, ps. Dionysius and Dante to show that Julian addresses similar issues to theirs in her text. As a result, he attempts to draw a theology out of Julian that considers the thematic problems posed by these other authors. Ultimately, he considers the issues with which Julian struggles as points of departure to engage the ongoing struggle with contradictions in contemporary Christian and human experience.

The theme in Julian upon which Turner performs variations are the "points of tension" in Julian. He distills these points of tension in the two sides of the message: (1) "sin is behovely," but (2) "all shall be well." He is concerned with Julian's central struggle to hold opposites in tension. For Turner the central conundrum that requires Julian to hold opposites in tension is found in her question "Why sin?"<sup>41</sup> That

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, xiii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, xiv.

conundrum plays out in the tension between Julian's personal revelation and the teaching of the church. Julian struggles to hold all of these opposites in tension.

Like Turner, I perform a set of variations on a theme in Julian. As Turner does, I place Julian in dialogue with figures that are different from her to discover what insights they lift from her text. Like Turner, the lens that I use is not Julian's and therefore my approach is not hers, either. However, while my approach is different from hers, the themes that I investigate are distinctly hers, as is also the case for Turner. I hope as he does to engage the tensions in Julian as points of departure to meet the ongoing struggle with contradictions in contemporary Christian and human experience.

However, I place Julian in dialogue with contemporary gender theorists, especially Judith Butler, and embodied theologies of sex, sexuality and gender. The latter find their roots in feminist theologies and earlier origins in liberation theology. Through these perspectives I investigate how Julian's practical theology may alleviate suffering, especially gendered suffering. As mentioned earlier, I adopt Butler's method that seeks "productive convergences" between gender theory and Julian's theology. I am not concerned to comprehensively survey Julian's text or to comprehensively systematically investigate her theology.<sup>42</sup> My project thus resonates with Turner's description of his project as a set of variations on a theme.

I also focus upon the thematic question of why sin exists, as Turner does. And I am concerned with how that question translates into the tension between Julian's personal revelation and the teaching of the church. I am especially

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<sup>42</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 138.

concerned with the way that Julian navigates the disagreement between them, as Turner is similarly concerned.

However, the perspectives from analytic philosophy, medieval scholastic theologians and patristic theologians direct Turner's eye to very different issues in Julian than does the perspective of Butler. Even though I also consider the navigation that Julian makes between church teaching and her visions about the existence of suffering, my lens directs my eye to different aspects of why Julian says that sin exists than Turner considers.

Turner's lens does not focus upon the affective tone in Julian's work, while I am concerned with "the discernment of true and false dreads" in Julian, which directly addresses the formation of affect in the reader. I ultimately claim that mother Jesus is essentially the practice(ing) of the discernment between true and false dreads. The cultivation of affect as a central mode of Julian's method is therefore central to my project.

The discernment of true and false dreads will prove central to the transition in sources of authority to which Julian appeals. Since Butler's theory will show Julian's transition to map onto the movement from melancholic anger to transformational anger, the consideration of affect is also central to the consideration of anger that I make through Butler's method in Julian's text.

I also notice different aspects of the nature of sin that Julian describes. While I seek to amplify many of the elements of Julian's definition of sin that counter juridical conceptions of Augustinian restitution theodicy, Turner

minimizes them. For example, Turner emphasizes the divine desire for humans to admit their transgression of trust. This tracks with the deity of juridical theodicy whose response to sin is to immediately identify humans as the transgressor who are responsible for sin. He perceives the cross to reveal that sin is ultimately “the refusal of an absolute and unconditional love.” As evidence for that definition he turns to the exemplum of the lord and servant, which he states is a gloss on the parable of the prodigal son. The purpose of the scriptural parable, he says, “is that all the father needs is that his son should openly admit to his transgression of the trust placed in him.”<sup>43</sup> However, that emphasizes the recognition of guilt on the part of the servant as the point of the parable. I take Julian’s point to be different. The exemplum emphasizes that the servant falls because of eager service, not because of a decision to leave the lord. The lord emphasizes his desire that the servant see his wish to reward the servant; the lord does not emphasize his desire that the servant admit his transgression.

The focus that I make upon the divine wish to reward, rather than upon the divine wish for the human to identify her transgression leads me to investigate that same divine wish in mother Jesus. It guides my eye to identify how mother Jesus as debtor to human beings harbors an intensification of that divine wish. Mother Jesus asks human beings to collect the debt of divine reward that mother Jesus owes to them.

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<sup>43</sup> Turner, *Theologian*, 127.

At the same time, the lens of gender theory leads me to investigate how the idea of “debt” in mother Jesus reveals a manifestation of sin at work in the unexpected location of mother Jesus. Maternity itself expresses the archetypal lack that sin represents. Julian uses that archetypal expression to assure humans of their entitlement to a guarantee of divine keeping in this life and salvation in the next. The divine mother Jesus thus expresses both perfection and sin. I therefore investigate sin at work in the most fundamental answer that Julian makes to the problem of evil, but in a very different location than Turner would identify.

Like Turner, I wish to locate how sin qualifies the divine perfection expressed through the phrase “all shall be well.” However, while he focuses upon the phrase “sin is behovely” I focus upon the structures of sin that travel into mother Jesus as the more developed version of the phrase “all shall be well.”

The intertwined development of the discernment of true and false dreads, the practice of mother Jesus, and the transitions in sources of authority that Julian makes also lead me to suggest that Julian presses against the boundaries of orthodoxy more than has previously been suggested. I suggest that the authority of the practice of discernment minimizes the authority of common church teaching while it promotes the authority of mother Jesus when these two conflict. This also differentiates me from Turner.

Turner rather feels that Julian holds these two in equal tension with faith that a future divine deed will reconcile them. He sees Julian navigate “either-ors” into “both-and,” where faith in a future beatific vision provides her with the

“and.” Her faith is the best way to hold ostensibly opposite truths in tension, with the trust that faith will be fulfilled in the fullness of the beatific vision. “For theology is story; and the vision of God is the end of the story.”<sup>44</sup> The narrative is incomplete in this life.<sup>45</sup>

This posture of faith that holds opposites in tensions confirms that Julian’s method is systematic for Turner. She does not “[conform] to some stereotype of the systematic.” However, despite that traditional theoretical expectation, her thought may “play some role in revising and expanding our current notions of the systematic,”<sup>46</sup> so much so that Turner considers Julian “one of the great works of medieval theology in any language by an author of either gender.”<sup>47</sup> Her theology is consistent and systematic while it also remains inconclusively open to faith in divine intervention. He considers this a necessary part of theological reflection.

#### *E. The Approach to This Project*

The unique investigation that this project contributes comes to view through the comparison and contrast with the foregoing major volumes that treat Julian. It draws from historical-critical considerations of Julian, feminist considerations of Julian and systematic considerations of Julian to form a creative, constructive theology. It uses the lens of gender theory to locate the project as a theology of embodied sex, sexuality and gender. True to its roots in feminist liberation theology, it emphasizes orthopraxy as

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<sup>44</sup> Turner, *Theologian*, 115.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 115-28.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 217.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, x.

orthodoxy. Because of the lens of gender theory, it asks questions that were not previously considered in relation to Julian; questions about gender, about constructions of meaning, and about the nature of theological vision or insight. It uses gender theory to highlight relationships among culture, self, divine vision, epistemology and authority. It primarily does this through an investigation of the many strands that advance the progression of Julian's understanding of her visions, guided by gender theory. It specifically contributes (at least) two new considerations to studies of Julian. The first, an investigation of the transitions that Julian makes in sources of authority as her text progresses and second an investigation of the significance of the relationship of debt to motherhood in mother Jesus.

#### *F. Julian In Relation to Orthodoxy*

In addition, this project consistently differentiates itself from the foregoing authors through my claim that Julian allows other sources of authority to overshadow the authority of common church teaching. As the foregoing authors confirm, the general consensus among scholars holds that Julian maintains the authority of common church teaching without displacing it through another source of authority. I wish to strongly underscore that my project does not aim to disprove Julian's orthodoxy; if my work suggests that Julian has a different relationship to common church teaching than consensus suggests, that suggestion is a byproduct of this work and not a goal that I set out to achieve.

Further, although it is a different inquiry than the one that this project makes, if Julian has a different relationship to what she names "common church teaching" I would question whether that relationship indeed places her outside the bounds of orthodoxy.

The question “whose orthodoxy?”—especially in the context of liberation theology and theologies of embodied sex, sexuality and gender—is crucial. Does Julian represent a prophetic voice that resonates with many sects of Christianity today? How is orthodoxy conceived when we retroactively summon the past to speak to the present? Since this project aims to speak to the present, I would be concerned to reframe the question of orthodoxy so that the results of my investigation contextualize themselves in the framework of its goal: to alleviate suffering today for marginalized groups of people, especially in relation to the body, sex, sexuality and gender. Thus, while it is outside the scope of this project to consider in detail what is meant by orthodoxy when present benefits are sought from Julian’s fourteenth century text, I wish at least to gesture towards the difficulties that arise because of the nature of this project that summons the past to speak to present difficulties.

And, I wish to openly acknowledge that the project suggests a reading of her that is different, even if marginally, than general consensus has reached about her orthodoxy. I recognize that most scholars read Julian as holding forward the faith that ultimately the teachings of holy church will be made clear rather than shown to be sinful. This project at least questions that conclusion when her speculation and her practical guidance are taken together. However, as mentioned before, I question her relationship to the doctrines that her fourteenth century text names as the teachings of holy church. And, again, the consensus among Christian churches about the orthodoxy of those positions today refracts differently than consensus about the orthodoxy of those positions among Julian’s contemporaries. So, with the recognition that this project unleashes difficulties in relation to orthodoxy that are beyond its scope to address, I deem the merits of Julian’s

text that may be employed to alleviate suffering worth the questions that it might raise about orthodoxy, that another inquiry may answer. Such risks are associated with the interdisciplinary, trans-historical benefits that a project like this one strives to offer to the present.

## Chapter 1: Materialization: the Repetition of Body and Gender

### According to Butler

In order to consider the meditative body and how it might prove a resource to constructive theologies of marginalization not call them contrary to reason as these intervene in bodies formed by compulsory heterosexuality, I first turn to what is meant by the term “body;” I will specifically consider Judith Butler’s account of the body. As Butler will show, the term “body” is intimately related to the term “matter.”

In the beginning of *Bodies that Matter*, Butler uses the notion of *materialization* in order to clarify a disputed theme that she developed in her previous work, *Gender Trouble*. The incendiary theme is captured in the following statement: “There is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body.”<sup>48</sup> Many object that Butler used this perspective in *Gender Trouble* to de-emphasize actual bodies and to focus instead upon the language that refers to them as generative of reality. In *Bodies that Matter*, as the title suggests, Butler answers this objection and strives to show that her project makes actual bodies the center of her attention.<sup>49</sup> However, she also criticizes her detractors for turning her claims in *Gender Trouble* into a straw man. They reduce her work, she says, to a kind of constructivism, and then wrongly divide constructivism into two types: the first type in which language generates reality in a deterministic fashion,<sup>50</sup> and the second type in which a human agent guides construction

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<sup>48</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> However, some feel she was unsuccessful in her efforts. See Amy Hollywood’s comments on this in “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization,” *Bodily Citations, Religion and Judith Butler History of Religions*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, 252-275 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 252-256.

<sup>50</sup> Similar to a divine force; see Butler, *Bodies*, 6-7.

and creates her gender in a volunteristic fashion.<sup>51</sup> In the latter situation one may choose a gendered orientation like one may choose a wardrobe. Butler objects that neither of these types of constructivism reflects the relationship between linguistic forces and the body that she portrayed and the dual mischaracterization reflects the popular idea that there are biological bodies made of matter, and then there are cultural ideas that write ideas of gender onto such a biological, material substrate. Butler's treatment of bodies insists that a facile division of matter and culture is not adequate to the complexity of sex, sexuality and gender as bodies live these realities.

In order to clarify her meaning in *Bodies that Matter*, rather than referring to the process of bodily formation through the language of construction, Butler adopts the new term *materialization*. She first introduces this term in *Bodies* in the following way:

What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucauldian sense.<sup>52</sup>

This chapter considers what the body is from Butler's perspective, and it therefore investigates what she means by *materialization*. She introduces it in the early parts of *Bodies* through a synthetic reading of several authors. They include Henri Bergson, Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Karl Marx, Aristotle, Michel Foucault, Plato, Luce Irigaray, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. In this chapter I will follow Butler as far as her development of the term through Plato and Irigaray, while I will consider her further honing of the term through Freud and Lacan in the following chapter. I will divide the

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<sup>51</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 6-7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 9.

chapter into three major sections: 1) materialization as process, 2) Butler's fusion of "soul" and "body/matter" through Aristotle and Foucault, and 3) Butler's portrayal of the "constitutive outside" of the body through Irigaray and Plato. I turn first to the role of process in materialization.

### I. Materialization as Process

Butler explains that materialization makes a genuine return to matter not as a site or surface, but as process. Drawing upon Derrida, she indicates that process is an iteration that makes the *temporal* mode of construction into a priority.<sup>53</sup> It objects to naming temporality in terms of a succession of distinct moments all of which are equally distant from each other and self-identical; such a naming would reduce time to temporality and thereby project inappropriate spatial metaphors onto time.<sup>54</sup> Such a reduction is a retrospective mathematical fantasy of mastery that violently interrupts durations in the past. To counter this reduction, Butler claims that "moments" of the past are not distinct and equivalent units of time, but rather the accumulation and congealing of such "moments" to the point of their indistinguishability.<sup>55</sup> Moments bring the weight of the indistinguishable repetitions of the past to bear on the repetitions which we

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<sup>53</sup> Reiteration "need not take place in speech or writing but might be 'signaled' in a much more inchoate way." See Butler, *Bodies*, 11. Butler understands at least "words, acts, gestures and desires" as cites of reiteration. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 136.

<sup>54</sup> As the tradition spanning from Henri Bergson to Heidegger would underscore; see Butler, *Bodies*, fn 8, 244.

<sup>55</sup> Butler points out that Derrida's notion of iterability does not describe simple repetition in which there are distances between temporal moments that may be identified in space. Rather, "It is the nonthematisable difference which erodes and contests any and all claims to discrete identity, including the discrete identity of the 'moment.' What differentiates moments is not a spatially extended duration, for if it were, it would also count as a 'moment,' and so fail to account for what falls between moments. This '*entre*,' that which is at once 'between' and 'outside,' is something like non-thematisable space and non-thematisable time as they converge." See, Butler, *Bodies*, fn 8, 246 and see Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, 307-330 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

continually perform. “Every act is a recitation,” Butler explains, “the citing of a prior chain of acts which are implied in a present act and which perpetually drain any ‘present’ of its presentness.”<sup>56</sup> The chain of acts which are repeated take the form of cultural norms that demand repetition. Butler significantly characterizes the process of repeating (or materializing) as ritualization.<sup>57</sup> The past congeals and accumulates those actions we repeat in accord with norms so that our bodies are continually materializing in accord with those norms.

While the past congeals those repetitions one makes in the present, it also congeals and accumulates those domains that one who is materializing *refuses* because a norm demands she do so. Butler characterizes the domains of those refusals as “the domains of the repressed, forgotten, and irrecoverably foreclosed.”<sup>58</sup> The “feminized fag,” for example, represents a set of repetitions that one must exclude in order to be materializing as a body in accord with compulsory heterosexuality. The past in which such rituals of refusal are performed is not distinguishable as a succession of moments; it is an indistinguishable sedimentation and accumulation of past refusals that drain the present of its “presentness”.

The congealing aspect of process, both when it commands certain rituals and when it forbids other rituals, can make the *process* of materializing (wrongly) appear to be a completed action. For example, the terms “moment” or “act” may appear as fixed realities but such fixity is a dissimulation of process. The moment and the act are

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<sup>56</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 244 footnote 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 9-11; x. The scope of this paper does not allow for further elaboration upon the role of ritual in *materialization*. However, see Amy Hollywood who specifically considers how Butler relies on “an at first barely articulated analogy with ritual actions” in *Bodies* and then expands the role of ritual in her description of performativity in *Excitable Speech*. See Amy Hollywood, “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization,” 254.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 244 footnote 8.

phenomena continually materializing and in process, although they disguise themselves as given, completed phenomena. The sedimenting and congealing qualities of process make process appear as concentrated in an unchanging completed object. Male or female sex, for example, dissembles as a natural, given type of body that cannot be otherwise. It is already, always ‘cooked’ and done instead of growing. This is important because it counteracts a prominent fantasy in Western culture about how the body moves through time. The West often views the body as a vehicle that holds a self-sufficient reason that may choose actions freely in any moment. Such a person also has access to past moments, present moments and future moments as if each were separate from the other and one could range with the mind over these moments; each a locus for freely chosen actions. Butler emphasizes, on the contrary, that the indistinguishable repetitions of the past congeal and weigh on the present moment to make some actions seem ‘natural,’ or outside the realm of choice. For example, some hold it is not a choice to be gay because “gayness” is hardwired genetically into the body. It is somehow “necessary” or “natural” and therefore outside the realm of choice.

The domains that a materializing body refuses (because a norm demands that they do so) thus pose as having always been refused, or as always having been non-existent. “In this sense,” Butler avers, “an ‘act’ is always a provisional failure of memory.”<sup>59</sup> In the Lacanian sense,<sup>60</sup> every act is a repetition of what cannot be recollected. Such a repetition refuses what is irrecoverable and so represents “the haunting specter of the subject’s deconstitution.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the congealing of refusals makes certain ways of

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 244 footnote 7.

<sup>60</sup> About which I will write more in the following chapter.

<sup>61</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 244 fn 7.

behaving, such as the rituals that attend the feminized fag, seem not to be possible and makes them seem never to have existed as possible.

However, a given norm that commands reiteration cannot wholly define or fix how materializing bodies occur. Thus, reiteration contains a “deconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition.”<sup>62</sup> This leads to a potentially productive crisis that is always at work as bodies continually engage in the process of materializing.

This view of materialization as process underscores that materiality is not a completed, given, blank reality that awaits the inscription of Culture (or mind or soul), nor a fixed, brute positivity. Materiality itself is always a process. Butler turns to Karl Marx and his “sensuous matter” as a predecessor to this view of matter. He, like the classical sources to which Butler will turn shortly, temporalizes matter by calling transformative action a constituent element of matter. According to Marx, practical activity structures and inheres in the object as an element of the objectivity and materiality of the object. “The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach’s),” Marx explains, “is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception (Auschauung)*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice (Praxis)*, not subjectively.”<sup>63</sup> Socially transformative activity, Marx suggests, is constitutive of matter itself. Marx usually understands the activity proper to praxis as the transformation of some object form a prior to a latter state, usually from a natural to a social state, but also from a social state of alienation to a social state of non-alienation. In either view, the object is not only transformed but in some real sense is the

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Karl Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 400, quoted in Butler, *Bodies*, 250 fn 5.

transformative action itself. The action establishes the materiality of the object. As Butler reiterates, “The materiality (of the object) is established through this temporal movement from a prior to a latter state...the object *materializes* to the extent that it is a site of *temporal transformation*.”<sup>64</sup>

In order more precisely to figure how we may speak about materiality as change (or activity), Butler turns to Aristotle and Foucault.

## II. Aristotle and Foucault: “Soul” and Matter

Butler wishes to redeploy the dynamism of Aristotelian matter in the service of the materializing body as Foucault describes it. I will first turn to her analysis of matter in Aristotle and then to her consideration of Foucault. Aristotle uses the Greek term *hyle*<sup>65</sup> as the word closest in meaning to “matter.” *Hyle* refers to wood already cut from trees and ready to be used in building. It is instrumentalized and instrumentalizable and “on the way to being put to use.”<sup>66</sup> The Latin rendering *materia* denotes the stuff out of which things are made; it not only refers to timber, but to other sources of origination such as nourishment for infants: the extension of the mother’s body that is ready to be made into the child. This classical usage of matter represents, Butler claims, a capacity to originate and compose: “Matter is clearly defined by a certain power of creation and rationality that is for the most part divested from the more modern empirical deployments of the term.”<sup>67</sup> She concludes that the classical use of “material” means to materialize,

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<sup>64</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 250 fn 5.

<sup>65</sup> Throughout this paper I will use the Latin alphabet to represent Greek terms in the fashion that Butler herself uses.

<sup>66</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

where the principle of materialization in such classical usage is a “meaning” or a kind of intelligibility. “To matter,” Butler avers, “means at once ‘to materialize’ and ‘to mean.’”<sup>68</sup>

To develop further how materiality “means” in classical usage, Butler fixes upon Aristotle’s analogy of the stamp and its impression to describe the relationship between matter and form. Aristotle states that the soul is to the body like the stamp is to the shape given by the stamp; there is never a shape without the stamp. Therefore it becomes moot to ask how stamp and shape exist separately or how matter and form exist separately. However, Butler notes that the Greek word *schema* that this translation renders as “stamp” can be interpreted differently. *Schema* can mean a variety of terms including “form, shape, figure, appearance, dress, gesture, figure of a syllogism, and grammatical form.”<sup>69</sup> Because in Aristotle’s text matter never appears without its *schema*, Butler concludes that matter only appears under a certain grammatical form. The grammatical form is the principle that allows us to recognize matter and is therefore a constituent element of matter. Butler infers from this that Aristotle never clearly distinguishes between materiality and intelligibility. Thus, Butler holds that in some real sense matter is intelligibility. While Butler wishes to use matter as intelligibility in the Aristotelian sense, she also disagrees with the way that Aristotle roots intelligibility in biology. Therefore, she replaces the Aristotelian biological basis for intelligibility with Foucault’s notion of soul, to which we will turn shortly. Foucault’s formulation of soul will allow her to refigure Aristotle’s *schema* into a different animal; she will read schema in terms

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

of “culturally variable principles of formativity and intelligibility.”<sup>70</sup> This synthesis allows her to read bodies as historically contingent nexūs of power and discourse. Such a schema describes the “manner in which what is most material and vital in . . . [bodies] has been invested.”<sup>71</sup>

Turning to Foucault, Butler focuses upon his work in *Discipline and Punish* as well as the final chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. She will particularly use Foucault’s description of the materialization of the body of the prisoner and the materialization of the prison. Her stated goal is to establish the materiality of the body as the effect of power.<sup>72</sup> To do so, she draws upon “soul” as Foucault describes it in *Discipline and Punish*.<sup>73</sup>

In *Discipline and Punish* the soul is an instrument of power through which “the body is cultivated and formed . . . it acts as a power laden schema that produces and actualizes the body itself.”<sup>74</sup> The Aristotelian soul to which Butler previously referred now becomes the Foucauldian soul: a normative and normalizing ideal which trains, shapes, cultivates and invests bodies. It is a historically specific imaginary ideal that materializes them. According to Foucault, the soul of the prisoner is the effect of a subjection more profound than himself: “A soul inhabits him and brings him to existence,

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<sup>70</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 33.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> In other texts Foucault describes the body differently; he states in other places that the body has a materiality that is “ontologically distinct from the power relations that take the body as a site of investments.” See *Bodies*, 33.

<sup>74</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 30. To cultivate the body means, among other things, to create the contours and movements of the body. See *Bodies*, 2.

which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.”<sup>75</sup>

However, Foucault’s soul does not only subordinate the body. Rather, it also secures and maintains it or “subjectivates” it. In a manner similar to the soul of Aristotle, the soul of Foucault constitutes the form of the body. As Butler explains, the soul “forms and frames the body, stamps it, and in stamping it, brings it into being.”<sup>76</sup> However, Butler always intends “being” to mean an ontological weight that may only be conferred and never presumed. Such a conferral may only take place in a Foucauldian scheme through an operation of power. The soul produces the subjects that it subjects. Butler is careful to point out that the way in which power forms bodies in a Foucauldian sense does not describe power acting on a body. She claims that is a misconception based upon speaking through external metaphysical relations. Rather, operations of power form the bodies themselves or constitute the materiality of those bodies. Such operations of power simultaneously regulate and form bodies. Both the materiality of the body of the prisoner, and the materiality of the body of the prison, Foucault writes, are established insofar as they are vectors and instruments of power. Thus, the prison materializes insofar as it is invested with power. Or, as Butler says, “there is no prison prior to its materialization.”<sup>77</sup> The materiality of the prison is coextensive with the power that forms it.

Materiality, Butler continues, is therefore an effect of power or is power in its formative or constituting effects. Butler uses “effect” here against its usual metaphysical

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<sup>75</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 30, quoted in Butler, *Bodies*, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 34.

deployment in relation to cause. She wishes to rework the notion of cause and effect within the context of process described earlier in this essay. In that earlier section I noted that the appearance of fixity is captured in the term ‘act;’ the term “act” represents itself as a completed fixed reality rather than as always a process. The sedimenting and congealing qualities of process make acting appear as an unchanging completed object or as an “act”. Similarly, Butler wishes to undermine the received metaphysical view of cause and effect in which we view cause as having substantial existence prior to its effect. Rather than a prior cause, Butler posits the continual reiteration of power relations that only exist in their effects, where these effects constitute the power relations themselves. Thus, the workings of power cannot be construed as the unilateral movement from cause to effect.

Butler underscores that when we mistake material effects for completed, material givens we mask the genealogy of power and political interests which those effects actually represent:

Insofar as power operates by constituting an object domain, a field of intelligibility, as a taken-for-granted ontology, its material effects are taken as material data or primary givens. These material positivities appear *outside* discourse and power, as its incontestable referents, its transcendental signifieds. But this appearance is precisely the moment in which the power/discourses regime is most fully dissimulated and most insidiously effective. When this material effect is taken as an epistemological point of departure...this is a move...that...successfully buries and masks the genealogy of power relations by which it is constituted.<sup>78</sup>

In order to expose the genealogy of power and to reveal matter, or materiality, as the effect *which is power*, and not the result of a pre-existing substantial power that caused it,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 35.

Butler uses terms strategically.<sup>79</sup> She adapts the term “materialization” from Foucault to refer to the continual process of power relations that constitute themselves in their effects, while she loosely uses the term “materiality” to refer to that which *dissembles* as a fixed, natural given that is an effect of a pre-existing cause. Thus, she uses materiality to refer to that passive, given matter of which people commonly speak. “Materiality,” she explains, “appears only when its status as contingently constituted through discourse is erased, concealed, covered over. Materiality is the dissimulated effect of power.”<sup>80</sup>

Materialization, in contrast to materiality, is the reiterated effects that are power. These effects are a site of transfer between power relations, where the transfer is the subjection and subjectivation of the body, the principle of which is the ‘soul.’ The soul is a normative and normalizing ideal which serves as the formative and regulatory principle of the material body. The soul is “the proximate instrumentality of its subordination.”<sup>81</sup> As Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*, disciplinary regimes (or “soul”) shape uniform bodies through continual repeated rituals of cruelty that over time produce “gestural stylistics of the imprisoned body.”<sup>82</sup> In Foucault’s the *History of Sexuality*, *Volume One*, “sex” operates in a similar fashion to produce uniformly sexed bodies. Butler compares the way sex functions in *The History* with the way soul functions in

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<sup>79</sup> It appears that Butler wishes to bend the proverbial reed in the other direction with regard to the way we commonly view matter and power. Especially in the midst of feminist conversations in the U.S., matter or the body are spoken of as natural givens that are then manipulated and defined by cultural and political investments. “Natural bodies” exist and then culture and power write upon them, as “causes” come before “effects.” Butler wishes to counter this and so paints the body as the effect of power such that power seems to exist before bodies. She thereby reverses the direction in which we usually think of cause and effect with respect to matter and power: now bodies are effects. However, ultimately, she most wishes to subvert and change the way we think of cause and effect so that cause and effect do not exist in a relationship of former and latter, but rather as simultaneous and identical. Thus, the body is an effect but the effect is the working of power relations, just as her interpretation of Aristotle would have the body and soul blur into one.

<sup>80</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 251 footnote 12.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 251 footnote 12.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 251 footnote 12.

*Discipline*. While the two describe operations of power that function along different axes, both subjugate and subjectivate bodies to produce enslavement as a fundamental principle of cultural formation. “It is in this sense,” Butler writes, “that materialization can be described as the sedimenting effect of a regulated iterability.”<sup>83</sup> Social regulations in this way constitute the moment to moment always changing body to give such a body-in-change the appearance of a congealed, fixed body, one that bears the marks of enslavement to social regulation.

While Butler draws upon Foucault’s notion of materialization in the foregoing ways of formation and production of bodies, she finds that Foucault does not adequately consider how materialization produces intelligible bodies that require a certain form of *unintelligibility*. Foucault does not, she holds, consider how materialization requires that some bodies that *resist* materialization, and that have to be excluded in order for the economies of intelligibility of compulsory heterosexuality to be sustained, come about.<sup>84</sup> In Butler’s opinion, Foucault fails to account for what Butler calls the “constitutive outside”<sup>85</sup> that materialization requires: materialization must exclude some bodies from

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 251 footnote 12.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> Butler indicates that a “constitutive outside” refers to what is excluded and what *has to be excluded* from economies of discursive intelligibility for those economies to function as self-sustaining systems. (*Bodies*, 35). Such an economy of discursive intelligibility produces this outside: “What is excluded from this binary is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside. A constitutive or relative outside is, of course, composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity. It emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity” (*Bodies*, 39). Butler describes this in another way in *Bodies* on page 52: “Insofar as the masculine is founded here through a prohibition which outlaws the spectre of a lesbian resemblance, that masculinist institution—and the phallogocentric homophobia it encodes—is *not* an origin, but only the *effect* of that very prohibition, fundamentally dependent on that which it must exclude.” And on the same page: “The regulation of sexuality at work in the articulation of the Forms suggests that sexual difference operates in the very formulation of matter. But this is a matter that is defined not only against reason, where reason is understood as that which acts on and through a countervailing materiality, and masculine and feminine occupy these oppositional positions. Sexual difference also operates in the formulation, the staging, of what will occupy the site of inscriptional space,

intelligible discourse in order to produce the uniform bodies which are the aim of a particular regime of power relations.

In order to expose this domain of necessary exclusion, Butler turns to the critique that Luce Irigaray makes of Plato and the origins of “matter.” Butler primarily considers Luce Irigaray in the two articles “Plato’s Hysteria” and “Une Mère de Glace.” Butler considers the analysis that Irigaray makes of Plato in these essays a “rude and provocative reading” that has a “largeness” and “speculative character” that Butler

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that is, as what must remain outside these oppositional positions as their supporting condition. There is no singular outside, for the Forms require a number of exclusions; they are and replicate themselves through what they exclude, through not being the animal, not being the woman, not being the slave, whose propriety is purchased through property, national and racial boundary, masculinism, and compulsory heterosexuality.” And, in the same place “...if there is an occupation and reversal of the master’s discourse, it will come from many quarters, and those resignifying practices will converge in ways that scramble the self-replicating presumptions of reason’s mastery. For if the copies speak, or if what is merely material begins to signify, the scenography of reason is rocked by the crisis on which it was always built. And there will be no way finally to delimit the elsewhere of Irigaray’s elsewhere, for every oppositional discourse will produce its outside, an outside that risks becoming installed as its non-signifying inscriptional space. And whereas this can appear as the necessary and founding violence of any truth-regime, it is important to resist that theoretical gesture of pathos in which exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification. The task is to refigure this necessary “outside” as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome. But of equal importance is the preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent boundaries of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity. In this sense, radical and inclusive representability is not precisely the goal: to include, to speak as, to bring in every marginal and excluded position within a given discourse is to claim that a singular discourse meets its limits nowhere, that it can and will domesticate all signs of difference. If there is a violence necessary to the language of politics, then the risk of that violation might well be followed by another in which we begin, without ending, without mastering, to own—and yet never fully to own—the exclusions by which we proceed,” (*Bodies* 53). In certain places the constitutive outside is also referred to as a “constitutive violation”: “To what extent in invoking received notions of materiality, indeed, in insisting that those notions function as “irreducibles,” do we secure and perpetuate a constitutive violation of the feminine?” (*Bodies* 54). Butler also gives a more casual description of how Irigaray understands the constitutive outside: “Irigaray’s response to this exclusion of the feminine from the economy of representation is effectively to say, Fine, I don’t want to be in your economy anyway, and I’ll show you what this unintelligible receptacle can do to your system; I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by *miming* the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing that what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within the system calls into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding.” (*Bodies* 45). Further “The *Timaeus* does not give us bodies, but only a collapse and displacement of those figures of bodily position that secure a given fantasy of heterosexual intercourse and male autogenesis. For the receptacle is not a woman, but it is the figure that women become within the dream-world of this metaphysical cosmogony, one which remains largely inchoate in the constitution of matter.” (*Bodies* 54).

confesses puts her on edge. However, Irigaray's over-reading of Plato mimes and exposes the excesses in Plato's assumptions and so remains important, nevertheless. "Sometimes," Butler says, "a hyperbolic rejoinder is necessary when a given injury has remained unspoken for too long."<sup>86</sup>

### III. Irigaray, Plato and the Exclusions of Matter

In Butler's opinion, Foucault fails to account for what she calls the "constitutive outside"<sup>87</sup> that materialization requires: materialization must exclude some bodies from intelligible discourse in order to produce the uniform bodies which are the aim of a particular regime of power relations.

Butler analyzes the critique that Irigaray makes of Plato to illustrate the bodies that must be excluded in the drama of compulsory heterosexuality. Through Irigaray, Butler shows that materiality<sup>88</sup> or what people commonly refer to as "matter" is the site at which the drama of sexual difference plays out. Butler's consideration of Irigaray underscores that the linguistic history of the term "matter" involves the creation of a

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<sup>86</sup> Luce Irigaray "Plato's Hysteria" and "Une Mère de Glace" in L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). And, see Butler, *Bodies*, 37.

<sup>87</sup> Butler indicates that a "constitutive outside" refers to what is excluded and what *has to be excluded* from economies of discursive intelligibility for those economies to function as self-sustaining systems. (*Bodies* 35). Such an economy of discursive intelligibility produces this outside: "What is excluded from this binary is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside. A constitutive or relative outside is, of course, composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity. It emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity" (*Bodies* 39).

<sup>88</sup> Butler uses this term as described earlier in contrast to 'materialization.' Used in this way materiality refers to the fantasy of a completed, given, blank reality which awaits the inscription of Culture (or mind or soul), a kind of fixed, brute positivity. She adopts the term "materialization" from Foucault to refer to the continual process of power relations that constitute themselves in their effects, while she loosely uses the term "materiality" to refer to that which *dissembles* as a fixed, natural given that is an effect of a pre-existing cause. Thus, she uses materiality to refer to that passive, given matter of which people commonly speak. "Materiality," she explains, "appears only when its status as contingently constituted through discourse is erased, concealed, covered over. Materiality is the dissimulated effect of power." Materialization, in contrast to materiality, is the reiterated effects that are power. See *Bodies*, fn 12, 251.

hierarchical binary between matter and form. Further, this binary requires a certain production of the “masculine” and the “feminine” as well as a certain erasure of the “feminine.” Both the production and the erasure will be shown to rely upon an aversion to touch that desires distance from tactile contact and a disconnection of touch from authoritative knowledge.

Matter has a genealogy that (at least) begins with the Platonic concept of the *hypodochē* travels through the Aristotelian idea of *hyle* and into contemporary ideas of “matter.” Irigaray focuses upon the consideration of matter and form that Plato makes in the *Timaeus*.<sup>89</sup> There, she considers the scenography that he creates for the work.<sup>90</sup> Butler interprets “scenography” as the conditions of systematicity that Plato sets out. These are “the architectonics of its theatre, its framing in space-time, its geometric organization, its props, its actors, their respective positions, their dialogues, indeed their tragic relations...(their) interventions on the scene...how the specular economy works.”<sup>91</sup> This scenography or imagined background theatre that Plato creates makes the representations that he uses feasible.

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<sup>89</sup> Irigaray follows this analysis in two works; the first and better known essay, “Plato’s Hysteria,” from *Speculum of the Other Woman*; and the second and somewhat lesser known essay “Une Mère de Glace,” also in *Speculum*. Butler notes that Irigaray methodically reads the text for what it excludes. According to Butler, as Irigaray does so she mimes the grandiosity of Plato’s terminology. However, she does this not to locate herself in between “his space and hers,” but to disrupt the topographical landscape upon which Plato relies (Butler, *Bodies*, 36). Butler notes in relation to Irigaray’s and her own analysis of Plato that it is sometimes necessary to perform a hyperbolic rejoinder to those hegemonic doctrines which have sustained a monopoly upon our attention and which have ensured that injuries have remain unspoken for too long (Butler, *Bodies*, 37).

<sup>90</sup> Insofar as Butler uses Irigaray to read the dialogues of Plato for the theatre laying in the background, she performs a task similar to the “disciplining of the disciplines” recommended by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This approach would read concept for the metaphor upon which it relies and which it evokes, and would read metaphor or poetry for the concept upon which it relies and which it evokes. See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *The Spivak Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>91</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 27. And, see L. Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, ed. Alan D. Schrift. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Irigaray will show that this scenography<sup>92</sup> disavows the feminine and installs male autogenesis. By autogenesis (and the related term phallomorphosis), Irigaray means that Plato sets a stage where the masculine principle reproduces itself as the sole cause of what it reproduces, or where a form is said to generate its own sensible representation. Plato erases a feminine principle and stages his imaginary scene so that the feminine is not a cause when sensible particulars are generated. He does this, Irigaray holds, even as he ostensibly names the “feminine.”

Plato outlines this scenography in the *Timaeus*; there he explains that sensible particulars come into being only through participating in a form which is the necessary precondition for the sensible particular. When such a particular comes into being it is the product of a form that generates the form’s own sensible representation. Thus, sensible particulars only exist insofar as they instantiate a form. Butler asks, where, if sensible particulars are copies of forms and exist only to the extent that they instantiate forms, does such an instantiation take place? What is the site of this reproduction or the medium through which forms transform into sensible particulars? Irigaray claims that this “where,” the location in which forms transform into sensible particulars, is one that reflects the fearful attempt that Plato makes to reject touch or material contiguity. The rejection of touch will have serious consequences for a Western view of the body.

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<sup>92</sup> A detailed explanation of what Butler means by “scenography” is beyond the scope of this paper. By way of a brief description, however, it describes the phantasmatic landscape that one has which reassures one that one’s position of power will be insulated in relation to others. It is this scenography that makes representation feasible. Citing Irigaray, Butler describes scenography as the conditions under which systematicity is made possible; those conditions of systematicity are “the architectonics of its theatre, its framing in space-time, its geometric organization, its props, its actors, their respective positions, their dialogues, indeed their tragic relations...(their) interventions on the scene...how the specular economy works” (Butler, *Bodies*, 27).

Additionally, it will point a way towards accounting bodies in different terms or reterritorializing them.

When Plato describes how forms generate material objects, he creates a cosmogeny that takes three natures into account. The first is the process of generation, the second is that in which the generation takes place, and the third is that of which the thing generated is a resemblance naturally produced. He likens the first nature to a child which he calls “intermediate” in kind, the second nature to the receiving principle which is like a mother, and the third nature to the “source or spring” that is like a father.<sup>93</sup>

He goes on to describe the “mother” nature in more detail. It is a receiving principle that he calls the *hypodochē* (receptacle) or *chora* (womb), or “the universal nature (*physis*) that receives all bodies.”<sup>94</sup> He further calls it like a “nurse.” This *hypodochē* is the “where” that Butler wishes to interrogate. It is that place in which the instantiation of a form in a sensible particular takes place.

The *hypodochē* includes all bodies and so can apply universally. However, the universality that belongs to it must never resemble at all the eternal realities (*eidos*) in the *Timaeus*. The *hypodochē* itself has no proper shape and is not a body. However, forms or shapes (*morphe*) enter and pass through it. He claims that no one can define the *hypodochē* but at the same time insists that everyone should call it by the same name of “unnamable.” The *hypodochē* cannot be defined; nevertheless, she must always be called by the same name of “unnamable” because she always receives all things and never

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<sup>93</sup> E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 50d. See also Butler, *Bodies*, 40.

<sup>94</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 40b;50b. Butler notes that another translation of “the universal nature which receives all bodies” might be “the dynamic nature (*physis*) that receives (*dechesthai*) all the bodies that there are (*ta panta somata*).”

departs from her own nature of reception. Plato emphatically forbids her to resemble the first or third natures in his cosmogony. Addressing the way she must relate to the forms, he specifies that she “she always receives all things...and never, in any way or at any time, assumes a form (*eilephen*) like that of any of the things which enter into her...the forms that enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of eternal realities modeled after their own patterns.”<sup>95</sup>

Plato prohibits the *hypodochē* from resembling (*mimeta*) the forms in a very specific way. The *hypodochē* is only to be entered and never to enter. The term by which Plato denotes entering is *eiseinai*; it means a going toward or into, an approach and penetration. It also means a going into a *place*, so the *hypodochē* is an enclosure and cannot be that which enters into another enclosure. Butler notes that this term also metaphorically means “being brought into court” or subjected to public norms, as well as “coming into mind” or “beginning to think.”<sup>96</sup> The *hypodochē*, then, will never be the agent who enters, approaches, penetrates, brings to court, subjects to public norms or begins to think. Rather, the *hypodochē* will always be acted upon by agents who perform these actions.

Because the *hypodochē* must not assume a form like those that enter her, she cannot really be likened to any body such as a mother or a nurse. Therefore, this reality cannot be known except by analogy, what Plato calls “bastard thinking.” Additionally, since for Plato what is named must be either a universal or a particular, and she is neither, she cannot be named.<sup>97</sup> Butler notes that Plato’s use of the word “bastard” indicates one

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<sup>95</sup> Hamilton and Cairns, *Plato*, 50c. Butler, *Bodies*, 40.

<sup>96</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 40. Butler is commenting on Hamilton and Cairns, *Plato*, 50c.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 41; 43.

who is dispossessed by the patrilineage of the forms. Because the *hypodochē* cannot assume a form like those that enter her, she escapes every figuration even though Plato compares her to a nurse, mother and womb (*chora*). These images are not metaphors based on likenesses to a human form but rather represent an insistent *disfiguration* of the human form. Such a disfiguration places the *hypodochē* at the boundaries of the human that cannot be a body or *morphe*. The *hypodochē* is the very condition of the human as well as “the insistent threat of its deformation.”<sup>98</sup>

Plato constructs this *hypodochē* as that which is penetrated and generated through, but which cannot penetrate or generate. He therefore guarantees the status of the forms (father) as the exclusive originary source of life; he guarantees that there will be no “destabilizing mimesis of the masculine, and the feminine will be permanently secured as the infinitely penetrable.”<sup>99</sup>

The *hypodochē* travels from Plato’s story into Aristotle’s notion of *hyle* and finally into Plotinus’ notion of “matter.”<sup>100</sup> Matter as *hyle* does not figure largely in the Platonic corpus; for the most part the term *hyle* is introduced by Aristotle. Aristotle claims in the *Metaphysics*<sup>101</sup> that *hyle* may only be known through analogy and is not a thing. He defines it as potency (*dynamis*) and positions it as one of the four causes, also describing it as the principle of individuation. Aristotle sometimes identifies it with the *hypokeimenon*.<sup>102</sup> While Aristotle finds fault with Plato for not distinguishing between

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<sup>98</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 41.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 255 footnote 28.

<sup>100</sup> Butler follows the analysis of the hypodochē and matter that Irigaray makes in “Une Mère de Glace.” See Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

<sup>101</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Hugh Lawson-Tancred, trans. New York: Penguin Classics, 1999. 1036a. Also see *Bodies*, 253 fn 22.

<sup>102</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, David Bostock, ed., Robin Waterfield, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 1, 192a.

*hyle* and *steresis* (privation), he still identifies the notion of Plato's receptacle, or the *hypodochē*, with *hyle*.<sup>103</sup>

As is the case for the Platonic *hypodochē*, Aristotelian *hyle* is indestructible, may only be perceived through "bastard reasoning," and cannot be defined.<sup>104</sup> Although Plato only construes the *hypodochē* as place or as *chora*, after Aristotle creates a direct philosophical explanation of matter, Plotinus reconstructs Plato's doctrine of matter and more specifically links the *hypodochē* to Aristotelian *hyle*.<sup>105</sup> Thus, matter has a genealogy that (at least in part) begins with the *hypodochē* (or *chora*) travels through *hyle* and into "matter." It is this synthetic notion of the *hypodochē* as "hyle" or "matter" that Irigaray and Butler consider. Plato also suggests that the appetites, the tokens of materiality for the soul, if they go unmastered in a (presumed) male soul, may come back as a woman and then a beast. Woman thereby represents a descent into materiality and the feminine *hypodochē* stands as the predecessor to "matter."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 209b, also see Butler, *Bodies*, fn 22, 253.

<sup>104</sup> Only *eidos*, and not matter, may be defined. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1035b. See Butler, *Bodies*, 253 fn 22.

<sup>105</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 253 fn 22.

<sup>106</sup> However, Butler notes that this early cosmogony in the *Timaeus*, calls for a rewrite since it suggests that there might be resemblance between the masculine and the feminine; this resemblance is specifically what Plato prohibits as he introduces the receptacle that may never resemble the form or its sensible representation. See Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 43. Also, Butler describes the two "types" of matter (matter and the matter that exceeds matter) as two modes of matter: one that is "a metaphysical concept that serves a phallogocentrism" and a second that is "an ungrounded figure, worrisomely speculative and catachrestic, that marks for her [Irigaray] the possible site of a critical mime," (Butler, *Bodies*, 47). The critical mimesis that Irigaray recommends represents a disruptive and liberatory possibility for women, who exist as the outside, to expose the instabilities of the inside: "To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the 'perceptible,' of 'matter'—to 'ideas,' in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible,' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover up of a possible operation of the feminine in language." Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine," 76. See *Bodies*, 47. While the foregoing quote may sound as if Irigaray suggests that women have an essential nature which may operate in language, Butler disagrees and explains that Irigaray considers *miming* to be that very operation of the feminine in language. The critical mime participates in what she mimes, and if she mimes the language of phallogocentrism, then hers is only a feminine language

Irigaray claims that the sterility of such a feminized *hypodochē-chora* creates a sterile feminine matter: the *hypodochē-chora* is “female in receptivity only and not in pregnancy... castrated of that impregnating power which belongs only to the unchangeably masculine.”<sup>107</sup> Matter and femininity become the necessary support for male autogenesis (or the process of a masculine principle acting as the sole cause of reproducing its sensible representation without a feminine principle also being a cause of the reproduction).

This sterility is accomplished in part, Butler claims, when Plato imagines the *hypodochē-chora* not as the dynamis of *physis* (the *nature* from which the *hypodochē* does not depart) but as a place. “She will be entered,” Plato states, “and will give forth a further instance of what enters her, but she will never resemble either the formative principle or that which it creates.”<sup>108</sup> Butler claims that in this scenography some of the potency and dynamism that is included in the meaning of *physis* is suppressed and instead figured as *hypodochē-chora* or as a place.<sup>109</sup> These map onto a feminine that makes no contribution in reproduction. The feminine is figured as a body without boundary or dynamism that is figured as a place or space.

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to the degree that she reworks a phallogocentrism that implicates the feminine in its own terms by its own demand. Irigaray explains that to play at mimesis means “‘to unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere*: another case of the persistence of ‘matter’...” or of the “excess” of matter and of femininity (Butler, *Bodies*, 47-48). Thus, Irigaray’s mime exposes what a Platonic phallogocentric discourse would hide; she exposes the logically inconsistent scene of the *chora* which Plato calls unnamable and then authoritatively names; most importantly, perhaps, she exposes the political interest Plato had in rendering the feminine nameless and non-existent while keeping the masculine form sovereign and contiguously distant from his subjects. She exposes the artificial creation that Plato makes of the *chora* in order to substantiate the way he conceptually separates form and the sensible particular from contiguity. Finally, she points to the emergence of contiguity in metonymy as one way of reasserting the “outside” of Plato’s dyad and of exposing the arbitrary scenography that he creates.

<sup>107</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 42.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Femininity becomes the “inscriptional space” of phallogocentrism insofar as it is a specular surface which takes on itself the marks of a masculine signifying act to render a false reflection and guarantee of the self-sufficient phallus while making no contribution of its own.<sup>110</sup> This exclusion of the feminine, Irigaray claims, mobilizes the binary of matter and form as the differentiating relation between masculine and feminine. *This exclusion causes the masculine to occupy both terms of the binary opposition, even as it ostensibly names the feminine. So, there are in fact two refracted fantasies of masculinity, one called masculine and one catachrestically called feminine.* Butler explains that in the place of a femininity that contributes to the fetus in reproduction, the *hypodoché* installs a phallic form that reproduces exclusively and always through itself. It does this through the feminine but with no assistance from her.<sup>111</sup> As a result, the problem is not (principally) that the feminine is associated with matter, but rather that the speaking of matter casts the feminine outside of the form/matter and universal/particular binarisms. To speak about matter, then, is not to invoke the feminine that is associated with it, but, rather, to ensure that such speech about the feminine does not occur.

In order to criticize this sterile femininity, and the feminine that is cast outside of the form/matter binary, Irigaray formulates two categories for the feminine: the “specular” feminine and the “excessive” feminine.

The specular feminine refers to the feminine that Plato represents through the *hypodoché* or receptacle in the *eidos/hypodoché* or form/receptacle binary. The specular feminine is a position called feminine but which really acts as a mirror of masculinity: specular femininity reflects back to masculinity the image of itself that masculinity

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>111</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 42.

wishes to see. Hence, the specular feminine is actually a second pole of masculinity that is defined by and occupied by masculinity. The specular feminine, for this reason, is an instance of catachresis.

This specular femininity is defined by the nurse-receptacle. The nurse-receptacle “freezes” the feminine as “that which is necessary for reproduction of the human but which is itself not human and which is in no way to be construed as the formative principle of the human form that is, as it were, produced through it.”<sup>112</sup> At the same time, specular femininity cannot really be named at all and is not really a mode.

The specular feminine also acts as a device in Plato’s story for narrow definition of the feminine. It excludes that in the feminine which resists the figure of the nurse-receptacle. Plato narrowly defines the *hypodochē* in order to prohibit the generation of other possible representations of the feminine that an undesignated feminine might produce. Even as Plato claims that the *hypodochē* cannot be named because it is neither a particular nor a universal,<sup>113</sup> he calls the *hypodochē* an impossible word; he designates it as the *unnamable* and stipulates that his naming must be the only authoritative one. He thereby makes the receptacle an impossible word that cannot be spoken because it has no ontological determination; if one does refer to it, she uses language improperly and imputes being to something that does not have it. Butler claims that Plato’s prescription that the receptacle *cannot* be named is actually Plato’s command that it *ought* not to be named. It is Plato’s prohibition against allowing the receptacle to be represented. Since

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<sup>112</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 42. See also P. DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (University of Chicago Press Chicago, 1988). And Butler, *Bodies*, fn 30, 255.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. “[B]ecause for Plato anything that can be named is either a universal or a particular, the receptacle cannot be named. Taking speculative license, and wandering into what he himself calls ‘a strange and unwonted inquiry’ (48d), Plato nevertheless proceeds to name what cannot be properly named, invoking a catachresis in order to describe the receptacle as a universal receiver of bodies even as it cannot be a universal, for, if it were, it would participate in those eternal realities from which it is excluded.”

Plato does offer a representation of the receptacle and claims that his must be the only authoritative name, Butler concludes that Plato authorizes a single representation of the feminine through which he intends to prohibit the proliferation of representational possibilities that the undesignated might produce.

Further, because the receptacle cannot be properly named it bounds and threatens the story that Plato tells. He must control its threat through forcibly imposed rules of naming, specifying that the *hypodochē* “must always be called the same” and “never in any way at any time” depart from her nature of reception. Butler calls Plato’s naming a penetration into the receptacle that allows him in the very telling of his story about the phallographic genesis of objects to enact that phallographosis. By so doing, Irigaray claims, Plato posits what he cannot posit and thereby creates a “founding inscription that secures this place as inscriptional space...a violent erasure that is an impossible yet necessary site for all further inscriptions.”<sup>114</sup> This is the specular feminine.

The excessive feminine, on the other hand, is the feminine that is cast out of the form/matter binary. It is produced through the story of the *hypodochē*, or the story of the specular feminine. The feminine in general must exceed its figuration in the story of the *hypodochē* in the same way that the *hypodochē* exceeds its figuration. Like the *hypodochē*, the feminine is an unthematizable, impossible yet necessary foundation for all that may be figured. The *hypodochē* can never be collapsed into any of the figures that it occasions, such as the mother, nurse or womb, because, as mentioned, the *hypodochē* can never resemble the forms or their sensible representation. By conflating nurse, womb, mother and *hypodochē* Plato’s discourse produces an excessive femininity

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

that acts as an “outside.”<sup>115</sup> In this outside there persists the feminine that the figure of the *hypodoché* (being unnamable and unfigurable) cannot capture, but which nevertheless persists.

The excessive feminine is erased and excluded from the binary of the masculine and the specular feminine (and matter and form). It exceeds this binary as the *excessive* feminine. The excessive feminine is the “outside” where the feminine which is not captured by the figure of the *hypodoché* remains.

Irigaray attempts, Butler claims, to expose the specular feminine as a violent erasure which is the pretension upon which Plato grounds his scenography. Irigaray makes what Plato has forced to be ostensibly outside his scenography—the excessive feminine—to emerge as the necessary, indispensable inside of his scenography. In so doing, she introduces that which he excludes—excessive femininity—back into his system.<sup>116</sup> She introduces excessive femininity back into his system by exposing

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Butler notes that even using the term “excessive femininity” is a naming that cannot work because in this mode “the feminine, strictly speaking, cannot be named at all and, indeed, is not a mode.” For Irigaray the ‘feminine’ cannot be said to be in any sense; it does not participate in ontology. “Grammar fails us” as the feminine is set under erasure as the impossible necessity that enables any ontology. It is disavowed and a remnant of the feminine stays as the “inscriptional space...the specular surface which receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a ‘false’ reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency, without making any contribution of its own.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. Butler describes the method by which Irigaray chooses to perform this exposure as an act of critical *mimesis*. While Irigaray utilizes the terminology and scenography of Plato to make her argument and therefore mimes his grand tale of male autogenesis, she only does so as a mime that displaces the origin that Plato posits. “This is citation,” Butler avers, “not as enslavement or simple reiteration of the original, but as an insubordination that appears to take place within the very terms of the original, and which calls into question the power of origination that Plato appears to claim for himself,” (Butler, *Bodies*, 45). Also, Irigaray claims that the violent erasure of the feminine that Plato performs is based upon his rejection of material contiguity, or matter that touches matter. She counters, however, that ethical relations must be based upon material contiguity. She specifies that material contiguity takes the form of closeness, proximity and intimacy that would refigure hegemonic views of reciprocity and respect. Such a refiguration would resist traditional notions of reciprocal exchange (such as relations of intimacy) based upon violent erasure, substitutability, and appropriation. Psychoanalytically, Irigaray understands material closeness as “the uncertain separation of boundaries between maternal body and infant;” she explains that the uncertain separation that represents material closeness reemerges in language as the metonymic

specular femininity as a pole of masculinity that is defined by the negation of excessive femininity.

Further, both the masculine as bodiless reason and the specular feminine are defined by an imagined spatial position in relation to knowledge, agency and touch. Plato attributes self-sufficiency, sovereignty, knowledge and agency to the form by positioning the form as distant from the touch of sensible particulars. This spatial position associates bodiless masculine reason with form and it also associates specular femininity as that through which the forms transform into sensible particulars. The imagined *places* on the stage that these characters assume make up the stuff of Plato's fantasy of masculinity and specular femininity.

Irigaray describes this imagined spatial distance as a break with material contiguity, or the touch of matter to matter. She claims that Plato conceals a cut that takes place between the form, receptacle and sensible particular; this is ultimately a break between the masculine and the feminine or feminized "matter." According to Irigaray, this break with contiguity is specifically opposed to an order of relations based upon closeness, proximity and intimacy. Butler adds that Plato's story sets the masculine principle opposite all of those considered less rational because they fill the role of "laboring to reproduce the conditions of private life" in close proximity.<sup>117</sup> This opposition, couched in Plato's concept of the "*hypodochē*" (and both the "specular" and "excessive" feminine that it necessitates) serves to conceal a cut with material touch.<sup>118</sup>

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proximity of signs. Metonymy operates on the basis of association by literal contiguity, for example, in the way that hard work is associated with sweat.

<sup>117</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 48.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. Butler notes that Irigaray presumes an order of contiguity prior to concept or matter that the concept of matter tries to conceal. "[P]hilosophical systems are built on 'a break with material contiguity,'

Plato inserts distance between the form and sensible particular to achieve this. The concepts of *hypodochē* and form serve the agenda that Plato has to reserve a self-sufficient, autogenic sovereignty for the form by making the form not materially touch the sensible particulars; the form is, rather, opposed to and superior to the realm of the sensible particulars.

Once Plato secures the form as untouchable, however, it makes little intuitive sense how the form manages to produce its sensible representation in the sensible particulars when the form never comes into contact with them. In order to cover over this problem which Plato causes when he places the form and the sensible particulars so far away from each other, or when he cuts their material touch, he tells a story about the *hypodochē-chora* to be a reality which will connect the two but which he may also invisibilize and never name. According to Butler, this is to materialize a bodiless reason. Further, it is to dematerialize all other bodies while covering over the fact that these ‘bodiless’ bodies perform the labor of being and maintaining the body for the masculine principle of bodiless reason.

Irigaray ultimately describes Plato’s response to touch as hysterical, or as a hysterical fear of the possibility of touch being an attribute of masculinity, knowledge and agency. The *hypodochē* will thus never appear to be contiguous with the sovereign form, either. It cannot be if it does not exist in a way that can be referred to the form. Plato manages in this way to refer to matter even as matter will never take on genuine

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and that the concept of matter constitutes and conceals that rupture or cut (*la coupure*)... psychoanalytically that material closeness is understood as the uncertain separation of boundaries between maternal body and infant, relations that reemerge in language as the metonymic proximity of signs. Insofar as concepts, like matter and form, repudiate and conceal the metonymic signifying chains from which they are composed, they serve the phallogocentric purpose of breaking with that maternal/material contiguity.”

ontological significance for him. And, he ensures that there is a non-material sovereign form that is kept far away from the touch of sensible particulars. Thus, Plato is motivated to create a scenography of the *hypodoché* (or the excluded feminine) by a fear of the material touching closeness between form (identified with the masculine) and sensible particulars.<sup>119</sup>

Later in the dissertation I will suggest that to rearrange the spatial position in this scene, to close knowledge, agency and the touch of sensible particulars, is to contest the division of the masculine and the specular feminine, and therefore to contest the division of the specular and the excessive feminine. Thus, to bring knowledge, agency and touch close together on this stage is to violate the positions of props in that scene, and to throw a different gendered scene into motion. Put in another way, Plato's scene announces that to act, to know and to touch are significant indicators of gender: to perform these acts through an imagined distance from each other is to repeat a gendered position of specular femininity or bodiless masculinity. Similarly, to know, to act and to touch through an imagined connectedness or closeness of these activities, is to repeat a violation of Plato's gendered positions.

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<sup>119</sup> Butler notes that Margaret Whitford understands the contiguity that exceeds the concept of matter to which Irigaray refers as the "symbolic articulation proper to women" but not as a natural relation. Whitford explains that feminine and masculine economies are never fully separable and so contiguous relations exist between them and therefore cannot exist exclusively in the realm of the feminine. See M. Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (Other, 1991), 177. And see Butler, *Bodies*, 47. Further, Irigaray's suggestion that contiguity disrupts the enumeration of the sexes is an implicit argument with Lacan's *Encore*; it substantiates one aspect of how the feminine is "not one." See J. Lacan, "Le Séminaire, Livre XX, *Encore*," Paris: Seuil (1975). And, see Butler, *Bodies*, fn 40, 256. Also, because Irigaray views metonymy as the emergence of material contiguity in language, to figure the feminine metonymically has the same effect; it contests the hierarchical binarism of masculine/feminine that parallels the hierarchical binarism of form/matter. Further, Irigaray holds that if one figures the feminine as or through the contiguous, she troubles the enumeration of the sexes as "first" and "second" sex. This follows from the way that to figure matter as or through the contiguous would disrupt the delineation of form and matter as superior and inferior, or as source and effect.

Plato does not offer bodies in his scenography, but a collapsing and displacement of bodily positions that secure his fantasy of heterosexual intercourse. The receptacle, for example, is not a woman but is the figure that women become within the dream-world of his scenography.<sup>120</sup>

This figure that women become in the dream-world of Western gendered norms suggests that women may be perceived as spaces for the reproduction of other bodies that the figure of men originate and through which men hope to see themselves represented in new men that are produced. It suggests that women are necessary to perform the activities that *produce and maintain bodies in close proximity*, a place filled by those who labor “to reproduce the conditions of private life,” even as women are made invisible by lacking agency and authority with respect to the very bodies that they produce and maintain, and by being subordinated to men.<sup>121</sup> Women in this fantasy become those things which masculine men circulate and exchange, but do not address as persons.<sup>122</sup> In addition, those bodies associated with the feminine will be linked with a type of threat: deformation, chaos, lack of pattern, lack of reason and lack of authority

While women seem to be associated in Plato’s dream-world with close proximity, what kind of “closeness” does the feminine principle have to bodies in Plato’s story? A body without surface cannot touch other bodies in the way that we usually conceive the encounter of touch. The *hypodochē-chora* has no bodily boundaries and cannot resemble a form or a sensible particular because it has no ontological form; thus it cannot be imagined or seen. Further, it cannot be spoken of by others, since they would be forced

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<sup>120</sup> *Bodies*, 54.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>122</sup> This interpretation is the one that Irigaray also takes in L. Irigaray, “Women on the Market,” *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift. (New York, Routledge, 1997).

into “bastard reasoning” if they tried to do so. Nevertheless, the *hypodochē-chora* is necessary for the production and maintenance of other bodies, a place filled by those who labor “to reproduce the conditions of private life.”<sup>123</sup> Obviously, the *hypodochē* also cannot represent itself in this schema. This is important because it means the *hypodochē* does its work of reproducing the conditions of private life without inciting consideration for its needs in the way that other bodies that may represent themselves would take consideration of their needs when they do their work. In addition, it is important because the *hypodochē* becomes a place upon which others act in order to achieve their goals in such a fashion that they need not consider the body of the *hypodochē* or its needs. It follows that others initiate action for the *hypodochē* and act upon it or through it and thereby fulfill “their own patterns and realities.” Further, the aversion and disgust that Plato inspires by characterizing the *hypodochē* as chaos and as the tendency towards the deformation of human bodies ensures that others will harbor suspicion of such a non-masculine body should she act like a human body with its own ends.

Ultimately, such a circulation of bodily repetition informed by stories such as the *hypodochē* may produce in the non-masculine body the imagination that she is the deformation of the human and the tendency toward chaos such that she would not attempt to claim the actions of a body with its own ends. She might normalize the lack of agency as natural and as appropriate to her. So, given these attributes of the *hypodochē*, what type of closeness does Plato create between such a feminine principle and bodies? It is an ambivalent one at best. Some say it is reflected in lived experience as erotic

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<sup>123</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 49.

domination.<sup>124</sup> Some have said that the story is an attempt to problematically imagine a world without women.<sup>125</sup> Others have said that the *hypodochē* was a precedent for the contemporary way of imagining the modern mother who is a “set of functions” rather than a person. This last example is a good illustration of how a regime shaped by fantasies similar to those of Plato still holds sway in contemporary gendered subjectivity. Because of this, I will turn to it in more detail.

Studies in contemporary psychology describe the way that children, husbands and others in contemporary Western society view a mother as a set of functions rather than as a person who has bodily needs in the same way that other persons in the household have them.<sup>126</sup> As a result, the family does not find it strange to assume that the mother will not take time for her personal interests. Rather, they find it normal that she should spend her time doing the labor of maintaining the others in the family in order to support real personal interests that other members of the family have. And, somehow, the family feels that this should produce happiness in the mother because such a disposition is natural to a mother. Thus, such studies show that women are associated with maintaining

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<sup>124</sup>J. Benjamin, "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination," *Feminist Studies* volume 6, number 1 (1980). She holds that one develops and confirms selfhood through a sense of being able to affect another through the acts one performs. When another recognizes our act we confirm our own reality as well as develop an appreciation for the other's subjectivity. If we act and have no affect on the other or if the other does not recognize our act, we feel powerless. Benjamin calls the effect we have on another "negation" insofar as we change the other upon whom we act by altering her old form. If we act to completely negate the other then there is no one left to recognize us. If we do not completely negate them or completely control them, they remain through the change and are able to recognize the change we have made in them. It is requisite, then, that the other not dissolve under the force of one's actions. "The other must simultaneously maintain his or her integrity, as well as be affected" (151). It requires a "mutual recognition between subjects in which both partake of the contradictory elements of negation and recognition." (153). The relationship of domination emerges when the two elements are split; when one member of the relationship desires and negates, while the other only recognizes. The relationship of domination may be seen as a failure of differentiation and of wholeness when this tension is lost. It becomes a mingling of control and submission rather than of affecting and recognizing.

<sup>125</sup> Turid Karlsen Seim, "Descent and Divine Paternity in the Gospel of John: Does the Mother Matter?," *New Testament Studies* 51.3 (2005).

<sup>126</sup> I will unfold this group of studies shortly when I describe the 'good mother.'

bodies, but that women are also associated with not having the personal interests and boundaries that other bodied-people have. In some sense the woman portrayed by these studies is a body without boundary, or without defined surface. The fantasy of the “empathic mother” that has dominated psychological recommendations for women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fuels this phenomenon.

The fantasy of the “empathic mother” directed the recommendations that therapists gave to women beginning in the 1940s. It emphasizes certain traits of femininity that continue to define the “good woman” today. Shari Thurer, a historian of 20<sup>th</sup> century motherhood, shows that this “empathic mother” is ostensibly defined by how continuously she can subordinate her awareness of herself to the awareness of her baby. As we shall see after a closer examination of the empathic mother, she ultimately subordinates her awareness of herself to the awareness that a group of male experts have of her. However, on the popular surface the “empathic mother” appears to be a story about mother and child in which the mother subordinates her awareness to the awareness that she has of her baby.

Dr. Benjamin Spock was a pediatrician and pioneer of empathic mothering and the correlate idea of “mother love;” his work recommends that the empathic mother subordinate her awareness of herself to the awareness that she has of her baby. In 1946 Spock’s *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* became the standard reference in American houses and gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Spock especially sought to eliminate guiltiness in children and perhaps unwittingly transferred it to mothers. He promoted relaxed discipline and play as healthy and recommended a previously unheard of amount of autonomy for the child. His view of the child-parent

relationship proclaimed “there are no problem children, only problem parents.”<sup>127</sup> Associated with “permissive child-rearing,” this psychology saw the postwar baby as a “gentle and sensitive creature whose instincts were reasonable needs, requiring facilitation, free expression and gratification.”<sup>128</sup> As Thurer notes, the ‘good’ mother that he constructed in this relationship is “ever-present, all-providing, inexhaustibly patient and tactful, and anticipates her child’s every need.” To be a good mother she must have “relentless tenderness” and “total availability.”<sup>129</sup> The mother’s outlook is a honed exclusive attention to the baby’s needs. As the fantasy of Plato’s *hypodochē* stipulated that the *hypodochē* could never resemble the forms of bodies and so had no definable contour, the empathic mother is to suppress her awareness of her own bodily contour and understand her own awareness of bodies by recognizing signs in the contours of the baby’s bodily expression. In addition, it is the nature of the *hypodochē* to be passed through and to never, at any time, imitate the initiating activity associated with the forms and associated with sensible bodies that penetrate other bodies through touch. In similar fashion, the body of the child initiates action for the empathic mother’s body and acts upon it.

Playing on the theme of the mother’s total attention to the expressions of the baby, much midcentury psychoanalytic recommendation colluded to elide the personhood of the mother into the personhood of the baby and to define mothers as non-persons who attended to the personhood of babies. It assumed that motherhood was the child’s drama, with mom in a supporting role. “The plot was played out against, or with, a female

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<sup>127</sup> S. Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 254.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-56.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-59; 66.

parent,” according to Thurer, “whose job it was to service her child’s needs and then disappear into the scenery.”<sup>130</sup> Many psychoanalysts asked patients to reconstruct their childhood but did not ask mothers to reconstruct their maternal experience of children. Psychoanalysis predominantly considered motherhood according to the baby’s experience.<sup>131</sup> Maternal sacrifice was styled as normal and good, creating a masochist definition of motherhood and of femininity. Professionals now popularly articulated healthy femininity as a woman’s willingness to be a masochist. In the late 1940s Helene Deutsch argued this in her second volume on the psychology of women called *Motherhood*. For a mother, Deutsch explained, maternal experience necessarily embraced masochism. This is because for the woman motherhood “represents an adjustment to the realities of her life, in which many of the normal female functions involve a combination of pain and pleasure, even joy, such as defloration and childbirth.”<sup>132</sup> The assumed masochism of the mother and the assumed purity of the baby’s wish combined to recommend that that the baby’s wish be the masochistic mother’s command.

In addition, the shape of this masochism was not limited to “defloration” and childbirth, experiences that were infrequent by comparison to the daily tasks of mothering. Rather, they extended into the continuous suppression that the mother must make of her awareness of herself and her needs as a body. This suppression of self performed by the mother was aided by what I will call here “mother threat.” “Mother threat” proclaimed that if the mother strayed at all from achieving the actions of the

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 279,

<sup>132</sup> See H. Deutsch, “The Psychology of Women.” In *Motherhood 2*. (1945). Thurer, *Myths*, 280.

empathic mother, she caused irreversible derangement in her child and thus posed a constant threat to its mental health. The father was not capable of inflicting this derangement. During the 1970s fathers were newly portrayed as tender and as emotively caring for their children. However, this only led for the dad, according to Thurer, to a “newfound enjoyment in his children” and not to engagement in the deluge of required parenting practices that psychologists doled out. Neither did this newfound enjoyment by fathers engage them in the “nitty-gritty” of the daily care of their children. Fathers, as a result, were not responsible for the success or failure of the impossible achievement of a well-balanced child; they were not responsible for performing the actual tasks that were demanded by the “baby improvement programs” (of which I will speak in a moment). Men claimed that they did not perform tasks because mothers did not want to share the babies, but women claimed that men devised ingenious ways to avoid onerous chores (like cleaning up the mess and chauffeuring kids) because they only enjoyed the “positive aspects of childcare” like conception, birth and ball games.<sup>133</sup>

As a result of this division of labor, mother came to be viewed as the primary agent in the child’s development as well as the primary obstacle to it. Her agency, however, was emphasized as a tenuous and dangerous one. The damaging character, or “mother threat” was emphasized in literature, media, sociology, psychology and even feminism. The 1950s were no longer bound by Victorian propriety and opened on new forms of “mother bashing.” In novels in the first half of the century, even that of Virginia

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<sup>133</sup> Thurer, *Myths*, 267.

Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, mothers are killed or silenced so that the protagonist of the novel can develop in a healthier way.<sup>134</sup>

Further encouraging the tenuous nature of mother threat, Margaret Mahler, arguably the most important object-relations theorist in the United States, explicitly stated that if mothers were not continually available to children until the age of three they would derange their children.<sup>135</sup> If mothers failed in this, Mahler claimed, they necessarily create “psychotic disorganization” in the child. The general public took this to literally mean that empathic mothers of young children were not to be otherwise engaged for the first three years of their children's lives lest they produce psychotic children.<sup>136</sup> Another influential psychological text, *The Rights of Infants*, in 1943 insisted that infants had the right to constant attention and physical contact, including that they should sleep in bed with the mother. Without this treatment, *The Rights* announced, infants are irreversibly damaged.<sup>137</sup> The working mother, it was said, deprived the child of its natural right to her in the same way that a mother who went to war or prison deprived that same child.<sup>138</sup> Although significant studies in the 1950s contradicted this and showed that the temperament of the child, not a bad mother, was the strongest predictor of maladjustment, these studies held little public sway and did not find their way into popular psychological

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 267. A reference to Woolf, Virginia. *To The Lighthouse*. London: Hogarth Press, 1927..

<sup>135</sup> According to popular psychological recommendations continuing through the 1970s mothers had at least to be full time care-givers who lived at home in order not to produce mentally deranged children. This condemned about two-thirds of mothers in the US who worked outside the home; mother rhetoric failed to notice them and fanned a fantasy of motherhood that claimed any ‘good mother’ could and would stay at home full-time. Most working mothers, however, had no choice but to work to support their children.

<sup>136</sup> Thurer, *Myths*, 284.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-73.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

books or treatment rooms.<sup>139</sup> Many day care centers followed up on Mahler's advice and refused to take children under four years old. Donald Winnicott, continuing this trend in the late 1970s, explained that the mother must not "retaliate against her baby's 'usage' of her" lest she cause psychosis.<sup>140</sup> Mother threat evolved between the 1940s and 1980s to describe the 'overprotective mom,' who won't let go and who protrudes into every aspect of the child's life as well as the 'neglectful mother' who did not cuddle the child enough; a popular psychological text of the 1950s estimated that between 40 and 50 percent of all mothers were 'rejecting, over-solicitous, or dominating.'<sup>141</sup> Mother threat in the empathic mother fantasy echoes the *hypodoché* that persistently threatens to deform and introduce chaos into the ordered body, even as the *hypodoché* is necessary to sustain the existence of bodies especially through labor that reproduces the conditions of private life.

With all the press about mother threat one might ask: how could one tell if a mother was a threat to her child's mental health rather than an empathic mother? Measures emerged in the form of tasks that a mother must accomplish to prove her appropriate empathy. Beginning in the 1950s child experts strove to be more sensitive to babies by giving recommendations to mothers that meant more labor for them. It was impossible to spoil an infant and the demands made by infants now dictated the mother's routine:

The good postwar mother gave her child undivided attention lest she miss an opportunity to toilet train or 'cognitively stimulate.' Rather than pursue her own ends in life, she was to maneuver, pretend, and manipulate so that her child would

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-73.

become ‘well-adjusted’ ... any missed cue... on her part could spell both cognitive and psychological harm.

The cognitive stimulation of the fifties developed in the seventies into ‘baby improvement programs.’ These required that moms teach babies to read with flashcards and purchase an ever-growing list of recommended toys to cognitively stimulate the babies; these programs further require that mom must be the presenter of these toys and that she must present them to the baby with empathy. Moms were told that they could miss a critical period of development if they fail on any of these scores.<sup>142</sup> Psychologists recommended to mothers impossibly long lists of tasks with which they must empathically engage their babies in order for them to be considered “stable” or healthy mothers that would produce “well-adjusted” children. The sheer volume of these tasks underscored the impossibility that mothers could prove their empathy and mental “health” and anticipated the devolution of these mothers into threatening mothers.

At the same time, psychologists introduced another unprecedented requirement that mothers must fulfill in order to prove their empathy and avoid their inherent threat. Mothers must have “mother love” defined as an inner state of fulfillment or “fun” that mothers experience when they engage in the tasks of mothering; further, they must have this fun in order to transfer an experience of this fulfillment to their infants who absorb it from them. Literature and practitioners told mothers and their families that “mother love” and motherhood were necessary healthy developmental stages for all women and that mother love and motherhood should supplant all other possible identities for women. “It was understood,” Thurer notes, “that the baby’s pleasure was the highest good, but this was not experienced as a burden by the unneurotic mother, because the baby’s

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 263-65.

pleasure was her pleasure... the good mother has no needs of her own.”<sup>143</sup> If a mother failed to enjoy “mother love” as she cleaned up the baby, she was a mentally sick woman and also a threatening mother that deranged her child. She became mother threat.

In addition, following the dominant trend to depict mothers in psychological studies as mentally unstable, professionals warned that mothers harbored unconscious hostility towards their babies. Such unconscious hostility, by its very virtue of being unconscious, could ruin the mother love of these women and derange their children while the women were unaware of the violence they were committing. A mother might think that she had mother love, but she might not know if she really had it or if she was unconsciously just pretending. “If she only pretended and did not *really* enjoy diapering a baby,” Thurer tells us, “she ruined it.” The real test of whether she harbored hidden hostility lay in the balance or imbalance that she produced in her child’s demeanor. The crankiness, withdrawal, or school phobia of an infant or child all revealed maternal ineptitude and the unconscious hostility she unleashed.<sup>144</sup> Empathy in mothers was thus defined as wholly opposed to hostility, whether conscious or unconscious, and the mother’s empathy or hostility was proven through her child’s behavior. The “unconscious” nature of this hostility in the fantasy of the empathic mother aligns with the threat of the *chora* that is threatening because it is irrational, inaccessible to reason and therefore inconceivable and uncontrollable. It could erupt at any moment despite the vigilance of reason.

Sarah Ruddick records the contemporary backlash that she met in mothers when she suggested that motherhood has hostile elements: “Once, when I insisted that mothers

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, 256.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 261.

dominate, humiliate, hate, and hit, a listener complained that I made mothering sound like ‘war, not love.’” The love of the empathic mother is a kind of ‘peacefulness’ Ruddick explains that is “a sweet, appeasing gentleness that gives peace a bad name while alienating almost anyone who had a mother or is one.”<sup>145</sup>

Sentimental descriptions of empathic mothering that bury anger and hostility are, Ruddick claims, demoralizing and mind-numbing. The promptings of ‘experts’ and family members when a mother’s child is delinquent make her lack confidence that she can fill the role of the ideal mother. She is angry and resentful when she remembers episodes of violence and neglect, and riddles her life with secrets that she cannot share with the closest of friends. She also creates a complement to the idealized good empathic mother: the fantasy of the bad mother. A mother may welcome the idea of the bad mother as a paradoxical protection from her sense of being bad. “The Really Bad Mother’s evils are specific, avoidable, and worse than her own. Sometimes, a competitive mother will describe her neighbor as ‘bad’ in order to claim a superiority of which she is uncertain.”<sup>146</sup> However, when her children have bad days the good empathic mother must find in herself the same ‘evil.’ As psychiatric expert of the late 1940s Edward Strecker warns, you can’t tell a bad mother by looking at her, “you know bad mothers by their children.”<sup>147</sup> Fathers, on the other hand, were portrayed as immune from this judgment.

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<sup>145</sup> Sara Ruddick, “Talking About Mothers” in M. Davey, *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001). 188.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 190. Of course, this dominant maternal mystique never addressed federal financial support for mothers, help from men, or a child-care ideology that was sensitive to women as well as children. Nevertheless, it made it *seem* that mothers mattered, even as it only considered the needs of children and ultimately, male experts. See Thurer, *Myths*, 288.

To reinforce the caution that mothers must take against the emergence of unconscious hostility, mothers are taught to distrust as inept their assessment of the needs of their children and to defer instead for an appropriate assessment of the children's needs to the advice of experts. A 1975 study illustrates popular belief about the lack of skill—and consequent lack of authority—that mothers have in the practice of mothering. In that study popular opinion evaluates the skill level and the difficulty of the work of mothering as equivalent to that executed by a dog pound attendant, a mud mixer helper and a shoveler of chicken offal into a container.<sup>148</sup>

This was the popular belief about the skill executed by the mother who successfully completed the tasks of mothering; the work appears so easy that anyone should be able to do it. However, if she fails the task, popular belief changes its position. When she fails, her work is so important and precise that if anything goes wrong with the child, the mother has irreversibly damaged the child's mental health.<sup>149</sup> Pediatricians, Selective Service officials, welfare workers, psychiatrists and teachers notoriously treat mothers condescendingly and belittle their advice.<sup>150</sup> Such experts who act as intelligent agency for the mother reveal the truer audience to which a mother must subordinate her awareness of herself. Although it might appear that baby is dictating mother's agency, in the end it is in large part the collective voice of 'experts' in the fields of pediatrics, psychiatry and other disciplines—overwhelmingly the voice of male experts—to which mother must attend. Men tend to be highly concentrated in the academic positions of expertise that inform such disciplines and women tend to over-represent the lowest paid

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<sup>148</sup> Davey, *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*, 190.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>150</sup> Thurer, *Myths*, 193.

professionals who practically consume and pass on expertise generated by male consensus.<sup>151</sup> It appears, then, that a masculine agency initiates action for the empathic mother, while the expressions of the body of the infant are the intermediary cause. The more direct cause, even if not more immediate, is the commands of masculine experts that tell mothers to subordinate their awareness of themselves to the awareness of the outline of the expressions that male experts have told them to find in the child's body. In the *Timaeus* Plato secured the sovereignty of the masculine form by making the form not materially touch the sensible particulars and positioning it at a distance from them even as it supplied the rational organization for them. The fantasy of the empathic mother sets the mother and child in bold relief but tells a more subtle story about masculine expertise. This expertise will not touch the child nor maintain its existence in private life, but will remain the reasonable advices that work from a distance through the empathic mother to produce in the contours of the expressions of the child body a desire for expert masculine

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<sup>151</sup> Myriad studies report that in the fields of medicine, psychiatry, law and education, those fields that inform the condescending advice that pediatricians, Selective Service officials, welfare workers, psychiatrists and teachers pass on to mothers, a glass ceiling ensures that men will dominate the positions of experts. According to some recent studies in psychiatry, even though women enter the field they do not pursue an academic career in the way that men do primarily because they must do the work of their career and care for the bodies of children, men and house while men do not share that labor. This prevents mothers from shaping what the experts say, so that they remain a recipient of the advice of experts. Sue Paish, for example, explains that there is still a societal expectation that women should be maintaining the work of care for families at home while simultaneously pursuing their careers, while men are expected to be cared for by women while they pursue theirs. The women in a recent survey at Stanford who planned to pursue academic psychiatry either had children who had grown or did not plan to have children. Women mothers at Stanford, on the other hand, did not plan to pursue academic psychiatry and also made fewer publications, fewer applications fewer grants, worked fewer hours and had fewer resources provided by the school because they were less available than men; they were working another full-time job maintaining husband, children and house. J. Arehart-Treichel, "Glass Ceiling Begins to Open, but Just a Crack," *Psychiatric News* 37, no. 10 (2002): 36:12.; A.M. Bogan and D.L. Safer, "Women in Psychiatric Training," *Academic Psychiatry* 28, no. 4 (2004): 28:305-09.

instructions. The mother will “fade from existence,” in Thurer’s words, as this drama plays out for the child.<sup>152</sup>

This “fading” of the mother from the scene even as she is ostensibly the primary character in it resonates with Butler’s claim that Plato names the feminine in the *Timaeus* only to invisibilize it. Plato’s catachresis, or impossible and self-contradictory act, seems to tell a story about the feminine principle even as he deprives the feminine of representation, ontological significance, bodily contour and agency. We see something similar in the empathic mother; the more that she acts in accord with empathy the more she must lose awareness of herself and act as the reflection of masculine expert awareness of her.

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<sup>152</sup> The relation between expert and empathic mother aligns with Butler’s consideration of the master-slave dialectic in Hegel, “The bondsman appears as an instrumental body whose labor provides for the material conditions of the lord’s existence, and whose material products reflect both the subordination of the bondsman and the domination of the master. In a sense, the lord postures as a disembodied desire for self-reflection, one how not only requires the subordination of the bondsman in the status of an instrumental body, but how requires in effect that the bondsman *be* the lord’s body, but be it in such a way that the lord forgets or disavows his own activity in producing the bondsman, a production which we will call a projection... This forgetting involves a clever trick. It is an action by which an activity is disavowed, yet, as an action, it rhetorically concedes the very activity that it seeks to negate. To disavow one’s body, to render it “Other” and then to establish the “Other” as an effect of autonomy, is to produce one’s body in such a way that the activity of its production—and its essential relation to the lord—is denied. This trick or ruse involves a double disavowal and an imperative that the “Other” becomes complicit with this disavowal. In order not to be the body that the lord presumably is, and in order to have the bondsman posture as if the body that he is belongs to himself—and not be the orchestrated projection of the lord—there must be a certain kind of exchange, a bargain or deal, in which ruses are enacted and transacted. In effect, the imperative to the bondsman consists in the following formulation: you be my body for me, but do not let me know that the body you are is my body. An injunction and contract are here preformed in such a way that the moves which guarantee the fulfillment of the injunction and the contract are immediately covered over and forgotten... At the close of the section on lordship and bondage, the bondsman labors away in a repetitive fashion on objects that belong to the lord. In this sense, both his labor and his products are presumed from the start to be other than his own, expropriated. They are given away prior to any possibility of giving them away, since they are, strictly speaking, never the bondsman’s to give. And yet, this ‘contract’ in which the bondsman substitutes himself for the lord becomes consequential; the substitution itself becomes formative of and for the bondsman. As the bondsman slaves away and becomes aware of his own signature on the things that he makes, he recognizes in the form of the artifact that he crafts the markings of his own labor, markings that are formative of the object itself. His labor produces a visible and legible set of marks in which the bondsman reads back from the object a confirmation of his own formative activity. This labor, this activity, which belongs from the start to the lord, is nevertheless reflected back to the bondsman as his own labor, a labor that emanates from him even if it appears to emanate from the lord.” J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1997), 36.

