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Steven Geitgey

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DONATIVE INTENT, POSITIVE TRIANGULAR MIMETIC DESIRE,
AND THE PORTRAYAL OF THE MEDIATOR-DIVINE (NON)OBJECT RELATIONSHIP
IN RICHARD ROLLE, JULIAN OF NORWICH, AND RICHARD CRASHAW

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College of Arts and Sciences

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Steven G. Geitgey

December 2020

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Steven G. Geitgey

2020

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ABSTRACT

“THAT THOSE HEARING OR READING MIGHT STRIVE TO IMITATE”:
DONATIVE INTENT, POSITIVE TRIANGULAR MIMETIC DESIRE,
AND THE PORTRAYAL OF THE MEDIATOR-DIVINE (NON)OBJECT RELATIONSHIP
IN RICHARD ROLLE, JULIAN OF NORWICH, AND RICHARD CRASHAW

By

Steven G. Geitgey

December 2020

Dissertation supervised by Sarah Breckenridge Wright.

Mystical texts often present themselves as possessing a “donative” intent, in which the writers aim to share the significance of their own experience. This dissertation will show how a consideration of donative intent and its textual results can enrich the study of medieval and early-modern mystical writings, approaching them from the broad concept of triangular mimetic desire in conjunction with other theoretical insights in order to examine the methods through which writers seek to portray their mediator-object relationship with God and inspire reading subjects’ mimetic desire.

I will elucidate Richard Rolle’s portrayal of his mediatorial purpose and unique experiences, and how his language and stylistic choices communicate the overwhelming and displacing aspects of these events, while bringing about a reading experience that is in its own way overwhelming and displacing. Julian of Norwich, I will demonstrate, undertakes a

hermeneutic of identification conflating mediator and subjects while presenting elements of divine-human identification. She portrays a positive mimetic triangle enabled by its divine object. Richard Crashaw presents a unique derivative donative intent, portraying in his Teresian poems Teresa of Avila as mediator and her mediator-object relationship. His stylistic choices serve these portrayals, providing a reading experience aesthetically analogous to Teresa's experiences of the divine. He portrays responding subjects within the poems to suggest the response of triangular mimetic desire.

These analyses will involve a unique synthesis of elements from phenomenology, theology, historical studies, and stylistics, validating the use of hybridized approaches in elucidating the underlying intentions and representational elements of mystical texts.

DEDICATION

For my wife Nina,
without whom
none of this
would have occurred.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a decidedly nontraditional doctoral student—older, already working at my life’s work, and without a direct vocational goal—I have had a lengthy and at times sporadic journey through the degree process, complicated further during the dissertation writing and revision period by the coronavirus pandemic and resulting limitations and exclusions of access to texts and systems.

Given these circumstances, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Danielle St. Hilaire and Dr. Sarah Miller, and particularly committee chair Dr. Sarah Breckenridge Wright, for their patience, understanding, and encouragement over the course of a number of years, and for never letting me give in to despair! I also thank them for their wise critiques and suggestions for improvement of the dissertation itself, and for their counsel in general. I am tremendously grateful. In addition, I wish to express my appreciation to the many scholars whose efforts have benefitted all who wish to study mystical texts, whether for academic reasons, personal enrichment, or both.

Finally, I would like to thank colleagues, family, and friends who have been sources of encouragement during this process. In particular, I wish to thank my mother, Marjorie Geitgey, and most of all my wife, Nina, to whom, as has been noted, this work is dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will explore several *donative* mystical texts from the late medieval era and the seventeenth century. While “mystical” in the sense of being based on putative experiences of the divine, these experiences are understood by their recipients as having a particular nature: they constitute a divine gift that is required, from the mystic’s perspective, to be shared with others. Various mystical writers, both in England and on the continent, suggest their experiences to be in some sense given them for others’ advantage, and perceive their texts as a means of fulfilling the resulting obligation. Mystical writings that are thus donative in nature may legitimately be approached in relation to this intent. While a number of these texts have traditionally been discounted or peripheralized, manuscript evidence suggests they represent an important and widespread tradition in the medieval era.

This dissertation will focus on two late-medieval English mystics whose writings reflect this intent: Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole; and the anchoress Julian of Norwich. The project will seek to demonstrate that the writings of Rolle and Julian fulfill this donative intention by using particular presentational and stylistic strategies to portray the mystical writer and the writer’s relationship with the divine object, and to address the implied reader whose mimetic desire the text seeks to stimulate through these means. In addition, it will focus on the poetry of Richard Crashaw, a seventeenth-century writer whose works also exhibit striking affective and sensory elements, and who has often suffered from critical dismissals. I will suggest that Crashaw’s poems dedicated to St. Teresa of Avila have a unique form of donative intention underlying his presentational and stylistic techniques.

The theoretical basis for the project lies in the theory of triangular mimetic desire, a theory René Girard initially developed in a literary analysis but which has been modified and

employed by Girard and others in a variety of cultural and theological studies. This approach has not been applied to mystical writings in spite of its suitability for elucidating the relationships—reading subject, authorial mediator, and divine object—often assumed by such texts. Girard suggests that the mediator, in a relationship with the object, is the model whose desire the subject imitates. The mediator demonstrates the value of the object by her or his own desire, to which the subject responds with mimetic desire, thus forming a relational mimetic triangle. While Girard’s own work has tended to focus on the problematic, rivalrous potentials of subject-mediator relationships, mimetic desire is not intrinsically bad. Girard and others have noted its integral role in the spread of Christianity, as Jesus’ call to the disciples to imitate him even as he imitates the Father initiates an endless sequence of positive triangular mimetic relationships. These relationships become increasingly textual over time, and the texts to be studied function in this way, portraying the mediator-object relationship and mediating the writer’s desire to the reading subject through presentational and stylistic means. The positive form of the theory of triangular mimetic desire therefore provides a theoretical basis, appropriate to the donative intentions exhibited in the texts themselves, by which to consider the techniques by which they fulfill such intentions.

In each chapter this primary methodology will be combined with additional theoretical approaches appropriate to the works of the writer to be studied. These will reflect the intentionally inter-disciplinary nature of the project, a nature appropriate to the genre-crossing quality of the works studied as they deliberately obscure the borders of theology, autobiography, poetry and prose, entering the luminous spaces at the borders of language itself in an attempt to express phenomenologically saturating experiences. As such, I will adopt methods from the critical realms of theology and theopoetics, phenomenology, literary studies, and stylistics.

Synthesizing these approaches will enable the project to amalgamate prior critical works focused on specific aspects of mystical writings such as spiritual-sensory and bridal-mystical language while examining how these elements are utilized and adapted by the writers in their effort to communicate experiences and inspire mimetic desire. The result will employ the insights of prior theoretical approaches in the service of an overall critical standpoint that has not been utilized in the study of mystical texts.

CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter will present René Girard's theory of triangular desire and mimesis, discussing the critical responses to this concept and its development in Girard's own thought. I will present evidence that the positive version of Girard's subject-mediator-object triangle is discernable in depictions of relationships throughout Christian history, and that it also occurs in equivalent epistolary relationships. The attributes and function of the textual mimetic triangle will then be considered in relation to the unique challenges faced by the mediator in this form of triangle, with reference to the transcendent internal medium and its role in inspiring mimetic desire. In relation to this I will reference medieval devotional and affective reading as depicted in such texts as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, Walter Hilton's writings, the anonymous *A Talkyng of The Loue of God*, and *The Book of Margery Kempe*.

CHAPTER TWO

The second chapter will introduce Richard Rolle and consider his various statements of purpose and their evidence of his donative intention. It will then survey Rolle's major works *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris*, examining the methods by which Rolle portrays himself as someone gifted with mystical experience and therefore capable of acting as the mediator of a relationship with the divine. The figure of the medieval "wild man" will provide the basis for a

theoretical approach to Rolle's depiction of his eremitic life, his prophetic persona, and his self-presentation as a sought-after holy man. I will consider how these portrayals stress Rolle's uniqueness, and how their resulting assertion of divine empowerment and blessing, emphasized through direct and indirect biblical and patristic references, plays an important part in Rolle's self-fashioning as the mediator of a divine relationship worthy of his reading subject's desire.

CHAPTER THREE

For Rolle to fulfill his mediatorial responsibility also requires that the reader identify with Rolle himself in his relationship with God and be moved to mimetic desire for a similar form of relationship. Therefore, the third chapter will examine the various means by which Rolle depicts that relationship, focusing particularly on the overwhelming aspects of his experiences of divine presence and gifting, and the strategies by which Rolle draws the reader into performative identification with his own desire for God. The internal medium he creates will be revealed employing and intensifying affective mystical language to portray Rolle's sense of displacement in these experiences, while utilizing stylistic elements to bring about an analogously displacing reading experience for his subject.

I will examine these rhetorical devices in light of the concept of "saturating phenomena" elucidated in an early work of Jean-Luc Marion, the critiques and modifications of Marion's later development of this concept (as "saturated phenomena") by Shane Mackinlay and Christina Gschwandtner, and additional relevant theoretical insights from Karmen MacKendrick and Anthony Steinbock, among others. Particular attention will be given to questions of hermeneutic openness and the displacement of the subject. The critical literature on Rolle's style and language will be considered in relation to this basis in order to suggest how Rolle goes about

portraying the limitless divine (non)object of his own relationship and inspiring his reading subject's mimetic desire for a similar relationship.

CHAPTER FOUR

The fourth chapter will turn to Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, focusing particularly on her avowed identification with her *evyn cristen* ("fellow Christians") and specifically with her implied reader. I will view this aspect of triangular mimesis in relation to Julian's own role as an anchoress in Norwich as well as her communal identification and textual self-displacement within *Showings*, focusing on the ways in which the latter model and encourage non-rivalrous mimesis and positive mimetic community. Several passages from Julian's reflection on the central "syght" of the lord and servant will be approached in terms of divine-human identification, again in relation to positive mimesis and the inclusive nature of the recipient community posited by the internal medium. Inclusivity, both in terms of divine portrayal and its human counterparts, will also be the focus of the chapter's final section on the maternal imagery of *Showings*.