Sarah Ruddick gives narrative flavor to this loss of awareness and the living experience of catachresis in the legacy of the empathic mother. While she recognizes that she reproduces many of the traits of the empathic mother in the practice of mothering, she also attempts to counter the catachresis and its denial of agency and personal boundaries to empathic mothers. She commits to “be done with the lie” of empathic mothering that forbids hostility to a mother:

While we [the narrator and her friend] watched the children together, or at night after they had gone to sleep, we talked about them.

‘I love them and everything, but I hate them,’ she would say.

‘I would die for him,’ I emphasized. ‘All those movies about a mothers running in front of trucks and bullets to save their children are true. I would much prefer to die than lose him. I guess that’s love’—I winced and we both laughed—‘but he has destroyed my life and I live only to find a way of getting it back again.’ I finished slowly, for without the second part of the sentence, the first part was a treacherous lie—a lie we had sworn to be done with. ‘I can’t wait until tomorrow when it is your day to keep the children,’ she would say, ‘but I dread leaving them in the morning.’ We learned always to expect sentences to have two parts, the second seeming to contradict the first, the unity lying only in our growing ability to tolerate ambivalence...<sup>153</sup>

This investigation of the empathic mother is not meant to instantiate perfectly, or even accurately, its precedent in the fantasy of the *hypodoché*. Rather, the investigation means to show an uncanny continuity between the *hypodoché* and the strange fabric of western mass mentality that was prepared to receive with such ease the self-contradictory fantasy of the empathic mother. Mass mentality was prepared not only to embrace the fantasy despite studies to the contrary, but also to silence those studies. This mentality thus narrated the empathic mother as the only naturally good mother and the only naturally good woman despite evidence to the contrary. At its heart, the story of the

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<sup>153</sup> S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace; with a New Preface* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

empathic mother illustrates how femininity may be associated with the tactile maintenance of bodies in close proximity but also may itself be separated from the agentive qualities of bodies that are required for just such a maintenance. This theme permeates the story of the *hypodoché* and that of the empathic mother, showing a continuity between the first story of femininity and the retelling of a more recent story of femininity in a changed context.

I turn back, now, to Butler's critique of Plato's dream-world in the *Timaeus*. Before considering the empathic mother, I followed Irigaray's critique of Plato to its end in which Irigaray identifies the *hypodoché* as a symptom of Plato's hysterical attempt to prevent touch from being a characteristic of the masculine form. Further, Irigaray claimed that the *hypodoché* represented a specular femininity that was defined against excessive femininity, or contained excessive femininity as its constitutive outside. Further, this *hypodoché* and its specular femininity travelled into later definitions of "matter." Therefore matter also harbors excessive femininity as its constitutive outside.

Thus, because matter contains specular femininity and excessive femininity as its constitutive outside, materiality is a site at which the drama of sexual difference plays out and to speak of matter is to speak of an associated femininity. Therefore, to speak of matter will also be to speak of the character of specular femininity that does not really exist like other things do, that is not an intelligible thing fit to discuss, and that may not begin to think because it does not have bodily contour in the way that other things do. This specular femininity contained within "matter" warns against a discussion of sex, sexuality and gender that makes a facile return to matter, or to the materiality of the body, or to the materiality of sex. Irigaray shows us, Butler says, "that to invoke matter is to

invoke a sedimented history of sexual hierarchy and sexual erasures which should surely be an object of feminist inquiry, but which would be quite problematic as a ground of feminist theory.”<sup>154</sup>

While Butler follows Irigaray to this point, she also moves beyond Irigaray’s analysis in important ways. Butler points out that when Irigaray consolidates the place of the feminine in and as the irruptive *hypodoché* that cannot be figured but is necessary to every figuration, she creates yet another exclusion or constitutive outside. Irigaray makes the mistake of “figuring” the *hypodoché* as always the feminine and so repeats Plato’s mistake: she identifies that which she claims cannot be identified.<sup>155</sup> Rather than make such an identification, Butler shows that Plato’s scenography of intelligibility excludes more than just the feminine body. Plato excludes any body. He therefore not only requires the exclusion of the feminine, but also the exclusion of, for example, slaves, children and animals:

This domain of the less than rational human bounds the figure of human reason, producing that ‘man’ as one who is without a childhood; is not a primate and so is relieved of the necessity of eating, defecating, living and dying; one who is not a slave, but always a property holder; one whose language remains originary and untranslatable. This is a figure of disembodiment, but one which is nevertheless a figure of a body, a bodying forth of a masculinized rationality...a materialization of reason which operates through the dematerialization of other bodies... [it] is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialization of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.<sup>156</sup>

Therefore, when Irigaray makes the bodies that Plato excludes exclusively feminine, through that very process she excludes (at least) the slave, child and animal bodies from making up the “outside” that Plato creates. These non-feminine bodies are forced to hold

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<sup>154</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 49.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

the place of excluded outside when Irigaray consolidates the disruptive force of the *hypodochē* to the feminine. Butler charges that Irigaray thereby repeats the violence of phallogocentrism that she seeks to oppose.

As a way of disrupting a feminine that solely occupies the place of the excluded, and in order to bring other bodies that Plato excludes into focus, Butler extends the interpretation of the *Timaeus* provided by Irigaray. She differently interprets Plato's use of the word *eilephen*. Plato states that the *hypodochē* must never "assume a form." The verb *eilephen* "to assume, as in to assume a form" that he uses there has other possible translations, Butler explains, among them: "to conceive." Irigaray chooses the latter translation and understands Plato to prohibit the *hypodochē* from contributing to the process of reproduction. However, Butler chooses an alternate translation in which *eilephen* means "to have a wife" or "the capacity to take a wife." In this sense the feminine figured as the *hypodochē* will never have the ability to take a wife, or to enter into another materiality. The forms, on the other hand, (which are likened to the father) will therefore never be entered into by her. Plato thus ensures that the form (or father) is the "impenetrable penetrator" and the *hypodochē* (or mother) is the "the invariably penetrated."<sup>157</sup> "He" would not be differentiated from "her" if it were not for this prohibition on resemblance that founds their positions as mutually exclusive and complementary. If she were to penetrate him, or penetrate elsewhere, she could not retain her identity and neither could he.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>158</sup> See also the history of penetration in this sense in Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992).

While Irigaray translates Plato's prohibition as forbidding the feminine to contribute to the fetus in reproduction, Butler translates Plato's prohibition as a panic over becoming like the penetrated feminine. "What might happen," Butler asks, "if a masculine penetration of the masculine were authorized, or a feminine penetration of the feminine, or a feminine penetration of the masculine or a reversibility of these positions—not to mention a full-scale confusion over what qualifies as "penetration" anyway."<sup>159</sup> Butler translates Plato's panic over the non-male penetrator as a panic over the lesbian, or the phallicization of the lesbian and other rival organizations of sexuality. These alternative penetrators attest to the unnecessary consolidation of penetration to the male as well as to the non-originary status of heterosexuality: the fact that Plato must prohibit non-male penetrators indicates that other penetrations are possible. Other bodies may resemble the male penetrating body because the "originality" of heterosexuality is contestable. Heterosexual male penetration is not an origin or an incontestable "natural affair," but the effect of Plato's prohibition. In order to expose this fact, Butler suggests the deployment of a "set of reverse mimes" that are different and all contest the master discourse from their various quarters. Irigaray served as one such mime for Butler. Butler's own critique of Irigaray serves as another mime. These forms of miming might resignify differently and scramble the presumptions of reason's mastery;<sup>160</sup> they might also reorient the fantasy, story or scenography that such a reason assumes.

We have reviewed thus far both how Butler's account of the body is one of a body in process and one that evokes in its repetition a history of presumptions about "matter"

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<sup>159</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 51. Butler muses that a prohibition on this kind of resemblance may be necessary for Western metaphysics to get going and assure the phallus of its own exclusive rights.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

and hence about masculinity as bodiless reason and other bodies as those dematerialized by such a masculinity. The process of the body mattering itself from moment to moment is one of reinvoking in the physical repetition the fantasies of matter from moment to moment. Thus the materializing body for Butler is one of both process and one that invokes the genealogy that she investigates. So, the process of genealogy that she recommends is not only a study that might be conceived as occurring as one sits and reads and which one then applies to one's body. For Butler, the body is a process of moment-to-moment existence and so genealogy is a moment-to-moment practice of observing what imaginings inform the flesh from moment-to-moment. As a result, I suggest that Butler's practice calls for instructions in very detailed bodily practices, as practices of meditation have traditionally supplied. I also suggest that while she has given some suggestions about how one might do this,<sup>161</sup> the set of skills that accompany meditation are detailed instructions for bodily practice that could serve the practice of genealogy in an apt way. As I move through the future chapters that consider practices of the meditative body in Julian of Norwich, I will show an example of how the skills of meditative practice may serve as a practice of genealogy, both practically and theoretically.

Butler also emphasizes that when one engages in such a process of genealogy in the midst of moment-to-moment materializing, there will be the experience of becoming "undone." In fact, according to Butler, one will have constantly to seek to create a field

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<sup>161</sup> Indeed, the process of coming to understand materialization is an undoing – one that is a bodily undoing of fascisms held latently in the flesh. One fascism is the fantasy of the body as a given that is not in process, or, as I will suggest in the next chapter, a body in pieces. Butler suggests practices of parody, drag, mourning, and (implicitly) psychotherapy as she includes psychoanalysis in her account. Practices of the meditative body offer a kind of list of internal techniques that one might use to detect the minute movements of fascism in one's flesh and for this reason can be helpful to a process of genealogy.

of anxiety rather than to seek to avoid anxiety in this process. This is because in every attempt that one makes to oppose a dominant discourse she will produce a different necessary outside that risks invisibilizing and disembodimenting some group of persons (or animals, plants, seas...). As an example of this, Irigaray's attempt to oppose the discourse of materialized reason resulted in creating a necessary outside of non-feminine bodies that were also cast outside the group of masculine bodies, such as slaves, children and animals. Nevertheless, Irigaray's effort was a necessary act of genealogy that Butler followed. If in the process of engaging genealogy one always creates additional necessary outsides, what ethical parameters guide genealogy? Butler suggests that in order to reduce the violence of exclusion, one refigure the necessary outside as never permanent, and that as a methodological practice one always expect that the exposure of any necessary outside always produces additional outsides. The task is to refigure the necessary outsides as future horizons where the violence of exclusion is continually diminished.

Hence Butler's method of genealogy requires a tentativeness in any conclusive recommendation that it might make; one that must create a space to receive charges of violence from the bodies of those who have been invisibilized by its recommendation. And this must be part of its method and expected profitable outcome. So, one seeks to find "ease" in encountering a constant "field of anxiety" in this way. There is a pleasure in discovering one's violent presuppositions of which one cannot be aware without such an encounter. And, there is a pain in being undone and finding that what seemed a discovery did violence to another. Both parallel the foregoing ease and the anxiety.

In addition, Butler's method of genealogy finds an ethical directive when it investigates the history of the formations of bodies and signification through a focus upon those bodies that are excluded and invisibilized; it surfaces these unseemly bodies to throw light upon the arbitrary scenographies that function as naturalized truth, the naturalized truth that as social commands shape the moment-to-moment bodily rituals that materialize and dematerialize bodies. She finds it important to preserve these unseemly bodies that are the outside where discourse meets its limits; such excluded bodies may disrupt and illuminate the violence of hegemony. Butler sees her project as finally a deconstructive inquiry into the "kinds of erasures and exclusions by which the construction of the subject operates."<sup>162</sup> She considers her work to be a partial genealogical effort that identifies the normative conditions through which the body and sex are formed and framed.<sup>163</sup>

The process of genealogy that Butler recommends above is grounded, as mentioned earlier in this essay, in Foucault's idea of subjectification that Butler uses to describe what she calls "materialization." Butler adds to Foucault's account by exposing the constitutive outside that the term "matter" requires and which Foucault fails to address. Butler thereby outlines the ethical parameters that I explained above. She makes yet another amendment to Foucault's theory which will be the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation.

When Foucault explains the process of subjectification he does not, Butler criticizes, elaborate on the specific workings of power that explain how the subject is formed in submission. He does not remark enough on the psyche, and also does not

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<sup>162</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 8.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

explore power as it operates in a double valence both to produce and subordinate the subject. This double valence takes a psychic form in which the subject turns back on itself. Such an “uncertain form of twisting”<sup>164</sup> marks the emergence of the subject as one who has the “unhappy consciousness” of Hegel’s slave in relation to its master. The master in this Hegelian context, who at first seems external to the slave, emerges again as the slave’s own consciousness. “The unhappiness of the consciousness that emerges,” Butler remarks, “is its own self-beratement, the effect of the transmutation of the master into a psychic reality...the self-mortifications that seek to redress the insistent corporeality of self-consciousness turned back upon itself.”<sup>165</sup> Butler expands her account of materialization to take into account this kind of turning upon itself that the subject performs, especially as she considers psychoanalytic melancholia in Freud and Lacan. This melancholy as Freud and Lacan articulate it --and the elements that Butler draws from it in order to explain how bodies matter from moment-to-moment-- are the subjects of the next chapter of this dissertation.

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<sup>164</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 1-4.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

## Chapter 2: The Melancholic Body: the Roots of Butler's Theory in Freud and Lacan

"I would like to start, and to end, with the question of the human, of who counts as the human, and the related question of whose lives count as lives, and with a question that has preoccupied many of us for years: what makes for a grievable life?"

~Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 18

"It requires hard work *not* to see."

~ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 11

"Melancholia is a rebellion that has been put down."

~Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, page

"Grieving is a pattern that is cut and fitted around my mind."

~*Elektra*, Sophocles trans. Anne Carson, page

The last chapter ended with a gesture to the topic of this chapter, namely, the subject that is wrought from an "ontologically uncertain form of twisting," a turning that occurs in the psychic form that power takes. Such a turning on the self describes how the subject comes to desire her own servitude. This psychic turn of power is different than a common conception of power as that which presses on the subject from the outside, weakens her and finally subordinates her to a lower order where she comes to internalize its terms. Rather, according to Butler, this psychic turn of power produces the subject itself:

As a form of power, subjection is paradoxical. To be dominated by a power external to oneself is a familiar and agonizing form power takes. To find,

however, that what “one” is, one’s very formation as a subject, is in some sense dependent upon that very power is quite another.<sup>166</sup>

Power in this sense is not what one opposes but what one harbors and preserves in the very being that she is. This is a subjection to terms of power that one never chose but that paradoxically initiate and sustain one’s agency. It is the process of being subordinated by power but also, importantly, the process of becoming a subject.

The slave and her “unhappy consciousness” mentioned at the end of the last chapter operates as a figure<sup>167</sup> that explains how a subject is produced by this kind of formative power. Because this power is formative and produces the subject, there is no subject who properly exists to make such a turn into unhappy consciousness in “the first place” before such terms of power subordinate the subject. On the contrary, Butler explains, “the turn appears to function as a tropological inauguration of the subject, a founding moment whose ontological status remains permanently uncertain.” Such a figure, then, seems difficult or perhaps impossible as an *explanation* for subject formation. We cannot identify who makes such a turn and so, according to Butler, we “are no longer in the business of ‘giving an account of the formation of the subject.’” We are, rather, confronted with “the tropological presumption made by any such explanation, one that facilitates the explanation but also marks its limit.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 35-36.

<sup>167</sup> The self-mortifications of the Hegelian slave that seek to redress self-consciousness turned back on itself that Butler mentions prefigure Nietzsche’s account (in *On the Genealogy of Morals*) of the repression and regulation that form his notions of conscience and bad conscience, and, more pertinent here, “how the latter become essential to the formation, persistence, and continuity of the subject.” In both cases power that at first seems to press the subject into subjection from the outside constitute a psychic form of power that constitutes the subject’s self-identity. This form of power shows as a turning back on oneself or a turning on oneself. See *Ibid.*, 35-37.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

Although we cannot presume a subject that performs such an internalization of the terms of power because the figure to which we make reference does not yet exist and so cannot be part of an explanation, according to Butler “our reference continues to make a certain kind of sense.” There is a necessary paradox of referentiality at work that begs a suspension of ontological commitment in order to account for how the subject emerges.

Following this track and suspending for a moment the commitment to whether or not the figure of the Hegelian bondsman exists before its contract with the lord, the figure of the bondsman shows how the “turning” to which I have referred takes the form of a “ruse” or a “trick” that is formative of the bondsman’s unhappy consciousness; the bondsman is a figure that illustrates the trick involved in the turn that is formative of the subject.

The trick is organized around a kind of exchange. The bondsman produces materials for her master that reflect the bondman’s subordination to the dominion of her master, and through her labor the bondsman supports the material conditions of the master’s life. The master requires that the bondsman be the lord’s body, but in such a way that the lord forgets that he produced the bondsman in the first place. The lord “projects” the bondsman but disavows that he does so, a process that Butler calls a “clever trick.” “It is an action,” she explains, “by which an activity is disavowed, yet, as an action, it rhetorically concedes the very activity that it seeks to negate.” It is an instance of what Butler described in the last chapter as catachresis. In this process the lord disavows his body, renders it “Other” and then denies that this other has any essential relation to his lordly self.

Further, this trick or ruse requires that the “Other” collude in this disavowal. In order for the bondsman to collude he must act as if he is not the body that the lord is and he must also act as if his own bonded body is not the orchestrated projection of the lord. Rather, he must act as a body that belongs to the bondsman himself. The bondsman must engage a kind of exchange, “a bargain or a deal,” that transacts ruses. In Butler’s words, the master directs the bondsman: “you be my body for me, but do not let me know that the body you are is my body.” The parties involved must immediately cover over and forget the terms of the contract in order to fulfill those very terms.

As the slave repeats this trick of a bargain from moment to moment, his labor emanates from him even as it appears according to the bargain to emanate from the lord, as Butler describes:

At the close of the section on lordship and bondage, the bondsman labors away in a repetitive fashion on objects that belong to the lord. In this sense, both his labor and his products are presumed from the start to be other than his own, expropriated. They are given away prior to any possibility of giving them away, since they are, strictly speaking, never the bondsman’s to give. And yet, this ‘contract’ in which the bondsman substitutes himself for the lord becomes consequential; the substitution itself becomes formative of and for the bondsman. As the bondsman slaves away and becomes aware of his own signature on the things that he makes, he recognizes in the form of the artifact that he crafts the markings of his own labor, markings that are formative of the object itself. His labor produces a visible and legible set of marks in which the bondsman reads back from the object a confirmation of his own formative activity. This labor, this activity, which belongs from the start to the lord, is nevertheless reflected back to the bondsman as his own labor, a labor that emanates from him even if it appears to emanate from the lord.<sup>169</sup>

Through this contractual ruse, the lord postures as a disembodied desire for self-reflection, a posture that we also saw in Plato’s disembodied reason of the last chapter and its desire to see itself reflected in specular femininity.

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

The qualities of this turn in the figure of Hegel's bondsman underscore important aspects of the psychic form that power takes. This power paradoxically produces the subject itself, facilitates the explanation of subject formation but also marks its limit, and necessarily involves a ruse. These qualities persist through Butler's further consideration of the psychic contours of power in Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. They color the nature of psychoanalytic melancholia: the relentless congealed repetition of this turning on the self. Butler uses melancholia to add psychic depth to this turn in her account of materialization that she draws from Foucault's theory of subjectivication. In addition, melancholia is particularly tied to bodiliness, so when she adds psychic depth to this account she adds bodily depth to it as well.

In order to describe Butler's account of melancholia, and to select elements of her account that are useful for their eventual application to the meditative body, this chapter will consider authors who influence Butler's account. The following chapter will show how she takes up and modifies their theories. Accordingly, I will first consider texts relevant for Butler in Freud and Lacan, and proceed to gendered and raced criticisms of them made by Kaja Silverman and Anne Anlin Cheng. Finally, I will explain Butler's theory of melancholia as drawn from those sources.

### I. Freud

Freud offers two different and somewhat contradictory ideas of melancholia, first categorizing it as an anxiety/neurosis that might be remedied, and later articulating it as the very structure of subjectivity. As a neurosis melancholia may be cured, while as the structure of subjectivity it cannot be altered. Freud describes his earlier version of melancholia in *Melancholia and Mourning* (1917) and his later version of melancholia as

the structure of subjectivity in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). The latter is the version that Butler primarily draws upon, although she also significantly gestures towards the first as a useful political tool.

#### *A. Melancholia, the First Account*

As early as the 1890s, Freud saw the incipient bases for his first account of melancholia in the self-reproaches that people made after the death of their loved ones.<sup>170</sup> He thought that these reproaches eventuated in hysteria, obsessions or melancholia. He identified a mental agency that he called the “ego ideal” that criticized the self internally and linked it with the methods through which the mind punishes itself. He had not yet theorized the super-ego.

Later in *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud develops the distinguishing features of melancholia as “a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.”<sup>171</sup> While he says that the mechanisms of melancholia are mysterious for reasons that I will list, Freud says that we may usefully understand melancholia by comparing it with the related work of mourning.<sup>172</sup>

Mourning engages in a “testing of reality” in order to find that the loved object no longer exists. The reality of the object’s absence requires that the libido withdraw its

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<sup>170</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 14: 243.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 244.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 246.

attachments to the object. A struggle follows in which the person withdraws from the object but also clings to it through “a hallucinatory wish-psychosis.” This process is engaged little by little over time with great cathectic energy, while the whole time the mind continues the existence of the lost object within itself. “Each single one of the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-cathected, and the detachment of the libido from it accomplished.”<sup>173</sup> Freud remarks that he does not know why the process is so painful but that it seems “natural” to us.

Melancholia also is a response to loss. However, in contrast to mourning, melancholia is a process that cannot admit that the object no longer exists. The melancholic senses that a loss has occurred but cannot identify it.<sup>174</sup> For this reason the behavior of the melancholic is puzzling because others cannot see what absorbs her. Despite the difference, Freud claims that the unknown loss in melancholia still produces social withdrawal like the conscious loss does in mourning: the unconscious melancholic loss results in the same inner labor that produces inhibition.<sup>175</sup>

Melancholia also differs from mourning insofar as it produces an unusual decline in self-esteem, which the person who mourns does not experience. The melancholic person’s ego is grandly impoverished. In mourning the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself that becomes empty:

The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any effort and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and chastised. He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with someone so unworthy. He does not

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 245-246.

realize that any change has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past and declares that he was never any better.<sup>176</sup>

In all of this the melancholic lacks interest in anything and is incapable of love and achievement because of “the inner travail consuming his ego.”<sup>177</sup>

Because the melancholic debases himself, it seems that he has lost something within himself. However, Freud says that because melancholia is similar to mourning, the melancholic must have suffered the loss of an object.<sup>178</sup> Thus there is an ambiguity in what has been lost by the melancholic: it seems on the one hand to be a loss within the self and on the other hand to be the loss of an object.

Freud explains this contradiction by saying that the ego of the melancholic sets one part of itself over against another part. It looks upon it as an object and judges it critically. He calls this critical agency the “conscience” and names it one of the “great institutions” of the ego.<sup>179</sup> Freud bases his theory on the behavior of the melancholic who makes the most violent accusations against himself that hardly can be seen to apply to him at all. However, with “significant modification” they do fit someone else whom the patient loves or feels that she ought to love. This gives Freud “the key clinical picture—by perceiving that the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted on to the patient’s own ego.” Thus a woman who bewails the misfortune of her husband for being tied to her when she is such a wretched creature is really not reproaching herself, but rather accusing her husband of being a wretched creature in some way. Freud encourages the reader not to be discouraged if some of the self-accusations

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 246.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 246.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 247.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, 247.

the melancholic makes do apply to her, while others only apply to another that she loves. This is a tactic of the melancholic ego that mingles true and false reproaches in order to use genuine self-reproaches to mask her real accusations against her lover and to hide the true state of affairs. Indeed, the reproaches “derive from the ‘for’ and ‘against’ contained in the conflict that has led to the loss of the loved object.”

This analysis of the patients’ loud complaints against themselves makes their behavior understandable: “their complaints are really ‘plaints’ in the legal sense of the word; it is because everything derogatory that they say of themselves at bottom relates to someone else that they are not ashamed and do not hide their heads.” Rather than hide themselves, they show no humility that a worthless person might exhibit. Instead “they take offence, give trouble, and act as if they are treated with great injustice.”<sup>180</sup>

In all the foregoing ways the melancholic does not respond to loss in the normal way of mourning whereby she withdraws libido from the lost object and transfers it to a new one. Instead, she develops a neurosis/anxiety in which she withdraws this libido into the ego and does not attach to a new one. This withdrawal serves to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object:

Thus the shadow of the object fell up on the ego, so that the latter could henceforth be criticized by a special mental faculty like an object, like the forsaken object. In this way the loss of the object became transformed into a loss in the ego, and the conflict between the ego and the loved person transformed into a cleavage between the criticizing faculty of the ego and the ego as altered by the identification.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 248.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* 249. For this special work of melancholia rather than mourning to happen, a strong fixation to the love object must have been present, as well as, in contradiction to this, the “object-cathexis can have had little power of resistance.” This contradiction “seems to imply that the object-choice had been effected on a narcissistic basis, so that when obstacles arise in the way of the object-cathexis it can regress into narcissism.”

### *B. Melancholia, the Second Account*

While in 1917 Freud based this account of melancholia as a neurosis on a similarity with mourning, later in 1923 in *The Ego and the Id* he makes melancholia more than an anxiety/neurosis. It now plays a normal formative role in subjectivity. It has “a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and...it makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called its ‘character.’”<sup>182</sup>

This shift in the meaning of melancholia accompanied a general shift in the language that Freud used to describe the structure of the ego. Before Freud formalized melancholic subjectivity in *The Ego and the Id* he used a typology that distinguished between the unconscious, conscious and preconscious.<sup>183</sup> In *The Ego and the Id* he introduced a new framework that divides the ego into the new categories of the id, the ego, and the superego (or ego ideal). Freud used these new categories in order to clarify the blurry boundaries between the unconscious and the conscious.

Citing Georg Groddeck in *The Ego and the Id*, he comments that “what we call our ego” is a passive behavior exemplified by how “we are ‘lived’ by unknown and uncontrollable forces.”<sup>184</sup> He goes on to call the ego that part that begins with the preconscious. The “id,” on the other hand, is that other part of the mind into which the ego extends and that behaves as if it were unconscious.<sup>185</sup> The ego has a “lower portion”

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<sup>182</sup> Sigmund Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 19: 23.

<sup>183</sup> Freud outlines this older system, for example, in “The Unconscious,” and the “Interpretation of Dreams.” Both articles are in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), pages 14, 188 and 5, 540n, respectively.

<sup>184</sup> Sigmund Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 19: 17.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18. The id cannot be represented. Where the id is there the ego will follow. The ego is dependent upon the id even though the id cannot be contemplated unless the ich or ego is formed. Freud

that merges into the id. That which is repressed also merges into the id but only into “a part of it.” The repressed may still communicate with the ego through the id. Further, the ego is a part of the id that is modified through conscious perception of external stimuli. The ego “seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id.”<sup>186</sup> Freud aligns the ego in this schema with common sense and the id with containment of the passions.

In a more intuitive analogy, Freud describes the ego as one who relates to the id as a rider does to a horse: the ego in relation to the id

... is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces... Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to ride it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id’s will into action as if it were its own.<sup>187</sup>

The ego is also a bodily surface. It is, Freud remarks, “first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface.”<sup>188</sup> A footnote that follows this claim links the ego particularly with sensations on the surface of the body:

The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of

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thought up to this point that the id was capable of being present to itself and that the unconscious was opposed to the ego. Now the ego is in part unconscious to itself. It can communicate with the conscious ego through the id. The ego represses material from the id that consciousness wants to push down; but that process of repression is unconscious so the ego functioning as repressive is unconscious to the ego itself. There is an aspect of the ego that can be made available to consciousness. The ego that represses the id is unconscious in its operations.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

the surface of the body, besides...representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.<sup>189</sup>

Thus the formation of the ego or “The way in which we arrive at the idea of our own body” involves the body, and above all, its surface.

This bodily surfaced ego has the ability to perceive both internal and external sensations and thus acts as a boundary between the internal and external. The surface is a “place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is *seen* like any other object, but to the *touch* it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception.” This position of boundary echoes Freud’s thematic characterization of the instincts and sexuality as frontier concepts or things that exist in the boundary between the physical and the psychical.<sup>190</sup>

How, then, do sensations that spring from the surface of the body shape the ego? Butler emphasizes strains of Freud that say that painful sensations in particular shape the ego. “Pain,” Freud says, “seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 20, Note 16. Freud notoriously does not give a detailed argument for why the ego is a bodily ego in *The Ego and the Id*. When he makes the statement referenced here he follows it by a suggestion that opposites that society objects to mixing in fact do mix so we should not be surprised that ego and body, usually opposed by societal views, are one. He says that a “scale of values” which his peers accept would anticipate that the “the scene of activities for the lower passions” is in the unconscious. Alternatively, this same scale expects that “the higher any mental function ranks in our scale of values the more easily it will find access to consciousness assured to it.” However, psychoanalytic experience, Freud says, disappoints in this regard because subtle and difficult intellectual operations are carried out unconsciously in sleep when, upon waking, certain persons know the solution to difficult mathematical problems; further, the faculties of self-criticism and conscience are unconscious although they rank as extremely high and important mental processes. Freud concludes that “not only what is lowest but also what is highest in the ego can be unconscious.” He further proclaims in the next sentence that “It is as if we were thus supplied with a proof of what we have just answered of the conscious ego: that it is first and foremost a body-ego.” It seems that the suggestion that high and low mix contrary to societal expectations is a model that suggests the body, usually seen as low, and the psychic, usually seen as high, mix in the bodily ego. However, this is obviously no proof, but a kind of suggestive conjecture. See *The Ego and the Id*, 21.

<sup>190</sup> See *Ibid*, 20 and Three Essays On The Theory Of Sexuality (Basic Books Classics) Basic Books; Revised edition (February 18, 2000) trans James Strachey, forward Nancy Chodorow, 34.

by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body.”<sup>191</sup> In *On Narcissism* Freud investigates the theory of libido in terms of bodily pain and asks again if a kind of negative investment in one’s own pain can be a kind of narcissism.<sup>192</sup> He considers organic disease as a process in which a person tormented by physical pain “withdraws libido from love objects, and lavishes libido on itself.”<sup>193</sup> The person suffering organic pain gives up interest in anything in the external world that does not relate to her own suffering. Citing a line of poetry from Wilhelm Busch’s *Balduin Bahlamin* about how desire relates to the toothache, Freud notices how a kind of concentration “eroticises that hole in the mouth...redoubling the pain of the physical as and through a psychically invested pain- a pain of or from the soul, the psyche.”<sup>194</sup> The soul or psyche in this case produces its own pain and adds it to the physical pain of the tooth producing a “libidinal self-investment.”<sup>195</sup> This redoubling of pain gives “new knowledge of our organs during

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<sup>191</sup> Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 19: 20.

<sup>192</sup> Freud gives a definition of narcissism in the beginning of *On Narcissism*, as “the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated—who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities. Developed to this degree, narcissism has the significance of a perversion that has absorbed the whole of the subject’s sexual life, and it will consequently exhibit the characteristics which we expect to meet with in the study of all perversions” (Freud, “On Narcissism,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 14: 73). Shortly after the foregoing quotation, Freud will say that Narcissism is a normative stage in development rather than a perversion: “Psycho-analytic observers were subsequently struck by the fact that individual features of the narcissistic attitude are found in many people who suffer from other disorders—for instance, as Sadger has pointed out, in homosexuals—and finally it seemed probable that an allocation of the libido such as deserved to be described as narcissism might be present far more extensively, and that it might claim a place in the regular course of human sexual development. Difficulties in psychoanalytic work upon neurotics led to the same supposition, for it seemed as though this kind of narcissistic attitude in them constituted the limits of their susceptibility to influence. Narcissism in this sense would not be a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature” (Ibid, 73-74).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 82. Cf., Butler, *Bodies*, 58

<sup>194</sup> Butler’s preferred translation of “Zur Einführung des Narzissmus” “Einzig in der engen Höhle, des Bachenzahnes weilt die Seele” is “Alone in the narrow hole of the jaw-tooth dwells the soul” (see *Bodies*, 258 fn 2).

<sup>195</sup> Then Freud says that sleep and dreams are practices of sustained self-preoccupation and extrapolates to hypochondria. He takes a ‘textual detour’ through sleep, dreams, and the imaginary to an analogy with

painful illnesses.” Thus the surface of the body that the ego experiences as painful is produced in one sense by organic disorder, and in another sense by an imputation by the ego of further psychical pain to that diseased part. Both of these give the conscious mind access to parts of the body to which it previously had no access, thereby producing the surface of the body that the conscious mind experiences.

After he discusses how this redoubling of pain shapes the ego, Freud transitions to hypochondria, a more obviously psychic form of pain that he also says shapes the ego. He defines hypochondria as an anxiety-neurosis which feels painful bodily sensations when, unlike organic disease, there are no demonstrable changes in the body that are organic. Hypochondria distributes libido to the part that feels painful in the same way that organic disease would. Like one who has organic disorder the hypochondriac withdraws interest and libido from the external world. After withdrawing, she concentrates her attention and libido in the bodily part with which she is involved; her focus produces the conscious access that she has to pain in that part. While the absence of a preceding organic change suggests that a psychic investment imputes pain where there is no organic change, Freud curiously concedes that “it would be entirely in keeping with our general conception of the processes of neurosis if we decided to say that hypochondria must be right: organic changes must be supposed to be present in it, too.”<sup>196</sup> “Our experience,” Freud continues, shows us that unpleasurable bodily sensations, like those in hypochondria, occur in other neuroses as well. Therefore, hypochondria is “an actual

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hypochondria and finally “to an argument that establishes the theoretical indissolubility of physical pain and imaginary injury.”

<sup>196</sup> Freud, “On Narcissism,” in *Standard*, 14: 83. In Freud’s early theory, hypochondria is an imagined investment that “constitutes a libidinal projection of the body-surface.” Such a projection makes the body part epistemologically available to consciousness. It further produces imaginary contours for the ego itself. Butler, *Bodies*, 63.

neuroses” and “a small amount of hypochondria” is found in many other neuroses besides hypochondria. This amounts to a normalization of hypochondria because it is present in many categories of disease rather than being in one special category.

This normalization paves the way for Freud to make an even wider normalization of hypochondria by identifying it with erotogenicity (and the excited genital organ), which is considered a typical human development rather than a disease or aberration in that development.<sup>197</sup> In the next and following sentences Freud makes this wider association that constitutes what Butler calls an “eroticized hypochondria.” I will cite the full paragraph and then parse its more particular meanings:

Now the familiar prototype of an organ that is painfully tender, that is in some way changed and that is yet not diseased in the ordinary sense, is the genital organ in its states of excitation. In that condition it becomes congested with blood, swollen and humected, and is the seat of a multiplicity of sensations. Let us now, taking any part of the body, describe its activity of sending sexually exciting stimuli to the mind as its ‘erotogenicity’, and let us further reflect that the considerations on which our theory of sexuality was based have long accustomed us to the notion that certain other parts of the body—the ‘erotogenic’ zones—may act as substitutes for the genitals and behave analogously to them. We have then only one more step to take. We can decide to regard erotogenicity as a general characteristic of all organs and may then speak of an increase or decrease of it in a particular part of the body. For every such change in the erotogenicity of the organs there might then be a parallel change of libidinal cathexis in the ego. Such factors would constitute what we believe to underlie hypochondria, and what may have the same effect upon the distribution of libido as is produced by a material illness of the organs.<sup>198</sup>

In the first sentence Freud compares the excited genital to hypochondria. The first term of the comparison is the hypochondriac who invests libidinally in a body part to change it from a neutral to a painful sensation. The second term of the comparison is the

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<sup>197</sup> Keeping in mind that Butler is developing one strain of Freud’s thought here; Freud certainly suggests her theme as he says that the ego is “partially” delineated through pain. She is following a method similar to that suggested by Irigaray and cited in the previous chapter who says that some pains must be overstated in order to be heard because they have been overlooked in the past.

<sup>198</sup> Freud, “On Narcissism,” in *Standard*, 14: 84.

typical person who invests libidinally in the genitals to change them from a neutral to an excited (tender and painful) state. The comparison makes the genitals like body parts that are delineated through “what underlies hypochondria.” This common source has “the same effect upon the distribution of libido as is produced by “a material illness of the organs.”

In the next sentence, he widens his claim and calls any part of the body that sends “sexually exciting stimuli to the mind” an erotogenic zone, suggesting that any part of the body may be a locus for eroticized hypochondria. Then, in the next sentence he remarks that “his theory of sexuality” has long claimed that these other non-genital zones of the body only act as “substitutes” for the genitals, which is now the originating source for which the other zones substitute. These claims prepare for the leap, the “one more step” that he must take to make his final suggestion that erotogenicity is a general characteristic of all organs that increases or decreases in particular parts of the body. Further, “for every such change in the erotogenicity of the organs there might then be a parallel change of libidinal cathexis in the ego.”

Freud makes a rhetorical argument for eroticized hypochondria through comparison and suggestion. He leaves a central question unanswered: because of the similarity that erotogenicity bears to hypochondria, are we to understand that when erotogenous zones occur consciousness imputes erotogenic excitation to a body part where before organic (erotogenic) change did not attract the mind? Or, on the other hand, does a change in organic excitation send a signal to the mind that retrospectively registers it through an observing consciousness? Further, is there a third possibility of oscillation or identity that cannot be reduced to either of these two? Freud’s detour

through hypochondria on his way to erotogenicity, rather than making a direct trip from organic disease to erotogenicity, suggests that he wishes to persuade that the mind imputes erotogenic change to previously unexcited body parts; in this way the mind produces erotogenic body parts much as the mind imputes painful organic change to previously unchanged body parts in hypochondria. In his final remark that “for every such change in the erotogenicity of the organs there might then be a parallel change of libidinal cathexis in the ego” he at least establishes that there are parallel changes in the organs and in the ego, but leaves this fundamental ambiguity unanswered. Later in this chapter Butler will further analyze it.

Although he leaves this ambiguity about eroticized hypochondria unresolved, he clearly suggests that an eroticized hypochondria shapes the ego. He goes on to say that one psychic (and erotogenic) pain more than any other performs this shaping, the shock of the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex especially explains the next aspect of the ego for which he must give an account: the super-ego or ego ideal, that second grade of the ego that stands in relation to the ego as the first grade. Although Freud considered the ego ideal earlier in *On Narcissism*, he notes in *The Ego and the Id* that because the super-ego is less strongly connected with consciousness he must explain it more and he does so through the Oedipus complex.

Freud first mentioned the myth of Oedipus in public as a representative of a wider truth about the human condition in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). He reinforced the idea in his later study of “little Hans.”<sup>199</sup> When five years old “Hans” refused to leave his home because he was afraid that a horse would bite him. Freud interpreted the boy’s

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<sup>199</sup> See Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. (London: Papermac, 1995) 360-65.

fear as a terror that his father would use his big penis (that was like a horse) to castrate him to punish Hans for harboring a forbidden desire for his mother. Hans was also afraid of falling horses, which Freud interpreted as Hans's fear of the harm that his hateful wishes toward his father could inflict. Thus the Oedipus conflict represents an ambivalence between desire, fear and regret. Such an ambivalence toward their parents is natural in children and is the theme of the Oedipus complex.<sup>200</sup>

Later, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud claims that a literal expression of the Oedipus complex founded civilization. A primal murder of the father occurred that endures in the psychic formation of human beings. The "primitive man" stands in direct relation to contemporary infantile states.

The complex occurs in the phallic phase in children between three and five years old and is usually successfully resolved around the age of five. In it the child, assumed to be male, has an unconscious wish to murder his father so that he can take sexual possession of his mother. Because the child is less powerful than the father and the father appears to be able to satisfy the mother in ways the child cannot, the child realizes that if he tries to murder his father the father will overpower him and punish him with castration, while if he tries to have his mother his father will punish him in the same way. Further, the (male) child could take another path, the "negative" form of the complex, and want to replace his mother in order to be desired by his father. In this case the child sees he would have to stand in a position to his father that is similarly castrated. The complex may unfold somewhere in between the positive and negative poles. If the Oedipus complex is successfully resolved, the shock of the threat of castration "smashes

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* 360-65.

to pieces” the Oedipus complex along with its attachments. The child will give up its Oedipal attachments and enter the “latency” period. This lasts till puberty and, after the temporary renunciation of latency, moves erotic desire onto surrogate figures for the mother.

The successful “smashing” of the complex produces the “superego” that is the seat of morality or the critical agency of the conscience in the structure of the ego. It acts as the interiorized authority of the parent that prohibits incest through the threat of castration in the melancholic ego.<sup>201</sup> Through it the boy child identifies with the father as the internalized parent and this first identification is the most long-lasting because “behind it there lies hidden an individual’s first and most important identification, his identification with the father in his own personal prehistory.”<sup>202</sup> Freud acknowledges that one might want to say that the child identifies with “parents” rather than the father, but remarks that this is because before a child learns the fundamental difference between his parents, which is that one lacks a penis, he “does not distinguish between their value.” He follows this by referencing a woman who continued to value her mother because she believed only inferior women (including herself) lacked penises, but that her mother was not inferior; therefore, she still believed that her mother had one. He returns from this digression by saying that he will only discuss identification with the father in order to “simplify” his “presentation.”

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<sup>201</sup> How does the ego in its repressive function, using the id’s energy to hold the id down, differ in a qualitative way from the super ego? It could be that the super ego is unconscious and already there telling the ego what it cannot do; the boss sets a coffee cup on the desk and you want him to move it but your dad never let you speak back so you transfer and become polite but have a headache. The body may already be so laden with culture that the bodily practices by which someone is brought into the world make the limit between the ego and the super ego not as sharp.

<sup>202</sup> Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *Standard*, 19: 22-23.

The only kind of object whose loss is capable of producing the super-ego in the subject is one to which the subject has a systemic and strong connection—one whose significance, Freud says “is reinforced by a thousand links or memories.”<sup>203</sup> This kind of a loss is one that Butler describes as carved into experience before it may be consciously articulated. It is a loss that withdraws or retracts from speech.<sup>204</sup>

The ego-ideal that is formed through an identification with the father consists of an “ought,” “you ought to be like your father” and of a prohibition “you *may not be* (like your father)...that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.”

This double aspect emerges because the ego ideal must repress the Oedipus complex:

The child’s parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself. It borrowed strength to do this, so to speak, from the father, and this loan was an extraordinarily momentous act. The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on—in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt.<sup>205</sup>

The ego ideal is thus the heir of the Oedipus complex since it mastered the Oedipal urges. At the same time it placed itself in subjection to the id. While the ego represents the external world “of reality,” the super-ego by contrast represents the internal world of the id.

When the “infantile ego” encounters the father as an obstacle and erects this paternal obstacle within itself, it takes the object in as an object of love, aggression and

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<sup>203</sup> Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Standard*, 14: 256.

<sup>204</sup> Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1997), 170.

<sup>205</sup> Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *Standard*, 19: 30.

hate. Butler explains that the self who ‘takes’ itself and the self that is ‘taken’ here are the same:

Not only is the attachment said to go from love to hate as it moves from the object to the ego, but the turn produces the ego itself as a *psychic object*; the very articulation of this psychic space, sometimes figured as ‘internal,’ depends on this melancholic turn.<sup>206</sup>

In this way melancholia produces the possibility for the representation of psychic life.

The ego is split into parts by what Butler calls “the strange, fabulating scene initiated by melancholy” and the psyche is represented in terms of “splits and parts, articulating ambivalence and internal antagonism.”<sup>207</sup>

According to Butler, following Freud the melancholic *would have* denounced the other whom he lost if he could—for leaving, if for no other reason. And now he says to himself what he would have addressed to the other. In Butler’s reading, the melancholic’s recriminations are “addressed only to himself, as one who is already split off from himself.”<sup>208</sup>

Hence, the melancholic follows a direction that takes him further from the other who is lost rather than closer. He moves “in a direction opposite to that in which he might find a fresher trace of the lost other; he tries to resolve the loss through psychic substitutions and increases the loss as he goes.”<sup>209</sup>

As the melancholic travels further away from the lost object he heightens the strength of his critical conscience. The further away he travels, the stronger the melancholic feels an inhibition against expression towards the object. The stronger is the

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<sup>206</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 168

<sup>207</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 179.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 183.

inhibition of expression towards the lost object, the stronger is the expression of the critical agency toward the ego. The super-ego continually berates the ego in a process that denies the foundational loss that structured the ego itself and renders the foundational loss unspeakable and unrepresentable. In turn, the unspeakability and unrepresentability of the foundational loss translates directly into a heightening of the critical conscience that berates the ego in a “merciless” manner that exhibits a “gathering place for the death instincts.”<sup>210</sup> Thus, the strength of conscience does not respond to the strength of *externally* imposed prohibitions; rather, it responds to the strength of the refusal to acknowledge the loss that has already taken place. In this way, melancholic substitution produces and maintains the strength of the critical conscience or super-ego.<sup>211</sup>

Following from this account of the melancholic super-ego, the ongoing loss that the ego suffers is actually the ongoing loss of an *ideal of itself*. The ‘merciless’ super-ego finds the ego lacking and devastates the ego’s ideal of itself. As Freud remarks, “the judgments of conscience work in such a way that the super-ego gauges the ego against the ‘ego-ideal.’ The ego is found to be lacking beside this ideal and ‘loses’ itself.”<sup>212</sup> The ego ideal by which the super-ego criticizes the ego is formed by social regulation, and may be an ideal rooted in social relations such as those to ‘family,’ ‘country,’ or ‘liberty.’<sup>213</sup>

Freud feels that melancholic loss of this sort may be the precondition for a person to tolerate any loss, and draws his opinion from the history of “primitive” peoples that

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, 214 fn10.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

<sup>212</sup> Question for future consideration: Does the ego “lose” its identification with the “love” that it feels for its original attachment? The side that is not rage as it incorporates its object? So it loses this attachment as it is slowly beaten down for not approximating the ego ideal defined to be mercilessly criticized by the superego?

<sup>213</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 185.

evolve into contemporary humanity. In *The Ego and the Id* he sees a parallel between the melancholic incorporation of loss that occurs through the Oedipus complex and the practices of “primitive” peoples who believe that the attributes of animals that are “incorporated as nourishment” persist in the character of people who eat them. They identify the object that they eat as being themselves, having their characteristics. This belief is a root of cannibalism that he says persists from the Totem meal to the “Holy Communion.” Freud compares the way that “primitive peoples” equate their object of desire with that with which they identify themselves with the infantile oral stage in which the baby, “still feeble,” also equates objects of desire with himself (or with that with which he identifies himself). Later the child has to replace his attachment to objects with identification through a melancholic process. When the child gives up his foundational sexual object he sets up the object inside his ego. He regresses to the oral phase and Freud speculates that his regression may make it easier for him to give up the object or to render the process possible: “It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects.”<sup>214</sup> Melancholic loss thus enables the character of the ego to form as “a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes” that “contains the history of those object-choices.” Further, the varying degree of ability to “resist” determines whether one’s character will fend off or accept the “influences of the history of his erotic object-choices.”<sup>215</sup>

Such a transformation of erotic object-choice into an alteration of the ego is also a process through which the ego can control the id and strengthen its relation to it, even as the ego must acquiesce to the id’s experiences (reminiscent of the image of the rider who

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<sup>214</sup> Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *Standard*, 19: 24.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

sometimes must follow the route of the horse). “When the ego assumes the features of the object,” Freud says, “it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the id as a love-object and is trying to make good the id’s loss by saying: ‘Look, you can love me too—I am so like the object.’”<sup>216</sup>

An important complication to Freud’s superego presents itself in feminine subjectivity. The feminine position is determined by how the girl stands in relation to the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the incident that produces the super-ego. While early in his career Freud described the girl as having a parallel path to the boy, he later stressed their difference. The girl’s attachment to the mother is intense and the girl believes that the mother possesses a penis, which she desires, until the girl enters the phallic phase. Then she realizes when she sees a boy’s penis that she does not have one and that her mother does not either. She develops “penis envy,” and blames her mother for her condition of castration. She repudiates the castrated mother along with all other castrated women. She transfers her desire to her father, and her own longing for a penis transforms into her desire to give the father a baby as a substitution for her lack of a penis. While the boy’s super-ego is formed through a fear of losing his penis (castration anxiety) the little girl has no similar force to produce a super-ego, because she is already castrated. Rather, she remains in an unresolved position of penis envy that is the mark of normal femininity. When she realizes that she cannot get a baby by her father, she (after a latency period) transfers her desire onto surrogate figures for the father in other men. This leaves her “naturally” without morality and conscience that the boy, on the other

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

hand, will “naturally” develop.<sup>217</sup> In the following chapter, Butler, as well as Silverman and Cheng, will show that the position of the girl in the complex reveals internal contradictions in Freud’s theory.

Having reviewed some important Freudian sources that influence Butler’s account of melancholic subjectivity, I will now turn to some Lacanian sources that build upon Freud and that also shape her perspective. I will specifically consider Lacan’s idea of the *imago*.

## II. Lacan

Freud’s conception of the super-ego or ego ideal travels into Lacan’s *imago*. For my purposes here, I will only consider the Lacanian mirror stage and *imago*; I will also only consider the Lacanian subject and ego insofar as they are useful to understand the mirror stage and the *imago*.

Freud connects the formation of one’s ego with the externalized idea that one forms of one’s own body. Thus, Freud’s claim “The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface.”

Lacan adopts the projection of this shape that marks the material discreteness of the body through his story of the *imago* in the “mirror stage.”<sup>218</sup> Lacan’s mirror stage, like Freud’s

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<sup>217</sup> See *Ibid*, 26-30, where Freud discusses the process of the Complex.

<sup>218</sup> Lacan accounts for the genesis of bodily boundaries in the “Mirror Stage” and takes the narcissistic relation as the site of primary identification. Psychic projection is on the level of the imaginary in the mirror stage, not the level of the symbolic. See Butler’s distinction in *Bodies that Matter*, 71. According to Lacan, language is a set of rules of differentiation based upon idealized kinship relations; he understands language to be essential to the development of morphology.

Butler is motivated to consider language in Lacan (at least) because she describes materiality as given in different modes that are defined by a demand in and for language. Rather than say that the “materiality” of the body persists throughout these modes Butler says that “a demand in and for language” is what persists. The demand that occasions how the body will be explained, exercised, fed, put to sleep etc. (*Ibid*, 67). The

bodily ego, involves an imaginary relation of psychic projection.<sup>219</sup> Lacan's mirror stage suggests that the ability to project a shape onto a surface is one aspect of the way that bodily contours come to be elaborated, contained and centered through a psychic process.

Because the complexity of Lacan's mirror stage can make it difficult to understand, I will register some of its more intuitive antecedents to which Lacan refers that make it more readily discernible. Charles Darwin suggested in 1877 that the human infant's reaction to her reflection in the mirror is a specifically human act that sets her apart from animals. He mentions that apes will see their reflection but try to grab what they seem to think is another ape behind the mirror and then quickly lose interest when they fail. The human, on the other hand sustains a fascination with her reflection even though Darwin says that she understands it only to be an image.<sup>220</sup> In 1931 psychologist Henri Wallon coined the term "mirror test" for an experiment in which a child incrementally recognizes his reflection in a mirror and separates his own body from the body reflected in the mirror. Wallon believed that the child through this experiment shows a symbolic comprehension of an imaginary space in which he creates a unity for himself.<sup>221</sup> Although different from Lacan's theory in important ways, sociologist

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demand is "that without which" no psychic operation can proceed and that on which and through with the psyche operates—the "constitutive demand that mobilizes psychic action from the start, that is that very mobilization, and, in its transmuted and projected bodily form, remains that psyche" (*Ibid*, 68). Language always tries to denote a referent that it cannot resolve or contain through a signifier. The referent persists only as an absence or loss that impels language to repeatedly attempt to capture it and to fail. The loss has a place in language as the demand or call "that, while *in* language, is never fully *of* language" (*Ibid*, 69).

<sup>219</sup> In the register of the Lacanian *imaginary*, rather than the register of the Lacanian *Symbolic*.

<sup>220</sup> See Charles Darwin, "A Biographical Sketch of an Infant," *Mind* 2 (1877), 285-294.

<sup>221</sup> Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion de corps propre, (in *Journal de Psychologie*, November-December 1931, pp.705-48, cited in Elisabeth Roudinesco, "The Mirror Stage, an obliterated archive," *Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, (2003), 26.. Roudinesco argues that Lacan neglects to cite Wallon even as Lacan drew his ideas from this source.

Charles Horton Cooley also introduced the “looking-glass self” in 1902.<sup>222</sup> He describes this idea as a social reference in which a person imagines herself or any object that she encounters as if it appeared in someone else’s mind. The feeling of herself that she has is determined by how this “other” mind feels; her feeling about herself is “reflected” in this imaginary looking-glass self, a glass that allows her to imagine others looking back at her with an idea of her. These contemporaries to Lacan show how a person comes to have a psychic idea of the shape of her body and of its center that is determined by being seen – whether that is a child who in a mirror sees herself gazing at herself and so experiences being seen, or whether a child sees actual other bodies seeing her and imagines how they are viewing her and so imagines that she is seen.

Further, it is interesting to note that Lacan mentions phantom limb syndrome as it relates to mirroring and so underscores that conscious access to bodily sensation is related to visual fantasy. About 70% of amputees suffer from this syndrome. They sense that their amputated limb persists and has pain even after it has been amputated. They often report that the phantom limb is contorted or misshapen and so is causing pain. Lacan maintains that in experiences of phantom limb syndrome “it is as if one caught a glimpse here of the existential relation of a man with his body-image in this relationship with such a narcissistic object as the lack of a limb.” Phantom limb syndrome, he continues, “leads us to suspect that the cerebral cortex functions like a mirror, and that it is the site where the images are integrated in the libidinal relationship...”<sup>223</sup>

Contemporary treatment for phantom limb syndrome called “mirror box treatment”

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<sup>222</sup> Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*. (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2009), 183-184).

<sup>223</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Some Reflections of the Ego.” *Influential Papers from the 1950s*, (London: Karnac, 2003), 298.

indeed employs mirrors. The patient places her remaining limb and her phantom limb into a box that has two compartments separated by a mirror. As the patient moves her functional limb she sees it in the reflection of the mirror as if the whole and functional limb were moving in the place where she expects to locate her amputated limb, contorted with pain. This mirror box treatment reduces or erases the symptom of phantom pain in many cases.<sup>224</sup> Lacan's use of phantom limb syndrome underscores that he, too, like Freud, is describing a bodily ego in which conscious access to bodily sensation is mediated through fantasy.

While in his early career Lacan saw the mirror phase as a developmental stage that occurred during a specific age in the life of the infant, he later broadened the concept of the mirror stage to represent not a historical moment but a permanent structure of subjectivity.<sup>225</sup> By 1956 Lacan says that "the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the development of the child. It illustrates the conflictual

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<sup>224</sup> Some also contend that Lacan's early formulation of the mirror stage and the *imago* was influenced by his interest in evolutionary biology and the process of mimicry, although Lacan only mentions mimicry in passing in his essay of 1949. Roger Caillois, a French theorist of evolutionary biology, suggested that there is a process by which organisms are captured in their environment. Certain insects or animals are capable of 'mimicry' or of assuming the texture and color of their surroundings. For example, a stick insect looks like a stick. It seems that the phenomenon is explained because the animal is protected from predators. However, investigators found that those creatures that assumed a disguise were as likely to be eaten as those incapable of disguise. A US government survey performed in the early 1930s investigated the stomachs of 60,000 birds to substantiate this claim. Roger Callois argued that this showed a kind of law whereby organisms were captured in their environment. Lacan incorporated this idea into his considerations of child psychology and social theory in order to suggest that a similar form of imaginary capture for an organism in an external image can happen. He contends that this explains the swings in mood that a child has. The child is not, he claims, conflicting with another individual when the mood swings. Rather, the conflict results from a conflict internal to the child resulting from an identification with another party. This identification occurs not in one moment, but develops. If the child identifies with an image outside itself, it can do things it could not do before. Through this process the child becomes captured in an image or images. See Darian Leader, *Introducing Lacan* (London: Icon Books, 2010), 19-21.

<sup>225</sup> Between 1936 and 1949 Lacan referenced the mirror stage as a stage but was already developing this idea into the mirror stage as a phase that was not linked to a developmental moment in the life of the infant. See Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Routledge, 1996) 115.

nature of the dual relationship.”<sup>226</sup> Recall here the ambiguity that Freud cites in the relationship that the child has to its parents in the Oedipus complex. This ambiguity founds the relationship of the incorporated bodily super-ego to the ego and prefigures the dualism to which Lacan refers here. Thus, in Lacan’s later theory, the mirror stage serves an exemplary function rather than a developmental function, and describes a hostile duality within the subject.

Lacan explains the mirror stage through a story. There is an infant that has undeveloped control of its movement; between the sixth and eighteenth month of life the infant lacks coordination. Lacan views the infant as a human creature given premature birth who is anatomically incomplete.<sup>227</sup> However, this infant (spoken of by Lacan as a “little man”) has visual ability that is more advanced. He is able to recognize himself in the mirror before he is able to control his bodily movements. While his uncoordinated body is like a fragmented body, or a body in pieces, the baby sees his own image in the mirror as a whole that contrasts with his sensations of his uncoordinated body. The infant is held up to the mirror to see his reflection by “some prop.” The infant sees the scene in the mirror. He moves his body and comes to recognize that the movements in the mirror correspond to his own. He takes in an instantaneous view of his reflected image in order to fix it in his mind. According to Lacan, the child is transformed by taking in the image. He “anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage.”<sup>228</sup> He is captured in the image and finds in his transformation a way to contain his wayward and uncontrollable body and world. The infant feels the contrast between his uncoordinated body and the

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<sup>226</sup> Evans, *Introductory* 115.

<sup>227</sup> Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), 78.

<sup>228</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, 76.

completeness of his image as a rivalry. He identifies with the image in order to resolve this aggressive tension.

This identification<sup>229</sup> with the image or *imago* is the beginning of the constitution of the ego. Lacan describes the moment that the infant identifies with its image as a moment of jubilation because it gives the infant an imaginary sense of mastery.<sup>230</sup> The mirror stage and this image or *imago* thereby creates imaginary boundaries for his body through the image or *imago* in the mirror. The spatial boundary of the *imago* negotiates “outside” and “inside” as the imaginary. This process constitutes the bodily ego as it specifies the imaginary boundaries of the body. As Lacan explains,

The function of the mirror stage [is] a particular case of the function of the *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*....The specular image that the child sees, that is, the imagining that the child produces, confers a visual integrity and

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<sup>229</sup> Lacan speaks differently about identification when it happens in the imaginary register and when it happens in the symbolic register. For my purposes, identification as it happens in the imaginary register is relevant. According to Lacan identification in the realm of the imaginary and the mirror stage is “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2). To “assume” an image one recognizes oneself in the image and one appropriates the image as oneself. See Dylan, *Introductory*, 80-82. Butler (unlike Lacan) effectively reduces the symbolic to the reinvocation of the imaginary, so what she says about this symbolic process also applies to the process that happens in the imaginary register. See Butler, *Bodies*, 97. More aspects of what identification means in this context will emerge as the chapter progresses.

<sup>230</sup> Lacan bases his idea of the mirror stage on Freud’s concept of primary narcissism. The narcissistic structuring of the ego is created with the *imago* of a double as its main element. See Freud, “On Narcissism,” *Standard*, 14: 67-102 and also see Lacan, *Écrits*, 30. Lacan argues that the mirror stage is not simply a moment in development; it has an exemplary function. I will address this in more detail shortly. Kristeva claims that Lacan uses the primary site of identification as a narcissistic one in order to displace the actual primary site of identification which is the maternal body. “The relations of differentiation between parts of speech which produce signification are themselves the *reiteration* and extension of the primary acts of differentiation and separation from the maternal body by which a speaking subject comes into being. Insofar as language appears to be motivated by a loss it cannot grieve, and to repeat the very loss that it refuses to recognize, we might regard this ambivalence at the heart of linguistic iterability as the melancholy recess of signification,” Butler, *Bodies*, 70-71. Referring to the fantasmatic site of deindividuated fusion with the maternal body and the loss of it to language, Kristeva says: “But insofar as this loss is figured *within language* (i.e. appears as a figure in language), that loss is also denied, for language both performs and defends against the separation that it figures. As a result, any figuration of that loss will both repeat and refuse the loss itself.”

coherence on his own body (appearing as other) which compensates for his limited and pre-specular sense of motility and undeveloped motor control.<sup>231</sup>

The mirror image produces a sense of the body through a projection of integrity and ideality. It transforms a lived sense of lack of control and lack of unity into an ideal of control (*la puissance*) and of integrity through a specularization.<sup>232</sup>

The *imago* provides the *Urbild* of the bodily ego. *Urbild* is frequently translated as “paradigm” and literally means “proto” (*ur*) and “picture” for a combined meaning of something like “proto-picture.” The *imago* provides an exemplary point, paradigm or “proto-picture” that is a primary identification that ripens into the bodily ego. Lacan suggests that the bodily ego is an identification that is the cumulative effect of its formative identifications rooted in this primary identification.<sup>233</sup> This echoes Freud who says that the character of the melancholic ego is “a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes” and that it “contains the history of those object-choices.” According to Butler:

The social construction of the ego takes place through a dialectic of identifications between an already partially constituted ego and the Other. The mirror-stage is precisely the primary identification... which precipitates the secondary (social and dialectical) identifications.<sup>234</sup> It prefigures and shapes social relations as well as relations to objects.... In a sense, the mirror-stage gives form or *morphe* to the ego through the phantasmatic delineation of a body in control.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Lacan, “The Mirror Stage,” *Écrits*, page 220, quoted in Butler, *Bodies*, 75. Lacan identifies the specular image with the ego-ideal (je-ideal) and with the subject, but he will distinguish the terms later on other grounds (see *Ibid*, 75).

<sup>232</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 75.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>234</sup> The mirror-stage is “presocial and determined, ‘dans une ligne de fiction,’ along a line of fiction (imaginary, specular)” (Butler, *Bodies*, 260n20).

<sup>235</sup> According to Butler the mirror stage “prefigures and shapes social relations as well as relations to objects (which are also social in the sense of linguistically mediated)” (Butler, *Bodies*, 260 n 20). I stress that objects are social in senses that may ostensibly seem to be more than linguistically mediated; however, it is not my task here to describe Lacan’s theory of and Butler’s read of language and the symbolic. I restrict myself to Butler’s consideration of the mirror stage and the realm of the imaginary. I do wish to underscore that I am not making an analysis of language or the symbolic and that if I did, “linguistic” mediation might actually fairly include the social object as I describe it in this chapter. In the passage we are examining, Butler says that the mirror stage gives form to the ego through the delineation of a body in control. The primary act of form-giving is the ‘*souche*’ or tree trunk fallen and giving fertile ground,

The mirror stage gives one a sense of her own body through differentiating from another, but also through a projection that involves a necessary division of herself and estrangement from herself. In this way the mirror stage bears similarity to Freud's description of the ego divided against itself in which the "merciless" super-ego that is a "gathering place for the death instincts" criticizes the ego.<sup>236</sup>

This division of self that introduces estrangement through the specular image of the body as *imago*, happens in two ways. First, it is other than the subject<sup>237</sup> because through it the subject *anticipates* a mirage of the body in control. Thus the *imago* stands outside of the temporality of the subject or the ego's temporal futurity establishes it as other than the subject. It is not an experience of self in the now so much as it is an anticipation of the image of a future self in control. The psyche as it "constitutes/finds" the *imago* finds a "mistaken and decentering token" of itself that can never exist simultaneously in the exact same moment; this is an interior alterity. Second, the psyche

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providing the condition for the appearance of other bodies and objects...this wood fallen or chopped, ready for use, resonates with the meanings of matter as 'hyle' considered in chapter one. In this sense, for Lacan, primary identifications are indissociable from matter."

<sup>236</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 71. The mirror stage can be read as "a rewriting of Freud's introduction to the bodily ego in *The Ego and the Id*, as well as the theory of narcissism."

<sup>237</sup> For my purposes, I will not trace the ways that Lacan distinguishes between the subject and the ego in evolving ways and different ways in different time periods. I consider Butler's insights into the sociality involved in the *imago* of Lacan that are relevant to my purposes. It is sufficient to say that Lacan associates the ego with the imaginary (the realm of images) and the subject with the symbolic (the realm of language and signification). For Lacan, the two realms are separate; the "I" of speech is not the same thing as the ego that is the site of the imaginary identifications. The ego is made up of privileged images and psychoanalysis seeks to dissolve them. The images block the dialectical progress of speech and must be integrated into speech. Further, Lacan developed the theory of the mirror stage from the early 1950s in Seminar I until 1975 in Seminar XXII. For my purposes here, I will consider those writings of Lacan that concern the mirror stage and *imago* that inform Butler's consideration. "The ego...is a particular object within the experience of the subject. Literally, the ego is an object—an object which fills a certain function which we here call the imaginary function" (Jacques Lacan, *Le Seminaire, Livre II* (Paris: Seuil, 1978) 44/60). Butler continues "As imaginary, the ego as object is neither interior nor exterior to the subject, but the permanently unstable site where that spatialized distinction is perpetually negotiated."

finds the *imago* to be an object of perception like other objects so that it stands at an epistemic distance from the subject.<sup>238</sup> It is like an object among other objects.

The *imago* itself is also a relation. It is marked by a twofold estrangement so that the ‘outside’ of the ego that is demarcated in a spatial boundary by the *imago* is made through an identification not with an object outside of the ego but rather with the *imago* that is itself a relation. As an identification made through a relation, the ego is marked by permanent instability. It is a relation and so is constantly being made or achieved, and so must be perpetually negotiated and reinstantiated.

Because the *imago* is a continuous anticipating negotiation it does not end with the infant, but is continually repeated as a structure of subjectivity.<sup>239</sup> The anticipation or identification involves fantasizing that it is possible to approximate the idealized control of the *imago*, or, spoken in reverse, that it is possible to approximate the idea of not being a body in pieces.<sup>240</sup>

Like the melancholic turn that forms the topography of the ego in Freud, the psyche forms the ego through projecting the specular body as *imago*; at the same time the ego is that projection and the projection is an act of fantasy. It is a “reflexive (mis)knowing” or “misrecognition (*méconnaissance*)”<sup>241</sup> of objects as if they were distinct from self and of self as if it were distinct from objects. The Lacanian ego is a cumulative history of this reflexive misknowing.

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<sup>238</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 75.

<sup>239</sup> The *imago* ripens into the ego.

<sup>240</sup> See Butler, *Bodies*, 97. Butler here refers to how identification and fantasy happen in the symbolic register, but she (unlike Lacan) effectively reduces the symbolic to the reinvocation of the imaginary, so what she says about this symbolic process also applies to the processes that happen in the imaginary register.

<sup>241</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 73.

The topography of the ego projects itself into every perceptible object.<sup>242</sup> Indeed, Lacan emphasizes that it is only on condition that the anticipated, unlocated body provides an *imago* and boundary for the ego that objects can come into perception. He maintains that:

The object is always more or less structured as the image of the body of the subject. The reflection of the subject, its mirror stage [*image spéculaire*], is always found somewhere in every perceptual picture [*tableau perceptif*] and that is what gives it a quality, a special inertia<sup>243</sup>

Thus, the subject finds the *imago* of its body in every object, or the bodily ego in every object. However, the subject does not exist and then find its *imago* in objects around it. Rather, the idealizing projection of the *imago* also generates the cognition of other bodies or objects. “The ‘reserve of *morphe*,’” Lacan explains, “produces the contours of objects—objects and others appear only through the mediating grid of this projected or imaginary morphology.”<sup>244</sup>

We might imagine that objects in the environment support the ego but this analysis suggests that the ego may also “be” the objects rather than be “supported” by them. It may be the diffuse spreading of a sense of reflected self that resides in these perceived objects when one of these very objects is the *imago*.

In his earlier quotation Lacan states “The reflection of the subject, its mirror stage [*image spéculaire*], is always found somewhere in every perceptual picture [*tableau*

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<sup>242</sup> Because of time restraints, in this essay I only consider the mirror stage and the *imago* related to it. Through the mirror stage epistemological relations which are not yet theorized in terms of signification develop. I will not consider how Butler treats the psychic processes that Lacan describes that appear to emerge after a shift from epistemological to signifiatory models. For my purposes, it suffices to say that Butler views the epistemological relations that develop in the mirror stage as the root of the signifiatory relations that emerge with the acquisition of language in later stages.

<sup>243</sup> Lacan, *II*, 167/199; quoted in Butler, *Bodies*, 76.

<sup>244</sup> *Bodies*, 73.

*perceptif*] and that is what gives it a quality, a special inertia”<sup>245</sup> He mentions that “every perceptual picture” carries a “special inertia.” Part of the “special inertia” is the perceiving and re-perceiving of objects that the ego imagines as separate from itself: a congealed habit of perceiving. The ego perceives objects as a support for its idea of itself that is rooted in a sense of bounded control over itself as an object and over these objects. Such a craving to see the idea repeated in every object confirms the ‘reality’ of the seemingly separate ego for itself.

The ego and the perceived objects in this scenario are like the same cord composing a net. According to this analogy, the net itself consists of every object in the ego’s environment as well as the ego itself as object. The ego effectively reinforces itself, indeed constitutes itself, by “finding” itself in every object that it encounters. I do not mean that the analogy of the net refers to some set of real existents to which we have access that live outside of the imaginary scene that Lacan describes.

The analogy suggests that one tear in the net, in one object that does not adequately sit within the frame of the mirror in order to support the anticipated ego, threatens the ego itself. One tear in the net tears at the skin of the bodily ego. This highlights that the frame of the mirror in which the *imago* elaborates itself contains the image of the infant and every other perceivable image in the mirror. The child recognizes an entire tableau of all the objects in the mirror that becomes the *imago*. This sheds some insight upon why people react with great force to a small token in their environment that does not mirror themselves as a certain center of control. These small tokens uphold the net and every chain (or piece of cord) is only as strong as its weakest link.

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<sup>245</sup> Lacan, *II*, 167/199; quoted in Butler, *Bodies*, 76.

Recall for a moment the previous chapter and the “scenography” of Plato’s *Timaeus*. This scenography framed the characters of Plato’s dialogue in space, determined their dialogues, their tragic relations and especially their respective positions with regard to distance and closeness.<sup>246</sup> Plato defines masculinity as bodiless reason and the specular feminine as its reflection through an imagined spatial distance between authority and a certain kind of touch. The distance and the characters on both sides of it are cords in the net of Plato’s fantasized ego. To rearrange the spatial position in this scene, to reverse the required distance between knowledge/agency and the touch of sensible particulars and rather make them closer, is to produce a tear in that net. The tear contests the division of the masculine and the specular feminine, and so also contests the division of the specular and the excessive feminine. Thus, to bring knowledge, agency and touch close together on this stage is to violate the positions of props in that scene and to throw a different net that is a different gendered scene into motion. As another application of the net analogy, recall the heirs to Plato’s scene in the 20<sup>th</sup> century empathic mother. To make closer active authority and nurturing touch, or to make closer hostility and the practice of mothering, tears at the netted bodily ego of the empathic mother and at the bodily egos of those experts who frame her.

Lacan associates the fictional line of control that centers the bodily ego with certain body parts. Some body parts become the tokens for the “centering and controlling function of the bodily *imago*.”<sup>247</sup> The one organ acts as a token or conjectured basis for narcissism, or the attachment that is the *imago*, an imagined projection of a bodily

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<sup>246</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 27. And, see Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine,” in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985).

<sup>247</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 76.

contour. Lacan emphasizes the importance of the way that select organs structure the ego:

The issue is knowing which organs come into play in (*entrent en jeu dans*) the narcissistic imaginary relation to the other whereby the ego is formed, *bildet*. The imaginary structuration of the ego forms around the specular image of the body itself, of the image of the Other.<sup>248</sup>

However, Lacan says that the phallus is strictly a signifier, being neither an imaginary effect nor an organ. Nevertheless, the symbolization of the phallus that Lacan describes echoes the roles for the boy and the girl in Freud's Oedipus complex.<sup>249</sup> The clitoris represents an absence of the phallus (like penis envy), while the penis represents having the fear of losing the phallus (like castration anxiety). To have a penis, one has what the phallus is not and through this "not being" the penis is an occasion for the phallus to signify. Thus having the penis is a kind of awareness of dispossession, a fear of not having, and also of not being. In this way the phallus requires the diminution of the penis if it is to signify. Butler refers to this as a kind of "master-slave dialectic" between the penis and the phallus. The clitoris, on the other hand, is to not have the penis or to have already lost it; the clitoris occasions the power to signify the power of the phallus to castrate, a penis-envy that threatens dispossession. Thus women are said by Lacan to "be" the phallus and to be dispossessed as well as dispossessing. Female body parts absently reflect the power of the phallus and so are said to "be" it; they signify through the function of a lack. They are imagined thus to "be" though not to "have" the phallus because they cannot properly wield it.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

<sup>250</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 263n30.

Lacan's choice to structure the *imago* around the male genitals is comparable to the choice that Freud made to consider the girl child a "little man" when she acted as a subject who desired the mother. Both identify desiring activity exclusively as generated by male genitalia. Lacan assumes that the only body part that could be associated with the center of a fictional line of control is the male genitals. It seems a foregone conclusion that such an act of identification could not find its impetus in an organ identified with female or feminine sexuality.<sup>251</sup> Similarly, Freud views the little girl's desiring activity for her mother as a trace of her imaginary alignment with the father who possesses the phallus, and of the little girl's wish to take his place towards the mother. He recognizes that the little girl child "makes its mother into the object and behaves as the active subject toward her"<sup>252</sup> but assumes this means she is a "little man." Freud's view forecloses that such desiring activity could be associated with the girl's femininity or femaleness. Both assume that desiring activity originates in a male body and thereby foreclose the possibility of desiring activity originating in a body identified as female.

When the *imago* is centered by the male genitals, objects are also centered around the male genitals because they are structured around the *imago*. As a result, as Lacan reminded us, "the reflection of the subject, its mirror stage [*image spéculaire*], is always found somewhere in every perceptual picture [*tableau perceptif*] and that is what gives it a quality, a special inertia." This "special inertia" is found everywhere, in the subject and in every object in the environment; or, using an earlier analogy, the entire net feels the same inertia. This inertia becomes the centering of the imagination of subject and object

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<sup>251</sup> See, for example, Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>252</sup> Quoted in Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Theories of Representation and Difference). (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 152.

around the privilege of the imagined male organ. There is a special, phallic inertia. As Butler mentioned, the imagined male organs become “token and proof” of the body’s imagined integrity and control. Therefore, when an object in the environment does not adequately reflect to a subject that they have this integrity and control, or if an object contests that they have this integrity and control, such objects make a tear in the skin of the boundary of the bodily ego. If the proof in its token is revoked, then the counter-evidence tears at its body.

In effect, a small token that does not support the *imago* threatens death—the unraveling of the net. Freud uses the image of “shadow” to refer to a moment when the force of life is threatened by the force of death. Lacan also adopts Freud’s image. For both the shadow results when the ego forms by disavowing its loss. Due to this formation the subject will continually live in denial of its loss on some deep level. When the subject encounters someone or something that unsettles the shadow, the subject experiences this as a threat of death. The shadow is like the net and each time that the subject reinstantiates itself as a locus of control, it reinstantiates this “shadow.”

Freud refers to this shadow as the “wandering shadow of the ego” that casts its quality on all that the subject perceives. He adopts this language from Psalm 23: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”<sup>253</sup>

As I discussed earlier in this essay, for Freud the melancholically formed ego brings the object inside but also brings aggression against the object. This aggression is directed towards the ego by the super-ego and the ego becomes impoverished. “The

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<sup>253</sup> King James Version

poorer the ego becomes,” Butler explains, “delusional self-abasement ‘overcomes the instinct which compels every living thing to life.’” The super-ego turns aggression towards the ego and overcomes the desire for life. Freud describes this as the ego that casts “the shadow of death” and eventually names this force the “death drive.”<sup>254</sup> Melancholia directly counters narcissism in this sense. Freud refers to “the shadow of death,” saying that in melancholia “the shadow of the object fell upon the ego.”<sup>255</sup> The loss of the object became a loss in the ego and cast its shadow on the ego.

Butler notes that Lacan importantly reverses Freud’s formulation, indicating that for Lacan, the shadow of the ego falls upon the object. In Lacan’s description it is still oneself that one finds there at the site of the object; it is one’s own absence there. Lacan adopts the Biblical metaphor of shadow for death to express this as he says:

What did I try to get across with the mirror stage? ...The image of [man’s] body is the principle of every unity he perceives in objects... all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego [*c’est toujours autour de l’ombre errante de son propre moi que se structureront tous les objets de son monde*].<sup>256</sup>

In this account of the shadow Butler notes that “the other contracts my abundance.” In Freud’s account, on the other hand, “I contract the other’s absence.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Standard*, 14: 246; quoted in Butler, *Psychic*, 187.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, 249; quoted in Butler, *Psychic*, 187.

<sup>256</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), p. 166; Jacques Lacan, *Le Seminaire, Livre II* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 198. See Butler’s discussion in *Psychic*, 187.

<sup>257</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 187.

### Chapter 3: The Melancholic Body, Butler and Contemporary Critiques of Freud and Lacan

Butler considers Lacan and Freud as sources for her theories about the melancholic body. She draws from the descriptions that Freud makes of the partitioned self that is split into the ego and super-ego as well as the description that Lacan makes of the partitioned self that is split into the double alienation of the *imago*.<sup>258</sup>

Butler addresses the process of *imago* formation as a form of fantasy. During fantasy<sup>259</sup> the locations by which the subject identifies herself alter quickly and spontaneously. The subject who fantasizes is not already formed, but rather stages herself and identifies herself by dispersing herself into several positions.

Further, the ‘scene of fantasy’ is generated by the impossibility of returning to primary satisfactions.<sup>260</sup> As a result, fantasy rehearses its desire for primary satisfactions as well as the impossibility of recovering them. Thus, fantasy does not relate to an object of desire, but rather to a stage or setting for desire. Jean-Bertrand Pontalis and Jean La Planche, upon whom Butler draws, describe this stage or setting:

In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequence of images. He forms no representation of the desired object, but is himself represented as participating in the scene although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it (hence, the danger, in treatment of interpretation which claim to do so). As a result, the

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<sup>258</sup> Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in *Standard*, 19:30 and Lacan, *Écrits*, 76.

<sup>259</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 265n2. Butler distinguishes between “fantasy” and “phantasy.” During this discussion I use the word “fantasy” to mean “phantasy” in Butler’s technical sense. I feel that it is clearer for my purposes and maintains the sense of her intention. However, to be clear, in chapter three of *Bodies*, fantasy refers to “those active imaginings which presuppose a relative locatedness of the subject in relation to regulatory schemes;” phantasy, on the other hand, refers to a situation in which “the identificatory locations of the subject are labile.” This latter term of phantasy she borrows from Jean LaPlanche and J.-B. Pontalis. As we will see later on in this chapter, heterosexist constraint that compels the assumption of sex operates through the regulation of phantasmatic identification.

<sup>260</sup> It is structured by a prohibition upon the possibility of returning to such origins or primary satisfactions.

subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question. On the other hand, to the extent that desire is not purely an upsurge of drives, but is articulated into the fantasy, the latter is a favoured spot for the most primitive defensive reactions, such as turning against oneself, or into an opposite, projection, negation: these defenses are even indissolubly linked with the primary function of fantasy, to be a setting for desire, in so far as desire itself originates as prohibition, and the conflict may be an original conflict.<sup>261</sup>

As mentioned earlier, fantasy is structured by a prohibition upon returning to primary satisfactions. Through this prohibition fantasy emerges upon the necessary condition of losing an original object of attachment and, as part of the same process, producing auto-eroticism to cover over that loss and to substitute for it.<sup>262</sup> “Fantasy,” Butler explains, “originates...as an effort both *to cover* and *to contain* the separation from an original object.”<sup>263</sup> As a consequence, fantasy dissimulates imagining that it recovers and articulates the lost object.

Fantasy thus emerges as a scene in which the subject is installed and distributed in the position of both desire and the object of desire. Fantasy overrides the separation between a subject that desires and its object; it stages an imaginary scene in which the subject inhabits both positions. This process reconfigures the subject.

The scene does not allow for the alterity of any object, though it allows for the imagined alterity of all objects. As Butler notes, “Insofar as fantasy orchestrates the subject’s love affair *with itself*, recovering and negating the alterity of the lost object through installing it as a further instance of the subject, fantasy delimits an auto-erotic

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<sup>261</sup> Jean-Bertrand Pontalis and Jean La Planche, “Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality,” in *Formations of Fantasy*, Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan, eds. (London: Methuen, 1986) 26-27.

<sup>262</sup> “The human object [*l’objet humain*] always constitutes itself through the intermediary of a first loss—nothing fruitful takes place in man [*rien de fécond n’a lieu pour l’homme*] save through the intermediary of a loss of an object” (Lacan, *Écrits*, 75). Kristeva translates this loss as the loss of the maternal body, while, as we saw earlier, Cheng translates it as loss of the mother who is degraded by culture.

<sup>263</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 267n7.

project of incorporation.”<sup>264</sup> In it the subject perceives that it encounters objects in their alterity but that is only an effect of the auto-erotic project that is the reconfigured subject. Fantasy emerges to expand the subject into the position of subject and object in order to incorporate the loss that it disavows.<sup>265</sup> The separation from the lost object is a trauma that the subject cannot admit, cannot thematize, and covers over with a fantasized scene that scatters the subject and configures the subject as an extended domain of auto-eroticism.

Lacan addresses the deliberate projection of the *imago* as “reflexive (mis)knowing” or “misrecognition (*méconnaissance*),”<sup>266</sup> of objects and self in a way that echoes this Freudian fantasy. The Lacanian *imago* is a cumulative history of the reflexive misknowing. Butler notes that the “mirror” after which Lacan names the mirror stage does not provide a *reflection* of a pre-existing ego, but rather a *frame, boundary or spatial limit* through which the ego may elaborate itself.<sup>267</sup>

Such a misrecognition means that the ego is fundamentally social and generates social objects.

Accordingly, Butler interprets the morphological scheme as the epistemic condition through which the world of objects and others appear,<sup>268</sup> suggesting a kind of reciprocity of ego and object. This “social constitution of the ego” offers more than a

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<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 268.

<sup>265</sup> Or the congealing of a history of unavowed lost objects that follow upon the loss of the original lost object.

<sup>266</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 73.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, 74. While the foregoing description maintains that identifications occur simultaneously with the formation of the ego, American ego psychology and object relations tend to disagree. For the sake of clarity I briefly differentiate here their account from that of Butler’s. The American reception tends to assume that the ego preexists its identifications. In their view an ego identifies with an object that exists outside of itself. However, Butler maintains that the ego does not precede its identifications. On the contrary, the relation with images establishes the ego itself (*Ibid.*).

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

narcissistic precondition for object genesis. Rather, Butler says it offers “an irreducible equivocation of narcissism and sociality which becomes the condition of the epistemological generation of and access to objects.”<sup>269</sup> Certain physical objects, such as organs or body parts, become the tokens of this reciprocity.

Butler reads Lacan as aligning the phallus with the centering and controlling function of the bodily *imago*, and then associating the phallus with the male genitals.<sup>270</sup> The body in pieces that is out of control before the mirror, according to Butler, is symbolically castrated. The upright phallus is the figure of the little boy. It is the ego ideal or the gestalt notion that we have a body not in pieces, a psychic process that we come to through the mirror image or through being looked upon as a subject. There is a particular cultural association of that wholeness with the phallus that allows Lacan to symbolically privilege the male genitals as the token that centers the *imago*. The idealization of the “whole” body centered in the phallus along a fictional line of control compensates and overcomes a fantasy of the castrated body in pieces.

The *imago* thus authorizes according to Butler a “male imaginary [in which] male narcissism is extrapolate[d] to the transcendental.”<sup>271</sup> When the male genitals are associated with the phallus, according to Butler, they become the site and token of a “specifically masculine narcissism.”<sup>272</sup> To the degree that these imagined organs center the *imago*, they provide the structure of relations to the Other and to the world of objects; they become part of the imaginary elaboration of the bodily boundary of the ego. They

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-79. Butler interprets Lacan as reading the phallus of the symbolic back into the imaginary register where the *imago* forms.

<sup>271</sup> Butler here quotes the analysis made by Whitford, *Irigaray*, 58-74 and 150-152. (specific quote is 152) about the mirror stage in Lacan and the phallomorphism that he engages in.

<sup>272</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 76.

are “token and ‘proof’ of its integrity and control, and the imaginary epistemic condition of its access to the world.”<sup>273</sup> As such they are the model or principle through which any object or other may be imagined and perceived. Therefore, all objects will be imagined to have an anthropomorphic and (a specifically phallic) andocentric quality.<sup>274</sup>

Ultimately, Butler claims that when Lacan assumes that the male genitals are the center of narcissistic investment “an organ, a body part, has been elevated/erected to the structuring and centering principle of the world.”<sup>275</sup> Those identified as non-masculine will have as their lack of a phallus as their mediating grid for their perception of self and world, while those identified as masculine will have the occasion to symbolize the phallus as their mediating grid for self and world.

Butler considers Lacan and Freud as sources for her theories about the melancholic body. She draws from the descriptions that Freud makes of the partitioned self that is split into the ego and super-ego as well as the description that Lacan makes of

Butler qualifies the foregoing description of the partitioned self that is split into the double alienation of the *imago* in conversation with theorists such as Kaja Silverman and Anne Anlin Cheng. Because these theorists approach the lost object that maintains melancholia from different perspectives than Freud and Lacan, their dialogue alters the parameters of the concept of melancholy.

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

I. Kaja Silverman

Kaja Silverman, another theorist of melancholia with whom Butler dialogues, revises the Oedipus complex and especially the role of the mother in it. She notes that while a person's history may not be absolutely determined by a gendered identity, the moments in that person's history cannot escape being inflected by it. Sex, gender and sexuality as those are enforced through the predominant heterosexual grid hold considerable weight in how one is culturally recognized and therefore affect the social positions to which a person has access. Further, socially assigned gender gives meaning to the patterns of identification in which a person engages, therefore:

It is not the same thing...for the daughter to align herself psychically with the father as it is for the son to do so, since whereas the latter case constitutes a successful Oedipal interpellation, the former constitutes an Oedipal irregularity—a refusal to become “a little woman.”<sup>276</sup>

Silverman rejects parts of the Oedipus complex. She does not hold that a visual moment, an instance where the child sees the penis or the lack of it, determines the child's awareness of castration. Instead, she adopts a “symbolic castration.” Symbolic castration views the mark of castration not as whether one has or does not have the penis but rather as whether a person has initial separation from the mother or separation from the wholeness that is a physical feeling/reality.<sup>277</sup> Through symbolic castration Silverman maintains that some “censored, repressed element of the feminine” has been relegated to the historically constituted unconscious.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 148

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 149. While Silverman criticizes Irigaray's basic account of femininity as one that conflates sexuality with the female body, Silverman's own desire to return to Irigaray's “what has been historically constituted as the ‘unconscious’, some censored, repressed element of the feminine,”] but in the form of the girl's negative Oedipus complex or the girl's desire for the mother, still shows the usefulness of considering the topography that positions bodies in space for questions of gender. Her insistence that the early phase of

She reconstructs sexual libido to exceed the Freudian context in which it must be associated with the activity of the penis so that women are “castrated” and do not properly have sexual libido. According to Freud, women play a passive role in relation to males who do have the penis and active ability. He assumes that what the girl child loses through the Oedipus complex, and is therefore the loss that informs her female subjectivity, is the penis and the ability to have an “active” role toward her love objects. Since she does not have a penis to lose, she cannot have castration anxiety and therefore cannot develop a superego. She lives a life of wishing that she were capable of having a penis but since she cannot trying to attach herself in some way to a body that is capable of having it.

However, before the little girl child becomes a “little woman,” before she goes through the Oedipus complex and discovers that she is castrated, Freud says that she behaves “in a masculine way” as if she had a penis--producing her own clitoral pleasure and erotically desiring her mother. Freud calls this the “phallic phase” and pre-Oedipal period when the girl child is a “little man.” This “little man” will transition into a “little woman” when she recognizes her castration and desires to get a child (to get a baby with a penis) by the father.<sup>279</sup> His idea that the little girl goes through a “phallic phase” suggests that he views the little girl’s desiring activity as a trace of her imaginary alignment with the father who possesses the phallus, and of the little girl’s wish to take his place towards the mother. He ignores that such desiring activity could be associated with the girl’s femaleness, rather than be associated with a trace of imaginary alignment

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the child in which the child in close proximity learns its identity as well as the object that it desires through the “voice etc.” of the mother, suggests that the close proximity of child to the touch of the caretaker signal that which the fictional centering line of the *imago* prohibits.

<sup>279</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 142.

with a male principle.<sup>280</sup> He does so even as he remarks that the little girl child who is a “little man” “actually makes its mother into the object and behaves as the active subject toward her.”<sup>281</sup> Freud comes, Silverman claims, “perilously” close to saying that play is the “active” side of femininity when he says that “the little girl’s preference for dolls is probably evidence of the exclusiveness of her attachment to the mother, with complete neglect of her father object.”<sup>282</sup>

Silverman counters this by saying that the little girl is not “already castrated” because she lacks a penis. What the little girl loses, what is foreclosed to her, is her homosexual desire.<sup>283</sup> Freud forecloses the possibility that the girl child could take the mother as both an erotic love object and as her model for identification. He forecloses the conjunction of desire and identification. Silverman calls this foreclosure the “censored, repressed element of the feminine,”<sup>284</sup> which she believes has a vital relation to feminism.<sup>285</sup>

The phallic model that performs this foreclosure fails to account for the essential place that the mother has in the early phases of subjectivity in which the child identifies with her:

Not only is (the mother’s)... face the visual mirror in which the child first sees itself, but her voice is the acoustic mirror in which it first hears itself. The child gropes its way toward identity by incorporating the mother’s facial expressions, sounds, and movements, not just before that mystical moment at which it first

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<sup>280</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 149-150

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*, 149-150.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

<sup>283</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 185.

<sup>284</sup> Silverman echos Luce Irigaray here. See Silverman, *Mirror*, 149. About this echo Silverman comments “I realize that in introducing it in this way I am flying in the face of Foucault’s important critique of the ‘repressive hypothesis,’ but I don’t think that feminist theory can manage without the concept of repression.”

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

catches sight of its own reflection, but afterwards, as it begins to assimilate the system of language.<sup>286</sup>

When the little girl identifies with the mother during these early phases of subjectivity, or early parts of the Oedipus complex, she at least partly aspires to activity because she identifies with the mother. Femininity is defined as passivity, Silverman explains, not because of “nature” but rather because of cultural discourses and institutions that support that definition.<sup>287</sup> It would thus be more correct to suggest that the little boy is ‘feminine’ until his castration crisis than to suggest that the little girl is ‘masculine’ until hers. Nevertheless, both concepts have a role only retroactively, after sexual differentiation.

According to Silverman’s new inclusion of the mother’s role, the threat of symbolic castration that propels the Oedipus complex for the little girl begins during a period of time when the little girl both desires and identifies with the mother and when her social community (and perhaps the mother herself) degrades the mother. At the same time the social community gives the little girl no outlet through which to object to such degradation, even though the mother is her primary object of love. In addition, because of the degradation shown the mother and the admiration shown the father, the girl would be encouraged by her community to displace her desire onto the father and to, in Freud’s words “get rid of the mother.”<sup>288</sup> She would at the same time feel enormous cultural pressure to continue to identify with the degraded mother; it is here that Silverman says melancholia strongly enters the picture.

As the girl advances through the positive Oedipus complex she enters into a condition that matches the descriptions of melancholia; this is a condition, according to

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, 153 (femininity).

<sup>288</sup> See Freud, “On Femininity.”

Silverman, that “may be pathological for the male subject, but which represents the norm for the female subject—that condition of melancholia which blights her relations with both herself and her culture.”<sup>289</sup> Matching the description of Freud’s melancholic, she represents [her] ego as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; [she] abases herself before everyone and commiserates with [her] own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy... [she] declares that [she] was never any better.”<sup>290</sup>

This formation of female subjectivity as it progresses through the positive Oedipus complex explains the peculiar quality of self-surveillance performed by the female subject. She torments herself so frequently with “her peculiar tendency to treat herself as an object to be over-seen and over -heard.”<sup>291</sup>

While the girl’s desire for her mother certainly includes ambivalence, Silverman maintains that the ambivalence is primarily due to the way that the mother is devalued. It “has more to do with the devaluation of the original erotic object than with anything else. In effect, the female subject is punishing her mother (and consequently herself) for being inferior and insufficient, unworthy of love.”<sup>292</sup>

This internalized inferiority is the incorporation of the mother as a melancholic object. Silverman describes the incorporated lost object not as a coherent entity but, following Freud, as a network of unconscious memories. Each of these memories has been libidinally invested with what Silverman calls a “mnemic trace.” Freud’s first account of melancholia, although Silverman more refers to his second, lends insight to

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<sup>289</sup> Silverman, cf., Irigaray, who gestures towards melancholia as the normative formation for feminine subjectivity.

<sup>290</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 155n48.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

her “mnemic trace.” According to Freud’s account of melancholia as neurosis, in order to cure the one in mourning who exhibits symptoms like the melancholic, each of these mnemic traces must be broken from their libidinal investment. The forces of hatred in the critical conscience or superego carry out this task fuelled by the death drive. According to Freud, “Memory after memory is called to the witness stand to be castigated by that punitive agency until it has been rendered worthless.”

Silverman sketches a correlative account of melancholic subjectivity for the little boy as he progresses through the positive Oedipus complex. Typically in Western culture the little boy, too, first sees himself in the visual mirror of the mother’s face and hears himself in the acoustic mirror of the mother’s voice. “He gropes his way towards identity” by incorporating her facial expressions, movements and sounds. As a result, as mentioned earlier, the little boy in Silverman’s opinion is more ‘feminine’ than masculine through this identification and incorporation until his castration crisis (although the idea of feminine or masculine only come into play retroactively after sexual differentiation). It follows, she suggests, that there is a period of time after the beginning of the Oedipus complex in which the male child both desires and identifies with the mother thereby approximating the “negative Oedipus complex” in the little girl. In the negative Oedipus complex the little girl takes on a feminine identification which does not give rise to the usual masculine object-choice, but rather to a feminine object-choice. Freud considers it a failure in the normal progression of the Oedipus complex. In this case the little boy would have identified with the mother and taken her as a love object.

The little boy in this case would also participate in this conjunction of identification and erotic desire that Silverman describes as the “censored, repressed

element of the feminine.”<sup>293</sup> However, the stakes for the little boy in this situation are different from those of the little girl. The little girl has everything to gain from societal pressure through “feminization” while the little boy has everything to lose from societal pressure were he to be feminine. However, the little boy will also not have to move through the experience of both degrading the mother and then being forced societally to identify with the mother as a proper feminine female. In this sense, the little girl develops a more rigid and cruel super-ego because she must deny that she ever loved a feminine object or ever lost a feminine object and, in addition, she must also desire a masculine object and mimic the object she denies that she lost. The little boy, on the other hand, must rediscover this feminine object of love later (after temporary renunciation) in a surrogate figure for the mother. The boy must also identify with or incorporate the father as he takes a feminine love object. In a strange twist, desire must still play a role in the boy’s imaginary relationship to the father. Either his own desire or the desire of the mother (and the extrafamilial symbolic order) show the mother’s erotic investment in the father and set the precondition for the son’s paternal identification.<sup>294</sup>

## II. Anne Anlin Cheng

Anne Anlin Cheng, with whom Butler is also in dialogue, presents melancholic subjectivity as a “cultural education” and illustrates the complex sources from which norms that enforce melancholic subjectivity arise. While Cheng describes melancholic race, her description of how the process of melancholy unfolds around social norms is

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<sup>293</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 151.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

immediate and acute and transfers easily to the process through which melancholic gender emerges.

Cheng considers the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* and the related narrative of Toni Morrison to contextualize the progression of melancholia among racial minorities. Her discussion points to the importance of considering damages to a group that one cannot identify as tangible, material damages. Rather, she underscores those damages that are melancholic in nature and that cannot be spoken or that remain inarticulable through legal (and most social) parlance.

Cheng maintains that the white racial majority in America and the authority that they wield require that they introject racial others. Further, the racial majority can neither relinquish nor accommodate the ghostly presence of these introjected others who are racial minorities. On the other hand, the racial other (whom she also calls the melancholic object) suffers from a racial melancholy; their racial identity requires that they introject the lost perfect racial majority. The identity of the racial other “is imaginatively reinforced through the introjection of a lost, never-possible perfection, an inarticulable loss that comes to inform the individual’s sense of his or her own subjectivity.”<sup>295</sup> These two ‘sides’ are implicated in each another.

To illustrate this, Cheng turns to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling. This ruling overturned a previous ruling that allowed segregation in schools. It used the evidence of social science studies of dolls and identification as ‘good’ ‘bad’ and ‘like self.’ In this study the researchers presented the black children with white and black dolls and asked the children to identify which doll was ‘good,’ which was ‘bad,’ and which

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<sup>295</sup> Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Race and American Culture). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xi.

was most like themselves. The black children overwhelmingly identified the white dolls as good and like themselves and identified the black dolls as bad and unlike themselves.

The novelty of *Brown* was that it required that the court take into account damages that were not easily tangible and quantifiable. The court had to consider not only tangible and quantifiable benefits that students who were segregated were deprived of, but also, in the words of the court, “the *effect* of segregation itself on public education... even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal.” Segregated schools deprive minority groups of equal educational possibilities because segregation “generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may *affect their hearts and minds* in a way unlikely ever to be undone.”<sup>296</sup>

In this way the courts during the *Brown v Board of Education* ruling resonate with the description of melancholic subjectivity earlier in this chapter. The norm of racial preference for whiteness was seen in the effects produced when the children pointed to the ‘good’ doll and the doll that they thought most resembled them. At the same time, the *causes* of racial preference are much more difficult to identify. *The ruling depended upon the indication that the children gave that they wished to be like something other than they were*; it did not depend upon the usual tangible damages that the court considered. The court thus decided that this *indication* of harm seen in the *effects* of segregation, rather than some proof of tangible damages that might discover its *cause*, indicated a call to action. According to Cheng the *Brown* case set the precedent to legally acknowledge “the invisible but tenacious aspect of racism—of allowing racial

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 4.

grief to have its say even if it cannot definitively speak in the language of material grievance.”<sup>297</sup>

At a subsequent ruling, white segregationists used the same evidence to argue that entirely black classrooms allowed black children the space to achieve a ‘healthier,’ stronger and more specific black identity. According to Silverman their argument sought to transform psychical damage that was the result of social injury into “a notion of inherent disability.” Thus an originally liberating idea of psychical injury that was utilized in the *Brown* case turned into a racist tool. It slipped from “recognizing to naturalizing injury.”<sup>298</sup> This is an example of complex norms subtly at work to produce the critical agency that polices and criticizes black children from inside their own psychical process.

Because society relies so heavily upon material or quantifiable terms to describe injury, Cheng claims that as a Western society we are disabled from confronting the psychical imprints of grief; rather than confront the psychical imprints of grief we turn them into sentimentalization or neglect. This stunts social healing. A litigious society that has a wide vocabulary to describe grievance based upon comparability and compensation deflects attention away from public and private grief that is immaterial and less quantifiable.<sup>299</sup> In Cheng’s words, “Instead of ‘getting over history’ we must ask what it means *to grieve*.”<sup>300</sup>

As Cheng reads melancholia through Freud, she maintains an agnosticism about whether the ego can exist prior to melancholia because the ego emerges as a psychical

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 6.

object only after the “shadow of the object” has fallen upon it.”<sup>301</sup> Thus, she does not express as strongly as Butler does that melancholic process is formative of the subject. Nevertheless, her reading is compatible with Butler’s view.

Cheng refers to introjection or incorporation of the lost other as a process of “taking in the other-made ghostly.” Through this process the melancholic subject fortifies herself and “grows rich in impoverishment.” Melancholia establishes the ego as a history of losses and as an entangled relationship with loss.<sup>302</sup>

Cheng describes the melancholic “taking in” as a kind of dining in which there is a swallowing that goes down only with difficulty. The libido turns feelings of rage, guilt and punishment originally attached to the lost object back onto the ego. At the same time the melancholic subject identifies with the lost object. As a result the subject experiences resentment and disappointment towards the lost object turned to her ghostly self; she consequently administers to herself her own self-denigration. The relationship to self as “swallowed object” is characterized by great ambivalence and profound resentment. The melancholic is stuck “almost choking on” the hated and loved thing she has devoured. Following Freud, Cheng notes that everything derogatory that the melancholic says about themselves is actually said about someone else; the thing is now within the ego and so the complaint now belongs to neither the subject nor the object because the two are “intrinsically confused.”<sup>303</sup>

It is at this turn that loss becomes exclusion, according to Cheng. Although Freud does not address it, Cheng claims that there are multiple layers of denial and exclusion

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, 5-7.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

that the melancholic must engage with in order to hold this “loss-but-not-loss.” First, the melancholic must deny that any loss occurred in order to believe that they still possess the object. Second, the melancholic must ensure that the ‘object’ never returns. If such a return happened, it would trouble the ‘cannibalistic project’ of the melancholic who has now swallowed the object. As a result, while it might seem like the melancholic would welcome the return of the lost object, the ego may not in fact wish for or be able to afford such a return.

At the heart of her loss the melancholic must also now actively exclude the object that she denies was lost. According to Cheng exclusion, rather than loss, is really “the stake of melancholic retention.”<sup>304</sup> Accordingly, melancholia offers a powerful critical tool because it accounts for both the guilt and the denial of guilt “the blending of shame and omnipotence” in the racist (or sexist) imaginary.<sup>305</sup>

As a result, Cheng wishes to discover what the subjectivity of the melancholic object is. She asks if it is also melancholic and asks what will we uncover when we resuscitate it? Further, how, she asks, will this help those who are excluded as the objects of loss? In her words, “How does recognizing this melancholic dilemma underlying

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, 11. Indeed, Freud’s text itself may be considered quite melancholic in *its* ruthless exclusion of the object. For the ego is not the only ghostly presence in this essay. That is, the melancholic ego is a haunted ego, at once made ghostly and embodied in its ghostliness, but the “object” is also ghostly—not only because its image has been introjected or incorporated within the melancholic psyche but also because Freud is finally not that interested in what happens to the object or *its* potential for subjectivity. Cf., *Ibid*, 10n23, 200:

In psychoanalytic theory, incorporation and introjection have for the most part been understood as similar processes, and here I am using the terms interchangeably. There are, however, theorists (such as Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok) who have argued for a differentiation between the terms. I examine this proposition and its implication in chapter 3 where I take a closer look at the relationship between **psychoanalytic incorporation and cultural assimilation** in relation to Maxine Hong Kingston’s work.”

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

dominant power *help* those who have been buried and then resuscitated only as serviceable ghosts?”<sup>306</sup>

“To exist within melancholic subjectivity,” Cheng tells us, “is sometimes a self-contradicting negotiation with pain.”<sup>307</sup> However, Cheng underscores, it is not self-hatred. Looking back at the doll tests reveals the results of social relations, but does not reveal self-hatred as the cause of the choices that children made. The issues raised about the dolls and consequently fought about since then is an argument about how to assign social meaning to psychological processes.<sup>308</sup>

The choices the children made did not indicate a “condition of surrender.” Rather, they expressed a negotiation and an expression of agency, as well as abjection. Cheng turns to Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, to fill out what this might mean. Morrison’s novel engages how a black child comes to prefer white qualities and is inspired by the *Brown* case. In Morrison there is another (feminine) confrontation with the sign of blue eyes and a black child makes a similar response showing self-denigration and pride. Morrison’s child narrator describes how every Christmas she would receive the ‘loving gift’ of a ‘big, blue-eyed Baby Doll’:

I had only one desire: to dismember it....But the dismembering of dolls was not the true horror. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls....What made people look at them, and say, “Awwwww,” but not for me? The eye slide of black women as they approached them on the street, and the possessive gentleness of their touch as they handled them.

If I pinched them, their eyes—unlike the crazed glint of the baby doll’s eyes—would fold in pain, and their cry would not be the sound of an ice box, but a fascinating cry of pain. When I learned how repulsive this disinterested violence

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<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

was...my shame floundered about for refuge. The best hiding place was love. Thus the conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love. It was a small step to Shirley Temple. I learned, much later, to worship her.

In the *Bluest Eye*, the child's own blackness is not where shame comes from. In fact, the child became angry, as would be expected, when her blackness was debased. This shows a great deal of self-possession in the child. The shame comes from a social message that communicates there is no place, no cultural or social repository, for her anger and grief. Therefore her grief must go into hiding. The little girl must internalize a white ideal and in addition—and importantly—she must internalize an ideal of black womanhood as a longing for the white ideal.<sup>309</sup> “That is,” Cheng explains, “what is hard to swallow is not just Shirley Temple, a competition for attention, but precisely the ‘eye-slide’ of black mothers.”<sup>310</sup>

The child heroine eventually believes that she literally has blue eyes and everywhere she looks she imagines that her black community wishes to harm her out of envy for her blue eyes; similarly, everywhere she looks she sees the threat of non-blue eyes and disavows her desire for her black mother's non-blue eyes to slide towards her. She imagines every object in her environment in order to sustain the object that is her ego, and her ego is in fact that imagining. Any suggestion from an object in her environment which she could not override with her own imagination that proved that black eyes deserve desire would tear at the skin of her now blue-eyed bodily ego.

According to Cheng the experiment with dolls does not supply us with data about the psychical workings of black children; instead, it supplies us with a story of a certain education of black children. Racism (and also in this case sexism) is an education in

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

desire that is both personal and social. It is “a pedagogy that tethers the psychical inextricably to the social. Political domination is reproduced at the level of personal experience.”<sup>311</sup> This education, and the sometimes reductive notion of “internalization,” is as much about surviving grief as it is about embodying it.<sup>312</sup>

Cheng tells us that the process of melancholia as described above results in a “loss of affective discrimination.” It is difficult to know what one’s first affections or loves might have been or might be:

For a child coming to racial discrimination, affective formation and distinction (how one tells the difference between love and hate) become so entangled and twisted that love and hate both come to be ‘fabricated’ and ‘fraudulent.’ We are witnessing the loss of affective discrimination in the face of racial discrimination. The social lesson of racial minoritization reinforces itself through the imaginative loss of a never-possible perfection, whose loss the little girl must come to identify as a rejection of herself.”<sup>313</sup>

As this statement illustrates, racial difference does not provoke self-shame in a racial minority who then tries to cover over it by preferring the dominant race. The process is more complicated and travels through a path of alienation, resistance, aggression and finally a domestication of that aggression as “love.” Cheng describes this as a conversion of grief over being black into an enjoyment of whiteness as a lesson taught by society. It is a “*cultural* lesson of mastering personal displeasure as social pleasure...”<sup>314</sup>

Cheng’s account of how melancholy unfolds transfers easily to a consideration of the complex process through which gender unfolds. I would offer that the “eye slide of black mothers” towards white children and the “possessive gentleness of their touch” in relation to them easily translates to the “eye slide” of society that gives its attention to the

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<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

desires, development and existence of boy children while averting its gaze from girl children. And, as a girl child recognizes this arbitrary sliding of attention, she recognizes what Silverman describes as the degradation of the mother and of anything feminine. The little girl realizes that her ideal will be a longing for the attention given to boys and a transformation of her resentment of male privilege into male worship. Similarly, according to Silverman's analysis, the little boy will learn to repudiate the identification that he may have made with the mother and distance himself from "femininity" based upon the eye-slide of society that gives its attention to the desires, development and existence of boy children as it looks away from feminine girl children.

### III. Judith Butler

#### *A. Norms*

Butler's conversations with psychoanalytic theorists gives Foucauldian norms psychic depth in order to understand how power operates within the psyche. She locates the ego-ideal as the place from which social norms exert their force upon the partitioned ego.<sup>315</sup> Because norms are often understood reductively, before turning to Butler's psychoanalytic account, some dominant misconceptions about norms will be addressed. A clearer sense that is freed from these misconceptions of how norms operate will clarify how they work in the psychic body that she addresses through psychoanalysis.

Because social norms ensure that people conform to a popular or regular set of social behaviors and thereby make regular, it might seem that norms are models that people strive to approximate in order to act "normal."

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<sup>315</sup> The following section on Butler's understanding of norms is drawn from chapter two, "Gender Regulations" in *Undoing Gender*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).

However, Butler clarifies that a norm is different from a model that individuals strive to approximate. A “model” inspires actions in the person who wishes to approximate it. So, the norm seems a separate or prior thing to the person’s actions. However, norms never exist outside of or before their incorporations in individual actions. The norm is considered as analytically independent of such incorporations only as an intellectual heuristic or intellectual exercise. “In fact,” Butler says, “the norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstituted in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life.”<sup>316</sup> Unlike a model, a norm does not exist prior to human actions related to it. Rather a norm is a form of social power in which practices work through idealizations. Using gender as an example of a norm, Butler describes it as:

A form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted. As a norm that appears independent of the practice that it governs, its ideality is the reinstituted effect of those very practices. This suggests not only that the relation between practices and the idealizations under which they work is contingent, but that the very idealization can be brought into question and crisis, potentially undergoing deidealization and divestiture.<sup>317</sup>

Thus the norm is analytically independent of its incorporations only as an intellectual heuristic; a norm only continues as a norm to the degree that people repeat social acts that reimagine and reproduce a norm through the daily social rituals of bodily life.

Accordingly, following a Foucauldian schema, Butler explains that regulatory power shapes and forms the subject and does not only act upon a preexisting subject. A regulation not only subjects but also subjectivates: it brings a subject into being through

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<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

the very regulating.<sup>318</sup> As Butler explains, “when Foucault claims that discipline ‘produces’ individuals, he means not only that disciplinary discourse *manages* and *makes use of them* but that it also *actively constitutes them*.”<sup>319</sup>

That norms actively constitute individuals also makes the displacement or resignification of norms a real possibility. Butler draws upon Pierre Macherey’s Spinozan thought to highlight this. Macherey’s distinction between immanent and transitive causality shows that norms are forms of action; they exercise immanent, and not transitive, causality. According to Macherey an immanent cause is an indwelling cause, one that is inseparable from its effect.<sup>320</sup> For example, the numbers 1 and 2 are immanent causes of 4 because they are always present in it as factors. They may only be separated out by analysis.<sup>321</sup> He explains:

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<sup>318</sup> Butler contravenes Foucault as she discusses gender as a norm in one respect: “If the Foucauldian wisdom seems to consist in the insight that regulatory power has certain broad historical characteristics, and that it operates on gender as well as on other kinds of social and cultural norms, then it seems that gender is but the instance of a larger regulatory operation of power. I would argue against this subsumption of gender to regulatory power that the regulatory apparatus that governs gender is one that is itself gender-specific. I do not mean to suggest that the regulation of gender is paradigmatic of regulatory power as such, but rather, that gender requires and institutes its own distinctive regulatory and disciplinary regime” (*Ibid*, 41).

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>320</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: with The Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and Selected Letters*, Seymour Feldman, ed., Samuel Shirley, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992), 46.

<sup>321</sup> Spinoza’s discussion of immanence denies Aristotelian final causality as the goal or purpose of a thing or event and the related traditional idea of God as a creative, transcendent cause of the world. For Spinoza an immanent cause is like an indwelling cause, a cause that is inseparable from its effect. It is distinct from the transitive cause that “passes” causation over from cause to effect, and in which cause and effect remain really distinct, as is suggested by the notion that God is the creative and transcendent cause of creatures. See Spinoza, *Ethics*, 46, and *Ibid*, translator’s preface, 25. This notion of immanent causality in Spinoza is related to his view of freedom. In def. 7, Part I of the *Ethics* Spinoza describes when freedom occurs: “that thing is said to be free (*liber*) which exists solely from the necessity of its own nature, and is determined to action by itself alone. A thing is said to be necessary (*necessarius*) or rather, constrained (*coactus*), if it is determined by another thing to exist and to act in a definite and determinate way.” Although this may sound like a common description of freedom viewed as freedom from coercion, it also contains another idea. It contains a positive notion of freedom like “giving yourself the law” in Kant’s sense, but in a naturalized form. For Kant it is possible for one to give oneself the law because there is the natural and the moral world, but for Spinoza there is only a natural world. So there is a form of self-legislation that does not radiate from a two-tiered cosmology as there would be for Kant. Spinoza holds that people tend to crave a belief in a transcendent cause because they are largely familiar with their emotions or desires but

The norm is not a power that represses a subject before she acts. If it were such a power, the subject could liberate herself from this kind of control. But the history of sexuality and madness show that such a ‘liberation’ only reinforces the norm. If the norm subsists in and through its actions it is a site of social intervention. The norm cannot exist in advance of the consequences of its action. The norm only exists as it acts in its effects.

The norm, then, only exists as it acts in its effects. This means that the norm may never be fully extricated from its instantiations. As a result, each instantiation actively produces the norm. Or, “the norm produces itself in the production of that field.” Only through repetition does the norm confer reality, therefore the repetition itself can stray from the “intention” of the norm and reproduce the norm differently.

Gender is a norm that follows these motions. It operates within social practices as an implicit standard that normalizes; because of this it exceeds explicit models, rules or laws. As a result, gendered norms are often difficult to read and can best be discerned in the effects that they produce. For example, sexual harassment codes do not explicitly announce that they produce gender but they do so as an “effect” in the service of another regulation. These codes appear to seek to eliminate sexual harassment but they assume general conditions about the structure of sexuality and thereby produce a norm of sexuality and gender.<sup>322</sup> They assume that sexually demeaning behavior in the workplace is an instance of “sex inequality” that stems from a general condition in which

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unfamiliar with the causes of them. So, they view their desires as being determined by their free choice because they are ignorant of the actual causes. They take instances of ignorance and thematize them as principles of knowledge for the explanation of things. As an example, if I want milk and am conscious of that desire, but ignorant as to why my body needs it and expresses that desire in my mind, I don’t actually know why I want milk. But I will posit my freely chosen desire for it as the cause. Thus I engage in a thematic transformation of my ignorance into a principle for explanation. See Spinoza, *Ethics*, Appendix 57-8, and Spinoza, *Spinoza: The Letters*, Samuel Shirley, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985), 284-285.

<sup>322</sup> Butler, *Undoing*, 52.

men subordinate women sexually.<sup>323</sup> Catharine MacKinnon strongly shaped these codes and because she makes these general assumptions without interrogating them, gender means to have already entered a heterosexual relationship of subordination. As a result, Butler remarks, “there appear to be no gendered people who are outside of such relationships; there appear to be no nonsubordination heterosexual relations; there appear to be no nonheterosexual relations, there appears to be no same-sex harassment.”<sup>324</sup>

Some of the interrogations in which MacKinnon fails to engage would separate sexuality from sexual practice and sexuality from gender. So, for example, to engage in anal sex does not presuppose that a person is a given gender. Queer sexualities and transgendered persons also point out the fluidity and internal instability of gendered identities insofar as they cannot easily be cited in a hierarchized heterosexuality in which a man subordinates a woman.

Because MacKinnon’s very attempt to curb sexual harassment fuels such an ideology, it produces social punishments for gender transgression in several other arenas. Some examples of punishments for transgressing gender in other arenas include the surgical correction of intersexed persons, the criminalization and pathologization of ‘gender dysphoric’ persons, discrimination in employment, and harassment of or violence towards gender-non-conforming persons in the street or at work. All of these scenes are part of the ideology that produces gender as a norm. When the prevention of sexual harassment of women by men defines sex and gender according to heterosexual subordination, it regulates these very norms.

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<sup>323</sup> Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 6-7.

<sup>324</sup> Butler, *Undoing*, 54.

Other examples of scenes that produce gender in the service of another regulation include state regulations of lesbian and gay adoption and of single-parent adoption. These restrict who may adopt. In the process they also mention and reinforce national ideas about who parents should be and who counts as a legitimate partner. These regulations, like the regulation of sexual harassment, seem to and do curb specific activities. However, they also produce the parameters of what a person is. As Butler notes, they make “persons according to abstract norms that at once condition and exceed the lives they make—and break.”<sup>325</sup>

These are some examples of the complex ways that gender is produced as a norm. Because it is difficult to read, any particular actor who embodies gender will only engage in a tenuous effort:

Gender is not what one has or what one ‘is.’ It is a tool through which the normalization and production of masculinity and femininity takes intersecting hormonal, chromosomal, psychic and performative forms. The operation of gender along such indirect and complex lines often disguises that the production of the very binary of masculine and feminine is a labor produced by the norm of gender.<sup>326</sup>

Gender produces a contingent idea of the feminine and the masculine and presents these states as if they were naturalized, necessary conditions. According to Butler, this assumption disguises that gender may come in other forms:

To assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ is precisely to miss the critical point that the production of that coherent binary is contingent, that it comes at a cost, and that those permutations of gender which do not fit the binary are as much a part of gender as its most normative instance.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, 42.

Terms such as “gender blending” or “gender bending” or “transgender” or “cross-gender” already suggest that gender has a tendency to spread beyond the naturalized binary of masculine or feminine.

### *B. Psychoanalysis, Crossings and Mutuality*

Having clarified some possible misunderstandings about how norms operate, and therefore how gender as a norm operates, I will now turn to the ego-ideal, the place from which norms exert force upon the ego. Specifically, I will examine the ways that Butler draws upon Freud and Lacan and dialogues with Cheng and Silverman about the ego-ideal to add psychic depth to her account of the materializing body. Butler describes her engagement with melancholic gendered subjectivity not as a survey of psychoanalytic texts but rather as suggestions for some “productive convergences” between Freud’s thinking “on ungrieved and ungrievable loss and the predicament of living in a culture which can mourn the loss of homosexual attachment only with great difficulty.”<sup>328</sup> Her account recommends thematic crossings that create more mutual gendered positions. As will be shown, this does not mean that there are two genders, masculine and feminine, for which she recommends a crossing or blending. Rather, she suggests that there are multiple positions that exceed those two categories. However, because Western culture forcibly produces gender through these two categories, she works through the context of masculinity and femininity to create more options for gender expression, which I argue creates more mutuality in the ways that gender may be lived. Why more mutuality? Heteronormative gender requires that masculinity have agency and visibility and requires

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<sup>328</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 138.

that femininity be excluded from them in order to ensure masculine expression of them. This creates a lack of mutual agency and visibility between masculinity and femininity, but also between masculinity and gendered positions that blend masculine and feminine characteristics or that cannot be recognized through that binary. Where gendered positions are less centered around masculinity and opposition to it, agency and visibility may be had by more gendered positions, creating more mutual ways of living gender. I will first turn to sources in Freud that Butler considers.

### *C. The Lost Object in Freud's Oedipus Complex in Relation to the Ego-ideal*

Freud gave an account of the Oedipus complex in which it appears that a prohibition causes the child to lose the mother as an erotic object. The father prohibits the child who sexually desires "his" mother from sexually possessing her, so it seems like the child incorporates this loss of the mother.

While this account makes it appear that Freud is dealing with a scene of typical heterosexual desire that occurs in a heterosexual family of mommy, daddy and child, it is not that simple. The boy and the girl child think that the mother has a penis and when they see that the mother does not, they think that the father has castrated her and that the father could castrate them. It is castration anxiety that fuels the superego that the boy (the child that develops to be more fully human in the spheres of culture) incorporates. It is the fear of the loss of the penis that creates the superego, so the penis is actually the lost object, more than the mother.

Silverman pointed to the insufficiency of this account. She holds that the Oedipus complex assumes that what the girl child loses through the Oedipus complex, and is therefore the loss that informs her female subjectivity, is the penis and the ability to have

an “active” role toward her love objects. She does not have a penis to lose so she cannot have castration anxiety and therefore does not develop a superego. Rather, she lives a life of penis envy wishing that she were capable of having a penis and trying to attach herself in some way to a body that is capable of having it. However, Silverman counters this by saying that what the little girl loses, what is foreclosed to her, is her attachment to her mother, or her homosexual desire, not a desire for the penis.<sup>329</sup> Silverman claims that Freud uses his own unexamined preference for heterosexuality based around the penis to foreclose the possibility that the girl child could take the same parent as both an erotic love object and as a model for identification; he forecloses that the little girl could erotically desire the mother as her love object and at the same time take the mother as a model for identification.

Silverman explains that Freud’s foregoing phallic model fails to account for the essential place that the mother has in the early phases of subjectivity, calling the mother’s face the visual mirror for the child and her voice the acoustical mirror for her.<sup>330</sup> It would thus be more correct to suggest that the little boy is ‘feminine’ until his castration crisis than to suggest that the little girl is ‘masculine’ until hers. The conjunction of identification and erotic desire that crosses heteronormatively forbidden positions, Silverman calls the “censored, repressed element of the feminine.”<sup>331</sup>

Cheng also disagrees that the penis is the lost melancholic object. Considering feminine children of color who learn to adore Shirley Temple and whose subjectivity is

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<sup>329</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 148.

<sup>330</sup> Silverman, *Mirror*, 150.

<sup>331</sup> Silverman echos Luce Irigaray here (see *Ibid*, 149). About this echo Silverman comments “I realize that in introducing it in this way I am flying in the face of Foucault’s important critique of the ‘repressive hypothesis,’ but I don’t think that feminist theory can manage without the concept of repression.”

educated to be a desire for feminine whiteness, she identifies the lost object as the “eye-slide of black mothers” or the desire of black feminine figures for their own black feminine girl child identity.

Butler similarly names the prohibited and lost object as homosexual desire. The positions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in Freud’s *Three Essays* are, according to Butler, “the effects of laborious and uncertain accomplishment.” They are established “in part through prohibitions which *demand the loss* of certain sexual attachments, and demand as well that those losses *not* be avowed, and not be *grieved*.”<sup>332</sup> When to assume a feminine or masculine position means to accomplish an always tenuous heterosexuality, the accomplishment mandates that one abandon homosexuality. It mandates a preemption of the possibility of making homosexual attachments. This heterosexuality is produced not only by prohibiting incest, but also—and prior to that—by prohibiting homosexuality.<sup>333</sup> The prohibition on incest already presumes the prohibition on homosexuality. This foreclosure of possibility produces a “domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss.” It presumes the heterosexualization of desire.

She presses the puzzling position of the girl child in such a foreclosure of homosexual desire that does not allow desire and identification to cross. The girl child must eventually transfer a desire that she has for her father to a substitute figure for him. In order for this to happen she must first renounce her desire for her mother and renounce it in such a way that she refuses both aim and object. Unlike the boy child, who must transfer his desire from the mother to a substitute figure that is “feminine,” the girl child must first renounce the mother as feminine and not transfer homosexual love onto a

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<sup>332</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 135.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*, 135.

substitute feminine figure for her mother.<sup>334</sup> Rather, she must transfer her desire to her father as masculine, before she can then transfer her desire to a substitute masculine figure for her father. She must renounce the possibility of homosexual attachment itself. “Only on this condition,” Butler relays, “does a heterosexual aim become established as what some call a sexual orientation. Only on the condition of this foreclosure of homosexuality can the father and substitutes for him become objects of desire, and the mother become the uneasy site of identification.”<sup>335</sup> This suggests, as Silverman pointed out, that the girl-child may have to develop a more rigid superego than the boy.

The boy child is to become a ‘man’ by repudiating femininity and the feminine identification that he made with the mother, although he may retain the feminine as object of desire. This creates a fundamental ambivalence in the masculine identity that he assumes. His heterosexual career will seek to live this repudiation. His desire for the feminine will also be a repudiation of it: “He wants the woman he would never be. He wouldn’t be caught dead being her: therefore he wants her. She is his repudiated identification (a repudiation that he sustains as “at once identification and the object of his desire).”<sup>336</sup>

The man’s desire will have as one of its most anxious concerns to outline the difference between him and her and to strive to find and establish the proof of that difference. A dread will haunt his desire, one of being what he wants. In this way his wanting will always also be a kind of dreading. The ambivalent feeling that is both desire and dread preserves the repudiated identification with the mother, so his desire will

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<sup>334</sup> This would suggest, contrary to Freud, that the little girl would have a stronger, rather than a weaker, super-ego than the little boy.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

be to overcome an identification that he can never completely overcome.<sup>337</sup> He will refuse to identify with her and will refuse to love another man and thereby illustrate the proof of difference between him and her. This refusal to love, his acquiescence to the prohibition that he never love a man and never identify with a woman, incorporates homosexuality as an identification with homosexuality. And, this masculinity will be haunted by the love that it cannot grieve.<sup>338</sup>

According to Butler, the unavowed loss involved in the melancholic turn does not consist of a loss in one isolated incident. Rather, it is a series of losses, or a history of losses that congeal; it is the history of substitutions that sediment over time and produce the effect of a self that is ontological.<sup>339</sup> The character of the ego is, she says, “the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the archaeological remainder, as it were, of unresolved grief.”<sup>340</sup>

#### *D. The Super-Ego, the Imago and the Repetitive Propulsion of Sexuality*

Following Freud’s articulation of the bodily ego that exists on the frontier between the physical and psychical, Butler agrees that the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego—one that springs from the sensations on the surface of the body and that is the projection of a surface that assumes a gendered character and so is a gendered bodily ego.

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<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>338</sup> On the difference between repression and foreclosure see *Ibid*, 211n3: “The notion of foreclosure has become Lacanian terminology for Freud’s notion of *Verwerfung*. Distinguished from repression understood as an action by an already formed subject, foreclosure is an act of negation that founds and forms the subject.” See the entry “Foreclosure” in J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), pp. 163-167.

<sup>339</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 168-170.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

Melancholic loss diffuses over the bodily surface; it attaches to certain body parts and becomes one's conscious access to sensations in the body. One's conscious lived experience of the body is founded, according to her reading, on such losses. Thus melancholia creates pathways of feeling in the body that direct conscious awareness to sensation in specific parts of the body and that occlude the awareness of sensation in other surfaces of the body.

Butler draws upon Freud's characterization, noted earlier, of a kind of eroticized hypochondria that shapes the bodily ego in the early Freud. Hypochondria is an imaginary investment that "constitutes a libidinal projection of the body-surface." It installs that body part as epistemologically accessible and gives the ego imaginary contours. During the Oedipus complex there is a prohibition on love accompanied by threats of imagined death. In response there is a strong temptation to refuse to love and so to be taken in by the prohibition and contract neurotic illness. After this prohibition is established, body parts become zones of punishable pleasure and so of zones of pleasure and pain. Guilt manifests itself as pain that suffuses the surface of the body and may appear as illness. This pain takes the form of Freudian castration anxiety or penis envy and shapes the masculine super-ego or feminine subjectivity that fails to develop a super-ego; the pain is centered around the penis as the object that is lost.

As noted, Butler rearticulated the lost object so that it appears as foreclosed homosexual attachment. Following that interpretation, gender-instituting prohibitions on homosexuality operate by suffusing the body with a pain that emerges in the projection of a bodily surface. Furthermore, such prohibitions forbid a specific aspect of homosexuality. Freud is concerned to foreclose the possibility not only of any form of

homosexuality, but of those forms that allow erotogenous zones other than the (heterosexual) penis to function as sources of erotogenicity. Although I cannot sketch her full argument here, Butler claims that in *On Narcissism* Freud first suggests that any body part may serve as an erotogenous zone and uses his “pure conviction” to act as an “unargued truth” that allows him to insist that the penis is the body part that is the source of erotogenicity for any other body part. In *On Narcissism* Freud proposes that erotogenicity, like hypochondria, may be an imagined pain that produces felt sensation in a body part. He also proposes that erotogenicity may be viewed as similar to the way that we intensify bodily pain with psychic pain. The former proposal suggests that a person could imagine any body part as suffused with erotogenicity and, in fact, Freud cites examples of many different body parts, of which the penis is one, in which persons have experienced erotogenicity. In this case every body part, including, for example, the lips that kiss, is erotogenic. The penis is shown to be one of many sites of erotogenic transfer. The latter proposal, while it suggests that a “pain” is already physically present and then invested with a second psychic pain, offers no requirement that the sole location for that original pain be the penis. Despite Freud’s own process that cites the penis as one of many examples of body parts that hold and transfer erotogenicity, he concludes that the “originary” penis is the prototypical source of all erotogenicity that might exist in other body parts.<sup>341</sup> The effort Freud makes, Butler remarks, to “resolve the figure of the jaw-tooth’s aching hole into the penis as prototype and then as phallus” rehearses a rhetoric that enacts the narcissistic investment and idealization that Freud wishes to document.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 62.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

Freud's process establishes an ambivalence at the center of the construction of the phallus that is a wish that it be associated with the penis as the unoriginated origin of other beings, even though he has no proof for this. The ambivalence is a scene of necessary failure, one that prompts a return to that idealization in a vain effort to escape that conflicted condition. It is, according to Butler, the "forcible production of a masculinist original" similar to Plato's depiction of the forms that represent masculinity and which function as the exclusive origin of other beings.<sup>343</sup> Butler sees this ambivalent masculinist original in the very "wounded instruments of penetration" that Freud uses that start with the toothache. It "suffers under the ideal of its own invulnerability." The necessary failure and ambivalence at the heart of the phallus, its conflicted condition, is precisely the "repetitive propulsion" of sexuality in Freud's model. The body that the ego projects is shaped by this pain. It becomes the occasion of an "identification which in its imaginary or projected status is fully tenuous."<sup>344</sup> Thus, a propulsion to repeat an embodied anxiety that hides from its tenuous status conditions erotogenicity and produces the gendered bodily surface.

This propulsion is taken up by the super-ego that criticizes the ego for failing to meet Freud's phallic standard in which the unoriginated penis originates other beings as the phallus. These 'workings of self-beratement' impoverish the ego. Indeed, Butler notes that the ego-ideal, or the 'measure' against which the super-ego judges the ego, is "precisely the ideal of social rectitude defined over and against homosexuality."<sup>345</sup>

The phallus is thus shown to be neither an imagined construction of the penis nor

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<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

the symbol for which the penis is a partial approximation. The very formulation that it *could* be would be the forcible production of that conclusion which Freud attempts but cannot ground. Rather, the dream world created by Freud's depiction of the penis becomes a sort of fetish. It is:

A surface, that is, a sexed morphology which is at once a compensatory fantasy and a fetishistic mask. And if one must either love or fall ill, then perhaps the sexuality that appears as illness is the insidious effect of such a censoring of love. Can the very production of the *morphe* be read as an allegory of prohibited love, the *incorporation* of loss?

Rather than installing the penis as the nearest symbolic valence for the phallus, Butler's critique of Freud suggests that other and multiple bodily surfaces might also serve as sites of transfer for erotogenicity, or sites that represent the phallus. And, when erotogenicity is linked to penetration, other body parts might serve as erotogenic sites and therefore as penetrations from elsewhere than the penis. This fact shows Freud's labor as one that seeks, with the assistance of cultural hegemonic repetition, to ensure that these other possible sites do not come into view, even when his own investigations point to them.<sup>346</sup>

This ego that projects the body is also for Butler the process body described in the foregoing chapter. It is the psychic body that repeats rituals of feeling and fantasy through physical sensation and imagination and so congealing the bodily-ego.

Butler also uses Lacan to describe the repetitive propulsion of sexuality through his *imago*, the fantasized identification through which the subject imagines itself as a

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<sup>346</sup> From the Freud, "Ego and the Id" in *Standard*, 19: 23: the model for sexuality cannot be illness: that would be moralizing guilt. Prohibitions against love are given that make one afraid to love a love object and develop narcissism. But one must give way to love and love an object in order not to fall ill.

locus of control.<sup>347</sup> She identifies the objects that the subject must lose in order to be formed in the *imago*; they are wayward motility, disaggregated sexuality, libidinal dependency and the condition of being “in pieces.”

As mentioned earlier, these losses bring about a double estrangement in the formation of the subject. This estrangement plays a role similar to that of the “merciless” super-ego that is a “gathering place for the death instincts” that criticizes the ego.<sup>348</sup>

The estranging division of self wrought by the specular image of the body as *imago* happens in two ways. The *imago* is other than the subject<sup>349</sup> because through it the subject *anticipates* a mirage of the body in control. Thus the *imago* stands outside of the temporality of the subject; it is not an experience of self in the now so much as an anticipation of the image of a future self in control. The psyche as it “constitutes/finds” the *imago* finds a “mistaken and decentering token” of itself that can never exist

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<sup>347</sup> “The human object [*l’objet humain*] always constitutes itself through the intermediary of a first loss—nothing fruitful takes place in man [*rien de fécond n’a lieu pour l’homme*] save through the intermediary of a loss of an object” (Lacan, *Écrits*, 75). Kristeva translates this loss as the loss of the maternal body.

<sup>348</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 71. The mirror stage can be read as “a rewriting of Freud’s introduction to the bodily ego in *The Ego and the Id*, as well as the theory of narcissism.”

<sup>349</sup> For my purposes, I will not trace the ways that Lacan distinguishes between the subject and the ego in evolving ways and different ways in different time periods. I am interested in utilizing Butler’s insights into the sociality involved in the *imago* of Lacan. It would be beyond the scope of this consideration to trace the developments of the distinctions which Lacan makes between these things beyond the way that Butler considers these ideas and the ways that her consideration is useful for my purpose here. It is sufficient to say that Lacan associates the ego with the imaginary (the realm of images) and the subject with the symbolic (the realm of language and signification). For Lacan, the two realms are separate; the “I” of speech is not the same thing as the ego that is the site of the imaginary identifications. The ego is made up of privileged images and psychoanalysis seeks to dissolve them. The images block the dialectical progress of speech and must be integrated into speech.

Further, Lacan developed the theory of the mirror stage from the early 1950s in Seminar I until 1975 in Seminar XXII. For my purposes here, I will consider those writings of Lacan that concern the mirror stage and *imago* that inform Butler’s consideration.

Butler describes how 1) the ego is an object that cannot coincide temporally with the subject and therefore the ego’s temporal futurity establish it as other than the subject. 2) the ego as an object of perception among other objects is epistemically distant from the subject—here she quotes Lacan: “The ego... is a particular object within the experience of the subject. Literally, the ego is an object—an object which fills a certain function which we here call the imaginary function” (Lacan, *II*, 44/60). Butler continues “As imaginary, the ego as object is neither interior nor exterior to the subject, but the permanently unstable site where that spatialized distinction is perpetually negotiated.”

simultaneously in the exact same moment and produces an interior alterity. Secondly, the psyche finds the *imago* to be an object of perception like other objects so that it stands at an epistemic distance from the subject.<sup>350</sup> It is like an object among other objects.

Because the *imago* is marked by this twofold estrangement, the ‘outside’ of the ego as it is first ambiguously demarcated in a spatial boundary by the *imago* is made through an identification in which the *imago* itself is a relation. As an identification made through a relation, the ego is marked by permanent instability. The identification is a relation and so must be constantly made or achieved. As such it must be perpetually negotiated and reinstantiated, describing the need for a repetitive propulsion similar to that of Freud’s.

To anticipate the body in control involves a fantasy. One must fantasize that one has the power to approximate the idealized control of the *imago*. Or, in other words, one must believe that they have the power to approximate the idea of not being a body in pieces.<sup>351</sup>

As discussed earlier, during fantasy the locations by which the subject identifies herself alter quickly and spontaneously. The subject who fantasizes is not already formed, but rather stages herself and identifies herself by dispersing herself into several positions. And, the subject finds the *imago* of her bodily contour in every object that she produces through this dispersal, spreading a net in which she finds her identities in these objects that she perceives. The idealizing projection of the *imago* generates the cognition

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<sup>350</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 75.

<sup>351</sup> See *Ibid*, 97. Butler here refers to how identification and fantasy happen in the symbolic register, but she (unlike Lacan) effectively reduces the symbolic to the reinvocation of the imaginary, so what she says about this symbolic process also applies to the processes that happen in the imaginary register.

of other bodies or objects. “The ‘reserve of *morphe*,’” Lacan explains, “produces the contours of objects...”

This image of the self had through Lacan’s *imago* is a gestalt, a sense that we have a body not in pieces, which is a psychic construction of the body that one comes to through the mirror image, through being looked at as a subject.

As mentioned in Butler’s earlier critique, when Lacan reads the phallus of the symbolic back into the imaginary register where the *imago* forms, he centers the *imago* around the phallus which he also associates with the male genitals.<sup>352</sup> Consequently, Butler interprets Lacan as saying that the body in pieces that is out of control before the mirror is symbolically castrated. The upright phallus is the figure of the little boy. It is the ego ideal or the gestalt notion that we have a body not in pieces, a psychic process that we come to through the mirror image or through being looked at as a subject. There is a particular cultural association of that wholeness with the penis that allows Lacan to symbolically privilege the male genitals as the token that centers the *imago*. The idealization of the “whole” body centered in the phallus along a fictional line of control compensates and overcomes the body in pieces, which in turn represents castration.

However, Lacan still holds that the road between the penis and the phallus is not direct. To have a penis is to be an occasion for the phallus to signify and is therefore to be what the phallus is not through such a “not being.” Thus having the penis is a kind of awareness of dispossession, a fear of not having and also of not being. In this way the phallus requires the diminution of the penis if it is to signify. Butler refers to this as a kind of “master-slave dialectic” between the penis and the phallus. The clitoris, on the

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<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, 77-79.

other hand, is to not have the penis or to already have lost it; the clitoris occasions the power to signify the power of the phallus to castrate, a penis-envy that threatens dispossession. Thus women are said by Lacan to “be” the phallus and to be dispossessed as well as dispossessing. Female body parts absently reflect the power of the phallus and so are said to “be” it; they signify through the function of a lack. They are imagined thus to “be” though not to “have” the phallus because they cannot properly wield it.<sup>353</sup> In either case, an *imago* centered around being or having the phallus is an anticipation founded in ambivalence and an impossible attempt to return to representing the phallus. Additionally, the very anxiety of this turn is founded upon a denial that body parts other than the (heterosexual) penis could serve as sources of erotogenicity, in Freud’s terms, or as centering tokens for the *imago*, in Lacan’s terms.

Thus the projection of the psychic body is founded upon an imagined ambivalence, as it was in Freud. It is a scene of necessary failure, one that prompts a return to an idealization that culturally associates the phallus with the penis in a vain effort to escape that conflicted condition. Such an escape only repeats a return to the same scene of ambivalent pain and is the repetitive propulsion of sexuality that shapes the gendered *imago* or psychic body. The anxious propulsion of sexuality demands that having the agency and visibility of the penis depend upon having or not having, and ensuring that these positions do not cross. It thereby diminishes mutuality in the way that sexuality repeats itself from moment to moment.

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<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*, 263n30.

### E. The Culture of Gender Melancholy

According to Butler, because the repetitive propulsion shaped by a prohibition on homosexuality is pervasive in Western culture, it compels certain losses on a cultural level that create a prevalent cultural melancholia.<sup>354</sup> It signals a culture in which a prohibition on homosexuality is pervasive and in which rituals culturally repeat the “loss” of homosexual love. This describes a culture of gender melancholy that produces masculinity and femininity as traces of an ungrieved and ungrievable love:

...indeed, where masculinity and femininity within the heterosexual matrix are strengthened through the repudiations that they perform. In opposition to a conception of sexuality which is said to ‘express’ a gender, gender itself is here understood to be composed of precisely what remains inarticulate in sexuality.<sup>355</sup>

Since these losses are internalized as publically unspeakable, they form a culture of ungrieved and ungrievable homosexual cathexis: “Where there is no public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named and mourned, then

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<sup>354</sup> “Psychoanalytic melancholia has frequently been read in relation to gender identities in the works of Judith Butler on heterosexual melancholia in *Bodies that Matter*; Kaja Silverman on femininity and the melancholic nature of the negative Oedipus complex in *The Acoustic Mirror*; and Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*” (Cheng, *Melancholy*, 200n24). Butler theorizes specifically about “drag” as a melancholic incorporation fantasy, whereby gender performance allegorizes a loss it cannot grieve but must act out. For Butler, homosexuality is the ungrieved loss that heterosexuality has not mourned, the melancholia at the heart of heterosexuality: “Heterosexual melancholia is the melancholy by which a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love” (Butler, *Bodies*, 235). Heterosexuality is thus constantly resurrecting and burying the gay figure...hence the guilt about homosexuality. Heterosexuality is the “lost, proper” identity that represents the melancholia of homosexuality—a loss that can only be acted out as the desire for “straightness” (Remember this part as I sort out how melancholia could occur in a less violent way according to Butler and when I sort out what happens when violating prohibitions is eroticized rather than enacted with a feeling of punishment. There will be a haunting specter of ‘straightness’ that the homosexual desires.)

Silverman’s chapter “Disembodying the Female Voice” in *The Acoustic Mirror* conducts an especially close reading of Freud and points out that the Freudian definition of female-gendering is essentially melancholic: the Oedipus complex by which a “girl becomes a girl,” when she is asked to repudiate and disidentify with the mother even as she suffers from continual cultural pressures to identify with the mother, creates a melancholic condition of ungrieved loss and self denial/denigration. Silverman works to revalue a sustained identification with the mother.

Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* was the first to gesture toward the conceptualization of race as melancholic, even though he never talks specifically about melancholia. In his discussion of ‘narcissism’ he refers to the ‘black body’ as ‘distorted, recolored, clad in mourning.” Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, Richard Philcox, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 112.

<sup>355</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 140.

melancholia takes on cultural dimensions of contemporary consequence.” In this way, identifications that are at least in part comprised of disavowed grief form and establish masculinity and femininity on a cultural level.<sup>356</sup>

While the cultural prohibition on homosexuality renders it unspeakable, it does not abolish homosexuality. Indeed, heteronormativity preserves homosexuality within itself.

Heterosexuality naturalizes itself by placing a radical otherness between it and homosexuality and in doing so heterosexual identity is obtained by melancholically incorporating the love that it disavows. A man who establishes the proof of his heterosexuality will claim that he never loved and therefore never lost another man. His love and attachment to a feminine position that desires another man will defend itself through a double disavowal that insists he never loved and never lost. This double disavowal founds heterosexuality and is a refusal to admit an attachment and a refusal to grieve it.<sup>357</sup>

Thus, a repudiation fuels melancholic gender:

If I acquire my gender by repudiating my love for one of my own gender, then that repudiation lives on in the acting out of my gender and asks to be read as rivalry, aggression, idealization, and melancholia. If I am a woman to the extent that I have never loved one, both aggression and shame are locked into that ‘never,’ that ‘no way,’ which suggests that whatever gender I am is threatened fundamentally by the return of the love rendered unthinkable by that defensive ‘never.’ Therefore what I act, indeed, what I ‘choose,’ has something profoundly unchosen in it that runs through the course of that ‘performance.’<sup>358</sup>

This type of repudiation creates rigid boundaries of disgust in the psyche that protect themselves from being crossed by threatening that any such crossing makes one

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<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-139.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

disgusting. When a cultural logic achieves gender and stabilizes it through this kind of heterosexual positioning threats to *heterosexuality* become threats to *gender* itself.

Homosexuality then presents the specter of threat to heterosexuality and to gender.

This creates every day forms of gender anxiety. A woman may panic if she feels homosexual desire because she feels that she is losing her femininity; that she is not a woman, no longer a proper woman;

If she is not quite a man, she is like one and so monstrous in some way. Or in a man, the terror of homosexual desire may lead to a terror of being construed as feminine, feminized, of no longer being properly a man, of being a ‘failed’ man, or being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection.<sup>359</sup>

The stronger the prohibition against homosexuality, the stronger is the attack made by the critical super-ego upon the ego for failing to meet the ideal of heterosexual rectitude. Prohibited homosexual libido is dissatisfied when it fails to meet the ideal that fits its expression and is transformed into a sense of guilt. This sense of guilt diffuses over the bodily surface as the critical conscience. The stronger is the sense of prohibition, the more rigid and “merciless” the sense of guilt. The prohibition on homosexuality thus preempts the process of grief and initiates a melancholic

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<sup>359</sup> *Ibid*, 136. Although Butler argues that there are many ways of experiencing gender and sexuality that do not presume that gender is stabilized through the congealing of a firm heterosexuality, she wishes at times to emphasize a “stark and hyperbolic” construction of the way that gender relates to sexuality in order to think through how ungrieved and ungrievable loss form what we call the gendered character of the ego (or of the ego ideal). I would add that such a “stark and hyperbolic” read that she gives when dealing with melancholia in the *Psychic Life of Power* is telling for many experiences of sexuality and gender in the world today, especially considering those places where any deviation from a presentation of heterosexual roles in which a feminine female engages a masculine man is punished, whether legally or socially, by death. Considering, for example, that 8 countries currently punish homosexuality with the death penalty including Mauritania, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Yemen (see these and more statistics at the international lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex association). Further, considering that the first united nations declaration seeking to decriminalize homosexuality occurred very recently in 2008, is still being debated and meets resistance from 60 UN member countries. And, although homosexuality is not punishable by death legally in the United States we do not have to look far to find it practically punishable by death regardless of the legal status of such an act.

identification that turns homosexual desire back upon itself in the form of guilty self-beratement.<sup>360</sup>

Citing *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Butler indicates that conscience requires the constant sacrifice or renunciation of instinct to maintain the particular satisfaction that conscience requires; it is never sated by renunciation. Rather, renunciation strengthens it and deploys the instinct for its own purposes, breeding intolerance. “The lived experience of prohibition as repeated renunciation,” she explains, “is nourished precisely by the instinct that it renounces.” Thus renunciation needs the very homosexuality that it reviles. It needs homosexuality, “not as its external object, but as its own most treasured source of sustenance...Renunciation becomes the aim and vehicle of satisfaction.” She cites the military that treasures this renunciatory source of energy as an example and asks what masculinity would “be” without such an aggressive circle.<sup>361</sup> These treasured sources are the workings of gender that do not “show” when gender is performed.

Homosexual attachments in this sense are not merely desires that emerge and are subsequently prohibited. Instead, these desires are proscribed from the beginning. They perform the impossible within the possible. In this way psychoanalysis shows that “the opacity of the unconscious sets limits to the exteriorization of the psyche... what is exteriorized or performed can only be understood by reference to what is barred from performance, what cannot or will not be performed.”<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>361</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 169-177. See also Sjoberg and Gentry for comments on militarized masculinity and femininity: Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

<sup>362</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 144-145.

This performance based upon what is barred from it shows in melancholic gender performativity.<sup>363</sup> Heterosexual gender melancholia shows the strictly straight man to be the truest gay melancholic man, while the strictly straight woman is the truest lesbian melancholic. Both repeat themselves as the refusal to grieve the masculine or the feminine as a possibility of love. A moment to moment physical and psychic repetition renounces the possibility of homosexuality and thereby produces a field of heterosexual objects and a realm where it would be impossible to love.<sup>364</sup> Heightened feminine or masculine identification preserves the excluded possible object of love. The hyperbolic identifications by which masculinity and femininity confirm themselves allow the straight man or woman to cite and become the man or woman that he or she never loved and never grieved. The more pronounced and defensive is a masculine identification, the more fierce is the homosexual cathexis that is not grieved.

People who forge gay, lesbian or queer identities for themselves also stand at risk to produce a resonant kind of gay melancholia. If they disavow that they have a constitutive relationship to heterosexuality by defining their identity over and against an ostensible heterosexual opposite, and consider their disavowal a political necessity, Butler feels that they weaken rather than strengthen their constituency. They give a false monolithic quality to homosexuality and fail to work the weakness of the logic of exclusion in heterosexual subjectivication. They perform an identification with a rejected heterosexuality, a rejection “whose symptomatic appearance is the insistence, the over determination of the identification that is, as it were, worn on the body that shows.”<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Butler describes this as the relation of gender melancholia and gender performativity.

<sup>364</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 146.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

They designate a specifically gay melancholia that requires an appearance of coherence by keeping heterosexuality in a rejected and repudiated place. The heterosexual remains must be sustained through the very insistence on a seamless gay identity.

The foregoing analysis of melancholic gender suggests that if the grip of the prohibition on homosexual desire could be loosened to allow for more crossings of gendered positions, the rigid threat of the super-ego might behave in kind; this in turn might create more mutual ways of living embodied gender.

However, while it might seem that more mutual relationships could be had if repudiation played no role in gender identity, a full sale rejection of repudiation is impossible. According to Butler, there is a necessary reason for desire to be fueled by repudiation because there are always losses involved in human subjectivity: “every position taken up and every desire determined engages a psychic conflict,” she explains, because “there are always losses, refusals, and sacrifices to be made along the way to having the ego or character formed or having desire disposed in any determinate direction.”<sup>366</sup> As a result, while repudiation cannot be expunged, ways of developing “refusal” or “exclusion” that distinguish between, on the one hand, a rigorous repudiation and foreclosure, and, on the other, a less rigid or less permanently declined happening, could be developed. Following these lines, one might account for homosexuality without relying upon “the unconscious ‘truth’ of homosexuality” that rigidly repudiates heterosexuality, while still accounting for homosexual lived experience.<sup>367</sup> Further, one might consider sexualities without framing them through the law of non-contradiction and rather taking a more mobile approach: sexuality need not rely upon a distinction

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<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

between how one identifies and how one desires. Homosexual, heterosexual, bi-sexual, transsexual or intersexed practices of sexual exchange show such an overlap of identification and desire to exist. When the founding heterosexual prohibition on the overlap of identification and desire is remapped in this way, sexual difference need not be the primary guarantor of loss in psychic life.<sup>368</sup>

As a consequence of a more fluid overlapping of desire and identification, homosexual love could be figured as more than “love of the same” because it transacts “love of the same.” New language for attachment and loss beyond “masculine” and “feminine” could describe sexual positions and practice. The proliferation of language within lesbian desire illustrates one attempt to speak about this. Descriptions such as “agro-femme,” “gender-queer,” “soft butch,” “androgynous,” “pansexual,” “kiki,” and “stem,” all with different valences that cannot be described through “feminine” or “masculine” positions, try to realize sexuality that exceeds two poles.

#### *IV. Rage: Combining Freud’s First and Second Accounts of Melancholia to Redirect Rage for Psychic Survival*

##### *A. Butler’s Use of the First Account of Melancholia*

Practices that work to redirect melancholic rage may especially play a role in loosening the grip of the prohibition on the overlap of identification and desire. Given the social nature of the super-ego and the *imago*, Butler considers the redirection of rage as a communal tool that necessarily involves public mourning and that might allow for “psychic survival” rather than rigidly melancholic awareness.

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<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 164-5.

Butler draws on Freud's two accounts of melancholia to use public mourning as a resource. As seen earlier in this chapter, his first account in *Mourning and Melancholia*, at least in the beginning of that essay, considers melancholia as a neurosis. It also highlights the social character of all melancholia. Melancholia here begins as an aberrant form of mourning in which one denies that an object (or other ideal) is lost and refuses to undertake the task of grief. Grief is understood as breaking the attachment to what is lost. The lost object is then mysteriously preserved as a part of one's psychic life. Melancholy in this early account seems to eclipse the social world which produces an internal world that is structured in ambivalence. Given this state of affairs, Butler asks how we may read melancholy in "social life" or the social regulation of psychic life? She responds that melancholy is an account of how psychic and social spaces are produced in relation to one another. Because of this, melancholy "offers potential insight into how the boundaries of the social are instituted and maintained, not only at the expense of psychic life, but through binding psychic life into forms of melancholic ambivalence."<sup>369</sup>

In this early account melancholia is opposed to mourning. Mourning gradually detaches libidinal attachments to objects that are lost. Objects present themselves to mourning not as objects themselves, but as cathected memory traces, traces that are already substitute and derivative in relation to the actual object. The process of mourning overcomes these memory traces, their innumerable 'links,' in a piecemeal way over time.

The process of melancholia, in contrast to mourning, contains ambivalence in relation to the object that makes any such gradual de-linking of attachments impossible. Rather, "countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which love and

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<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*, 167-168.

hate contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault.”<sup>370</sup> This battle happens, in Freud’s account in “the region of the memory-traces of things.”<sup>371</sup>

This battle also occurs, taking Lacan’s *imago* into account, in an auto-erotic fantasy, one that distributes self and objects in a projected net in which every object (including the self as object) supports a fictional line of imagined control. This kind of social melancholia produces “self-esteem” as an intrinsically self-destructive process.<sup>372</sup> The work of internalization creates a split so that a loss suffered in the world becomes the characteristic lack in the ego.

The violence that the superego directs at the ego to prove the ego’s lack is a refracted indictment of social norms that forbid grief for certain kinds of losses.<sup>373</sup> Social norms that prohibit homosexual attachment provoke rage in the subject and, although the self rebels, melancholia is “a rebellion that has been put down, crushed.” However, it is not entirely quelled; melancholia continues as a deflected rebellion in the violence of conscience. Norms that deploy the power of the state to crush rebellion enter the melancholic conscience through internalization and there become the deflected power of the state at work in conscience. The conscience becomes the power of the state at its “vanishing point;” conscience continues to wield invisibilized state power from within the melancholic subject:

Figured within the workings of the psyche is the power of the state to preempt an insurrectionary rage. The ‘critical agency’ of the melancholic is at once a social and psychic instrument. This super-egoic conscience is not simply analogous to

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid*, 185.

the state's military power over its citizenry; the state cultivates melancholia among its citizenry precisely as a way of dissimulating and displacing its own ideal authority. This is not to suggest that conscience is a simple instantiation of the state; on the contrary, it is the vanishing point of the state's authority, its psychic idealization, and, in that sense, its disappearance as an external object. The process of forming the subject is a process of rendering the terrorizing power of the state invisible—and effective—as the ideality of conscience. Furthermore, the incorporation of the ideal of 'Law' underscores the contingent relation between a given state and the ideality of its power. This ideality can always be incorporated elsewhere and remains incommensurable with any of its given incorporations.<sup>374</sup>

The incorporations of the ideal of "Law" are sites of rearticulation or conditions for "working through" and "throwing off" the tyrant who quelled the rebellion.<sup>375</sup>

How, then, practically, could one begin on the individual and social level to throw off the state made invisibly effective in the psyche? Butler suggests that a genuine surfacing of rage is necessary to accomplish this. Conscience is a purveyor of psychic terror that threatens one's life. Freud notes that in melancholia as neurosis the conscience "often enough succeeds in driving the ego into death, if the latter does not *fend off its tyrant* in time by the change round into mania." However, mania fends off the tyrant only temporarily and so does not overcome it because "what the ego has surmounted and what it is triumphing over remain hidden from it."<sup>376</sup> Therefore mania only marks a suspension of the internalized tyrant, but the tyrant remains in the psyche and remains unknown. For a thorough resolution of melancholia as a neurosis Freud says that the self must know the object that no longer lives. It must accept "a verdict of reality" that the object no longer exists. This verdict, in Freud's early account, transforms melancholia into mourning.

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<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, 191 Note 15.

According to Butler, reading this verdict involves the ego marshalling aggression against the super-ego:

Indeed, the aggression instrumentalized by conscience against the ego is precisely what must be reappropriated in the service of the desire to live: 'the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished.'<sup>377</sup>

The verdict states unequivocally that the object is gone and so marshals aggression that throws the tyrant off, rather than rendering it more powerful by hiding it only temporarily so that it remains ensconced in the psyche. The verdict produces transformative aggression.

Butler describes the process of the ego delivering and accepting this verdict as the ego turning against conscience in a "second loss" of the object that externalizes aggression and "kills off" the conscience. The object first lost its externality when it was made a psychic ideal; during this second loss it loses its ideality as the ego turns against conscience. This second loss causes the object to become decentered and offers the possibility of psychic survival to the ego:

The judgments of conscience are exchanged for the verdict of reality, and this verdict poses a dilemma for the melancholic, namely, whether to follow the lost object into death or to seize the opportunity to live.<sup>378</sup>

Freud remarks that accepting such a verdict of reality desanctifies the idealized lost object by externalizing aggression towards it:

Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement to live, so does each single struggle of

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<sup>377</sup> *Ibid*, 192, quoting Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *Standard*, 255.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it off...<sup>379</sup>

Thus, a transformative aggression ‘kills off’ attachment to the object so that there can be an end to the ambivalence of melancholic conscience that wishes to preserve the object’s life.

### *B. Butler’s Use of the Second Account of Melancholia*

However, Butler also considers Freud’s later (different) interpretation that stresses melancholia is the structure of subjectivity and as such is a structure that may never be undone. Butler’s consideration of Freud’s later theory radically qualifies the suggestions that she makes when she interpreted his earlier account of melancholia. Freud’s later account is seen in the later portions of *The Ego and the Id* where the ego is composed of its lost attachments and only an internalization of melancholic loss produces the ego itself. While a redirection of rage may be required to affect the melancholic bind, there can be no end to the ambivalence in the psyche that is rooted in melancholia and no pristine return to mourning that is free from ambivalence. In the later account melancholia is even a necessary condition for mourning. Although in the beginning of *Mourning and Melancholia* melancholic ambivalence is merely one possible response to loss, by the end of that essay loss *occasions* the ambivalent struggle between life and death.<sup>380</sup> Thus, by the end of the essay Freud combines his two accounts in a similar fashion to the way that Butler combines them in her own account.

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<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*, 192, quoting Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Standard*, 257.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

Unlike Freud, Butler explores the inverse of his position that the ego may only be produced through melancholia. She claims that there is an implied opposite side to Freud's conclusion that he does not explore. "If the ego contains aggression against the other who is gone, then it follows that reexternalizing that aggression 'uncontains' the ego." This side, Butler remarks, shows that the ego does not desire to live, but rather has a desire to undo itself. She states:

The 'mastery' of the ego would then be identified as the effect of the death drive, and life, in a Nietzschean sense would break apart that mastery, initiating a lived mode of becoming that contests the stasis and defensive status of the ego.<sup>381</sup>

However, Butler only shortly considers this Nietzschean possibility. She more emphasizes Freud's sensibilities when she considers mourning and melancholia. While mourning breaks attachments to the dead object in order to live, this break can never be final nor full. One cannot detach libido completely from the original lost object in order to reattach it to other objects (as Freud's early theory would suggest that the ego could do). Rather, melancholy sets the ego up as the distinction between the psychic and the social and enables an epistemological interaction with otherness. This is because the historicity of loss can never be replaced. Butler's bodily ego is also the process body, one that repeats itself every moment and congeals the history of its repeated losses:

The conclusion of grief may undo the ego (in the sense of 'unbinding' it from its cathexis in conscience), but it does not destroy it. There is no break with the constitutive historicity of loss to which melancholy attests (except perhaps in the manic response, which is always temporary). The historicity of loss is to be found in identification and, hence, in the very forms that attachment is bound to take.

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<sup>381</sup> *Ibid*, 194. Cf., Butler, *Undoing*, 1. These essays focus on "what it might mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life. Equally, however, the essays are about the experience of *becoming undone* in both good and bad ways. Sometimes a normative conception of gender can undo one's personhood, undermining the capacity to persevere in a livable life. Other times, the experience of a normative restriction becoming undone can undo a prior conception of who one is only to inaugurate a relatively newer one that has greater livability as its aim." Also compare this description of the process of undoing point by point with contemplative progress later.

‘Libido’ and ‘attachment’ in such a view could not be conceived as free-floating energies, but as having a historicity that could never fully be recovered.<sup>382</sup>

If it is the case, then, that one can never undo the cathexis that forms the super-ego, then how could the super-ego be loosened? Butler responds that internalization could remain but in different forms. Turning again to *The Ego and the Id*, she comments that only on the condition that one internalize the lost other may one accomplish mourning and begin new attachments. She turns again to an unexplored implication that internalization could remain but take other forms: “internalization does not have to take the form of a mercilessly violent conscience, and certain kinds of internalization, which are not always incorporations, are necessary for survival.”<sup>383</sup>

These internalizations of psychic survival would still require a redirection of rage on the model of Freud’s early account of melancholia as neuroses. The verdict that survival must read requires a redirection of radical aggression akin in some way to the aggression melancholic neuroses requires when it reads a verdict that discovers and overthrows “the tyrant.” This aggression must turn against the already “turned back” aggression that is the idealized conscience. It requires that one redirect rage against the lost other, “defiling the sanctity of the dead for the purposes of life, raging against the dead in order not to join them.”<sup>384</sup>

Although it refers to a less resolved state of being, it reverses and displaces to some degree melancholia’s relentless “delusional self-abasement... that overcomes the instinct which compels every living thing to life.” Survival is not the opposite of melancholia, like mourning would be, but still liberates to some degree what melancholia

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<sup>382</sup> Butler, *Psychic*, 194-195.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

puts in suspension. Survival is thus an asymptotic concept. It is a practice that asymptotically approaches mourning. Survival comes more or less close to mourning depending upon the intensity of the practice, while it still never actually reaches the state of mourning. While it is asymptotic, and so will never undo melancholia, it also moves in the direction of mourning and thereby suggests that some characteristics of melancholia might be softened or made more fluid and mobile. It may create space to lessen the merciless threats of conscience and thereby form looser attachments and soften boundaries of disgust that enforce the tight grip of conscience.

The internalizations that Butler associates with survival still announce the fundamental lack of autonomy that an ego structured around a history of lost others repeats. While one may rage against an attachment to an other, rage can never break the attachment to alterity itself. The ego may only emerge through confrontation with the social world, it may not autonomously confront that world:

Survival is a matter of avowing the trace of loss that inaugurates one's own emergence. To make of melancholia a simple 'refusal' to grieve its losses conjures a subject who might already be something without its losses, that is, one who voluntarily extends and retracts his or her will. Yet the subject who might grieve is implicated in a loss of autonomy that is mandated by linguistic and social life; it can never produce itself autonomously. From the start, this ego is other than itself; what melancholia shows is that only by absorbing the other as oneself does one become something at all...by forfeiting that notion of autonomy survival becomes possible; the 'ego' is released from its melancholic foreclosure of the social. The ego comes into being on the condition of the 'trace' of the other, who is, at that moment of emergence, already at a distance. To accept the autonomy of the ego is to forget that trace; and to accept that trace is to embark upon a process of mourning that can never be complete, for no final severance could take place without dissolving the ego.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

*C. Ethical Recommendations for the Redirection of Anger: “A Different Sort of Genealogy.”*

The redirection of anger discussed above requires that one recognize the dissimulation of state power inside the conscience as the object toward which one might redirect her rage, which raises the question of how one knows to recognize the commands of the state inside her own conscience towards which she might redirect her rage? A redirection of rage according to Butler’s recommendations could scarcely be carried out without a knowledge of the history of state power, the modes by which it is made invisible and visible, and whose interests the dissimulation of state power in the psyche serves. Butler investigates the history of state power with relation to sexuality when she considers the history of the term matter that inflects gender (as I described in the previous chapter). She also considers this history in Freud and Lacan who associate the penis or the phallus (which is also associated with the penis) with cultural wholeness. They thereby describe cultural values that give agency and visibility to bodies associated with the penis while diminishing those qualities in bodies not so associated. Such a genealogy could guide the surfacing and redirection of rage.

However, it must be carried out in a “different” way than standard historical inquiry. The conscience in an ambivalent position with respect to the self offers a faded social text that requires a “different sort of genealogy,” different because it must take into account how “what remains unspeakably absent inhabits the psychic voice of the one

who remains.” Such a genealogy seeks in performance primarily what is disbarred from its scene.<sup>386</sup>

Therefore, the search for what is disbarred from a scene directs the historical focus of genealogy. It seeks those bodies that are excluded and invisibilized as unseemly. These throw light upon the arbitrary scenographies that function as a dominant naturalized truth, and exposes those social norms that exclude some bodies in the interest of other bodies.

This search for that which is disbarred also directs genealogy’s lens through a methodological caution. In every attempt that one makes to oppose a dominant discourse she will avoid her own boundaries of disgust and thereby produce a different necessary outside that invisibilizes some group of living beings. In order to reduce the violence of exclusion, she must seek out and encounter her boundaries of disgust by searching for the voices of those made abject and invisible by her recommendations. This requires that she figure the necessary outsides that every suggestion creates as outsides that are never permanent. The task is to refigure the necessary outsides as future horizons where the violence of exclusion is continually diminished. This is a form of solidarity informed by genealogy.

These directives require a tolerance of strategic discontent in which one seeks out zones of anxiety rather than avoids them, because any ethical recommendations that she makes will inevitably avoid her boundaries of disgust and exclude those bodies that

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<sup>386</sup> Traces the conditions of the emergence of the subject. “Genealogy is not the history of events, but the enquiry into the conditions of emergence (*Entstehung*) of what is called history, a moment of emergence that is not finally distinguishable from fabrication.” Judith Butler, “Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures,” in *Performativity and Belonging*, Vikki Bell, ed. (New York: SAGE Publications, 1999), 15.

represent it. One must engage such a genealogy with the expectation that her most cherished ideals will be violated. This is because those ideals are produced through boundaries of disgust that one must intentionally cross in order to begin to see other possibilities for a grievable life.

The answer to the question “how might one know where to redirect rage?” also requires that one first become aware of that rage, to the degree that is possible, in order to redirect it. The process through which one might detect such rage finds direction in the two moments of ambivalence described by Lacan’s *imago*. These two moments provide a focus that foregrounds aspects of the bodily ego, the super-ego, the *imago* and the work of genealogy that I will relate to the contemplative body in future chapters.

In lived experience these two moments feel so close as to be indistinguishable even as they have two distinct aspects. The first, the body in pieces, recognizes the second, its specular image, in a fictional line of control. The recognition does not occur in an infantile stage of development that adults leave behind. Rather, the body in pieces and the projection of the *imago* through a fictional line of control recur in every moment as a pattern of subjectivity. They are the “propulsionality of sexuality” that Butler described earlier, where the fictional line of control is associated with the phallus and with masculinity. They are like two poles of one experience and seem so close as to feel like one thing. The “congealing” affect of repetition to which Butler refers conspires to make them seem so. The congealment makes these two poles seem like one thing and also makes them seem like one fixed reality that is the natural sexed body that is a “given” and that can be described anatomically by medicine as a reality that remains the same for all places and times.

In addition, these two moments constitute the bodily ego. They produce the conscious access that one has to the physical sensations that spring from the surface of the body that are both physical and psychic. Both aspects also are the “faded social text” of a melancholic loss that is hidden from awareness behind their repetition.

*D. Background Imagining in the Second Moment of the Imago*

The *imago* of the second moment also depends upon an imagined background scene that shapes the repetition of gender to the degree that it is normalized and eludes awareness. This is a place where the rudimentary staging of beings in space shapes the boundaries between masculinity and femininity that must not be crossed and that shapes heterosexuality by forbidding a “homosexual crossing” of these postures in space.

Butler found such a positioning of beings in space when she interrogated Plato. The theatrical scene that Plato used to imagine gendered beings is an example of an imagined scene that sets the conditions for the emergence of the stories told about gender in the West. He imagines a scene in which close touch and distance are positions that he makes available to mark bodies in relation to sex, sexuality and gender in gendered stories. These imagined background positions give credibility and coherence to the stories told about gender.

Butler notes that Plato associates masculinity with authority and authority with reason, and then makes reason diminished by an association with bodies that touch. This is a fantasy of “bodiless masculinity,” one that intensifies the character of masculinity as reasonable and authoritative in proportion to the distance that it achieves from bodies

capable of touching or being touched.<sup>387</sup> He also associates femininity with the inability to resemble bodies that have boundaries that touch and positions it as the condition for the production and maintenance of such bodies. The *Timaeus* thus describes positions for beings associated with masculinity and femininity, but does not describe actual masculine or feminine bodies. It does not specify rules for bodies as such, but, as this quote cited earlier mentions, rather imagines a scene that allows for a later specification of those rules:

The *Timaeus* does not give us bodies, but only a collapse and displacement of those figures of bodily position that secure a given fantasy of heterosexual intercourse and male autogenesis. For the receptacle is not a woman, but it is the figure that women become within the dream-world of this metaphysical cosmogony.<sup>388</sup>

Thus in the dream-world positions of distance and closeness in the different modes in which it is discussed become primary signifiers for how bodies may be marked and recognized through a complex fantasy. A body that touches that may also be associated with roles of care—for example the nurse, parent to an infant, etc., will be feminized, but feminized through an imagined “specular femininity.”<sup>389</sup> On the other hand, bodies that touch but with the imagined position of distance from that which they manipulate, or the imagined position of touching in order to distance themselves from an object, will be masculinized. Thus, a crossing of these two gender-signaling positions with respect to space and touch would produce something that approaches Butler’s “lesbian phallus” or something that approaches Irigaray’s “excessive femininity:” an instance of crossing

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<sup>387</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 48-49.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>389</sup> Feminine beings are disbarred from the scene of gender where masculinity is performed. Specular femininity shows feminine bodies to be absent reflections of masculinity, or another version of masculinity. This results in ambivalent options for bodies that materialize with bodily markers of masculinity and an ostensible femininity.

tantamount to homosexuality. This crossing would combine the touch associated with maintenance of bodies in close proximity and the authority that usually only comes with a position of distance or distance-making from those bodies.