While attentive to the critical literature, my analysis will concentrate on the elements of identification within Julian's internal medium in relation to Girardian triangular mimetic theory. It will clarify how these aspects serve Julian's donative intent and present a community based on non-rivalrous mimesis and embodying relationally the elements of the transcendent mimetic triangle.

CHAPTER FIVE

The final chapter will examine the Teresa poems of the seventeenth-century poet Richard Crashaw. Noting the often-negative reactions to Crashaw's work, it will locate the basis of these reactions in negative judgments concerning its affectivity and supposed non-Englishness, as well

as the critical tendency to interpret Crashaw's poetry as outbursts of spontaneous personal devotion rather than intentional literary works.

In contrast, I will adopt the recent contention that Crashaw's poetry is more reflective of aspects of early seventeenth-century English spirituality than previously acknowledged. In addition, through an examination of the texts in the library of William Crashaw, the project will establish the possibility of direct medieval influences, including the writings of Richard Rolle, on his son Richard. The result will be to confirm that Crashaw, far from "living in a world of imagination that does not have its roots in England" (Praz 135), reflects aspects of both contemporary English spirituality and its medieval forbears.

Crashaw's Teresa poems parallel the emphasis found in the writings already surveyed in their effort to incite readers to mimetic desire, in their use of "dazzling" stylistic techniques and affective mystical language (often derived from Teresa of Avila's own writings), and in their desire to portray the suitability of the mediator. I will show that the distinctiveness of these poems' internal medium lies in the fact that the portrayed mediator is Teresa herself, with the voice of the poem describing and lauding her relationship with God as well as the success of her writings in inspiring mimetic desire. That poetic voice is ultimately personified as a desiring subject responding to Teresa's mediator-divine (non)object relationship and coming to enjoy a similar relationship. Crashaw's donative intent will be revealed as derivative in nature: he wishes his own Teresa poems to continue the mediatorial success of her writings by providing his readers the opportunity to respond to his poetic depiction of her life.

The dissertation will reflect and interact with the contemporary approaches noted above. It will focus directly on the texts' donative intent and demonstrate that the presentational elements and stylistic strategies of these texts play an integral role in the fulfillment of this

intent. In doing so, it will also seek to validate such interdisciplinary combinations of approaches as fruitful avenues of study for other mystical texts of a donative nature.

**CHAPTER ONE:
DONATIVE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE
AND TRANSCENDENT TRIANGULAR MIMETIC DESIRE**

As he approaches the conclusion of *Incendium Amoris*,¹ the fourteenth-century English hermit Richard Rolle notes his inability to fully communicate his direct experiences of the divine due to what he calls the smallness of his own nature (*paruitas. . . ingenii mei*). Rolle's words reflect the common understanding that experiences of the divine, including his own, are ultimately ineffable. They exceed the human capacity for understanding, resist definition and interpretation according to common experience, and are therefore incapable of communication in any fullness and clarity. Yet Rolle states that he is "compelled to speak" (*dicere compellebar*) by reason of having had them. They have not been given merely for his own private benefit, but in order to be communicated—however inadequately—for the benefit of others. In Rolle's view his mystical experiences² are given in order to be given for the common good.

A number of late-medieval mystical writers portray their purpose in writing in this manner, suggesting their experiences were given them, as Julian of Norwich says of her revelations, "for the profytte of many oder" (*Showings* 6.18; 220). These writers see their experiences as *donative*³ in nature, in that they have been given them (and more broadly the relationship they exemplify) in order to *give* them, sharing with others in order to in some sense bring others to a similar experience and relationship. Mystical experiences are not simply meant for private spiritual formation; they may instead be divinely given in order to be shared for the common good.⁴

¹ *Incendium Amoris* 268.20-26. All *Incendium* references are to the edition edited by Margaret Deansely.

² "Mystical" is meant in the broad sense of referencing some form of direct experience of the divine.

³ I choose the word *donative* in relation to the Latin *donare*, "to give."

⁴ Note Balthasar's discussion of mystical experiences as traditionally defined, that "point inwards," and those belonging to the "realm of the charisms," that "point outwards" (*Glory of the Lord* 409, 410). In the latter case, "it is not the individual undergoing the experience who is the goal of the divine action, but the Church as a whole"

These writers perceive their texts as a means of facilitating this giving. Gertrude of Helfta, for example, contrasting experiencing “a rose in spring” to hearing “its sweet sense . . . evoked in words,” nevertheless claims that “the latter can to some extent revive the memory of former loveliness.” She adds, “And so I want, if I can, in my nothingness, to find some similitude to describe what I felt in that most blissful vision of you, in praise of your love. Then perhaps some reader, having received a similar or even a greater grace, may be reminded to give thanks” (126). Elsewhere Gertrude speaks of her words as “painted pictures,” and suggests that those reading them “may be led to taste within themselves that hidden manna, which it is not possible to adulterate by any admixture of material images and of which one must have eaten to hunger for it forever” (135). I will refer to writings with this intent as *donative* mystical writings.

This donative consideration shapes the way such writers present both their experiences and themselves to their implied reader. Rolle, for example, alludes to the means by which this donative purpose will ideally be fulfilled and in doing so explicates his purpose in writing. He states that he has written “in order that those hearing or reading might strive to imitate.”⁵ For Rolle’s divinely given mission to succeed, his readers must become lovers of God even as he is, striving to imitate his desire. He assures them that the one “who chooses God truly and wholeheartedly”⁶ will come to know a relationship of divine love much like Rolle himself already possesses.

Rolle is not alone in seeking to inspire his reader’s desire to imitate his own life and come to possess a similar divine relationship. Approaching the works of several writers from

(414). Evelyn Underhill says of such a circumstance that the mystic “must turn back to pass on the revelation he has received; must mediate between the transcendent and his fellow men” (65).

⁵ *ut audientes uel legentes studeant imitari* (*Incendium* 268.23-24)

⁶ *qui Deum ueraciter et toto corde deligit* (269.13)

this recognition of their donative intent⁷ reveals their efforts to inspire mimetic desire for the relationship with the divine they portray, and which they strive to mediate by various representational and stylistic means. The basis for this approach will be the theory of triangular mimetic desire posited by the contemporary literary and cultural critic René Girard and subsequently critiqued and modified by a number of writers as well as Girard himself.

TRIANGULAR MIMETIC DESIRE

The interrelationship between the mystical writer, God (with whom the writer is in relationship), and the reader that is the focus of the writer's donative intent, bears a striking resemblance to the interrelationship of mediator (or model), object, and subject within Girard's theoretical mimetic triangle. Girard initially presents his theory of triangular mimetic desire within a literary study exposing the romantic illusion of fictional heroes functioning autonomously when their desires are, in fact, mimetic.⁸ He nevertheless views mimetic desire as more than a merely novelistic phenomenon, and he comes to see it as the basis for human behavior:

If our desires were not mimetic, they would be forever fixed on predetermined objects; they would be a particular form of instinct. Human beings could no more change their desire than cows their appetite for grass. Without mimetic desire there would be neither freedom nor humanity. (*I See Satan Fall* 15)

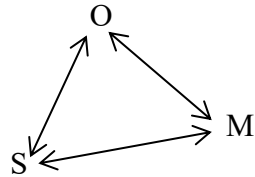
Simply put, Girard claims that our desire for objects "rests on a third party who gives value to the objects," and who therefore functions as "the model for our desires" (*I See Satan Fall* 9-10).

Girard suggests, "The impulse toward the object is at bottom an impulse toward the mediator" (*Deceit* 10), who is already in a desiring relationship with the object and whose desire the subject

⁷ These writers are Rolle himself, Julian of Norwich, and the seventeenth-century poet Richard Crashaw.

⁸ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*

imitates in response to the mediator's own valuing of that object.⁹ The mediator models desire for the object, mediating that desire to the subject. As Mark Ansprach puts it, "In Girard's analysis, the presence of a model is essential to orient desire by designating the object as worthy of possession" (xxxiv). Thus, the mimetic relationship can be construed visually as a triangle with subject, object, and mediator/model as the points:



This triangular mimetic relationship implies that the mediator may merely unintentionally model desire for the object in the eyes of the subject or can play an active role in presenting the object as desirable. This latter will prove important for considering donative mystical writings.

It would be questionable in this regard to suggest (as Girard at times seems to) that all desire originates in a mimetic manner: certain of Richard Rolle's experiences, for example, would appear to indicate that specific desires may be aroused by the direct unmediated experience of phenomena unprecedented in the subject's own awareness. The subsequent communication of such experiences and their apparent significance, however, brings mimetic desire into the equation, perhaps particularly when the mediator expresses or exhibits a purposefully donative intention. In such circumstances the subject of the initial experience now becomes its deliberate mediator to others who themselves come to know and to possibly desire that experience through the mediation.

⁹ Neil Ormerod makes the amusing and perhaps somewhat sardonic (if accurate) observation, "Evidence for the mimetic nature of desire is not difficult to uncover, as every advertiser knows" (251). Girard suggests that mimesis plays a broad role in life: "It is not only desire that one borrows from those whom one takes for models; it is a mass of behaviors, attitudes, things learned, prejudices, preferences, etc." (*I See* 15). Like the young person whose love of espresso and dislike of brussels sprouts in reality reflect inherited parental attitudes, various aspects of "who we are" may have unrecognized mimetic aspects.

Mimetic Rivalry

Girard tends to focus on the imitating subject and the subject's responses, partly because of his interest in the conflictive version of the mimetic relationship. He notes in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, "If imitation does indeed play the fundamental role for man . . . there must certainly exist an acquisitive imitation, or, if one prefers, a possessive mimesis whose effects and consequences should be carefully studied and considered" (9). For Girard this possessive form of mimesis and the rivalry resulting from it are pervasive. His descriptions of its characteristics are often indistinguishable from those of the mimetic process itself:

Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, *the subject desires the object because the rival desires it*. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject . . . in regard to desires. (*Violence and the Sacred* 145)

This would seem to suggest that the triangular mimetic process itself is the source of the rivalry: the model/mediator becomes a rival simply by reason of being a model. Girard states in *Violence and the Sacred*, "Two desires converging on the same object are bound to clash. Thus, mimesis coupled with desire leads automatically to conflict" (146). For Girard this rivalry is the result of "insufficient distance" between the mediator and the subject, a situation Girard alludes to by delineating two dominant forms of mediation:

We shall speak of *external mediation* when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of *possibilities* of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers. We shall speak of *internal mediation* when this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly. Obviously it is not physical space that measures the gap between mediator and desiring subject. Although geographical separation might be one factor, the *distance* between mediator and subject is primarily spiritual. (*Deceit* 9)

"Spiritual distance" relates to the difference in standing between the mediator/model and subject, which prevents the latter from viewing the former as a mere equal (and thus rival) rather than an

admired superior.¹⁰ Spiritual distance is not simply based on social status, but can involve other forms of recognition, respect, and perceived achievement, as with some recognized master in a particular area or discipline, “so that one may be ‘proud to be the disciple of so worthy a model’” (Ormerod 256).

To give a medieval example of the role of vertical transcendence, the fifteenth-century writer Margery Kempe is eager to describe her visit to Julian of Norwich and the latter’s approval of various aspects of Margery’s spiritual life, partly because ‘þe ankres was expert in swech thyngys & good cownsel cowd 3euy’n’ (42.16.17).¹¹ Elsewhere Margery stresses that her reading list has included admired spiritual standards such as Rolle’s *Incendium Amoris*, Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection*, the life of St. Bridget, and works by Bonaventure, among others (143.25-29). For Margery the quality and status of her models forms an important part of her own self-authorization.

Metaphysical Desire and Internal Mediation

The example of Margery Kempe’s models suggests a related aspect of triangular mimesis. For Girard the relationship between the subject and the mediator/model is metaphysical, in that the subject’s imitation of the modelled desire is ultimately an attempt “to conquer the being, the essence, of his model by as faithful an imitation as possible” (*To Double Business Bound* 3, qtd. in Webb 203). For A to say, “I desire that object desired by B” is also, in one sense, to say “I desire to be like B”; the object of desire gains its value in light of the qualities the subject observes in the mediator. The subject “desires *being*, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person

¹⁰ As Chantre and Merrill put it, “One might even say that it is the same thing as culture, and as aristocratic culture in particular” (162). It involves more than mere class status, however.

¹¹ Quotations from the *Book of Margery Kempe* are from the edition edited by Meech.

to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being” (Girard, *Violence* 146). *Being* may include, as Robinette notes, such qualities as “recognition, identity, status, or power” (133). These qualities are not, however, merely those publicly ascribed to a person, but those qualities of being the subject feels their model legitimately projects. The model must be recognized by the subject as superior in some way if the subject is to wish to imitate that person in desiring what the model desires:

If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being. It is not through words, therefore, but by the example of his own desire that the model conveys to the subject the supreme desirability of the object. (Girard, *Violence* 146)

The subject’s mimetic desire is based on both the “superior being” of the model themselves and for an object the subject perceives as related to that superior being. To use an analogy, if a famous and admired guitarist decides to always play a particular brand of guitar, fans of that guitarist will likely also come to appreciate that brand more and desire to play it as well. The quality of the guitar is perceived as associated with the quality of the guitarist.¹² This aspect of the triangular mimetic relationship will be important to the current study.

However, Girard sees the metaphysical aspect of desire as potentially bound up with mimetic rivalry, stating, “The model, being closely identified with the object he jealously keeps for himself, possesses—so it would seem—a self-sufficiency and omniscience that the subject can only dream of acquiring” (*Things Hidden* 296). The subject may be drawn into a rivalrous relationship with the model not only because of the latter’s possession of the desired object, but

¹² The existence of endorsement contracts demonstrates the power of such artist-brand associations.

also because that possession is seen in conjunction with what the subject perceives as the model's apparent "superiority."¹³

It should be stressed, however, that the problem in rivalrous mimesis lies not with the desire to be like another or attain their qualities of being per se. Rather, it results (as noted above) from the loss of the spiritual distance separating the model and subject, and the shift from external to internal mediation. To use a further musical analogy, if a would-be jazz pianist's model is Herbie Hancock, rivalrous mimesis is not likely. One may say "I'd like to be like Herbie Hancock," while also knowing such a statement is not truly within the realm of possibility. One will never deserve the acclaim he enjoys; one can only be inspired by him to attain the level of performance (and potential acclaim) one is capable of attaining. On the other hand, if the model is another pianist at the local jazz club's open-mic night, rivalry becomes not only possible but perhaps even probable.

In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, Girard sees internal mediation as a modern phenomenon. It arises in the shift from what Chantre and Merrill call "a world where admiration without rivalry is still possible; a world where stable models that provide structure and support are still imitated in all innocence" (159), to a modern egalitarian world in which such distance is eroded and models are therefore capable of being perceived as and reduced to rivals. Although *Deceit* predates Girard's expressly theological works, he connects this development with a secularization—"God is dead and man must take his place" (56)—that causes us to become

¹³ Girard's use of the term "jealously" (and in the earlier quote, the phrase "conquer the being") implies a relationship that is inexorably rivalrous in nature; indeed, he claims, "We might well decide to use the word 'desire' only in circumstances where the misunderstood mechanism of mimetic rivalry has imbued what was previously just an appetite or need with this metaphysical dimension" (296). Such statements are part of a reductive tendency in Girard's theory that—as will be shown—has been critiqued and modified by others, and at least heavily nuanced by Girard himself in response.

focused excessively on one another.¹⁴ It is not that imitation of others does not exist prior to this secularization, but that the shift in focus and lack of distance problematizes the relationship: “The nearer the model comes to the desiring subject the more remote transcendence becomes from that vertical. It is deviated transcendence at work” (*Deceit* 215). This issue is exacerbated by the fact that “the impulse toward the object is ultimately an impulse toward the mediator,” now become an accessible idol, and “in internal mediation this impulse is checked by the mediator himself since he desires, or perhaps possesses, the object” (10).

The Ubiquity of Mimetic Rivalry

Thus in Girard’s early presentation of triangular mimetic desire the issue is the turn toward the other in a relationship of internal mediation, and the resulting “mimetic rivalry” between subject and mediator/model. Girard’s language above might suggest that the problem of internal mediation is irrelevant to the medieval era that predates the rise of modernity and secularization. His subsequent writing, however, tends to give this problematic form of mimetic relationship a far more pervasive role and scope in the history of human culture. This can be seen in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, in which Girard directly links the appearance of acquisitive mimesis and the rivalry that results (as well as the victim mechanism in which the violence of the rivalry is diverted toward a third party) to the appearance of distinctively human life: “Beyond a certain threshold of mimetic power, animal societies become impossible. This threshold corresponds to the appearance of the victimage mechanism and would thus be the threshold of hominization” (20).¹⁵

¹⁴ “We will borrow an abstract formula from Louis Ferrero’s *Désespoirs*: ‘Passion is a change of address of a force awakened by Christianity and oriented toward God.’ Denial of God does not eliminate transcendence but diverts it. . . The imitation of Christ becomes the imitation of one’s neighbor. The surge of pride breaks against the humanity of the mediator, and the result of this conflict is hatred.” (*Deceit* 59)

¹⁵ Raymund Schwager’s comment on this passage further explicates its significance: “In animal societies, mimetic desire is kept within clear boundaries by means of dominance patterns. The dissolution of these dominance patterns

Humanity is entangled from its very beginnings with the rivalries that result from limitless desires; indeed, as Hans Urs von Balthasar nicely summarizes, “the threshold to the human is passed when imitation of the leading animal becomes (by contrast with the animal kingdom) a *mimesis d'appropriation*. . . . Now the question is how to find a mechanism that will regulate the struggle of all against everyone” (*Theo-Drama* 304). In Girard’s theory, this search results in the “scapegoating” mechanism that undergirds human society from its origins, as the title *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* would itself suggest.¹⁶

Girard also pursues a theological presentation of mimetic rivalry and its results, particularly apparent in *I See Satan Fall*. He develops this argument from a consideration of the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17), which he states “sketches . . . a fundamental revolution in the understanding of desire” because it reveals that desire “rests on a third party who gives value to the objects” (9). He notes in relation to the commandment’s language, “The Hebrew term translated as ‘covet’ means just simply ‘desire.’ This is the word that designates the desire of Eve for the prohibited fruit, the desire leading to the original sin” (7). Girard’s words indicate the influence of Raymund Schwager, who had previously applied the notion of mimetic rivalry to the biblical story of the Fall.¹⁷

means that desire becomes limitless. . . . The unlimited mimesis easily leads to rivalries, which exceed even the most vital boundaries” (*Mimesis and Freedom* 35).

¹⁶ In subsequent writings (most notably *Violence and the Sacred*) Girard develops his premise into a notion of the role of mimetic rivalry as one aspect of a broad anthropological and theological investigation of violence in culture, myth, and religion, focused around his theory of scapegoating. A number of critics (many of whom will be noted below) have adapted and modified Girard’s approaches, and have applied his theories to a wide range of disciplines, from cultural studies, psychology, and theology to film theory and economics. See Hetzel, “The Reception of the Mimetic Theory in the German-Speaking World” and Chantre and Johnsen, “Rene Girard in France” for broad-ranging surveys of the many disciplines in which Girard’s theories have been applied.

¹⁷ In relation to the warning against eating the fruit of the tree, because “you will be like gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5), Schwager suggests, “The temptation to imitate God himself (as a rival) stems from the voice.” The fruit and its promise of godlike knowledge is the object of rivalry: “[The voice] plays the role of a mediator. Because of this mediator, the object, the fruit of the tree of knowledge, becomes something worth striving for, and it now assumes control over men. Thus sin is the result of imitation. At the real origin, we find not the imitation of man but that of a ‘God’—of course, not the true God but that image of God created by the voice of mistrust” (33).