This background scene provides categories of basic spatial imagination that may not at first glance seem to be “gendered” at all. However, Butler examines them as uniquely important for just this reason. These imagined positions, because they seem unrelated to gender, often go uninterrogated and provide the basis for ostensibly “common sense” first principles upon which conclusions about gender may then proceed. She sees it as crucial to examine these conditions for the emergence of gender as the foundation according to which gendered stories are consequently found compelling.

*E. The Contemplative Body May Usefully Surface the Circuit of Physical Sensation and Imagination that Moves from Background Scene to Stories Told About Gender that Occur in the Two Aspects of the Imago.*

Contemplative practices train one to have heightened awareness of physical sensation and imagination, amplifying and making sensible material and psychic forces that emerge in the present moment that otherwise would elude her. They may observe the movements of the circuit of conscience as seen in the *imago* with more specificity and acuity. I refer to the heightened awareness that contemplative practices develop as “mature tactility.” I aim with this term to describe an education similar to the one that Silverman described earlier. She called for an education of affect that would counteract cultural melancholia’s education of black children to have a “loss of affective discrimination.” Silverman noted that affective formation and distinction (how one tells the difference between love and hate) “become so entangled and twisted that love and hate both come to be ‘fabricated’ and ‘fraudulent.’” Racial melancholy produced this

loss of affective discrimination. Similarly, the psychic body that experiences physical sensation through a circuit of feeling in which a critical conscience mercilessly criticizes one for failing to meet an ideal produces a loss of tactile discrimination. Pathways of feeling based upon failure become normalized and confuse love and hate so that the physical sensation of both in the body might be said to become fabricated and fraudulent. I see mature tactility as one attempt at educational antidote that systematically trains awareness to become discriminately aware of physical sensation and imagination that would normally elude detection.

Mature tactility is a way to engage those impulses that stage fantasy for the imagination and position bodies in space in order for gendered bodily markers then to settle into those imagined spaces. The disciplined exercises of mature tactility invite one to observe the first perceptible workings of fantasy in one's imagination as they spatially stage gender and fix objects in their environment. The positions on the stage for masculinity and femininity may shift and change if awareness is brought to them and if genealogy informs one's perception of them. It is further a way to engage those stories themselves, the painful repetition of which shapes the bodily ego.

The contemplative body aims to slow its processes down and expand its feeling enough to recognize the patterns of its constantly changing repetitions. It also makes use of an *imago* of the body to do that. It slows down one's awareness of the processes of the materiality of the body and the body as psychically constructed. As mentioned earlier, the body in pieces and the *imago* are totally close, so much as too seem indistinguishable in the moment, but they are not exactly the same. Practices that focus upon physical sensation and imagination may draw out their distinction and their identity. I align

contemplative practices that focus upon physical sensation with the body in pieces and those that focus upon the imagination with the *imago*, although both are intimately related. I suggest that practices that transform one “pole” can lead to the transformation of the other and vice versa.

The future chapters will illustrate strategic ways in which contemplative practices may assist the redirection of anger that Butler suggests and skillfully create different patterns of sensing and imagining, even engaging the rearrangement of how one imagines herself positioned in space and how one touches outside of and inside of the body. These imaginings, as I have mentioned, bear directly upon the imagined background scenes that result in the stories told about gender that inform bodily repetition.

Such a repositioning calls for skillful instruction that uses language based upon deviant imagined spatial positions for distance, touch and authority. This applies not only to the individual, but to communal ways of engaging this scene.

The meditational refiguring of the body that works through physical and psychic operation is the heart of what I will explore as a practice that intervenes in the repetition of gender to make it more mutual. In future chapters I will turn to practitioners of meditative psychic bodily practice to show how what Butler gestures towards as a possibility in fact takes place for them. I will suggest that meditative practice can uniquely provide a somewhat controlled space for the surfacing of rage, the expression of grief and the work of genealogy.

I will also illustrate ways that genealogy may inform contemplative practice to shape the results of that practice. I take Butler to say that genealogy, by drawing attention to the moment of repetition that is the two aspects of the *imago*, may intervene

to encourage a deviant gendered repetition. Genealogy in some way may expose that the body is not fixed but is maintaining itself through repetition and also point towards the “faded social text” hidden behind this repetition. Contemplative practices may prove a suitable site for such an intervention as they magnify and work within these two aspects, especially when they are informed by genealogy.

## Chapter 4: Context for the Analysis of Julian

This chapter provides context for the consideration of Julian that I make in the following two chapters. It provides context for the language that I use to analyze *A Revelation*, the historical milieu for key ideas that I focus upon in *A Revelation*, and theoretical frameworks that explain the layers of phenomena, understanding and interpretation at work in those ideas that emerge in the midst of visions. The themes in Julian to which I pay attention in chapters 4 through 6 are influenced by the future consideration that I will make of Julian in relation to Judith Butler. However, I will not explicitly consider Butler in relation to Julian in this chapter. I will only make that explicit consideration in the final chapter.

Chapters four, five, and six will focus upon *A Revelation*. As the introduction described, they will focus upon the scandalized grief that emerges in chapter 27 and the six returns that Julian makes to it that evolve into the idea of mother Jesus. The initial derision that Julian shows to her grief changes until later she valorizes traces of that same grief. This project seeks to understand that reversal and development.

### *I. The Social Imaginary That Causes Julian To Shame Her Scandalized Grief*

In order to understand the manner of indirection in which Julian describes her scandalized grief, a consideration of her motivation to avoid direct communication is warranted. There are many reasons why she might be afraid to present her question directly. The very agency that assumes that she may have the ability to discern good and evil for herself places her in conflict with many common church teachings. Julian introduces her questions because she cannot reconcile them in the registers of her reason,

her will and her embodied response of sorrowful perplexity. She moves as an agent that expects that she should see some reconciliation of these opposites “as they relate to her,” or in her own holistic understanding. Yet, that very agency that she assumes finds little outlet in the social imaginary of her time.

Medieval views of women among Julian’s contemporaries largely condemn women who presume to act as independent agents when they use their reason, especially if they share their insights as teachers.

The scientific and theological discourse of the Middle Ages associates the female with the material and corporeal that must be overseen by reason. Calling upon the authority of Aristotle’s natural philosophy, for example, Thomas Aquinas maintains that the male is the active and the efficient cause in reproduction while the female is the passive and material cause.

Medieval literature also construes the female as carnality, a metaphor of the flesh. Philo originates this trend when he reads Eve, created from the body of Adam, as the sensory and sensual. “Mind corresponds to man, the sense to woman.” He approves the strategy of the tempting serpent who rightly strategizes that he will more easily successfully sway Eve, being sensuality that is swayed by pleasure, when he would fail if he approached the mind present in Adam that does not bend for pleasure. Ambrose and Augustine follow Philo and align male with soul and female with body.

However, as Denise Baker explains in *From Vision To Book*, the church of Julian’s time also insists on the literal identity of male and female souls, at the same time

that it insists upon the foregoing symbolic difference in their bodies.<sup>390</sup> This creates a gap in which church authorities of Julian's time restrict the agency of the concrete bodies of women even as those same church authorities affirm the value of women's souls. Eventually, the female is associated with bodily functions that should be governed by the male who is associated with reason. Julian's claim that she must use her reason to survive, then, poses a concrete danger for her as an embodied woman, especially when it disagrees with common church teaching, which is a structure produced by male reason that Julian would "unnaturally" usurp.

How then, does Julian's text that claims that she as a woman must use her reason settle amidst her contemporaries? Augustine's frame for the appropriately different ways that men and women must deploy reason dominates medieval theology on the topic. He uses the mind to mirror the hierarchy of male and female through a division of labor between the higher and lower reasons. While the higher reason contemplates eternal things and participates in wisdom (*sapientia*), the lower reason is exclusively oriented to action in the temporal world that produces only knowledge (*scientia*). When considering the image of the deity in men and women, Augustine maintains that woman and man are two parts of "one flesh" that are similarly distinguished by their labor. Only in the man who wields the higher reason is the divine image found in humankind: "in that part alone, to which belongs the contemplation of eternal things, there is not only a trinity but also an image of God." Women, aligned with the lower reason, may not reflect the image of God that higher reason expresses: "in that which has been diverted to the action upon temporal

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<sup>390</sup> Baker, Denise. *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision To Book*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), 125.

things, even if a trinity can be found, yet it cannot be an image of God.”<sup>391</sup> Similarly to Philo, Augustine opines that the serpent deceived the historical Eve who lured Adam into eating the forbidden fruit, just as the feminine part of the mind, the lower reason, in contact with the bodily serpent, seduces the higher/masculine reason to sin.<sup>392</sup>

Augustine’s medieval followers repeat his portrayal of higher reason as masculine and of sanctity as the subjugation of the lower, feminine self.<sup>393</sup> For example, the twelfth century Cistercian William of St. Thierry not only continues Augustine’s division of “higher” and “lower” reason, but also places them in a more antagonistic relationship as *anima* and *animus*:

The soul [anima] is something incorporeal, capable of reason, destined to impart life to the body. It is this which makes men animal, acquainted with the things of the flesh, cleaving to bodily sensation. But when it begins to be not only capable but also in possession of perfect reason, it immediately renounces the mark of the feminine and becomes spirit [animus] endowed with reason, fitted to rule the body, spirit in possession of itself. For as long as it is soul it is quick to slip effeminately into what is of the flesh; but the spirit thinks only on what is virile and spiritual.”<sup>394</sup>

Walter Hilton attests to this theme in fourteenth-century England. In *The Scale of Perfection*, he divides reason into two parts in which the lower feminine reason should fearfully obey the higher masculine reason:

The higher part is compared to a man, for it should be master and sovereign, and that is properly the image of God, for by that alone the soul knows God and loves him. The lower part is compared to a woman, for it should be obedient to the higher part of reason as woman is obedient to man, and that lies in the knowledge and rule of earthly things, to use them discerningly according to need and to

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<sup>391</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, (fn 49b) 126b

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.* 12.7.12. See Baker, fn 5.53, 192 for a further discussion of Augustine’s discussion of the serpent as body, the woman as lower reason, and the man as higher reason.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.* fn 54.

<sup>394</sup> William of St. Thierry. *The Works of William of St. Thierry*, vol. 4, *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu* 2.4, trans. Theodore Berkeley, O.C.S.O., Cistercian Fathers Series 12 (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 79.

refuse them when there is no need; at the same time always to have an eye raised to the higher part of reason, with reverence and fear, in order to follow it.<sup>395</sup>

These passages illustrate the dominance in medieval theology and spirituality of Augustine's hierarchy, in which the feminine sensory and sensual element of the mind should fearfully submit to masculine reason.

Julian's description of herself as an embodied woman who writes the pages of *A Revelation* echoes these passages. In chapter six of the short text she divests herself of authority because of her female body,

Botte God forbade that ye shulde saye or take it so that I am a techere. For I meene nought so, no I mente nevere so. For I am a woman, lewed, febille, and freylle. Botte I wite wele, this that I saye I hafe it of the shewings of him that es soverane techare. Botte sotheylye charite stirres me to telle yowe it.<sup>396</sup>

Julian divests herself of the authority of her own reason, claiming that she can minister to her fellow Christians only because she is a medium for a divine lesson, or a divine messenger.<sup>397</sup>

According to that model of female messenger of the divine, Julian is propelled to communicate *A Revelation* because she sees herself as a vessel into whom the deity has poured a divine message. In this scenario she understands the importance of communicating what the source pours through her (just as the lower form of sensory reason cleaves to the higher reason), but the message is not the product of her own understanding and struggle. The female sex of the divine messenger in such a model often functions as a shaming mechanism that the deity uses. For example, in the case of

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<sup>395</sup> Hilton, Walter. *The Scale of Perfection* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990) Fn 56.

<sup>396</sup> Watson, Writings of Julian, 6.35-38, *A Revelation*

<sup>397</sup> As do the Continental women mystics. For further discussion of this feature of mystical discourse in relation to gender see Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations in the Flesh*, *New Cultural Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), chapter 2.

Hildegard, because the clerics who should act appropriately masculine instead act perversely feminine in their inactivity, the deity raises up an incapable woman as a vessel to deliver the divine message to the clerical order that they repent of their feminine failure and restore themselves to the dignity of action that indicates their masculine clerical authority. Hildegard is ordered to preach to them in order to shame them because she miraculously stands before them in a superior position when without the miraculous intervention she would be an incapable woman. Her miraculous behavior shows them how they should comport themselves as men. While Julian certainly uses this trope, I will show later that she more strongly presents other sources of authority for her authorship of *A Revelation*.

In light of the foregoing passages, the submission that Julian must make of her understanding as lower, sensory, and bodily to a “soverane techare,” could equally apply to the submission that she must make of her lower understanding to common church teachings that express masculine higher reason.

Baker contends that Julian would be keenly aware of the criticism that might be directed against her for violating St. Paul’s prohibition against women who teach about spiritual matters. English spirituality was conservative and the writings of Continental women visionaries did not begin to become available in England until the 1390s. Thus Julian had no tradition of female authors as authorities upon which to build.<sup>398</sup>

Julian also risked the odor of heresy that surrounded texts written in the vernacular. She risked association in ecclesiastical minds with the Lollards because she is writing for all of her fellow-Christians and not only for the learned; in addition she is

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<sup>398</sup> Watson, *Julian*, fn 1.

writing in the time of the Peasant's Revolt.<sup>399</sup> As a medieval woman she writes in the time of the Peasants' Revolt and the Lollards.

Based upon medieval constructions of the female as sensory, sensual, body that may only use her lower reason when she keeps "an eye raised to the higher part of reason, with reverence and fear, in order to follow it," Julian's expression of scandalized grief suspects the incapacity of the very sources she is to follow. It therefore finds no cultural outlet to receive it and is dangerous. As a result, the indirect manner in which she progressively revives it throughout her text makes a definite kind of sense. The social imaginary in which she writes certainly would threaten her with punishment for sin if she were to use her reason in opposition to that of the superior deity or to that of church teaching explicated by superior men. She would mount an insurrection of flesh against reason, punishable as the archetype of sin. Her first scandalized question does just that: it suggests an accusation of failure on the part of the "great, foreseeing wisdom of god" mounted by a sensory, sensual body incapable of higher reason according to the social imaginary of her time. Therefore the condemnation that she pours on her first direct expression of scandalized grief makes sense as a measure of protection. At the same time, as future chapters investigate, textual evidence suggests that Julian herself not only condemns that grief, but indirectly valorizes it through related future returns to it. Thus, in light of the social imaginary in which she writes, the indirection with which she revives her question in its later forms is understandable since her theological contemporaries might make her afraid to present her question directly.

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<sup>399</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 80.

While I have considered the reasonable strategy of indirection to this point, that line of inquiry runs the danger of overshadowing the remarkable risk that Julian takes when she articulates her indirect questions *at all*, even indirectly. The gap in between the hypothetically reasonable complete absence of articulation that Julian may have performed and the indirect articulation that she does in fact make is crucial. According to Butler's theory, that miniscule space contains the tight proximity of shame to anger, where shame may keep anger frozen behind it through silence, or where shame may loosen through even small traces of that anger that expresses. This miniscule space in which Julian expresses indirect scandalized grief connects Julian's earliest scandalized grief that she condemns to her later indirect expressions that she valorizes. Butler's methods highlight traces of scandalized grief that surface when shame would entirely exclude them from the scene. The gap between silence and indirect expression may mean the gap between the death and life of a more liberatory relationship to conscience.

## II. The Role of Julian's New Ideas

The analysis of the return that Julian makes to questions that relate to her scandalized grief proposes that Julian eventually tells a different story about her grief than the early one that rejects that grief as folly. This project will also make an additional proposal about the ways that Julian revives her scandalized grief. While Julian revives her scandalized grief through her repeated return to it as I have indicated, she also revives it through the new theological ideas that arise with her questions. Her idea of the godly will, and the corollary that it suggests of human blamelessness and the absence of damnation, develops into the idea of mother Jesus. This idea expresses Julian's

scandalized grief in the fullest way, even if it still does so indirectly by comparison to her first expression in chapter 27.

In chapter sixty, mother Jesus enters the showings as a debtor to human beings. The element of debt in mother Jesus suggests Julian's original suspicion towards the deity for its failure to prevent human suffering. Her portrayal of Jesus as in debt suggests that the maternal deity must restore something that it borrowed from human beings.<sup>400</sup> Despite the strong sense of restitution that Jesus as a debtor expresses, Julian still maintains throughout the showings that her first expression of suspicion in lines 28.1-8 was sinful and to be rejected. Nevertheless, her scandal quietly finds significant traces of the restitution that her scandal desires in mother Jesus: he owes humanity sensitivity to their suffering through keeping and salvation. Further, mother Jesus owes this to human beings irrevocably, no human action may cancel his debt to them.

Butler's lens helps to show more clearly how this debt expresses Julian's scandalized grief. It interrogates Julian's portrayal of femininity as debt in mother Jesus. Julian's adoption of mother Jesus will be shown to have some aspects that might define sex, sexuality and gender in more liberative ways, as well as aspects that re-inscribe femininity as a lack and a wounded form of normatively masculine humanity. At the same time, it will consider the fearful heart of masculinity that informs "wholeness" and that Julian separates from indebtedness, which she only pairs with maternity and femininity. Ultimately Butler's method will point out the crossings and interruptions to heteronormative sexuality that Julian performs in mother Jesus as both wound and

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<sup>400</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 60.20-24

authority. According to Butler, these might alleviate suffering that happens through a heteronormative fantasy of wholeness that sustains the rigid conscience.

Even more importantly than the concept of mother Jesus, Butler's method will show that mother Jesus is a *practice*. It is a process, and so to call it an idea falls short. Julian describes the ultimate authority that arbitrates truth as the individual internal discernment of the movements of mother Jesus. This practical movement that is mother Jesus will be shown to overshadow other sources of authority in Julian's text. It will also represent the purest form of truth, even though it only "stands to us" in the night. True to the process, truth is a practice and not an idea.

Thus, through Butler's method the project will argue that the highest form of authority in the text reveals itself in mother Jesus who proves to be the practical discernment of the bewildering questions that Julian proposes. However, he also reassures human beings that they may collect a debt of protection as they navigate the process of discernment.

The project will argue that while Julian explicitly upholds traditional doctrines that counter the guarantee of salvation and the sinlessness of human beings, she allows those traditional doctrines to recede from view as her practical instructions for discernment forbid the practical exercise of those traditional ideas. For example, Julian explicitly upholds that humans committed original sin and incurred the blame for it. She also upholds that the deity allows suffering to purge humans so that humans should be grateful for that suffering. In addition, she upholds that divine grace that forgives human sin is absolutely gratuitous. However, she also counters those ideas in such a fashion that if the reader performs the showings, they will have to practically reject those traditional

ideas. Julian's ideas that counter those ideas become part of the deposit of faith, such that one sins by opposing them. More importantly, Julian instructs a moment-to-moment practice that strictly controls what one should imagine and the feelings that one should cultivate or reject. The practice recommends a full-scale rejection of those traditional ideas in the registers of imagination and feeling tones. For example, if one doubts in any fashion that they are owed keeping and salvation by mother Jesus through a fear that they may be blameworthy and deserving of divine punishment, Julian tells them that they sin.<sup>401</sup> While she also recommends that one cultivate some traditional ideas as part of this process, they are a means to the end of eventually cultivating ideas from the showings that oppose them. Thus I will argue that the practical moving process that is mother Jesus overshadows the traditional teachings of common church teaching and so minimizes them as a source of authority.

Butler's lens highlights that Julian explicitly uses the process of mother Jesus as her own source of authority in a stronger way than she uses common church teaching. It will also illustrate that she uses this form of authority more strongly than the authority that some have said she invokes using the medieval model of the divine female messenger, described earlier.<sup>402</sup>

Even when she most strongly divests herself of authority because of her female sex, she suggests traces of the other sources that she will introduce. In chapter six of the short text, after she denounces her ability to teach because of her female frailty and claims that the deity only delivers its message through her, she follows with "Botte sotheylye charite stirres me to telle yowe it." The charity that truly stirs her to write *A*

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid. 60.20-24.

<sup>402</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 79.

*Revelation* is complex bewilderment propels the showings more than her conformity to the model of divine messenger.

Because to illustrate the new ideas and their relationship to the strategic manipulation of sources of authority that Julian performs requires a very detailed consideration across the second half of the long text, I will not do that here. It is too difficult to recapitulate in a brief space. However, the next two chapters will perform that task and the foregoing paragraphs gesture towards the reasons that I will offer there.

### III. Usefulness of the Terms “Scandalized grief”

I have used the terms “scandalized grief” to crystallize the sentiments that I wish to lift out of Julian’s overall expression. I use these terms to concentrate the elements in her message that I newly consider through the assistance of Butler’s lens. In order to give the reader a sense of why the terms scandalized grief make sense as a way to understand Julian’s process I address that here. The textual examples that this chapter uses to this point illustrate a frame for Julian’s experience that these terms attempt to capture. They attempt to focus the sorrowful bewildered indignation that easily recedes from view in her text.

Julian describes her experience through many terms that express grief, such as perplexity and sorrow. She does not use terms that express scandal as clearly. However, the force or “might” with which she asks her later questions suggests it. This “might” more suggests scandal when the reader understands that word through the pointed accusation of divine failure that she suggest through her earlier “sinful” question. In addition, her poignant request for answers to her questions that she deems necessary to her bare psychic survival, and the failure of the all-powerful deity to offer her satisfaction

in a clear way, illustrates a model of her scandal even when she does not use explicit words to mark it.

Butler's lens will show compelling reasons to couple the agitation with which Julian asks her questions and the scandal that is present in her early sinful question. The terms scandalized grief will act as a felicitous bridge between Julian's language and Butler's language of melancholic anger.

"Scandalized grief" will not only highlight the scandalized elements of Julian's grief. These terms will also draw out the element of restitution that Julian incorporates into mother Jesus as a debtor.

In order to this, I will consider how Julian's scandal transforms across the long text. I consider the "transformation" of her grief according to the returns that she makes to her questions, the process/idea of mother Jesus that she proposes, and the shift in sources of authority to which she appeals. When considered across the text in this manner, the scandalized aspect of her grief diminishes while the new ideas that she proposes offer (very partial) restitution for the insensitivity to human suffering that provoked it in the first place. I point to strategic eruptions of Julian's scandalized grief in seven moments across the Long Text to illustrate this. The final eruption is the appearance of mother Jesus. Through Butler's perspective, mother Jesus will prove to offer elements of restitution for Julian's original scandalized grief.

An analysis of these elements in Julian allow for an informative way to think about what Julian does in *A Revelation* from Butler's methods. The project suggests a practice of philosophy and of theology that has the capacity to translate across time as

well as across disciplinary spaces. The terms “scandalized grief” help me to accomplish this bridge between Julian and Butler.

*IV. How Julian Is a Visionary: Prayer, Historical Context for Julian’s Ideas, and Theoretical Categories for the Different Layers in Which Julian Understands Her Visions*

The foregoing examples show that Julian’s “vision” involves an intense interior, psychological, physical and emotional tension. She is a visionary, and a certain kind of visionary. She works with her visions or has visions that work on her. Her psychological turmoil is a knot that is a clue to her process.

I would like to more precisely locate the way that vision functions in Julian’s text—what vision is all about—in that process. She is a thinker of a particular kind who had visions and interprets her visions in a sophisticated way. That sense is important for the way that I will restructure some of her basic teachings through Butler’s methods in later chapters.

Denise Baker and Grace Jantzen provide helpful frames through which to understand Julian’s visionary process. Both provide helpful historical context for the new ideas in *A Revelation* that are important for this project. They also make theoretical distinctions between the different layers of understanding that Julian has of her visions. These frames from Jantzen and Baker open the complexity of Julian’s text so that I can apply Butler’s methods to it more easily in future chapters. I will refer to both of them throughout this section.

Denise Baker helps us to understand Julian’s experience of vision as a genetic movement that happens through a contemplative, recursive genius. Her understanding of

her visions does not come all at once. As noted earlier, she works on them or they work on her. There are many layers of knowledge in Julian's experience and none of them bring her untarnished comfort. There is a long gestation period between Julian's first bodily sights and the way that she more fully performs the visions. A contemplative center fuels that gestation; it requires that time to produce its result.<sup>403</sup>

Grace Jantzen links Julian's prayers and her visions. Julian's "sources of knowledge" are a combination of her prayer and her visionary experience. Her prayers help to explain the categories for knowledge that Julian describes in the foregoing examples. A probe of the link between prayer and vision shows her experience is at the same time longing, meditation, vision and theological reflection.

Julian became seriously ill when she was thirty years old and during that time received dramatic visions of the passion of Jesus. She describes these events in the short text of *A Revelation*, and then adds her reflections upon them over the following twenty years in the long text.

Jantzen stresses that the visions were rooted in a life of prayer that provides the context for her visions.<sup>404</sup> Julian prayed for three things in her youth: an understanding of the passion of Christ that would allow her to participate in it, a physical illness that caused her to believe that she was dying, and for three "wounds." The three wounds are true contrition, loving compassion, and the longing of the will for god.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> The following sections that provide historical context and that analyze the different elements of Julian's vision draw heavily upon Denise Nowakowski Baker's *Julian of Norwich's Visions: from Showing to Book*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey: 1994) as well as upon Grace Jantzen's *Julian of Norwich, Mystic and Theologian*, New York/Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000).

<sup>404</sup> See Jantzen, *Mystic*, from which I draw for this section.

<sup>405</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 76.

If Julian had not prayed with the longing that she did she would not have understood the visions as she did despite the vividness of her sensations.<sup>406</sup> Julian's prayer was an active longing, rather than a passive piety, which may be seen in her persistent probing questions about sin. Her active longing was not individual; she was not content to accept the consolations of the visions as long as she was aware of the sufferings of others. As the earlier examples from Julian showed, when the visions assure her of the love of the deity, she boldly asked how if the deity is so loving, it ever allowed sin. As Jantzen notes, when she is told all will be well, she replied, in effect "all does not look well to me."<sup>407</sup> After she asks for a better explanation, she receives a response, but she does not understand it till she reflects upon it for twenty years (and still only understands it partially). Julian did not take the visions as definitive, but probed them for deeper meaning as part of her prayerful active longing.

The longing that Julian has to witness and to participate in the suffering and death that Jesus underwent in the passion follows developments in medieval theology and spirituality. These "specifically mundane" historical pressures that beset a mystical text urge the creation of complicated and ambiguous statements about claims to embody truth. Historical environment enlightens the predicaments that mystical writers encounter when they form theological ideas and describe mystical experience.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 82.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>408</sup> Nicholas Watson, "Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority", in *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

### *A. Devotion to the Humanity of Jesus*

Julian's desire to experience the passion follows trends of devotion to the humanity of Jesus. Devotion to the humanity of Jesus, in turn, follows thinking about God as a loving father who sent his son to bring humankind to salvation. This trend to view Jesus as the emissary of a loving father is a transformation that deviates from earlier portrayals of Jesus. Early Christianity emphasizes martyrdom as a real consequence of following Jesus. Martyrdom as a way of relation to Jesus receded when the church entered a period of respectability and Christians no longer faced that threat. As a result, new models of theology and spirituality that focus on triumphalist images replaced the focus upon taking the risk of martyrdom. Triumphalist images displaced the early focus on the martyred humanity of Jesus with a remote deity who sends a majestic son to conquer the devil.<sup>409</sup>

However, a new interest in the humanity of Jesus emerged between approximately 1050 and 1200. During this time an unprecedented interest in individual experience and introspective analysis developed, catalyzed by ideas such as Anselm's satisfaction theory. Anselm rejected a prevailing model of redemption based on feudal customs in which humans played a relatively static role as the deity and Satan vied in a legal contest for possession of the souls of human beings.<sup>410</sup> In *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm rejects that model and replaces the humanity of Christ at the center of redemption, claiming only the son of the deity could assume human nature in order to atone for humanity's sins. The humanity of the redeemer becomes the agent along with divine nature that makes

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<sup>409</sup> Baker, *Mystic*, 54.

<sup>410</sup> See, for example, "Why God Became Man" 1.7, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. And trans. Eugene Fairweather, Library of Christian Classics 10 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 107-8.

reparations to the “father” deity.<sup>411</sup> Further, Anselm focuses upon the humanity of Jesus in order to elicit his own human compassion for the human sufferings of Jesus. His prayers signaled the change occurring in devotional practices at this time that encourage emotional response to human suffering. The next two hundred years would focus upon theologies of salvation in which the incarnate deity shows love for humankind by submitting to torture and death in a human nature.<sup>412</sup> In the twelfth century, Peter Abelard’s statement that salvation depends upon the mutuality of love between the redeemer and the redeemed takes this trend even further.<sup>413</sup>

The new interest in the humanity of Jesus was particularly fueled by monastic spirituality that engaged in loving meditation on all aspects of the life of Jesus. The preliminary devotional practice of affective spirituality as Julian’s contemporaries express it is a form of meditation that involved an imaginative participation in the events of Jesus’ life. Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, for example, promoted the humanity of Jesus as a focus for the spiritual life.<sup>414</sup> A certain imaginative ingredient in the currents of monastic practice warrants special mention as an influence upon *A Revelation*. Monasteries fostered the practice of spiritual reading that resonates with

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<sup>411</sup> Why God Became Man 1.3.

<sup>412</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 18. Christ in earlier medieval literature is often portrayed as a conquering hero who victoriously mounts the cross with a noble posture and a crown on his head. The cross was sometimes figured as a banner that led to victory. However, just before Julian’s time a shift in emphasis in art and literature upon Jesus as a tormented sufferer with head bowed in agony began to replace the earlier conquering hero. See Jantzen, *Mystic*, 54, for a further description of some of these artistic pieces during this shift.

<sup>413</sup> Translated in Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972): 144; for Latin text, see *Petri Abaelardi pera theologica*, vol. I, *Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert, O.F.M., Corpus christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis II (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 112-13.

<sup>414</sup> The *Sermons* and the *Song of Songs* by Bernard of Clairvaux both emphasize the humanity of Christ and meditations on the sufferings of Christ. As another example William of St. Thierry’s *Golden Epistle to the Carthusians of Mont Dieu* recommended daily meditation on the passion and redemption of Christ. See also Baker, *Showings*, 15 – 20.

Julian's visions and practices. Anselm's prayer involved dialogue with Jesus and his friends, and he wrote his prayer in rhythmic prose for the benefit of others. He also emphasizes his desire to recollect the passion.<sup>415</sup> These imaginative elements appear in Julian's visions and prayer.

In the practice of spiritual reading, as one read scripture or listened to it many times over, "reading" took on new dimensions. More than an intellectual assimilation of the information, reading involved "the participation of the whole body and the whole mind."<sup>416</sup> Aelred encouraged this kind of reading in anchoresses. In his letter to his sister he instructs her to imagine herself as various characters in the gospel story, interposing herself imaginatively into the life of Jesus from his birth to his resurrection.<sup>417</sup> She would thereby bring those stories into her context and bring Jesus to life in her prayer. She was to accompany him in the solitude of the desert, listen to his teaching as the paralytic was lowered from the roof, and witness the passion as she imaginatively read:

Follow him...to the courtyard of the High Priest and bathe with your tears his most beautiful face with they are covering with spittle...Mark well how he stands before the governor: his head bent, his eyes cast down, his face serene, saying little, ready for insults and scourging...<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Benedicta Ward, tr., *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1973): 95, 97.

<sup>416</sup> Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*. (New York and London: Fordham University Press, 1961) : 95, 97.

<sup>417</sup> Rolle, 29, p. 80. Aelred of Rievaulx, *De vita eremitica ad sororem liber* PL 32, cols. 1451-74 (incorrectly placed among St. Augustine's works); also called *Regula ad sororem, De institutione inclusarum*. English tr., "A Rule of Life for a Recluse", in *Treatises and the Pastoral Prayer*, Cistercian Fathers Series No. 2 (Kalamazoo, Michigan, Cistercian Publications, 1971). Also see Jantzen, *Mystic*, 56-56.

<sup>418</sup> Rolle, 31, pp. 88-9.

Walter Hilton similarly recommended to anchoresses in the fourteenth century that they should compassionately enter the passion of Jesus, assuring them that sympathetic entrance into the story would transform their minds:

Your mind is suddenly detached from all worldly and material things, and you seem to see Jesus in your soul as he appeared on earth...at this sight you feel your heart moved to such great compassion and pity for your Lord Jesus, that you mourn and weep and cry out with all the power of your body and soul, marveling at the goodness and love...your heart overflows and you shed many sweet tears. And you have great confidence in the forgiveness of your sins and the salvation of your soul by virtue of his precious passion.<sup>419</sup>

This kind of spiritual reading developed a sympathetic entry into the death of Jesus that would transform the sympathetic imagination of the reader.

This kind of meditation encourages the meditator to close the gap between the present time and the past time of the historical Christ by being engaged “either as an eyewitness or as an actor in the drama of the event. He is present to the event and the event is present to him.”<sup>420</sup> As another example, Pseudo-Bonaventure advises the meditator to “see” the scene by imagining through concrete imagery and evocative language.<sup>421</sup> The meditator who brings Christ’s life to their “mind’s eye” in this way is promised “newe gostely comforte.”<sup>422</sup> The meditator must bring the scenes of the passion to their “mind’s eye” as if they saw it with their “bodily eye.” Additionally, Pseudo-Bonaventure advises his meditators to “Pay attention now carefully to every point

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<sup>419</sup> Walter Hilton, Bk. 1 Ch. 35; cf. S.S. Hussey, ‘Walter Hilton: Traditionalist?’, in Marion Glascoe, ed., *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, Papers read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies, General Editor: M.J. Swanton (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980).

<sup>420</sup> Cousins, “The Humanity and the Passion of Christ,” in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: Oxford university Press, 1983), 383-86. Cousins terms this form of meditation ‘a mysticism of the historical event.’

<sup>421</sup> See Baker, *Showings*, 44-47 for excellent examples that contextualize how Julian’s contemporaries use this type of meditation.

<sup>422</sup> Pseudo-Bonaventure . “The Privy of the Passion: Bonaventura de mysteriis passioinis Jesu Christi,” in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and His Followers*, ed. C. Horstman, 2 vols (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1895), 1:198.

as if you were there bodily....Go you among them, and behold now lovingly, how feelingly he goes with them and speaks and stirs them to pray.” One who performs this stage of meditation should use all the acuity of the mind to open wide their inner eye in order to behold the passion of Jesus so that they forget and cast out of any other occupation or business out of their minds. They must do so in a lasting, loving and alert way.<sup>423</sup>

Julian’s bodily sights of Christ’s passion seem to reasonably locate themselves in this tradition of meditation among her contemporaries.<sup>424</sup> Julian introduces each showing with a reference to seeing or beholding which seems to follow the instructions of the manuals written by her contemporaries to visualize the events in Christ’s life. She also uses the concrete details of an eye-witness. She meditates on the passion by describing seven corporeal visions of Christ: the head crowned with thorns, the face that is mocked, the bleeding scourged body, the discolored, dying face, the blissful face of the restored savior, the wound in his side, and Christ in glory.<sup>425</sup>

However, unlike the meditative treatises on the passion Julian does not narrate the entire story of Christ’s suffering to death but instead concentrates on particular moments. She also describes the suffering he endured but does not, like her contemporaries, describe his tormentors.

Julian’s visions owe their genesis, to some degree, to the religious culture of affective spirituality among her contemporaries, especially meditation on the passion.

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<sup>423</sup> Pseudo-Bonaventure, “Privity”, 1:198.

<sup>424</sup> See Baker, *Showings*, 47, and Marion Glasscoe, “Time of Passion: Latent Relationships between Liturgy and Meditation in Two Middle English Mystics,” in *Langland, the Mystics, and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in honour of S. S. Hussey*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 141-60.

<sup>425</sup> Watson, *Julian*. In the long text see: 1.4.294 and 1.7.311-13, 2.10.324-25; 4.12.342-43; 8.16 and 17.357-65; 9.21.379; 10.24.394-95; 12.26.402.

However, her more focused and intimate account suggests that Julian describes moments in the passion that she actually did “see”.<sup>426</sup> The meditation on the passion of Christ among her contemporaries seems at least to be a catalyst for her visions.

Julian’s process involves another stage of meditation that goes beyond the instructions to visualize the passion in order to bring the immediacy of an eye-witness that engages Jesus and his followers. Her retrospection of the visions also catalyzed the insights that she formed as she reflected for twenty years upon the visions that she saw. Her own revelations become a text for her meditation and “re-vision.” Nevertheless, especially as Julian amplifies her memories in her move from the short to the long text, the meditative tradition influences not only what she sees, but also how she decides to communicate it.<sup>427</sup>

Further, while Julian’s first four bodily sights correspond to handbooks on meditation, her last three do not as much correspond with these accounts as with late medieval iconography. These latter three, her visions of the blissful face, the wound in his side and his glorified body may reflect what became common in fifteenth-century practices that refer the meditator to a visual representation, usually a text, statue or painting in a church.<sup>428</sup>

Julian describes another traditional devotional motif in her showings, that of contemplative union. She sees her final corporeal vision of the glorified body of Christ as ineffable, beyond the powers of human beings to describe. When she attained contemplative union she may only report the words formed in her understanding, each

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<sup>426</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 51.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-54.

<sup>428</sup> Rosemary Woolf, *the English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 183-84. Baker, *Showings*, 55.

punctuated by the traditional vocabulary used to identify mystical experience in the contemplative tradition, “I am who am” of Exodus 3:14. She reports the word of Christ who says “I it am in whom you delight. I it am whom you serve. I it am for whom you long...I it am who showed myself before to you.”<sup>429</sup> Augustine describes this ecstasy of the contemplative state in *the Mystical Ark* (ca. 1155). “And then [the mind] falls asleep ‘in the same’ when by means of contemplation and wonder it rests in Him to whom it is one and the same thing to be everything that is, and who alone can truly say, “I am who I am.”<sup>430</sup> Her bodily showing of the passion thus culminates in a mystical and beatific vision. Perhaps because Julian has reached the point in her showings where meditation gives way to contemplation and visionary experience progresses to mysticism, the last three bodily showings, one of which was just described, are briefer and less graphic than the previous episodes from the passion. After chapter thirteen, her corporeal visions cease except for the devil that she sees in a dream. During this latter phase of her visions she receives instruction “be worde formed inmyne vndyrstandynge, and be gastelye sight” (1:224). Words begin to fail her. She cannot show the spiritual visions as plainly or fully as she would wish:

Botte the gastelye sight I maye nought ne can nought schewe it vnto sowe  
oponlye and als fullye as I wolde; botte I truste in oure lorde god alle myghtty that  
he schalle of his goodnes and for oure love make sowe to take it mare gastelye  
and mare swetly than I can or maye telle it... (1:224)

Julian also moves beyond the recommendations of her contemporaries when she asks for actual visions of the passion of Christ, an experience of the passion, rather than

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<sup>429</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 1:243. Baker’s translation.

<sup>430</sup> Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of The Trinity*, trans. Grover A. Zinn, *Classics of Western Spirituality* New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 4:22, 304; Migne, Jacques-Paul. *Patrologia Latina*. New York: North American Patristics Society, 2011) 196.165. This work is often referred to as *Benjamin Major*.

an imaginative entrance through spiritual reading. Julian justifies her request as a means to identify more fully with the sufferings of Jesus and to be united with those who loved him, so that she would more express the values of his life in her own subsequent life and to increase her sympathetic love for him. Her need to justify her request responds to the spiritual literature of her period that shows great caution towards visions, ecstasies or similar mystical phenomena.<sup>431</sup>

Through her second request for a physical illness, another deviation from the recommendations of her contemporaries, Julian similarly hopes to align her body and mind with that of Jesus, as she thought the illness a mercy through which the experience of death would purge frivolity from her ensuing life.<sup>432</sup>

Julian makes her request for a vision so that she may “haue the more true mynd in the passion of Christ.” Jantzen interprets the “mynd” that she desires as a “recollection,” a process that involves more than memory. It means to re-collect or collect again. It is a process through which all thoughts ideas and distractions are gathered into a central focus that is deliberately chosen as the center of life. “It draws,” Jantzen explains, “all things quietly back for measurement against that which is of ultimate importance, so that life and activity are integrated rather than haphazard.”<sup>433</sup> Julian’s desire for the “mynd in the passion” collects her around the passion in this central way.

Because of this desire for “recollection,” Julian’s request for visions and even for physical sickness strikes Jantzen as a pervasive common sense on Julian’s part. Julian

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<sup>431</sup> Jantzen and the time’s disdain for visions and those who seek them, along with the reasons that Julian’s request makes her acceptable.

<sup>432</sup> Medieval spirituality appreciated the direct intentional awareness of death as a preparation for the after-life, so that one could reduce time in suffering in the afterlife if they prepared well for their death. Julian goes beyond this focus, hoping that her actual experience of death will remove trivial details that distract her from love in this life. Jantzen, *Mystic*, 59.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

desires them as the means to an end. They will change her body and mind into the experience of Jesus. She is willing to wager that an actual experience of vision and physical sickness may be even more effective than intellectual assimilation or even spiritual reading to make that change.<sup>434</sup>

### *B. Theodicy*

The historical context that forges Julian's "predicament" as a mystical writer also involves the treatment of theodicy by her contemporaries. *A Revelation* stands as an important theodicy in itself. The tradition of western theodicy, as Milton refers to it, seeks "to justify the ways of God to man."<sup>435</sup>

Julian was not satisfied with either heterodox or orthodox solutions to the problem of evil, both of which defend the deity by imputing the origin of evil to another source. The heterodox variety represented by the Manicheans of the early Christian era and the Cathars of the high Middle Ages attributes sin and suffering to the actions of an evil force in the universe of equal power to the deity, but separate from it. The orthodox proposal is represented by Augustine and is a theological axiom in the Middle Ages.<sup>436</sup> It attributes evil to the free will of creatures, either angelic or human, who deliberately disobey the deity.

While Julian defines evil through some of Augustine's categories, she also challenges the juridical theodicy that he proposes.<sup>437</sup> She denies the substantial reality of evil, as does Augustine. The deity is in the midpoint of all things and does all things,

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.78

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.68B

<sup>437</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 64b.

ensuring the omnipotent immanence of the Creator and the goodness of creation<sup>438</sup> and therefore sin remains unsubstantial: “here I saw verily that synne is no dede, for in alle thys, synne was nott shewde.” In Revelation 13 she repeats that sin has no substance: “But I saw nott synne, for I beleue it had no maner of substance, ne no part of beyng.”<sup>439</sup>

In these ways she rejects evil as an independent force and aligns herself with Augustine.<sup>440</sup> She also adopts the perspectives of both Augustine and Plotinus who consider evil as the insufficient blindness of creatures who fail to understand the divine plan. In Revelation 3 she contrasts the inadequacy of human understanding with the perfect judgment of the deity.<sup>441</sup> From that divine vantage point, evil does not exist because it has no substance and it works towards an eventual good. However, despite the insubstantial nature of sin, the experiential suffering that it produces as the lack of a due good is real: “synne is cause of alle thys payne.”<sup>442</sup>

While Julian draws upon Augustinian theodicy in these ways, she also challenges it when she probes the reasons for the deity’s purpose in allowing sin in Revelation 13.<sup>443</sup>

Augustine’s solution attributes the origin and continuation of evil to the free decisions of creatures. They reject good through the unrestrained wills of Adam and Eve who then pass on an inclination to evil through weakened wills to the rest of humanity. The deity justly punishes sinners for the initial sins in the garden as well as those that follow because humans commit sin voluntarily. In the *Confessions* Augustine recalls the

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<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.* 3.11.338

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* 13.27.406.

<sup>440</sup> For more details, see Baker, *Showings*, 64-67, especially 65.

<sup>441</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 3.11.339-40)

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.* 13.27.407).

<sup>443</sup> B67

two premises that inform his theodicy: “that free will is the cause of our doing evil and that [god’s] just judgment is the cause of our having to suffer from its consequences.”<sup>444</sup>

Augustine concerns himself with origins because his theodicy is an effort to place blame. He fears that when humans deny their guilt they will taint the just wrath of the deity. Julian’s concerns are at least different, if not opposite. She is concerned that Christians will be overwhelmed by guilt and fear of divine punishment for sin. Her concern leads her to consider purposes and ends, rather than causes as Augustine does. She is teleological rather than etiological.

Instead of the Augustinian emphasis on causes and consequences, her writing reflects a concentration on purpose and ends. Given the fact of sin, she explores its function in the divine plan and God’s disposition toward sinners, both now and at the end of time. In contrast to the etiological preoccupation of Augustinian theodicy, Julian’s solution to the problem of evil is teleological.<sup>445</sup>

Her approaches counteract Augustine’s point for point. While he claims that individuals suffer as punishment for sin, Revelation 13 claims that sin is pedagogical. In Revelation Fourteen of the long text chapters 44 through 52 she denies that original sin was deliberate and that the deity desires to punish human beings, both of which Augustine maintains as he reads Genesis 3. Chapters 53 through 62 develop the godly will that was first introduced in chapter 37 of Revelation 13; it challenges Augustine’s depraved will crucial to his idea of original sin.

Julian uses sin as an idea that consoles rather than condemns creatures. The middle chapters of Revelation 13 reveal a divine act reserved for the end of time that

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid, B67.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid, 67-69B

entails universal salvation.<sup>446</sup> Because Julian holds that the godly will assure salvation, she appraises sin as useful but not damning. In that context, she still adopts some traditional categories that make a positive appraisal of sin: it is useful because it brings knowledge of self as impotent and the deity as merciful; in addition purges humans of vice.<sup>447</sup>

At the same time she holds with Augustine that Justification is a gift from deity.<sup>448</sup> And, like Augustine, she holds that humans will do nothing but sin, and frequently refers to the elect who are nevertheless still assured of salvation.

### *C. Deification*

While Julian counters the anthropology of Augustine in the foregoing ways, she also uses Augustinian principles in mystical theology that counter his juridical ideology of sin.<sup>449</sup> Rooted in Gen. 1:26-27, “Let us make them in our image and likeness...,” Augustine’s use of the *imago* drawn from Genesis authorizes the occidental tradition of contemplative mysticism. Baker claims that Julian’s familiarity with this kind of mysticism allows her to interrogate the medieval ideology of sin from within the tradition, but through the lens of the mystical tradition that has different views of the self than the mainstream theological tradition.<sup>450</sup>

Mystical medieval theology, more than other concentrations in medieval theology, emphasizes the mystical potential for deification, a process that Augustine’s

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid*, 69B.

<sup>447</sup> Watson, *Julian*. It is pedagogical (13.27.406-7), a scourge that purges (13.39.449) and teaches humans to understand their impotence and divine mercy (13.39.451-52).

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid*, 13.36.436.

<sup>449</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 106-108.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

theory of the self in the *imago Dei* suggests.<sup>451</sup> Even though Augustine does not write an explicit mystical theology, the later medieval practice of contemplation is influenced by the ideas that he presents in *De Trinitate*. Although the participation in the deity that Augustine outlines in *De Trinitate* only occurs in eternity, Augustine's successors in the medieval tradition entertain the possibility that a brief foretaste of that participation may happen now through contemplation. Even though the contemplative may only momentarily participate in the divine nature, she hopes to eventually perfect the *imago Dei*. Through that she experiences aspects of the kind of fulfillment of participation in the divine nature that Augustine only locates in eternity.<sup>452</sup>

This tradition metaphorically spatializes contemplation as a movement of the mind both upward and inward, "since to ascend in the scale of being is to enter more deeply into oneself, into the centre of one's being."<sup>453</sup> Augustine's investigation in *De Trinitate* is psychological and analogical, but theories of contemplation in the high Middle Ages are influenced by the examination that he makes of his own psyche in the second part of this treatise. Prescholastics and Scholastics over the twelfth through fourteenth centuries used his idea of the self as a wounded image with the capacity to become like the deity through introspective mysticism.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition, Volume 4*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 66-68.

<sup>452</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 110b.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid*, 110 b fn 12

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, 110b. In Revelation 13 Julian invokes this tradition of introspective mysticism to support her theodicy. Various developed by the Victorines and the Cistercians in the twelfth century, the Franciscans and the Dominicans in the thirteenth, and the Rhineland mystics in the fourteenth, the mystical theology of the *imago Dei* is so ubiquitous and the transmission and dissemination of its central texts so difficult to trace in late fourteenth-century England that it is impossible to identify any single source for Julian's ideas. (fn 13).

In chapter 51 Julian reflects the influence of contemplative mysticism in her idea of the self. She considers predestination as the realization that the saved make of their inherent likeness to the divine.

#### *D. Jesus as Mother*

The historical context that forges Julian's "predicament" as a mystical writer also involves her "ultimate solution" to the problem of evil, her idea of mother Jesus.<sup>455</sup> Therefore I will briefly situate the historical context for medieval references that associate maternity with the deity and that associate maternity with Jesus.

One stream that developed a feminine personification of Jesus is the Wisdom tradition. Sapiential literature associates the second person of the Trinity with a female manifestation of the deity. Proverbs 1 through 9, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 1, 4, 6, 14, 15, and 24, and the Wisdom of Solomon 6 intermittently portray Wisdom as Sophia or as a woman. Of these, Prov. 8:22-31 and Ecclesiasticus 24 are important because they assert Sophia's eternal presence with the deity as well as her action in the act of creation. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning....I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times." (Proverbs 8:22) Sophia is also twice recorded as a mother: "And she will meet him as an honorable mother; and will receive him as a wife married of a virgin" (Ecclus. 15:2); and "And I rejoiced in all these: for this wisdom went before me, and I knew not that she was the mother of them all" (Wisd. 7:12). Thus, Wisdom is identified as eternal, as creator, and also as mother. Theologians in the third century used

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<sup>455</sup> Baker, Showings, 109.

the account of creation that the personified Wisdom presents in Prov. 8:22-31 to prove the divinity of Jesus as eternal Logos that is implicit in John 1:1-14. I Cor. 1:24 in which Paul refers to Christ as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” further substantiated the identification of the figure of Wisdom with Christ.

Sophia is associated in the medieval tradition with creation and with predestination. In the thirteenth century, Albert the Great comments on Isaiah, “The wisdom of god is the first mother in whose womb we have been formed.” He also associates the sapiential Jesus with predestination, placing the following words in Christ’s mouth: “I am more than mother, who formed and carried you in the light of my foreknowledge.”<sup>456</sup> Bonaventure also associates Wisdom with conceiving and bringing forth all of creation,

There is a principle of fecundity tending to the conceiving, the bearing and the bringing forth of everything that pertains to the universality of the laws. For all the exemplar reasons are conceived from all eternity in the womb or uterus of eternal wisdom. [This is true] most of all [of all the exemplary reasons] of predestination.<sup>457</sup>

When, however, the maternal is particularly identified with Jesus, for example in Meister Eckhart, the feminine element is often identified as passivity in the deity. Because the medieval tradition wishes to ensure that maternity is passive, and because they wish to associate maternity with Sophia, and because they wish to associate Sophia with Jesus, they end up assigning passivity to Jesus, who is associated with maternity, because he is always being born. Thus they make motherhood into the infant that is

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<sup>456</sup> Alberti Magni. “The Motherhood Theme,” 27, trans. by Bradley, in *Postilla super Isaiam* 49.15, ed. Ferdinand Siepmann, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 19 (Aschendorff: Monasterii Westfalorum, 1952), 491.

<sup>457</sup> Bonaventure, *The Works of Bonaventure*. Translated by José de Vinck. 5 vols. Patterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960-1970. 5:301-2; S. Bonaventurae, *Opera Omnia*, 5:426.

always being born, because this allows them to conclude that Jesus is the passive component of the trinity who is wisdom:

Wisdom is a name for a mother. The characteristic of a motherly name is passivity, and in God both activity and passivity must be thought. The Father is active, and the Son is passive because of his function as the one being born. For the Son is Wisdom born from eternity in which all things are distinct.<sup>458</sup>

These examples illustrate how this tradition often associates wisdom as a feminine manifestation of the deity who predestines souls and incorporates form into matter. In addition, this tradition interprets wisdom as a name for Jesus that refers to his passive relationship to the first person of the trinity who is always giving birth to him. Walker-Bynum has shown that the various strands of this tradition suggest the roles of creator, redeemer and sustainer for Jesus who is Wisdom and a mother.<sup>459</sup>

Importantly, the reading of Jesus as mother conformed to the association of the female with the material and the corporeal in scientific and theological writings in the Middle Ages, which writings were considered earlier in this chapter. As an example of this, Thomas Aquinas involves Aristotle's natural philosophy to conclude that the male is the active and efficient cause in reproduction while the female is the passive and material cause:

In human generation, the mother provides the matter of the body which, however, is still unformed, and receives its form only by means of the power which is contained in the father's seed. And though this power cannot create the rational soul, it nevertheless prepares the matter of the body for receiving a form of that kind.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Bernard McGinn with Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstadt, eds. "123b Sermon 40" in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 302.

<sup>459</sup> Caroline Walker-Bynum. *Jesus as Mother: studies in the spirituality of the high Middle Ages*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 1982), .

<sup>460</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae 2a2ae.26, 10 Blackfriars ed.*, vol. 34, ed. And trans. R. J. Batten, O.P. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 149. Eckhart alludes to this same Aristotelian model in his discussion of Wisdom and motherhead earlier.

These trends that associate a complex motherhood to Jesus as Wisdom enlighten Julian's portrayal of Jesus as a mother in nature and in creation. Jesus is "our moder in kind in oure substanncyall making."<sup>461</sup> In a way analogous to the human mother whose body holds the semen of a father that grows into a human Jesus is the "mene that kepyth pe substance and the sensualyte to geder, so that it shall nevyer departe."<sup>462</sup>

Baker claims that Julian's respect for the sensuality (that is identified with the passive element of motherhood in medieval discourse) is her most important contribution to the theological terms that give rise to the associate of motherhood with the deity.<sup>463</sup> Julian conceives of creation as an act performed cooperatively by the first person or father and the second person or mother. According to Baker, she also rejects some traditional divisions of the soul into masculine and feminine. While her distinction between substance and sensuality is drawn from Augustine's distinction between the higher and lower reason, unlike Augustine Julian ennobles the lower reason by identifying it as an integral part of the human being.<sup>464</sup> She figures holiness as the sensuality reunited with the substance and sin as the division between these two parts of the soul and also as a temporary separation from the deity. Mother Jesus recreates and reunites the divided soul. Further, only Jesus may reunite the self because of the three persons of the trinity only he unites with created sensuality.<sup>465</sup>

Julian develops the three-part maternity of Jesus in chapters 53 through 63 as a conclusion to the theodicy that she begins in Revelation 13. Mother Jesus is her ultimate

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<sup>461</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 14.58.586.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.56.571.

<sup>463</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 219b.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, 131b. All three persons can substantially unite to humankind.

answer to the problem of evil.<sup>466</sup> While the project of future chapters will analyze how Julian imports the subordination of femininity into the debt that the motherhood of Jesus owes to humans, as well as how she also imports valorized active masculinity into the motherhood of Jesus, this overview does not serve to explain that perspective that will come later. Rather, this overview serves to contextualize Julian's thought among the perspectives of her contemporaries. The further analysis that this project will make of mother Jesus will come in later chapters.

#### *E. The Use of "Wound" as a Divine Act of Healing*

Since this project will show that the debt that mother Jesus owes to humans is intimately related to the conception in the Western social imaginary that female bodies are forms of wounded masculine bodies, Julian's thematic use of "wounds" warrants consideration. Julian's third request for three "wounds," those of true contrition, loving compassion and longing for the will of god, show the medieval sense that the love of the deity is costly and painful; it has a wounding quality. Often rooted in the commentaries upon the Song of Songs in the Hebrew scriptures that allegorizes mystical union between the soul and a divine spouse, love heals as it wounds.<sup>467</sup> Origen thus wrote of the conversion to spiritual things as falling in love with a bridegroom who sends a saving dart of love that wounds. Bernard of Clairvaux also speaks of the bridegroom who pierces hardened hearts with a pleasure that is also painful.<sup>468</sup> The creature must be receptive like a wound in order to receive the consummating love of the deity. The erotic

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<sup>466</sup>Ibid, 133b.

<sup>467</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 61-64.

<sup>468</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux. "Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs." *Origen*. Rowan A. Greer, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 223.

metaphor of the wound in connection with union with the deity and mystical marriage was thus common in the writings of Bernard of Clairveaux and the Cistercians, whose influence was ubiquitous in fourteenth-century England. It was also present in figures from the Rhineland and the Low Countries in the thirteenth century who had a deep influence upon East Anglia when England was at war with France. For example, among the Dominican nuns, influenced by Eckhart and his followers Tauler and Suso, and among the Beguines, noticeably Mechthild of Magdeburg who began as a Beguine, the theme of erotic wounding and its healing power represented the surrender of the soul to the love of the deity shown in the wounded Christ.<sup>469</sup> Julian's use of wounds that heal draws from this tradition.

Her request for the wounds of penance and contrition, given through the wound of love, also supports a movement in medieval spirituality away from external forms of contrition and penance toward an interior rejection of sin and reception of divine mercy. An earlier penitential system supported a system that demanded exterior forms of satisfaction for sin that followed rule books that listed adequate penances for particular sins, such as penances of money or ascetic practices. A shift from this system to one that emphasized interior contrition and sorrow as requirements to restore human-divine relationship was taking place in Julian's time. Even to produce the sorrow that would begin interior contrition, this period recommended a turn to divine mercy rather than a focus upon sin. According to this movement, humans could not even feel the beginnings

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<sup>469</sup> See Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* II.14, ET Lucy Menzies, *The Revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg* (Longmans, Green, London and New York, 1953), p. 40. Also cf. Hadewijch, *The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) Letter 6. P. 63; Vision 1, p. 269 Poem 5, pp. 328-9; Valerie Lagorio, 'The Medieval Continental Women Mystics', in Sarmach. Also see Jantzen, *Julian* 62-64 and see Shelly Rambo, "Julian of Norwich" in Compier, Don H., Pui-lan Kwok, and Joerg Rieger. *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

of sorrow that leads to contrition without divine help. This thematic change from a focus upon sin to a focus upon mercy happened in conjunction with the shift in emphasis mentioned above from an aloof deity to a loving divine father of Jesus.<sup>470</sup> Nevertheless, Julian clearly feels the need to argue against the ubiquitous fear of external punishment and damnation throughout *A Revelation*, showing the hold on public devotion that exterior forms of satisfaction still had in her time.

As a further development during this period of the power that the erotic wound of divine love wields, the wound expanded to include not only individual contrition but also social concerns. Bernard of Clairvaux uses the ointments with which the bride attracts her lover in the *Song of Songs* to express the needs of the poor, the anxieties of the oppressed, the worries of those who are sad, sins of wrong-doers and the “manifold misfortunes of people of all classes who endure affliction, even if they are our enemies.”<sup>471</sup> Aelred recommended a similar list to anchorites in prayer.<sup>472</sup> Julian’s concern in prayer that she be transformed by love as well as her understanding of solidarity as the central expression of love reflects social concern in the wound of love. Through the lens of social concern in the wound of love, the wounded Christ expresses love through human healing, fulfillment and delight. This orientation resonates with Julian’s grief that fuels her question about why the deity allowed the human community to suffer.

Medieval theology and spirituality that speaks about divinely dealt wounds that heal thus contextualizes Julian’s request in prayer for an experience of the wounded

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<sup>470</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 65.

<sup>471</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux. “Sermon 12 in Kilian Walsh.” *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux* vol. II. (Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1977), 77.

<sup>472</sup> Rolle, p 46.

Christ and true contrition. Her visions are given as answer to her prayer, and as part of her prayer. This context informs not only Julian's requests for wounds of love, but also her eventual portrayal of the wounds that Jesus exercises for the good of humans, such as his "active thirst." According to the analysis of later chapters, it will finally inform the debt that mother Jesus owes to humans through the wound of motherhood.

*V. Theoretical Categories for the Different Layers of Understanding that Julian Has of Her Visions.*

Julian's process of experiencing visions in *A Revelation* is complex. It involves several layers of sensation and understanding. During Julian's serious illness, she received last rites and lingered for two days and nights in her critical state. Expecting death on the third night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1373, a priest told her to set her gaze on the crucifix. As she felt herself dying, she suddenly regained her previous health and witnessed a series of alterations in the crucifix. The visual transformations in the crucifix appear to answer her earlier prayers for a "bodily" vision of Jesus' suffering. She begins to see blood flowing down from under the crown of thorns and then the graphic stages of Christ's suffering before death.

She has "corporeal" vision of the suffering and dying Christ, "spiritual sight" and understanding of the teachings that the vision communicated. She "sees" and "understands" many things as the bleeding and passion continue. Finally, after witnessing graphic stages of decay, Julian sees Jesus in "the pallor of dying" and expects him to die. However, he makes a miraculous recovery, just as Julian had, and begins to teach her through speech in a combination of vision and locution.

She distinguishes between bodily and spiritual vision. For example, she expects to see Mary at the foot of the cross “in bodily likeness” but instead she receives a “spiritual” vision of her. Jantzen suggests that because Julian distinguishes between bodily and spiritual sight, when Julian reports that she saw an object with bodily vision, she means what she says; she is not instead referring to imagination or spiritual imagination.<sup>473</sup>

All her visions occur while she gazes at the crucifix, except for one that occurs during sleep. However, in her visions she sees more than the crucifixion. For example, she sees a vision of a hazelnut and an extended vision of a lord and a servant. Some of her visions involved physical senses of smell and heat and were clearly not related to the sight of the crucifix before her eyes. She pondered these visions for more than fifteen years and developed a theology around them that, as previously investigated, particularly engages the problem of evil.

When considering visions in general, Julian’s situation points to the two broad categories into which recent philosophical writing on mysticism sometimes falls. The first category holds that mystical experiences like voices and visions are decisive events that bring complete conviction and produce religious commitment. One of example of this might be Saul in Damascus who is knocked from his horse by a vision of the glorified Jesus and who is converted from a persecutor of Christians into a Christian apostle. The other category holds that context antecedently determines visionary

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<sup>473</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*. Also, cf Paul Molinari SJ, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a 14<sup>th</sup> Century English Mystic* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1958), pp. 33-49. As Jantzen notes, “This is contrary to the opinion of R. H. Thourless that Julian’s visions were hallucinations showing precarious mental balance, or C. Pepler’s comment that she suffered from ‘acute neurosis induced perhaps by an over-enthusiastic life of penance and solitude.’” Fuller justification of the claim for her sanity may be seen in R. H. Thouless, *The Lady Julian: A Psychological Study* (London: Macmillan, 1924), p. 25; Conrad Pepler, *The English Religious Heritage*. (London: Herder Book Company, 1958), 312.

experience.<sup>474</sup> For example, medieval Europeans see visions of the Virgin Mary, but not of Siva dancing. The Virgin Mary was an antecedent religious concept that made their visions possible. According to the two sides of this debate, if, hypothetically speaking, a medieval European saw a vision of Siva dancing, she would likely not understand it and so dismiss it as non-religious or possibly assign it religious meaning as a demonic image. Following this thought experiment, the likelihood that she would convert to Hinduism is very low. Saul, on the other hand, was already familiar with Christian ideas, which made possible his understanding of his vision.<sup>475</sup>

In the first category, experiences determine belief, while in the second belief determines experience. Jantzen feels that in Julian's case, these two sides are at least reciprocal. Julian is devoted and committed to Jesus, while, reciprocally, the visions of love increase her perceptions.<sup>476</sup>

Baker directs the reader of Julian to the philosopher Peter Moore who also supports a reading that does not separate these two sides of the debate over belief. While mystical phenomena happens within cultural frames of reference, that is true of all experience. Experience without preconceptions is impossible. Therefore, the beliefs and expectations that affect the experience and the report of mystical experience recognize particular location rather than discount the ontological or epistemological credibility of

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<sup>474</sup> Steven Katz, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism." *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. (London: Sheldon Press, 1978).

<sup>475</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 83.

<sup>476</sup> Jantzen, *Mystic*, 83.

visions. Therefore “The mystic’s doctrinal background should,” Moore explains, “be seen as a key to his experience rather than a door which shuts us off from it.”<sup>477</sup>

In Julian’s case her doctrinal background, some of which was briefly reviewed earlier, is a key to understanding her visionary and mystical experience and to discovering her mental and emotional preparation for it.

Julian’s claim that she is only a divine messenger evokes the first side of the debate over belief in which a decisive event carries complete conviction. Thus, her claim warrants investigation. While earlier paragraphs already touched on why Julian might disclaim herself as a teacher as a protective measure, they did not address a potential danger for interpreters that her claim presents. Texts that portray their authors as the vessels of supernatural truth foreclose historical and cultural context and, according to Baker, have often restricted the study of mystical writings to two poles. In the first, believers assess the orthodoxy of the mystical message and in the second, skeptics justify the physical or psychological illnesses that create it.

An important third way to investigate mystical texts avoids these two options. The provision of cultural frames of reference for *A Revelation* may find the kinship of Julian’s texts with contemporary traditions in medieval spirituality and theology. These also enlighten her predicament as a woman writer in a field dominated (at least in England) by men, circumstances that might lead her to divest herself of a teaching posture in the first place.

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<sup>477</sup> Peter Moore, “Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique,” in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz. London: Sheldon Press, 1978), III. See also idem, “Christian Mysticism and Interpretation: Some Philosophical Issues Illustrated in the Study of the Medieval English Mystics,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium 4*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 154-76.

An important question when investigating Julian's historical context becomes, then, how did the theological and spiritual trends of her contemporaries reach Julian? While little may be substantiated with certainty, some possible scenarios are suggestive of answers. Both Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton wrote books in the vernacular to guide their female friends who were nuns or anchorites. Anchoresses in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ranged from illiterate to literate. Anchoresses who had been nuns were known to read at least in the vernacular. Women left manuscripts to other women in their wills and women received religious education through sermons, conversations and the practice of reading aloud.<sup>478</sup>

Given these potential resources, Julian's comment that she is "a simple creature vnlettyrde" (2.285) also merits investigation. During the fourteenth century the phrase "simple and unlearned" was used in various ways. One of these identified the approach that a reader took to the text. The phrase could indicate an approach of humble devotion despite the theological expertise of the reader. The phrase is also applied in several places to women and men who were able to read in the vernacular. In addition, both Richard Rolle and Nicholas Love use similar phrases to characterize their texts as affective rather than intellectual. Both authors describe their readers as "simple" even when Rolle's readers were versed in Latin, and Love's in the vernacular. These examples indicate that "simple and unlettered" may refer to the devotional character of texts rather

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<sup>478</sup> See Bella Millett, "Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol Meale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 86-103. And see Baker, 8.

than the level of education in their readers.<sup>479</sup> The medieval uses of this phrase at least indicate that Julian does not necessarily mean to indicate that she is uneducated.

Moore also provides a helpful heuristic to analyze the role that doctrines, practices and institutions may play in the theological interpretations that Julian makes. Julian communicates her interpretations primarily in the long text where she makes a retrospective interpretation of the short text after twenty years of reflection. Moore distinguishes between the *incorporated interpretation* and the *raw experience* within the mystical phenomenon. The incorporated interpretation includes “features of experience which have been caused or conditioned by a mystic’s prior beliefs, expectations and intentions.”<sup>480</sup> The raw experience, on the other hand, includes all of the aspects of the experience that are unrelated to the mystic’s previous horizon. (11b)

*Incorporated interpretation* further divides into two types. The first or *reflected interpretation* is the “ideas and images reflected in an experience in the form of visions and locutions and so forth.” The second or *assimilated interpretation* is the “features of experience moulded into what might be termed phenomenological analogues of some belief or doctrine.”<sup>481</sup> The first type, or reflected interpretation, is produced in the practice of meditation, which is “the disciplined but creative application of the imagination and discursive thought to an often complex religious theme or subject-matter.” The second type, or assimilated interpretation, is produced through contemplation, a practice of devotion that builds upon meditation but “attempts to

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<sup>479</sup> Baker, *Showings*, 8-11.

<sup>480</sup> Moore, “Mystical Experience,” 108.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

transcend the activities of imagination and intellect through an intuitive concentration on some simple object, image, or idea.”<sup>482</sup>

Moore’s two categories of incorporated interpretation may describe the three different kinds of experience that Julian says she had: “Alle this blyssede techynge of our elorde god was schewyd to me in thre partyes, that is be bodylye sight, and be worde formed in myne vndyrstandynge, and be gastelye syght’ (I:224). Julian repeats these categories for her experience in the long text, 1.9.323, and in 16.73.666. Reflected interpretation describes Julian’s visions and locutions, while assimilated interpretation describes her abstract or “ghostly” sights.

Because this project is interested in tracking Julian’s interpretation of her visions, specifically her choice to use different sources of authority across the long text and her development of mother Jesus as a debtor that requires that transition in sources of authority, I will not attempt to describe or evaluate her raw experience. Instead, I will focus upon her interpretation of the showings that correspond to incorporated interpretation in the two forms that Moore mentions. Even while I focus upon incorporated interpretation, Nicholas Watson’s contention that it is both impossible and unnecessary to separate Julian’s raw experience from her incorporated interpretation bears mention.<sup>483</sup>

Moore provides more distinctions that analyze the stages of comprehension that Julian passes through in *A Revelation*. She indicates that she did not initially understand

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<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, 113; Moore disagrees with the exclusion of visions and locutions from serious consideration as mystical experiences, on 119-20.

<sup>483</sup> Nicholas Watson, “The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of Love*.” Also see fn 30, Baker.

the showings fully and underwent three phases of comprehension in relation to them, which she describes in the long text:

And therefore me behoveth now to telle thre proertes in which I am domdele esed. The furst is the beginning of teching that I understode therein in the same time. The secunde is the inwarde lerning that I have understonde theirein sithen. The third is alle the hole revelation, fro the beginning to the ende, which oure lorde God of his goodnes bringeth oftymes frely to the sight of my understanding. And theyse thre be so oned, as to my understandign, that I can not nor may deperte them. And by theyse thre as one, I have teching wherby I ow to beleve and truste in oure lorde God, that of the same goodnesse that he shewed it and for the same end, right so of the same goodnes and for the same end he shall declare it to us when it is his will.<sup>484</sup>

She describes the beginning of teaching that she understood at the time; the inward instruction that she understood since; and all the whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which the deity often and freely brings before the eyes of her understanding. She experiences these as so united that she cannot and may not separate them. Because every showing is full of secrets,<sup>485</sup> she spent fifteen years before she understood the unity of the Revelations.<sup>486</sup> After twenty years, she better understood the “mysty example” of the lord and servant in which the secrets of the revelation were deeply hidden.<sup>487</sup> Even so, in the last chapter of A Revelation she relates her continued lack of understanding of the showings and that her efforts to understand them will only allow her to continue till her life’s end to partially perform them.<sup>488</sup>

Moore’s additional categories for analysis of the stages of comprehension through which Julian passes are three: the visionary experience itself, which includes both raw and incorporated interpretation, and two further types of interpretation, reflexive

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<sup>484</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 51.63-72.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid*, 51.62.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 16.86.732-33, 136-7b.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*, 14.51.519.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid*, 16.86.731). 137b.

and retrospective. Reflexive interpretation forms during the experience itself or immediately afterwards. It aligns with Julian's category of 'the begynnyng of techyng.' Retrospective interpretation, on the other hand, refers to the doctrinal interpretation that the visionary forms after the experience ends.<sup>489</sup> It corresponds to Julian's description of 'the inward lernyng that I haue vnderstonde there in sythen.' Moore exemplifies the different layers of understanding at work in Julian's text in chapter 54:

And I sawe no difference betwen God and oure substance, but as it were all God. And yet my understanding toke that oure substance is in God: that is to sey, that God is God and oure substance is a creature in God. For the almighty truth of the trinite is oure fader, for he made us and kepeth us in him. And the depe wisdom of the trinite is oure moder, in whom we are all beclosed.<sup>490</sup>

Moore points out the difference between experience and interpretation, or between reflexive and retrospective interpretation in the passage above. "The first part of the first senetence," he relates, "states what Julian saw (And I sawe no difference...'), the second how she immediately understood it ('and yet my vnderstandyng toke...'), and the third taken together with the following sentences, her more elaborate theological interpretation ('that is to sey...')."<sup>491</sup> Moore's analytical categories highlight the layers of interpretation that Julian performs in the showings.

#### *A. Julian's Recursive Meditative Method*

Baker offers another analytical category through which to understand Julian's process of understanding her visions. She sees a contemplative, recursive method at

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<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 2.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.13-28, 14.54.562-63.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 3.

work in Julian's writing. Julian's recursive method involves her retrospective interpretation and so it is also seen most in the long text as opposed to the short text.

The long text shows the continuum of the meditations on the visions, while the short text shows a more straightforward narrative of the day's worth of visionary experience. The short text divides into three themes: chapters 1 through 13 focus on compassion, chapters 14 through 25 on contrition, and the theme of union is spread throughout. Julian maintains these same themes in the long text but expands her text by six times in length.<sup>492</sup> She most significantly expands her account of Revelation 14. Revelation 14 makes up one third of the whole long text while the short text only contains brief sections of chapters 41 and 43 and a phrase in chapter 47.<sup>493</sup> The short text succinctly describes her visionary experience, while the long text combines the story of her visions with her retrospective interpretation. The scandalized grief described earlier in this chapter appears most clearly in the long text when Julian retrospectively tries to reconcile the conflict between her visions and her understanding of common church teaching. Windeatt underscores the pressures that only emerge because of such conflicts in the long text:

A sense of its own narrative continuity no longer controls the book, for the first text has been turned inside out by those pressures in the implications which have impelled Julian's development as a mystical writer. Instead, the narrative of the original one-day's visionary experience is held in fractured form within what is now the real continuum of the meditations on the visions.<sup>494</sup>

Her retrospective interpretation of the straightforward description of her visions in the short text shows as a strain in the long text. That tension dictates the changes in sources

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<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 4.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 5.

<sup>494</sup> Windeatt, fn 7.

of authority that Julian will make in order to present her solution to the problem of evil in Mother Jesus. Because this project is most interested to investigate how Julian uses sources of authority, as well as how she styles mother Jesus as a debtor to human beings in response to evil, I consider the long text rather than the short text. Furthermore, I begin my investigation in chapter 27 of the long text. While sin and evil haunt the whole of the long text, they do so with clearer focus from chapter 27 till the end.<sup>495</sup>

The difference between her reflexive and retrospective interpretations also emerge in the long text.<sup>496</sup> Baker explains that Julian attempts to simultaneously communicate three different moments of Revelation through this tension, “the immediacy of the showing, the gradual unfolding of its meaning through meditation and contemplation, and the realization of the unity of her vision.”<sup>497</sup> Her oneness of vision struggles alongside the erratic flow of her twenty years of reflection.

Strategies of Julian’s writing structure handle some of this tension. Julian distinguishes between her immediate mystical engagement and her retrospective interpretation by dividing the long text into sixteen showings. She describes the bodily or

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<sup>495</sup> Chapter 27 (“what is sin?” was first asked in Chapter 11, but not examined, rather it was seen as no deed, and that all deeds are done well by the deity, while Julian moved on to describe the passion that she saw) shifts to thematically focus on sin and Julian brings up her first dispute as a “folly.” The second revelation’s vision of the dry blood has already begun to expose the incongruous fact of sin. This question haunts the whole of *A Revelation*, especially from Chapter 27 on. Chapter 27 follows Julian’s insight that Watson feels may be taken as a digest of the first twelve revelations, “Nothing letted me but sin.” Accordingly, the first 12 revelations make Julian see that only sin prevents her from love, which the divine interlocutor shows is the whole meaning of *A Revelation*. If, then, the deity is omnipotent and loving and nothing but sin prevents Julian from love, she deduces that the omnipotent deity should have prevented sin and her feeling of separation from love that is suffering. The first 12 then lead to a transition to a focus upon sin and why it is here. This transition necessitates a shift from reliance upon church authorities as a source of authority to reliance upon Julian’s divine interlocutor as a source of authority, and, ultimately, Julian’s own ability to discern the communications of her divine interlocutor as a source of authority. She will increasingly argue for the divine interlocutor as a stronger source of authority, finally doing so explicitly (for example, in chapter 31).

<sup>496</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 140b.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid*, 140b.

ghostly sight or the words revealed to her at the beginning of each section. The sight thus acts as a motif for the section and preserves the priority of her immediate vision. At the same time she sets each motif in the midst of the new material of her retrospective interpretation that she incorporates in the long text. As she adds retrospective interpretation, she returns to the earlier motif throughout the showing, each time adding more detail. As Baker explains, her recursive style “cumulates and develops” the revelations by imitating the ruminative style of meditation.<sup>498</sup>

In further imitation of the ruminative style of meditation, Julian preserves the simplicity and unity of her revelations when she draws connections between the sixteen showings through cross-references. These also primarily take place in the long text. The cross-references imitate the return again and again to the themes of the vision and reinterpretations that the style of meditation performs. The cross-references recall and anticipate the various visions to create a verbal echo that invokes the unity of the “hole revelation fro the beginnyng to the ende.”<sup>499</sup>

Julian’s recursive style requires the reader to engage in a process of meditation rather than in a linear or chronological reading. The reader must follow the cross-references within and among the sixteen revelations. Her strategy of revision artfully brings the reader to reenact Julian’s own struggle to make sense of the revelations.<sup>500</sup>

In future chapters that synthesize Julian and Butler, Butler’s psychoanalytic method will show that Julian’s recursive method gives the reader unique access to the way that Julian navigates parts of herself that are informed by sources of knowledge in

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<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 8, 140b.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 141b.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 148b.

conflict based on the way that she returns to themes and transforms them. An analysis of her recursive method will also show that she establishes a hierarchy among the sources of authority to which she appeals. She eventually more frequently returns to some themes rather than others, or to some elements of the showings more than others. In addition, her recursive method will be considered as a new resource to move from melancholy to transformational anger in Butler's terms.

## **Chapter 5: The Expression of Scandalized Grief and the First Two Returns To It**

This chapter tracks the strategic emergence of three related things in A Revelation. (1) The shift in sources of authority which first rely upon common church teaching, then move to rely upon the content of A Revelation, and finally move to rely upon the internal discernment of divine movement in the self. (2) New ideas in A Revelation, especially about blame and punishment, that counter and replace common church teaching about those same subjects. (3) A controversial dispute between Julian and her divine interlocutor about divine benevolence and omnipotence in the face of suffering, during which Julian expresses scandalized grief.

These three elements are integrally related. The new ideas preserve the scandal that Julian expresses during this controversial dispute, even if partially. Julian first denigrates the scandal that she initially shows, as the previous chapter described. She rejects her scandalized reaction as shameful error according to traditional church teaching. However, through subtle reversals she progressively honors her scandal as the central message of the showings. She achieves this reversal through the introduction of new ideas and through a delicate replacement of traditional sources of authority with new ones that preserve her scandal rather than degrade it.

As the last chapter illustrated, because opposition to church teaching may be life-threatening in Julian's time, the process through which she preserves her scandal is a subtle and dangerous one. She couches it in many contexts that preserve a trace of the original scandal; these contexts also preserve the appearance of compliance with general traditional themes. The chapter will thus track the transformation of her scandal by

tracking her new ideas as well as her shift away from common church teaching as a source of authority and towards *A Revelation* as a preferred source of authority – and finally towards a discernment of divine movement within the self as a preferred source of authority.

Specifically, this chapter will identify the first three of seven moments in which Julian rearticulates her scandalized grief that gradually vindicate and develop her scandal illustrated in the original dispute. It will track the transitions in sources of authority and the new ideas that allow her to progress from one moment of articulation to the next. The chapter that follows this one tracks the last four moments in this progression.

While Julian never wholly vindicates her scandal from the shame that she initially directs towards it, she yet preserves traces of that scandal that allow for an evolution of the dispute from a shameful folly into the central concern of the deity, and therefore into the wise expression of divine (and human) life.

In the last chapter, I will use Butler's theories to show that the progression described in this chapter is a movement of transformational anger that maps onto gender.

*I. Three articulations of Julian's charges alongside the shifts in sources of authority that support them and the new ideas that also support them*

*A. Dispute #1: The first form of Julian's scandalized grief. If omnipotent and benevolent, why did the deity not prevent sin?*

I begin my analysis in chapter 27 because I am concerned with Julian's treatment of sin. While sin haunts the whole of *A Revelation*, it does so most clearly from chapter 27 until the end. Sin is important for this analysis because Julian finds that her divine interlocutor conflicts with church authorities over teachings about sin and consequent damnation. As a result, in order to preserve the credibility of her new counter ideas about

sin and damnation, she must delicately persuade her readers (and perhaps herself) to rely more upon the divine voice of her showings than upon the opinions of church authorities. Therefore, the more prominent transitions in sources of authority in *A Revelation* occur as Julian engages sin more intensely, beginning in chapter 27.<sup>501</sup>

To place Julian's treatment of sin in chapter twenty-seven in context, I briefly consider her earlier pertinent references. Earlier suggestions of the incongruous fact of sin, especially the vision of dry blood in the second revelation, prepare the reader to encounter the narrow focus upon sin that begins in chapter twenty-seven. The earlier revelation of dry blood introduces the power differential that Julian struggles with throughout *A Revelation*: that of a deity with unlimited power who could prevent suffering if it wished to but who does not, on the one hand, and Julian's limited power that would prevent suffering if it could but cannot, on the other. In the center of this power differential Julian debates whether the deity has goodwill towards humans, whether it cruelly enjoys human suffering, or whether we can never know which of these two options is more true. She also debates at times whether human suffering suggests

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<sup>501</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 207-209: 27.1-8. ("What is sinne?" was first asked in Chapter 11, but not examined, rather it was seen as no deed, and that all deeds are done well by the deity, while Julian moved on to describe the passion that she saw) shifts to thematically focus on sin and Julian brings up her first dispute as a "folly." The second revelation's vision of the dry blood has already begun to expose the incongruous fact of sin. This question haunts the whole of *A Revelation*, especially from Chapter 27 on. Chapter 27 follows Julian's insight that Watson feels may be taken as a digest of the first twelve revelations, "Nothing letted me but sin." Accordingly, the first 12 revelations make Julian see that only sin prevents her from love, which the divine interlocutor shows is the whole meaning of *A Revelation*. If, then, the deity is omnipotent and loving and nothing but sin prevents Julian from love, she deduces that the omnipotent deity should have prevented sin and her feeling of separation from love that is suffering. The first 12 then lead to a transition to a focus upon sin and why it is here. This transition necessitates a shift from reliance upon church authorities as a source of authority to reliance upon Julian's divine interlocutor as a source of authority, and, ultimately, Julian's own ability to discern the communications of her divine interlocutor as a source of authority. She will increasingly argue for the divine interlocutor as a stronger source of authority, finally doing so explicitly (for example, in chapter 31).

that human power may overcome divine intention, making the deity less than all-powerful.

Standing thus before unlimited divine power that opposes suffering and while she sees the bleeding face of Christ undergo suffering, Julian wonders how sin can exist when divine power maintains everything; she asks “What is sinne?” (11.14-18) Just after the second revelation provokes her question it dissuades her from pursuing it. The vision tells her that sin is “no deed”. The answer seems to erase sin from existence, a place where all things are done well by the deity. Julian is left with little room for her concern that suffering be entirely prevented.<sup>502</sup> Since the answer resonates with classical ideas of sin as the absence of a due good, it may mollify the reader. However sin still erupts as Julian wishes that the deity prevented its origin. Julian’s unanswered concern for the prevention of sin remains in the background till the beginning of chapter twenty-seven. The early lines of chapter twenty-seven may be considered an abridgement of Julian’s struggle with sin in the first twelve revelations.<sup>503</sup>

The tension between divine power and the fact of sin come to fruition in Julian’s “wondering” about why the deity did not prevent sin in chapter twenty-seven: “...often I wondred why, by the grete forseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sinne was not letted.” (27.5-6) *A Revelation* consistently shows all of human longing to be fulfilled only by love, which the deity is and which the deity can provide to humans. Love ends up being the whole meaning of *A Revelation*. Julian believes these facts about the deity because the church teaches them and because her visions confirm them. However, according to Julian’s scandalized grief in lines three through six, sin keeps her from love

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<sup>502</sup> Julian will more narrowly develop her concern as *A Revelation* progresses.

<sup>503</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 206: 27.2, “Nothing letted me but sin.”

and makes her unwell. And according to lines three through eight, divine foreseeing wisdom wishes Julian to have the love that sin prevents. Taken together, they suggest that the deity whose meaning is love opposes sin (and suffering, which is the deprivation of love that sin creates). Since that deity is also all-powerful, they also suggest that divine foreseeing wisdom could have prevented suffering by preventing sin. Julian uses the word “wonder” that stops short of suggesting that the deity *should* have prevented sin. For the purposes of this paper Julian’s “wondering” in lines 27.5-6 will be called the first formulation of her scandalized grief.