Schwager does not take the story of the fall literally but as a representation of humanity's history of mimetic rivalry resulting from placing "unlimited expectation in the models of the finite, purely immanent world." The result of this turn to "idolatrous models" is an ongoing history of "excessive mimesis, thus enslaving freedom and leading to the scapegoating mechanism" (41). Similarly, for Girard, whether viewed through the lenses of evolutionary development or theological speculation, "Mimeticism is the contagion which spreads throughout human relationships" (*Things Hidden* 299).¹⁸ In addition, mimetic rivalries are self-perpetuating, as "the prestige of the model, the resistance he puts up, the value of the object, and the strength of the desire it arouses all reinforce each other, setting up a process of positive feedback" (*Things Hidden* 295). Not only is this a disruptive factor present from the beginning of human history, but broadly influences human culture. Girard asserts that as "all the great institutions of mankind, both secular and religious, spring from ritual" (*Things Hidden* 306), mimetic rivalry, through the rites developed to contain and discharge it, is responsible for the development of much that constitutes society.

Given Girard's tendency toward such characterizations, his use of words like "contagion," and all-encompassing statements like "in principle it spares no one" (*Things Hidden* 299), it comes as no surprise that critics such as Peter Sloterdijk can say Girard's mimetic theory constitutes a "scientific version of the doctrine of original sin" (qtd. in Steinmar-Pösel 6). A closer theological parallel might be concupiscence: humans can't help but become rivals in

¹⁸ In addition to the Hebrew Bible, Girard investigates the myths and rituals of a number of cultures as well as the history of drama and literature, in relation to mimesis and scapegoating. See, for example, the lengthy presentations in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* and *Violence and the Sacred*, as well as the discussion of Apollonius of Tyana in *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. As Paul Keim notes, for Girard, the violent aggression that develops from mimetic desire is "'the mother of all human drives,' the inevitable byproduct of social interaction" (158).

mimetic relationships.¹⁹ Girard sees negative mimesis as inevitable and unavoidable, suggesting that all human mimetic behavior is ultimately tainted by mimetic rivalry and cannot help but embody it, because the underlying desire is “endemic” (*Things Hidden* 288). As a result, mimetic rivalry in Girard’s early work appears inescapable except via renouncing mimetic desire altogether, what he refers to as “repudiation of a human mediator and renunciation of deviated transcendency” (*Deceit* 312).²⁰

Critiques and Further Development

Such a negative portrayal of mimetic desire and its consequences might suggest that Girard’s theory is of little value as an approach to study the donative mystical writers. Nevertheless, both Girard and his critics have developed more affirmative understandings of the role of triangular mimetic desire and the relationship of mediator/model and subject. Girard’s theory has been critiqued at the level of what Keim calls its “highly reductive nature” (159), and various theorists have offered alternatives to Girard’s negative portrayal of mimesis and the triangular relationship. In light of these critiques Girard himself has to some degree modified (or at least nuanced) his own approach, and the following survey will consider the developments most applicable to triangular mimesis and desire as they relate to medieval donative mystical literature.

Webb, for example, notes (in relation to *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*), “Girard describes destructive imitative desire as a ‘deviated’ or ‘diverted’ impulse toward transcendency. The great imitators of literature, Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, might just as well have become

¹⁹ Rebecca Adams observes, “There seems to be a covert suspicion, throughout the theory, of real agency” and a suggestion of “bondage of the will” (“Violence” 22).

²⁰ Webb says of this proposed solution, “One must renounce all human mediators (and therefore all books, with the possible exception of the Bible) and look to vertical transcendency, in other words a direct relationship with God. . . Other human, even ‘good,’ examples become unnecessary” (202).

mystics.” Webb is implying the apparent superiority of this latter choice in relation to Girard’s characterization of deviated transcendence: the implication is that in becoming a “mystic” one would renounce deviated transcendent desire. But Webb goes on to ask, “But what, in that case, would they have been imitating? Other mystics? Or are we to assume that they would imitate Christ alone?” (201). Webb’s critique suggests the questionable nature of implying one can imitate an unmediated divine model. Similarly, James Allison states, “The difficulty is that God is not a model in any obvious sense. If we do not have a human model to imitate, one at our level, then we have no ability to desire according to God” (30). Allison would posit Christ as the human model par excellence, but it is also true that outside of the original disciples no one comes to Christ except via a sequence of imitation: as will be seen, even the earliest Christians came to imitate Christ via the imitation of the disciples and apostles. Mimesis, in other words, is still necessary, even in such “positive” circumstances; and this reality underlies donative writers’ efforts to mediate their own divine relationships to others.

POSITIVE MIMESIS

Petra Steinmar-Pösel notes that in Girard’s early work “the conflictual and violent dimensions of mimesis and mimetic desire . . . are basically used synonymously” (2). Yet Girard’s views develop in agreement with those, such as Brian Robinette, who feel the “mimetic attraction” between the subject and mediator “lies at the heart of both human belonging and conflict . . . tend[ing] either toward creative mutuality or violent rivalry, and with many different shades in between” (131-32).²¹ Girard comes to speak of mimetic desire involving “the opening

²¹ Rebecca Adams, for example, asserts in an interview with Girard, “You make the statement that to follow Christ means to ‘give up’ or renounce mimetic desire, yet the hominization section implies that mimetic desire is the only kind of desire there is.” Girard responds “The idea that mimetic desire itself is bad makes no sense. It is true however that occasionally I say ‘mimetic desire’ when I really mean only the type of mimetic desire that generates mimetic rivalry and, in turn, is generated by it” (Adams, “Violence” 22-23).

out of oneself,” asserting that in consequence such desire, “even when bad, is intrinsically good” (Adams, “Violence” 24). He also clarifies that desire need not be mimetic “in the bad, conflictual sense. Nothing is more mimetic than the desire of a child, and yet it is good. . . . Cultural imitation is a positive form of mimetic desire” (“Violence” 25).

Although Steinmar-Pösel observes, “In spite of this repeated emphasis on the fundamental goodness of mimetic desire, Girard’s more recent writings continued to speak more about acquisitive and conflictual mimetic structures” (2)—a predictable situation given the important role such structures play in Girard’s larger theory of violence and scapegoating—Girard has nevertheless embraced the notion of more positive forms of desire and mimesis. In *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, for example, he considers Jesus’ words in John chapter eight, “You are of your father the devil, and it is the desires of your father that you wish to do” (39), and states that they constitute “an explicitly mimetic definition of desire” capable of turning in either positive or negative directions based on the choice of model:

God and Satan are the two supreme models, “arch models,” whose opposition to one another corresponds to what I have already described: one between models who never become obstacles and rivals for their disciples because they desire nothing in a greedy and competitive way and models whose greed for whatever they desire has immediate repercussions on their imitators, transforming them right away into diabolic obstacles. (40)

Girard does not consider Satan an actual being, but rather a “mimetic concept” (44) that “signifies rivalistic contagion” (43): Satan, in a sense, functions as the biblical personification of the negative form of triangular mimetic desire and the rivalry resulting from it.²² But Girard here

²² Girard notes “The kingdom of Satan corresponds to that part of human history that precedes the death and resurrection of Christ, almost entirely governed by the single victim mechanism and the false religions it produces. The mimetic concept of Satan enables the New Testament to give evil its do without granting it any reality or ontological substance in its own right that would make of Satan a kind of god of evil” (*I See* 44). Compare, for example, Rebecca Adams: “The source of violence is not in mimesis itself. Rather, violence originates in the very split way of thinking that conceives of subjects as autonomous and in opposition to one another and therefore allows things, including human beings, to be conceived as objects of an appropriation” (“Loving Mimesis” 295).

also posits a divine model of non-rivalrous mimetic desire, one that is not “greedy and competitive” but is instead a positive force in the life of the desiring subject. The fourteenth-century English writer and spiritual guide Walter Hilton appears to reference this type of desire in *Mixed Life*, telling his reader, “God haþ sent fier of loue, þat is a good desire and grete wille for to plesse him, in to mannys soule, and vnto þis ende, þat a man schal knowe it, kepe it, and norsiche it and strengþe it, and be saued þerbi” (40.461-64). Hilton stresses that this desire is the dynamic force of the spiritual life, the “rote of al þi wirkyng” (47.558). For Hilton it is the divine gift of desire that enables the human striving for God. But it needs to be recognized and maintained, nourished and strengthened, in order to bring about a salvific result.

Transcendent Desire and the Limitless (non)Object

The possibility of desire as a positive (and divinely-given) force capable of being nourished, strengthened, and directed toward transcendent attainment underlies the donative mystical writings to be considered, and it is important to recognize the mimetic nature of this desire inspiring the approach of such texts. It is, at one level (to reiterate Richard Rolle’s words) the “desire to imitate,” not in a rivalrous but in a positive manner, directed toward a divine object that exceeds the possibility of full possession by either mediator or subject. This reveals the importance of a limitless object to non-rivalrous imitation, and the resulting possibility of positive mimesis for donative mystical texts focused on mediating a relationship with the divine.

Steinmar-Pösel’s important study of mimesis in Girardian thought delineates the connection between desire as a dynamic transcendent force and positive mimesis in Christian theology. Noting, “As God’s image and likeness, the human person is always striving beyond him/herself—to God as his/her model/figuration,” she nevertheless stresses that God “normally is not directly accessible to the human person, but is accessible only through the

mediation of his/her fellow human beings, who also have been created in God's image and likeness" (3). Therefore, desire for God "is immediately interlinked with the mimetic nature of the human person" (4). In contrast to the metaphysical form of mimetic desire—which Girard in his early work sees as integral to the development of rivalry via the desire for the being of the other—this is instead a desire for transcendence. In some sense it is a desire for participation in the being of God, who not only willingly gives that participation to those who seek it, but who has placed that desire within each person. Thus, positive mimesis "arises not from an attitude of scarcity but from the experience of gratuitous forgiveness and from newly bestowed possibilities for life," and "doesn't aim at taking the place of the model and finally of God." Rather, it aims at "gratuitous participation—ultimately participation in the divine life" (Steinmar-Pösel 9-10). One does not desire to conquer the being of the mediator in a rivalrous manner, but rather desires the divine who is revealed or at least indicated by the mediator in their own desire and relationship.

This has a salutary effect on the relationship of desire between the subject and the mediator/model. In his late work *Battling to the End*, Girard advances the concept of an "internal mutation of the mimetic principle," a transformation resulting from "renouncing the autonomy of our desire." This would involve the subject's recognition of commonality with the model in mutual but non-rivalrous desire, resulting in "a state of positive undifferentiation, in other words, identified with others" (131).²³ In response to Benoît Chantre's later observation concerning the dangers of both "excessive empathy" and "excessive indifference" in relationships, leading to Chantre's comment, "Identification makes it possible to see the other from the right distance," Girard stresses "But only Christ makes it possible to find that distance"

²³ Compare the words of Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." All modern-language scriptural quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version: see bibliography.

(“Battling” 134). The grounding of mimetic relationships in Christ leads to the state of positive undifferentiation, a *via media* in terms of subject-mediator identification neither too rivalrously close nor indifferently distant. This allows a mutuality of desire and imitation in/of Christ.

Such observations also suggest the connection of positive mimesis to donative mystical experience; as Steinmar-Pösel puts it, positive mimesis “is cultivated wherever human beings experience themselves as having received a gratuitous gift and consequently are willing to pass on what they have received, freely and without calculation” (10). The divine reorientation of desire is capable of transforming the mimetic relationship into one of selfless freedom based on mutuality rather than autonomy of desire, a mutuality that guards against mimetic rivalry and violence, rather than enabling it. This non-rivalrous aspect of mutuality and identification in positive mimesis will prove particularly notable in Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*.²⁴

Wolfgang Palaver’s words suggest a further implication of this divine reorientation of desire: “As long as desire is directed at an object that can be shared . . . mimesis poses no problems” (46). Triangular mimesis cannot degenerate into rivalry in relation to an object that opens us to that which is beyond ourselves or is itself an object transcending human capacity to control or possess.²⁵ In this regard donative mystical experience—as a divine gift intended for the mystical body, not only capable of being shared but, from the mystic’s perspective, required to be shared with others—is by definition resistant to mimetic rivalry. It is understood to be a gift possessing an infinite capacity for transformation, and a gift with a degree of expansiveness that infinitely exceeds human receptivity.

²⁴ Girard himself came to revise his understanding of metaphysical desire under the influence of Raymond Schwager, as Moosbrugger notes in studying their correspondence: “According to Girard, *Things Hidden* had wrongly implied that ‘metaphysical desire . . . Is nothing but a creation of mimetic violence.’ But there actually was a dimension beyond that. From Schwager’s reasoning in ‘Mimesis and Freedom’ he had learnt that there really was a way of acting out human life that was founded in ‘nothing but the good revelation,’ . . . the possibility of opening up one’s existential freedom through faith in the true God” (57 – 58).

²⁵ To use a banal example, no one fights over possession of the air we breathe.

Similarly, when viewed from the standpoint of the medieval apophatic mystical tradition, having God as the “object” of the mimetic triangle frees it from the possibility of rivalry, as God cannot be possessed. On the one hand, God overwhelms any attempt at definition, understanding, or categorization, as *Deonise Hid Diuinite* (the fourteenth-century translation of the *Mystica Theologia* of pseudo-Dionysius) suggests:

For þe parfite & þe singuleer cause of al most nedelynges be wiþoutyn comparison of þe moost hiȝe heiȝt abouen alle, boþe setting & doying away. And his not-vnderstandable ouerpassyng is vn-vnderstandably abouen alle affermyng and deniinge. (10.19-23)

As the cause of all, God infinitely transcends all that could be said or understood by any created thing (such as a human being), and thus resists any human effort at possession or control of God’s being. In this regard the German mystical writer Meister Eckhart, quoting an unknown source, says, “If I had a God whom I could understand, I should never consider him God” (207): the god subject to such human regulation would be in Eckhart’s illustration a mere idol.

On the other hand, the apophatic mystical tradition stresses that God is not a “thing,” and in fact defies our categories of being. This is exemplified in the lengthy “ne” passages of *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, asserting the impossibility of either affirming or denying anything concerning God through analogy to created things, “For he ne is any of þees þinges, ne haþ any of þees” (9.19-20), and, most strikingly, “ne he is anyþing of not-beyng þinges, ne anyþing of beyng þinges” (10.9-10). God can be counted neither among those things that exist nor those things that do not exist, because, as Eckhart puts it, “He is a being transcending being and transcending nothingness” (207). In this sense, to have the divine as the object of the mimetic triangle is to have (using an appropriately paradoxical phrase) a limitless “(non)object,” one by

definition incapable of inspiring possessive rivalries, unless reduced to a limited object (and thereby to something less than divine).²⁶

The probability of mimetic rivalry is therefore undermined by the limitless (non)object as well as the opening of the possibility (noted above in relation to Steinmar-Pösel) for what Swartley calls “positive, *nonacquisitive mimesis*” (219). In such a situation the mediator can encourage the subject’s desire for a relationship with the divine (non)object without thereby provoking rivalry.

Positive Mimesis and the Trinity

Girard sees Christ as the source of this latter possibility for otherwise rivalrous humans, telling Rebecca Adams, for example, “Jesus seems to say that the only way to avoid violence is to imitate me, and imitate the Father” (“Violence” 23); and most of Girard’s theological commentators follow him in this view.²⁷ Christ serves as a model of non-violence toward others, “advocating the renunciation of violence and the love of one’s enemies,” and, in his trial and crucifixion, “act[ing] totally in accordance with his own requirement”; as a result, “his behavior departs completely from the lawlike pattern of escalating mimesis” (Schwager 37). Steinmar-Pösel positions the source of non-rivalrous imitation in what she calls “the passionate relations of the divine persons with each other,” noting that “Jesus’ image of the Father is not that of a rivalrous God who wants to withhold something from God’s creatures, but that of a loving Father who wants to give Godself as a present,” while Jesus, as God the Son incarnate, “is imitating the

²⁶ Compare, for example, Emmanuel Lévinas’s comment, “Infinity is not the ‘object’ of a cognition (which would be to reduce it to the measure of the gaze that contemplates), but is the desirable, that which arouses Desire” (qtd. In Jackson, 336 n.22). Lévinas not only emphasizes divine irreducibility, but also suggests that the transcendent ineffability of the (non)object itself may nourish the transcendent desire of both mediator and subject.

²⁷ Robin Collins discusses the transformation of “appropriative” to “positive” desire in Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and neo-Confucianism (146-47). But as Girard himself uses Christian terminology and most commentators on his work are western, Christianity tends to provide the framework for theological discussion. It is the applicable framework for a discussion related to medieval Christian mystics.

Father by virtue of the Holy Spirit that has been given to him” (9). Christ in the incarnation serves to model both the donative and mimetic aspects of the trinitarian relationship.

The significance of seeing non-rivalrous mimesis as flowing from the interrelationships of the Trinity lies in Christ’s own statement that, through him, his disciples are brought into that Trinitarian relationship: “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (John 14:19-20). This promise is not limited to his original followers, but also encompasses “those who will believe in me through their word . . . so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me” (John 17:20, 22b-23a). Fodor notes, “because the Fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit is distinguished by continuous self-dispossession and self-giving, a certain space is opened up whereby we, as God’s creatures, are enabled to share in God’s Trinitarian life” (257). It is through the selfless interrelationships of the persons of the Trinity, extended to humanity in the incarnation, that non-rivalrous human relationships reflecting the divine inter-relational life are made possible.

This view can be observed in the donative mystical texts to be studied. Thus Julian of Norwich, having concluded her explication of the lord and servant allegory in relation to the incarnation (to be discussed in chapter three), suggests that the soul—always understood in relation to those “þat shall be savyd” (57.3; 576)—is enclosed within the godhead through Christ:

That wurschypfull cytte þat oure lorde Jhesu syttyth in, it is oure sensualyte, in whych he is enclosyd; and oure kyndly substance is beclosyd in Jhesu, with þe blessyd soule of Crist syttyng in rest in the godhed. (56.23-25; 572)

The level of this bond between the soul and God is emphasized by Julian’s subsequent reference to the progress of spiritual formation, “into the tyme that we be led so depe in to god that we

verely and trewly know oure owne soule,” to which she adds, “in to this hye depnesse our good lorde hym selfe ledyth vs” (56.27-29; 572-73). Julian’s words suggest what Girard in *Battling to the End* calls “innermost mediation” (in contrast to “internal mediation, which can always degenerate into bad reciprocity”), which proceeds from the divine “in the sense of St. Augustine’s *Deos interior intimo meo*” (133). It is divine intimacy that forms the basis for the transformation of internal mediation into transcendent mediation.

For Julian, Christ is the source of this intimacy, for he unites the substance and sensuality (that is, the upper rational and lower sensual parts) of the soul with God, “for the trynyte is comprehendyd in Crist, in whom oure hyer party is groundyd and rotyd; and oure lower party the second parson hath taken, whych kynd furst to hym was adyght” (57.19-22; 578). She stresses that there is a mimetic aspect to our role in Christ’s task:

In whych werkyng he wylle we be his helpers, gevyng to hym alle oure entent, lernyng his lawes, kepyng his lore, desyeryng that alle be done that he doth, truly trustyng in hym, for verely I saw that oure substance is in god. (57.56-59; 581)

Christ, through his incarnation and passion, has taken on and raised our sensual nature, uniting it with our substantial nature in him. This opens the possibility for us to fully grow into him (and thus into the Trinitarian relationship) through acts of obedience which Julian expressly relates to mimetic desire. Swartley’s comment concerning the “in Christ” person could just as easily be applied to Julian’s description of the new existence opened to those “þat shall be savyd”:

If there is a mysticism here, it is moral and mimetic at its core. It is linked to *desire* and assumes that thought, conduct, and aspiration are governed by new *desires*. . . . The “in Christ” person dies to the old *acquisitive mimetic desire* and lives by the power of a new mimesis, *imitating the pattern of Jesus Christ and seeking to be conformed to his image*. (238)²⁸

²⁸ So also Robin Collins: “Human nature was restored in Christ, and salvation consists in partaking of this new human nature in Christ. . . . We are saved by partaking mimetically partaking of the incarnated subjectivity of God the Son” (148).

Swartley's mimetic analysis of spiritual formation and Julian's guidance to her *evyn cristen* suggest that imitating Christ leads to Christlikeness, "desyeryng that alle be done that he doth," and this will be important to understanding the role of the mediator in positive mimesis.