While Julian stops short of suggesting that the deity should have prevented sin, the compelling direction of her logic and her desire that everything be well insinuates scandalized grief. The deity shows Julian human longing and shows her that only sin prevents it. Further, the object of human longing is love, which the deity can provide. Julian’s lament that if sin were prevented “...We shulde alle have be Clene and like to oure lorde as he made us” (27.1-8) shows her dismay that an all powerful deity would allow the creation that it controls to suffer the painful thwarting of its good desires. Julian’s dismay, made reasonable by the previous lines, suggests that the deity *should* have prevented sin. If the deity should have prevented sin then it is culpable for the suffering that plagues the first twelve revelations. Along these lines, someone should demand retribution from the deity, or bring it to some kind of justice. Julian’s “wondering” communicates the sense that the deity may be guilty of cruelty. These tones surround what I call the first form of her focused feelings of scandal in chapter twenty-seven: if possessed of “grete foreseeing wisdom” that implies the deity opposes suffering for human beings, why did the deity not prevent the “beginning of sinne”?

Rather than draw out the compelling logic of her scandal and of her desire that everything be well, Julian degrades her dispute as one that should be forsaken, or repudiated.<sup>504</sup> She then further degrades herself, blaming herself in line 27.8 for giving her energy to “morning and sorow I made therfore withoute reson and discretion,” rather than rejecting it as she should have done. She accuses herself of violating reason and moderation by engaging in a “folly” that often occupies her mind and emotions.

Even as Julian ostensibly dismisses her dispute as folly and blames herself because she inappropriately sorrows over sin, the next lines suggests otherwise. In verses 27.8-10, the divine response to her approves of her concern. Later in the text *A Revelation* will lay out rules for how one should discern whether the internal voice one senses is one’s sinful folly or the opposite: the movement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>505</sup> According to those later directives if the deity responds to one’s question one should pursue her question. And, on the other hand, if the deity is silent, one should abandon it. Although Julian says that her charge is folly, the deity is not silent in response to her question. Instead it answers her with a message that will be the basis for the rest of *A Revelation*. According to Julian’s rules, then, the deity’s response suggests that Julian’s charge was the movement of the Holy Spirit, rather than her folly. As Julian writes, “But Jhesu, that in this vision enformed me of alle that me neded, answered by this worde and saide: ‘Sinne is behovely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wel.’ (27.8-10) Thus, the deity’s answer, rather than its silence, encourages Julian to pursue her scandalized feelings rather than to reject them. However, she does not explicitly comment on the divine response that encourages her to consider

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<sup>504</sup> *Ibid*, 209:27.7-8.

<sup>505</sup> Follow the “steering” if the deity responds, but do not if the deity is silent.

her scandalized grief. Rather, she rejects it as folly. These contradictory messages establish a tacit ambiguity about how she and the deity view her scandal because she explicitly shames it but the deity rewards her for it according to her later rules for discernment.

Lines 27.8-10 in which the deity reassures Julian that “alle shalle be wele” do not seem to endorse Julian’s feelings of scandal. On the surface they justify sin as “fitting” and assert that all will be made well. They affirm that the deity is all-powerful but do not explain why divine good will did not prevent pain. While they fail to answer the terms of her question, they still preserve a trace of Julian’s original desire to make all things “clean” and like the deity through a suggestion that every thing (“alle”) will be included in wellness. So, the answer does not give Julian what she asks for – an explanation for how an all-powerful good will and the failure to prevent sin exist together. However, the “alle” reassures Julian that her concern is the deity’s concern even if she cannot see the reason. The deity’s shared sentiment preserves her concern even if only at a remove that does not give her the intelligent answers for which she asked.

*B. Julian’s dispute migrates from her shameful “alle” into the deity’s sacred “alle” through the deity’s response*

When Julian places the word “alle” that crystallizes her seemingly shameful scandalized concern into the words of the divine response, she also subtly keeps her charge in play so that she may gradually amplify and develop it later. The words of the deity’s answer reproduce her lament and transfer her concern to the safer space of divine speech. Thus even as Julian seemingly repudiates her scandal, she also again indirectly preserves it. Julian “wonders” why the deity did not prevent sin so that “alle shulde have

be wele.” (27.1-8) Her divine interlocutor responds that: “It is soth that sinne is cause of alle this paine, but alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thing shale be wele.” (27.8-10) These words were shown to her “fulle tenderly,” and showed no manner of blame to her or to “none that shalle be safe.” (27.26-31) Although Julian calls the concern that she expresses through the term “alle” her “folly” in chapter twenty-seven, the deity now uses the same word. Her concern that animates the word now animates the deity’s speech. As will be shown, Julian develops her future visions so that the divine voice later uses “alle” to express sentiments much closer to Julian’s original feelings of scandal.

The word alle that transferred from Julian’s lament into the deity’s response inherits the senses of earlier uses of the term “alle” in *A Revelation*. There it suggests that the deity could be responsible for sin if omnipotent and responsible for its prevention if benevolent.<sup>506</sup> The earlier vision of the hazelnut that represents creation showed that every expression of being, connected to love, is the expression of the deity. It thus emphasizes omnipotence because of its scope and benevolence through love. Julian marvels how creation symbolized by the hazelnut “might laste,” for it “might soddenly have fallen to nought for littleness.” She was answered in her understanding “It lasteth and ever shall, for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God.” The love of the deity is coincident with omnipotence, since love maintains existence. Since chapter twenty-seven shows that sin prevents love it would seem that sin exists outside of love. But, that is impossible because “all thing” have existence by the love of God. So, the hazelnut suggests that the omnipotent divinity who maintains all things should not maintain “sin”. Later Julian sees the deity “in a point” by which sight she “saw that he is

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<sup>506</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

in al thing.” In response to seeing the deity in a point that emphasized the deity is in every thing, Julian already marveled with a “softe drede” and asked “What is sinne?” (11.14-18). The “point” and her query about sin inarticulately evoke the vision of the hazelnut in 5.7-13.<sup>507</sup> Together these revelations prepared Julian to voice her scandalized grief in chapter twenty-seven because they suggest that an omnipotent and benevolent deity should not exist alongside sin.

When divine activity does “alle” things as Julian saw in the point, and when it does all those in love as she saw in the hazelnut, Julian sees the incongruous fact that the deity seemingly must perform all things and so must be responsible for sin and cause suffering for creatures. Or, on the other hand, sin must be absent, prompting her to ask “What is sinne?” Thus, Julian’s previous use of the hazelnut and the point emphasize that the direct action of the deity controls every being and action, and therefore the deity should in some way be accountable for the existence of sin, or, if not, should at least supply more explanation to her about what sin is.

After these encouragements keep Julian’s charge in play rather than reject it, chapter twenty-seven oscillates between common church teachings that disparage it and faint encouragements. This reversal of emphases is characteristic of the rhetoric of *A Revelation*. The church teachings shift her focus to humans who are responsible for sin

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<sup>507</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 163: (Chapter 11, third revelation) “And after this, I saw God in a pointe—that is to say, in my understanding—by which sight I saw that he is in al thing. I beheld with avisement, seeing and knowing in that sight that he doth alle that is done. I merveyled int hat sight with a softe drede, and thought: ‘What is sinne?’ For I saw truly that God doth alle thing, be it never so litile. And I saw turly that nothing is done by happe ne by aventure, but alle by the foreseeing wisdom of God. If it be hap or aventure in the sight of man, our blindhede and our unforesight is the cause.” Also see Watson, *Julian*, 162 about the hazelnut, point and, “the ‘pointe’ anticipates the Christian Neoplatonism of Chapters 52-63: see, e.g., 62.10-17, with its account of the creation as ‘flowing out’ from God at the center of being, before returning to him. A ‘point’ is also a subdivision in an argument or a full stop in a sentence, meanings that give parts of the chapter a scholastic and dialogic cast.”

and a deity who courteously forgives humans their misdeeds. It thereby glosses over the tension in Julian's first scandalized grief between divine power that can prevent sin and limited human power that cannot. Verses 27.11-25 describe the deity as the victim of human sin:

In this naked worde 'sinne,' oure lorde broughte to my minde generally alle that is not good, and the shameful despite and the utter noughting that he bare for us in this life, and his dying, and alle the paines and passions of alle his creatures, gostly and bodely...

And the beholding of this, with alle the paines that ever were or ever shalle be—and with alle this, I understode the passion of Criste for the most paine and overpassing—and alle this was shewde in a touch, and redely passed over into comfort...

Jesus' suffering overshadows the suffering of humans and hides the responsibility that an omnipotent deity might have for allowing sin. Rather, human suffering is good because it purges humans of the evil that they produced when they sinned. It also allows them to follow the example of Jesus who also suffered for sin.<sup>508</sup>

After marginalizing Julian's scandal in this way, verses 27.26-29 again reverse their emphasis:

And for the tender love that oure good lorde hath to alle that shalle be saved, he comforteth redely and swetly, mening thus: "It is soth that sinne is cause of alle this paine, but alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thing shale be wele." Theyse wordes were shewde fulle tenderly, shewing no maner of blame to me, ne to none that shalle be safe. Than it were a gret unkindnesse of me to blame or wonder on God for my sinne, sithen he blameth not me for sinne. (And in theyse same wordes, I saw an high...) <sup>509</sup>

These lines suggest that human beings are not responsible for sin. While sin is the cause of human pain, the deity reassures Julian that all will be well because it shows no manner

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<sup>508</sup> Despite this seeming showing of sin, Julian continues that she "saw not sinne" because it has no being and is only known by the pain that results from it, following some traditional teachings on sin as a privation of a due good.

<sup>509</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 209:27.26-31.

of blame towards her or towards those who “shalle be safe,” the souls of the saved. The deity’s erasure of blame towards Julian stands out as different from common church teaching. Julian will make clear later that common church teaching demands that humans be considered worthy of blame. This lack of blame echoes elements of Julian’s first scandalized grief. Humans are not to blame for sin because an omnipotent deity could have prevented sin and finite humans could not. However, since the deity does not blame Julian or those who are “safe,” the passage implies that the deity continues to blame those who are not saved. Thus, those who are damned are not saved and so may be blameworthy. Since Julian’s concern was that “alle” creation be made well the deity’s promise to show no blame towards some humans does not address her concern for all created beings. The allocation of some to salvation and some to damnation also preserves the common church teaching that humans are blameworthy, at least for those who are damned. Thus the deity’s partial specification of blame acts as a buffer between Julian’s desire for human blamelessness and common church doctrines that demand some be damned and have no remedy.<sup>510</sup> So, while this section does not remove blame from humans completely, it does so partially and will allow Julian to do so more completely later in the text.

After Julian thus introduces human blamelessness (at least in the saved), in the lines that follow she obscures her suggestion through a distraction from the idea of human blamelessness. Lines 27.30-31 that follow encourage the reader to imagine human blame and divine innocence: “Than it were a gret unkindnesse of me to blame or wonder on God for my sinne, sithen he blameth not me for sinne.” These verses assume

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<sup>510</sup> *Ibid*, 155:9.16-17 Julian first uses the term the “saved” that will repeat throughout the showings.

reciprocity between Julian and the deity, as if both could blame the other, but the more noble path for each would be to overlook the other's fault. However, such a stance of reciprocity glosses over Julian's early charge that specifically focuses upon the power differential between her finite power and unlimited divine power. If it is possible for the deity to prevent sin and impossible for Julian to prevent sin then it is impossible for the deity to blame Julian for sin but possible for her to blame the deity.

Additionally, Julian refers back to her first expression of scandal or "wonder" on god with increased disdain. Verse 27.30 remembers her "wondering" as "unkindness" or sin<sup>511</sup>: "Than it were a gret unkindnesse of me to blame or wonder on God for my sinne, sithen he blameth not me for sinne."<sup>512</sup> She now calls her expression of scandalized grief sinful, a stronger condemnation than her previous description of it as an exercise in folly. Through her condemnation she also positions the deity farther from blame, since it is not only innocent but also in its benignity chooses not to blame guilty humans. This frame prevents the readers' imaginations and feelings from wondering if the deity should be responsible for sin, since in that act they would not only overlook their own blameworthiness but would also cast aspersion on the deity, one who is the epitome of innocence and compassion when it foregoes rightful punishment for the sake of love.

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<sup>511</sup> Julian makes an idiomatic usage of the noun "unkindness" using it as synonym for sin. See her similar use in 66.23 ("this was a gret sinne and a gret unkindness"). However, it may be taken in the context of her other use of "unkinde" in 63.13 where it conveys a harsher sense of perversity. See Watson, *Julian*, 320:63.13.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid*, 211:27.31-32. Keep this or maybe not... Julian here overlooks the dissimilarity between her finitude and the deity's omnipotence. Considering that she is preoccupied with a deity who is omnipotent but does not prevent sin when she would prevent sin if she were omnipotent, she seeks a reason why the deity did not act differently from her because it has different powers. Since her dispute is based upon their difference, her dispute suggests that the deity should ask forgiveness of her for causing pain because it could have prevented it, while she should not ask forgiveness of the deity because she is incapable of such a prevention. Therefore, her suggestion that she forgive because the deity forgives overlooks the fundamental difference in power that fuels her dispute. And, on the other hand, it masks her charge and the power differential that it focuses upon.

When she places the deity in such an innocent and benign role she masks the differences in human and divine power that fuel her scandalized feelings.

While the foregoing verses 27.29-31 seem to absolve the deity from blame for not preventing sin, Julian also sows other seeds through them, especially as she removes punishment from the scene since the deity assigns no blame to humans. She emphasizes the blame that one who causes sin must bear, on the one hand. And, on the other, she shows a different way in which blame may operate in communal relationship: she models the virtuous response of an innocent towards one who is blameworthy against the grain of popular views. She retains an innocent deity who relates to guilty humans, but she changes the divine response to those guilty humans. The deity assigns no blame to humans and so does not introduce ideas of punishment into the scene. According to her popular contemporaries, the deity is the blameless one who demonstrates virtue by extracting retribution from guilty humans through punishment. Julian's scene changes common assumptions that the deity would see blame in human beings. The text thereby models for the reader an internal conversion in which human assumptions reverse if they are to reflect the perspective of the deity. Julian's marginal model of virtuous response that erases blame towards the blameworthy is an important seed. Later, Julian develops a more explicit agnosticism about who is responsible for sin. Readers may be persuaded to accept Julian's later agnosticism more easily when they do not feel that such an agnosticism robs them of the rightful satisfaction they take in identifying a criminal to punish for the cause of sin. Further, Julian will eventually portray the deity as one who owes the debt of eternal life to human beings. It is easier for Julian to interpret "debt" as a divine bestowal of life toward humans when she first dethrones the popular view of

“debt” as the suffering that humans owe to the deity to make up for the divine honor they stole. Thus, even as Julian emphasizes human guilt and divine innocence in this section, she also lays foundations for future themes that counter those same ideas.

The final verses of chapter twenty-seven (27.33-36) revive traces of Julian’s scandalized grief through the prophecy of a “secret” that is not found in common church teaching. While the recent arguments of chapter twenty-seven seemingly use shame to deter human beings from “wondering on god” for the failure to prevent sin, the prophecy suggests otherwise, at least indirectly. Because it promises a future explanation for why the deity failed to prevent sin, it implies that the reasons that the vision supplied to Julian in chapter twenty-seven in response to her scandalized feelings fail to answer her sufficiently:

And in theyse same wordes, I saw an high, mervelous previte hid in god, which privite he shalle openly make knowen to us in heaven. In which knowing we shalle verely se the cause why he sufferede sine to come, in which sight we shalle endlessly have joye.<sup>513</sup>

The secret<sup>514</sup> contained in the prophecy post-pones Julian’s answer to a future heaven where she will understand the deity’s reasons. While it may seem that the deity deflects her feelings of scandal when it thus displaces it from the present to the future, the very reintroduction of her scandal is still significant; she very recently rejected it as sinful. The secret validates it as a worthy question despite her rejection.

Further, the secret emerges as the meaning of the promise that “all shall be well.” According to Julian the secret is “in” these words. The term “alle,” investigated earlier as a trace of Julian’s scandalized grief, now serves as a holding place for the secret. Thus,

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid*, 211:27.33-36.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid*, 211:27.33, an high, mervelous previte. A lofty and wonderful secret. The first of several ‘privites’ discussed in the thirteenth revelation. See Chapters 30, 32, 34. See Watson, *Julian*, 210.

the divine response of “alle” now contains a promise to Julian to explain the divine reasons for not preventing sin. It validates Julian’s emotional and intellectual need to receive consistent reasons for why the deity failed to prevent sin.

The secret embedded in “alle” also serves as a promise that the deity will be accountable to Julian for the suffering she endures because of sin. The secret reassures Julian that she will be happy about the explanation, even if she cannot see it now. Thus, the term “alle” absorbs a fuller trace of Julian’s feelings of scandal because it promises Julian that her sentiments will be satisfied when heaven shows her the reasons why the deity failed to prevent sin.

The secret signals the need that Julian increasingly has to appeal to different sources of authority than common church teaching. Common church teaching does not support the secret. While the secret may not seem threatening to common church teaching at this stage in *A Revelation*, it will become so later. It is part of a network of teachings that conclude together that human beings have no blame for sin and that hell need not exist. As Julian makes clear in those later sections, church teaching condemns those views. Therefore, as *A Revelation* progresses Julian will shift her appeal to sources of authority in order to support the secret and the related teachings that emerge in connection with it.

Chapter twenty-eight seems to bury Julian’s scandalized grief even though it could be taken to support it. In verse 28.1, Julian concludes that chapter twenty-seven showed her “How Crist hath compassion on us for the cause of sinne.” If the cause of sin echoes the recent secret that declares the cause of sin is unknown, then verse 28.1 might declare humans blameless and align with Julian’s feelings of scandal. The “cause” of sin

is unknown at this point in *A Revelation* and will remain so to some extent.<sup>515</sup> However, the rest of chapter twenty-eight emphasizes the innocence of the deity and the guilt of human beings, which encourages the reader to understand the “cause” of sin as human in origin, rather than unknown, as the secret suggests. Verses 28.1-6 relate that the deity enjoys purging humans of vice by laying suffering upon them, which suggests that the deity is innocent of sin and so may purge human beings who are contaminated by it. In response to Julian’s comment that “Holy church shalle be shaken in sorow and anguish and tribulation in this worlde as men shaketh a cloth in the winde,” “Oure lorde” states that in heaven he will make “endlesse wurshippe and...everlasting joye” of the suffering that she sees.<sup>516</sup> Julian understands this to mean that the lord enjoys the tribulations of his servants, citing scorn, rape<sup>517</sup> and being cast out as sufferings that he lays upon them to purge them of vainglory and to make them clean for their entrance into heaven. The lord says that he “shall alle to breke you from youre vaine affections and youre visciuous pride.”<sup>518</sup> The emphasis placed upon the persecution of the righteous is unusually forceful even for a fourteenth century context. While suffering and persecution are common teachings in Julian’s time, the forceful language that she adopts is only

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<sup>515</sup> *Ibid*, 210: 27.34-5 “Compassion for us by reason of sin.” A reason that is still hidden at this stage in *A Revelation* and to some extent remains so.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid*, 210:28.1-6 And as to this oure lorde answered, shewing on this maner: ‘A, a gret thing shalle I make herof in heven of endlesse wurshippe and of everlasting joye.’ Ye, so farforth I saw: oure lord enjoyeth of the tribulations of his sarvantes, with pite and compassion. And to ech person that he loveth, to his blisse for to bring, he leyth on them som thing that is no lacke in his sight, wherby they be lacked and dispised in this worlde, scorned and raped and cast out. And this he doth for to let the harm that they shulde take of the pompe and of the pride and the vaignglorye of this wreched life, and make ther wey redy to come to heven, and heyne them in blisse without ende everlasting. 7- 15

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid*, 12. raped. Abused. Literally ‘snatched,’ the word can already refer to sexual assault in Middle English.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid*, 213:28.15-17

characteristic of marginal reformers.<sup>519</sup> The deity not only tolerates suffering here but also enjoys laying it upon human servants to purge them of sin. Thus verses 28.1-6 suggest that humans are the cause of sin, rather than acknowledging that the secret just declared the cause to be unknown.

Verses 28.19-26 continue to analyze suffering and stress divine innocence through the suffering humanity of Christ. This obscures Julian's feelings of scandal that would rather stress the unlimited power that the divine Christ has to prevent sin in the first place and the ensuing blame he has for failing to do so.<sup>520</sup> These verses emphasize the virtue of the passion of Christ that turns all human suffering to worship. The deity suffers the consequences of sin, which according to later verse 28.28 is presumed to be human in origin. Julian advises humans to suffer with Christ as their ground, contemplating his suffering that infinitely surpasses theirs so that they will not begrudge their pain or despair.<sup>521</sup> The suffering humanity of Jesus invites one to imagine that Jesus, like other humans, would prevent suffering if it were possible, but rather suffers it because he cannot. His omnipotence lies in his ability to endure infinite suffering, rather than in his ability to prevent it. According to Julian the suffering of Jesus comforts humans in their pain, who may suffer with Jesus and know that he will bring them to

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid*, 213:28.10-15 to ech person...everlasting. Common teaching about suffering and persecution, this is the central theme of the *The Chastising of God's Children*, explaining that work's title. The language used here, with its emphasis on the persecution of the righteous, is unusually forceful by the standards of the fourteenth century outside the writings of Lollards and other reformists, as though in reaction against the language of enjoyment and comfort in the surrounding passages.

<sup>520</sup> In addition to repeating some traditional arguments from chapter twenty-seven, including that Christ will make a great thing of sin in Heaven and that the deity enjoys the tribulation of humans because it purges the saved of sin, particularly vain affections and vicious pride, and makes them meek and oned to the deity.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*, 213:28.25-26.

heaven.<sup>522</sup> Thus the passion of Christ might encourage readers to feel guilt at causing the excruciating suffering of the passion and gratitude toward the lord for suffering the consequences of their sin and offering solidarity to them in their own suffering through it. Continuing her emphasis upon divine innocence and divine largess, Julian then combines the suffering humanity of Jesus with her theme of the virtuous response to blame; she concludes that although human sin deserves pain, the love of Jesus excuses humans. In verses 28.37-40 she explicitly reaffirms that the cause of sin is human in origin and the courtesy of Jesus takes human blame away:

“(we see) sothly that oure sinne deserve it, yet his love excuseth us. And of his gret curtesy he doth away alle oure blame, and beholdeth us with ruth and pitte as children, innocens and unlothfulle (not loathsome).”<sup>523</sup>

Finally, in chapter twenty-eight Julian again obscures her scandalized grief that would hold the deity more responsible for the cause of sin than humans when she advises humans to model the largess of Jesus. However, she again might indirectly support it. She recommends that as Jesus shows compassion when he excuses our deserved pain, her “evenchristians” should express Christ within by extending the same courtesy to other people. The model of divine largess emphasizes divine innocence; however, the logic of her recommendation could peak the resurgence of her original charge of divine neglect in the reader. The Christic forgiveness that Julian asks readers to imitate asks them to place

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<sup>522</sup> Watson notes that Julian emphasizes divine joy in the deserved suffering of humans more than her contemporaries, perhaps to counter her incongruous suggestions that the deity would prefer humans not suffer because they are blameworthy, but take joy in some other source: A deity who lays forms of suffering on humans to purge then is a common teaching about suffering and persecution in Julian’s time. “this is the central theme of the *The Chastising of God’s Children*, explaining that work’s title. The language used here (in *A Revelation*), with its emphasis on the persecution of the righteous, is unusually forceful by the standards of the fourteenth century outside the writings of Lollards and other reformists, as though in reaction against the language of enjoyment and comfort in the surrounding passages.” See Watson, *Julian*, 212.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 212 fn 27.

themselves in the shoes of Jesus, so to speak. If the deity does not blame humans, people should similarly forgive each other. However, if readers truly put themselves in the shoes of Jesus they might see that they suppose themselves to have unlimited power. In that case, they might be brought squarely back into the power differential that fuels Julian's charge. When human beings are asked to stand in the role of Jesus towards each other, humans might recognize that if they were Jesus they, as Julian wished she could, might prevent sin altogether. The logic of imitation might bring Julian's dispute closer to the surface.

At the same time, her recommendation to imitate Jesus' forgiveness supports common church teaching that Jesus forgives humans and that humans should suffer patiently as they imitate the humanity of Jesus that suffers for sin. Since the frame of chapter twenty-eight stresses common church teaching about divine innocence and human blame more than their opposites, it does not explicitly support Julian's scandalized grief in the reader's mind.

In summary of chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight, Julian presents her accusation that the deity should have prevented sin in order to prevent human suffering in the first of seven forms that I track in *A Revelation*. She explicitly emphasizes the common teachings of holy church that disparage it; at the same time she indirectly teaches new ideas about human blamelessness that support it. Consequently, the general sense of chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight make her scandalized grief appear as error that she commits in the face of a divinity that corrects her. Nevertheless, she plants seeds that encourage her scandalized grief, so that she can develop them later. In these chapters, she primarily uses common church teaching as an authority and suggests new

ideas through her showings but does not explicitly wield them as an authority that would rival common church teaching.

*C. Dispute #2: Chapter 29, Given the harm come by sin how can things all be well?*

Julian reformulates her scandalized grief in Chapter 29.1-5 a second time. She begins by expressing her feelings of dissatisfaction with the answer that the deity made to her first expression of grief in 27.1-8. “But in this I stode,” she says, in “beholding generally, swemly, and mourningly, seying thus to oure lorde in my mening with fulle gret drede: ‘A, good lorde, how might alle be wele for the gret harme that is come by sinne to thy creatures? And here I desyered as I durste to have some more open declaring wherwith I might be esed in this.’”<sup>524</sup> Her question repeats her earlier sense in chapter 27.1-8 that the deity has chosen badly to create and maintain a world in which it did not prevent sin. However, this second iteration focuses upon the sheer harm that she suffers because of sin, instead of her previous scandalized grief that mourned because she lost her likeness to the deity through sin. In the first formulation she laments that creatures could have been “Clene and like to oure lorde as he made us.”<sup>525</sup> That early focus risks less insubordination on her part because, even while she questions why the deity did not prevent sin, she feels distress because she wants the pleasure of being like the deity, so she hides her dispute in a compliment to her divine superior. In this second reformulation, she gives no compliment; rather, she asks how the deity may make things well because she suffers, and her suffering is unacceptable to her. She asks for clarification to ease her

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<sup>524</sup>*Ibid*, 213:29.1-5

<sup>525</sup>*Ibid*, 207-209:27.1-8.

distress.<sup>526</sup> Thus in her second iteration her scandalized grief is more straightforward and explicit.

The deity's immediate response in 29.6-8 emphasizes again that humans are to blame for sin, citing the sin of Adam as proof. The earlier response of the deity to dispute #1 also emphasizes human blame through the suffering of Jesus that surpasses any human suffering and the "behovely" nature of sin that purges humans of their bad inward dispositions. At this stage in chapter twenty-nine the frame for the earlier first instance of scandalized grief and the second expression of this grief that Julian makes follow a pattern that immediately turns to the reasons that humans are to blame for sin. The immediate textual frame therefore colors both responses of scandal as inappropriate or untrue and reinforces human guilt.

Verses 29.6-8 "shewd that Adams sinne was the most harme that ever was done or ever shalle to the worldes end."<sup>527</sup> The divine response successfully makes Adam the face of harm, rather than an omnipotent deity who does not prevent sin. To strengthen the focus on human harm and preempt the resurgence of Julian's objections the deity recalls church authority: "this is openly knowen in alle holy church in erth."

While this response establishes human blame and divine innocence it also indirectly supports Julian's scandalized grief. Even as the response uses church authority to subordinate Julian's doubts about whether human limited power can harm when unlimited divine power could prevent it, the force of the response used to distract from

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<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*, 213:29.1-5.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid*, 213:29.6-7. An endorsement of standard teaching on sin among Julian's contemporaries. See Watson, *Julian*, 214.

those same doubts serves to highlight them.<sup>528</sup> In addition, the immediate blame towards humans in 29.6-8 also distracts from the impertinence a reader might find in Julian's suggestion that the deity cannot make well her suffering, and her implied accusation that the deity recklessly failed to prevent it. Rather than cause the reader to sit in the forceful desperation of her question, the divine response shifts the reader's attention to humans as the instigators of harm, which is a more familiar view of suffering provided by common church teaching and therefore a safer position for the reader to absorb. However, since the divine answer does not address how the deity will make things well, the reader is aware that Julian's question has not been sufficiently answered, which supports her suspicions.

The textual movement in verses 29.9-12 then repeats an earlier argument that emphasizes human guilt and divine innocence. It reestablishes common church teaching about the innocent deity who takes rightful pleasure in redeeming human harm; it thereby shifts the subject from Julian's acute suffering to a deity that delights in its own activity. The shift perhaps supplies another cushion for the impertinence the reader may have just found in Julian's scandalized grief. As in the traditional response to the first accusation, the deity again affirms in verses 29.9-12 that suffering is good because it pleases the deity; in this case it pleases the deity to atone for human sin:

Ferthermore he lerned that I shulde beholde the glorious asseth (atonement). For this asseeth-making is more plesing to the blessed godhed and more wurshipfulle for mannes salvation withoute comparison than ever was the sinner of Adam harmfulle.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> *Ibid*, 214.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid*, 215:29.9-12.

However, the divine response in verses 29.6 onward encourages Julian to pursue her question according to the later rules that she lays down for discernment of spirits just as the divine response to her first expression of scandalized grief in chapter twenty-seven encouraged her to pursue it for the same reasons. As mentioned earlier, Julian will indicate later in the revelations that one should discern good from bad questions based upon whether the holy spirit within supplies an answer to them or whether the holy spirit responds with silence. In this case the “goode lorde” answered her questions and doubts saying “full comfortabely” that it shall “make alle thing welle.”<sup>530</sup> According to Julian’s rules for discerning good from bad questions, the divine answer tells her that she acted well when she posed her question.

Verses 30.1-21 also eventually support Julian’s charges, even if they seem to discourage it at this stage in the work. The “two types of truths,” one inappropriate and one appropriate, will later approve Julian’s concerns. Here in verses 30.1-21 the deity continues to answer Julian’s anxious question “How might alle be wele?” by revealing to her two kinds of truth.<sup>531</sup> The two truths again ostensibly disparage the dispute by making Julian’s query appear unvirtuous.<sup>532</sup> They use common church teaching to show that virtuous humans should not desire to know divine secrets, but rather delight in being ignorant of them. However, such virtuous people should desire to know *some* divine secretes, namely those divine secrets that pertain to “our savior” and to “our salvation.” The holy spirit inwardly draws virtuous people to seek these appropriate truths and the church “outwardly” draws people to them through common church teaching. However,

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<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 217:31.1-4.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 215:30.1-13.

<sup>532</sup> Or opposed to what the saints in heaven would do.

the virtuous should delight in their ignorance of divine secrets or “privy concelles”<sup>533</sup> that fall outside of these categories. They are “beside” what is necessary to our salvation, and they belong “by right” to the “lordship” of the deity and not to its servants. Julian significantly does not categorize her first or second expressions of scandalized grief as inquiries into the appropriate or inappropriate kinds of divine secrets. Therefore, she might be disparaging or encouraging her feelings of scandalized grief. However, because she called them shameful and sinful before, the reader remembers that color and may assume that her first dispute sinfully pried into the kind of secrets that it should not. Nevertheless, she does not label her dispute as she did earlier.

In verses 30.13-15 she supports an interpretation of her accusation as an inappropriate inquiry by associating the actions of the unholy inquiry with a description of herself when she made her first expression of grief. She links anxious questioning with the sinner, who could ease her pain if she would leave her questions behind: “some creatures make them so besy therin. And I am seker if we wist how mekille we shuld plese him and ese oureselfe to leve it, we wolde.” Earlier in verses 27.7-8 Julian censured herself for a similar form of nervous questioning: she failed to forsake her first expression of scandalized grief quickly enough, which produced for her mourning and sorrow without reason or discretion. By contrast, verse 30.16 shows the virtuous inquirer to be she who leaves her questions behind in order to trust in the lord for all things.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 217:30.11. See Watson, 216: 11 *prevy concelle*. Secret counsel. The term is political, rather than religious, referring to the king’s inner circle of advisers or to confidential matters of state. In Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*, the sultan sends for his ‘prevee conseil’ to consult them about his marriage (II [B] 204). The expected word here would be ‘privetes,’ which often means ‘heavenly secrets,’ as when the apostel John, in Hilton’s *Scale*, is ‘ravesid by love into contemplation of Goddis privettees’ (1.17).

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 217:30.14-21. Oure lorde hath pitte and compassion on us, for that some creatures make them so besy therin. And I am seker if we wist how mekille we shuld plese him and ese oureselfe to leve it, we wolde. The saintes in heven, they wille nothign wit but that oure lorde wille shew them, and also ther

At the same time that verses 30.13-15 disparage her scandalized grief. In this way, verses 31.1-4 encourage it when Julian expands the term “alle” again to absorb more content that preserves traces of her concerns. She reintroduces it in chapter 31:

And thus oure good lorde answered to alle the questions and doutes that I might make, sayeng full comfortably: ‘I may make alle thing wele, and I shalle make alle thing welle. And thou shalt se thyselfe that alle maner of thing shall be welle and thou shalt se thyselfe that alle maner of thing shall be welle.’<sup>535</sup>

Then, she introduces a new idea that the term “alle” cited above contains: the thirst of Christ.

Julian will later develop Christ’s thirst into the maternity of Christ that will emphasize human innocence and divine responsibility to alleviate human suffering. The deity tells Julian that through the act of making “alle” things well the deity will enclose itself in peace and will put an end to the thirst of Christ. This thirst is an ostensible vulnerability in the deity and belongs essentially to the divine goodness. As Watson notes, Christ’s thirst is a love-longing, the emotion of the lover not yet united with the beloved in Song 2:5 and 5:8: “For I languish for love.” This paradoxical idea of divine need runs through A Revelation.<sup>536</sup> Julian will later use her new idea of divine need as a platform to introduce doctrines that further deviate from common church teaching and support her scandalized grief.

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charite and ther desyer is ruled fter the wille of oure lorde. And thus oght we to wille to be like them. Than shalle we nothing wille ne desyer but the wille of oure lorde, like as they do. For we be alle one in Goddes mening. And here was I lerned that we shalle onely enjoye in oure blessed savioure Jhesu, and trust in him for alle thing.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 217:31.1-4

<sup>536</sup> It resurfaces, still unresolved, as late as 79.30-80.35. See Watson, *Julian*, 218, n 12. For this is the gostly thirst of Crist: the love-longing that lasteth and ever shall till we se that sight at domesday. For we that shalle be safe, and shalle be Cristes joy and his blisse, some ben yet here, and some be to come, and so shalle some be into that day. Therefore this is his thurst: a love-longing to have us all togeder, hole in him to his endlesse blisse, as to my sight. For we be not now fully as hole in him as we shalle be than.

Christ's thirst marks the beginning of what might be called Julian's enduring agnosticism that makes room for the new ideas that flow from her scandalized grief, and that downplays common church teaching as an authority. Her enduring agnosticism holds two doctrines that contradict, whether subtly or overtly, in tension. Eventually she will lay down rules that guide her choice of conflicting doctrines by a practice of feeling rather than a reconciliation of intellectual opposites.<sup>537</sup> Here Julian wishes to establish that Christ may have the lack characteristic of "thirst" not only in his "human" nature, but also in his character as part of the "godhead." Traditionally, the latter cannot be held alongside the former because there can be no lack in the deity. However, Julian will use *A Revelation* as a source of authority explicitly for the first time to prove this point instead of relying upon common church teaching to make this theological point. Eventually, Julian's method will show a tolerance for an agnosticism about reconciling such opposites; she begins to use her method here in chapter thirty-one with the thirst of Christ.

While Julian makes her first explicit appeal to *A Revelation* to support her new idea, she also appeals to common church teaching to prove antecedent points to her conclusion. She thus (at least) gives the appearance of traditional authority to her process. She interprets the biblical passage "I thirst" to mean that thirst is a part of the godhead from the moment of creation till the end of time. In order to support that Christ can thirst in his human nature she appeals to traditional teaching about the two natures of Christ. However, common church teachings on the two natures of Christ support the human Christ who thirsts, but not the deity who thirsts. So, in the same sentence in which Julian

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<sup>537</sup> She discerns which notion should shape her practices according to later rules that she lays down for the discernment of true and false feelings of dread.

appeals to the church she also appeals for the first time to the entire revelation to produce more specific evidence to prove that the divine nature of Christ thirsts. In lines 31.17-33 she uses “it was shewde in alle” as evidence of truth alongside “oure faith”. She parallels the authority of the revelations with the authority of faith in common church teaching.<sup>538</sup> This is a shift in Julian’s approach to sources of authority. She requires it because common church teaching does not support that idea that her showings introduce.

In verses 31.17-33 she indexes the different revelations that bear upon Christ’s two natures that support the idea of Christ’s thirst. The practice of appealing to the entire revelation to support a theological point will become common practice from chapter forty-four onwards. In addition, Christ’s thirst suggests divine need which, while in kernel form here, will also develop into a view of the deity that more supports Julian’s first and second accusations.

Verses 32.1-6 shift back to the term “alle.” Julian’s least concern the central concern of the deity. After the deity responds that it will “make alle thing welle” it adds “And thou shalt se thyselfe that alle maner of thing shalle be wele.” Julian explains that by this addition the deity means it “wille we witte that not only he taketh heed to nobille thinges and to gret, but also to litille and to small, to lowe and to simple, and to one and

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<sup>538</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 219-221:31.17-33. For we know in oure faith, and also it was shewde in alle, that Crist Jhesu is both God and man. And aneynst [concerning] the godhed: he is himself highest blisse, and was fro without beginning and shalle be without end, which very endlesse blisse may never be highed nor lowede in the selfe. [she then details Christ is what is highest – and also that in Christ’s ‘manhood’ suffered and died]...For as aneynst that Crist is oure hede, he is glorified and unpassible. And as anenst his body, in which alle his membris be knit, he is not yet fulle glorified ne all unpassible. Fro the same thirst and longing that he had uppe on the rode tre—which desire, longing and thirste, as to my sight, was in him from without beginning—the same hath he yet, and shalle into the time that the last soule that shalle be saved is come uppe to his blisse.

to other.”<sup>539</sup> This allows a person to believe that all will be well because she knows “that the lest thing shall not be forgeten.” Since the deity has addressed Julian directly, indicating that she personally will see herself that all is well, the passage suggests that her least concern is the concern of the deity.

While this paper calls verses 32.1-6 part of the second dispute, these lines also segue into the third dispute. In the third dispute Julian will bring up her concern for the damned. The deity’s attention to her least concern prepares the reader to receive Julian’s concern rather than reject it as folly, sin, or scandal. If Julian’s least concern is the central concern of the deity, and she is concerned for the damned, then the deity should receive her question with as much care as Julian feels for it. Thus, the second meaning given to “alle” preserves Julian’s forthcoming third dispute rather than disparages it and may, in retrospect, cause the reader to soften towards Julian’s earlier “folly” in disputes one and two. The reassurance of the deity that she will see for herself how all is well also counters suspicion that Julian’s dispute regards the kind of secret about which she should desire to remain in eternal ignorance, as the saints in heaven do about “privities.” On the contrary, the divine voice has now told her that she should desire to see the object of her query “for herself”.

Continuing to preserve her dispute, Julian explains another meaning that “thou shalt se thyselfe” adds to “alle,” this time placing the the words of her second dispute<sup>540</sup> in the thoughts of the deity towards us. The phrase means that it might seem to humans

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<sup>539</sup> *Ibid*, 221:32.1-6: One time oure good lorde saide, ‘Alle maner a thing shalle be wele,’ and another time he saide, ‘Thou shalt se thyselfe that alle maner of thing shalle be wele.’ And in theyse two the soule toke sundry maner of understanding. On was this: that he wille we witte that not only he taketh heed to nobille thinges and to gret, but also to litille and to small, to lowe and to simple, and to one and to other.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid*, 213-215:29.1-5: ‘A, good lorde, how might alle be wele for the gret harme that is come by sinne to thy creatures?’ And here I desyered as I durste to have some more open declaring wherwith I might be esed in this.

that the many evil deeds done in our sight and the harm inflicted by them make it impossible that all could come to a good end.<sup>541</sup> The similarity between the words of the dispute and the deity's expression shows sympathy towards it and, since the showings are meant generally for all, indicates that her dispute is one that humans generally have. Rather than disparage her dispute in a way that removes it from sight as shameful in the way that Julian did in its first form, the deity now suggests that it is a general human sentiment. However, at the same time, Julian then explains that the blindness of reason makes us to feel this way, and to sorrow and mourn, which seems to again disparage her dispute.

In addition, if Julian's dispute merely expressed blindness then her repeated return to it does not make sense. If she were engaged in folly or sin then according to her guidelines she should drop her questions like the saints in Heaven do. And, as mentioned earlier, according to her later rules for discernment she should receive no response from the inner deity, responses that she sees as encouragement to press her question. Her insistent return to the question, encouraged by divine response, reveals that it contains something other than sin or folly.

Verses 32.19-30 introduce the prophecy of a deed that shall be done at the end of time that may refer back to the secret first mentioned in 27.33-36. The deed will fill Julian with joy. The deity wants people to know about the deed so that they will be eased in soul and "peesed" in love, so that they may leave the tempests that keep them from enjoying the deity. The deed seems to be a remedy for the general human being that

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<sup>541</sup>*Ibid*, 221:32.7-11: Another understanding (of "all" in all shall be well) is this: that ther be many dedes evil done in oure sight and so gret harmes take that it semeth to us that it were unpossible that ever it shuld come to a good end.

sorrows and mourns at the harm they see around them, as Julian describes just before.

However, the deity will not reveal the content of the deed or how it will be accomplished.<sup>542</sup>

The prophecy addresses Julian's rational dispute about how all may be well in the midst of sin and suffering. And, it addresses an emotional conundrum about the human need to understand and to trust. It asserts that the deity will resolve the first rational dispute outside of Earthly time, on the "last day." While it seems to assert that knowledge of the prophecy should also resolve the second, the emotional state that needs to know more in order to trust fully is not resolved but continues to dominate the rest of the work.<sup>543</sup>

While Julian does not specify what the deed will be, she does mention that it will parallel creation from nothing, "For right as the blessed trinite made alle thing of nought, right so the same blessed trinite shalle make wele alle that is not welle."<sup>544</sup> This anticipates more that she will say after she articulates the third dispute.

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<sup>542</sup> *Ibid*, 223:32.19-30. There is a deed the which the blisseful trinite shalle do in the last day, as to my sight. And what the deed shall be and how it shall be done, it is unknowen of alle creatures which are beneth Crist, and shall be tille whan it shalle be done. The goodness and the love of our lorde God wille that we witte that it shall be. And the might and the wisdom of him, by the same love, wille heyle it and hide it fro us, what it shale be and how it shalle be done. And the cause why he wille we witte it thus is for he wille we be the more esed in oure soule and peesed in love, leving the beholding of alle tempestes that might let us of true enoyeng in him. This is the gret deed ordained of oure lorde God fro without beginning, tresured and hid in his blessed brest, only knowen to himselfe, by which deed he shall make all thing wele. For right as the blessed trinite made alle thing of nought, right so the same blessed trinite shalle make wele alle that is not welle. 32.19-30.

<sup>543</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 222:32.19-30, "The only further hints as to the nature of the 'deed' are in 75.13-39.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid*, 223:32.29-30.

*D. Dispute #3: It is impossible that all be well if creatures are damned, the deity responds that “What is impossible to you is possible to me”*

Julian reformulates her dispute in Chapter 33 (which I will call the third dispute). She introduces it without the overtly disparaging language she used in the first formulation and, to a lesser degree, in the second formulation. In this third formulation she “marveyled gretly, and beheld oure faith,” (32.31) both of which have a positive connotation. She frames the discussion through the word of God that must be saved in all things. She associates this word with a point of “faith” taught by holy church. She alternates between a new doctrine from the revelation and common church as she usually does. After introducing the Thirst of Christ and the prophecy that preserves her dispute, she turns to her desire to maintain church teaching, in this case, that some will be damned. If that it is so she cannot see how all can be well, echoing her second formulation in which there is no way that all be well because of the great harm that comes to creatures as a result of sin. She narrows her focus to express that which her first formulation did not dare to: how can a benevolent and omnipotent deity not prevent sin to prevent suffering, and specifically prevent the greatest form of suffering, damnation. How, especially, can damnation be the word of the deity?

Julian highlights the common church teaching that hell must exist only to cast doubt on it in verses 33.21-30. This formulation of Julian’s dispute makes clear the tensions that exist between church teaching and her interpretation of the showings about hell and about blame generally.<sup>545</sup>

Importantly, the deity does not reject her when she feels that damnation precludes wellness for the world. Rather, it allows her to preserve her demand that suffering be

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<sup>545</sup> *Ibid*, 222:32.33-38.

alleviated while she saves herself from an explicit rejection of the common church teaching about hell. The divine interlocutor achieves this by supplying more details that add to the meaning of the term “alle.” The prophecy will make all things well, as Julian desires, but will also save the word of the deity through an act that is impossible to Julian but not to the deity.<sup>546</sup> Because Julian cannot imagine what is impossible for her, the prophecy confounds her reasoned efforts to assuage her fears. Yet, because the deity assures her that it will make all things well, echoing Julian’s original concern, the deed at the end of time reconciles common teaching about damnation with Julian’s concern that damnation would make wellness impossible. This formulation of the dispute begins to tilt authority towards the *showings* when faced with an incompatible church teaching:

All theyse shalle be dampned to helle without ende, as holy church techeth me to beleve. And standing alle this, methought it was impossible that alle maner of thing shuld be wele, as oure lorde shewde in this time.

And as to this, I had no other answeire in shewing of oure lorde but this: ‘That that is impossible to the is not impossible to me. I shalle save my worde in alle thing, and I shalle make althing wele... And in this I was taught by the grace of God that I shuld stedfastly holde me in the faith as I had before understand, and therwith that I shulde stonde and sadly beleve that alle maner thing shall be welle, as oure lorde shewde in that same time. For this is the grete dede that oure lorde god shalle do, in which dede he shalle save his worde in alle thing and he shalle make wele all that is not welle. But what the dede shal be, and how it shall be done, there is no creature beneth Crist that wot it, ne shall wit it, till it is done, as to the understanding that I toke of oure lordes mening in this time.’<sup>547</sup>

The deed suggests solidarity through a mysterious act, and in light of the deity’s concerns for Julian’s dispute she has to at least draw connections that suggest no one may be

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<sup>546</sup> *Ibid*, 222:32.41-42. That that is impossible...to me. That which is impossible for yo uis not impossible for me. With a similar resistance to orthodox salvation theology, Langland at the climax of *Piers Plowman* has Christ say: ‘I may do mercy through rightwysnesse, and alle my wrdes trewe,’ even though ‘Holy Writ wole that I be wroke of hem [avenged on those] that diden ille [evil]’ (B 18.390-91). Both Langland and Julian allude to Luke 18:26-27: ‘Those who heard it said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ But he said, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with god.’

<sup>547</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 223:32.37-50.

damned, even if she cannot see how the deity will achieve it and “save” common teaching.

Because the deed will seem impossible to us, it can break with the expectations that were thought necessary in the past. This fluid space allows Julian to maintain her dispute that damnation be made into something else for wellness to be achieved. Beneath her dispute, the deity’s promise to focus on her least concern and make it well stands at odds with common beliefs in the deity’s desire to blame and punish humans for their misdeeds. Julian stands in the midst of a confused dialogue in which she chooses to use her intelligence in a flexible way so as to avoid danger; she must hold two trajectories of feeling and thought that oppose each other, but retain her trust that requires one subtly trump the other. As she navigates, the text begins to unfold a model for discernment of conflicting inner feelings that she will address more explicitly later. Here, she models it through her questions, confusion and conclusions. At the least she shows that understanding and feeling towards truth calls for a necessary lack of clarity. Human access to “truth” is a process – a process of attuning the emotions, imagination and thoughts to often conflicting interior voices made accessible through contemplative habits that require difficult and lengthy practice. Her model retains an abiding agnosticism that her direct contemplative experience does not completely ease – to which her relentless return to her dispute bears witness.

When Julian dares to desire that she “might have had full sight of hel and of purgatory,” (33.1) she places her dispute in the balance to be judged as sinful folly or as virtue.<sup>548</sup> She ambiguously reports that she is not able to see them:

I ne culde se of this right nought but as it is before saide in the fifte shewing, wher that I saw the deville is reproved of God and endlessly dampned. In which sight I understond that alle the creatures that be of the devilles condition in this life, and therin ende, ther is no more mention made of them before God and alle his hollen then of the deville, notwithstanding that they be of mankinde, wheder they have been cristend or nought.<sup>549</sup>

However, her further comments suggest their absence is an approving answer from the deity not a silence that would signal she presses a question that she should not. She defends the absence of hell by pointing out that the showing does not overlook evil but rather focuses it in the passion of Christ, which, in her opinion, scrupulously follows common church teaching and includes evil, sin and suffering as real. Further, her looking resonates with her gaze at the hazelnut and her standing to the sight of everything in a point. The gaze similarly shows all that exists and would exonerate her from overlooking an essential element present in creation.

Perhaps in order to defend the revelation from the accusation that she violates church teaching by ignoring evil, Julian focuses evil in the person of Jesus.

For though the revelation was shewde of goodnes, in which was made litille mention of eville, yet I was not drawn therby from ony point of the faith that holy church techeth me to beleve. For I had sight of the passion of Crist in deverse shewing: in the furst, in the secunde, in the fourth, and in the eighth, as it is before saide, wherein I had in part feling of the sorow of oure lady and of his tru frendes that saw his paines.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> *Ibid*, 224:notes 32.46-48. Hell and purgatory are common destinations for visionaries from the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Paul* (fourth century) on, and it is no more surprising that Julian should have expected to see them in the course of her revelation than that she expected a ‘bodily sight’ of Mary (see Chapter 25). Hell and purgatory are clearly relevant to meditation on a deed that promises to reconcile the doctrine of eternal damnation with ‘alle shalle be wele.’

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid*, 225:33.6-11.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid*, 225:33.12-18.

Through this device she avoids discussing evil through those suffering in hell or those on Earth who rightly suffer because they are worthy of blame. The passion of Jesus becomes the visible marker for cruel suffering and sin in order to deflect the celebrated belief that humans are worthy of blame and suffering. Jesus allows Julian to avoid injecting cruelty into her relation to other creatures by absorbing it in his person. Julian associates evil with Jesus so that she does not have to associate blame with humans and vengeance with the deity.<sup>551</sup> Her milieu does not popularly think to blame Jesus for failing to prevent sin because they feel subordinated to his divinity and do not wish to be insubordinate. Even though through her dispute Julian edges toward blaming the divinity for the failure to prevent sin, she never explicitly goes that far. However, she supports a related sentiment by shifting blame away from human beings so that the question of who is to blame remains open rather than closed. The divine Jesus serves as the appearance of blame and evil while failing to suggest that any eternal punishment should follow it, or even that any punishment should follow it (people are less likely to delight in the right punishment inflicted as suffering upon Jesus than they would in the right punishment inflicted on other blameworthy humans). The logic of human blamelessness emerges here and grows throughout *A Revelation*. This doctrine, like that of damnation, is another idea that Julian will later mention is clearly at odds with common church teaching. Her wish not to test anything that belongs to her faith places responsibility to discern whether a test is in fact taking place in the response of her divine interlocutor. For the

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<sup>551</sup> She advances this theme even as she methodically pushes back against it with church teachings about the grievousness of original sin and the various useful ends that suffering accomplishes for human beings. The end of each of her circles, however, move towards a persuasive emphasis upon the blamelessness of humans and even the sin that one commits if she thinks that humans are blameworthy, as will emerge later in the text.

moment, the deity stands as a shield between Julian's actions and the judgment that common church might make.

Julian has also formed the notion that the revelation acts as a comprehensive guide to her faith, as she shows where she presses her question "to gain information about everything to do with my faith."<sup>552</sup> The revelations are building as a source of authority about how to act and believe.

Perhaps in order to allay the confusions that come from Julian's sight of the absence of evil, and her sight of the presence of evil in the passion of Jesus, chapter 34 introduces clarifying distinctions between her showings, secrets, and church teaching. If *A Revelation* is a showing of divine truth, how is it not the kind of "secret" into which, according to previous verses 30.1-2, a virtuous person should not pry? These questions bear directly upon whether Julian is pursuing an appropriate kind of knowledge and whether one should imitate her.<sup>553</sup> While Julian did not specify in verses 30.1-21 what kind of secret *A Revelation* is, now in verses 34.1-11 the divine interlocutor revisits the two kinds of secrets (or privities) that clarify where *A Revelation* stands:

One is this gret previte with all the prevy pointes therto belonging: and theyse prevites he wille we know thus hid into the time that he wille clerly shew them to us. That other are the prevites which hemselfe shewed openly in this revelation: for those are prevites which he wille make open and knowen to us. For he wille that we wit that it is his wille we knowe them. They are prevites to us, but not only for that he wille they be prevites to us, but they are prevites to us for oure blindhed and oure unknowing. And therfore hath he gret reuth. And therefore he

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<sup>552</sup> *Ibid*, 224: notes 33.4-5.

<sup>553</sup> Julian is rewarded for pressing her questions. So, how does one know if her model is pursuing the right kind of knowledge, and how could one imitate her? This is where Julian's text foreshadows how it must shift authority again, not only from HC, but also from DI, to Julian's own example throughout the text that shows how she discerns through the DI rewards what knowledges she should press. This tells her what revelations from the DI she should accept (or press, because they are unacceptable to her own sense). So, she will have to shift her source of authority towards the example of her own discernment of spirits (or dreads). This is one reason the text is inherently practical. It's very theory of authority is a description of a practice that may have guidelines but is at heart a personal discernment.

wille make them open to us himselfe, wherby we may knowe him and love him and cleve to him. For alle that is spedfulle to us to wit and for to knowe, fulle curtesly oure good lorde wille shew us what it is, with alle the preching and teching of holy church.<sup>554</sup>

In 34.3 Julian makes the “gret private” of chapter thirty-two the same in kind as the “privy conceyles” of chapter thirty. Both become part of the “alle” that answers her cry in 29.2-3 “A, good lorde, how might alle be wele?” She further indicates that other privities showed in the revelation are different; the deity wants humans to know them and humans should seek them out. The deity shows them to humans because of their blind ignorance that hides the necessary knowledge from them.

The showings are important, then, because a state of blindness and ignorance is a normal quality for anyone on her Earthly journey, as Julian states in 10.10-11 and 11.6-7. People need the Revelation as a remedy. Further, in 34.11 the Revelation is a truth that common church teaching cannot express; it is “besides” common church teaching. The term “with” in “with alle the preching...” best translates as “besides” or “as a supplement to.” Following Watson, the passage generally addresses divine revelation and the sharp reaction against it in the next passage suggests that Julian fears that 34.11 threatens common respect for church teaching and requires that she assuage those fears by bolstering church authority.<sup>555</sup> Thus the Revelation is necessary, aside from common church teaching, for people to know, love and cleave to the deity.

As mentioned before, Julian then gives a corrective account of how church teachings are adequate and must be accepted despite the importance of secrets that the Revelation shows. The deity is fully pleased by the meek taking of church teaching,

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<sup>554</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 227:34.1-11.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid*, 226:34.9-11.

because “he it is, holy church.”<sup>556</sup> Nevertheless, the revelations remain in tension with church teaching, since they are necessary and different from it.

Just after the text rewards Julian for seeking a vision of the damned, she says that only folly turns one to behold the “reproved” or the damned.<sup>557</sup> She reinforces the offense of a direction of attention toward the damned by saying that “it is as if” the deity responds to this query with “Let me alone” and do not inquire into the damned.<sup>558</sup> While Julian might be characteristically reversing her emphasis, her reversal may serve another purpose. Julian has already established that she is to have faith in a deed that the deity will do that will cause her joy for the treatment of the damned who are at the center of her concern. If she now wishes to overlay that deed with other compatible theological ideas to form a coherent theology that agrees with the tone of the deed, she may wish to banish mention of the damned from any theological thoughts. In other words, she may have come the closest that she can to a disposal of that troublesome idea and the replacement of it. To banish its mention will best move beyond it and prevent interference from it. Reinforcing the folly that results from a concern with the damned in verses 36.53-57, Julian reiterates common church teaching about the anguish and trouble that come from the mischief and febilness of human beings:

that we shuld know oure owne febilnesse and mischef that we have fallen in by  
sine, to meke us and make us to drede God, crying for helpe and grace. And gret

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<sup>556</sup> *Ibid*, 226: 34.13-14.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid*, 233:36.37.

<sup>558</sup> Julian follows her contemporaries in this recommendation. As Watson comments “this is oure lordes working in us. To decide not to meditate on the damned is to do God’s will. Such an idea echoes standard teaching on refusing to succumb to doubt in one’s own salvation, such as *The Remedy*’s counsel against paying heed to any ‘imagination or temptation...by the whiche ye doubte of salvation’ (chap. 4, YW 2:112), but extends it to include everyone. Contrast *The Book of Margery Kempe* 1.59-60, which teaches the necessity of taking note of damnation. See Watson, *Julian*, 232: notes 36.40-41.

miracles come after, and that of the high might and wisdom and goodnesse of God, shewing his vertu and the joyes of heven...<sup>559</sup>

In verses 37.14-17 Julian then introduces another new theological idea, or more properly an anthropological idea, that supports the innocence of human beings and redefines sin as something other than being worthy of blame. Her theology develops from this point onwards as a theological anthropology, describing structures in the human that explain her worldview, as well as ideas of a deity. The “godly will”, her newest idea, exists in every “soule that shalle be saved” and it never assented to sin, or ever will. It stands in opposition to the “bestely wille” in the lower party that may not will anything good. The godly will is so good “that it may never wille eville, but ever good.” Because of this, human beings that are saved are what the deity loves and they endlessly do what it likes. As a result, the deity loves these humans as much now on Earth as it will in heaven. It is because humans fail in love that they travaile.<sup>560</sup> This thought, like the avoidance of considering the damned, is meant to stave off despair.<sup>561</sup>

In a related vein that supports human blamelessness, sin is to be celebrated insofar as every sin shall be rewarded:

Also God shewed that sinne shalle be no shame, but wurshipe to man. For right as to every sine is answering a paine by truth, right so for every sinne to the same soule is geven a blisse by love. Right as diverse sinnes be ponisehd with diverse paines after that they be grevous, right so shalle they be rewarded with divers joyeds in heven after as the sinne have ben painfule and sorwfulle to the soul in erth. For the soule that shalle come to heven is so precious to God, and the place so wurshipfulle, that the goodnes of God suffereth never that soule to sinne that shalle come ther but which sinne shal be rewarded.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 237: 37.14-17.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid*, 237:37.14-20.

<sup>561</sup> See *Ibid*, 236:37.14-17. *The Remedy* makes a similar recommendation.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid*, 237:38.1-9.

This paradox grows out of the interlocutor's promise to "kepe the full sekerly" (37.8-9). It redefines sin alongside the other startling doctrine of the "godly will". As Watson notes, while her contemporaries follow Anselm in saying that those in heaven remember their sins without shame, Julian goes significantly further by calling sin a form of "wurshipe."<sup>563</sup>

*E. Shift from doctrines to how to interact with sin in a personal life and the application of ritual and discernment to the individual soul: chapter 39*

Chapter thirty-nine continues to redefine sin, but shifts its focus from doctrines to how the individual should interact with sin in a personal life; it deals with practical application of ritual and discernment to the individual soul. The shift anticipates the later shift to the individual soul in prayer. Within this movement, Julian relates to "holy church" as a ritual remedy for sin rather than a doctrinal authority. She redefines sin to be compatible with her thematic rejection of blame in human beings: sin is the experience that follows from the belief that one is worthy of blame and therefore worthy of hell:

Sinne is the sharpest scourge that ony chosen soule may be smitten with. Which scourge alle forbeteth man and woman, and alle forbreketh im, and noyeth him in his owne sight—so ferforth that otherwhile he thinketh himselfe he is not wurthy but as it were to sinke into helle—tille whan contrition taketh him by touching of the holy gost, and turneth the bitternesse into hope of Goddes mercy. And than begin his woundes to heele and the soule to quicken, turned into the life of holy church.<sup>564</sup>

The pain of sin is the belief that one is worthy of hell and so worthy of blame that placed her there.

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<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 237:38.1.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 239:39.1-7.

Julian maps her sentiment about sin onto traditional despair, or the idea that the deity cannot save one's soul as a support to human blamelessness. However, while she holds with the tradition that despair is the ultimate sin, she also radically departs from it. Traditional blame holds that humans are worthy of blame and damnation but must hope in the mercy and power of the deity to save them. Julian holds that despair is sinful because it counters the Revelation that humans have no blame so damnation is impossible. Nevertheless, her doctrine resonates with a significant strain in tradition even if it undermines that tradition at the same time. Her continuous care for despair suggests that a *Revelation* is primarily a meditation on how to avoid it.

Julian's shift to the individual soul and its practical interaction with sin follows the tone that Julian sets with the mention of her own personal experience as the beginning of Revelation 13 in verses 27.1-3 (and, as we shall see, Revelation fourteen "Have I felt in myself..."). Her personal narrative invites the reader to imagine herself in the same position and to imagine how she could apply the Revelation to her own internal process. Her shift also follows the tone of the new religious ideas that she introduced in verses 27.1-5 insofar as they emphasize the individual nature of humanity's role in the deity's activities,<sup>565</sup> especially as she introduced them framed by her own personal narrative.

Her shift to the individual soul and its practical interaction with sin is also anticipated by the mounting question begged by tensions in Julian's text: how is one to discern the divine interlocutor within if that internal revelation is necessary to love the deity and will sometimes differ from common church teaching? Julian has introduced

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<sup>565</sup> Which includes the mature meaning of the "alle" – that the least concerns of every individual human is the center of the deity's concern, and each human being will see for herself that her concern is met beyond any expectations that she can imagine.

several doctrines that either diverge from or oppose common church teaching, among them the “deed” that will be performed at the end of time, the thirst of Christ and, especially, the godly will. This paper suggests that Julian will gradually answer the foregoing question through a fusion of idea and practice that depends upon a skillful use of what is traditionally called a “discernment of spirits.” Julian’s text places one inside Julian’s personal experience at the crossroads of her internal revelations and common church teaching to eventually invite the reader to perform the same navigation. As she shifts in chapter thirty-nine to advise individuals about how to personally interact with sin she raises the question of how one is to integrate her internal moment-to-moment life with common church teaching and these new ideas in *A Revelation*. Perhaps more importantly, how is one to integrate this internal life so as to follow the recommendation of *A Revelation* to cultivate a sense for her own ability to hear the divine within that wishes to speak to her? Especially when this internal voice could be her own imaginings rather than a divine voice and it could be “besides” common church teaching? Who is the arbiter of truth and error? What are truth and error in such a situation? Julian sets a tone for this question to urgently surface so that her later practical solution will sound compelling to a ready listener.<sup>566</sup>

Chapter thirty-nine, the fourth of five chapters on sin, applies the rewards and sins of the saints to the ordinary person. Following her usual pattern of divergence from common church teaching followed by a vehement return to its defense, Julian returns to a traditional stance that qualifies the honor that sin brings to the sinner in heaven with the

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<sup>566</sup> Julian’s individual revelation – that is meant for all – directly opposed church teaching on human blame with the godly will and began to diverge from church teaching in the thirst of Christ. So, the contradiction presses how one may discern what is “folly” inside oneself and what is the divine expression of the divine interlocutor “inside” oneself.

damage that sin does. The language of penitence, rather than comfort and remedy, is used.<sup>567</sup>

Chapter forty reveals another aspect of sin that builds upon the idea mentioned in verses 39.1-7 that sin believes one is worthy of blame and hell.<sup>568</sup> A sinful soul also feels that god is angry with her when really the deity is in friendship with her and keeps her tenderly. A soul looks through fettered eyes at the unbreakable friendship it experiences with the deity and sees an angry god ready to expose her deep worthiness of blame. The soul refuses to see the deity who thirsts for the soul to recognize its unbreakable friendship. Although Julian exposes this inaccurate perception of guilt, she nevertheless maintains its usefulness to incite repentance despite its inaccurate portrayal of human and divine life.<sup>569</sup>

Perhaps as another way of deflecting thought away from hell, in chapter 40 Julian guides her readers to be aware of sin rather than of hell; the pain of sin is greater than hell and so

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<sup>567</sup> As noted by Watson, *Julian*, 238: note 39.1.

<sup>568</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 243:40.5-12: And this is a sovereyne frendship of our curtesse lorde, that he kepeht us so tenerly while we be in oure sinne. And ferthermore he toucheth us fulle prevely, and sheweth us oure sinner by the swet light of mercy and grace. But when we se oureselfe so foule. Than be we stered of the holy gost by contrition into prayerand desyer to amending of oureselfe with alle oure mightse, to slake the wrath of God, unto the time we finde a rest in soule and softnes in consciens. And than hope we that God hath forgeven us orue sine, and it is soth. And then sheweth oure curtesse lorde himselfe to the soule merely and of fule glad chere, with frendfulle wellcoming, as if it had ben in paine and in preson, seyeng thus: 'My dere darling, I am glad thou arte come to me. In alle thy woe I have ever ben wit the, and now seest thou my loving, and we be oned in blisse.'

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid*, 239:39.5-12: Then we wene that God were wroth with us for oure sinne. Than be we stered of the holy gost by contrition into prayerand desyer to amending of oureselfe with alle oure mightse, to slake the wrath of God, unto the time we finde a rest in soule and softnes in consciens. And than hope we that God hath forgeven us orue sine, and it is soth. And then sheweth oure curtesse lorde himselfe to the soule merely and of fule glad chere, with frendfulle wellcoming, as if it had ben in paine and in preson, seyeng thus: 'My dere darling, I am glad thou arte come to me. In alle thy woe I have ever ben wit the, and now seest thou my loving, and we be oned in blisse.'

supersedes fear of hell. One should fear sin rather than hell and hate sin rather than hell.<sup>570</sup>

Chapter forty-one continues Julian's new emphasis upon the individual soul and its practical interactions by turning to revelation fourteen that concerns prayer. As mentioned before, Julian's shift to how to interact with prayer in an individual life arrives alongside her increasing need to justify the *Revelation* because it diverges from common church teaching. The *Revelation* has specified that there are two kinds of secrets, or matter that the unaided human being cannot know; the first that pertains to human salvation should be sought in prayer by human beings; and the second that belong to the "privy councils" of the deity should not be sought. Humans should delight in their refusal to pursue this latter kind of secret, which would be to "interfere" with the deity. Prayer is a way of discerning if one is pursuing the right kinds of secrets. Julian doggedly pursued secrets in the various formulations of her scandalized grief and prayer now validates her, at least for the most part. The deity's words show Julian to be an instrument of the divine will, rather than its opponent: "I am grounde of thy beseking. Furst it is my wille that thou have it, and sithen I make the to wille it, and sithen I make the to beseke it—and thou besekest it!" Further, the deity has itself prescribed for her from all eternity that which it causes her to ask for.<sup>571</sup>

Chapter forty-two describes the necessary conditions for prayer:

One is rightfulle prayer; another is seker trust. But yet oftime oure trust is not fulle. For we be not seker\* that God hereth us, as we thinke for oure unwurthinesse, and for we fele right nought. For we be as baryne and as drye

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<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 245:40.25-36.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 253:42.34-35: "therefore he hath done alle" or he has done everything show the deity to be doing as well as being. As Watson notes, this line recalls the third revelation, the sight of 'God in a pointe' In Chapter 11. See Watson, 252: note 42.34.

oftentimes after oure prayers as we were before. And thus, in oure feling, oure foly is cause of oure wekenesse. For thus have I felt in myselfe.<sup>572</sup>

Using a personal style to advise the reader about prayer, Julian explains that one enacts the opposite of trust when she fears that she is unworthy and so the deity does not hear her. She feels this because she feels “little” or barren. But God responds that it is impossible that prayers go unheard and that she will not receive the mercy and grace for which she prays:

I am grounde of thy beseking. Furst it is my wille that thou have it, and sithen I make the to wille it, and sithen I make the to beseke it—and thou besekest it! How shoulde it than be that thou shuldest not have thy beseking?<sup>573</sup>

Therefore, she should know that her prayer will be answered and that the opposite is impossible. She may trust in this secure fashion because her prayer is not her finite prayer, but rather the expression of an omnipotent deity who is the ground of her prayer and who therefore will certainly hear it and bring about its object.

Chapter forty-two specifies this further. Three things are needed for prayer in order to have the basis of “seker trust.”<sup>574</sup> First, the one praying must know that the source of their prayer is the “ground” of the deity and the will of the deity makes prayer happen; second, the manner and use of prayer by the one praying should turn her will into the will of the deity;<sup>575</sup> thirdly, the fruit and end of prayer ones the one praying to the deity in all things. This kind of prayer that produces “seker trust” is “an understanding of the fullness that is to come” with “seker trust.”<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.* 251-2533:42.1-23.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.* 251-253:42.1-23.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.* 251:42.1-2.

<sup>575</sup> “I make thee to will it.”

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.* 255-257: 42.45-47: “For prayer is a rightwis understanding of that fulhed of joy that is for to come, with tru longing and seker trust.”

“The fullness that is to come” strongly implies the prophetic deed of Revelation thirteen since the deed is the greatest idea of what will come at the end of time that Julian has seen thus far. She will see for herself that her least concern will be miraculously made well through a deed that she cannot anticipate, and that will make well even those that are damned. This diverges from common church teaching that humans are worthy of blame and that some are worthy of damnation. Because prayer is an understanding of “the fullness of what is to come”, one should in her moment-to-moment prayer bring this fullness to mind in every way possible. Prayer thus solidifies the moment to moment focus upon the prophecy in the one who prays. Since the deed diverges from common church teachings, prayer forms the “understanding” and the “love” of the one who prays in a way that diverges from common teachings about blame and damnation.

Watson notes that the “seker” or “certain” trust that Julian mentions in 41.2 Glances back to “I kepe the fulle sekerly” in 40.45 and 37.4-9. The resurgence of the term in 41.2 suggests that the word “seker” is a bridge between revelations thirteen and fourteen, or a bridge between the reality of sin and the way in which one personally relates to internal experience to find its remedy.<sup>577</sup>

If secureness of trust is also a faith in the prophecy as mentioned, then the *Revelations* recommend that one shapes one’s moment to moment prayer through a secureness that keeps the prophecy at the forefront of one’s mind; the prophecy becomes larger in one’s imagination than the counter doctrine, that humans are worthy of blame

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<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*, 247:40.45 I kepe the fulle sekerly See 234: note 37.4-9. A formal ending to a four-chapter exposition of this divine promise. 235:37.4-9: Though oure lorde shewed me that I shuld sinne, by me alone is understonde alle. And in this, I conceived a softe drede. And to this oure lorde answered: "I kepe the fulle sekerly." This worde was saide with more love and sekernessee of gostly keping than I can or may telle. For as it was afore shewde to me that I shuld sinne, right so was the comfort shewede: sekernessee of keping for alle min evencristen.

and that some will be damned. So Julian's idea of secureness eclipses church teachings because it diverges from them and requires that one keep the opposite of them in mind, which diminishes them in the moment-to-moment formation of one's prayer.

The chapters on prayer bring new language to the tensions in Julian's texts and the questions that arise from them. How is she to differentiate between her seeking that she now defines as her (divine) ground and her seeking that is (human) folly and opposes it? How much of Julian's original "folly" that seems to travel into her genuine prayer was always already genuine prayer that she did not recognize at first and rather in her immaturity called the opposite of prayer – sinful folly? Julian hints at the future sophisticated analysis that she will make of true and false dreads to explore these questions beginning in chapter seventy-four. In verse 41.46 she names "lovely dread" as an integral part of prayer and "doubtful dreads" as steerings away from secure trust, and therefore away from authentic prayer.<sup>578</sup> She implies now that one must discern between internal "steerings" that move towards doubtful dreads that oppose secure trust and other internal "steerings" that move with or are the movements of one's divine ground.<sup>579</sup> The deity's answer to Julian continues to approve her seeking that she describes in the chapter as authentic prayer.

The tensions may be due to Julian's fright when disharmony with common teaching erupts when the "ground" of the deity expresses in her disputes and she cannot accept them at first but may only recognize the ground as acceptable after time and with great

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<sup>578</sup> *Ibid*, 251:41.46.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid*, 249:41.2 and 251: 41.56. 251:41.45-52: Thanking is a true, inward knowing, with gret reverence and lovely drede, turning oureselfe with alle oure mightes into the werking that oure lorde stereth us to, enjoyeng, and thanking inwardly. And sometime, for plenteoushede, it breketh out with voice and seyth: 'Good lorde, grant mercy, blessed mot thou be.' And sometime, whan the harte is dry and feleth nought, or elles by temptation of oure enemy, than it is dreven by reson and by grace to cry upon oure lorde with voice, rehersing his blessed passion and his gret goodnes.

difficulty. Or the tensions may be due to her fright at her own ambiguous response to her developing feelings. They may be due to her conscious orchestration of rhetoric to persuade the reader of *A Revelation's* sentiments about blame and damnation without provoking suspicion from church authorities.

Julian's tensions seek resolution through prayer and internal discernment as an arbiter of truth which signals the practical theology that she will more openly unfold through the rest of *A Revelation*. The theology of the latter *Revelation* might be called a practical theological anthropology, given her emphasis both upon structures in the human and upon her instruction to individual human beings about how to discern the divine movement inside of them. Her reference to the deity in lines thirty-four to thirty-five as one who "does all" as well as one who is the ground of being bolsters her emerging practical theology. The deity is doing as well as being, which alludes to the third revelation in chapter eleven and Julian's sight of the deity "in a pointe". Ethics is ontology.

While a tone of triumph over doubt ends Julian's advice about prayer in chapter forty-two, her personal model of prayer resists it. In lines 42.55-56 she sees in the deity's words a "fulle overcoming against ale oure weaknesse and alle oure doubtful dredes." However, her scandalized grief still reemerges in different forms, suggesting that her own doubts are relentlessly present, and certainly not "fully overcome." Further it is therefore ambiguous whether her doubts are part of prayer or a sinful "steering" that should be avoided. The model of Julian's own prayer as she makes her changes leaves the reader unsure of how one would discern whether they are internally moving towards doubtful dreads or secure trust.

Chapter 43 continues to focus upon the individual soul and its practical interactions in prayer but sharpens prayer to refer to its “highest” form, that of contemplative prayer.<sup>580</sup> It supports the experience of contemplative prayer as a source of authority that validates Julian’s new ideas that diverge from common church teaching, especially the “godly will”:

Prayer oneth the soule to God. For though the soule be ever like to God in kinde and in substance, restored by grace, it is ofte unlike in condition, by sinne of mannes perty. Than is prayer a wnesse that the soule wille as God will, and comforteth the conscience, and ableth man to grace. For he beholdeth us in love, and wille make us perteyner of his good wille and dede.<sup>581</sup>

Prayer, by which is meant here contemplative prayer, attests to the godly will; it therefore allows one to have secure trust that the godly will exists because she experiences it. As witness to the godly will, contemplative prayer will also witness to another idea that Julian introduces in the following chapter, “substance” in the human being. The witness that contemplative prayer makes to the godly will and to human substance anticipates the practical rules for discerning between genuine contemplative prayer and error that Julian makes when she considers dreads. If contemplative prayer plays the important role of witnessing to otherwise questionable or heretical ideas, Julian must assure her readers that they may detect them in their own experience of contemplative prayer.

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<sup>580</sup> Contemplative prayer happens when the soul is less restrained by sin, a view that follows the classical ways of mystical prayer as three: the purgative way, when one strips herself of overtly sinful habits, the illuminative way, when one’s ideas and feelings reflect the stirrings of the Holy Spirit that may be observed by a person in her internal life, and the unitive way, when one experiences wordless, formless contemplative unitive prayer. As Watson points out, this is described by Julian’s contemporary: Watson, *Julian*, 254: note 43.2-3. ‘Ceasing of sinne and leving to do yvel’ is the first ‘needful thing’ in prayer in *Pore Caitif*: ‘For medicin helith not while the arwhed [arrowhead] is in the fleish’.

<sup>581</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 254:43.1-6 The partnering to which Julian refers is to experience the deity as ground of her prayer: 255:43.11-14: “yet it is he that doth it. And for that we besech him mightly to do that thing that him liketh, as if he said: ‘What might thou plesse me more then to besech mightly, wisely, and wilfully to do that thing that I wille done? And thus the soule by prayer is acorded with God.’”

Contemplative prayer is thus an arbiter of truth and so an integral part of the theology expressed by *A Revelation*. Because the emphasis is upon the individual soul and its practical interactions in contemplative prayer, this theology is reproduced by and based in concrete experience, specifically experience in contemplative prayer, as this paper will shortly show. It is further based on the contrast of contemplative experience with “mundane” experience, described as less true and associated with a lower realm of existence that includes common church teaching. Contemplative prayer is a taste of heaven on Earth, one that a human being may only survive because they are strengthened by the divinity or they would die.<sup>582</sup> And, the experience of “sin” keeps one in the lower dome from experiencing/seeing the deity and the higher dome. The hierarchy that Julian builds allows her to develop an alternate source of authority than common church teaching. The “two domes,” treated shortly, solidify this hierarchy.

With contemplative prayer as the new focus, earlier questions about whether Julian’s first dispute was sinful folly or its opposite—prayer—transform into questions about whether her first dispute was sinful folly or specifically contemplative prayer? This question will remain thematic through the rest of the paper.

While chapter forty-three is about contemplative prayer, verses 43.1-2 describe the soul as “ever like to God...in kinde and in substance” (or in its essential nature and substance). The optimistic view of the good soul that one may experience in contemplative prayer remembers the “godly will” in 37.14-21; it also anticipates Julian’s idea of the soul’s substance that she will introduce in chapter forty-five. The optimistic view reinforces Julian’s claim that one may verify the existence of the godly will through

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<sup>582</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 259:43.44.

contemplative prayer and prepares the reader for the idea of the soul's substance in chapter forty-five.<sup>583</sup>

Julian's consideration of prayer suggests the view at play from the beginning in *A Revelation* that human beings must tolerate unknowing and agnosticism in order to avoid despair and to know anything important. She tries to preserve the fundamental goodness of human beings and the deity while keeping in close view her experience of suffering that makes her question the benevolence of the omnipotent deity. She upholds that humans are blameless because they are unbreakably connected to an omnipotent deity of pure benevolence who, because of its benevolence, wishes to alleviate suffering as much as possible. However, it could have prevented sin and did not, so she cannot provide a logical answer to why suffering exists that would help her to avoid despair. She is creating two realms that overlap ambiguously. The first where the benevolent human and the benevolent deity sit in a higher realm that one may access through contemplative prayer. The second where the deity who might be malicious and the human who inevitably sins sit in a lower realm that one may access through ordinary awareness (but that is less true). At the same time, in order to prevent a malicious deity that is to blame for human suffering she has to unite the two realms. She finds compelling resources to unite them but must embrace contradictions. She remains persuasive even as she offers contradictions because she offers a sense of cohesiveness with tradition to the reader through a supply of traditional memes that comfort; she does so even as she pulls the reader towards new ideas that contradict those same teachings so that one vaguely also

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<sup>583</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 255:43.1-2. "be ever like... in kinde and in substance. Is always in the likenes of God in its essential nature and substance. The optimistic view of the state of the fallen soul given here forms a bridge between the doctrine of the 'godly wille' in 37.14-21 and the full exposition of the doctrine of the soul's substance, which begins in Chapter 45."

feels that no answer has been given to them. Individual discernment in contemplative prayer acts as a bridge between opposites in this situation. It allows one to experience the godly will even as she will experience sin in the mundane sphere of common prayer and common life. This is the oscillation of wellness and woe. She emphasizes the reliability of the deity who grounds contemplative prayer rather than emphasize human sin.

However, her own disputes with the deity model a more complicated version of prayer (and so of contemplative prayer). Her first expression of scandalized grief begins as sin and travels into what seems to be prayer in her later expressions of scandalized grief.

Thus Julian's own model of prayer, which is perhaps more important than her words about it, does not emphasize the reliability of the deity as much as her straightforward speech about prayer does.

Contemplative prayer is a special grace that answers the totality of one's desire, presumably incapable of fulfillment by other means:

But whan oure curtesse lorde of his special grace sheweth himselfe to oure soule, we have that we desyer. And then we se not for the time that we shulde more pray, but all oure entent with alle oure mightes is set hole into the beholding of him. And this is an high, unperceivable prayer, as to my sighte. For alle the cause wherfore we pray is oned into the sight and the beholding of him to whom we pray, maeruelously enjoyeng with reverent drede and so gret swetnesse and delighte in in him that we can pray right noughte but as he stereth us for the time.<sup>584</sup>

It is different from the prayer that one seeks when they feel the lack of the deity in their trouble and temptation, which anyway only makes the soul supple with respect to the deity but does not sway or change the deity, who is "ever alike in love" regardless of this kind of prayer. However, when one does pray out of such a need, the deity "foloweth

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<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*, 257:43.15-20.

us, helping our desire.” The deity may as a special grace draw one into it by love.<sup>585</sup>

This is the way that a soul may move into the deity and the experience of Heaven in this life, as Julian testifies through her own experience:

For I saw and felt that his mervelous and his fulsom goodnesse fulfilleth all oure mightes. And therwith I saw that his continual werking in alle maner thinges is done so godly, so wisely, and so mightely that it overpasseth alle oure imagining and alle that we can wene or thinke. And than we can do no more but beholde him, enjoying, with an high, mighty desyer to be alle oned into him, and entende to his wonning, and enjoy in his loving, and delighte in his goodnesse. And thus shalle we, with his sete grace, in our owne meke, continual prayer come into him now in this life by many prevy touchings of swete, gostly sightes and felinges, mesured to us oure simplilhed may bere it. And this is wrought and shall be by the grace of the holy gost, so long till we shall die in longing for love.<sup>586</sup>

The transition in sources of authority from common church teaching to *A Revelation* pointed toward through contemplative prayer comes to fruition in the forty-fourth chapter. It marks a shift from analysis of the separate revelations on their own to a synthesis of the insights contained in all of them taken together as a source of authority. Julian begins 44.1 with “God shewed in all the revelations”<sup>587</sup> and collects the revelations to reinforce that the soul perpetually performs the deity’s will and honor. The focus of this chapter changes to humanity’s role in the divine plan, which is to ever do what humans were made to do: to see, behold and love the deity.<sup>588</sup> This action is Trinitarian, witnessing to the Trinitarian source of human beings. This claim is justified in succeeding chapters. Here the human being is introduced as Mary was at the

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<sup>585</sup> *Ibid*, 257:28-30: “And whan we of his special grace plainly beholde him, seyeng none other nedes, then we followe him, and he draweth us into him by love.”

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid*, 257-259: 43.23-43. Interestingly, it is in describing contemplative prayer that Julian uses the most sensual descriptions in her text, “And than shall we alle come into oure lorde, orueselfe clerely knowing and God fulsomly having; and we endlesly be alle had in god, him weverly seyeng and fulsomly feling, and him gostely hering, and him delectably smelling, and him swetly swelwing.”

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid*, 277:51.63-72 describes this mode of analysis in more detail.

<sup>588</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 143-145:6.33-35 and 151:8.14-15 where the human being is made because of love.

Annunciation in the first revelation. Language that was originally applied to Mary is now applied generally to “mans soule”.<sup>589</sup>

Following the traditional images of the trinity and Mary at the Annunciation, in chapter forty-five Julian introduces the two domes which create a theoretical basis for the Revelation to assume a higher authority than church teaching, at least in some important ways. The domes are based on traditional subordinations of body to spirit, echoed in “sensuality” and “substance,” and of changeable to immutable things:

God demeth us upon oure kindly substance, which is ever kepte one in him, hole and safe without ende, and this dome is of his rightfulhede. And man demeth upon oure changeable sensualite, which someth now one and now another, after that it taketh of the parties and sheweth outward. And this dome is medled, for sometime it is good and esy, and sometime it is hard and grevous. And in as mekille as it is good and esy, it longeth to the righfulhede. And in as mekillle as it is hard and grevous, oure good lorde Jheū reformeth it by mercy and grace thorow vertu of his blessed passion, and so bringeth into the rightfulhede...<sup>590</sup>

Julian situates the new ideas in *A Revelation* as part of contemplative prayer that takes place in the changeless dome of the deity’s righteousness. At the same time, common church teaching takes place in the lower dome of mutability. The higher realm made for contemplation becomes important because the showings are given to Julian as part of contemplative prayer, or as part of this higher realm. Because of this, the two domes allow Julian to navigate the tensions between her showings and common church teachings; the higher realm of *A Revelation* has more authority than the lower realm of common church teaching. Both cooperate, but one is better and draws the lower up into it. As Julian described earlier, sublime prayer or seeing in a point draws one up out of following the simple dictates of holy church.