Christ and Christ-like Models

Mimesis centered on Christ is in reality an imitation of Christ's own imitation of God the Father. In *I See Satan Fall*, Girard stresses, "What Jesus invites us to imitate is his own *desire*, the spirit that directs him toward the goal on which his intention is fixed: to resemble God the Father as much as possible" (13). Christ calls his disciples to a form of triangular mimetic desire, with himself as the mediator of that mimetic desire, and God the Father as the object of that mimetic desire. Girard asserts that this desire is by definition mimetic: "Jesus does not claim to possess a desire proper, a desire 'of his very own.' . . . He does not flatter himself that he obeys only his own desire" (13). The source of this desire is the God who is also its object. This desire is then embodied in Christ—"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. . . . The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works," Jesus tells Thomas (John 14:9-10)—and offered by Christ as mediator to his disciples, who "will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (John 14:12).

Jesus promises his followers that he will be with them through the power of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26-28, 16:7-15), and this indwelling, already discussed above, means that Christ's own desire is in one sense shared directly with the disciple. But it would be wrong (and biblically naïve) to suggest that the mimetic desire and behavior of Christ's disciples is therefore exclusively a direct, unmediated imitation of Christ. In the gospels Jesus is shown seeking to

establish an ever-increasing community of followers growing outward from the mediating activity of the disciples and apostles.²⁹

The Apostle Paul appears to see his role in this manner, telling the Corinthian church, “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned [ἔδωκεν, *gave*] to each” (1 Cor 3:5). Paul’s further statement emphasizes the mimetic aspect of this relationship: “I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (4:16-17). Timothy, to whom Paul has served as mediator, now may play that same role between the Corinthians and Paul, and thereby to Christ, as Paul’s later words, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1), make clear. The mimetic sequence has been from Christ to Paul and Apollos, Paul and Apollos to the Corinthians, and now Paul to Timothy to the Corinthians. The subject of the triangle, receiving the mediation of another and coming into relationship with Christ the object, becomes the mediator of the subsequent triangle, mediating Christ to another subject or group of subjects.³⁰ Indeed, outside of the small group of original disciples, the relationship with Christ would invariably be the result of a prior mimetic relationship involving another mediator, as Paul’s delegation of Timothy indicates. In relation to the donative mystical writings to be studied, it is important to note the intentionality that comes into play in this mimetic sequence:

²⁹ Thus Jesus tells the disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20a).

³⁰ In his response to the 1994 *René Girard and Biblical Peace Theology* conference, Girard stresses the significance of this chain of mediation/mimesis in relation to Paul’s words: “Paul often makes the two sidedness of mimetic desire visible by juxtaposing the bad imitation of rivalrous models with the good imitation of Christ. Since Paul imitates Jesus just as faithfully as Jesus imitates his Father, he is almost as good a model as Jesus himself and since he is still around, unlike Jesus, he advises his converts to imitate him. This recommendation is not a symptom of Paul’s narcissism, or of his ‘will to power’; it is practical advice to people who get bogged down in scandals” (“Violence Renounced” 311). Girard uses the word “scandals” here to refer to mimetic rivalries (see 310), and thus suggests that the “good” imitation of Christ that avoids mimetic rivalry can be accomplished through the imitation of a mediator (Paul) who is himself in a mimetic relationship with Christ.

the mediator is not merely perceived by the subject as a model, but actively wishes to mediate the object and relationship to the subject. Such a situation is resistant to mimetic rivalry, as the object/relationship is meant to be shared and is received as such, creating not rivalry but mimetic community.

Girard's early description of internal mimesis—"The imitation of Christ becomes the imitation of one's neighbor" (*Deceit* 59)—is reversed in this positive form of mimesis: the imitation of the human Christ-like mediator becomes the imitation of Christ through that mediator. Therefore, while Girard notes, "As soon as we pattern our desires on our neighbors' desires, we all desire the same objects and we become entangled in mimetic rivalries," the alternative (by this point in his thought) lies not in rejecting mimesis altogether, but in "imitating Christ or Christlike models" ("Violence Renounced" 310).³¹ For the sake of differentiating this form of mimesis from the negative, rivalrous mimetic triangle, I will call the relationship between the subject, the "Christ-like" mediator, and the divine object the *transcendent* mimetic triangle.

THE TRANSCENDENT MIMETIC TRIANGLE

It is important to consider the qualities, purpose and function of this transcendent form of mimetic triangle, applying elements of the above critical insights and discussion in order to enable an examination of its role in the texts to be studied. It is resistant to mimetic rivalry due to its focus toward a divine and therefore unlimited (non)object, never fully possessable. The desire of the subject is thus not metaphysical but transcendent, focused not on the mediator but on Christ. There is sufficient spiritual distance between the mediator and subject for the

³¹ Girard continues to hold this view, stating in his later work *Battling to the End*, "St. Paul says, 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.' This is the chain of positive undifferentiation, the chain of identity." Girard directly connects this chain with the "innermost meditation" which is "nothing but the imitation of Christ" (133).

mediation to remain external, insofar as the mediator is seen in the role of Christ within the context of the mimetic community proceeding from Christ.³² The relationship between mediator and subject is mutually giving and non-rivalrous because of its transcendent foundation in and focus on Christ as divine object.

This is not to suggest that such a triangle is incapable of devolving into mimetic rivalry. For such a situation to occur, however, it would have to cease being a transcendent mimetic triangle through the absence or distortion of one of the above qualities. Medieval literature of spiritual guidance often warns or seeks to guard against behaviors and attitudes that might cause such a development. One such distortion, for example, would be the more-or-less subtle shifting of the “object” of the triangle from the divine limitless (non)object to a related, but limited object capable of possession. The subject might, for example, subtly shift from transcendent desire for God to a desire for the agreeable feelings or favors (“consolations”) expected from a relationship with God. For this reason, many medieval authors, including Walter Hilton, warn against focusing on consolations:

Whaso þan wil here angels sang, and nocht be desayued be feyneng ne be ymaginacioun of himself, ne be illusioun of þe enemy, him byhoues for to haue perfit charite. And þat es, when al vayn luf and drede, uayn ioy and sorw, es castyn oute of þe herte, þat he lofs naping bot God, ne dredes nathing bot God, ne ioy, ne sorwys nathing bot in God, or for God. Whaso myght be grace of God ga þis way, he suld nocht er. (*Of Angels' Song*, Takamiya 12-13.105-12)

A somewhat similar situation would involve a subtle shift in focus from the mediator seen in light of the object (and therefore with sufficient spiritual distance through association with Christ

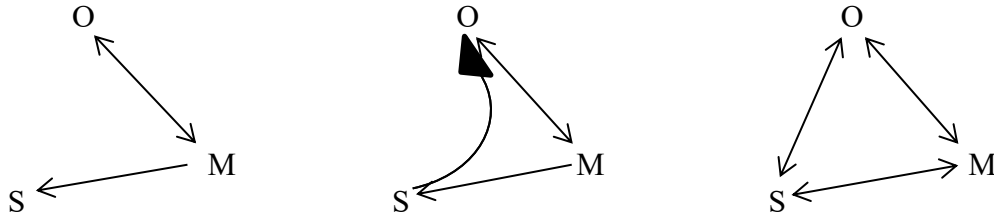
³² This certainly appears to be the quality of the heavenly relationships portrayed by the Maiden in *Pearl*, in which, although all strive for the reward, no one seeks to supplant another (“Sir, fele here porchasez and fongez pray,/Bot supplantoarez none withinne þys place,” 75.439-440). J.A. Jackson (approaching the text via Lévinas rather than Girard) says of this passage and the Maiden’s relationship to Mary, “The imitative desire here is nothing more than the Maiden imitating Mary, Queen of Heaven, who in turn imitates the Lamb. . . . Mary, in turn, can do nothing other than share the court with every Other king and queen” (166-67).

and the community in Christ), to the mediator as the focus of the triangle. Such a shift would result in a shift into (problematic) metaphysical desire and internal mediation leading to rivalry.³³ In this regard Girard emphasizes the danger of a mediator who assumes the role of “antichrist”; that is, who seeks in some sense to intrude on the centrality of Christ and substitute themselves as the focus (and thus the *de facto* object) of the mimetic triangle (see *Battling* 133).

This to some degree may underlie the typical “modesty” tropes of mystical literature in the medieval period. Julian of Norwich, for example, tells those reading her revelations to “leue the beholdyng of a wrech that it was schewde to, and myghtely, wysely and mekely behold in god, that of hys curteyse loue and endlesse goodnesse woldd shew it generally in comfort of vs alle” (8.36-39; 320). So too, Walter Hilton, who concludes the first book of *Scale of Perfection* by humbly stating that his reason for writing a text of spiritual direction is to “firste stire myn owen necgligence for to doon betere than I have doon” (2614-15; 133) suggests to his reader, “yif ony word be thereinne that stireth or conforteth thyn hert more to the love of God, thanke God, for it is His gift and not of the word” (2618-20; 133). Such statements have the effect of focusing the reading experience toward God rather than the human mediator. While an authorial move of this sort may have various underlying motives (some of which will be considered in the chapter devoted to Julian), the desire to avoid obstructing what rightly belongs to God is overtly stated, and its importance should be appreciated. It suggests these writers, while in some sense presenting themselves as Christ-like mediators, nevertheless wish to maintain a divine (rather than human) object for their readers’ desire. This encourages what from a Girardian perspective

³³ This would certainly appear to be the situation among some members of the first-century Corinthian church, who apparently fell into in-fighting based on favoring either Apollos or Paul. This situation inspires the latter’s aggravated response, “Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor 1:13), and subsequent reminder, “For when one says ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human? . . . You belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor 3:4, 21). Christ must be the object, Paul suggests, and not his mediators.

could be described as a positive and non-rivalrous form of mimesis of the type embodied by the transcendent mimetic triangle. Using the following diagram, I will suggest how the distinctives and function of such a triangle can best be understood:



In the first triangle, the mediator, a “Christ-like model” already in a relationship with the divine (non)object, communicates her or his desire to the subject, so that the latter might be inspired with the same desire, and come into a similar relationship and Christ-likeness. The ultimate source of the desire communicated by the mediator is, as noted above, the divine (non)object of the triangle. Julian of Norwich, for example, indicates that God would have divine love more fully known through her text, “in whych knowyng he wylle geve vs grace to loue hym and cleve to hym . . . in drawing of oure hartes fro sorow and darknesse whych we are in” (86.9-12; 732). The intention behind the mimetic triangle may be divine, but it is mediated through and by the mediator, whose mediation is intentional.

In the second triangle, the subject, in responding to the mediator and the relationship she or he communicates, is drawn mimetically into this same desire for the divine, a desire now in common with the mediator. The subject is therefore opened to the possibility of increasing Christ-likeness, and the mediator in sharing her or his own desire wishes to encourage this result. Julian of Norwich seems to have this wish in mind when she notes at the end of the long text of *Showings* that her book, while “begonne by goddys gyfte and his grace . . . is nott yet performyd,

as to my syght” (86.1-2; 731). The gifting from God to mediator to subject, must be completed by the performance of this same desire by the subject.

The third triangle suggests the result of such performance, and the subsequent interrelationship of subject, mediator, and object in a positive non-rivalrous mimetic triangular community of ongoing and deepening transcendent desire and divine response. The perpetuating and reinforcing character Girard had claimed for rivalrous mimesis (*Things Hidden* 295) is paralleled by a similar, but positive, reinforcing and deepening quality in the ongoing transcendent triangular mimetic relationship.

This positive form of the triangular relationship between subject, mediator, and divine (non)object is present throughout the history of the church. Biblical examples include Jesus’ previously discussed relationship with the disciples, whom Jesus calls his “friends,” and to whom he gives his actions as an “example” (John 15:15; 13:15). Paul’s relationship with Timothy has already been noted, and his words concerning Onesimus—whom Paul says has become his “child,” and suggests Philemon receive at his house as if Onesimus were Paul himself (see Philemon 10 and 17)—would also seem to indicate such a relationship.

With the rise of monasticism among the desert fathers in the third and fourth centuries, the relationship of master and disciple begins to be prized as the ideal for spiritual formation. The collections of sayings and exemplary actions of the desert fathers demonstrates the increasing importance of such guidance and its retention for posterity as well as revealing the mimetic chain of Christ-likeness. In a passage discussed by Robinette, John Cassian (c365-c435), for example, relates a conference with Abba Moses, who tells a story of Abba Sarapion and Abba Theo. Moses notes that this is a story Sarapion “very often told his younger brethren,” presumably including Moses himself, “for their own good” (*Conferences* 68), thus suggesting the

series of triangular relationships mediating life in Christ: Theo to Sarapion, Sarapion to Moses, Moses to Cassian, and finally Cassian to his readers via his writings. At the conclusion of the story, Cassian's text (the speaker is apparently still Abba Moses) states, "Let us in all things travel the road laid down for us by the tradition of our elders and by the goodness of their lives," adding, "Now the spiritual life is unseen and hidden, open to only the purest heart. . . . so then how stupid is it to believe that only this way of life has no teacher!" (*Conferences* 70). Referring to this text, Robinette notes, "The transmission of the elder's sayings and deeds, along with their 'performance' in community, can be thought of as establishing a *habitus* of imitation extending from the disciples of Jesus, who themselves were summoned to 'follow me'" (136). The monastic tradition develops out of such beginnings, and, as Adalbert de Vogüé stresses, the tradition "unfolds itself from the teachings of Christ and of the Apostles. . . . It cannot be separated from the Gospels and the other apostolic writings where it receives its first expression, and in one sense, its definitive expression" (29). Such examples suggest the connection of triangular mimesis with a mimetic tradition that is initially oral and based on direct relationships; yet over time these relationships will become increasingly textual in nature, as Cassian's text itself demonstrates.³⁴

THE TEXTUAL TRANSCENDENT TRIANGLE

The mystical writers to be studied overtly present their mediator role in this positive version of the triangular mimetic relationship.³⁵ These efforts are textual in nature, presenting

³⁴ In the medieval era the popularity of the various collections of sayings of the desert fathers and mothers exemplifies this phenomenon. As in Cassian's *Conferences*, these desert dwellers are the source of the oral tradition the text now makes available in the textual form, continuing their mediation.

³⁵ Walter Hilton perceives himself as a mediator in *Mixed Life*, telling his reader, "Now ȝif þou aske hou þou schalt kepe þis desire and norisch it, a litil schal I telle þee" (50.587-88). Similarly, Richard Rolle tells the unknown recipient of *Ego Dormio* that in writing her he is actively concerned "þat þou ware dere with Crist" (*Prose and Verse* 30.170). Rolle's presentation of his mediator role will be examined at length in the chapters dedicated to his writings.

the mediator's own relationship with the divine object and intended for an audience over which the mediator has no ecclesial authority. One of the unique aspects of this indirect, textual form of mimetic triangle is its distinction from the more formalized relationships of the monastic community. Under monastic rules, the monk was obedient to the superior or spiritual director, whatever their perceived qualities or abilities. But with texts in non-monastic circumstances, the response would be more voluntary in nature: the reception of the text would be based on its quality and subsequent reputation—and by extension the quality and reputation of its author.³⁶

In *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (c1410), for example, Nicholas Love recommends Walter Hilton's writings to active laypeople seeking a deeper spiritual life, noting, "who so wole more pleynty [be] enfourmed & tauht in english tonge, lete him loke þe tretees þat þe worþi clerk & holi lyuere Maister Walter Hilton þe Channon of Thurgarton wrote in English by grete grace & hye discrecion" (122.38-41). The quality of Hilton's writings is cemented in Love's eyes not simply by Hilton's position as an Augustinian canon or personal holiness, but by the grace and discretion they exhibit. Similarly, in the poetic prologue to Rolle's *Psalter*, its anonymous early-fifteenth century writer³⁷ refers to Rolle as "Thys holy man in all his lyfe"(2.33), who not only "many myracles . . . has wrouzt," but has also "made many a holy boke" (2.37), and whose "werkis were ful profetabul to pore and rych" (2.39). These recommendations are based on the apparent spiritual quality and attested usefulness of the writings, specifically described (in Rolle's case) in relation to a broad lay audience. The profitable nature of the texts becomes a recommendation for themselves and their author.³⁸

³⁶ Nicholas Watson notes this element in relation to *Dives and Pauper*: "Pauper never identifies himself as a cleric: his authority derives not from a place in a hierarchy but from his attitude of inner poverty and his ability to convince Dives that he, too, must cultivate this attitude despite his wealth. The author of this work was probably a friar, but his persona is a more deinstitutionalized figure" ("Censorship" 850).

³⁷ See Allen, *Writings* 173.

³⁸ Richard Crashaw will make a similar assertion regarding the writings of Saint Teresa.

That audience, although still limited, was increasing. While, as Paul Saenger notes, “Royal and aristocratic libraries after 1350 grew to be far larger than their predecessors” (“Reading” 141), the late medieval period also saw a significant increase in book ownership among the general populace. Susan Groag Bell demonstrates that the number of women known to have owned books more than triples from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, and almost doubles again from the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. Similarly, the number known to possess from two to ten books doubles from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries and more than quadruples from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries (151). Bell suggests various technical developments, including the chimney flue and fireplace, window glass, eyeglasses, and cheaper production of manuscripts as influences on the growth in book ownership (152).

Many of the books in possession of the laity were religious in nature. The burgeoning lay interest in spiritual matters was both encouraged and reflected by the Lambeth Constitutions (1281) and the subsequent ecclesial efforts toward lay religious education and spiritual formation in the fourteenth century. These efforts included the publication of the *Lay Folks Catechism* of 1358 as well as the production of numerous prayer books. Thomas Bestul observes in his survey of ownership that the era saw “an enormous increase in this audience for devotional texts,” not only among the aristocracy but the “mercantile class” as well (10). Books of hours were the most popular texts of devotion, particularly (although by no means exclusively) among “women of the nobility and of the upper bourgeoisie” (Bell 161), but other religious works were popular as well. There exist “250 partial or complete copies” of the *Wycliffite Bible*, for example, in spite of its controversial Lollard associations, while *The Prick of Conscience* survives “in over a hundred manuscripts and in every major English dialect” (in Wogan-Browne 241-42).

As the latter suggests, while the scriptures and books of prayers formed an important part of devotional reading, other types of texts were considered equally legitimate during the era. Bestul mentions “visionary literature” as having “served devotional ends” (2), and this characterization is borne out by Margery Kempe’s reading list, which includes texts containing mystical and visionary elements. Meale notes that “evidence presented by book-patronage . . . [and] wills” demonstrates that books owned by medieval women ranged “from lives of the saints, to didactic works . . . to various of the treatises of the fourteenth-century mystics, Walter Hilton and Richard Rolle” (132), both of whom were read by Margery.³⁹

Some texts, such as *Mixed Life* or *Showings*, are openly inclusive of or directed to this broad audience for devotional literature. The anonymous *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, for example, is quite open in defining its intended readership:

I see þat many walde be in religyone bot þay may noghte, owthir for pouerte or for drede of thaire kyne or for band of maryage, and for-thi I make here a buke of þe religion of þe herte, þat es, of þe abbaye of the holy goste, that all tho þat ne may noghte be bodyly in religyone, þat þay may be gostely. (in Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers I*, 321)

The writer implies that many lay people (perhaps particularly women) have a level of interest in spiritual matters similar to those in the monastic orders, although they may have been excluded from a life “in religyone” by circumstance. They are nevertheless capable of some roughly commensurate level of spiritual attainment acquired through reading, and the text is placed in the equivalent mediatorial role to the abbess or abbot of the monastic environment, inspiring and guiding their spiritual desires.

³⁹ Meale adds, “Works by the two last-mentioned authors [Rolle and Hilton] would, presumably, have been considered particularly appropriate for a female readership, given that both men wrote extensively for women during their lifetimes” (137).