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<sup>589</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 258: note 44.11.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 261:45.1-8.

The two domes support Julian's efforts to remove blame for suffering from human beings. Contemplative prayer in the higher dome instructs the reader to engage in prayer that imagines divine approval, rather than divine disappointment or retribution that requires human shame or fear of punishment. Because contemplative prayer takes place in a "higher" dome than church teachings that say human beings sin and deserve divine blame and punishment, divine approval for human beings displaces divine blame. This prioritization of approval also suggests that goodness and the nuances of intimacy in relationship are more interesting to investigate than shame and the nuances of restitution.

This chapter concludes here in chapter forty-five its investigation of the first three iterations of Julian's scandalized grief, the shift that she makes in sources of authority, and the new ideas that she introduces. The next chapter will continue to track her trajectory of four more articulations of her scandalized grief that gradually express stronger traces of her first dispute. This chapter has noted Julian's progression through three successively bolder articulations of her scandalized grief. It related her ideas of "The thirst of Christ," "the grete dede" that remains a secret, the two "domes," the "godly will," virtuous response to harm as courteous excuse, sin as worship, sin as the belief that humans are worthy of blame, and prayer as "seker trust" in what is to come, as ideas that progressively move towards a theological anthropology of innocent humans who believe in a deity who of necessity rewards and never punishes humans. These ideas follow Julian's progression through sources of authority that move from common church teaching, through *A Revelation* taken as a whole, to contemplative prayer that, through direct experience, confirms ideas like the godly will that might otherwise seem heretical or unreal.

## Chapter 6: The Four Returns to Scandalized Grief that Progress into the Divine Thirst of Mother Debt

While the last chapter (five) tracked three of seven moments in which Julian develops her scandalized grief, this chapter (six) tracks four remaining moments in which she does so. It will track the transitions in sources of authority and the new ideas that allow her to progress from one moment of articulation to the next.

Specifically, it tracks the strategic emergence of three related things in *A Revelation*. (1) The shift in sources of authority which first rely upon common church teaching, then move to rely upon the content of *A Revelation*, and finally move to rely upon the internal discernment of divine movement in readers when they follow the program of *A Revelation* (2) New ideas in *A Revelation*, especially about blame and punishment, that counter and replace common church teaching about those same subjects. (3) A controversial dispute between Julian and her divine interlocutor about divine benevolence and omnipotence in the face of suffering.

As the last chapter noted, while Julian never wholly vindicates her original expression of scandalized grief as she introduces it in new forms, she preserves traces of the original in those forms. The traces present Julian's original concern that she called shameful folly into the central concern of the deity. When the concern originates from the deity, it animates the wise expression of divine (and human) life.

The foregoing three elements are integrally related. The new ideas preserve Julian's scandalized grief in this controversial dispute, even if partially. Julian first presents her feelings of scandalized grief as shameful error according to traditional church teaching. However, through subtle reversals she progressively honors them as the

central message of the showings. She achieves this reversal through the introduction of new ideas and through a delicate replacement of traditional sources of authority with new ones that preserve her dispute rather than degrade it.

Because opposition to church teaching may be life-threatening in Julian's time, her process is a subtle and dangerous one. She couches the dispute in many backgrounds that preserve a trace of the dispute; these backgrounds also preserve the appearance of compliance with general traditional themes. While the last chapter shifted away from common church teaching as a source of authority and established *A Revelation* as a preferred source of authority, this chapter fortifies the authority of *A Revelation* and shifts towards the program for internal discernment that *A Revelation* suggests as a preferred source of authority.

In the sixth chapter, I will use Butler's theories to show that the progression described in this chapter is a movement of transformational anger that maps onto gender.

#### I. Dispute #4

Chapter forty-five presents the fourth reappearance of scandalized grief, which focuses upon the disagreements about human blame that exist between common church teaching and the showings. The fourth iteration of scandal follows her discussion of the "kindly substance," always kept safe and whole in the deity.<sup>591</sup> She cannot be "full eased"<sup>592</sup> with the assurances that the deity gave her that humans are kept safe in this way

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<sup>591</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 259-261: 45.

<sup>592</sup> Echoes Watson, *Julian*, 213: 29.1-3 ("A, good lorde, how might alle be wele?"); as in Julian's first dispute, her perplexities drive the argument forward.

that she saw in “the first dome.” The higher dome<sup>593</sup> showed her through the entire revelation that the deity assigned to humans no manner of blame. However, she is ill at ease because she continuously sees blamelessness in the higher dome and blameworthiness in the lower dome; these important disagreements are “continuously” in her sight. She sees blameworthiness in her previous training from common church teaching that tells her she must understand herself a sinner, one who is sometimes worthy of blame and wrath. And, at the same time, she sees blamelessness in her new teaching from the showings where she never saw herself a sinner or worthy of blame and wrath. The contradiction between the two plays continuously in her “sight” during the showings. As a result, she is so agitated that her desire for advice is more than she “can” or “may” tell:

The furst dome, which is of Goddes rightullhede, and that is of his owne high, endlesse love—and that is that fair, swete dome that was shewed in alle the fair revelation, in which I saw him assigne to us no maner of blame. And though this was swete and delectable, yet only in the beholding of this I culde not be full esed. And that was for the dome of holy church, which I had before understonde and was continually in my sight. And therefore, by this dome, methought that me behoveth nedes to know myselfe a sinner. And by the same dome I understonde that sinners be sometime wurthy of blame and wrath, and theyse two culde I not see in God. And therefore my advice and desyer was more than I can or may telle. For the higher dome God shewed himselfe in the same time, and therefore me behoved nedes to take it. And the lower dome was lerned me before time in holy church, and therefore I might not be no weye leve the lower dome.<sup>594</sup>

Julian seeks to resolve her agitation by asking how the dome of holy church is true in divine sight, given the disagreement between the two:

Then was this my desyer: that I might se in God in what manner that the dome of holy church herein techeth is tru in his sight, and howe it longeth to me sothly to know it, whereby they might both be saved, so as it ware wurshipfulle to God and right wey to me. And to alle this I ne had no nother answeere but a mervelous

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<sup>593</sup> The dome of the deity’s rightfulness and high endless love.

<sup>594</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 261: 45.10-16.

example of a lorde and of a servant, as I shall sey after, and that full mestely shewed.<sup>595</sup>

While she voices the question, she defers a description of the answer of the “example” to a later time.<sup>596</sup>

Julian’s fourth expression of scandal more boldly addresses the conflict between her showings and church doctrine on fundamental teachings of human sinfulness, blame and punishment. It more directly squares the opposed view of her showings and common church teaching than her previous expressions of scandalized grief. She asks the deity to what degree common teachings are “true” in divine sight and how she ought “truly”<sup>597</sup> to know them.

This scandalized grief echoes, at least partially, the logic of her original scandal that suggests that the deity should be responsible for its failure to prevent sin, and that humans should not suffer for that divine failure. The belief in human innocence rather than blame at least suggests that humans should not suffer because they caused sin. The fourth expression of scandal asks the deity to remove Julian’s doubt that humans are innocent that common church teaching encourages.

Her wish to know how to “truly” apply common church teaching to herself requires that she know how that teaching is “true” in divine sight. Julian wants to conform her view to the divine view in order to cultivate the divine movement inside of her. To the degree that church teaching is true in divine sight Julian wishes to

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<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.* 261: 45.16-26.

<sup>596</sup> With the use of triple negatives, an addition of force in Middle English, Julian emphasizes the importance for the showings of the “mervelous example of a lorde and of a servant” that answers her fourth dispute. However, she waits until a later point to describe the example in detail. See Watson, *Julian*, 261: 45.26.

<sup>597</sup> “sothly.”

incorporate church teaching into her own emotional, intellectual and contemplative practice. However, to the degree that church teaching is not “true” in divine sight, she implies that she does not wish to do so, since the deity shows itself in the higher dome which she “behoved nedes to take.” Of course, since divine sight corresponds to the first dome, she wishes to appropriate what is true in the first dome. Julian hopes that the divine voice will somehow save its teaching and common church teaching together even though they disagree.

In this fourth iteration of her scandalized grief Julian fortifies the authority of the consistency of the showings that she established verse 44.1. The first dome “in alle the fair revelation” shows to humans no manner of blame. Her use of the consistency of the message throughout the whole revelation to indicate its authority expresses her stronger regular use of the showings as an authority their own right. Further, since the showings take place in the higher dome, they continue to be a “higher” authority than those of common church teaching that exists in the clearly subordinate “lower” dome.<sup>598</sup>

The dome of “holy church” or the lower dome follows and reinforces the “medelled” judgement of the “changeable sensualite” described in lines 2-10.<sup>599</sup> In this lower dome human self-judgement is mixed, for sometimes it is good and comforting, and sometimes it is harsh and terrible. Thus the authority of the higher dome is the authority of the showings that subordinates common church teaching in this hierarchical duality.

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<sup>598</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 261: 45.20-21.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.15.

## II. Abiding Agnosticism

Julian's more direct engagement of the opposition between sources of authority highlights the agnosticism that remains in the background of the showings. Even though the higher dome answers her with the "example" it fails to give her the clear answer that she desires. Rather, she expects to live in permanent unanswered desire for a clearer truth:

And yet I stond in desyer, and wille into my lives end, that I might by grace know theyse two domes as it longeth to me. For alle hevenly thinges and alle erthely thinges that long to heven be comprehended in theyse two domes. And the more knowing and understanding by the gracious leding of the holy gost that we have of these two domes, the more we shalle see and know oure failings. And every the more that we see them, the more kindly by grace we shall long to be fulfilled of endlesse joy and blisse, for we be made therto. And oure kindly substance is now blisseful in God, and hath bene sithen it was made, and shalle be withoute ende.<sup>600</sup>

The "desyer" in which Julian stands shows an abiding agnosticism about how to reconcile the two domes, one that will not resolve in this life. The agnosticism will bring anxiety into the contemplative navigation between the two domes. As Watson notes, "all of life becomes a process of discerning how god's judgment and that of the church apply to the self."<sup>601</sup>

Thus, the pleasure of contemplative experience does not dissolve the conflicts that humans find between church teaching and "the gracious leading of the holy gost." Even as Julian beholds the "first dome" she feels dis-ease. The "sweet, delectable" feelings of the higher dome in which Julian sees the deity assign her no manner of blame intermingle with feelings of dis-ease. The term "yet" expresses Julian's consternation at the presence of anxiety that plagues her even in the midst of contemplative bliss: "Yet only in the

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<sup>600</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.28-35.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.28-35

beholding of this [the first dome] I culde not be full esed.” Furthermore, anxiety does not dissolve with time or experience since Julian expects to remain in the desire for clarity that foments anxiety into “her lives end.” Anxiety in the midst of contemplation thus qualifies the “secureness” that Julian requires. As secureness flows from the “higher dome” in contemplative experience it does not remove anxiety that originates from the lower dome. That secureness must somehow include an ambiguous lack of resolution between conflicting truth claims. Nevertheless the navigation of contemplative experience remains the way to discern “the gracious leding of the holy gost” in the soul and the route to participating in the “higher dome,” the greatest bliss that one may have.

The ethical demands of the higher dome happen simultaneously with the opposing ethical demands of the lower dome. And, significantly, the higher dome cannot “fully ease” the contemplative. Rather, her experience of cognitive and emotional dissonance drive her demand to know how the lower is true in light of the higher. Cognitive dissonance is an essential aspect of contemplation. I will describe this conflictual element in the next chapter as a “transformational anger”<sup>602</sup> at the center of contemplative activity. Importantly, Julian’s cognitive dissonance is not only a desire for intellectual consistency; it is also solidarity that refuses to make the least human suffering expendable. The disagreement between the domes causes turbulent sorrow, delight and anger. Nevertheless, the more that Julian articulates her turbulence to demand more clarity, the more that she seems to progress in some sort of ease, even if she will always stand in the midst of dissonance.

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<sup>602</sup> The following chapter will read the movements of chapters four and five through the earlier theory of melancholic anger in Judith Butler.

The contemplative must also know how the two domes are relevant “as it longeth to me.”<sup>603</sup> This care for personal satisfaction echoes the deity’s central concern with the least concern of the contemplative. It also echoes Jesus’ statement that he would suffer all that he suffered for any one person. Particularity and personalism play an essential role as one navigates the two “domes.” Julian will address how one’s “reason” relates to them later. For now, the contemplative must apply the two domes to herself as they land in her personal dissonance, delight and sorrow.

The personal nature of the tormented choice between the conflicting domes anticipates the need for the rules for discernment between true and false dreads. However, those will not appear until chapter 65.

The fourth iteration of scandal also carries forward Julian’s original expression of scandalized grief, which transferred into the term “alle” and then into the phrase “no maner of blame.” Verse 45.13 Repeats the phrase “no maner of blame” that picked up the rhythm and vocabulary of “all maner of thing” in 39.29-30 and 27.28-30.<sup>604</sup> “No maner of blame” approximates Julian’s original expression of scandalized grief more closely than the wider term “alle,” because “no maner of blame” specifies the innocence of human beings and so does not use human malice to distract from the prevention that the deity could have made of sin. Thus “no maner of blame” recasts traces of Julian’s original scandalized grief from self-professed shame and folly to appropriate traces of concern in the “higher dome”. And, the higher dome overshadows conflicting ideas in the “lower dome.”

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<sup>603</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.29.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid*, 260: notes 45.13.

From Chapter forty-five's account of the two 'domes' follows a first account of the separation between substance and sensuality, vital parts of *A Revelation's* model of the soul, as well as a structure through which the individual person morally navigates between the two domes.<sup>605</sup> The sensual part of the soul is the only part to which everyday consciousness has access. Sensuality houses the self that tries to understand itself as a participant in the two domes of common church teaching and the divine expression of the higher dome. Only faith can glimpse the reality that belongs to the soul's substance, which a person encounters in the higher dome. Both sensuality and substance long for the whole experience of the lower dome taken up and transformed in the higher dome:

But oure passing living that we have here in oure sensualite knoweth not what oureselfe is but in our faith. And whan we know and see, verily and clerely, what oureselfe is, than shalle we verily and clerly see and know oure lorde God in fulhed of joye. And therfore it behoveth nedes to be that the nerer we be oure blisse, the more we shall long, and that both by kinde and by grace. We may have knowing of oureselfe in this life by continuant helpe and vertu of oure high kind, in which knowing we may encrese and wax by forthering and speding of mercy and grace. But we may never fulle know oureselfe into the last point, in which pointe this passing life and alle manner of wo and paine ashalle have ane ende. And therfore it longeth properly to us, both by kinde and by grace, to long and desyer with alle oure mightes to know oureselfe, in which full knowing we shall verely and clerely know oure God in fulhede of endlesse joy.<sup>606</sup>

The navigation of the two domes, or of substance and sensuality, is a process in which the seeker will never fully encounter herself "into the last point," but will rather approach that point as much as possible through a desire with all her might to know herself. Desire, then, fuels the abiding agnosticism that seeks knowledge that may be had - but which knowledge is always partial and ambiguous. Further, the primary sense of the

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<sup>605</sup> Julian gives the theme of self-knowledge, an important aspect of many contemplative programs, more extended treatment in Chapter 56.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid*, 262: 46.1-12.

approach to truth and holistic fulfillment of desire at this point in the showings is a transformation from the view that one is blameworthy—an idea proposed by the sensuality and the lower dome—to the view that one is innocent and worthy of divine reward—proposed by the substance and the higher dome.

As Watson notes, knowledge of self means entirely different things in different medieval contemplative writings. The distinctions that Julian makes between the knowledge of self that common teaching in the lower dome proposes, on the one hand, and the knowledge of self that the higher dome proposes, on the other, illustrate two of these different interpretations. In verses 45.15-17 Julian records her obligation according to the “dome of holy church” to “know myselfe a sinner.” However, in verses 46.1-12, she emphasizes knowing one’s soul in its ideal, unfallen or “substantial” state, as a way to approach the deity. Thus, two interpretations of the command to “know thyself” are at work. One might argue that the iterations of Julian’s scandalized grief trace Julian’s transformation of a changing interpretation of the command to “know thyself.” The first form commands one to “know thyself” to be a sinner, and the second commands one to “know thyself” to be worthy of no manner of blame and worthy of divine reward.<sup>607</sup>

The conversion of topics in chapter forty-five and forty-six—the ambiguity of truth, the internal navigation of the two domes, and the desire to know oneself—signal another shift in sources of authority. While Julian already gave stronger authority to *A Revelation* than to common church teaching, now she begins to give more authority to the

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<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*, 262; 46.6. As Watson notes, many of Julian’s contemporaries recommend the contemplation of the powers of the soul as the presence of the Trinitarian powers in the soul, which would exemplify the latter approach to self-knowledge. In addition, the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways as those develop would recommend the knowledge of oneself as a sinner as a beginner’s tool that develops into knowledge of oneself as united to the divine as the more mature person’s tool.

internal discernment of divine movement in the reader than to the simple text of *A Revelation*. She begins to emphasize discernment of the “gracious touchings of the holy gost” as the way that one enacts *A Revelation*. The action of discernment will become the most effective arbiter of truth as it pertains to the individual person. The model that she suggests may refer back to the secret transformation of verses 32.19-50, and 36.45; an action that is not reserved for the end of time but that rather begins now. It may also refer to Julian’s suggestion that *A Revelation* has yet to be performed, in later verses 86.1-2. The shift in sources of authority from common church teaching to *A Revelation*, and then from *A Revelation* to *A Revelation*’s model for discernment, works in feedback loops. They serve to diminish those church teachings that framed Julian’s original expression of scandalized grief as shameful folly.

While Julian for the most part previously located “holy church” in the first dome, verses 46.13-23 complicate that. The “beholding” of common church teaching now comes “not from her” but from the showing itself. The showing itself teaches her “to love it and like it” in order to rise to “more heavenly knowing and hyer loving:”

And yet in alle this time, fro the beginning to the ende, I had two manner of behldinges. That one was endlesse continuant love with sekernesse of keping and blissful salvation. For of this was all the shewing. That other was the comen teching of holy church, of which I was befor enformed and grounded and wilfully having in use and in understanding. And the beholding of this came not from me. For by the shewing I was not stered not led thefro in no manner point, but I had therin teching to love it and like it, wherby I might, with the helpe of oure lorde and his grace, encrease and rise to more heavenly knowing and hyer loving.<sup>608</sup>

Before she mentions the lower dome of common church teachings, verse 46.15 fortifies the authority of the showings by referring to their consistency taken together (“For of this was all the shewing”). She thus establishes the “sekernesse of keping” and “blissful

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<sup>608</sup> *Ibid*, 262: 46.13-23.

salvation” that the showings promise. She then relates that the showings also tell her to love and like common church teaching. However, the showings do not tell her how to love and like common church teaching. They indicate that if Julian has a love and like for those teachings should increase and rise to more heavenly knowing and higher loving.

The instructions, then, are very broad. After all, even according to common church teaching, the instruction to love someone one may require that one rebuke another in love. So, how exactly is Julian to love common church teaching? The next lines are informative. Julian identifies church teaching as the command to know herself a sinner that deserves pain, blame and wrath.

And thus, in alle this beholding, methought it behoved nedes to se and to know  
that we be sinners and do many evilles that we oute to leve, and leve many good  
dedes undone that we oughte to do, wherfore we deserve paine, blame and wrath.

How is she to love this teaching, when the showings have already opposed it directly?

Julian frames her explanation of the manner in which she must love common church teaching through the specific teaching that she deserve pain, blame and wrath. She further frames her explanation through an indirect rebuttal of this idea that focuses upon wrath in the deity, rather than upon human desert of wrath.

Rather than explicitly deny that humans deserve pain, blame or wrath, Julian insinuates that humans cannot deserve pain, blame or wrath because of qualities in the deity. The deity has no wrath in it, humans are entirely oned to the deity, and there can be neither wrath nor forgiveness between the deity and the human:

And notwithstanding alle this, I saw sothfastly that oure lorde was never wroth  
nor never shall. For he is God, he is good, he is truth, he is love, he is pees. And  
his might, his wisdom, his charite, and his unite suffereth him not to be wroth.  
For I saw truly that it is against the properte of his might to be wroth, and against  
the properte of his wisdom, and against the properte of his goodnes. God is that  
goodnesse that may not be wroth, for God is not but goodnes. Oure soule is oned

to him, unchangeable goodnesse. And betwen God and oure soule is neither wrath nor foregevenesse in his sight. For oure soule is so fulsomly oned to God of his owne goodnesse that betwene God and oure soule may be right nought.<sup>609</sup>

Her insinuation, rather than explicit confrontation, leaves her less vulnerable to attacks of heresy. Her insinuation that the “oned” nature of the link between humans and the deity make humans immune to wrath just as the deity must be immune to it avoids stating that humans simply do not deserve blame in their own right. She approaches the issue with indirect lines. At the same time, her conclusion suggests that she should not believe that she deserves pain, blame and wrath.

While Julian will develop her claim that there is no wrath in the deity over several chapters until the end of chapter forty-nine, she gives some reasons for it here in verses 46.13-23. In some ways her claim is commonplace insofar as her theological contemporaries would agree that the deity does not experience desire or passions. At the same time, depictions of divine anger are ubiquitous in medieval accounts of the Last Judgment and deployed in pastoral theology to dissuade people from sin.<sup>610</sup> And, Julian offers the lack of wrath in the deity as an argument to persuade that she does not deserve wrath. The latter position disagrees with her contemporary theologians. Although Julian argues that there is no wrath in the deity because it is contrary to the deity’s essential might, wisdom, charity, unity and omnipotence,<sup>611</sup> she appeals to *A Revelation* to settle the matter:

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<sup>609</sup> *Ibid*, 262: 46.13-23.

<sup>610</sup> *The Pricke* devotes many lines to ‘the wrethe of the lamb’ at the Judgment (5060-108), basing its account on the irreproachable authority of the Books of Revelation and Job. In his Epistle to the Romans Paul, too, writes that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men” (1:18), associating that wrath with the inexorable demands of divine law. See Watson, *Julian*, 262: 46.24-25.

<sup>611</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 262: Notes 46.26-27. Might, wisdom, charity and unity are the qualities that define the deity as father, son, Holy Spirit, and godhead, while might here means omnipotence.

For oure soule is so fulsomly oned to God of his owne goodnesse that betwene God and oure soule may be righth nought. And to this understanding was the soule led by love and drawen by might in every shewing. That it is thus, oure good lorde shewed. And how it is thus: sothyly, of his gret goodnesse.<sup>612</sup>

The consistent message of the showings is again used as a source of authority to dispel doubts that the showings are not true when they oppose church teaching.

In addition, in verses 46.35-38 Julian argues for the truth of the position in the showings by explaining that these teachings about divine wrath are the sort of secret that the deity wants us to know, and not the type into which the saints should not pry:

And that he wille we desyer to wit: that is to sey, as it longeth to his creature to wit it. For all thing that the simple soule understode, God will that it be shewed and knowen. For those thinges that he wile have prevy, mightely and wisely himselfe hideth them for love. For I saw in the same shewing that moch private is hid which may never be knowen into the time that God of his goodnes hath made us wurthy to se it. And therwith I am well apaide, abiding oure lords wille in this ye marveyly.<sup>613</sup>

While there are some secrets that remain inappropriate for humans to know, these secrets are not only appropriate but should be known in obedience to divine will.

Thus chapter forty-five maintains that the higher dome commands that creatures love the lower dome of common church teaching. In this dome a fictive divine anger sometimes plays an important role. And, the structure of “the faith” that the higher dome expresses may only be known in part. It keeps secrets, as already referenced by the “deed,” that humans should not yet know. Because of that secret space that professes it will reconcile seeming contraries in the upper and lower domes at the end of time, the reconciliation of a fictive divine anger and the impossibility of anger in the deity may rest ambiguously in these secret “privy councils” that humans cannot know.

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<sup>612</sup> *Ibid*, 263: 46.31-33.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*, 265: 46.35-41.

Before she learned that there is no wrath in the deity, Julian believed that divine mercy was the forgiveness of divine wrath in response to human sin. According to this view of mercy “for a soul whose meaning and desyer was to love” the wrath of god would be the worst pain. And so the forgiveness of wrath would be the center of mercy. Since *A Revelation* reveals that there is no wrath in the deity, verses 47.1-12 ask what mercy is if there is no wrath in the deity to forgive? And, what then is the worst pain for human beings if not the wrath of the deity that they incur? Further, what is the greatest relief of that pain if not the divine forgiveness of wrath?

In answer *A Revelation* redefines mercy as the secure keeping that the Holy Spirit performs in the soul.<sup>614</sup> Thus it is not the forgiveness of a negative emotion but a continuous maintenance of a positive one. Although she is temptested by ignorance, powerlessness, and foolishness, the forces of sin that occlude the powers of the soul, she finds hope in the secure keeping of mercy that she sees in verse 47.28. This mercy is the antidote to the blindness that original sin<sup>615</sup> produced and that sometimes loses sight of the deity, thus causing humans to “fall into ourselves.”<sup>616</sup> During this fall humans experience their own wrath as a “contrariousness” to peace. The next several chapters will work out this new definition of mercy that eventually becomes the maternal function of Jesus. Divine maternity will owe a debt of a love to humans that is unbreakable.

Verses 47.18-30 give an intense account of how Julian’s understanding of the truth about divine anger and mercy was so “lowe and smalle” (47.20) that she reacted

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<sup>614</sup> *Ibid*, 265: 47.28. She “sees and feels” this in the same time and gives the most immediate description of her experience in all the showings in 47.27-30.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid*, 265: 47: “For we by sin and wretchedness have in us wrath;” 265: 47.35: “the old roote of our furst sinne.” Enduring opposition or contrariousness is more than just the changeability of sensuality. She keeps this idea of human responsibility for sin that will be somewhat balanced by Jesus’ debt (and therefore responsibility) to save human beings because he birthed them.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid*, 265: 47.31-38.

ambiguously to the showing. However, the “seker hope of his merciful keeping” in verse 29 keeps her from complete confusion. Even in the height of the showing Julian in her “sensualite” needs divine mercy to reassure her. As Watson notes, in these passages “*What* mercy is thus matters less than *that* mercy is.”<sup>617</sup>

Chapter forty-eight explains that wrath only exists on the part of human beings. Mercy thus slakes human wrath rather than divine wrath. Human wrath is a “frowerdnes (or rebelliousness) and a contrariousness to pees and love.” The deity forgives this wrath in humans<sup>618</sup> and the divine goodness of the Holy Spirit works a peace and ease into us against wrath.<sup>619</sup> The goodness working to ease contrariousness in human beings is mercy that moves from a ground of love.<sup>620</sup> it is specifically the care of the Holy Spirit for the “sensualite.”<sup>621</sup> Because mercy is not forgiveness, grace emerges as a more fitting synonym. Thus Julian reverses the direction of the economy of mercy. Mercy and wrath do not have a common origin in the deity, but originate in opposite spaces – mercy eases the contrariousness that is in human beings. Mercy and wrath take up different spatial positions in the imagination through this redefinition by comparison to Julian’s “previous” understanding that she links to common church teaching.

The characteristics of mercy also assume gendered categories in verses 48.14-32. Mercy pertains to motherhood and grace to lordship. Mercy is “meddeled with plenteous pity.” When we fail in “sight and feeling” of the deity that is our life we die. Mercy works to turn our death to good; further our dying is shameful and dreadful and our dying

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<sup>617</sup> *Ibid*, 266: Note 47.22.

<sup>618</sup> Thus the only thing the deity has to forgive is the inability of humanity to forgive itself.

<sup>619</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 267: 48.1-5. “The Holy Spirit full sekerly kepeth us and werketh therin a peesand bringeth it to ees by grace “and this is the mercy and the way that our good lord continually ledeth us in, as longe as we be in this life which is changeable.”

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid*, 267: 48.10-13.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid*, 267: 48.3 and 265: 47.9.

is sorrowful. Mercy and grace work together against this dying but in “two maner of working in one love.”<sup>622</sup> Mercy, because it is pitiful and tender belongs to motherhood. Grace, because it is worshipful and royal, belongs to lordship. Mercy works by “keeping, suffering, quicking, and heling” in tenderness.<sup>623</sup> Grace works *with* mercy,

“raising, rewarding (endlessly overpassing that oure loving and our traveyle deserveth), spreding abrode, and shewing the hye, plentuouse largesse of Goddes royal lordshippe in his mervelouse curtesy.”<sup>624</sup> 48.27-29

The gendered account of mercy and grace thus describe different positions in the hierarchy of space. The two domes are already distinguished by being “higher” and “lower.” The lower is “drawn up” into the higher. Here the exclusive “work” of mercy is to move through pity and tenderness in the realm of the changeable where creatures fall. This suggests that mercy tends towards the lower dome. The words used to describe the exclusive work of grace include upward references like “raising,” “overpassing,” and “high.” These suggest work linked to the location of the higher dome. The gendered account of mercy begins in this way with distinctions in which mercy and grace are imagined as distinctly opposed in space.

This gendered spatial hierarchy is further linked to other-direction or self-direction. Mercy’s works are other-directed while the work of grace is self-directed by comparison. Mercy works on the soul, while grace relates to the lord’s own worship. Mercy as pity suggests work that is other-directed, motivated by sympathy for the suffering that someone else undergoes. Grace pertains first to the lord’s own worship and works in a secondary way with mercy for the sake of the soul. Mercy has an other as its

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<sup>622</sup> *Ibid*, 267: 48.23.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid*, 267: 48.26.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid*, 267-269:48.27-29.

end while grace is its own end, but assists mercy in its other-directed work as an auxiliary function.<sup>625</sup>

In addition, words used to describe the work of grace, such as “largess,” “royalty,” “lordshippe” and “courtesy,” suggest an other-directedness that comes from the courtesy of a superior, rather than a movement that could occur between equals, as pity could suggest. More will be said about this as Julian hones the specific qualities of mercy that pertain to the maternity of Christ as different from aspects of the deity’s work that she links with masculinity.

Mercy emerges as needful in the present while grace is eternal reward. In verses 48.33-37 the changeable realm of sensualite, the specific realm that mercy tends, contrasts with the realm in which grace does its work “up” in heaven. This high work of grace humans will receive as a reward for their sufferings in the changeable present:

For I saw full sekerly that ever as oure contrariousnes werketh to us here in erth paine, shame, and sorrow, right so, on the contrary wise, grace werketh to us in heven solace, wurship, and blisse overpassing—so ferforth that, when we come uppe and receive that swete reward which grace hath wrought to us, ther we shall thanke and blisse oure lorde, endlessly enjoying that ever we suffered wo.<sup>626</sup>

Given the previous gendered context of mercy and grace, maternal mercy maintains the changeable sensuality so that lordly grace may bestow itself as a reward forever “up” in Heaven. Maternity is needful in the present but lordliness is every humans destiny.<sup>627</sup>

These distinct works of grace and mercy that act in one love persuade Julian even further that she “behoves nedes to grant that the mercy of God and the forgiveness is to

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<sup>625</sup> See *Ibid*, 270.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid*, 269: 48.33-37.

<sup>627</sup> Later, maternity in the changeable will tie to a debt that we may collect, while lordliness gives itself without such a tie.

slake and waste our wrath.”<sup>628</sup> The new interpretation of wrath sheds light on the question Jesus posed to Julian in 22.1-3: “is my passion enough for you?” Here the emphasis would be upon “you.” How much do you need for me to slake and waste your wrath before you are able to forgive your own wrath? And before you may attend to the ways that I keep you which have nothing to do with divine wrath? Mercy that slakes human wrath suggests that the passion is a concession that Christ makes so that humans may realize that the fictive divine anger in which they believe is a projection of their own wrath. Jesus in his passion would serve as an object that absorbs the fictive divine anger in which people mistakenly believe. His ordeal would serve to help them move through a fictive belief in divine wrath into the awareness that they produce wrath for themselves.<sup>629</sup>

III. The 5th Iteration of Scandalized Grief: I See That We Sin Grievously All Day and Are Very Blameworthy, Yet She Sees the Deity Shows Us No Manner of Blame<sup>630</sup>

The foregoing clarifications about the nature of wrath, forgiveness, mercy and grace responded to Julian’s fourth expression of scandal. In her fourth dispute Julian asked how the deity viewed church teaching, since the showings told her to understand that she has no manner of blame and common church teaching told her that she must understand herself a sinner who is sometimes worthy of blame and wrath. The showings offer Julian new ways to understand wrath, mercy and grace, but she remains unsatisfied and returns to this fifth iteration. She roundly restates her fourth expression of scandal,

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<sup>628</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 269: 48.41.

<sup>629</sup> Jesus will serve the role as absorbing evil in other ways in his maternal functions, as we will see shortly.

<sup>630</sup> Follows dispute four in Watson, *Julian*, 261: 45.11-27.

with mounting anxiety that the showings will end and that she will remain uninformed about how to behold herself in sin. The fifth expression runs as follows:

But yet here I wondrede and merveyled with alle the diligence of my soule, mening thus: “Goode lorde, I see the that thou arte very truth, and I know sothly that we sin greuously all day and be mekille blamewurthy. And I may neither leve the knowing of this sooth, nor I se not the shewing to us no manner of blame. How may this be?” For I knew by the comen teching of holy church and by my owne feling that the blame of oure sinnes continually hangeth upon us, fro the furst man into the time that we come uppe into heven. Then was this my merveyle, that I saw oure lorde god shewing to us no more blame then if we were as clene and as holy as angels be in heven.<sup>631</sup>

Even during Julian’s elevated moments of vision, her own feelings rally against what she sees. She knows “by my owne feeling” that the blame of her sin hangs continually upon her. The showing thus moves against her own feelings. She informs the reader that her feelings are informed by common church teaching. At the same time, her feelings also originally revolted against church teaching when she blamed the deity for its failure to prevent sin. Her feelings reproduce church teachings and deviations from them, both of which differ from the messages of the showings.

In response to the fifth expression of scandal, the deity shows humans as blameless in the same fashion as the angels who never sinned, which brings Julian no more resolution. In her dissatisfaction, she returns to press the issue of the disagreement between common church teaching and the showings about the nature of human blame. Her return underscores that the divine answer was insufficient to explain to her how the deity beholds humans in their sin:

And between theyse two contraries, my reson was gretly traveyled by my blindhede and culde have no rest, for drede that his blessed presens shulde passe fro my sight, and I to be lefte in unknowing how he beholde us in oure sinne.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> *Ibid*, 271: 50.1-15.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid*, 273: 50.14-16.

Although Julian blames her blindness, the reader can see that she wrestles with irreconcilable contraries and that the divine interlocutor has not shown her a satisfying third way. Julian's fear that the vision will cease without giving her a satisfactory answer haunts the fifth expression of scandalized grief as it did the fourth.<sup>633</sup>

So far, the revelations of peace have deprived Julian of her own peace. They are in danger of presenting her with a temptation to doubt her faith and to despair of her salvation. She remains in anxiety that she cannot know herself or "behold herself in her sinne," something that the showings have told her she must do in order to love. The contemplative experience that she says has 'sekerness' at its center shows itself to also contain the opposite—it also produces anxiety and dissatisfaction. Because it fails to answer her questions, contemplation pushes her to repeat those same questions with greater specificity and force.<sup>634</sup>

Her perplexity drives her to repeat her question and to poignantly ask the deity to show her "all" truth or a whole truth that will resolve the contraries of the higher and lower domes:

For either me behoved to se in God that sine were alle done away, or els me behoved to see in God how he seeth it, wherby I might truly know how it longeth to me to see sinne and the manner of oure blame. My longing endured, him continuantly beholding. And yet I culde have no patience for gret feer and perplexite, thinking: "if I take it thus, that we be no sinners nor no blamewruthy, it semeth as I shulde erre and faile of knowing of this soth. And if it be tru that we be sinners and blamewurthy, good lorde, how may it than be that I can not see this sothnes in the, which arte my God, my maker, in whom I desyer to se alle truth?"<sup>635</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> Fear of not being "enformed...of alle that me neded" (Watson, *Julian*, 209: 27.9) has already been mentioned (265.47.26-27) as haunting her expressions of scandalized grief.

<sup>634</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 272: Note 50.15.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid*, 273: 50.16-24.

As in the fourth expression of scandal of verse 45.14 Julian's perplexities drive the argument of the showings. They seem to be part of the motion of contemplation that happens in the human experience of the first or "higher" dome. When Julian beholds the first dome in which the deity assigns to humans "no maner of blame" she simultaneously sees the commands of common church teaching in the lower dome.

As in the previous expressions of scandalized grief, Julian needs to know how sin and blame pertain to her personally, or "longeth to me." Her experience of personal, intellectual, and emotional disintegration justifies the return that she makes to her scandalized grief.

However, before she repeats her question with more force five lines later, verses 50.25-30 diverge and offer justification for Julian's persistent inquiry:

For thre pointes make me hardy to aske it. The furst is for it is so lowe a thing: for it were an hye, I shulde be adred. The secunde is that it is so common: for it if were special and prevy, also I shulde be adred. The therde is that it nedeth me to wit—as me thinketh—if I shall live here, for knowing of good and evil, wherby I may by reson and by grace the more deperte them asonder, and love goodnesse and hate evil as holy church techeth.<sup>636</sup>

The first two reasons validate Julian's questions as inquiries into the appropriate kinds of secrets, which she described earlier in the work.<sup>637</sup> The third reason explains that she must have a cohesive intellectual and emotional knowledge of herself in order to "live here." Such a cohesive knowledge is necessary for her to distinguish good from evil

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<sup>636</sup> Ibid, 273: 50.25-30.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid, 272: note 50.25. "so lowe a thing:" So modest a matter. See 265: 47.20, where Julian's ability to understand how God cannot be angry is described as "but lowe and smalle." As Julian has placed mercy and grace in certain hierarchies based upon mercy's relation to the changeable world and grace's relation to unchangeable eternal reward, revelation of God's relation to the world is "lowe" compared to the vision of God itself. Thus, her question does not pry into the deity's "prevy concelle" (217: 30.10-21), even though the theological project that she engages seems more revolutionary than "lowe" might suggest. Also see "special and prevy" as she discusses those in chapter 35 in relation to the need not to ask "special" questions.

through her reason aided by grace, as well as to love good and hate evil. The answers to her expressions of scandalized grief now loom as basic requirements for the continuation of her life. As she established in 36.19, if she needs to know it, the deity desires to show it. The account of Julian's anxiety in lines 50.14-24 make her need for mental and emotional cohesion the most powerful of the three reasons given here. Thus, because of its vital importance she makes herself "brave"<sup>638</sup> to ask her questions. Having validated her motives, she makes a final petition:

I cryde inwardly with all my might, seking into God for helpe, mening thus: "A, lorde Jhesu, king of blisse, how shall I be esede? Who shall tell me and tech me that me nedeth to wit, if I may not at this time se it in the?"<sup>639</sup>

Her cry solidifies the shift in sources of authority that *A Revelation* has already made. It suggests that there is no one else but her interlocutor in *A Revelation* who may resolve the conflicting opinions that bear upon her basic survival.

In chapter fifty-one Julian's cry is answered by the parable of a lord and a servant,<sup>640</sup> or "exemplum" that presents many of her new ideas in the form of a narrative. Because the purpose of this paper is to track the shift in sources of authority and new ideas across the text, and because of the consequent limits in space, I will not treat the parable here. I will refer to some of its elements as those prove helpful. The parable gives color but not substantial alteration to the new ideas that surround it. My purpose is

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<sup>638</sup> "hardy" see Watson, *Julian*, 272: Note 50.25.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid*, 273: 50.30-33.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid*, 273: 51.1-5: And then oure curteyse lorde answered in shewing, full mistely, by a wonderful example of a lorde that hath a servant, and gave me sight to my understanding of both. Which sight was shewed double in the lorde, and the sight was shewed double in the servant. That one perty was shewed gostly in bodely liknesse. That other perty was shewed more gostly withoute bodely liknes.

to consider the flows and shifts that occur as those affect Julian's scandalized grief, new ideas and shift in sources of authority.<sup>641</sup>

Following the parable, Julian uses the lord in the exemplum to deduce truths about the self, rather than about the deity. The lord and servant become figures for the two parts of the soul, which she calls sensuality and substance.

#### IV. Substance and Sensuality

Julian frames her discussion of substance and sensuality through grace that comes "down" and infuses life into the soul. The downward gesture evokes the deity that meets the lowest part of our need from verses 6.25-26. Based upon the courtesy shown by the lord in the exemplum, substance, though it is high, is most intimately concerned with sensuality, though it is low. Her great fear to which the exemplum gave answer is somewhat eased by her renewed sight of the godly will, which she first discussed in 37.14-17. Now in chapter fifty-three she redescrines the godly will, however this time she does so "full securely," emphasizing the godly will as revelation: a "godly wille that never assented to sinne, ne ever shall."<sup>642</sup>

In addition to emphasizing the revealed character of the godly will, the godly will and *A Revelation* also now merge with faith, thus strengthening them as sources of authority. The godly will must be "known" "in faith." In previous references, *A Revelation* usually implicitly differentiates itself from the faith of holy church.<sup>643</sup> Here

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<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, 290: Note 52.59-60. As Watson notes, the tone of the parable reduces the extreme anxiety of chapters 45 and 50 but the ideas that it introduces are not different. The new theological ideas that it makes possible are yet to come.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, 293: 53.9-10.

<sup>643</sup> As in *Ibid.*, 157: 9.18.

Julian erases that distinction by adding a new doctrine to what is considered the “faith of holy church.”

And in this that I have now side was my desyer in perty answered, and my grete fere somdele esed, by the lovely, gracious shewing of oure lorde God. In which shewing I saw and understode full sekerly that in ech a soule that shall be safe is a godly wille that never assented to sinne, ne never shall. Which will is so good that it may never weille evil, but evermore continually it willeth good and werketh good in the sight of God.

Therefore oure lorde wille we know it in the faith and the beleve, and namely and truly that we have all this blessed will hole and safe in oure lorde Jhesu Crist. Fro that ech kinde that heven shall be fulfilled with behoveth nedes of Goddes rightfulhede so to be knit and oned in him, that therein were kepte a substance which might never nor shulde be parted from him, and that thorow his awne good will in his endlese foreseeing purpose.<sup>644</sup>

Thus she adds to the deposit of faith. The godly will or the substance that may not be parted from the “knit” that binds it to the deity now become part of the deposit.

The “deed” that informed the term “alle” that was “tresured and hid in his blessed brest, only knowen to himselfe” also returns in line 53.28.<sup>645</sup> In connection with the godly will, the deed is an essential part of the idea of humankind that the deity keeps eternally in mind. As such it is part of the “knit” that binds us to the deity in our substance. The deed in the eternal mind informs the godly will. The substance (thus connected to the deed) that may not be separated from the deity is shown to be essentially human, since it determines the character and destiny of the self.<sup>646</sup>

The sensual soul, not mentioned since 46.1, reappears in verses 54.22-23 to explore sensuality’s role in relation to the substance and to the deity. The self is split into two sensual and substantial halves and the sensuality has no direct access to the

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<sup>644</sup> *Ibid*, 293:53.1-17.

<sup>645</sup> This “deed” is mentioned in *Ibid*, 233: 32.27-28.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid*, 297: 54.12; 297: 54.22-29. Also see 296: Note 10-12.

substance. The sensual soul is the psychic and physical self as it knows itself, cut off from knowledge of its substance. This is unusual because “sensuality” often refers to the part of the soul that interacts with body and sense. Consciousness itself is usually associated with the substance. However, Julian moves common ideas of sensuality across the boundary that typically divides sense from consciousness.<sup>647</sup> It is “by the holy gost” that the deity joins the substance and sensuality:<sup>648</sup>

We graciously according to him we are by grace reconciling with him.

And oure faith is a vertu that cometh of oure kinde substance into oure sensual soule by the holy gost, in which vertu alle oure vertues comen to us. For without that no man may receive vertues. For it is noght eles but a right understanding with trew beleve and seker truste of oure being, that we be in God and he in us, which we se not...<sup>649</sup>

“Seker trust of oure being” continues to fill its previous role as the thread that allows Julian to access the keeping of the higher dome. Trust unites sensuality with God and the substance.

However, this secure trust, shown in Julian’s contemplative beholding of *A Revelation*, proved to involve anxiety and dis-ease. Even contemplative awareness kept in mind and was plagued by the sensual awareness of common church teaching that opposed it. The substantial beholding of faith and the sensual psyche together must move through wellness and woe. The sensual psyche must yet believe that it “be more truly in heaven than in earth:”

And notwithstanding all oure feling, wo or wele, God will we understand and beleve that we be more verely in heaven than in erth...In which working the holy

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<sup>647</sup> *Ibid*, 261-263: 46.1-12. Also see *Ibid*, 296: Note 54.22-23.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid*, 296: Note 54.22-23.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid*, 297: 54.22-26.

gost formeth in oure faith hope that we shall come againe up aboven to our substance, into the vertu of Crist, encresed and fulfilled throw the holy gost.<sup>650</sup>

A belief in Heavenly citizenship reflects the structural claim that Julian makes that our substance is in god and god is in our sensuality.<sup>651</sup> The belief that one is more truly in heaven also marks attention towards the higher dome as more “true” than attention to the details of the lower dome.

Sensuality thus reaches up into divine substance since it is founded in being, mercy and grace, the attributes of three person of the trinity. This agency of sensuality is conscious life that sometimes catches contemplative glimpses of the substance, or the higher dome. Both Julian’s usual conscious awareness and common church teaching exist in the lower dome – or the realm of the sensuality. Thus both should be in a process of reaching into the higher dome of substance in order to materialize truth.

The placement of consciousness as well as the placement of common church teaching in the realm of sensuality serves the authority of Julian’s voice. If reason were not in the realm of sensuality, but rather in the realm of substance, with which it is traditionally associated, her voice would be more vulnerable. The higher realm of substance is traditionally associated with spirit or consciousness. At the same the lower realm of sensuality is traditionally associated with less consciousness or less spirit. In addition, women and non-ordained persons are traditionally associated with the lower realm of non-conscious sensuality. When Julian places herself (a woman), consciousness, and common church teaching together into the lower dome of sensuality, she evens the terrain, if only slightly. Julian does what women might be expected to do

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<sup>650</sup> *Ibid*, 299: 55.10-17.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid*, 298: Note 55.15-19.

by using the full powers of sensuality as she reaches towards substance. However, she also uses her consciousness or “reason,” which she would not do as much if consciousness were traditionally associated with the substance, which is traditionally identified with masculinity. Consciousness and masculinity would oppose her lower feminine efforts. In addition, when common church teaching and consciousness rest in the lower dome, they both stand to be enlightened by the higher dome of the messages of A Revelation. So, Julian’s contemplative questions that drive A Revelation become the tutors for ordained men and for reason, usually the domains of men that teach women.

Verses 51.123-36 sum up the dichotomous human structure of substance and sensuality that justifies suffering in the sensual soul. God’s dwelling place in the soul is at the point of union between the substance, which dwells in him, and the sensuality, which is separate, fallen and redeemed. The place is analogous to the union between divine and human in Christ and the ground that serves as the lord’s seat in the exemplum.

Looking forward to the notion of Jesus as mother in chapter fifty-eight, the Holy Ghost provides cure and keeping of mercy and grace to the soul at this crossroads. While the roles of grace and mercy were more starkly divided in XX, they are less so here. Chapter fifty-six recommends self-knowledge as a quest to integrate sensuality and substance, or outer and inner feelings. The opening lines daringly reverse the usual order of this quest, even if temporarily. They view the deity as a means by which the self comes to know the self, rather than as the end of contemplation. Then they shift to recommend a “fullness to desyer wisely and truly to know oure own soule, wherby we be lerned to seke it ther it is and that is into God.”<sup>652</sup> Jesus orchestrates the quest for self-

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<sup>652</sup> *Ibid*, 301: 56.5-8.

knowledge by producing the “wise” and “true” manner in the seeker. Both wisdom and truth traditionally attach to Jesus as the second person of the Trinity. The passage concludes that the integration of inner and outer allow humans to know the self and the deity in one act of knowing.

Further, as one progresses in self-knowledge she cultivates a different manner of speaking with her own soul. Just as Julian’s maturation in the showings cause her to progress from talking to herself as the subject of blame to talking to herself as (at least the potential) subject of blamelessness and reward, the maturing Christian will cultivate the use of “comening and dalyance,” or “conversation and love talk,” with her own soul. As the inner and outer integrate in maturity, both our substance and sensuality are rightly called our soul.<sup>653</sup> Thus, the path to self-knowledge develops skills in love-talk, with all the sources of knowledge through which one relates to her own soul: those that come from the lower dome and those that come from the higher dome.

Further exploring how “sekerness” keeps sensuality and substance together, humans cannot be holy till they know their own soul.<sup>654</sup> Chapter fifty-six explains that substance is not complete without sensuality. On this path, Jesus leads us through longing and penance to knowledge of ourselves. The deity wants us to know ourselves because that will be our ultimate joy in Heaven, “the endless joy and bless that we shall have in heven, which god wills we begin here in knowing of his love.”<sup>655</sup>

Perhaps in an effort to distract from the possibility that the cause of doubleness in human nature is malicious, chapter fifty-six asserts that the deity wills humans to be

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<sup>653</sup> *Ibid*, 297: 54.15-19.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid*, 297: 54.14-15 and see *Ibid*, 300: Note 54.17-19.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid*, 303: 56.25-44.

doubled into substance and sensuality. It appeals to the sheer divine will without supplying a further explanation. Although the soul participates in god's perfect being in its substance, it paradoxically cannot be complete until it has first been "doubled," split off into substance and sensuality. This is so that aspects of divinity other than "kind" namely mercy and grace, can be brought to bear upon it. Although not explicitly stated, the duality is shaped around the parable in which substance represents the lord and sensuality the servant. The soul's self-division and consequent lack of ability to know itself in this life is understood and accepted by end of this chapter. God wills that we were double.

The Trinitarian persons emerge in association with split gendered categories that supply paths of self-knowledge that align with the split categories of substance and sensuality. In the father we have 'oure keeping and our blesse, as anemptes oure kindly substance, which is to us by oure making fro without beinning.'" In the second person, "in wit and wisdom, we have our keeping, as anemptes oure sensualite, oure restoring and our saving. For he is oure moder, broder, and savoure." And, finally, in "our good lorde the holy gost" we have "oure rewarding and oure yelding for oure living and oure traveyele, ...overpassing that we desyer in curtesy of his grace."<sup>656</sup>

The "wit and wisdom" associated with the second person continue to link Jesus with these traditional categories for the second person. Jesus also attaches to motherhood which is most "of truth." However, in distinction from the Medieval tradition that uses mother as an analogy for Jesus, *A Revelation* explicitly applies the term mother to Jesus as more than a metaphor. Earthly mothering represents only a shadow of heavenly

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<sup>656</sup> *Ibid*, 307: 58.17-24.

mothering. Because sensuality includes our conscious awareness in the lower dome, Jesus as a figure of wisdom keeps our sensuality that knows and must learn to “wisely perceive” his guidance.<sup>657</sup>

Two “ways of keeping” emerge: one of mercy that pertains to the sensuality and one of grace that pertains to the substance. As Julian divides these ways, the opening of chapter fifty-eight signals the beginning of a new discussion. Chapter fifty-eight begins differently than the previous chapters since chapter forty-nine, which all begin with the word “and.” The topic is the motherhood of Jesus. Because Julian has consistently associated Jesus as the second person with sensuality, the reader might expect that Jesus would be mother to the sensuality, while the first person would be father to the substance (kinde). However, Julian surprisingly insists that Jesus is first mother to human substance. This is another reversal of expected direction. The reader might expect that substance flows from the first person while sensuality flows from the second. “First” and “second” suggest an order in the space of the social imaginary, but Julian displaces the origin of this flow.

The Trinity for Julian, Watson comments, is always process more than state. All three persons turn out to be implicated in the soul’s “being,” its “kinde” or substance, and the son takes a special role. Jesus is first mother to the substance and then becomes mother to the sensuality through the incarnation.<sup>658</sup>

While human substance is in all the persons of trinity, human sensuality is only in the second person. The second person is given the task of creation. Christ as mother first

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<sup>657</sup> The Holy Ghost in this schema rewards and gives us yield for our life of travail through the courtesy of grace.

<sup>658</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 307-309: 58.30-32.

produced and now preserves the integrity of sensuality and substance described in chapter fifty-seven. Insofar as Jesus in his role as mother is the only person of the trinity that is associated with sensuality, and all three persons are associated with substance, motherhood aligns with sensual creation and fatherhood with non-material being, while the Holy Ghost leans toward non-material being but because it rewards our travail, is somewhat connected to sensual beings.

As mother Jesus keeps sensuality he is a disciplining mother as well as a loving mother. Humans are to relate to him as compliant and obedient children.<sup>659</sup> However, whatever the disciplinarian role mother Jesus plays, at this stage in *A Revelation* the Holy Spirit supplies grace that mother Jesus then works with in humans.

Mother Jesus is thus mother to the substance, and therefore mother in the realm of grace, but at the same time receives and administers that grace that the Holy Spirit provides. However, he has another active role in verses 59.5-9 as the principle that works good against evil in sensual human beings. The property in the deity that does good against evil is present in the maternal role of Jesus as its ground. While before the work of mother Jesus may have been as a vessel for the grace sourced from the Holy Spirit, the ground of maternal action is now the doing of good against evil. Such a ground that originates “doing of good” suggests action like grace that usually originates from the Holy Spirit that now originates properly from the maternal nature as maternal nature. The “ground” suggests that Jesus is a source of “goodness” and not its intermediary vessel. The surprising claim that Jesus is first mother to the substance now emerges as the claim that Jesus is mother of the ground of good action. If Jesus were only mother to

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<sup>659</sup> *Ibid*, 307: 58.40-41.

the sensuality, it would be dissonant to claim that the ground of maternal nature is the work of good against evil. It would be more congruent, if Jesus were only mother to the sensuality, to claim that the maternal nature was a vessel for the work of grace that comes from the realm of substance.

Just after the maternal nature of Jesus is properly associated with the ground of good activity rather than vessel, Julian moves back to traditional exclusions of activity for maternity: “I it am, the might and the goodness of fatherhood, I it am, the wisdom and the kindness of motherhood, I it am, the light and the grace that is all blessed love.”<sup>660</sup> These associations suggest that potency and goodness sit in the father as source and wisdom and kindness sit in Jesus as recipient of that potency. However, Julian follows those lines with “For where soul is highest and worshipfullest there it is lowest and meekest.”<sup>661</sup> She suggests some of the reversals in traditional role assignments that she makes for maternity. The following verses 59.24-30 return again to traditional roles for the Trinitarian persons and traditional roles for motherhood and fatherhood within them: the father wills, the mother works, the Holy Ghost confirms. In this triad the mother is not the source of her work, she moves because the originating force of the father’s will moves her. This again would seem to correlate more evenly with mother Jesus as the source of human sensuality. Mother Jesus as source of substance in the human does not easily align with these traditional role designations.

In accord with these traditional roles, verses 59.26-30 advise humans to love god in whom they have being, reverently thanking and praising him for their making, to pray to their mother of mercy and pitty, and to pray to “our lorde the holy gost” for help and

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<sup>660</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 309-311: 59.11-13

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid*, 311: 59.11-16

grace.<sup>662</sup> The human behaviors clearly retain the structure of the trinity as “kinde, mercy and grace” as lines 59.29-31 make clear. In this structure Jesus is not maker or originator of grace, but the expression of mercy and pity. Thanks and praise for origin map onto the substance in the father. A petition for mercy and pity map onto the mother who may dispense grace to the changeable sensuality. And, a petition for help and grace maps onto the Holy Spirit who seems to land in between the originating father and the maternal dispensation of what belongs properly to the father.

However, despite this economy of petition and dispensation that would align mother Jesus with mercy and pity and oppose him to origination, the work that Jesus does with sensual conscious awareness pushes against these divisions. The push back is the fruit of Julian’s earlier choice to place conscious awareness in the realm of sensuality, rather than in the traditional realm of “reason” or “spirit” that is closer to “substance.”

Traditionally awareness or reason, whether through concept or deliberation,<sup>663</sup> attaches to the part of the human being that is active and originative, while the awareness that senses physical sensation is aligned with sensual, passionate, or physical life.<sup>664</sup> Additionally, origin and activity are traditionally considered self-directed, or as having no real relation to another but only to one’s own simple activity.<sup>665</sup> Mercy and pity are traditionally associated with relation to another, or with the presence of the deity at work in the creation. Because of its other-centered relation, some traditions of wisdom apply other centeredness to Jesus as divine wisdom at work in creation. As noted, however, that other centeredness would traditionally be reserved for the second person and not for

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<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*, 311: 59.26-31

<sup>663</sup> Two types of reason at work, for example, in Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*.

<sup>664</sup> Watson, Julian, 154: Note 7.32.

<sup>665</sup> Augustine, *Summa*, 74.

the first person who is self-directed. Thus, if Julian consistently applied the traditional divisions to the gendered persons of the Trinity, Jesus as the second person would not originate awareness or reason; rather that activity would belong exclusively to the first person as proper origin. Jesus might originate sensuality because sensuality aligns with categories of receptivity or passivity upon which activity acts. However, because Julian has defined sensuality to include consciousness (and therefore reason) that are not the contemplative act of faith in the higher dome, acts of awareness, reason or consciousness are sensual. So, if Jesus originates sensuality as the second person he also originates reason, and, because activity is traditionally associated with reason, pushes against traditional designations of the first person as active origin. Further, Julian defines mother Jesus as the originator of substance, which bleeds the boundaries of consciousness and sensuality, active origination of the first person and passive reception of the second person into one another even further. Mother Jesus originates substance, which aligns with that which awaits human access in the “higher” dome of substance.

Later this paper will explain how these important chinks in the armour of traditional divisions preserve traces of Julian’s original scandalized grief. The small categorical shifts erode traditional categories. With these categorical distinctions in the background, Julian will paint mother Jesus as mercy and pity that move human sensuality through contemplative prayer to consciously experience their substance.<sup>666</sup> However, grace must be present along with mercy for the conscious mind to move in this way.

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<sup>666</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 311: 59.18-19: And of this substantial ground, we have all our virtues in our sensuality by gift of kind, and by helping and speeding of mercy and grace, without which we may not profite.

Lines 59.32-37 unfold more crossings that result from Jesus as mother to the substance. While the Holy Spirit has dispensed the grace with which Jesus works in the scenario of Julian's trinity before, Jesus now properly has offices that pertain to "deerworthy" motherhood that attach him to the origin of grace. He is our mother in grace because he takes our nature (kinde). Importantly, that includes that humans have "in him" the "godly wille" that pertains to substance. Jesus keeps the human godly will in him "hole and safe without ende, both in kinde and in grace, of his owne proper goodnesse."<sup>667</sup> Julian clearly placed the godly will in the dome of substance, rather than in the dome of sensuality. She now assigns Jesus a few roles that do not easily align with his previous role of other-directed, nonorigination. As the originator of grace Jesus does not seem only to channel it from its separate origin, but he also "properly" keeps the godly will, the guarantee for Julian of "sekerness."

Julian's explanation for Jesus as mother of grace also troubles traditional divisions in the Trinitarian persons. Jesus is mother to the substance because he himself takes it on and so is "closest to it".<sup>668</sup> However, traditionally, the Neoplatonic outflux and influx of the one back to itself at work in Julian's frame would not claim that one other than the proper originator should become the originator because that emanation from the one is closer in kind to more distant emanations from the one. Rather, emanations would all take their identity as more potent the closer they were to the one as an emanation. In other words, the emanations are all intermediary causes and find more dignity the closer they are to the original cause. No intermediary cause suddenly becomes an origin in its own right in relation to the intermediary causes that follow it

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<sup>667</sup> *Ibid*, 311:59.35-36.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid*, 311:59.32-37.

merely because it is closer to them than the originating cause is close to them. Thus, the closeness which Jesus has to human nature because he “takes” it himself does not in the Neoplatonic schema indicate that Jesus should be the origin of human substance and the human godly will. At least traditional Neoplatonic lenses do not suggest that.

However, Julian’s sense that what attaches itself most closely to sensual existence is most potent with relationship to sensual existence does lend itself to that argument. Her sentiment also echoes her feeling of scandalized grief, which holds that the deity should be responsible to prevent suffering in humans, or should be other-related towards them, as a function of the deity’s closeness to humans (with “naught” between them). Her sentiments this way also more align with an egalitarian sense of her “evenChristians”<sup>669</sup> insofar as Christians have a responsibility to prevent suffering for each other as equals and not only insofar as they participate in a clerical hierarchy that echoes the hierarchy of the Neoplatonic flow from and back to the one.

Julian mentions the godly will for the last time in verse 59.35. Her informal excitement and enthusiasm in the opening verses of chapter sixty suggest that she leaves the idea behind to focus upon issues closer to the heart of the instructions in *A Revelation*. These are instructions in the concrete skills through which human beings may sense the godly will at work. The showings will increasingly blend ideas with everyday Christian experience that allows the reader to perform them. Here, Julian begins the account of the motherhood of Jesus at work in the literal, physical maternal role in ordinary human

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<sup>669</sup> See Julian’s EvenChristians and relation to Protestant egalitarianism in Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008).

processes. Chapter sixty describes—through the frame of ordinary human sensual processes—the “fair workings and sweet kindly offices” of “dearworthy motherhood.”<sup>670</sup>

Chapter sixty correlates the “lowness” of the services of motherhood with their “sekerness.” Verses 60.5-8 correlate Mary’s womb with the “lowness” of the services that mother Jesus provides.<sup>671</sup> Jesus took flesh in order to “do the service and the office of moderhode in ale thing.”<sup>672</sup> The services that motherhood provides are nearest (most of our nature), readiest (most of love) and securest (most of truth).<sup>673</sup> Security, as treated in the last chapter, acts as a bridge between revelations and is the state that allows a person to love rather than to sin, and to reach up with their sensuality into faith in the realm of substance. To fail to have security is to sin in despair. Here Julian identifies motherhood that is known through its “lowness” as the proper place of security. It is “securest.”

Such a motherhood based in proximity to the “lowest” parts of human nature is also eternal – it is not a concession to temporary changeability. The motherhood of Jesus through mercy and grace brings humans “into oure kindly stede where that we ware made by the moderhed of kind love, which kinde love never leeveth us.”<sup>674</sup> The eternity of the motherhood of Jesus also aligns this maternal nature with substance; it will continue to serve after created time ends. While human mothers bear children into the changeable

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<sup>670</sup>Watson, *Julian*, 313: 60.5-8.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid*, 312: Note 60.9-11. God was born of a mother in order to become a mother; this has crossings for origination-product, active/passive dichotomies. Jesus was not born of a mother in order to be a man distinct from the vessel of a woman’s womb and like to the originating potency in his father’s sperm. Rather Jesus is born in a womb in order to be similar to it – to perform the offices of motherhood in all things. This posh the tradition in Aristotle and Plato in which a child born of a womb wishes to be different from it – more developed than it – in the masculine form that nature intends for all humans.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid*, 313: 60.10-11.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid*, 313: 60.12-13.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid*, 311-313: 60.3-5.

realm of pain and dying, mother Jesus bears them to endless life, associating the motherhood of Jesus most properly with the unchangeable realm of substance.

V. Dispute #7: Mother Debt

Verses 60.20-24 introduce more detail about the security that mother Jesus provides.

The maternal function of Jesus makes him owe human beings their secure keeping as a debt:

We wit that alle oure moders bere us to paine and to dying. A, what is that? But oure very moder Jhesu, healone bereth us to joye and to endlesse leving—blessed mot he be! Thus he sustaineth us within him in love, and traveyled into the full time that he wolde suffer the sharpest throwes and the grevousest paines that ever were or ever shalle be, and died at thd last. And whan he had done, and so borne us to blisse, yet might not all this make aseeth to his mervelous love. And that shewd he in theyse hye, overpassign wordes of love: “If I might suffer more, I wold suffer more.” He might no more die, but he wolde not stinte of werking. Wherfore him behoveth to fede us, for the deerworthy love of moderhed hath mde him dettour to us.<sup>675</sup>

Mother Jesus has to feed humans because mother love has made him “debtor to us.”

In the same sense that a mother owes a child the debt of her responsibility for the child’s existence, mother Jesus needs to “suffer more” and to feed us because we are his children. Mother love here is other-directed, following the traditional ideas of mothers as the recipients of a man’s bloodline who must be related to their husbands, fathers or sons to have a place in community.<sup>676</sup> Their survival is necessarily other-related based upon the system in which they survive. Julian does not mention, for example, father love making the deity a debtor to human beings. Rather it is the “homely leading”<sup>677</sup> of mother love in which the reader may register a debt to humans as children, since the

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<sup>675</sup> *Ibid*, 313: 60.20-24

<sup>676</sup> See the analysis of the construction of 20<sup>th</sup> century Western motherhood in chapter three.

<sup>677</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 313: 60.34

social imaginary views mothers as owing the keeping of children to their husbands.<sup>678</sup>

Similarly, the originating deity is not traditionally considered to have a real relation to created beings, while sensual creatures are considered to have a real, necessary relation to the originating deity. Thus, mother debt makes sense since the idea of motherhood carries with it a debt to others.

Debt in itself may be seen as an imperfection when considered in contrast to “debtless” originating fatherhood. In this way debt may serve to absorb blame for suffering. Considered in this light, Julian’s idea of mother-debt continues the use she made of the passion of Jesus earlier in *A Revelation*. The drawn out suffering of Jesus in his passion served to visibly represent evil and suffering in the showings and thereby preserved *A Revelation* from denying the existence of evil when Julian failed to see sin and blame in human beings and when she failed to see hell. Mother debt continues to be the visible marker for imperfection in the way explained, even though Julian now locates that imperfection in the substance of the godhead. While Julian does not renew her first expression of scandalized grief, which would demand restitution from the deity for failing to prevent sin, she preserves a trace of that in mother debt. The deity owes human beings keeping in their being in such a fashion that the deity must prevent ultimate suffering—the separation of eternal damnation—for them. Mother debt may also direct the reader to reinterpret the passion as the expression of mother love/debt. This further distracts the reader from making what Julian says is the standard assumption that humans inflicted the passion through their sin and are blameworthy for it.

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<sup>678</sup> An idea considered theoretically and practically in chapters 1 and 2.

Many theologians directly associate the processes of birth in the human mother as a deformation of human being.<sup>679</sup> However, they would contrast that human birth process with the generation that the godhead performs that is ultimately self-related and involves no debt. The stigma of other-relatedness and debt remains in the maternal Jesus but that debt is situated in the eternal godhead. Julian underscores that the godhead, in the form of the second person, has a real relation to human beings that is a debt owed to them. This other-oriented indebted deity crosses more traditional boundaries between deity and creatures.

In the latter part of chapter sixty Julian further links mother debt with the human physical activity of birth. Jesus is the activity of “forthbringing” or delivery in birth when it happens in human beings:

For though it be so that oure that oure bodely forthbringing be but litle, lowe, and simple in regard of oure gostely forthbringing, yet it is he that doth it in the creatures by whom that it is done.<sup>680</sup>

Jesus’ agency in biological processes has already been claimed for excretion in 6.25-37. Now it is claimed for childbirth. Jesus is in actual mothers and causes the good that they do.<sup>681</sup> The following lines in chapter sixty show Jesus to be better than earthly mothers and then, from 60.39 forwards, as more genuinely mothering than earthly

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<sup>679</sup> An idea that radical feminist Mary Daly translated into the formulation that female being is sin; to be female is to sin. Femininity is associated with birth and motherhood, as chapter three discussed. Whether rooted in a mainstream tradition that did not medically define a female anatomy prior to the sixteenth century, or the specifically female anatomy defined since that time, to be “woman” was to be a deformed male or to be defined by absence of potency, activity or intelligence. The early woman lacked the maturation of the male, while the later woman lacked political cunning and the ability to defend herself – her virtue is childlikeness, obedience and innocence, all associated with passivity and receptivity as opposed to activity and child rather than originating source. See the treatment of motherhood in chapter three as well as Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*, (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2005) and Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>680</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 313-314: 60.42-44.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid*, 314: Note 60.50

mothers. Mother debt does not “stinte of werking.”<sup>682</sup> Having given birth to humankind, he produced the debt of keeping them, which is explained through the debt that mothers have to feed their children to preserve their lives.

While mother debt owes human beings, it also disciplines them. Verses 60.45-50 show the loving mother as knowing and keeping the child tenderly by using different types of “work” according to the different phases of maturation in the child:

And when it is wexid of more age, she sufferth it that it be chastised in breking down of vicis, to make the childe to receive vertues and grace. This werking, with all that be fair and good, oure lord doth it in him by whome it is done.<sup>683</sup>

The “delight in the tribulations of the blessed” that the earlier showings discussed are now recast as the work of a mother that chastises a child to remove vice in the context of tender keeping. Julian’s emphasis upon the physical process of birth and other “lowest” biological processes as the direct activity of Jesus signals to the reader that if they wish to sense the activity of Jesus in themselves, they should attend to these physical processes. This highlights the different color that Julian’s idea of birth has in relation to classical ideas of motherhood in the godhead. Traditional ideas would not emphasize that the reader should attend to those biological processes in actual concrete women to immediately experience the “work” of Jesus.

Nevertheless, Julian retains a traditional hierarchy in the center of her less traditional interpretation of the mother debt of Jesus. While she emphasizes the physical, the physical exists for the love of the higher. Jesus is “our moder in kinde by the werking of grace in the lower perty, for love of the higher.”<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> *Ibid*, 313: 60.23

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid*, 315: 60.45-50

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid*, 315: 60.50-52

While discussing mother debt, Julian also redefines sin by addressing debt in human beings.<sup>685</sup> All human debt is fulfilled in “trew loving of God, which blessed love Crist werketh inus.”<sup>686</sup> The debt that we owe to the deity is the same mother debt at work towards us, but in reverse. Julian makes the reciprocity of human and divine debt clearer when she discusses thirst later.

Chapter sixty-one leaves the physical workings of mother debt in chapter sixty to consider how mother debt spiritually births and how human trespass may not cancel the debt of birth. Mother debt guides human sensual awareness into the awareness of human substance through a spiritual birth:

And in our gostly forthbringing he useth more tendernes in keping, without ony likenes, by as moch as our soule is of more price in his sight. He kindeleth oure understanding, he prepareth oure weyes, he seeth oure conciens, he conforteth oure soule, he lighteth oure harte, and geveth us in party knowing and loving in his blisseful godhede...And whan we falle, hastily he raiseth us by his lovely becleeping and his gracious touching. And when we be strengthened by his swete working, than we wilfully chose him...And yet, after this, he suffereth some of us to falle more hard and more greuously than ever we did before, as uth thinketh.<sup>687</sup>

Mother debt births and feeds human souls the same way that it births and feeds human bodies. However, the price of the soul is higher and so the debt increases. Lines 61.21-23 specify the terms of the debt: it cannot be broken by human trespass.

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<sup>685</sup> Watson connects the debt that humans owe to the deity to the Fourth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother,” Exod. 20:12. Christ as mother has been called “dettour to us” in line 24. Now this debt becomes reciprocal. See also 42.39, where humans have a “det” to pray to God. It is telling that the debt of honor a child would owe in the Jewish context to mother and father is ultimately a debt the child owes to the father. The mother is not formally a member of the Jewish covenant except by her relation to her husband. The child owes a debt to the male father that more closely mirrors the self-directed deity, while the mother may collect a debt of honor from the child in view of her other-relatedness to her husband. In Julian’s context here, debts are owed in scenarios that do not follow this traditional economy. Children owe a debt to the other-directed mother in her own right as mother to their substance, in addition to the debt that they owe of thanksgiving and praise to the first person who is self-directed. Additionally, the other-directed mother owes a debt not only to sons because of their eventual status as self-directed males, but to daughters.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid*, 315: 60.50-56

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid*, 315:61.1-12

Humans need to fall so that they can experience through the spiritual keeping of mother debt a “high and a marvelous knowing of love in God without end.” Specifically, they will experience that mother debt is “hard and marvelous” insofar as it “may not, nor will not, be broken for trespass.”<sup>688</sup>

Mother debt as other-oriented obligation that may not be broken by human failure resonates with the positions that mothers hold in western society as discussed before. The Western social imaginary creates the conditions for the emergence of mothers who have less cultural currency without relationships to father or husband. The debt of unpaid labor that they “owe” most often takes the form of domestic labor that maintains bodily needs, as discussed in chapters two and three. In this sense mother debt in western human communities is not a debt that may be dissolved if the woman wishes to continue to live with cultural authority in her community. Western masculine identity does not assume a similar debt of unpaid labor for maintaining the bodily needs of others in order to survive; bodies marked as masculine are assumed to have a degree of financial and political solvency in their own masculine right and so could survive without being other-oriented through the debt described. Since they do not rely upon the debt to survive they are not associated with unbreakable obligation to others. In fact, as may be seen in the history of divorce regulations and stereotypes about sexual commitment, they may more easily keep or break their connection to feminine others as those connections fit or do not fit their needs. The cultural sense of mother debt makes spaces in the social imaginary for mothers and debt to be combined. It allows Julian space in the western social

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<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*, 317: 61.22-23. The immediate subject whose love may not be broken the “maker” and the “love of god;” however both are said in the context of the discussion of spiritual birth that is modeled on physical birth that Jesus exclusively performs.

imaginary to associate mother debt that may not be broken with mother Jesus in the imaginaries of her readers. At the same time, Julian is taking this quality into the realm of the usually masculine substance of the godhead. By doing this Julian crosses the traditionally feminine identity attached to a debt that may not be broken and the traditionally masculine identity attached to no such intrinsic debt.

Julian introduces her model for motherhood in the showings with actual “low” biological processes which echo her previous references to the low points of our need exemplified by defecation. Her point of departure in the physical processes of concrete women as the basis through which the reader should understand divine spiritual motherhood is unique. Julian states that the reader is to become the revelation<sup>689</sup> – to assimilate it and perform it as a proper act of faith. As they follow those instructions, the readers may imagine concrete women who give birth and owe their children keeping, rather than imagine a spiritualized birth that is associated with an immaterial deity. The imagination of concrete women has a stronger link to the debt that concrete women are supposed to have in relation to children. If, by contrast, readers imagined a point of departure for birth in the spiritual processes in the divinity they may not undergo as strong a link to the idea that the spiritualized “mother” owes a debt to her children. This is because a spiritualized birth within the deity has historically often been stripped of the “imperfections” of birth that could not properly be said of the perfect father who produces the second person. Such a spiritualized birth does not link as strongly to a notion of other-centered debt. By emphasizing concrete women who give birth as the

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<sup>689</sup> In the previous reference, and her final statement that *A Revelation* is to be performed.

activity of Jesus, Julian more strongly moves the debt of birth, usually considered its imperfection, into the divine realm.

Mother debt preserves the traces of Julian's original scandalized grief in important ways. The divine parent is one who may not, despite its possible wishes, destroy the eternal life of its children. While Julian's original scandal claimed that a divine parent should prevent suffering in its children altogether, mother debt at least claims that the divine parent must prevent the most severe form of suffering in its children. The deity is bound to preserve the children's life and may not break that tie and destroy those lives through damnation.

Furthermore, mother debt is meant to keep humans "secure" in their hope of salvation. Mother debt may not blame humans in a way that would justify the termination of their lives. Thus the logic of mother debt removes self-blame which removes one of the primary sources of suffering as Julian describes them. Mother debt removes the suffering caused by feelings of blame for the very suffering that humans have. The deity shares human suffering insofar as the deity becomes an "imperfection;" it becomes necessarily other-centered. All of the foregoing preserve traces of Julian's original desire for the deity to prevent suffering altogether. At the same time Julian will return to traditional justifications for human suffering. Suffering shows humans "how febil and how wretched we be of oureselfe." Human wretchedness, however, serves to show the depth of mother debt that may not be broken by that wretchedness.

Verses 61.34-46 outline practical instructions for how readers should assimilate mother debt into practice. Humans should cultivate the thoughts and emotions of a

responsive child in relation to mother debt. Later, the acts of the responsive child will become the acts of reverent dread. Here, the act of the responsive child is the act of immediately running to the mother:

But oftymes when oure falling and oure wrechedness is shewde us, we be so sore adred and so gretly ashamed of oureselfe that unnethis we wil wher that we may holde us. But then wille not oure curtese moder that we flee away, for him will nothing lother, but he will than that we use the condition of a childe. For when it is dissesed and adred, it runneth hastely to the moder.

And if it may do no more, it cryeth on the mother for helpe with alle the mightes. So will he that we done as the meke childe, seyeng thus: “My kind moder, my gracious moder, my deerworthy moder, have mercy on me. I have made myselfe foule and unlike to thee, and I may not nor canne amende it but with thine helpe and grace.” And if we feeles us not than esed as swathe, be we seker that he useth the condition of a wise moder. For if he see that it be more profite to us to morne and to wepe, he suffereth it with ruth and pitte into the best time, for love. And he wille then that we use the properte of a childe, that evermore kindly trusteth the love of the moder in wele and in woe.<sup>690</sup>

The responsive child runs to the mother and cries “with all its mights” for mercy. The “mights” that the child must use to properly run to the mother recall the manner of Julian’s expressions of scandalized grief, newly cast as the act of the responsive child.<sup>691</sup> Further, the responsive child may be “seker” even in the face of woe that mother debt has not cancelled its keeping because it may not. Rather, even in woe the responsive child must trust that mother debt cannot break. Consequently, mother debt is only wisely meting out its unbreakable keeping in the form of penance that reforms the child.

Chapter sixty-one also discusses security in which mother debt takes the form of a nurse. The nurse underscores the services that mother debt provides to maintain the “lowest points” of human need.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 317: 61.34-46.

<sup>691</sup> See especially *Ibid*, 145: 6.39-41

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid*, 317: 61.55-57.

As another instruction in the practical assimilation of mother debt, chapter sixty-three dissuades the reader from imagining hell at all, since sin is a greater suffering. Sin takes humans far away from their “fair nature.” That journey that absences human beings from their natures is worse than any imagined pain. However, humans should not be “adred” of sin for these reasons because they may go to the mother who sprinkles blood on them and makes them clean, or brings them back to their fair nature.

Rather than consider hell, Julian instructs her readers to understand their experience of suffering through an imaginative focus upon their blameless “fair” nature, and then to understand their pain as a distance from it. Her recommendation to forget about hell because it is less painful than sin serves a similar purpose. She instructs readers to shift their focus away from hell because hell directly suggests punishment for blameworthy humans whom an angry deity rightfully punishes through a separation from divine love. Thus, a shift in focus away from hell is a shift in focus away from blameworthiness. Since these instructions are nested in the recommendation to be a responsive child to mother debt, when her readers imagine their fair nature they do so with the idea of the unbreakable care that mother debt must provide.<sup>693</sup> By contrast, a focus on hell suggests a divine mode of love that may be broken by human trespass. The focus upon sin aligns more easily with mother debt than a focus upon hell.

As a logical consequence of mother debt, chapter sixty-five opens mother debt not only to the “saved,” but also to any one who chooses divine love. The saved and unsaved, along with many other structural dichotomies, previously flowed from the “two domes.” The rest of the showings dismantle the divisions between many of those

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<sup>693</sup> *Ibid*, 321: 63.10-14

dichotomies. As the dichotomies collapse, the meanings of the terms change. Here, chapter sixty-five collapses the saved and the unsaved when secure salvation belongs to anyone who chooses the deity for love:

And thus I understode that that man or woman wilfully choseth God in this life for love, he may be seker that he is loved without end, with endlesse love that werketh in him that grace. For he wille we kepe this trustly, that we be as seker in hope of the blisse of heven while we are here as we shalle be in sekernesse when we are there. And ever the more liking and joye that we take in this sekernesse, with reverence and meekenes, the better liketh him.<sup>694</sup>

While the foregoing assures anyone who chooses love that Jesus owes them salvation, the lines that follow caution lest people take mother debt and salvation for granted. Lines 65.7-10 emphasize that reverent dread must still produce a certain kind of fear of the lord, even when not a fear of hell: “This reverence that I mean is a holy, curtiuous drede of our lorde, to which meekenes is knit: and that is that a creatur see the lord marvelous great and the selfe marvelous litle.”<sup>695</sup> The fear is described through special categories of largeness that instills fear in one that is smaller. The spatial references suggest a form of intimidation in which one feels vulnerable before a larger threatening being. Reverent dread takes the place of hell as a deterrent for sin. The concern not to take mother debt for granted will preoccupy the instructions to discern between true and false dreads.

Nevertheless, even reverent dread should make humans feel small in the presence of a deity looming large, they should still securely sense their safety. They are not expendable; they should envision themselves as personally worthy of all the works that

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<sup>694</sup> *Ibid*, 327: 65.1-6

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid*, 327: 65.7-10

the deity has done. “It is God’s will that I see myselfe as mikelle bound to him in love as if he had done for me all that he hath done.”<sup>696</sup>

#### VI. Dread and Personal Faith

“Reverence,” “drede,” and “meekenes” are often linked in *A Revelation*, beginning with the first revelation’s account of the soul in contemplation of the maker, as Mary contemplated the deity: “the beholding and the loving of the maker maketh the soule to seme lest in his awne sight, and most filleth with with reverent drede and trew meknesse”<sup>697</sup> Dreads emerge as the central way that “secure trust” allows sensuality to enter contemplation and reach up into the realm of faith.

Dreads prove to be habitual feelings that one must selectively cultivate in order to wisely perceive the inward keeping of mother debt. The revelations specify which dreads are wise and which are vicious. As mentioned before, *A Revelation* instructs the reader to practically become like the showings.<sup>698</sup> While the showings displaced common church teaching as the strongest source of authority, the rest of the revelations will increasingly demand that a personal discernment of the performance of the showings inside become the foundational source of authority.

As the beginning of a movement that will tie personal discernment of truth to a personal act of faith in the showings, Julian makes *A Revelation* part of the deposit of faith in the sixteenth revelation. While the showings claimed the godly will as part of faith in the earlier verses 53.12-14, they now claim all of the revelations as part of faith. In verses 70.6 Julian claims that the “owne blessed worde in tru understanding” gave her

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<sup>696</sup> *Ibid*, 331: 65.13-16

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid*, 145: 6:56-7

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid*, 339: 68.39-40

authority to have faith in the showings. She contrasted the authority of the “blessed worde” spoken to her against the tokens sometimes left to other visionaries to prove the veracity of their visions.<sup>699</sup> Based on the deity’s “owne blessed word” that Julian took in “tru understanding” the divine voice bids her to believe in *A Revelation* and “so she does.” She believes that “it is in the faith” because the visions specifically showed that.<sup>700</sup> As part of orthodox faith, *A Revelation* now overshadows common church teaching in a new way. The showings already attach to a higher dome than common church teaching, which already subordinates common church teaching. Common church teaching could have misunderstandings that should reach up into the substantial realm of the higher dome to be enlightened. And, *A Revelation* is an expression of that higher dome. However, common church teaching may also attach to orthodox faith in a way that the reader does not perceive *A Revelation* to do. This might give common church teaching the appearance of having more authority than *A Revelation*. Now that *A Revelation* is equally part of the orthodox faith by comparison to common church teaching, that barrier is removed. *A Revelation* stands as an equal source of authority as part of the deposit of faith and a superior source of authority in relation to its “dome.”

The sixteenth revelation also ties Julian’s personal discernment of her sense of inward divine movement to faith.<sup>701</sup> After Julian is tempted and denies the showings as “ravings,” the deity revisits her and fills her with a sense of the truth of the showings. The quality in Julian’s experience of the deity persuades her and gives her “ever seker trust” in the showings. In verse 68.49 “the goode lorde” gives Julian knowledge that it

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<sup>699</sup> *Ibid*, 342: Note 70.3. Other tokens, such as Katherine of Alexandria’s ring or Francis of Assisi’s stigmata, bear witness to the truth of their visions.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid*, 343: 70.4-7

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid*, 331: 66.1-3

was the lord who told her everything before. This knowledge convinces her that Christ has been in full control of all of *A Revelation*, his seat in the center of Julian's soul, and of Julian's apprehension of it. He tells Julian "full mekely" and "full sweetly" in a voiceless and lipless<sup>702</sup> way: "Wit it now wele, it was no raving that thou saw today. But take it and believe it, and kepe thee therin, and comfort thee therewith, and trust thee therto, and thou shalt not be overcome."<sup>703</sup> These words were said to Julian to give her "lerning of full tru sekernesse, that it is oure lorde Jhesu that shewed me alle." She feels "full tru sekernesse" in his words. They make her feel that she will not be overcome; the "full tru sekernesse" feels like a "tru comfort."<sup>704</sup> Her sensed feeling of secure conviction confirms for her that the showings are true after she doubted them. Her sense thus arbitrates truth. In addition, she states that her experience of the arbitration of truth through secure feeling should "generally" play the role that it did for her for all of her "evencristen."<sup>705</sup>

In theyse six wordes that foloweth wher he seyth, "Take it," (the showing) his mening is to fasten it faithfully in oure hert. For he wille it dwelle with us in faith into oure lifes ende, and after in fullehed of joye, willing that we have ever seker trust of his blisseful behestes, knowing his goodnesse."<sup>706</sup>

Thus a secure inward sense of truth plays a strong role in the arbitration of truth. It becomes a source of authority.

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<sup>702</sup> As in Watson, *Julian*, 169: 13.3-4.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid*, 339: 68.44-45.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid*, 339: 68.51-52.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid*, 339: 68.40-49. Julian is given knowledge that it was truly the deity who showed her everything before. This knowledge precedes Christ's words in 339: 68.45-47, which in a sense do no more than make public what, it is said here, Julian had already understood. Christ's occupancy of the soul, and the fact that "I saw him sitte" (339: 68.41), in themselves not only act as "confirmation" of the truth of all the revelations (331: 66.3), by gathering up so many of its strands, but also dispute her reckless claim to have been "raving" (331: 66.13). From the beginning Jesus has been in full command not only of the revelation but, from his seat in Julian's soul, of her apprehension of it.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid*, 345: 70.20-24.

Julian also tethers the foregoing secure feeling to the meaning of faith. The “lorde Jhesu” tells her again later in chapter seventy that even though she doubted the showings during her “raving” he would “full mekely” show all of them to her again within her soul.<sup>707</sup> He tells her to ‘wit it’ and to ‘seest it’ again as he shows her a repetition.<sup>708</sup> Julian knows it and sees it in order “to set thereupon the grounde of my faith.”<sup>709</sup> Julian reports that the lord wills that one should take inward secure knowledge of such a divine movement to be the ground of faith. He meant this, Julian says, when he spoke the following words: “But take it, and believe it, and kepe thee therin, and comfort the therewith, and trust therto, and thou shalt not be overcome.”<sup>710</sup> Thus a securely felt belief in one’s inwardly sensed divine communication as *A Revelation* models it becomes the ground of faith. This inward “gostely light” guides faith:

For oure faith is contraried in diverse maner by oure owne blindhede and oure gostely enemes, within and withoute. And therefore oure precious lover helpeth us with gostely lighte and tru teching on diverse manner within and withoute, whereby what we may know him. And therefore in what manner that he techeth us, he wille that we perceve him wisely, receive him swetly, and kepe us in him faithfully.<sup>711</sup>

Thus faith is tied to the wise perception of the inward keeping of “gostely light” that the deity performs. It also is tied to a wise perception of “gostely light” and true teachings from without, although the text does not specify those outward sources here.

Importantly, faith exists in the realm of substance while everyday non-contemplative awareness and common church teaching exist squarely in the sensual realm beneath the activity of faith. Even after Julian collapsed the division between the

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<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, 343: 70.12-13.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 343: 70.15-17.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-345: 70.17-20.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-345: 70.17-19.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, 345: 70.21-30.

saved and the unsaved, the divisions that separate faith, reason and common church teaching still stand. Julian advises her readers that the inward keeping that they must perceive wisely only comes from the realm of faith:

For above the faith is no goodnesse kept in this life, as to my sight, and beneth the faith is no helth of soule. But in the faith, there will oure lorde we kepe us. For we have by his goodnesse and his owne werking to kepe us in the faith, and by his suffrance throw gestely enmite we are asayde in the faith and made mighty.<sup>712</sup>

Faith here is tied to the keeping that the deity performs in the realm of faith or the realm of substance. In order to “perceive wisely” the quality of inward feeling that specifies that divine keeping and therefore that divides truth from falsity, as Julian asked for repeatedly in her scandalized grief, one must access the realm of faith and substance.

The wise perception already shown to involve faith, must also, according to lines 70.9-10, be a personal act of faith. While chapter fifty-three established the godly will as part of faith through a flat declaration, chapter seventy makes the whole of *A Revelation* part of faith through a personal act of belief. The godly will is part of faith because “oure lorde” willed that “we know it in the faith and the believe.” However, chapter seventy addresses the whole of the showings as part of faith so that the phrase “that it is in the faith” of 70.6 depends on Julian’s personal “I believe.”<sup>713</sup> Watson notes that Julian’s mention that she presents no “signe” or “token” to prove the truth of *A Revelation* communicates the absolute necessity of personal faith to apprehend *A Revelation* as a whole.<sup>714</sup> Julian emphasizes this in verse 70.9 where “the faith” becomes “my faith.” She declares herself bound to believe by the full force of the deity’s intention:

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<sup>712</sup> *Ibid*, 345: 70.29-33.

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid*, 342: Note 70.6.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid*, 342: Note 70.6. The passage at 343-345:70.17-18 shows that faith is based upon obedience and trust, not sight, even though sight in the visions still remains a “grounde.”

But he lefte with me his owne blessed worde in tru understanding, bidding me fulle mightly that I shulde believe it, and so I do...I believe that he is oure savioure that shewed it, and that it is in the faith that he shewde. And therefore I believe it, ever joying. And thereto I am bounde by alle his one mening, with the nexte words that folowen: ‘Kepe thee therein...’ Thus I am bounde to kepe it in my faith.<sup>715</sup>

Julian’s “I” who must have faith in 70.10 above translates into “we” the readers who must do so in lines 70.21-22, where “His mening” is that we should “fasten it faithfully in oure hert” so that “it dwelle with us in faith into oure lifes ende.” The transformation from “I” to “we” follows Julian’s example in chapters eight through nine.

### VII. Wise Perception or the Discernment of True and False Dreads

Thus by chapter seventy the showings have become part of the orthodox faith whose wise perception demands a personal act of belief. Readers may only come to a “tru understanding” of them if they personally believe in them. Additionally, *A Revelation* communicates itself to the inward parts of a person through contemplation. And, the wise perception of true dreads proves to be the central way that “secure trust” allows sensual human beings to reach up into the realm of faith. Taken together, these elements establish the authority of the showings to depend upon the reader’s wise perception of inward messages.

Because sloth and despair especially prevent wise perception, chapter seventy-one shows the deity’s concern to eradicate them. Sloth and despair fuel the unpleasant aspect of the “medular” of wellness and wo that marks human experience and that blocks wise perception.

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<sup>715</sup> *Ibid*, 343: 70.4-10.

These vices particularly thwart the purpose of the showings, which is to make the reader wisely aware of three sources of knowledge that are available to them in this life: knowledge of God, knowledge of the self as seen by God, and knowledge of the self as felt by the self.<sup>716</sup> Knowledge of the deity has “sekerness” because of mother debt—human beings may rely upon the debt of salvation that the deity owes to them in a secure fashion because the debt cannot be cancelled. “Sekerness,” as noted before, is the attitude most frequently cited by the showings as necessary for all other forms of right understanding. The “chere” of “ruth and compassion” that result from the birth that Jesus gives to human beings signifies “sekernesse of keping” that cannot be broken.<sup>717</sup> Despair in the face of suffering, on the other hand, corrupts the “seker” knowledge and feelings that should flow from mother debt.

Despair is a type of dread.<sup>718</sup> Julian sorts dreads into two categories, those of “doubtful dread” and “reverent dread.”<sup>719</sup> Doubtful dread “stintes” in its belief that the deity will follow through to actually save human souls; it is an “unknowing” or “blindness” towards love.<sup>720</sup> In other words, it doubts mother debt. It tempts the reader to self-recrimination or self-blame.

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<sup>716</sup> *Ibid*, 349: 72.43-47. “It longeth to us to have thre manner of kowing. The furst is that we know oure lorde God. The seconde is that we know oureselfe, what we are by him in kinde and in grace. The thirde is that we know mekely what oureselfe is, anemptes oure sinne and anemptes oure febilnes. And for these thre was lle this shewing made, as to my understanding.” For the first two, see especially Chapter 56. Also see 348: Note 72.43-47.

<sup>717</sup> For example, in Watson, *Julian*, 345:71.8-10.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid*, 351: 73.8-11

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid*, 353: 27-28 “dred of afray” and “dree of paine,” which Julian initially describes as helpful in themselves are now categorized with “dout-fulle drede” as “not so tru.” While Julian sorts through several types of dreads, she eventually narrows them into two categories.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid*, 351: 73.11 and 353: 73.25. See the echoes from blindness in the exemplum 275: 51.21-23. And the phrase “unknowing of love” also used in 143: 6.3.

Doubtful dread is particularly devious because it charades as humility. When a person sees her frequent fall into “wretchedness,” shame makes her so heavy that she cannot feel any comfort.<sup>721</sup> Some wrongly interpret the feeling of shame to be humility, which mistake is a “a foul blindhede and a wekenesse.” To expose such false acts of humility that valorize shameful fear is the most pressing message of *A Revelation* when it is read as a practical work of pastoral theology.<sup>722</sup>

Doubtful dread thus emerges as a sin because through it humans doubt the central message of the showings, namely, that humans bear no manner of blame and that mother debt cannot damn them. On the other hand, doubtful dread also follows common church teachings that thwart the showings: that humans are sinners and are sometimes therefore worthy of blame, wrath and damnation.

Wise perception of doubtful dread, then, asks readers to ferret out their internal movements that have followed these common church teachings. It also asks them to replace those movements with feeling tones that follow the religious ideas of *A Revelation*. Thus, the remedy for doubtful dread is an internal practice of love that has the character of mother debt.<sup>723</sup>

However, there is another dread that pleases the deity that also plays a role in wise perception. That is reverent dread. It is “fule softe, for the more it is had, the lesse it is felte, for swetnesse of love.”<sup>724</sup> Love and this dread are “bredren,” and both will exist eternally. Human beings love and dread both by their nature (kind) and by grace.

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<sup>721</sup> *Ibid*, 351: 73.29-34

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid*, 352: Note 73.33-34.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid*, 351: 73.11-12.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid*, 357: 74.15-16. Shown earlier in Mary’s reaction to the Annunciation in 145: 7.1-8 and Julian’s to the revelation in 147: 8.20-2.1.

Julian explains reverent dread through gendered categories, as she did earlier for mercy and grace. Here reverent dread belongs to lordship and fatherhood, while love belongs to goodness:

It longeth to the lordeshippe and the faderhed to be dred, as it longeth to the goodnes to be loved. And it longeth to us that are his servantes and his children to drede him for lordshippe and faderhed, as it longeth to us to love him for goodhed.<sup>725</sup>

At this stage, Julian does not assign a gender to goodness, although it stands in opposition to lordship and fatherhood. The proper human responses to each follow suit so that love stands in opposition to reverent dread.

Under one aspect, reverent dread is the opposite to love. Reverent dread and love are different in property and working and Julian is “seker” that the one who loves dreads “though he feele it but litille.”<sup>726</sup> The *felt sense* of reverent dread operates by inverse proportion to the felt sense of love. As the felt sense of love increases, the felt sense of reverent dread decreases. This is true even though one may not be had without the other.

Reverent dread also opposes love insofar as reverent dread aligns with lordship and love aligns with secureness, which has been previously associated with mother debt. Lordship and mother debt, then, align with masculine and feminine qualities that are opposed. Love attaches to mother debt insofar as love now gives to human beings the most “sekernesse,” like mother debt did in previous texts. “For of alle the properttes of the blisseful trinite, it is Goddes will that we have most sekernesse and liking in love. For love maketh might and wisdom fulle meke to us.”<sup>727</sup> Thus, love aligns with the

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<sup>725</sup> *Ibid*, 357: 74.15-19.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid*, 357: 74.19-26.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid*, 355: 73.36-40.

secureness that attached to mother debt before, lending a feminine quality to love that would oppose the masculine quality of lordship.

Similarly, if one withdrew *doubtful* dread she would offend the trust represented by mother debt because despair believes that one may be damned rather than believes that the debt of salvation that motherhood owes may not be broken by human trespass. Doubtful dread does not explicitly offend lordship, which is not associated with the debt. So, doubtful dread also seems to point to the oppositional nature of mother debt to lordship, in which mother debt is associated with debt and lordship is not.

Further, as the increase of love caused dread to decrease, the increase of love now causes the force of might and wisdom to decrease. Love causes might to decrease so that it is “fulle meke to us,” as stated above. Thus love operates by inverse proportion to might, which Julian often associates with masculine attributes like fatherhood and lordship. In all these ways reverent dread is opposed to love.

However, while they are opposed, when viewed in light of a greater opposition that doubtful dread (or despair) brings to light, their opposition is qualified. While reverent dread and love still stand in inverse proportion to each other, such that as love increases reverent dread decreases, they also work together. Doubtful dread has a greater opposition to love than reverent dread because doubtful dread is an obstacle to divine love. Reverent dread, on the other hand, assists divine love. Reverent dread and love are one in working, while doubtful dread hinders the work of love. The relationship of doubtful dread to love shows that reverent dread stands in opposition to love, but also, at least at this stage in *A Revelation*, assists love.

As reverent dread and love work together, their relationship further complicates. While love represents the “sekerness” of mother debt, reverent dread protects mother debt, even though it still relates to it inversely. The relationship between dread and mother debt echoes a “protective model”<sup>728</sup> of gendered opposites, in which masculinity “protects” femininity even though masculinity defines itself as the opposite of femininity. Reverent dread protects mother debt by making the human child aware of its feebleness and need for the mother before it approaches her. Reverent dread is the force that causes the child to immediately fly away from that which is evil, to know human feebleness and need, and to fall into the mother’s bosom. It causes one to approach mother debt through human dispositions of feebleness and need before a maternal bosom that is strong and sufficient. The defining test through which one may discern whether a dread is reverent (true) and not false (doubtful) detects true dread that makes one flee and fall into the mother’s bosom:

Alle dredes other than reverent drede that are profered to us, though they come under coloure of holinesse, they are not so tru. And hereby may they be known onsonder. That dred that maketh us hastily to fle fro alle that is not goode and falle into oure lordes brest, as the childe into the moders barme, with alle oure entent and with alle oure minde—knowing oure febilnes and oure great nede, knowing his everlasting goodnesse and his blisseful love, only seking into him for salvation, cleaving to with seker trust—that dred that bringeth us into this wurking, it is kinde and gracious and good and true. And alle that is contrarious to this, either it is wrong, or it is medelde with wrong.<sup>729</sup>

Reverent dread is thus defined in relationship to mother debt as the force that causes one to flee towards the maternal bosom that owes humans their salvation and keeping. The

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<sup>728</sup> See Coontz, *Marriage*, 34-39. A model of gendered opposites that in contemporary conversations usually relies upon a myth of femininity that intrinsically lacks the intelligence that would allow her to feed, clothe and protect herself in an imagined stone age.

<sup>729</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 357: 74.27-35.

feeling of reverent dread as awe in reaction to paternal lordship in the deity inspires the response of the child who flies into the mother's breast. The child in flight recounts mother debt as it appeared in 61.34-46. Now, chapter seventy-four gives reverent dread a role that initiates that flight. In this fashion, reverent dread still opposes mother debt but also steers humans towards it.

In lines 74.27-35 Julian instructs readers to sift through their personal feelings of dread. They should amplify a childlike response to mother debt and minimize any contrary feeling tones as "wrong" or "medelde with wrong."<sup>730</sup>

Reverent dread takes on more gendered attributes in the following lines where it becomes the working of grace by the Holy Spirit, who is eternally "gentile, curteyse," and "fulle delectabile." The text further contrasts gentle and courteous reverent dread with love that makes humans "homely and nere to God." Using the test of mother debt from the lines before, human beings must recognize true and false dreads in order to refuse false dread:

Than is this the remedy, to knowe them both, and refuse the wrong. For the kinde properte of drede which we have in this life by the gracious werking of the holy gost, the same shall be in heven afore God: gentille, curteyse, fulle delectabile. And thus we shalle in love be homely and nere to God, and we shalle in drede be gentille and curtese to God, and both in one manner, like even.<sup>731</sup>

Reverent fear is "honorable, courteous, most delicious" -- a courteous attitude to maintain before a lord.<sup>732</sup> Love, on the other hand, is intimate (homely) and near.<sup>733</sup> Verse 74.40 shows Heaven's courtiers will stand before the lord in an attitude blended of fear and

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<sup>730</sup> *Ibid*, 357: 74.27-35.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid*, 357-359: 74.36-40.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid*, 356: Note 74.38.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid*, 359: 74.40.

love. Thus reverent dread attaches to courtesy, which was previously identified with lordship, while love attaches to intimacy (homeliness) and nearness, which attaches to mother Jesus who is nearest in kind. As before, both operate together “in one manner.”

Love then becomes “meke love” to suggest that reverent dread needs to temper on overconfident love:

Desyer we than of oure lorde God to drede him reverently and to love him mekly and to trust in him mightly. For when we drede him reverently and love him mekly, oure trust is never in vaine. For the more that we trust and the mightilier, the more we plesse and wurshippe oure lorde that we trust in. And if us faile this reverent drede and meke love, as God forbid we shuld, oure trust shalle soone be misruled for that time. And therfore us nedeth mekille to praye oure lorde of grace, that we may have this reverent drede and meke love of his fite, in hart and in worke, for without this no man may plesse God.<sup>734</sup>

When trust is “misruled” for a time, Julian implies an overconfidence in love that is not sufficiently “meke” because it is not combined with “reverent drede.” The term “meke love” is used four times in this chapter but nowhere else in the work. It emphasizes that love may be overly bold if not tempered by reverent dread.<sup>735</sup> Or, it suggests that a supposedly overly bold love is actually an underestimation of love.

Chapter seventy-five develops mother debt and reverent dread in more detail. The previous qualities of mother debt blend into the “active thirst” of Jesus. The thirst of Jesus may be taken for granted and so requires the guard from that error that reverent dread supplies.

The chapter opens with a discussion of “longing and pity.” Longing and pity are linked earlier in verses 31.34-41. Pity has been discussed as an aspect of mercy in Chapters 48, 51, and elsewhere. However, chapter seventy-five newly develops the sense

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<sup>734</sup> *Ibid*, 359: 74.40-48.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid*, 358: Note 74.44-46.

in which the deity can be said to long for humanity, an aspect of mercy not included in those earlier discussions. Human longing is an expression of divine longing that expresses through “us.”<sup>736</sup> Christ actively thirsts for humans to know and love him, to take humans out of pain and into heaven, and to “fulfille us of blisse” on the last day.<sup>737</sup>

Because active thirst attaches to the realm of the changeable, it injects traces of change into the deity. It suggests that Jesus lacks something that must be replenished. Further, it suggests changeable appetite that must destroy another being to slake hunger and thirst. And, active thirst is other-centered, which is traditionally an imperfection by contrast to the self-centered deity. While ruth and pity already suggested a relation to another through sympathy for the lack in another, active thirst more directly expresses lack in Jesus himself.

Part of Jesus’ thirst is for Judgment Day, or to “fulfille us of blisse” on the last day. However, judgment day follows a non-traditional interpretation of dread at work on that day. Rather than the union of bodies with souls, Julian evasions the completion of the deed prophesied in chapter thirty-two (32.26-39).<sup>738</sup>

The prophecy was the beginning of mother debt. It travelled into the promise that all would be made well, which turned into the absence of damnation, and then became salvation that is available to anyone who chooses to love. Finally, it moved into a final security in the debt of salvation that mother Jesus owes because she birthed us, and which cannot be broken by human trespass.

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<sup>736</sup> *Ibid*, 359: 75.7-8.

<sup>737</sup> See also *Ibid*, 219: 31.14-15: “Therfore this is his thruste: a love-longing to have us all togeder, hole in him to his endlesse blisse.” And, see Julian’s wish to be taken up into heaven in 323: 64.1-13. Here the deity, not the soul, is longing. And see 358: Note 75.5, where the passages refer to the thirst of Christ, since it is Christ who makes souls members of his body.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid*, 223: 32.26-29: “This is the gret deed ordained of oure lorde God fro without beginning, tresured and hid in his blessed brest, only knowen to himselfe, by which deed he shalle make all thing wele.”

The prophecy emerges again, this time as the continuation of mother debt, which takes into account the new role of reverent dread as the protector of mother debt. After the discussion of the fulfillment of the prophecy, line 75.23 reminds of the dread human beings should have in the face of the hidden deed. The order of praise and then caution mirrors the order of the text's earlier introduction of mother debt and then advice of caution to embrace reverent dread lest one underestimate mother debt.

Chapter seventy-five also adds the new qualities of eternality and force to reverent dread. It will remain in heaven with infinitely greater force than it had on Earth. The heavenly form of reverent dread is a courtesy that "is in heaven before Goddes face." Its strength shall cause everything that exists, characterized by pillars, to tremble and quake. "Alle heven, alle erth, shall tremelle and quake whan the pilers shall tremelle and quake."<sup>739</sup>

While trembling and quaking in 75.24-39 probably refers to the deity's "anger" in Job that makes the pillars of the Earth tremble, here the reverent dread of human beings towards the deity makes the pillars tremble.<sup>740</sup> *A Revelation* thus reinterprets the quake as human in origin. Created agency in this form recalls the passion in 18.13-14 where "alle creatures that God hath made to oure servys, the firmament and erth, failed for sorow in ther kind in the time of Cristes dying."

Further, the quality of reverent dread that causes the pillars of Heaven to shake and tremble "shalle have no manner of paine." In place of pain it shall be meekness of joy that marvels at the greatness of the deity and the smallness of creation. Here she combines verses 4.31-32 that concern Mary at the Annunciation with verse 5.10, the

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<sup>739</sup> *Ibid*, 361: 75.36-39.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid*, 360: Note 75.24-25.

vision of the hazelnut that immediately follows. “Knowing the greatnes of her maker and the littlehead of herselfe that is made.” The first revelation resurfaces to show reverent dread before the Judgment as a new annunciation, instead of a day of terror.

This reformulation of reverent dread is rooted in marvel rather than in terror that correlates with the instructions in 76.25-33. These advise the reader to reject as sin a fear that the deity would terrorize – or punish the human being. Julian instructs readers to discern between dreads that are rooted in fear of punishment and those that lead one to meekness through the disposition of marvel. The first dread follows common church teachings about blame, wrath and hell, while the second diverges from those teachings and follows the ideas that A Revelation suggests. However, the human being at the crossroads of these two sources must discern which emotions map onto these teachings, and reject the emotions that track onto the first and accept those that follow the second.

As the reader discerns between the two foregoing paths of internal motions, Jesus appears as sovereign friend in verse 76.21. The sovereign friend Jesus appears for this brief interval to show that the temptation to believe that humans are wretched is an attack by the “enmye” in order to let fear of pain cause one’s mind to leave divine friendliness. The shortly mentioned “sovereign friend” of chapter seventy-six expresses the maternal traits of mother debt as Jesus asks humans to be homely and close, asking them to “fasten us homely to him evermore.”<sup>741</sup>

In this section Julian also draws closer together the poles of masculine and feminine symbols through her treatment of the Holy Ghost and mother debt. She makes the courtesy previously attached to the Holy Ghost (and hence to a pole of masculinity

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<sup>741</sup> *Ibid*, 363: 76.21-22.

that is opposed to the feminine tropes associated with mother debt) draw closer to the homeliness previously attached to mother debt. Courtesy appears as “sovereign” but is qualified by friendship. At the same time friendship is qualified by the maternal attributes of homeliness and closeness. Thus friendship joins courtesy, homeliness and closeness in one identity. Jesus as sovereign friend counsels the reader to fasten themselves to homeliness “evermore” in the face of the temptation to (wrongly) see oneself as a “wrech” and to fear the consequent punishment before the “curteyse lorde.”<sup>742</sup>

#### VIII. Courtesy as Guard of Mother Debt from Sinful Neglect

Following the combination of courtesy with homely love in Jesus the sovereign friend, courtesy again shows itself to limit the sin of recklessness that would underestimate the gravity of mother debt:

Flee we to our lorde, and we shall be comforted. Touch we him, and we shalle be made clene...For oure curtese lorde wille that we be as homely with him as hart may thinke or soul emay desyer. But be we ware that we take not so rechelusly this homelyhed for to leve curtesye. For oure lorde himselfe is sovereyn homelyhed, and so homely as he is, as curteyese he is. For he is very curteyse.<sup>743</sup>

The language of courtesy taken from the political court serves to protect the vulnerable intimacy or “homeliness” that attaches to the domestic sphere.<sup>744</sup> Mother debt suggests

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<sup>742</sup> *Ibid*, 363: 76.25-33.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid*, 365: 77.40-45. The passage at 365: 77.40-41 suggests “Touch we him...clene” of Matthew 9:20-22 where the sick woman says, “If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well,” and is healed. Feminist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock notes that Matthew 9:20-22 describe reversals in which the woman, considered blameworthy because impure, divests Jesus of masculine privilege when through her speech he recognizes that her faith healed her, rather than his, even though the crowd supposes him pure and her impure. Brock refers to a reversal of the common attribution of wounded sin to the (feminine) human whose blameworthiness before the “father” Jesus atones.

<sup>744</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 365.77.43-44 “But be we ware..leve curtesye” See Watson: but we must be wary that we do not take this intimacy so carelessly that we forgo courtesy. “Hoelyhed” and “curesye” have been in play in *A Revelation* since Chapter 4. After language evocative of the intimacy of family relationships, the

the debt of labor in the home that is obligatory but not regulated by the protections of law, while courtesy suggests the king who creates the laws that regulate and protect his labor and demand the services of the mother in the domestic sphere. Thus the text summons the courtesy associated with political power to protect mother debt that is associated with vulnerability to the laws made by others outside the domestic sphere.

Jesus “the lorde” in this passage himself “lerneth”<sup>745</sup> us to discern inward motions that would recklessly overlook the homely guarantee of mother debt and to steer away from them. Jesus “lerneth” readers to combine the respectful courtesy due to the lord with the response they have to guaranteed maternal love. Such a bleed of characteristics into one space creates an emotional response to a kind of sovereign motherhood, a third space that is neither solely lordly nor maternal. It combines the obedience that the reader owes to the authority of the lord and the entitlement that that the reader has to collect the debt that the mother owes to him or her. The image in the exemplum of the lord who has the eyes of maternity fosters this inward response that Julian solicits in her readers.

The next chapter teaches about reverent dread, or the courtesy that humans must show to mother debt, through a comparison of human and divine courtesy. The self-restraint of divine courtesy teaches humans how to use self-restraint in relation to mother debt. The deity measures out to persons appropriate degrees of knowledge of their sin, restraining itself from showing the entire amount lest the lest humans despair:

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more formal gestures of respect implied by “curtise” need to be emphasized. Human courtesy is here seen as modeled on divine.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 367: 77.49-50. “And the blessed creatures that shalle be in heven with him without ende, he wille have them like unto himselfe in alle thing. And to be like to oure lorde perfetly, it is oure very salvation and oure fulle blisse. And if we wet now how we shall do alle this, desyer we of oure lorde, and he shalle lerne us, for it is his owne liking and his wurshippe. Blessed mot he be.”

And thus by the sight of the lese that oure lorde sheweth us, the more is wasted, which we se not. For he of his curtesy mesureth the sight to us, for it is so foule and so horrible that we shulde not endure to se it as it is. And thus by this meke knowing, throw contrition and grace, we shall be broken from alle thing that is not oure lorde; and than shalle oure blessed saviour perfetely hele us and one us to him.<sup>746</sup>

The deity courteously conceals from humans most of their sin because it would be unendurable to contemplate directly.<sup>747</sup> The meting out of self-knowledge describes a program of gradual acclimatization to the inward keeping of mother Jesus. The more naturalized people become to experience of the higher contemplative dome, the stronger they are to endure new revelation of the deity's goodness and of their own shortcomings. Julian models an incremental increase in knowledge of self and knowledge of faith through the showings. As she increases she follows the showings and her discernment of the inward keeping of mother Jesus as an authority. She also relinquishes her focus upon common church teachings and the feelings of blameworthiness which they produced in her.

Reverent dread also produces a form of "unsekernesse," although it is only instrumentally useful. The keeping of mother debt eventually eclipses the insecurity that reverent dread makes temporarily useful. Julian sees that she will sin which gives her a dread of insecurity about herself:

I saw that I shulde sine, ther was I lerned to be dradful for unsekernesse of myselfe, for I wot not how I shalle falle, ne I know not the mesure ne the gretnesse of my sinne. For that wolde I have wist, dredful, and therto I had no answeare."<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>746</sup> *Ibid*, 367: 78.17-22. Section 367: 78.13 engages despair, an implied topic since Chapter 73, which is the peril into which the soul engaged by the wrong kind of fear can fall. This passage makes the case that any direct confrontation with one's sin that is not mediated by divine "mercy" (367: 78.3) induces despair.

And, in order to engage mercy one must "securely" believe in unbreakable love that guarantees salvation.

<sup>747</sup> In *Ibid*, 367: 78.2-3, due to divine courtesy God does not show people their sins in their absolute form but already tempered by his mercy. First part of the lesson of courtesy promised in 367: 77.48-50.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid*, 369: 79.9-12.

As she saw no soul damned in her earlier visions, here she sees “no answer” to her dread that she should sin. Rather, the deity shows her mother debt to answer her fear:

Also our curteyse lorde, in that same time, he shewde fulle sekerly and fulle mightely the endleshed and the unchangeabilte of his love. And also, be his grete goodnesse and his grace inwardely keping, that the love of him and of oure soules shalle never be deperted in two without ende.<sup>749</sup>

Julian explains that her fear of inevitable sin saves her from presumption. However, the deity conspicuously fails to respond to her fear and rather introduces mother debt to overshadow it, keeping Julian from despair.<sup>750</sup>

Julian found the insecurity that she feels at her sin helpful to fight the presumption that might take mother debt for granted. She finds it so even while the deity ignored her fear entirely and distracted from it with a response of mother debt. However, she sides with the divine response when she concludes that sin is anything that one feels that is contrary to mother debt. It seems then that the insecurity she felt about the fact that she would sin would be sinful because it counters the secureness of mother debt. However, she underscored that insecurity as an ostensible good means to counter presumption. Nevertheless she concludes: “For he will that we know, by the swetnesse of the homely love of him, that alle that we see or fele, within or withoute, which is contrarious to this [mother debt], that it is of the enmy, and not of God.”<sup>751</sup> The inward keeping of her vision allows Julian to consider reverent dread helpful but only so that inward keeping may eventually overshadow it with security.

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<sup>749</sup> *Ibid*, 369: 79.12-15.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid*, 369: 79.15-18. And thus in the dred, I have matter of mekenesse, that saveth me fro presumption. And in the blessed shewing of love, I have mater of true comforte and of joy, that saveth me fro dispair.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid*, 369: 79.20-23.

The possible contradiction between the feelings of insecurity in reverent dread and security in mother debt find resolution in a practical instruction about how to discern truth through discernment of true and false dreads:

If that we be stered to be the more rechelesser of oure leving, or of the keeping of oure harte, by cause that we have knowing of this plentuous love, than nedeth us gretely to beware of this stering. If it come, it is untrew, and greatly we owe to hate it, for it hath no liknes of Goddes wille. And whan we be fallen by freelte or blindhede, than oure curtesse lord, touching us, stereth us and kepeth us. And than wille he that we se our wrechednesse and mekely be it aknowen.<sup>752</sup>

The “if” that begins Julian’s statement provides a contingent role for the courteous lord who, if humans fall through reckless neglect of mother debt,<sup>753</sup> steers them back into care for it. Jesus wills that human beings not “be besy...gretly aboute oure accusing” when they fall, but rather hastily entende to him,<sup>754</sup> as the child hastily runs to the mother’s breast.<sup>755</sup> Thus the courtesy that is a “brother to love” and will remain in heaven seems increasingly to diminish as one ceases to underestimate homely love, reflecting Julian’s earlier sentiment that one who loves also dreads, “yet he feels it but little.” However, feeling tones play a tremendous role as one discerns the inward keeping of mother debt. Such a discernment comes to be an arbiter of truth for each person as she discerns the inward keeping of Jesus that the Revelation performs. The practical instructions of the showings at this stage recommend that one wisely attend to reverent dread in a horizon that sees it diminish in proportion to the maturity with which one loves. Maturity in this

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<sup>752</sup> *Ibid*, 369-371: 79.23-28.

<sup>753</sup> Addresses spiritual complacency that ends the thirteenth revelation. Watson, *Julian*, 245: 40.22-25: “If any man or woman be stered by folly to sey or to thinke, ‘If this be soth, than were it good for to sinne to have the more mede’...beware of this stering. For sothly, if it come, it is untrue and of the enemy.”

<sup>754</sup> Also see *Ibid*, 233: 36.39, where Jesus says: “Intende to me” and see 365: 77.11-12: “Than is this that we hastily entenede to him.”

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid*, 371: 79.29-31. “But he wille not that we abie therwith, ne he wille not tha twe besy us gretly aboute oure accusing, ne he wille not that we be to wrechedfulle on oureselfe. But he wille that we hastily entende to him.”

scenario is the honor and trust shown to mother debt. Thus, in the practical arbitration of truth that characterizes the latter part of the showings, mature arbitration diminishes reverent dread and increases honor for mother debt.

Chapter eighty addresses the sources of information that are provided to the self as one discerns between the foregoing true and false dreads. These sources are natural reason or “mannes kindly reson,” the common teaching of holy church and the “inwarde gracious werking of the holy gost.”<sup>756</sup> These three are gifts from the deity that “wurke in us continually, all togeder.” While Julian lists them as divine gifts, which suggests that they exist harmoniously, she rather models them throughout the showings as sources of information in conflict; they straddle the two domes and often directly oppose each other. As she systematically collapsed the categories built on the division of the two domes, she overshadowed the lower dome by the higher; correlatively, she overshadowed common church teaching by the messages of *A Revelation*. Finally, human reason that discerns practical truth in “inward keeping” when it reaches into the higher dome of contemplative faith interprets the showings. Thus, the three sources of information provided to human beings have unequal authority by this point in the showings, even if this passage presents them as equal divine gifts.

Lines 80.28-35 underscore again how mother debt trumps information that may be proffered by human reason or common church teaching during the interaction of the three foregoing divinely donated sources of information. Sin is characterized as the human act that leaves Jesus alone as he stands “swemly and moning” in divine thirst. When humans fail to believe in mother debt, despairing, they damage Jesus by leaving

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<sup>756</sup> *Ibid*, 371: 80.1-7

him alone.<sup>757</sup> They exacerbate Christ's thirst. This interpretation of sin considers hurt not a theft of the father's honor but the failure to respond the other-directed need for relationship in mother Jesus. Julian is able to make this interpretation because she has made other-directed love an essential part of the deity in the second person, or because she has made mother debt an essential part of the deity. Mother debt becomes the focus that trumps practical human arbitration of truth, as this latter chapter solidifies. Through conflict and suffering in the soul, persons must move away from some common church teachings that conflict with the inward teachings of the showings. Reason, on the other hand, straddles the two in an attempt to bridge them. The human matures as her holistic response to mother debt becomes a habituated one of honor and immediate response rather than the taking for granted or taking "too recklessly" of mother debt.

The discernment of true and false dreads, then, must rely on knowledges in the self that emerge from human reason, from the lower dome and from the higher dome.<sup>758</sup> The discernment proves to be the discernment of the feeling of reliance upon mother debt, and the rejection of any movement in the self that suggests the opposite. After considering the three sources of knowledge between which one must discern, Julian emphasizes again the theme that she explored in chapter seventy-eight. Humans will sin, but the deity will measure the showing of it to their awareness mildly. In response, humans should see that "his love and goodness" are their medicine. His love is repeated

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<sup>757</sup> *Ibid*, 373: 80.28-35. "And what time that we falle into sinne and leve te midne of him and the keping of oure owne soule, than bereth Crist alone alle the charge of us. And thus stodeth he swemly and moning. Than longeth it to us for reverence and kindnesse to turne us hastely to oure lorde, and let him not alone. He is here alone with us alle. That is to sey, only fo rus he is here. And what time I be straunge to him by sinne, dispair or sloth, then I let my lorde stonde alone, in as mekille as he is in me. And thus it fareth with us all which be sinners. But though it be so that we do thus oftentimes, his goodnesse suffereth us never to be alone, but lastingly he is with us and tenderly he excuseth us, and ever kepeth us from blame in his sight."

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid*, 259: 45.1-22. The higher beholding... the lower beholding introduced with the two domes.

as that love which is “marvelous and hard” and which may not be broken by human trespass, or the love that Julian has rooted in mother debt: “I love the and thou lovest me, and oure love shall never be deperted in two, and for thy profite I suffer...and all this was shewde in gostly understanding seyeng this blessed worde: ’I kepe the full sekerly.’”<sup>759</sup>

As repeatedly discussed, mother debt is the clearest specific meaning by which Julian defines the important term “sekerness” in the showings. The gradual process through which human beings sort through internal and external sources of information in order to acclimatize their senses to the “inward keeping” of mother debt produces the “sekerness” that humans owe to the deity. Sin is the reckless underestimation of mother debt during this process. Mother debt proves to be the medicine that gradually heals the illness of sin. It is also the reward of virtue that proves to be the intimate inward experience of mother debt. The turbulent navigation of the “three things by which we stand” is a longing and a penance that Julian models. As she summarily shows in 82.26, humans are to instrumentally keep the lower dome in view, only to practice the self so that the higher dome gradually overtakes the lower:

In falling and in rising we are ever preciously kepte in one love...for in the beholding of god we falle not, and in the beholding of oureselfe we stonde not. And both theyse be soth, as to my sight, but the beholding of oure lord God is the higher sothnes.<sup>760</sup>

She further supports this displacement through the rest of chapter eighty-two. The discernment between the three sources of knowledge is a practical cultivation of enjoyment and aversion, not an assent to a truth claim. It encourages persons to foster a sense of the higher dome that overshadows the sense of the lower dome. The “higher

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<sup>759</sup> *Ibid*, 375: 82.15-17.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid*, 375: 82.23-26.

beholding” keeps one in the feelings of solace and enjoyment, the lower in dread that makes one “ashamed” when they take mother debt too lightly.<sup>761</sup> The objective in this practical cultivation is to always hold oneself “mekille more” in beholding the higher dome while one does not leave the lower dome. However, to direct one’s attention “much more” towards the higher dome implies that one should direct her attention “much less” towards the lower dome. The text reinforces that instruction by making only negative reference to the lower dome. One should “not leave” it; however, the text here gives no positive directions about how to positively engage it.<sup>762</sup>

This dyad of reverent dread and homely love blended and separated over the last chapters. Love emerges as the more prominent and aligns with mother debt. Dread, on the other hand, prevents the immature human from touching that love recklessly. Mother debt overshadows reverent dread when readers perform the instructions to discern true from false dreads; Julian gives mother debt more practical visibility since the experience of mother debt is a goal in itself, while reverent dread is meant as a check upon those who are not mature enough to give proper estimation to homely love.

Chapter eighty-three deviates from the previous discussion of homely love and dread. It rather discusses life, love, and light. I only consider these briefly here for two reasons. The first because the discussion of light and love is difficult and “elusive.”<sup>763</sup> It picks up the arguments made in chapters fifty-five and fifty-six that defend the “truth” of the showings according to more traditional categories for the Trinitarian persons. While

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<sup>761</sup> However, it is only pain that blames and punishes, *Ibid*, 375: 82.8-9 recalls 289: 51.29-30: “And I behelde with avisement, to wit if I culde perceive in him onydefaute, or if the lorde shuld assigne in him any maner of blame. And sothly there was none seen.” Also 279: 51.99-101: “And then I saw that only paine blameth and ponisheth, and oure curteyse lorde comforteth and socurreth”

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid*, 375: 82.27-34.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid*, 376: Note 83.4. Life, love and light.

these arguments are important parts of the showings, the less traditional arguments that this paper traces practically overshadow these more traditional arguments. For example, the reader who would implement Julian's practical instructions for discerning true and false dreads would find the bulk of their instructions ask them to imagine reverent dread and mother debt, rather than life, love and light. The abstraction of her discussion of light stands in contrast to the more concrete practical arguments that she has made about reverent dread and mother debt during the last half of the showings, which her readers may more easily implement. Further, this paper argues that the showings eventually place most authority in the readers' practical discernment of the divine movement within guided by the instructions of the showings. For this reason, the paper focuses upon the theological ideas that pertain most to that practical discernment. However, even if practical discernment did not emerge as an authority in this way, the bulk of the showings build an argument that spends far more time developing the ideas of mother debt and reverent dread than it does developing the ideas of life, love and light. So, for that reason, and due to limitations of space, I only consider life, love and light briefly here.

#### *IX. Standing To Us In the Night*

The light that produces faith makes an account of truth as the woeful practice of reason that struggles to bridge the two domes. It is woeful because the light of faith is only measured discretely to human beings according to the maturity of their ability to receive it. The immaturity of their inability to receive faith causes the woe that makes up

the “medular” of human suffering. Truth<sup>764</sup> is that which “stonds to” us “in the night.”

The divine source measures faith out to the practitioner in doses that increase as she practically advances :

Our faith is a light, kindly coming of oure endlesse day that is oure fader, God; in which light oure moder, Crist, and oure good lorde, the holy gost, ledeth us in this passing life. This light is mesured descretly, nedfully stonding to us in the night. The lighte is cause of oure life, the night is cause of oure paine and alle oure wo, in which woe we deserve endlesse mede and thanke of God. For we, with mercy and grace, wilfully know and beleve oure lighte, going therin wisely and mightely.<sup>765</sup>

“Standing to,” a phrase used nowhere else in the showings, implies not only the benefit of the light that illuminates only what we need to see, but also the obliqueness of the truth that it provides. Accordingly, *A Revelation* may only illuminate the night as one practices the discernment of true and false dreads in order to receive more light in that night. One knows the light or truth by “going therin” wisely, or by *living* it wisely.<sup>766</sup> The truth is an action, qualified by the contemplative maturity of the practioner. A person may receive the effect of the truth that stands towards her insofar as that person cultivates her own practical “standing towards” truth in the realm of contemplative practice. After all, the “standing” of desire in her is the desire of Christ expressing through her.

The goodness that the Trinity mediates through this light of faith inspires Julian to desire it with all of her “mightes.”<sup>767</sup> The “mightes” also suggest Julian’s scandalized grief, which was delivered with all of her “mightes,” as well as the highest human virtue,

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<sup>764</sup> *Ibid*, 377: 83.5 and 377: 83.10. Reason is associated with “kinde” that is associated with the light. The light is also associated with faith. Thus truth, as the object of reason and truth as the object of faith are associated with the light that “stands to” human beings in the night.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid*, 377: 83.13.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid*, 377: 83.16-17, Watson, p. 376.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid*, 377: 83.5-7.

which is performed with all of the human “mightes,” that of fleeing to the mother’s breast. The “mightes” here primarily refer to the intellectual ability that helped Julian to understand the showings and to the force in her that desires union with “goodness.” However, it also refers at this stage to a faculty of the higher part of the soul in its substance, as described in 55.11-13: “Oure faith cometh of the kinde love of oure soule, and of the clere lighte of oure reson, and of the stedfaste minde which we have of God in oure furst making.”<sup>768</sup> Thus, the navigation of truth requires the “mightes” of reason as well as the “mightes” of faith, as those draw progressively closer to each other by the end of the showings.

Verses 83.17 also return to the significance of the belief in the “deed” that will meet Julian’s least concern as she navigates truth and the two domes. Truth “stonds to” us as we rely upon the coming of that deed.<sup>769</sup> Julian will circle back to the importance of the deed in everyday Christian experience in the last chapter.

Chapter eighty-four reveals the light itself to be charity, having been identified with faith and reason in chapter eighty-three. The practice of truth that only “stonds to” us in the night is unclear so that it prevents human beings from seeing clearly “oure blisseful day.” Rather, “it is all sperred fro us, but it is such a lighte in which we may live nedfully with traveyle.” “Sperred” evokes the deity’s “prevy concelle” in 30.10-13, which is “hid and sparred fro us.” It anticipates Julian’s reintroduction of the “deed”

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<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*, 376: Note 83.6-7.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 377: 83.17: “And at the end of woe, sodeynly oure eye shalle be opened, and in clernes of sight oure light shalle be fulle, which light is God oure maker, fader and holy gost in Crist Jhesu oure savior.” For themes related to “oure eye shalle be opened,” see also 347: 72.27: “For oure gostly eye is so blinde;” 375: 82.33-34, “more in the beholding of the higher,” and 379: 85.9-10, “than shalle we clerely see in God the previtees which now be hid to us.”

again in the last chapter. The unclarity of truth shows that an abiding agnosticism remains during truth that is a practice.

While Julian's practical instructions exploit the other-centeredness of divine mother debt, Julian turns in chapter eighty-four to charity as a grace in which love is self-directed. Humans love the deity for his own sake, and ourselves in the deity, and everything that the deity loves, for his own sake. The height of charity is the disinterested love of the deity.<sup>770</sup> The showings land here in another distressing contradiction. While "sekerness" was rooted in the sureness of mother debt, and specifically in its other-centered nature that makes it owe salvation to human beings, the deities now loves for its own sake, which does not suggest any such debt. The self-directed love that the deity has for itself has not been shown to have any such responsibility to save that guarantees human beings "sekerness." The reader must keep both divine mother debt and self-directed divine love in mind. And, at the same time, they must cultivate most strongly the highest human virtue that runs to the mother's breast with all "sekerness," or, they must trust mother debt the most.

However, while self-directed divine love ostensibly complicates the portrayal of mother debt, it also follows its logic. Julian places a human stigma in the deity – birth that owes its offspring for that very act of birth. She does this in order to ensure that the deity must preserve the lives of human beings and may not be allowed to damn them. She thus uses a stigma, rather than a virtue, to ensure secureness for human beings. Even as she positions the stigma within divine authority, it retains a stigmatized character. The

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<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, 379: 84.10-12. See 376: Note 84.10-12, "This seems to allude to the account of the third and fourth degrees of love in Bernard of Clairvaux's *De Diligendo Deo* (On Loving God), in the lower of which "man loves God for God's sake," while in the higher, attainable only for short periods in this life he "loves himself only for the sake of God" (118-119).

stigma aligns with other symbols that must be subordinated in order to ensure the superiority of the higher, or divine, identity. Thus, creation is other-directed in relation to the deity as human mothers are other-directed in relation to human fathers. Divine superiority relies upon human inferiority. The strategy that Julian uses to ensure “sekerness” through mother debt gives her the assurance of salvation but also requires her to, at the end of the showings, reinstate self-directed love that is contingently related to that assurance.

Chapter eighty-five returns again to the deed that will be revealed. When the higher dome is “geven” we will all be brought up above and then we shall “clerely see in God the previtees which now be hid to us.” At that point, because the prophesied deed will have resolved Julian’s concern that the Deity did not prevent suffering, no one will be inclined to make her first expression of scandalized grief:

And then shalle none of us be stered to sey in ony thing: “Lorde, if it had ben thus, it had ben wele.’ But we shalle alle sey with one voice: “Lorde, blessed mot thou be, for it is thus, it is wele. And now we se verely that alle thing is done as it was thin ordinance, or ony thing was made.”<sup>771</sup>

Julian approaches the end of the showings with the scandalized grief that began her reflection on evil and sin. Here no one will be “steered” to make her accusation, but only because the secret deed that resolves her distress will have preempted their lament. Thus, in the absence of the deed, the scandalized grief may be reasonable. Only trust in the deed justifies “sekerness.” The deed travelled into “alle” then into “sekerness” and then into “mother debt.” Thus, if one practices mother debt and believes in the deed, Julian’s scandalized grief will dissolve, but only under those conditions. Importantly, those conditions oppose the common teachings of the church. Thus, if one were to follow

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<sup>771</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 379: 85.1-13.

common church teaching rather than the showings, they would reasonably make the accusations that Julian's scandalize grief represent.

However, as was shown, the "sekerness" of truth that mother debt offers is not an intellectual offering. It is a practice in which the practitioner develops the ability to discern between true and false dreads in order to sense the inward keeping of mother debt. Thus, if one practices her abiding agnosticism with faith in the deed and in the assured salvation of mother debt, one may follow the program of *A Revelation*. If they do, they will alternately feel wellness and woe. According to the foregoing analysis of the showings, that means that they will alternately believe in a deity that assuredly prevents sufferings for human beings (mother debt), on the one hand, and in a deity that could damn them, on the other. The first will leave them with no reason to demand restitution from a neglectful deity, while the second will leave them with a reason to demand such restitution.

Julian shores up this practical trajectory of the showings at their end by calling for the performance of the book that has not yet been made: "This boke is begonne by Goddes gifte and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as to my sight. For charite pray we alle togeder, with Goddes wurking: thanking, trusting, enjoyeng." This performance will not be merely a human one. Rather the performance will be one in which humans beseech the deity acting as a channel for the divine desire that moves in them:

For thus wille oure good lord be prayde, by the understanding that I toke in alle his owne mening, and in thes wordes where he seyth full merely: "I am ground of they beseching." For truly I saw and understode in oure lordes mening that he shewde it for he will have it knowen more than it is. In which knowing he wille geve us grace to love him and cleve to him.<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> *Ibid*, 379: 86.1-7.

The book is thus to be performed as a prayer of the deity who is the ground of the readers  
“beseeching” that waits to be performed.

## **Chapter 7: Synthesis of Julian and Judith Butler; Mother Debt as a Crossing that Produces Survival through Transformational Anger**

Chapters four and five show an antagonistic relationship between different sources of Julian's experience. Julian describes her experience as coming from three places: one is her response to the revelation. Another is her response to common church teaching. Additionally, she refers to her "reason" and responses to her own feelings. These different streams of experience tell Julian different things about how she should relate to blame and punishment for sin. Julian agonizes over the conflict because she wants a uniform agreement among her different experiences about how she should relate to blame and punishment in herself.

To complicate things further, Julian recognizes that her own feelings are shaped by the opinions expressed by church teaching as well as the opinions of her visions that disagree with church teaching. Her experience of her reason, then, is to feel that her own opinions are at odds with each other.

In addition, Julian's own concern that the deity uses its omnipotence to prevent sin and suffering for human beings finds expression in mother debt. According to the last chapter the expression of scandalized grief that Julian makes in chapter 27 initiates the chain of ideas that develop into the practice of mother debt. As we have seen in Ch. 6, mother debt involves the deity's obligation toward all human beings to guarantee them salvation and keeping in this life regardless of the sin that human beings may commit. The idea that proves to be nascent mother debt when it fully develops first appears through the "alle" in Julian's question that asks "how might alle be well?" This is an incipient form of mother debt because, as chapter six explained, the term alle becomes

the secret deed that may save all human beings from damnation and for which mother debt thirsts. This mother debt sharpens the disagreement that Julian's revelation has with church teaching over sin and blame. So, the disagreements that the higher realm of faith has with church teachings seem to originate from Julian's own questions concerning damnation and the possibility of universal salvation, or from her reason.

Julian is careful gradually to prove that her questions are the motion of the deity within her. She explains that Jesus both delights in the questions that he initiates within Julian and is the divine thirst at work within Julian that asks the questions themselves. Thus, Julian's reason is her own and, at the same time, is not separate from the divine thirst that moves in the higher realm. In other words, her reason and the realm of faith have vague boundaries, even while she refers to them separately, because the deity is the very motion of her reason. Reason and faith, in this sense, are two aspects of the same process.

At the same time, Julian's reason seems specifically distinct from the deity. She remains dissatisfied with the explanation for suffering that the revelations offer. The ostensible explanation that *A Revelation* gives is a process, an experience. It is primarily an experience of the higher realm that the inner senses discern. The deity offers the whole experience as the new stream of information that would explain why it is good for all that suffering exists. Given this meaning of "explanation," Julian gleans from the revelations that she will remain dissatisfied till her death at the inadequacy of the answer or experience. Since she nonetheless describes a divine force that is completely satisfied, even overjoyed, at the explanation for suffering that it will eventually give, the deity and its reason remain starkly separate from Julian's reason.

What should we make of the antagonism between these different parts of Julian's experience? This chapter will attempt to show that the concepts of melancholic anger and mother threat help to explain both these tensions and Julian's resolution of them. Melancholic anger, as we have seen, depends upon a lost object that has certain characteristics, such as a repressed, censored relationship to a caretaker who both gives a child identity and serves as the object of the child's erotic desire. Butler's approach enables us to interpret Julian's text to describe that lost object and these attached characteristics at work in Julian's text. The lens of mother threat, treated in the first chapter, and the lens of the Butlerian partitioned subject, treated in the second and third chapters, thus allow us to find the traces of that lost object in the migration of the "alle" in chapter 27 of *A Revelation* into the practice of Mother Jesus, or mother debt, that follows later. In other words, Julian resolves the antagonism between these different aspects of her experience by transforming her desire that all be well into a relation to a divine figure that crosses identity and desire.

The antagonism that Julian feels comes from the conflict between different streams of knowledge that she experiences. One stream of knowledge (common church teaching) justifies a deity who fails to prevent suffering and whom Julian suspects is insensitive to human suffering. Another stream (the realm of faith) portrays mother Jesus who is not only sensitive to human suffering but offers Julian reparations for human suffering by promising unbreakable keeping and salvation to Julian since mother Jesus bore her into suffering. These two different portrayals of divine insensitivity or sensitivity correlate with a view of the human and the divine that associate with gendered roles based on the separation of identity and desire, or gendered roles based upon the crossing

of identity and desire. A disposition of insensitivity in the deity towards human beings correlates with masculinity that is defined by femininity that poses as its absent reflection, or in which identity is strictly separated from desire. That definition of gender views femininity as intrinsically masochistic, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century empathic mother considered in chapter 1. Femininity so empties itself of content that it becomes masochism, to uphold a masculinity that does not suffer. Thus a divine figure that associates with this form of masculinity should not be affected by the suffering of humans that associate with femininity, which absently reflects that masculinized deity. A divine figure that crosses the separation between identity and desire, on the other hand, does not justify the suffering of one feminine side of a polarized gender identity because both femininity and masculinity bleed together across the separation and in doing so become a third space that is not intelligible as either heteronormative femininity or masculinity. Both sides might equally be expected to have suffering or the lack thereof because both sides blend. Thus, Julian's scandalized grief at the insensitivity in the deity is a scandalized grief at a binary that requires a strict separation between identity and desire.

Julian will describe mother Jesus as a divine figure that violates the usual requirements of the norms of compulsory heterosexuality to separate masculinity and femininity through the separation of identity and desire. According to those norms, Julian should describe the deity that is the object of her erotic desire as a figure that is opposite to her in gender (and so masculine), and she should not be able to identify with that masculine figure, because according to those same norms she should identify with a figure of the same gender, or a figure marked by femininity. In other words, she should

not cross the figure with whom she identifies with the figure that she also desires. Additionally, according to these norms in the Western social imaginary, divine figures stand in relation to human beings as masculinity stands to femininity. Therefore Julian should not describe a divine figure that is marked by femininity and so she should never identify with a divine figure so long as her body is marked by femininity. However, when she describes mother Jesus she will violate the command to separate masculinity and femininity, since she may take that figure both as the object of her desire and as the figure with whom she identifies. Importantly, the explicit crossing of gender in mother Jesus is really the culmination of a number of other methodical crossings of binaries that Julian performs earlier in the text before she introduces mother Jesus.

Reading Julian's methodical crossings against Butler's framework, Julian's work to methodically cross binaries is the beginning of a rearrangement of gender that she continues in mother Jesus. In chapter 1 Butler's method of genealogy did not begin to investigate gender through the distinction between sex and gender that is usually considered to be a division between biology and culture. Rather, Butler investigates gender by considering the history of conditions in the Western imaginary that allow masculinity and femininity to emerge. These conditions are a history of related binaries that especially collect around the binary of matter and reason. Those binaries act like a root system that predetermines the shapes of the leaves that gender will take. Consequently, the investigation of those binaries radically investigates gender.

Butler's lens will reveal that Julian follows a similar strategy in *A Revelation*. When Julian insistently returns to her scandalized grief she progressively revises the root system of Western traditional binaries that would exclude her anger towards divine

insensitivity as unintelligible. In this way she prepares a different root system that allows for expression of at least traces of her anger towards that insensitivity. She especially revises those binaries that relate to blame, punishment and the responsibility for suffering. For example, she erodes the inferiority of sensuality upon which the superiority of speculative reason depends when she makes sensuality the genre that includes speculative reason; she also erodes the boundaries between human blameworthiness and divine innocence through her new theological ideas of the godly will and mother Jesus. Because these new anthropological and theological ideas erode authoritative binaries in the Western imaginary, they also oppose common church teachings about the responsibilities that the deity and human beings hold for suffering. Therefor Julian delicately replaces traditional sources of authority with new ones that encourage her anger rather than exclude it. Before Julian introduces the idea of mother Jesus late in the text, the revisions that she previously made to Western binaries have already evacuated the feminine and the masculine of their usual meanings. Thus mother Jesus may act as a figure that could have sensitivity towards human suffering. Mother Jesus thus functions as a deity that corresponds to Julian's desire that it have sensitivity towards Julian in a similar way to the sensitivity that Julian has towards the divine figure and towards other humans. Or, mother Jesus functions as the lost object that Julian mourns when she feels scandal in response to a deity that is insensitive to human suffering.

I will use Butler to interpret Julian's returns as the gradual emergence of the presence of such a lost object. After that I will consider how the changes that happen throughout that migration may describe the progression of melancholic anger into what I

have called transformational anger. The shifts in Julian's appeal to different sources of authority will play an explanatory role in that later consideration.

Thus we will follow the foregoing antagonism in order to shed light upon it through the lens of melancholic anger. This approach uses the theory of melancholic anger to open up ways to look at the antagonism between the different sides of Julian's "reason," as well as the antagonism that Julian encounters between her reason, church teaching and her visions.

### *I. Gender Theory's Analysis of the Shame Through Which Julian Frames Her Scandalized Grief*

Chapters five and six tracked Julian's return to the theme she presented in chapter 27 of *A Revelation*, where she first voiced what I have called her scandalized grief at the deity's lack of sensitivity to human suffering. Those chapters showed that, even as Julian presented her grief originally as folly, she later repeatedly returns to that ostensible foolishness in order to revive it as a perfection. She finally makes her concern the defining divine quality of mother Jesus: the divine thirst to remove all suffering that cannot be broken by human trespass. Thus, Julian rhetorically shames her scandalized feelings in chapter 27, only to repeat them in less direct ways as one main purpose of the showings. From Butler's point of view, as explained in chapter 3, *A Revelation* might be considered the unraveling of grief insofar as the Western social imaginary allows for traces of forbidden grief to emerge.

It is important at the outset, then, to understand the conditions in the Western social imaginary that forbid Julian's expression of grief. This is important because Julian subtly unravels many of these conditions by repeatedly returning indirectly to her

feelings of scandal, an erosion that we may miss if we do not recognize those conditions at the outset.

Gender theory suggests that in chapter 27 Julian preemptively shames her scandalized grief at the deity's failure prevent sin because she spoke from a position of gender panic. Gender panic requires that one restabilize their position either as masculine or non-masculine if they cross the boundaries that separate those two.<sup>773</sup> In Julian's grief, as we will see, this restabilization takes the form of her assessment that her grief is sinful folly that she and others should forsake.

The preemptive frame that repudiates Julian's scandalized grief before she mentions it in 27.4-6 suggests this panic. Before she tells readers how she thematically doubts the wisdom and the power of the deity, Julian discounts the doubts she is about to reveal by calling them foolish in advance. It is only "in her folly" that she wonders "why, by the grete forseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sinne was not letted" so that "alle shulde have be wele." As the previous chapter indicated, Julian also frames her scandalized grief in an indirect space, one outside of the vibrancy of direct address that gives brightest color to her visions. She moves into an indirection, an alley that is out of site from the fabric of her larger conversation, to voice it. Only in that detour does she introduce her scandalized grief. She then punctuates that space as folly:

And after this oure lorde brought to my minde the longing that I had to him before. And I saw that nothing letted (nothing prevented me) me but sinne. And so I behelde generally in us alle, and methought: 'If sinne had not be, we shulde alle have be Clene and like to oure lorde as he made us.'" And thus in my folly before this time, often I wondred why, by the grete forseeing wisdom of God, the beginning of sinne was not letted. For then thought me that alle shulde have be

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<sup>773</sup> See Butler in chapter 3, page 391.

were. This stering was mekille to be forsaken, and neverthelesse morning and sorow I made therfore withoute reson and discretion.<sup>774</sup>

Despite this self doubt, as chapters five and six showed, she returns to her concern that the deity is insensitive to human suffering, and therefore not wise or powerful, over and over again. She uses the contemplative cyclical method that Baker describes to allow the meter of *A Revelation* to be the return over and over again to this knot, in order to incrementally unravel it. However, when she first mentions that scandal, she repudiates it.

Gender panic explains the preemptive shame that she uses to diffuse the energy of her concern, even if she eventually valorizes that same concern. As chapters 2 and 3 explain, this panic consists in the internalized fearful response that occurs when one violates the prohibition that one never cross identification and desire in the social imaginary. In the face of fear when one crosses the prohibition, this panic immediately repeats the behaviors that will reestablish this prohibition. The boundaries that limit the feminine, and therefore the positions through which Julian may express as a woman, turn upon the requirement that people must make erotic object choices through the separation of identification and desire. To understand that prohibition upon crossing illuminates the depth of shame that Julian preemptively shows in response to her scandal.

As chapter three explained, the separation between identity and desire produces masculine and feminine positions through a devaluation of certain erotic ties.<sup>775</sup> It devalues a “censored, repressed element of the feminine” that in turn produces normal feminine and masculine gender identities.

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<sup>774</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 27.1-8.

<sup>775</sup> See chapter 3, page 106.

Silverman describes the separation through an early experience of the feminine caretaker in which the child both identifies with the mother, models their own identity upon her, and takes the mother as the child's erotic object. She therefore conjoins her identity – that of the mother – with her erotic object choice – also the mother. The mother has an essential role in the early phases of subjectivity in which the child gropes its way toward identity by incorporating the mother's facial expressions, sounds, and movements, as it begins to assimilate the system of language.<sup>776</sup> When the little girl identifies with the mother during these early phases of subjectivity, she aspires to activity because she identifies with the mother. She also aspires to activity because she takes the mother as an erotic object of love.

However, the social community symbolically castrates that the relationship that the child has with the mother that both identifies with and desires her when it degrades the mother in particular and requires that femininity be synonymous with degradation in general. At the same time the social community gives the little girl no outlet through which to object to such degradation, even though the mother is her primary object of love. In addition, because of the degradation shown the mother and the admiration shown the father, the girl would be encouraged by her community to displace her desire onto the father and to, in Freud's words "get rid of the mother."<sup>777</sup> Thus the Western heteronormative social imaginary requires the degradation of the feminine and the valorization of the masculine.

She would at the same time feel enormous cultural pressure to continue to identify with the degraded mother because of her own assigned gender role. This causes the girl

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<sup>776</sup> See chapter 3, page 105, on Silverman.

<sup>777</sup> See chapter 3, page 102, Silverman on Freud.

to enter into a condition that is normative for feminine subjects that blights her relations with both herself and her culture.<sup>778</sup> The girl must separate the object with which she identifies (the mother) and the erotic object that she chooses (which become masculine figures).

The ambivalence that the girl feels toward the mother when she must degrade her “has more to do with the devaluation of the original erotic object than with anything else. In effect, the female subject is punishing her mother (and consequently herself) for being inferior and insufficient, unworthy of love.”<sup>779</sup> Femininity is thus defined as passivity, Silverman explains, not because of “nature” but rather because of the cultural discourses and institutions that support that definition.<sup>780</sup>

Further, the disjunction of identification and desire devalues the feminine in a particular way and causes the little girl to have a more rigid super-ego than the little boy. The feminine position is defined as passivity that may not aspire to activity. The little girl is specifically forbidden to mourn her loss of activity that she experienced when she both identified with the mother as well as took the mother as her erotic object. This prohibition results in a self-surveillance through which the girl treats herself as an object to be criticized and acted upon, to be overseen and overheard, but not to act. Each of the little girl’s memories of activity towards the mother must be broken and rendered worthless. Thus, the feminine position requires passivity that is maintained by an internalized hatred of her efforts toward activity. What the little girl loses, what is foreclosed to her, is her activity through which she attached to her mother, or what this

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<sup>778</sup> See chapter 3, page 106, and also see chapter 1, page 15 on Irigaray, who gestures towards melancholia as the normative formation for feminine subjectivity.

<sup>779</sup> See chapter 3, page 106, Silverman on ambivalence and devaluation.

<sup>780</sup> See chapter 3, page 105, Silverman on femininity.

heteronormative grid considers her homosexual desire.<sup>781</sup> On the other hand, the feminine position in this scenario must maintain the hatred for her own aspirations to activity through her continual dependence upon the exclusive activity of the masculine position.<sup>782</sup>

Silverman's theory responds to Freud. Recall that through the separation of identity and desire Freud identified the position of masculinity with morality and a kind of cultural wholeness. By the same token, he defined femininity through a lack of male genitals and a longing for them. The formation of masculinity for Freud is the formation of conscience and morality. The feminine position is not capable of wielding conscience in the same way, or lacks that power, on account of the girl's lack of moving through a fear of castration because she has no penis to lose.<sup>783</sup> Lacan similarly based the formation of gender on the separation of identification and desire. Through the *imago* he associated a line of control with masculinity that staged itself against the wayward body in pieces that aligns with the feminine position as a lack of that control that could unite the body in pieces. Freud and Lacan's theories both underscore the societal norms that degrade the feminine and define it as a certain hatred for aspirations toward activity.

Silverman's account lends insight to the preemptive repudiation that Julian makes of her scandalized grief. Julian stands in a doubly feminine position, first in relation to

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<sup>781</sup> As described in chapter 3, page 107. According to Silverman's account the little boy, too, "grope[s] his way towards identity" by incorporating the facial expressions, movements and sounds of the mother. As a result, the little boy in Silverman's opinion is more 'feminine' than masculine through this identification and incorporation until his castration crisis (although the idea of feminine or masculine only come into play retroactively after sexual differentiation). It follows, she suggests, that there is a period of time after the beginning of the Oedipus complex in which the male child both desires and identifies with the mother.

<sup>782</sup> These are at least the aims of societal norms; as Butler, Silverman and Cheng show these norms possess their own undoing in the instability at the heart of masculinity, which will be discussed later.

<sup>783</sup> Freud established this dichotomy of wholeness and lack through what Butler describes as his "sheer conviction" that the male genitals are the origin of desiring activity despite his own observation that (as Silverman notes) the girl child displays desiring activity towards the mother. See Chapter 1, page 60.

common church teaching that is reserved to masculine clerics and second in relation to a deity that church teaching presents as iconically masculine. When Julian “wondered why” in 27.5 she questions the power and wisdom of the masculine architects of church teaching about the deity as well as the power and wisdom of the masculine deity that speaks to her in her visions. In that act she fails appropriately to hate her aspirations toward activity, and so fails to uphold the separation between identity and desire that maintains masculine identity both for church teaching and for her divine interlocutor. When she “wonders” or shows suspicion towards masculine others she fails to hate her own aspirations towards activity. Rather, she aspires to activity, to make moral meaning that is not first produced by a masculine other. In this way, when she aspires toward activity, she crosses identity and desire. She fails to be the appropriate feminine position that identifies with a degraded passive non-masculine caretaker and who desires an active masculine subject erotically. Her activity rather suggests that she identifies with a masculine object that aspires to activity, even while she speaks from the position of a woman and a creature, both marked as feminine positions, that should according to the prohibition despise her aspirations towards activity.

Julian thus temporarily destabilizes her own appropriate femininity as well as clerical and divine instantiations of appropriate masculinity. Standing in that unstable position, gender panic provokes her to restabilize them. She does this preemptively in line 27.4 where she introduces her suspicion as folly, but also after she describes her scandal in lines 27.7-8, where she instructs readers that her “stering” was “mekille (much) to be forsaken,” and then describes her further indulgence in mourning and sorrow because of it that was “without reson and discretion.”

Since chapters 5 and 6 show that Julian in fact methodically returns to her scandal at divine insensitivity to suffering, and eventually establishes a deity who owes human beings salvation as well as an explanation for why it failed to prevent suffering, she clearly does not forsake her “stering” that asks this question. Gender theory suggests that she incrementally destabilizes her gendered position, covers over it through gender panic, and then destabilizes it again, only to repeat this process as a cycle throughout the showings. After many of these key destabilizations, she attributes less hatred to her aspirations for activity, and less exclusive activity to church teaching and to the deity. She eventually erodes the prohibition upon identity and desire through this incremental destabilization to a great enough extent that she presents a more mobile relation to it, rather than the rigid relation that Western compulsory heterosexuality requires.

Keeping this in mind, I will further explore the reasons that gender theory proposes for gender panic that would explain the shame towards her aspirations for activity that Julian shows in chapter 27. I will then consider the erosion of gender panic that she makes as she moves through some other key moments in *A Revelation*.

Silverman underscored that society degrades the feminine and makes it into passivity. Other gender theorists that we have examined in chapter 3 emphasize that society defines femininity as an absent mirror that reflects masculinity back to itself. The mandate to separate identity and desire produces “femininity” as a second pole of masculinity that mirrors masculinity back to itself as masculinity’s absence. In this case the very identification of femininity performs an erasure of it. Accordingly, social positions visibilize the more masculine they are and invisibilize the more feminine that they are. If a body that is labeled feminine performs in a masculine way, that body

visibilizes against the command to be feminine, and becomes a third thing aside from normalized femininity or masculinity that threatens proper visibility itself.

Drawing upon Foucault, Butler explains that masculinity that is based in the separation of identity and desire must dematerialize feminine (or non-masculine) bodies in order to keep them from erupting as visible and agentic. It must materialize bodies such that any position for the non-masculine other than that of lack is unthinkable, unrecollectable. The materialization of reason thus renders positions other than lack for non-masculine bodies unthinkable. Organizations for sex, sexuality and gender that are not determined by the separation of identity and desire become domains that a materializing body refuses; they pose as having always been refused, or as always having been non-existent. Thus to repeat the materialization of reason or the dematerialization of those bodies not associated with reason in any given moment “is always a provisional failure of memory.”<sup>784</sup> The congealing of refusals makes certain ways of behaving that cross the lack of femininity with the agency of masculinity, such as the rituals that attend the feminized fag or the phallic lesbian, seem not to be possible and makes them seem never to have existed as possible.

Julian’s action must be framed as folly, as sinful or unnatural, because the heteronormative Western social imaginary makes her actions seem impossible and unthinkable given the feminine position to which she has access. They materialize a body for whom it would be imagined to be impossible to act in the manner that she does. Materialization thus requires that some bodies that *resist* materialization, such as Julian’s as she expresses her scandal, be excluded in order to sustain the intelligibility of

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<sup>784</sup> See chapter 1, page 4, on repetition. Butler, *Bodies*, 244 footnote 7.

compulsory heterosexuality.<sup>785</sup> She represents a “constitutive outside” that materialization requires: materialization must exclude some bodies from intelligible discourse in order to produce the uniform bodies, which are the aim of a particular regime of power relations.<sup>786</sup>

Julian’s actions make her into such a body that must be excluded from the intelligible discourse of the Western imaginary enacted in the showings. She must be called a deformation of body, of intelligibility, because her expression of scandal is impossible to align with the feminine position in the Western social imaginary. She ceases to be a “normal” feminine subject; she must rather be a deformation of an intelligible subject, a sinful one.

Moreover, Butler’s considerations of Irigaray and the 20<sup>th</sup> century mother underscore that the feminine (or the non-masculine) that is dematerialized, invisibilized, or that lacks and absently reflects masculinity, does more than lack – it looms as a terrorizing threat should it erupt into something more than a lack or absence. That continuously threatening potential makes the lack of femininity into an always potentially firing weapon. Further, only masculinity can vigilantly organize femininity so that it does not erupt in that dangerous fashion.

The linguistic history of the term “matter” sheds light on this position. It serves the prohibition to cross identity and desire through a hierarchical binary between matter

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<sup>785</sup> See chapter 1, page 14. Butler, *Bodies*, 48.

<sup>786</sup> See chapter 1, page 12. Butler indicates that a “constitutive outside” refers to what is excluded and what *has to be excluded* from economies of discursive intelligibility for those economies to function as self-sustaining systems. (*Bodies*, 35). Such an economy of discursive intelligibility produces this outside: “What is excluded from this binary is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside. A constitutive or relative outside is, of course, composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity. It emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity” (*Bodies*, 39).

and form. This binary requires a certain production of the “masculine” and of the “feminine” as well as a certain erasure of the “feminine.” The part of the feminine that is erased, reminiscent of Silverman’s “repressed and censored feminine,” Butler identifies with the feminine position that welds reason or conscience, as Julian does in her scandalized grief.

Plato imagines a scenography of necessary exclusion for the erasure of a certain kind of “femininity”. The scenography involves “the architectonics of its theatre, its framing in space-time, its geometric organization, its props, its actors, their respective positions, their dialogues, indeed their tragic relations...(their) interventions on the scene...how the specular economy works.”<sup>787</sup> This scenography or imagined background theatre that Plato creates makes the representations that create a domain of necessary exclusion feasible.

Plato’s scenography produces, in the first place, masculinity which he associates with form. He in turn associates form with self-sufficiency, sovereignty, knowledge and agency. He claims that these qualities are established because of their distance from the touch of sensible particulars. He uses this spatial position to associate bodiless masculine reason with form as well as to associate femininity as a special location through which the forms transform into sensible particulars. The feminine is an infinitely penetrable location that cannot reproduce herself. She is “A universal nature that receives all bodies,” has no proper shape and is not a body. However, forms enter and pass through it. The imagined *places* on the stage that these characters assume make up the stuff of Plato’s fantasy of masculinity and femininity.

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<sup>787</sup> See chapter 1, page 17. Butler, *Bodies*, 27. And, see L. Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine.”

Plato emphatically forbids the feminine (or *hypodochē*) to resemble the masculine form or any sensible particular. Addressing the way she must relate to the forms, he specifies that she “she always receives all things...and never, in any way or at any time, assumes a form (*eilephen*) like that of any of the things which enter into her...the forms that enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of eternal realities modeled after their own patterns.”<sup>788</sup> The *hypodochē* is only to be entered (or penetrated) and never to enter (or penetrate). As a result, the *hypodochē*, then, will never be the agent but instead will always be acted upon by agents and will further be a space in which they act.

Since the *hypodochē* must not assume a form like those that enter her, she cannot really be likened to any body. Therefore, she cannot be known except by analogy, what Plato calls “bastard thinking.” This bastardization happens when one attempts to attribute metaphors based on likenesses to a human form to the feminine principle. The feminine represents an insistent threat of *disfiguration* to the human form. When Julian expresses her scandal she speaks from the feminine position that wields conscience and establishes meaning – she becomes a heightened version of the insistent threat of

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<sup>788</sup> See chapter 1, page 19, Hamilton and Cairns, *Plato*, 50c. and chapter 1, page 20, Butler on Hamilton and Cairns in *Bodies*, 40. It is interesting to consider another Platonic dialogue in relation to Butler’s examination here. In the *Parmenides* a young Socrates reaches for a definition of the forms by opposing them to hair, mud and feces (sometimes translated as ‘filth’). The *Parmenides* highlights the exclusivity of the forms as well as a sense of emotional urgency to the rejection of the suggestion of hair, mud and filth as related to the forms. An older more mature philosopher in the dialogue, Parmenides challenges the young Socrate’s idea of the forms. Parmenides asks Socrates of what things are their forms? “if there are forms, are their forms of fire and water or just justice and temperance...and are you undecided about anything else such as mud?” Mud here may also be translated as filth and as feces. Socrate responds to Parmenides by saying that the appearance of mud and related things are how things appear to us but that there can not be a form of such things. Socrates claims that he fears falling into an abyss of nonsense when he entertains the question, so he comes back to other things like justice and temperance. Socrate’s response shows the exclusion of things like mud or feces from the sovereign *archē* but also the emotional urgency of running away from the possibility of feces as having a place in the realm of the forms. *Parmenides* 130C to 130D. And see further discussion in footnote 98, in chapter one.

disfiguration towards the masculine deity as well as towards the masculine mortal authorities, especially those who author and enforce common church teachings.<sup>789</sup>

Butler translates Plato's scenography as a panic over becoming like the penetrated feminine. He panics over the non-male penetrator or the lesbian, or the phallicization of the lesbian and other rival organizations of sexuality. In order to expose this fact, Butler suggests the deployment of a "set of reverse mimes" that are different and all contest the master discourse from their various quarters. Irigaray served as one such mime for Butler. Butler's own critique of Irigaray serves as another mime. These forms of miming might resignify differently and scramble the presumptions of reason's mastery;<sup>790</sup> they might also reorient the fantasy, story or scenography that such a reason assumes.

Julian's expression of scandal, if she did not re-establish the impossibility of her act through the shameful context that she attributes to it, would also represent such a mime. When Julian performs actions that violate the space made for the *hypodochē*, when she begins to think as an origin that does not mirror back the reasonableness of society's sheer conviction that the masculine deity is wholeness and perfection, she becomes an insistent threat of deformation to the human. She affirms that the eruption of her scandalous grief is not possible for the feminine (or the non-masculine) according to a heteronormative fantasy when she calls her scandal folly or sin.

This mime can be understood more clearly by examining Irigaray's criticism of the feminine that is cast outside of the form/matter binary. In order to articulate this criticism, Irigaray formulates two categories for the feminine: the "specular" feminine and the "excessive" feminine.

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<sup>789</sup> See chapter 1, page 21, Butler on platonic disfiguration.

<sup>790</sup> See chapter 1, page 51, on miming and mastery.

The specular feminine refers to the feminine that Plato represents through the *hypodochē* or receptacle in the *eidos/hypodochē* or form/receptacle binary. The specular feminine is a position called feminine but which really acts as a mirror of masculinity: specular femininity reflects back to masculinity the image of itself that masculinity wishes to see. Hence, the specular feminine is actually a second pole of masculinity that is defined by and occupied by masculinity. *This exclusion causes the masculine to occupy both terms of the binary opposition, even as it ostensibly names the feminine. So, there are in fact two refracted fantasies of masculinity, one called masculine and one catachrestically<sup>791</sup> called feminine.*<sup>792</sup> The specular feminine, for this reason, is an instance of catachresis.

This specular femininity is defined by the nurse-receptacle. The nurse-receptacle “freezes” the feminine as “that which is necessary for reproduction of the human but which is itself not human and which is in no way to be construed as the formative principle of the human form that is, as it were, produced through it.”<sup>793</sup> At the same time, specular femininity cannot really be named at all and is not really a mode. The specular feminine thus acts as a device in Plato’s story for narrow definition of the feminine. It excludes that in the feminine which resists the figure of the nurse-receptacle. Plato thus narrowly defines the *hypodochē* in order to prohibit the generation of other possible representations of the feminine that an undesignated feminine might produce. The

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<sup>791</sup> A misuse of language in which a word ostensibly names a referent but is actually used to make invisible the referent. See chapter one for further discussion of Butler’s use of this word.

<sup>792</sup> See chapter 1, page 24, on catachresis. Butler, *Bodies*, 42.

<sup>793</sup> See chapter 1, page 24, on specular femininity. Butler, *Bodies*, 42. See also P. DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (University of Chicago Press Chicago, 1988). And Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 255 fn 30.

excessive feminine, in contrast, is the “outside” where the feminine which is not captured by the figure of the *hypodochē* remains.

Julian’s expression of scandal according to this model describes “excessive femininity” and violates the position that the Western social imaginary provides for femininity, the “specular feminine.” Julian not only originates her thought that does not align with the opinions of her masculine expert contemporaries, but she also originates thought that contradicts her masculine divine interlocutor. She also brings moral objections against the masculine deity when she indicates that the deity fails to have a kind of wisdom about sensitivity to human suffering that she has and/or fails to have appropriate will power to act on that wisdom in order to prevent sin. She thus radically fails to be the second pole of masculinity, an inscriptional space through which the masculine may reflect back to itself the image of masculinity that it wishes to see.

Following Irigaray’s perspective, Julian’s scandal could, if she did classify it as sinful folly, make what Plato has forced to be ostensibly outside his scenography—the excessive feminine—to emerge as the necessary, indispensable inside of his scenography. In so doing, she could introduce that which he excludes—excessive femininity—back into his system.<sup>794</sup> She could introduce excessive femininity back into his system by exposing specular femininity as a pole of masculinity that is defined by the negation of excessive femininity.

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<sup>794</sup> See chapter 1, page 51, Butler describes the method by which Irigaray chooses to perform this exposure as an act of critical *mimesis*. While Irigaray utilizes the terminology and scenography of Plato to make her argument and therefore mimes his grand tale of male autogenesis, she only does so as a mime that displaces the origin that Plato posits. “This is citation,” Butler avers, “not as enslavement or simple reiteration of the original, but as an insubordination that appears to take place within the very terms of the original, and which calls into question the power of origination that Plato appears to claim for himself.” Butler, *Bodies*, 45.

The good mother of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ((and the horror of its crossing to mother threat) provides a second framework that contextualizes why Julian might frame her scandalized grief in shame. As we have seen, the excessive feminine is the “outside” where the feminine which is not captured by the figure of the *hypodoché* remains. The 20<sup>th</sup> century mother provides a thick description to the cultural norms that would incite Julian to frame her expression of scandal as shameful and sinful, so that she could reject it and return to an acceptable feminine (or non-masculine) position in the social imaginary.

According to the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century empathic mother “mother love” and motherhood were necessary healthy developmental stages for all women. Mother love and motherhood, according to this view, should supplant all other possible identities for women.

In particular, for a woman to be a good woman/mother she must exhibit a joy that masochistically defers to others. Mothers must have “mother love” defined as an inner state of fulfillment or “fun” that mothers experience when they engage in the tasks of mothering; according to experts like Dr. Benjamin Spock mother love/joy must be “ever-present, all-providing, inexhaustibly patient and tactful, and anticipates her child’s every need.” It is “relentless tenderness” and “total availability.”<sup>795</sup>

The mother’s awareness is not of herself but rather of the body of the child, which initiates action for the empathic mother’s body and acts upon it. Psychoanalysis during this period made it the job of a mother “to service her child’s needs and then disappear

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<sup>795</sup> See chapter 1, page 36, on relentless tenderness. *Ibid*, 258-59; 66.

into the scenery.”<sup>796</sup> Experts claimed that appropriate femininity was necessarily masochistic in this regard: it “represents an adjustment to the realities of her life, in which many of the normal female functions involve a combination of pain and pleasure, even joy, such as defloration and childbirth.”<sup>797</sup> The assumed masochism of the mother and the assumed purity of the baby’s wish combined to recommend that that the baby’s wish be the masochistic mother’s command. Accordingly “the baby’s pleasure was the highest good, but this was not experienced as a burden by the unneurotic mother, because the baby’s pleasure was her pleasure...the good mother has no needs of her own.”<sup>798</sup>

Mother love specifically forbids that mothers feel any hostility. If a mother felt ambivalence toward her tasks of mothering, if she failed to enjoy “mother love” as she cleaned up the baby, she was a mentally sick woman and also a threatening mother that deranged her child. She became mother threat. According to the notion of “mother threat” if the mother strayed at all from achieving the actions of the empathic mother, she caused irreversible derangement in her child and thus posed a constant threat to its mental health. The father, on the other hand, was not capable of inflicting this derangement. Fathers, as a result, were not responsible for the success or failure of the impossible achievement of a well-balanced child. “Mother bashing” was popular in the media, for example in novels where mothers are killed or silenced so that the protagonist of the novel can develop in a healthier way.<sup>799</sup> Thus any emergence of hostility that retaliated

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<sup>796</sup> See chapter 1, page , 36, on the plot against female parents. Ibid, 279.

<sup>797</sup> See chapter 1, page 37, on H. Deutsch, "The Psychology of Women." *Motherhood* 2 (1945). Thurer, *Myths*, 280.

<sup>798</sup> See chapter 1, page 41, on mothers’ needs. Thurer, *Myths*, 256.

<sup>799</sup> See chapter 1, page 38, on narrative. Thurer, *Myths*, 267.

against her baby's usage of her turned the woman into an obstacle that merited silence or death.

This fantasy of femininity echoes the *hypodochē* that persistently threatens to deform and introduce chaos into the ordered body, even as the *hypodochē* is necessary to sustain the existence of bodies especially through labor that reproduces the conditions of private life. Importantly masculine experts must perform surveillance upon feminine caretakers because women have unconscious hostility of which they cannot be aware; these masculine experts are presumed not to be subject to eruptions of unconscious hostility and must therefore manage the always potentially dangerous feminine caretakers. Hence, if a woman is to be a "good woman" she must have continual suspicion of her feelings which could really be veiled unconscious hostility of which she is unaware. The "unconscious" nature of this hostility in the fantasy of the empathic mother therefore aligns with the threat of the *chora* that is threatening because it is irrational, inaccessible to reason and therefore inconceivable and uncontrollable. It could erupt at any moment despite the vigilance of reason.

Thus, a good woman depends upon the virtual presence of masculine expertise to be the mind that filters how she measures whether she has succeeded or failed to be an empathic bearer of mother joy uncontaminated by hostile mother threat. She is a set of functions that produce the desired practices that maintain the conditions of private life. Her materializing body becomes the contour of masculine expertise as it represents itself to her in the bodies that she maintains. Thus, such studies show that women are associated with maintaining bodies, but that women are also associated with not having the personal interests and boundaries that other bodied-people have.

The notion of an “empathic mother” is defined by how continuously she can subordinate her awareness of herself to the awareness of the collective voice of ‘experts’ in the fields of pediatrics, psychiatry and other disciplines—overwhelmingly the voice of male experts. Such experts who act as intelligent agency for the mother reveal the truer audience to which a mother must subordinate her awareness of herself. A masculine agency initiates action for the empathic mother, while the expressions of the body of the infant are the intermediary cause. The more direct cause, even if not more immediate, is the commands of masculine experts that tell mothers to subordinate their awareness of themselves to the awareness of the outline of the expressions that male experts have told them to find in the child’s body.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato secured the sovereignty of the masculine form by making the form not materially touch the sensible particulars and positioning it at a distance from them even as it supplied the rational organization for them. The fantasy of the empathic mother sets the mother and child in bold relief but tells a more subtle story about masculine expertise. This expertise will not touch the child nor maintain its existence in private life, but will remain the reasonable advice that works from a distance through the empathic mother to produce in the contours of the expressions of the child body a desire for expert masculine instructions. The mother will “fade from existence,” in Thurer’s words, as this drama plays out – supposedly for the child – but in reality for the satisfaction of masculine expertise.

This “fading” of the mother from the scene even as she is ostensibly the primary character in it also resonates with Butler’s claim that Plato names the feminine in the *Timaeus* only to invisibilize it. Plato’s catachresis, or impossible and self-contradictory

act, seems to tell a story about the feminine principle even as he deprives the feminine of representation, ontological significance, bodily contour and agency. We see something similar in the empathic mother; the more that she acts in accord with empathy the more she must lose awareness of herself and act as the reflection of masculine expert awareness of her.

The good woman is therefore normalized by the unconscious hostility of which she cannot be aware that fires and causes psychosis in society. She is defined as the potential for continuous harm but cannot keep herself from harming society unless she continuously produces her emotions through the advice of masculine experts. She is a “set of functions” that masculine experts dictate. The story of the empathic mother thus illustrates how femininity may be associated with the tactile maintenance of bodies in close proximity but also may itself be separated from the agentive qualities of bodies that are required for just such a maintenance.

This fantasy is based upon the divisions of identity and desire which, like the other figures in the legacy of compulsory heterosexuality, require that the reason of masculinity be present in two poles – one that shows active expression, and one that reflects back that image of activity through its lack of activity. The 20<sup>th</sup> century good woman shows how particularly threatening hostility expressed by the second pole of masculinity, or “specular” femininity, is to the requirements of this norm.

As a result, when Julian presents her eruption of scandal it involves an implicit hostility: as a suggestion that the deity is neither all knowing nor moral, she begins to emerge as a destabilizing mime of the masculine (as Irigaray and Butler acted towards Plato’s scenography). However, Julian’s shame instead turns her expression into

something that covers over the monstrous “excessive feminine” – she exiles that monstrosity to a place outside of “specular femininity” that mirrors the masculine back to itself as lack. Her pre-emptive shaming anticipates her transformation into mother threat should she assess her own feelings and oppose masculine expertise that organize her. She anticipates that monstrous change and pre-emptively neutralizes herself as threat when she first shames the eruption that she enacts as shameful folly (that later is sin).

II. Returns 1.5, 2 and 3 Revive Traces of Julian’s Scandal In An Honorable Rather Than Shameful Context, and Thereby Erode the Separation Between Identity and Desire

The previous section shows how Julian’s scandalized grief crossed identity and desire, provoked gender panic, and resolved that panic through the shameful context that preceded and followed her expression of scandal. This section will consider the second half of her first expression of scandal that moves in the opposite direction – the second half revives her crossing of identity and desire rather than shaming it. It will also consider the elements in her first three returns to this theme that do the same.

The divine response to Julian’s suspicion in 27.4-5 again destabilizes the prohibition on the crossing of identity and desire (which I will henceforth simply refer to as the prohibition ). Julian’s later themes in the showings make both her criticism of herself as well as her satisfaction with the deity’s actions in 27.4-5 seem spurious. Just after Julian states that she mourned and sorrowed without discretion in 27.7-8, she uses language of opposition that seem to place the divine interlocutor as a positive intelligent presence that remedies the foolishness of her suspicion by opposing it. She uses the conjunction “but” to show a contrast between the foolish indiscretion of her mourning and the divine answer which seems to answer her with an opposed truth: “But Jhesu, that

in this vision enformed me of alle that me neded...” However, her words in the rest of *A Revelation* will counter her statement that the vision in that moment gave her all that she needed. In fact, she drives the rest of the text with her assessment that the vision has not given her even what she basically needs to survive. Thus, the rest of the text makes the satisfaction that she claims to have seem misleading, which in turn promotes the need that she has to continue her question so that she may find a satisfactory answer to it.

Despite this, the divine response in lines 27.9-11 does begin to cross the prohibition. The divine answer refracts Julian’s concern that the deity is insensitive to human suffering. The divine response ‘Sinne is behovely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wel’ affirms that the deity is all-powerful but does not explain why divine good will did not prevent pain.<sup>800</sup> While it fails to answer the terms of her question, it still preserves a trace of Julian’s original desire to make all things “clean” and like the deity through a suggestion that every thing (“alle”) will be included in wellness. So, the answer does not give Julian what she asks for – an explanation for how an all-powerful good will and the failure to prevent sin exist together. However, because the deity repeats Julian’s word, “alle,” the repetition reassures Julian that her concern is the deity’s concern even if she cannot see the reason.

Further, the deity speaks to Julian without blame, which presents her term “all” in a different context that is not shamed. “It is soth that sinne is cause of alle this paine, but alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thing shale be wele.” These words of divine response were shown to her “fulle tenderly,” and showed no manner of blame to her or to “none that shalle be safe.”

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<sup>800</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 209: 27.8-10

As chapter 5 explained, the word “alle” bears traces of its earlier use in the context of the vulnerability of all creation, only kept in existence through love, and her sight of all things “in a point” that indicated divine responsibility for everything that exists. They suggest that an omnipotent and benevolent deity should not exist alongside sin.<sup>801</sup>

Most importantly, the final verses of chapter twenty-seven (27.33-36) revive traces of Julian’s scandalized grief through the prophecy of the “secret” that is not found in common church teaching. The prophecy promises a future explanation for why the deity failed to prevent sin; it thus implies that the reasons that the vision supplied to Julian in chapter twenty-seven in response to her scandalized feelings fail to answer her sufficiently. The secret will be revealed in heaven and will explain “the cause why he sufferede sine to come, in which sight we shalle endlessly have joye.”<sup>802</sup>

While the secret<sup>803</sup> contained in the prophecy postpones Julian’s answer to a future heaven where she will understand the deity’s reasons, the very reintroduction of her scandal is still significant; she very recently rejected it as sinful. The secret validates it as a worthy question despite her rejection.

The secret thus emerges as the meaning of the promise that “all shall be well,” tying the phrase “all” back to the visions of the hazelnut and the point, and their

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<sup>801</sup> When divine activity does “alle” things as Julian saw in the point, and when it does all those in love as she saw in the hazelnut, Julian sees the incongruous fact that the deity seemingly must perform all things and so must be responsible for sin and cause suffering for creatures. Or, on the other hand, sin must be absent, prompting her to ask “what is sin?” Thus, Julian’s previous use of the hazelnut and the point emphasize that the direct action of the deity controls every being and action, and therefore the deity should in some way be accountable for the existence of sin, or, if not, should at least supply more explanation to her about what sin is.

<sup>802</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 211: 27.33-36.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid*, 211: 27.33 “[A]n high, mervelous previte.” A lofty and wonderful secret. The first of several ‘privites’ discussed in the thirteenth revelation. See *Ibid*, Chapters 30, 32, 34, and 210: Note 28.33.

implications. According to Julian the secret is “in” these words. The term “alle,” the trace of Julian’s scandalized grief, now serves as a holding place for the secret. Thus, the divine response of “alle” now contains a promise to Julian to explain the divine reasons for not preventing sin. It validates Julian’s emotional and intellectual need to receive consistent reasons for why the deity failed to prevent sin. It also serves as promise that the deity will be accountable to Julian for the suffering she endures because of sin.

The term *all* thus revives Julian’s scandal by crossing the prohibition in several ways. It revives her dissatisfaction with a deity who is insensitive to sin that requires a different kind of deity in order for her to trust it. Additionally, the deity promises Julian to be responsible to answer her suspicion, which legitimizes it. This promise will eventually animate the divine thirst where Julian’s concern reaches full bloom in divine expression. Importantly, the deity delivers these concessions to Julian and shows her no manner of blame, which begins to undo the preemptive shame that Julian shed on her first expression.

Julian also presents the second and third returns to her scandalized concern without incriminating them. Because both of these returns continue to cross the prohibition, and they do so without shame, they may begin to act as a destabilizing mime of the Western story about the separation of identity and desire.

Julian returns for the second time in 29.1-5. She expresses dissatisfaction with the answer that the deity made to her first scandalized expression in 27.1-8: “But in this I stode,” she says, in

“beholding generally, swemly, and mourningly, seying thus to oure lorde in my mening with fulle gret drede: ‘A, good lorde, how might alle be wele for the gret

harne that is come by sinne to thy creatures? And here I desyered as I durste to have some more open declaring wherwith I might be esed in this.”<sup>804</sup>

Her question repeats her earlier suspicion in chapter 27.1-8 that the deity has chosen badly to create and maintain a world in which it did not prevent sin, except for in this version she does not name the deity who could have prevented sin but only mentions sin. On the heels of her previous suspicion, however, the question of how things are well when sin causes suffering still raises the question of whether the deity is trustworthy since humans do not know why the deity failed to prevent sin. In this second iteration Julian focuses upon the sheer harm that she suffers because of sin, rather than the divine likeness that she lost, as she lamented in the first iteration. She asks for clarification to ease her distress.<sup>805</sup>

She asks for this clarification even after she said before that the last divine answer gave her everything that she needed to know. Since the deity provided her with such a comprehensive answer before, Julian clearly asks for more clarification that she feels she personally needs even after the deity gave her that answer.

The analysis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century good woman suggests that Julian’s need to feel “ease” is dangerous. She feels dis-ease about the presence of sin in the world when she recently pointed out that she suspects that the deity could have prevented sin and should have done so but failed. She still feels dis-ease even after she pressed the deity on the issue and received an answer. She does not reflect that masculine answer to the deity and remain absent in her own feminine assessment. Rather, she continues to press her own sense of suspicion forward against the deity’s answer. Her failure to absently reflect the

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<sup>804</sup> *Ibid*, 213-215: 29.1-5.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid*, 213: 29.1-4.

masculine answer signals the inappropriate use of feminine awareness, and therefore the dangerous use of it. Julian strays into mother threat. However, unlike chapter 27, she does not apologize for it through repudiation. The virtue of the 20<sup>th</sup> century good woman is normatively to suspect her own assessment of her emotions; the instructions of masculine experts must regulate her state of normative cognitive dissonance that threatens psychosis should she attempt to assess her emotions herself. The tasks that masculine experts assign are “mind numbing” – and keep women in a numb state that ensures they will not inflict harm. Women who follow these instructions properly ignore any signs of hostility in themselves and will themselves to enjoy the masochistic sacrifice of their self-awareness as the exercise of mother joy. Julian resists this model of feminine awareness and when she does so crosses the separation of identity and desire.

Verses 32.2-3 reinforce that Julian requires satisfaction in her own assessment that the deity is appropriately sensitive to human suffering. The deity promises Julian “thou shalt see thyself that alle shall be well,” not only in large matters but also those that Julian considers “small.”

Julian’s third return emphasizes the same issue that her second return did but focuses upon the sheer harm that sin causes for creatures in a way that underscores the contradiction between common church teaching and the answers of her divine interlocutor. According to church teaching lines 32.31-50 require that some creatures be “dampned to hell without end.” Julian feels that if anyone is damned it is impossible that all be made well. She again introduces this objection without any shame.

The divine answer to her question underscores the contradiction between common church teaching and the ideas of *A Revelation*. Repeating the words of Julian’s objection

as the divine answer did in chapter 27 in relation to the term “alle”, the deity responds in 32.41-43: ‘That that is impossible to the is not impossible to me. I shalle save my worde in alle thing, and I shalle make althing wele.’ Julian identifies that which is not impossible for the deity as the secret, or the greet deed, and parallels what will happen through it with creation from nothing.<sup>806</sup>

The deed at the end of time reconciles common teaching about damnation with Julian’s concern that damnation would make wellness impossible. This formulation of the dispute begins to tilt authority towards the *showings* when faced with an incompatible church teaching. The unsatisfactory situation that appears to violate perfection, to be imperfectly sensitive to human suffering, is found in common church teaching. The solution that may alter it in ways humans cannot predict, like creating something from nothing, comes from *A Revelation*. Because the solution that *A Revelation* offers will satisfy even Julian’s “small” concerns that the deity must be sensitive to all human suffering, this tilt of authority toward *A Revelation* erodes the prohibition. It crosses the rigid boundary between identity and desire. Julian holds two trajectories of feeling and thought that oppose each other, but retains her trust that requires one subtly trump the other. She recommends a level of unclarity that trusts in *A Revelation*’s solution.

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<sup>806</sup> Watson, Julian, 201: 23.29-30. See *Ibid*, 222: 32.41-42. That that is impossible...to me. That which is impossible for you is not impossible for me. With a similar resistance to orthodox salvation theology, Langland at the climax of *Piers Plowman* has Christ say: ‘I may do mercy through rightwysnesse, and alle my wrdes trewe,’ even though ‘Holy Writ wole that I be wroke of hem [avenged on those] that diden ille [evil]’ (B 18.390-91). Both Langland and Julian allude to Luke 18:26-27: ‘Those who heard it said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ But he said, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with god.’

III. Returns 4 - 6 Intensify Crossings of Identity and Desire By Placing Common Church Teaching and *A Revelation* In Direct Contest; Analysis Through the Partitioned Subject

This section will consider how Julian's returns intensify the erosion of the prohibition between identity and desire with the help of the idea of the partitioned subject. The erosions on the prohibition that she makes in returns 4 through 6 will be shown to move her from melancholic anger into transformational anger.

Returns 4 through 6 highlight how Julian's internal psychic workings model a transition from melancholic anger to transformational anger. They also highlight how the new ideas that Julian produces create new sources of authority that assist that transition.

Julian describes each of her returns in relation to teachings given to her from two outside sources as well as teachings that come from within her own psyche. During each return Julian describes how she views the disagreement between the two outside sources. Sometimes, however, she describes the outside sources through words that place them as an expression of her own feeling. She thus describes an unstable boundary between the outside sources and her own feeling. When she describes these sources as part of her own feeling, she also describes a conflict within herself.

Return four emphasizes, as do returns five and six, the tensions between (1) key common church teachings that are grounded in the prohibition and (2) Julian's model of return to key new ideas in *A Revelation* that erode that prohibition. Specifically these returns present the tension between the common church teaching that human beings are worthy of blame because they sin and *A Revelation's* contrary teaching that human beings are shown no manner of blame by the deity.

In verses 45.11-27 return four describes the tension. "The furst dome, which is of Goddes rightullhede, and that is of his owne high, endlesse love—and that is that fair,

swete dome that was shewed in alle the fair revelation” shows Julian that the deity “assignes to us no maner of blame.” However, at the same time, Julian states that according to “the dome of holy church” she must think of herself otherwise: “methought that me behoveth nedes to know myselfe a sinner. And by the same dome I understonde that sinners be sometime wurthy of blame and wrath.” While she receives the parable of the lord and servant in response to her request that the divine interlocutor reconcile the tension of these opposite perspectives, the fifth return shows that she requires more explanation.

Return five in verses 46.13-26 poses the tension again. Julian this time explains that the showings tell her to embrace holy church teaching. According to them, she must see herself as blameworthy. “Methought it behoved nedes to se and to know that we be sinners and do many evilles that we oute to leve, and leve many good dedes undone that we oughte to do, wherfore we deserve paine, blame and wrath.” At the same time, according to the showings, “notwithstanding alle this, I saw sothfastly that oure lorde was never wroth nor never shall.”

Return six again unfolds the same tension in verses 50.1-15: “the blame of oure sinnes continually hangeth upon us, fro the furst man into the time that we come uppe into heven. Then was this my merveylye, that I saw oure lorde god shewing to us no more blame then if we were as clene and as holy as angels be in heven.”

Between each of these returns Julian describes how she views the two sources of information that conflict. Sometimes she describes them through words that place them outside of her and at other times using words that make them part of her own feeling.

Butler's theory of the partitioned subject sheds particular insight on these descriptions that Julian makes.

The partitioned subject that is produced through the Western social imaginary gives insight into Julian's experience. The social imaginary that we have been examining produces a form of subjectivity that is ambivalent and self-critical, such that different parts of the self oppose each other, even though everyday awareness usually describes the subject as "one thing." The ambivalent parts that make up the ego are formed through social norms that prohibit the crossing of identification and desire, as Silverman described earlier.<sup>807</sup> Thus the sources of information that Julian describes as coming from sources outside of her – those of church teaching and those of her divine interlocutor – may also work through norms that simultaneously produce and maintain Julian's own conscience.

For example, after return 4 Julian explains that her sources of information come from the first dome of "Goddess righttullhede" and the second dome of "holy church." However, the dome of holy church that she "before understonde" is "continuously . . . in her sight." The continuous presence of holy church inside her sight suggests a habitual presence of the church in Julian's own sight which blurs the boundaries between the holy church as a source of knowledge that is distinct from Julian's "own sight."<sup>808</sup>

Return five emphasizes the different modes by which the two sources of information outside of Julian present themselves, one with love and positive emotions, the other as a tool of understanding. They arrive as "two manner of beholdinges." The

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<sup>807</sup> This crossing is perceived as homosexual attachment in the Western social imaginary since it frames sex, sexuality and gender through compulsory heterosexuality.

<sup>808</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 263: 46.13-26.

shewing arrives as “endlesse continuant love with sekernesse of keping and blissful salvation” which Julian explains is “all the shewing.” Common church teaching arrives as a source “of which I was befor enformed and grounded.” It also arrives as a source that Julian “wilfully” has in “use and understanding.”

Return six erodes the boundaries between Julian’s own feelings and the two sources of information that are considered outside of them. She “wondrede and merveyled with alle the diligence of (her) soule” for a solution to the disagreement between the two domes about blameworthiness. However, this time she states that she herself knows that she deserves blame, rather than stating that church teaching makes that claim. “I know sothly that we sin grevously all day and be mekille blamewurthy.” She further combines the claim of common church teaching that humans are blameworthy with her own feeling. “For I knew be the comen teching of holy church and by my owne feling that the blame of oure sinnes continually hangeth upon us.”<sup>809</sup>

At this point in returns five and six, when Julian deals with the disagreements between the two domes she describes her anxiety about them as she holds church teachings about blameworthiness in her own thoughts and feelings. At the same time, in each return she asks for a way to understand how those anxious feelings may co-exist with the feelings that follow upon the teaching of blamelessness that the showings present. Further, she describes positive emotions when she experiences the showings and uses neutral or suspicious language in relation to church teaching.<sup>810</sup> Thus, the information from church teaching and from *A Revelation* emerge in conflict. As

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<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-313: 60.1-15.

<sup>810</sup> I will discuss these shortly.

discussed earlier, church teaching also promotes the prohibition while *A Revelation's* teaching erodes it. The theory of the partitioned subject relates to this conflict directly.

Silverman described the process through which Western subjectivity is formed through the prohibition. The subject gropes its way toward voice and sight through the voice and gaze of a feminized primary caretaker from whom the subject takes its identity and whom it also takes as an erotic object. When society degrades that instance of homosexual attachment the subject splits into parts. It is forced to lose the identity that it formed through the object as well as the object itself. However, because the relationship is so primary and strong, the subject refuses to lose it. Rather than admit the loss, the subject takes the object in and installs it as part of the self.

As we saw in chapter three, according to Butler, the object taken in through this melancholic process is taken in as both an object of love and of hatred. The subject takes in the rage at losing the object as well as love for the object and installs the object inside the self in order ostensibly to preserve the object's life. However, through this taking in the object partitions the subject in such a fashion that the superego redirects the rage that was originally felt in response to social norms that demeaned the object. It now directs them towards the ego itself. These 'workings of self-beratement' impoverish the ego. Indeed, Butler notes that the ego-ideal, or the 'measure' against which the super-ego judges the ego, is "precisely the ideal of social rectitude defined over and against homosexuality."<sup>811</sup> This is therefore also the ideal of social rectitude defined over and against the combination of identity and desire.

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<sup>811</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 141.

Julian's own feeling in returns five and six affirm the blame for human sin that flows from the prohibition. According to the prohibition, the deity must speak from a position that originates power, truth and morality. The feminine creature must speak from a position that absently reflects those qualities of masculinity back to the masculine subject as the lack of power, truth and morality. She illustrates to the reader how she blames herself and feels that cycle of blame continuously in her imagination when that teaching of blame is "continuously" in her sight and in her feeling tones when she knows that blame "in her own feeling."

At the same time, something in Julian rebels against the internal assignation of blame that she makes to herself. In fact when she returns to her scandalized grief in instances 4, 5 and 6 she erodes the existence of that blame. The theory of the partitioned subject also illuminates her rebellion at the same time that she feels the blame against which she rebels as her own. I will first consider some examples when Julian rebels against her internal assignation of blame, or when she rebels against societal norms that flow from the prohibition.

Return five first promotes the prohibition by combining church teaching with the teachings of the showings, only to erode that prohibition afterwards. The higher dome of the showings tells Julian to love common church teaching. She states that the beholding of church teaching "came not from me" since the showing "did not sterve" or lead her away from "in no manner point." Rather, the showing taught her to "love it and like it" so that with "the helpe of oure lorde and his grace" she might "encrese and rise to more hevenly knowing and hyer loving."<sup>812</sup> The higher dome provides "endlesse continuant

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<sup>812</sup> See chapter 6, page 317, on "hyer loving." Watson, *Julian*, 262: 46.13-23.

love with sekernesse of keping and blissful salvation” while church teaching needs the help of oure lorde for it to serve the “encrese and rise to more heavenly knowing and hyer loving” for Julian.

However, the showings are unclear here as to how the help of our lord (or of the showings, which are the help of our lord) will change the way that Julian considers church teaching. The divine help presumably changes how Julian will receive that information to transform it into “more heavenly knowing” and “higher loving.”<sup>813</sup> The positive feeling tones that Julian associates with the showings in contrast to the neutral or negative feeling tones that Julian associates with church teaching in returns 4, 5 and 6 provide further clues about how the help of the showings will transform the way that Julian changes church teaching.

In return 4 church teaching that insists Julian is blameworthy torments her. She cannot be eased despite the “swete and delectable” quality of the first dome that shows her no manner of blame. To reduce her tension, she asks for a solution that allows her to “take” the showings and to “not leave” church teaching. The verbs “take” and “leave” suggest that she is an agent separate from either of these sources of knowledge that could take either position as her own. Further, the positive connotation of the term to “take” in relation to the showings expresses enthusiasm that the neutral connotation of the term to “not leave” in relation to church teaching lacks.<sup>814</sup> The enthusiasm that Julian shows towards the showings and the neutrality or even negativity that she shows toward church teaching belie the command of the showings that Julian must “like” and “love” church teaching.

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<sup>813</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 263: 46.13-26.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.11-27.

Further, in return 4, Julian desires to know “in God” how church teaching is true, rather than the other way around. If she chose that other way around she would desire to know “in church teaching” how what she sees “in God” is true. But that is not how she expresses her method of interpretation. Rather, she explains “this (was) my desyer: that I might se in God in what manner that the dome of holy church herein techeth is tru in his sight, and howe it longeth to me sothly to know it.” While Julian wishes to find a solution “whereby they might both be saved,” she thus gives priority to the showings. The divine sight of the showings will serve as the lens to indicate how church teaching may be true, which suggests that she does not save them both equally. Rather, she wishes to see how the showings would view church teaching so that she may rearrange church teaching accordingly. She is devoted to finding the lens of the showings that may clarify church teachings; she desires to find that lens more than she “can or may telle...”<sup>815</sup>

Return six also emphasizes the priority of the showings as a lens through which Julian may interpret church teaching. It shows Julian’s intensifying consternation towards the disagreements between the two domes about human blame. It stresses that she is excessively troubled by the disagreement because she finds the opposed positions at work in her own feelings. Her reason was “greatly travailed” by the disagreement about human blame. She “culde have no rest” for fear that “his blessed presens” should leave her sight and she be left with no understanding of how to “behold us in our sinne.” She needs to see either how the deity does away with sin or how the divine eye sees it; if she may see it through the divine sight then she may “truly know” the answer. During this time she refers to the “goode lorde” as the one who is “very truth” and the one in

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<sup>815</sup> *Ibid*, 261: 45.11-27.

whom she desires to “se alle truth.”<sup>816</sup> Her consternation heightens leaving her no ease: “how shall I be esede? Who shall tell me and tech me that me nedeth to wit, if I may not at this time se it in the?” Return 6 thus emphasizes the divine sight of the showings as a lens that will interpret church teaching, and in that way control church teaching rather than be controlled by it, in several ways. Julian views the divine sight as “very truth,” the lens through which she desires to see truth, and that which, should it fail to answer her, will leave her without basic knowledge that she needs to live.<sup>817</sup>

The quality of struggle in the foregoing returns is therefore clarified by the theory of the partitioned subject. The process of taking the object in that partitions the subject happens through continual battles. “Countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which love and hate contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault.”<sup>818</sup> These battles happen in “the region of the memory-traces of things.”<sup>819</sup> Julian’s continual recollection of previous moments of revelation as well as church teachings as she searches for an interpretation that will neutralize their disagreements ranges through these memory-traces. In addition, when she finds church teaching in her own feeling she ranges through the memory-traces of what may be read as her partitioned ego that has taken church teaching in.

As mentioned earlier, the violence that the superego directs at the ego in order to show the ego’s failure to meet the ego ideal is a refracted indictment of social norms that

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<sup>816</sup> *Ibid*, 271: 50.6 and 273: 50.24.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid*, 273: 50.27; 271-273: 50.1-30.

<sup>818</sup> See chapter 3, page 145, on maintaining libido against the assault. Butler, *Psychic*, 173.

<sup>819</sup> See chapter 3, page 146, on memory-traces. Butler, *Psychic*, 173.

forbid the conjunction of identity and desire.<sup>820</sup> The key church teachings to which Julian refers directly support the prohibition of the conjunction of identity and desire. Those social norms that prohibit such homosexual attachment provoke rage in the subject and, although the self rebels, melancholic internalization puts down or crushes that rebellion.

However, the rebellion is not entirely quelled; melancholia continues as a deflected rebellion in the violence of conscience. The norms that deploy the power of the state to crush rebellion enter the melancholic conscience through internalization. There they become the deflected power of the state at work in conscience. The conscience becomes the power of the state at its “vanishing point;” conscience continues to wield invisibilized state power from within the melancholic subject.<sup>821</sup> In her struggle between church teaching and the showings, Julian is psychically confused between them so that she cannot identify good or evil, or distinguish between them in order to love one and hate the other. She feels the vanished and effective power of the prohibition at work in conscience, on the one hand. On the other, she feels the rebellions at work in key teachings of the showings that destabilize that prohibition.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> See chapter 3, page 146, on forbidden grief. Butler, *Psychic*, 185.

<sup>821</sup> As Butler described in chapter 3, page 146: Figured within the workings of the psyche is the power of the state to preempt an insurrectionary rage. The ‘critical agency’ of the melancholic is at once a social and psychic instrument. This super-egoic conscience is not simply analogous to the state’s military power over its citizenry; the state cultivates melancholia among its citizenry precisely as a way of dissimulating and displacing its own ideal authority. This is not to suggest that conscience is a simple instantiation of the state; on the contrary, it is the vanishing point of the state’s authority, its psychic idealization, and, in that sense, its disappearance as an external object. The process of forming the subject is a process of rendering the terrorizing power of the state invisible—and effective—as the ideality of conscience. Furthermore, the incorporation of the ideal of ‘Law’ underscores the contingent relation between a given state and the ideality of its power. This ideality can always be incorporated elsewhere and remains incommensurable with any of its given incorporations.

<sup>822</sup> As Baker notes, at least one source that influences the showings teachings about human blame come from the mystical tradition, or what would not be called “mystical anthropology.” The idea of divinization from this tradition leans toward the showing’s teachings on human blame.

According to Butler transformations may take place when rebellions tip towards regime change rather than vanquished efforts. They may soften the rigid criticisms that the super-ego makes of the ego and erode the prohibition that sustains the super-ego. The new ideas that Julian unfolds throughout returns 4, 5 and 6 illustrate moments that speak to a regime change in terms of human blame and divine insensitivity, rather than purely vanquished efforts. Butler's theory of "survival" or what I call "transformational anger" may read these new ideas as an erosion of the rigid ego tightly locked in struggle in Julian's text. I will first describe Butler's theory and then those ideas.

Butler suggests that a genuine surfacing of rage is necessary to redirect rage away from the ego and towards the terrorizing conscience.<sup>823</sup> The self must recognize that the cherished internalized object is not the object that once lived; it is rather a refracted indictment of social norms that demeaned that same once living object. It must accept "a verdict of reality" that the object no longer exists. To read this verdict the ego must marshal the aggression instrumentalized by conscience against the super-ego. In addition, "The ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished."<sup>824</sup>

To deliver this verdict the ego must turn against conscience in a "second loss" of the object that externalizes aggression and "kills off" the conscience. The object first lost its externality when it was made a psychic ideal; during this second loss it loses its

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<sup>823</sup> See chapter 3, I interpret two strains of Butler together to suggest this application of her thought. Butler would not directly suggest this, although separate pieces of her work taken together through my lens suggest it.

<sup>824</sup> See chapter 3 on psychic survival of the ego. Watson, *Psychic*, 192; quoting Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *Standard*, 255.

ideality as the ego turns against conscience. This second loss causes the object to become decentered and offers the possibility of psychic survival to the ego. In this process “each single struggle of ambivalence loosens the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it off...”<sup>825</sup> Thus, a transformational anger ‘kills off’ attachment to the object so that there can be an end to the ambivalence of melancholic conscience that wishes to preserve the object’s life.

Julian’s gradual placement of key church teachings in opposition to *A Revelation*, and finally her placement of those teachings in alignment with sin, may be read as her efforts to decenter those teachings that prohibit the crossing of identity and desire. I will first consider some key ideas that emerge in conjunction with returns 4, 5 and 6 (that were discussed at length in chapter 6) that follow this trend.

During returns 4, 5 and 6 Julian introduces several new ideas. These developments represent small rebellions that focus on the same regime change. They wish to deflect blame for sin away from human beings. As discussed in chapter five,<sup>826</sup> Julian’s scandalized grief responds to the position of an all-powerful deity who fails to prevent sin for finite creatures who cannot because of their limited power prevent that suffering. Her scandal fails to see appropriate sensitivity to human suffering in the assignation of blame to a finite creature rather than to the infinite creator who is capable of such a prevention. Therefore, to remove blame from human beings changes the supporting positions in the Western imaginary that make a blameless deity compelling.

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<sup>825</sup> See chapter 3, on mourning. Watson, *Psychic*, 192, quoting Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Standard*, 257.

<sup>826</sup> See chapter 6 on why an omnipotent deity did not prevent sin.

These small rebellions move towards a regime change in imagination for these themes of blame.

The “alle” that began in Julian’s first expression of scandal that repeated as “alle manner of thing” and then transferred its rhythm and vocabulary into “no manner of blame” takes particular prominence in return 4, 5 and 6.<sup>827</sup> Thus, “no maner of blame” towards human beings permeates Julian’s return to her scandalized grief that the deity failed to prevent sin in order to make “alle” well.

Further, in verses 45.28-35 after return 4 and before return 5 Julian models prayer in its contemplative form as a particular struggle with normative unclarity. She anticipates that prayer will leave her “standing in desire” till her life’s end to know to discern how the two domes apply to her practical belief. She therefore creates a gap between the commands of conscience shaped by the prohibition and the immediate absent reflection of them that she might mirror back to the architects of church teaching. Rather than immediately mirror back in that fashion, she may “stond in desire” to know whether they are true or false in relation to her.<sup>828</sup>

Following return 6, Julian makes her need to coherently understand for herself how the deity will take away human blame a basic right, since she needs it to basically survive. In chapter 50 Julian defends the reasons for which she presses the questions in her returns. She claims that her questions pertain to the type of secrets that the deity wishes her to pursue. She defends herself against the tacit accusation that she pries into

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<sup>827</sup> See Watson, *Julian*, 261: 45.11-27, 263: 46.13-26, and 271: 50.1-15. Also see Watson on page 260 Footnote 45.13, treating the transition from “alle maner of thing” to “no maner of blame” in 211: 27.28-30.

<sup>828</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 261:45.28-35.

the kind of divine secrets that remain the divine prerogative to keep from creatures.<sup>829</sup>

While she supplies various reasons, the account of Julian's anxiety in lines 50.14-24 make her need for mental and emotional cohesion the most powerful of the reasons given there.<sup>830</sup> In her words, Julian's anxiety results from her need to know how the deity sees her in relation to blame "if I shall live here, for knowing of good and evil, wherby I may be reson and by grace the more deperte them asunder, and love goodnesse and hate evil."<sup>831</sup> Thus, Julian claims that in order to basically survive the showings must show her how to preserve her understanding of herself as blameless in the face of church teaching that claim she is blameworthy.

After return 6, lines 53.12-14 introduce the godly will as a "secure" part of the deposit of faith. This grants the godly will the same authority that church teachings may claim. The godly will contradicts church teaching that humans are blameworthy so that the deity must allow some to be damned. This is because the godly will has never sinned and so cannot incur blame.<sup>832</sup> The new authoritative status of the godly will reduces the anxiety that Julian feels toward accepting the godly will when church teaching forbids it.

Shortly thereafter in lines 53.28, the secret deed becomes part of the godly will. Because the deed is part of the 'knit' that binds human substance to the deity, the deed in the eternal mind informs the godly will. Thus, the deed that validated Julian's first expression of scandal returns in the godly will that deflects blame from creatures.

Lines 54.22-23 introduce sensuality that crosses the prohibition. The account of sensuality in the showings includes consciousness, or as Watson describes "the psychic

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<sup>829</sup> The "prevy concelle" of *Ibid*, 217: 30.10-21.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid*, 272:50.27-28.

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid*, 272:50. 27-28. Also see Watson 272: Note 50.27-28.

<sup>832</sup> See chapter 6 on divine blamelessness.

and physical self as it knows itself cut off from awareness of its substance.”<sup>833</sup> This performs a crossing because sensuality is usually not aligned with consciousness, but rather is aligned with body and sense, which the earlier section shows are symbolically paired with feminine or non-masculine positions. Masculinity in the Western social imaginary requires that these positions posture as the lack of consciousness in order for masculinity to materialize as bodiless reason. This crossed account of sensuality as consciousness places Julian on a more leveled playing field with masculine architects of church teaching. Both of them now align with the sensual realm. Recall that Augustine associates the feminine with sensuality and the masculine with reason, and so opposes sensuality to consciousness.<sup>834</sup> Butler would refer to these associations as spatial separations, as Irigaray pointed out happens in Plato, and would call them some of the conditions in a scenography that allow for gender to emerge. By realigning sensuality with awareness, Julian rearranges the conditions for the emergence of gender, or the spatial locations that the Western social imaginary places on the stage where gender may then emerge.

Further, lines 55.10-17 claim that the awareness of the sensual psyche must move through the wellness and wo of daily life and still believe that it is “more in heaven” than on Earth.<sup>835</sup> Thus both Julian’s consciousness and church teaching exist in the lower dome of sensual awareness but must through secure trust reach up into the higher dome of substance and of *A Revelation*. Thus Julian and the masculine architects of church

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<sup>833</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 296:54.22-23.

<sup>834</sup> See chapter 4 on Augustine’s views of gender.

<sup>835</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 299: 55.10-17: “And notwithstanding all oure feling, wo or wele, God will we understond and beleve that we be more verely in heven than in erth...In which werking the holy gost formeth in oure faith hope that we shall come againe up aboven to our substance, into the vertu of Crist, encreased and fulfilled throw the holy gost.”

teaching both wield consciousness and both should assume the incompleteness of church teaching as they reach up into the wisdom of *A Revelation* that will interpret it for them.

Finally, lines 56.14-19 explain that the practice of imagining that one's sensual awareness is more in heaven than on Earth will produce a change in self-talk that crosses the prohibition. A wise and true manner of self-knowledge cultivates "conversation and love-talk" with one's own soul. The soul in this passage refers to both substance and sensuality. When sensual awareness reaches up into the interpretive lens of *A Revelation* the conscience that mercilessly criticizes the ego must shift in tone. However, the very tone of rigid criticism maintains the prohibition. Therefore Julian's instruction to engage in inner "love-talk," especially when taken in the context of the other foregoing "rebellions," may be read as an instruction to erode the prohibition that would survive through a circuit of inner speech about blame and lack.

The new ideas that the showings produce during returns 4, 5 and 6 erode dichotomies that support the prohibition. These include blameworthy humans in relation to a blameless deity, sensation in relation to consciousness, femininity in relation to masculinity, and the showings in relation to the deposit of faith. These erosions may be read as Julian's efforts to decenter those teachings that maintain the prohibition on the conjunction of identity and desire.

These ideas represent rebellions, or the second loss of the object in which it erodes its ideality as the ego turns against conscience. This second loss causes the object to become decentered and offers the possibility of psychic survival to the ego. In this process "each single struggle of ambivalence loosens the fixation of the libido to the

object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it off...”<sup>836</sup> These rebellions may be read as a shift in regime, or the beginnings of transformational anger.

The new ideas that the showings produce during returns 4, 5 and 6 erode dichotomies that support the prohibition. These include blameworthy humans in relation to a blameless deity, sensation in relation to consciousness, femininity in relation to masculinity, and the showings in relation to the deposit of faith. These erosions may be read as Julian’s efforts to decenter those teachings that maintain the prohibition on the conjunction of identity and desire.

#### IV. The Seventh Return: Mother Jesus; Continued Analysis through the Partitioned Subject

Julian’s seventh return to her scandalized grief unfolds in mother Jesus, or what I analyze in chapter 6 as mother debt. Mother debt continues the thematic erosion of the prohibition that developed in returns 4 through 6. It similarly describes rebellions, or the process by which the object loses its ideality as the ego turns against conscience. Lacan’s *imago* also describes this process of rebellion. As chapter three explained, Lacan names the *imago* as he explains the mirror stage. Butler notes that the “mirror” after which Lacan names the mirror stage does not provide a *reflection* of a pre-existing ego, but rather a *frame, boundary or spatial limit* through which the ego may elaborate itself.<sup>837</sup>

The ego elaborates itself through two moments of ambivalence described by Lacan’s *imago*. In lived experience these two moments feel so close as to be indistinguishable even though they have two distinct aspects. The first, the body in pieces, recognizes the second, its specular image, in a fictional line of control. The

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<sup>836</sup> See Butler, *Psychic*, 192, quoting Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *Standard*, 257.

<sup>837</sup> See chapter 1 on the function of the mirror stage.

recognition does not occur in an infantile stage of development that adults leave behind. Rather, the body in pieces and the projection of the *imago* through a fictional line of control recur in every moment as a pattern of subjectivity. The fictional line of control is associated with the superego, the phallus and masculinity. It fuels the anxious impossible effort to approximate the fictional line of control, which plays a role similar to that of the “merciless” super-ego that is a “gathering place for the death instincts” that criticizes the ego.<sup>838</sup> The anticipation of the body in control involves a fantasy that one can approximate the idealized control of the *imago*, or, that one can approximate the idea of not being a body in pieces.<sup>839</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, during fantasy the locations by which the subject identifies herself alter quickly and spontaneously. The subject who fantasizes is not already formed, but rather stages herself and identifies herself by dispersing herself into several positions. And, the subject finds the *imago* of her bodily contour in every object that she produces through this dispersal, spreading a net in which she finds her identities in these objects that she perceives. The idealizing projection of the *imago* generates the cognition of other bodies or objects. It produces the contours of objects. The ego proves to be fundamentally social in this way. The *imago* is the epistemic condition through which the world of objects and others appear.<sup>840</sup> It establishes a reciprocity of ego and object.

Because the social ego finds its identity in the objects that it perceives in this self-dispersed fantasy, the prohibition upon the conjunction of identity and desire maintains the divided subject through objects that align with the prohibition. Consequently, when

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<sup>838</sup> See Butler, *Psychic*, 71: the mirror stage can be read as “a rewriting of Freud’s introduction to the bodily ego in *The Ego and the Id*, as well as the theory of narcissism.”

<sup>839</sup> See chapter 3 on identification with the *imago*.

<sup>840</sup> See chapter 1 on the episteme of the *imago*.

Julian introduces ideas that erode that prohibition, those ideas are objects in a net of identity that shift her identity from one that maintains the prohibition to one that erodes it. The projection of the *imago* as an anticipated object finds itself as one cord in a net for which other objects provide the additional cords. When other objects shift in relation to the prohibition, the position of the social ego also shifts in relation to that prohibition. Through these new ideas, or new objects, Julian unfolds a new frame for the fantasy that unfolds the partitioned subjectivity that is the ego and its objects.

Thus, the new ideas in returns 4 through 6 eroded the rigidity of the super-ego because those ideas changed the frame, or the net, that is the autoerotic fantasy of the projected ego. As Julian found each object that erodes the prohibition in her environment, as a subject she found the *imago* of her bodily contour changed in those objects. Conversely, she also produced the contours of those changing objects as she perceived them in her changing self-dispersed fantasy. The new idea of mother Jesus, or mother debt, at work in return 7 continues the erosion of the prohibition that loosens the tight grip of conscience, or the tight fictional line of control at work in the *imago*.

Mother debt erodes the prohibition even more significantly than Julian's return to her scandalized grief in returns 1 through 6 insofar as it suggests restitution to Julian for the deity's allowance of human suffering. This restitution comes in the form of the irrevocably guaranteed divine sensitivity that keeps human beings in this life and that provides them with salvation in the next. This is the payment of the divine debt. The provision of restitution on the part of the deity erodes the boundaries between masculine and non-masculine positions that the prohibition creates. The masculine position of the deity, characterized by wholeness, control, reason, morality and power, slips towards the

feminine position when it stands in the position of debtor. This is because the lack or debt that is intrinsic to the feminine position constitutes the second pole of masculinity that maintains the first pole. When the masculine is debt in relation to the feminine neither support the super-ego or fictional line of control that characterize the first pole of masculinity. They are objects that blur the line between the body in pieces and the fictional line of control. Such a masculine debt erodes the prohibition that founds these positions.

As discussed in chapter six, mother debt is introduced in 60.17-24. The passion in which mother Jesus suffered “the sharpest throwes and the grevousest paines that ever were or ever shalle be, and died at the last” is the process that gives birth to human beings. However, his “mervelous love” suffers birth pangs for human beings that extend beyond the passion. He shows this in his words: “If I might suffer more, I wold suffer more.” Julian explains that even if he cannot die more, he still performs a suffering of “werking.” This suffering takes the form of feeding us. Jesus must feed us because “the deerworthy love of moderhed hath made him dettour to us.”<sup>841</sup> The character of debt describes the kind of suffering care that mother Jesus gives to human beings.

Considering the ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century good mother and that of Irigaray’s specular feminine, Julian may track debt onto motherhood in the deity with some ease. This is because the Western social imaginary makes motherhood the defining quality of the feminine and further associates the feminine with lack, chaos and danger that threatens to inflict psychosis on innocent masculine humanity. In order to avert that harm, masculine expertise must organize the feminine. Thus the feminine exists as a

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<sup>841</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 313: 60.20-24.

lacking subjectivity that always owes a debt to masculinity for the work that masculinity must perform to keep the feminine in check.

This position for the feminine in the social imaginary maps onto the traditional definition for sin as the lack of a due good. It also maps onto the description of women who intrinsically lack the fullness of humanity that men have. Women are dependent upon men, for example, to be in the image of the deity, as Julian's contemporaries believed and as was discussed in chapter 4. According to this fantasy of the *imago dei* women will always be indebted to men. They will always be indebted to men who intrinsically have the image because women lack it and must receive it from men. However, according to this schema women do not give to men any equivalent existential item in the exchange. Thus men remain the creditors in the exchange. In this way the combination of motherhood and debt find a resonant position the Western social imaginary.

Julian's description of mother debt as a nurse further supports this interpretation of mother Jesus. Chapter sixty-one discusses the security that human beings may find in mother debt through the image of nurse. As a nurse, the services that mother debt provides maintain the "lowest points" of human need.<sup>842</sup> Mother debt performs "The office of a "kinde nurse" "that hath not ells to do but to entende about the salvation of her childe. It is his office to save us."<sup>843</sup> As Watson notes, the nurse image even more stresses the low place in which Jesus serves, because a nurse is paid money. So if a nurse

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<sup>842</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 317:61.55-57.

<sup>843</sup> The lack of awareness of oneself that the nurse shows in favor of her entire focus upon the care of the child shows that humans may securely collect their debt of care. The lines that follow explain that because Jesus plays the office of nurse "He wants us to trust in him meley and mightly. And this shewde he in these gracious words: "I kepe the fulle sekerly." Watson, *Julian*, 317:61.57-60

owes you her care, she owes you her wages. This maps onto the fantasy of Plato's maternal chora that expresses through the 20<sup>th</sup> century good woman. The woman is to have no awareness of her own, but should rather distrust the assessment that she may have of her own needs and continually carry out the tasks that masculine expertise supply to her. This is because women naturally have a deficit. They are unconscious hostility that inflicts harm. They are a naturalized debt that masculinity must repair.

As a logical consequence of mother debt, the deity owes salvation to all the creatures to whom it gives birth. Chapter sixty-five opens mother debt not only to the "saved," but also to any one who chooses divine love.<sup>844</sup> Chapter sixty explains that the indebted love that the "forthbringing" of mother hood represents cannot be cancelled "for hard and marvelous is that love which may not, nor will not, be broken for trespass."<sup>845</sup>

Further, Julian interprets motherhood in the deity against the grain of her contemporaries. She speaks about divine motherhood as well as human motherhood in terms of an agency that originates. She links mother debt with the human physical activity of birth. Jesus is the activity of "forthbringing" or delivery in birth when it happens in human beings:

"For though it be so that oure that oure bodely forthbringing be but litle, lowe, and simple in regard of oure gostely forthbringing, yet it is he that doth it in the creatures by whom that it is done."<sup>846</sup>

Julian calls Jesus a divine mother for a reason separate from the medieval tradition; he is a divine mother because he works through the actual physical acts of birth and produces

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<sup>844</sup> And thus I understode that that man or woman wilfully choseth God in this life for love, he may be seker that he is loved without end, with endlesse love that werketh in him that grace. For he wille we kepe this trustly, that we be as seker in hope of the blisse of heven while we are here as we shalle be in sekernesse when we are there. And ever the more liking and joye that we take in this sekernesse, with reverence and meekenes, the better liketh him. *Ibid*, 327: 65.1-6

<sup>845</sup> *Ibid*, 315-317: 61.19-24.

<sup>846</sup> *Ibid*, 313: 60.42.

our substance and sensuality. And he is a divine mother because having birthed us he tends to our sensuality. Jesus was born of a mother in order to become a divine mother.<sup>847</sup> In these descriptions the originative agency of motherhood rises to prominence. As described in chapter four, Julian's contemporaries would not allow these qualities to describe motherhood. On the contrary, the medieval tradition would deny originative agency to divine motherhood. They would consider divine motherhood a form of passive childhood.

As chapter four explained, the medieval tradition is motivated to talk about divine motherhood because it wishes to ensure that maternity is passive; that maternity is associated with Sophia; and that Sophia is associated with Jesus. They are able to preserve the passivity of motherhood, the motherhood of Sophia, and the linkage of Sophia to Jesus by associating Jesus with passivity because he is always being born, and associating that passivity of infancy with passivity that is motherhood. The passive characteristic of being birthed allows them to conclude that Jesus is the eternally passive component of the Trinity. Because Jesus is a passive entity, he may represent the maternal characteristics of Sophia, which are also passive. As Meister Eckhardt explains, "Wisdom is a name for a mother. The characteristic of a motherly name is passivity, and in God both activity and passivity must be thought. The Father is active, and the Son is passive because of his function as the one being born. For the Son is Wisdom born from

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<sup>847</sup> God was born of a mother in order to become a mother in verses 60.8-11; this has crossings for origination-product, active/passive dichotomies. Jesus was not born of a mother in order to be a man distinct from the vessel of a woman's womb and like to the originating potency in his father's sperm. Rather Jesus is born in a womb in order to be similar to it – to perform the offices of motherhood in all things. This posh the tradition in Aristotle and Plato in which a child born of a womb wishes to be different from it – more developed than it – in the masculine form that nature intends for all humans. Also see Watson 312: Note 60.9-11. And, Jesus took flesh in order to "do the service and the office of moderhode in ale thing." *Ibid*, 311: 60.10-11.

eternity in which all things are distinct.”<sup>848</sup> Thus the medieval tradition imagines divine motherhood as an eternally repeated moment of passive infancy.

Julian’s claim for Jesus’ agency in biological processes has already been claimed for excretion in 6.25-37. Her claim for Jesus as the agency in the childbirth that human mothers actually perform continues that trajectory.<sup>849</sup>

The medieval interpretation resonates with the position for motherhood in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mother who finds her appropriate femininity by ostensibly subordinating her awareness to that of a child, but who must in reality subordinate her awareness to the virtual masculine reason that instrumentalizes the body of the child to organize the mother’s feminine awareness through tasks that masculine experts assign to her. She represents the absent reflection of masculine agency through her lack of origination and agency. She represents the body in pieces that of its own accord cannot organize itself along a fictional line of control or of materializing reason. The feminine subject who assesses her own awareness, and especially the woman who feels hostility, becomes mother threat, or a deformation of appropriate mother joy. Thus, the feminine must be stripped of originaive agency lest it become “excessive femininity,” or a “penetration from elsewhere,” in Irigaray’s and Butler’s terms. Because Julian’s description of motherhood attributes originaive agency to the physical act of birth and to the physical processes of mothering that raise a child, it erodes the prohibition that founds the passivity of the non-masculine position. It destabilizes one strand of the net that makes up the subjectivity of the reader of *A Revelation*. In that way, it is a rebellion against the

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<sup>848</sup> See chapter 4 page 209, on motherly wisdom. Bernard McGinn with Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstadt, eds. “123b Sermon 40” in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 302.

<sup>849</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 315: 60.50.

prohibition that moves towards regime change in the authority of the super-ego or the fictional line of control of the *imago*. As an object that sustains the net of the partitioned ego, when this object erodes the prohibition it also erodes the fictional line of control in the *imago* based upon that prohibition.

Mother debt gives rise to a further object that makes up the net of the partitioned ego. The showings instruct readers to cultivate the self through a disposition that responds to mother debt. That is the disposition of “meke love,” or the disposition of the child that trusts in the debt that the divine mother owes to it.

Meke love outlines practical instructions for how readers should assimilate mother debt into practice. They should especially assimilate mother debt as an antidote when they are tempted to believe that they are worthy of blame. To combat feelings of blame, humans should cultivate the thoughts and emotions of a responsive child in relation to mother debt:

But oftimes when oure falling and oure wrechedness is shewde us, we be so sore adred and so gretly ashamed of oureselfe that unnethis we wil wher that we may holde us. But then wille not oure curtese moder that we flee away, for him will nothing lother, but he will than that we use the condition of a childe. For when it is dissesed and adred, it runneth hastely to the moder... And he wille then that we use the properte of a childe, that evermore kindly trusteth the love of the moder in wele and in woe.<sup>850</sup>

Thus the meke love that trusts like a child in mother debt subverts the temptation to develop a fear of punishment that results from a belief in the church teaching that humans are blameworthy that causes some to be damned.

Since meke love positions itself against the foregoing church teachings, the authority of *A Revelation* that teaches meke love could become tenuous. The

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<sup>850</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 317: 61.34-46.

tenuous combat between these ideas is seen in the struggle between them that returns 1 through 6 illustrated. Julian's *imago*, partitioned by the prohibition, retains a fictional line of control through the key church teachings that maintain the prohibition that Julian cites. Through the authority of those church teachings it struggles to quell the rebellions against the prohibition that crossings of that prohibition such as mother debt and meke love perform. Thus, if the authority of the showings increases, the tension between rebellion and the authority that may crush it increase.

*A Revelation* increases those tensions when it claims the sources of authority that belong to church teaching for authority in chapter 70. There the sixteenth revelation makes *A Revelation* part of the deposit of faith. While the showings claimed the godly will as part of faith in the earlier verses 53.12-14, they now claim all of the revelations as part of faith. Julian claims that the "owne blessed worde in tru understanding" gave her authority to have faith in the showings.<sup>851</sup> She believes that "it is in the faith" because the visions specifically showed that.<sup>852</sup>

However, the claim that *A Revelation* is part of orthodox faith actually allows *A Revelation* more than equal authority with church teaching. As chapter 6 explains in more detail, it allows the showings to overshadow common church teaching. The showings already attach to a higher dome than common church teaching, which already subordinates common church teaching. The position of church teaching in the lower dome allows for church teaching to have misunderstandings that should

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<sup>851</sup> *Ibid*, 343:70.6.

<sup>852</sup> *Ibid*, 343:70.4-7.

reach up into the substantial realm of the higher dome to be made into “higher” and “more heavenly” interpretation. And, *A Revelation* is an expression of that higher dome. Now that *A Revelation* is equally part of the orthodox faith by comparison to common church teaching, it stands as an equal source of authority as part of the deposit of faith and a superior source of authority in relation to its “dome.”

*A Revelation* now strengthens the rebellions against the prohibition that church teaching represents where it becomes effective and invisible as conscience. The objects that socially constitute the *imago* through key authoritative ideas now face competition in the authority of the opposed ideas of mother debt and meke love that erode the prohibition.

Julian further enhances the authority of the showings by claiming that individuals must make a personal act of faith in the showings and in mother debt at their center. In addition to the declaration of *A Revelation* as deposit of faith, chapter 70 demands that readers make a personal act of faith in the showings. As discussed in more detail in chapter 6 of the dissertation, Chapter 70 addresses the whole of the showings as part of faith so that the phrase “that it is in the faith” of 70.6 depends on Julian’s personal “I believe.”<sup>853</sup> And, Julian’s “I” who must have faith in 70.10 above translates into “we” the readers who must do so in lines 70.21-22. Thus by chapter seventy the showings have become part of the orthodox faith whose wise perception demands a personal act of belief.

Through returns 1 through 6 Julian’s scandalized grief showed that she could not “live here” in the ambivalence of her partitioned ego torn between authoritative ideas that

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<sup>853</sup> *Ibid*, 342: Note 70.6.

maintain the prohibition and ideas that she describes with more positive feeling that erode it. In order to survive the ambivalence, when both church teachings that support the prohibition and the showings that erode it vied with each other with more equal authority, Julian subtly tilts the balance of authority towards mother debt. When she positions the authority of church teaching in opposition to the showings, she suggests that those teachings are not necessarily the highest fixed authority. She decenters or denaturalizes them. As she decenters those objects that make up subjectivity, as she unravels strands of the net of subjectivity, she begins to rearrange the whole net. Because church teachings support the prohibition, she begins to rearrange a net that does not take its shape and character solely from the rigid maintenance of the prohibition.

False dread charades as humility: false dread of punishment, to expose such false acts of humility that valorize shameful fear is the most pressing message of A Revelation when it is read as a practical work of pastoral theology.<sup>854</sup> Doubtful dread thus emerges as a sin because through it humans doubt the central message of the showings, namely, that humans bear no manner of blame and that mother debt cannot damn them; correlatively, it construes the emotions that result from the church teaching that humans are to blame and that some will be damned as sinful and to be forsaken.

Julian first portrayed her suspicion that the deity may be cruel because it is insensitive to human suffering as a sin that should be forsaken. Julian's suspicion returned to suggest that the deity would be cruel because it is insensitive if it damns human beings. Now later in the text the showings may construe the belief that the deity

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<sup>854</sup> *Ibid*, 352: Note 73.33-34.

could damn human beings, and the fear of such a deity that follows from that fact, as a sin that should be forsaken.

This reversal is made possible by the transition in sources of authority that Julian makes. As described in the developments of chapters 5 and 6, as well as earlier in this chapter, authoritative social norms that follow upon the prohibition authorized the assessment of Julian's first suspicious that the deity failed human beings because it failed to prevent sin as a sinful act that is dangerous to entertain. Her suspicion returned and narrowed when she is suspicious for the same reasons that the deity could fail to prevent the damnation of any human being. Her suspicion about the deity's relation to damnation exposes the deity to be inadequate in wisdom and power. The transition in sources of authority that favor the showings and discredit church teachings now authorize a contrasting assessment of the same issue. Such a reversal in the way that a lack of sensitivity in the deity may be construed suggests that small battles that the text wages between the many objects that make up the net of subjectivity for Julian and her readers tilt towards a change in regime in relation to the prohibition. The fictional line of control that depends upon the prohibition has competition from other quarters that serve at least to loosen the immediate commands to imagine and enact the prohibition.

Chapter 6 explains how this reversal in sources of authority matures into the discernment of false dreads from true dreads and, most importantly, the discernment of true dreads from meke love. True dread eventually proves to be secondary to meke love. Meke love is the disposition of a child that trusts in mother debt. Julian instructs readers to sift through their personal feelings of dread. They should amplify a childlike response to mother debt and minimize any contrary feeling tones as "wrong" or "medelde with

wrong.”<sup>855</sup> True dread is secondary to it because it bears traces of the fear of punishment that align with the insensitive deity who occupies the position of masculinity: the position that is a fictional line of control that requires the absent reflection that specular femininity mirrors back to it which, in the case of the 20<sup>th</sup> century good woman, requires the insensitivity of masculine expertise to the mental “mind numbing” suffering that those who speak from the (specularly) feminine position must normatively undergo.<sup>856</sup>

Thus meke love instructs readers about how to practically eliminate imaginations and feeling tones that align with the prohibition while at the same time it instructs them about how to assimilate the idea of mother debt and the feeling tones that accompany it. This practical program of instruction matures into mother debt as divine thirst in Jesus.

Through divine thirst, the desire to suffer for humanity that mother debt expresses transforms into active thirst to eliminate the suffering that humanity undergoes. The desire to suffer for humanity that mother debt expresses is crystallized by Jesus statement that if she could suffer more than death for human beings she would. Divine thirst now describes the maternal desire to suffer as the desire to keep human beings and to alleviate their suffering. In chapter 75 divine thirst addresses an aspect of mercy that mother debt has not so far emphasized, even though mother debt developed out of mercy as a maternal quality that pities human beings. That aspect of mercy is the sense in which the deity can be said to long for humanity. Christ actively thirsts for humans to know and love him, to take humans out of pain and into heaven, and to “fulfille us of blisse” on the

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<sup>855</sup> *Ibid*, 357: 74.27-35.

<sup>856</sup> See Chapter 6, page 361, on the discernment of true and false dreads.

last day.<sup>857</sup> Divine thirst is the thirst to fulfill “the deed”, which shows the itinerary of the term *alle* has come full circle. The deed came to define the term “*alle*.” The term “*alle*” travelled into mother debt as universal salvation and then into divine thirst for the accomplishment of the deed.<sup>858</sup>

Further, sin is characterized as the human act that leaves Jesus alone as he stands “swemfully and moningly” (anxiously and sorrowfully)<sup>859</sup> in divine thirst. When humans fail to believe in mother debt, despairing, they damage Jesus by leaving him alone.<sup>860</sup> They exacerbate Christ’s thirst.

Further, divine thirst expresses itself through human longing in “*us*.”<sup>861</sup> Thus sin is now not only false dreads that arise from fear of punishment. Rather, sin is now also the failure to promote the active thirst of mother debt at work in the self. While chapter 31 long ago argued that Christ’s thirst was part of the deposit of faith, divine thirst reappears in chapter 75 as part of the whole revelation that is now part of the deposit of faith.

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<sup>857</sup> See also Watson, *Julian*, 219:31.14-15: “Therefore this is his thruste: a love-longing to have us all togeder, hole in him to his endlesse blisse.” And, see Julian’s wish to be taken up into heaven in 323:64.1-13. Here the deity, not the soul, is longing. And, see 358: Note 75.5, where the Watson refers to the thirst of Christ, since it is Christ who makes souls members of his body.

<sup>858</sup> Jesus’ thirst is for Judgment Day, or to “fulfille us of blisse” on the last day. Judgement day follows a non-traditional interpretation of dread at work on that day. Rather than the union of bodies with souls, Julian envisions the completion of the deed prophecied in chapter thirty-two (Watson, *Julian*, 223:32.26-39). See 223:32.26-29: “This is the gret deed ordained of oure lorde God fro without beginning, tresured and hid in his blessed brest, only knowen to himselfe, by which deed he shalle make all thing wele.”

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid*, 370:79.31-32.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid*, 379:79.31-32 and 373: 80.28-35. “And what time that we falle into sinne and leve te midne of him and the keping of oure owne soule, than bereth Crist alone alle the charge of us. And thus stodeth he swemly and moning. Than longeth it to us for reverence and kindnesse to turne us hastily to oure lorde, and let him not alone. He is here alone with us alle. That is to sey, only fo rus he is here. And what time I be straunge to him by sinne, dispair or sloth, then I let my lorde stonde alone, in as mekille as he is in me. And thus it fareth with us all which be sinners. But though it be so that we do thus oftentimes, his goodnesse suffereth us never to be alone, but lastingly he is with us and tenderly he excuseth us, and ever kepeth us from blame in his sight.”

<sup>861</sup> *Ibid*, 359: 75.7-8.

Thus the sense that informed Julian's scandalized grief—that the deity lacked appropriate sensitivity to human suffering—finds reversal in a deity who becomes sensitivity to human suffering. Just as Julian sorrowfully and anxiously moved from the first through the sixth return to her scandalized grief, Jesus as mother debt sorrowfully and anxiously thirsts to completely alleviate human suffering. Julian's first expression of scandalized grief suggested that she felt scandal and grief that the deity failed to have the awareness of solidarity that she did. It also suggested that the deity lacked the will power to alleviate it that she had. She now receives partial restitution for her scandal and for her grief when the deity defines itself as the infinite expression of sorrow that human suffering exists, as well as the unbreakable promise that his thirst to alleviate human suffering is powerful enough to ensure that every human soul will be saved. The emergence of mother debt as thirst thus provides Julian with a cultural outlet through which to express her grief, even in partial form. From Cheng's perspective,<sup>862</sup> she does so rather than floundering about for refuge in her shame at the lack of outlet, and finding a hiding place for it in fraudulent worship of the prohibition that takes solidarity from her.

Mother Jesus as debtor and as thirst further crosses the position for the non-masculine/feminine subject. When considered through the frame of the 20<sup>th</sup> century good mother, mother debt resists the position of the specular feminine. The good woman must develop normative cognitive dissonance towards her assessment of her thoughts and emotions, especially repudiating any emotion other than a positive joy that she takes in the masochistic subordination of her awareness to a child's body. She must especially

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<sup>862</sup> See chapter 3, page 109.

repudiate feelings of hostility or other emotions that might relate to hostility, like sorrow and mourning.

Rather than neutralize feelings like sorrow and mourning, mother debt is defined by them. It also announces the unfulfilled need that she has over which she mourns: the need to alleviate human suffering. Importantly, through her own agency she meets her needs, by supplying the keeping and salvation to the humans whose suffering she longs to alleviate. Because through her own agency she meets her needs, mother debt performs a role usually reserved to the masculine position. She thereby becomes the excessive feminine.

She assesses her thoughts and feelings, expresses them, and provides her own active solution to meet her needs. Masculine agency from a source other than maternity fades from the scene in this drama. That ostensibly conflicts with the prohibition that requires that the feminine position fade from the scene in obedience to masculine expertise, at whose pleasure her absent reflection serves. The mother in this scenario considers her own suffering need and alleviates it. She will bring the human beings that she longs for up to bliss and unite them to herself.

However, while these reversals erode the rigidity of the prohibition in this way, on the other hand, they also may never completely dissolve it, on the other. Divine thirst represents these battles that might gain territory to loosen the rigid control of conscience that serves the prohibition. However, at the same time, the idea of the melancholic partitioned subject also stresses that melancholia is the structure of subjectivity and as

such may never be undone.<sup>863</sup> Or, in other words, the prohibition that founds it may never be undone. As considered in the above paragraphs, the battles that the ego may wage by redirecting rage towards the conscience may allow the partitioned subject to become looser or more mobile, but this only liberates to some degree what melancholia puts in suspension. It cannot expunge repudiation but only develop ways of developing “refusal” or “exclusion” that distinguish between, on the one hand, a rigorous repudiation and foreclosure, and, on the other, a less rigid or less permanently declined happening. Repudiations that support the prohibition will always remain, even if in less rigid form. Mother debt therefore also fuels some of these repudiations, even while in the foregoing ways it erodes them.

Thus, in some ways mother debt acts in accord with the dichotomous system of heteronormative masculinity in which femininity as debt takes its place. That system names femininity but really describes two poles of masculinity that circulate in a closed circuit of masculinity. The auto-erotic project of masculine fantasy that unfolds itself into two poles—masculinity and specular femininity—leaves its logic in the idea of the feminine as debt and thirst that Julian takes up.

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<sup>863</sup> See chapter 3, page 150: “If the ego contains aggression against the other who is gone, then it follows that reexternalizing that aggression ‘uncontains’ the ego.” This side, Butler remarks, shows that the ego does not desire to live, but rather has a desire to undo itself: The ‘mastery’ of the ego would then be identified as the effect of the death drive, and life, in a Nietzschean sense would break apart that mastery, initiating a lived mode of becoming that contests the stasis and defensive status of the ego.” Butler, *Psychic*, 194. Cf Butler, *Undoing*, 1. These essays focus on “what it might mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life. Equally, however, the essays are about the experience of *becoming undone* in both good and bad ways. Sometimes a normative conception of gender can undo one’s personhood, undermining the capacity to persevere in a livable life. Other times, the experience of a normative restriction becoming undone can undo a prior conception of who one is only to inaugurate a relatively newer one that has greater livability as its aim.” Also compare this description of the process of undoing point by point with contemplative progress later. According to Butler, there is a necessary reason for desire to be fueled by repudiation because there are always losses involved in human subjectivity. “Every position taken up and every desire determined engages a psychic conflict,” she explains, because “there are always losses, refusals, and sacrifices to be made along the way to having the ego or character formed or having desire disposed in any determinate direction.” See Butler, *Psychic*, 164.

Mother debt thirsts to unite humans to her and therein alleviate their suffering. However, mother debt moves in the human being in order to return to itself. Julian's thirst that returns to her scandal is the thirst of mother debt moving inside of her.

Creatures that mutually act upon mother debt are at least not as obviously defined. In this way her system resembles a closed circuit through which the divine feminine moves. While it names creatures as beings that exist as part of the process of mother debt/thirst, the creature does not appear as an agent. The function of the creature bears resemblance to the function of the specular feminine that absently reflects the masculine subject back to itself. Similarly, mother debt/thirst moves through created vessels to return back to itself. On the one hand debt and thirst, following the prohibition, align with the position of the body in pieces that owes masculinity the repair of that wayward body through its absent guarantee of a fictional line of control that would organize it. However, on the other hand, that same debt and thirst stand in a similar relationship to passive creatures through whom mother debt/thirst returns to itself.

Despite the return that mother debt makes to the separation of divine agency and human passivity, the idea of survival applauds the crossing of the prohibition that Julian's performance of the showings makes. Through the gradual rearrangement of ideas that cross the prohibition Julian acts as one of Butler's mimes that scramble reason's mastery. It acts as a penetration from other quarters that disrupts the presumption that only masculinity is capable of acting as an agent in the auto-erotic project of the partitioned subject. The thirst of mother debt may also mimic such an auto-erotic project.

Further, Julian introduces another variable into the ostensibly closed circuit of maternal thirst that erodes the prohibition. While humans may seem to occupy the pole of

absent reflection to mirror back the desiring activity of mother thirst, humans also determine whether they will diminish or amplify divine mother debt/thirst as it moves through them. The showings offer a program through which one may cultivate her awareness of the internal workings of mother debt in order to amplify the divine work. When she does so she relieves the thirst of Jesus that mourns and sorrows. If she fails to cultivate that awareness she leaves Jesus alone in that suffering. Human beings thus also determine the flow of mother debt/thirst, even if they also act as vessels for it.

The discernment of mother debt/thirst on the part of human beings therefore places some authority in human hands in relation to the divine movement. This is true even if mother debt/thirst reproduces a somewhat auto-erotic closed circuit of desire that Julian inherits from the heteronormative frame for the positions of the masculine and the specular feminine that produced the feminine as debt.

According to the idea of survival, the ways that the thirst of mother debt decenters the prohibition still improve survival—in fact, they are the only way to create positions for gender that are more mutual and that alleviate suffering since a full repudiation of the super-ego is not possible. The closed circuit of desire may never be completely undone; the rebellion may never be complete. However, it may approach a less rigid practice of internal blame. It may soften boundaries of disgust that enforce the tight grip of conscience. If the grip of the prohibition on homosexual desire could be loosened to allow for more crossings of gendered positions, the rigid threat of the super-ego might behave in kind; this in turn might create more mutual ways of living embodied gender. The sources of authority that speak within the partitioned subject may be more shared or

multiple.<sup>864</sup> Sexuality need not rely upon a distinction between how one identifies and how one desires. A less rigid or less permanently declined happening could be developed. Survival as the asymptotic nature of transformational anger thus underscores the importance of Julian's indirect rebellions.

In order to redirect rage in the manner that survival recommends, one first must become aware of that rage, to the degree that is possible. The method that allows Julian to detect her scandalized grief can be highlighted through the two moments of ambivalence described by Lacan's *imago*. They offer insight into the ways that Julian detected her scandalized grief, or those feeling tones that attach to her suspicion that the deity fails her.

Julian's contemplative method allows her to uniquely observe the sources of her knowing as they occur. They are "continually before her sight," pitched against each other in conflict. As investigated earlier in this chapter, Julian sees the ambivalent sources of her knowing sometimes as separate and sometimes as both hanging continually in her own feeling, in her own belief, and in her own imagination. And, as discussed, the sources are ambivalent because they respectively align with the prohibition or erode it. The two moments of the *imago* offer a framework through which to view the working of Julian's contemplative return in the acute awareness that she has of her psychic life that includes her awareness of contradictions that exist there.

In lived experience these two moments feel so close as to be indistinguishable even though they have two distinct aspects. The first moment, the body in pieces, recognizes the second, its specular image, in a fictional line of control. They are like two

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<sup>864</sup> See chapter 3, page 144. Butler, *Psychic*, 164.

poles of one experience and seem so close as to feel like one thing. The “congealing” affect of repetition to which Butler refers conspires to make them seem so. While the two moments are a perpetually navigated and tenuous achievement, they seem like one fixed reality. The natural sexed body, for example, can therefore be described by anatomical medicine as a reality that remains the same for all places and times.

The estranging division of self produced by the specular image of the body as *imago* happens in two ways. The *imago* is other than the subject<sup>865</sup> because through it the subject *anticipates* a mirage of the body in control. Thus the *imago* stands outside of the temporality of the subject; it is not an experience of self in the now so much as an anticipation of the image of a future self in control. The psyche as it “constitutes/finds” the *imago* finds a “mistaken and decentering token” of itself that can never exist simultaneously in the exact same moment and produces an interior alterity. Secondly, the psyche finds the *imago* to be an object of perception like other objects so that it stands at an epistemic distance from the subject.<sup>866</sup> It is like an object among other objects.

The scandalized grief that Julian feels crosses the prohibition and it therefore threatens Julian’s maintenance of the feminine position that represents wayward motility or the body in pieces. And, depending upon where the balance of regime in the partitioned ego moves, when she erodes the prohibition the decentering object that is the anticipation of a future self in control more or less rigidly opposes itself to the body in pieces. Thus, as the small battles of mother debt erode the prohibition Julian’s scandalized grief finds itself less rigidly opposed by the specular image of control because they are less polarized.

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<sup>865</sup> See Chapter 3, page 80.

<sup>866</sup> Butler, *Bodies*, 75.

Julian's contemplative recursive method encourages her movement from polarization to greater fluidity in a few important ways. The recursive method focuses her awareness upon the contradictions at work in her psyche. The recursive method responds to contradiction by returning to it endlessly—the performance of *A Revelation* is never completed. Julian models a process of indefinite return. These pressures that attend contradiction hold the visionary experience in fractured form as Julian returns to them.<sup>867</sup> As chapters 5 and 6 show, the contradictions center around blame and divine insensitivity.

The contemplative center of Julian's method takes time to produce its result, as the gestation period between the short and long text illustrate.<sup>868</sup> The slowness supports the different levels of interpretation that she makes. Her reflected interpretation, produced in the practice of meditation, creatively applies the imagination and discursive thought to a complex religious theme. Her assimilated interpretation, produced through contemplation, practices devotion that builds upon meditation. It strives to transcend imagination and intellect “through an intuitive concentration on some simple object, image, or idea.”<sup>869</sup> Both levels of interpretation model a methodical slowness. Because every showing is full of secrets,<sup>870</sup> Julian spent fifteen years before she understood the unity of the Revelations.<sup>871</sup> She describes the unity that she approaches through her returns as the integration of three things: the beginning of teaching that she understood at the time of vision; the inward instruction that she understood since vision; and all the

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<sup>867</sup> See Baker's consideration of Julian's recursive method in chapter 4, page 192.

<sup>868</sup> See Baker in chapter 4, page 192, on Julian's contemplative center.

<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*, 113; Moore disagrees with the exclusion of visions and locutions from serious consideration as mystical experiences, on 119-20.

<sup>870</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 277: 51.62.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.86.732-33, 136-7b.

whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which the deity often and freely brings before the eyes of her understanding. As Baker explains, her recursive style requires extended time to “cumulate and develop” the revelations by imitating the ruminative style of meditation.<sup>872</sup>

In further imitation of the ruminative style of meditation, Julian preserves the simplicity and unity of her revelations when she draws connections between the sixteen showings through cross-references. The cross-references imitate the return again and again to the themes of the vision and reinterpretations that the style of meditation performs. The cross-references recall and anticipate the various visions to create a verbal echo that invokes the unity of the “hole revelation fro the beginnyng to the ende.”<sup>873</sup>

Furthermore, she more frequently returns to contradictory themes about blame and divine insensitivity rather than other themes. She thus brings the reader to reenact her specific struggle with issues of blame and divine insensitivity. This style requires the reader to engage in a process of meditation rather than in a linear or chronological reading. The reader must follow the cross-references within and among the sixteen revelations. Her strategy of revision artfully brings the reader to reenact her own struggle to make sense of the revelations.<sup>874</sup> Such a model cultivates in the reader the desire to seek out anxiety and uncertainty that attend contradiction.

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<sup>872</sup> See chapter 4, page 225, on Baker’s consideration. Strategies of Julian’s writing structure handle some of this tension. Julian distinguishes between her immediate mystical engagement and her retrospective interpretation by dividing the long text into sixteen showings. She describes the bodily or ghostly sight or the words revealed to her at the beginning of each section. The sight thus acts as a motif for the section and preserves the priority of her immediate vision. At the same time she sets each motif in the midst of the new material of her retrospective interpretation that she incorporates in the long text. As she adds retrospective interpretation, she returns to the earlier motif throughout the showing, each time adding more detail.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.*, 141b.

<sup>874</sup> *Ibid.*, 148b.

Her method allows her to cultivate the desire to lean into the embattled self in contradiction in different registers of experience. In the midst of battle she uses the imagination to infuse ideas, feeling tones and physical sensations that solicit ease with the contradiction. It is there, in the heart of battle, that she demands that one strive to implement “love-talk” between her polarized parts. As one progresses in self-knowledge she cultivates a different manner of speaking with her own soul. Just as Julian’s maturation in the showings cause her to progress from talking to herself as the subject of blame to talking to herself as (at least the potential) subject of blamelessness and reward, the maturing Christian will cultivate the use of “comening and dalyance,” or “conversation and love talk,” with her own soul.<sup>875</sup> Thus the navigation of contradiction will mingle the feelings of love-talk and battle, at the boundary of challenge in the maturing contemplative. When the contemplative moves into panic at crossing the prohibition, and feels the terrors described earlier that accompany that panic, in that very moment she must recognize the opportunity for love-talk. This is the heart of the discernment between dread and meke love. This is the opportunity that Butler mentions to recognize the death drive as Nietzsche’s drive towards life, or to recognize boundaries of disgust as opportunities for survival, rather than as threats to survival.<sup>876</sup>

Such a navigation of battle and love-talk resonates with the ambiguous character of truth in *A Revelation*. Truth is the woeful practice of reason that struggles to bridge the two domes. It is woeful because the light of faith is only measured discretely to human beings according to the maturity of their ability to receive it. The immaturity of

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<sup>875</sup> Watson, *Julian*, 54.15-19.

<sup>876</sup> See chapter 4, page 150.

their inability to receive faith causes the woe that makes up the “medular” of human suffering. Truth<sup>877</sup> is that which “stonds to” us “in the night.”

“Standing to” implies not only the benefit of the light that illuminates only what we need to see, but also the obliqueness of the truth that it provides. The truth is an action, qualified by the contemplative maturity of the practioner. A person may receive the effect of the truth that stands towards her insofar as that person cultivates her own practical “standing towards” truth in the realm of contemplative practice. It is an asymptotic practice as Butler describes the practice of survival also to be.

Further, a method of recursive return allows Julian to observe the contradiction in feeling tones, in imagination or ideas, and in physical sensation. In other words, it allows her awareness in multiple registers of experience that align themselves for or against the prohibition. As chapters 5 and 6 showed, Julian’s new ideas develop into the practice of mother debt that discerns between false dreads, true dreads, and meke love. Readers are to sift through their personal feelings and imaginations in order to amplify a secure confidence in mother debt and in order to minimize any contrary feeling tones that fear punishment as “wrong” or “medelde with wrong.” Thus as Julian’s recursive method invites the reader to enact her contemplative method, it also instructs the reader to cultivate a honed discrimination of her thoughts, feeling tones and sensations.

Julian’s mention of concrete physical processes as the activity of mother Jesus directs the attention of the one who performs Julian’s instructions to feeling tones and sensations. Especially in moments when the movements of the deity do not announce

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<sup>877</sup> In Watson, *Julian*, 377:83.5 and 377: 83.10 reason is associated with “kinde” that is associated with the light. The light is also associated with faith. Thus truth, as the object of reason and truth as the object of faith are associated with the light that “stands to” human beings in the night.

themselves in the manner of vision to the reader, those “lowest” biological processes indicate where one may discern the direct activity of Jesus. Julian especially describes the biological processes of birth as the activity of mother debt. This signals readers that if they wish to sense the activity of Jesus in themselves, they should attend to these physical processes. Thus one source of truth emerges as the information that changing flesh provides to awareness. This in itself crosses the prohibition, since changing flesh and physical sensation are usually not aligned with knowledge or with truth.<sup>878</sup>

Julian’s emphasis upon slow methodical return to the contradictory positions that she observes in her own thoughts, feeling tones and physical sensations may be read through the two moments of Lacan’s *imago*. The slow pace of her methodical return to felt contradiction allows her to observe the dynamic of the two moments at work. As mentioned earlier, those two moments present themselves as being so close together in everyday experience that they feel like a normal state of anxiety that cannot be otherwise. The two moments illustrate a system of anxiety that covers over the impossibility of the demand they makes that subjects achieve the psychic position of the fictional line of control or its counterpart, the position of the wayward body in pieces. They hide the tenuousness of the fictional line of control so that the circuit of two moments appears to be one naturalized repetition. Anxiety, described earlier and in chapter three as gender panic, further pressures the psychic experience of the two moments and produces an instantaneous failure in the psyche to observe or remember that psychic life could repeat otherwise. The slow pace and desire to turn towards contradiction in the contemplative recursive method allows Julian to counter gender panic, even if partially. She therefore

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<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-217:46.1-12. And see 296: Footnote 54.22-23.

becomes aware of the contradictions that lie at the heart of the subject partitioned by the prohibition that fuels the two moments of the *imago*. Therefore, Julian's recursive method offers unique resources to intervene in the duality of those two moments that seem like one instance. Her method allows one to create more space between the two moments insofar as one may see that contradictions exist rather than panic in flight to cover over them and demand that they must be one and consistent.

This consideration of Julian in light of the two moments of the *imago* shows Julian's practice to be a resource that may be used in service of Butler's project of survival. Julian's contemplative practice of self-cultivation may help to reveal the faded text that is barred from the scene by the congealed repetition of the self in accordance with the prohibition.

Thus mother debt proves to be a practical psychic and physical way to unravel the tight circuit of conscience that demands the separation of identity and desire, even as it will always be an asymptotic practice that yields a practical asymptotic truth that depends upon the maturity of the contemplative practitioner. It further will always serve this purpose in the bounds of the melancholic subject that may never declare itself unbound by the prohibition. Butler's method of survival suggests that the most precious alleviations of suffering for human beings, especially for those bodies that are rigidly condemned for living sex, sexuality and gender in marginalized positions, may only happen in precisely this asymptotic form. Julian's contemplative recursive return to contradiction therefore offers new forms of practice that may serve Butler's recommendations for the practice of survival.

## Concluding Thoughts

Julian's returns begin in her first expression of scandalized grief where she portrays her desire for a mutuality with the divine that crosses the prohibition on the conjunction of identity and desire. She seems to panic as she unveils the contradictions in that system and quickly calls her actions foolish and sinful. However, the six returns that she makes to that scandalized grief develop into mother debt, which realizes her wish to cross identity and desire, at least in significant ways. These offer theological and practical methods for living sex, sexuality and gender in more mutual ways.

The trajectory that thus frames mother debt suggests recommendations for the ethical use of Julian's practical idea of mother Jesus in order to alleviate gendered suffering.

It suggest that the use of the notion of mother Jesus in service of the alleviation of gendered suffering must underscore the partial nature of the battles that cross identity and desire that lie at its heart. If the character of those partial battles do not define mother Jesus, the idea may serve to reconstitute specular femininity, or the auto-erotic project of the materialization of reason that invisibilizes non-masculine bodies and increases their suffering.

In a related vein, the use of the notion of mother Jesus with special attention to the holistic development that the battles that cross identity and desire make may provide a model for loosening the tight grip of conscience that relies upon the prohibition, and may offer a model for survival and more mutual models of sex, sexuality and gender. Even in this case, the nature of specular femininity at work in mother debt remains a possible reconstitution of specular femininity and so may decrease survival and create less mutual models of these things.

Julian's contemplative method also provides a model for knowledge that is practical and flexible in a way that allows for epistemologies that cross identity and desire insofar as her method crosses awareness and changing flesh as sources of knowing. To attend to these conditions of epistemology that allow gender to emerge is to powerfully engage the gendered positions that bodies live.

Finally, Julian's instructions to develop an ease with anxiety while observing the warring parts of the partitioned self may also provide support during the sometimes heartbreaking process that one goes through when she investigates what is barred from the scene of history. In the discovery of what is barred from the scene lies the history of bodies that are violently erased, as well as the personal ways in which the seeker's body has been violently erased, regardless of societal privileges that she may hold. Julian's contemplative method may be a partner to the project of genealogy that supports "love-talk" in the self that is sufficiently wide to lean into terrible contradictions as one uncovers what is barred from the scene of history. This practice may ease the heartbreak that inevitably accompanies transformational anger and survival.

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