This circumstance may underlie the broader secondary audience seemingly anticipated by certain texts directly intended for a more limited primary audience. Bella Millett notes, for example, that “the most striking feature of *Ancrene Wisse* is the number and diversity of the readers that it assumes (93), in spite of its focus toward the anchoritic community.⁴⁰ Such an audience was always a possibility, as texts tended to achieve expanded circulation if deemed valuable, and subsequent audiences in the manuscript tradition of such texts were often more mixed than the original. While *The Wohunge of ure Lauerd*, for example, was written for anchoresses, Innes-Parker’s examination of the manuscript tradition shows “the text has circulated beyond the confines of the anchoritic community, and been altered for a mixed audience that included male readers (the Titus [manuscript] exemplar) and a mixed audience of lay readers (Titus itself)” (98). Similarly, Rolle’s writings, according to Hope Emily Allen’s survey, “were in the possession of persons of education and position, both lay and clerical,” counting among them “Lord Scrope of Masham, Henry FitzHugh, lord of Ravensworth, [and] John Newton, treasurer of York Cathedral” (*Writings* 521-22).

Perhaps not surprisingly in such circumstances, even where the original text is itself epistolary and directed to a specific individual, the subsequent manuscript tradition often demonstrates an expansion of their circulation to encompass a much broader audience. The text itself may be modified in light of this expansion. Ogilvie-Thomson notes fourteen manuscripts of Rolle’s *The Form of Living* that omit recipient Margaret Kirkby’s name or the entire dedicatory final paragraph, while others substitute generic forms of address (“frend,” “woman,” “man,” “my deere freende in ihesu criste”), or in one case (Bodl. Rawl. C 285) another named

⁴⁰ Millett states that *Ancrene Wisse* “seems to have been intended in the first place for a specific audience. . . . But it was later revised for a scattered community of recluses which had grown to 20 or more, and from the beginning the author seems to have envisaged a wider audience still, both of other recluses and (in the section on Confession) of general readers” (93).

recipient, “Cecil” (“Introduction” xxxvi-xli). Similarly, Ogilvie-Thomson notes that one textual tradition of Hilton’s *Mixed Life* adds the address “broþir and suster” or “breþerne and systerne” in order to help expand its appeal beyond the original recipient (*Mixed Life* x).

As a result of this elimination of specificity, any reader might then choose to understand the personal aspects of such texts as directed to themselves and their own desire for God, a fact relevant to the discussion of reading practices below. Nicholas Watson, who refers to this phenomenon as the “democratisation of devotional literature” (“Methods” 137), stresses that even after the 1407 *Constitutions* restricted theological reading, “No serious attempt seems to have been made to restrict circulation of texts written before 1409 among professional religious or the wealthier laity” (“Censorship” 831). As educated and aristocratic laity could have been trained in Latin, the barrier of language would not necessarily exclude them from non-vernacular religious texts. Bestul suggests, “One should be wary of assuming that laypersons, whether male or female, were necessarily illiterate in Latin (Bridget of Sweden, for example, surely knew Latin), even though it is undoubtedly true that women both lay and cloistered were more often than not poorly instructed in Latin” (67).⁴¹ The example of Margery Kempe indicates that those illiterate or at least incapable of reading Latin could possibly have texts read for them, even in spontaneous translation, as Kempe depicts in her *Book* in relation to Rolle’s *Incendium Amoris* (143.28-29). This depiction also suggests that although book ownership was still comparatively rare and libraries small—as Andrew Taylor’s survey of book production and ownership in late-medieval England makes clear (356-58)—the patient and persistent seeker could still gain access to texts, although the process might not be easy. In addition, the inclusion of texts or excerpts

⁴¹ He also notes, “Indeed, once the appearance of vernacular texts begins, it seems misguided to consider Latin and vernacular developments as isolated from each other, distributing them into separate traditions, with impermeable boundaries” (11).

(whether in Middle English, Latin, or vernacular translation) in compilations allowed for broader circulation and audience composition, as did their perhaps uncredited appearance in subsequent works.⁴²

In such a situation, what Watson affirms concerning vernacular theological writings could even be extended to Latin texts: that their (secondary but still to some degree anticipated) readership was “an indeterminate and socially mixed group,” and that the texts themselves exhibit “an increasingly overt sense that what they were doing in presenting an ever wider array of theological concerns to an ever larger and less clearly defined group of readers needed justifying” (“Censorship” 837-38). This justification in terms of both author and message generally holds true for the donative mystical writers, whether writing in Latin or the vernacular. They cannot necessarily rely on ecclesial position and/or direct personal relationships but must in some sense fulfill their mediatorial role in a strictly textual manner toward an audience that is perhaps itself indeterminate, such as the *evyn cristen* of Julian’s *Showings*. Dhira Mahoney notes, “The holy man or woman was an intimate of God, in touch with the Other; he or she could function like a lens to concentrate and refract the spirit shining through” (38); but in a strictly textual triangle the reading subject must be convinced that the author/mediator is in a legitimate relationship with the divine (non)object, that the relationship is desirable, and that the mediator’s desire is worth imitating. This happens through the text itself, via the author/mediator’s presentation of personal experience, desire, and self. It also occurs through that text’s impact on

⁴² To cite one such example, Rolle’s Latin work *Emendatio Vitae* serves as a source text for portions of the Middle-English *Pore Caitif*, itself intended to “teche symple men & wymmen of good will þe riȝt weie to heuene . . . without multiplicacioun of manye bookis” (1.3-6).

readers and (as in the case of Nicholas Love's commendation of Hilton's writings) their subsequent recommendations to other potential readers.⁴³

It is important to note that this effort occurs within an environment that exhibits openness to the legitimacy of saints and mystics as mediators of divine revelation, and of their texts as potentially having a high degree of authority. In *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, for example, Nicholas Love presents alongside biblically derived material various scenes and visionary statements of the Virgin Mary derived from the revelations of Elizabeth of Hungary (19.37-21.26). About these he states, "And what she dide & how she lyued þere in þat tyme, we mowen knowe by þe reuelationes made of hire to a deuoute woman [þe] which men trowen was seynt Elizabeth" (19.34-37). Love gives Elizabeth's visionary revelations an authority legitimizing their place as a guide to purported non-biblical aspects of Mary's life. Similarly, in the *Officium* prepared by the nuns of Hampole, Richard Rolle's writings are placed in the company of the biblical epistles of Paul:

And to what excellent perfection he at length attained in this art of fervent love for God he himself records, not for boastfulness nor to seek vainglory, but rather after the example of the glorious and humble apostle Paul, who, narrating his rapture to the third heaven, where he heard secrets which are not lawful for a man to utter, also avows the greatness of the revelations made to him by God, and openly exalts his own labours above the labours of all the other apostles. All which things he wrote in his epistles for the profit and edification of others, and left them for others to read. So too this holy hermit, Richard, in chapter one of his first book of *The Fire of Love*, tells to what high and sweet delights he attained by contemplation, so that others may obtain hope of advancing likewise in acts of contemplation and of love for God, if only watchfully, constantly, and perseveringly they persist in those works which are ordained for the attainment of

⁴³ This description may begin to elucidate the distinction between what I will be seeking to do and the studies—such as Watson's work on Richard Rolle—that focus on a mystical writer's efforts to achieve a form of *auctoritas* within the ecclesial context of the late-medieval era. While such concerns are important, and my own work will to some degree parallel them and draw on their insights, I will approach such questions through the lens of triangular mimetic desire, seeking to elucidate the way in which the mediator/writer's communication of desire and experience functions in relation to that triangular relationship, attempting to fulfill the donative aspect of the mediator/writer's mystical experience.

this most desirable state of perfection and hate and cut off as poison all impediments to contemplation. (Comper 303-304)⁴⁴

Rolle's writings are equated with the biblical texts in both their donative purpose and their function as sources for mimesis. Such views constitute a form of what Hans Robert Jauss has called the "horizon of expectations,"⁴⁵ a horizon that the work "at the historical moment of its appearance, satisfies, surpasses, disappoints, or refutes" (25). In that sense text has a potentially sympathetic audience; but that audience could still reject the mediator and text if the latter's portrayal of the mediator and mediator-(non)object relationship proves unconvincing. Thus, if a mystical writer views their transcendent experiences as donative—given for the sake of others—and perceives themselves as divinely ordained to mediate transcendent desire to others, this portrayal must be communicated convincingly through their text.

My contention is that the texts to be studied provide evidence that this intention is shared by their writers. As will be shown, these writers view themselves as mediators of transcendent desire in relation to a donative understanding of their own mystical experience, and this self-understanding forms an intentionality underlying their presentation of their experiences and themselves to their implied reader. When considered in relation to the constitution and stages of the transcendent mimetic triangle described earlier, this intentional presentation of mediatorial

⁴⁴ *Quam excellentem autem perfeccionem. in hac arte deum ardentem amandi tandem optinuit : ipsemet non ad sui iactanciam aut unanam gloriam conquirendam set potius exemplo gloriosi et humilis apostoli pauli enarrantis raptum suum ad tertium celum. ubi audiuit archana que non licet homini loqui. qui etiam fatetur magnitudinem reuelacionum sibi factarum a deo et publice pretulit laores suos omnium aliorum apostolorum laboribus que omnia ad aliorum profectum et edificacionum in epistolis suis scripsit et aliis legenda reliquit : ita et iste sanctus heremita Ricardus in libro suo primo de incendio amoris capitulo primo narrat ad quam altis et mellifluas dilectaciones attigit contemplando. ut alii per hoc spem similiter proficiendi in actibus contemplacionis et amoris dei accipiant. si tamen uigulanter instanter et perseueranter insistant illis occupacionibus. que ad adipiscendum huiusmodi perfeccionem desiderabilissimam ordinantur et impedimenta contemplacionis uelud uenenum abhorreant et abscondant. (Officium 29-30)*

⁴⁵ "A literary work . . . predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. . . . The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced" (23).

role and mediator-(non)object relationship is revealed to function as an *internal medium* within the initial stage of the triangular mimetic relationship.

THE TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM

In a textual triangle the communication of desire is not direct. The reading subject experiences the mediator and object in their relationship not directly but indirectly through the medium of the text, and thus through the mediator's own representation of that relationship.

Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, in their study of Girardian mimetic theory, designate the mediator's representation of her or his own desire and relationship with or experience of the object as the *internal medium*:

The mediator . . . reveals a special world, one symbolically constituted out of inner images, affects, ascribed values, and designations, which are not the usual ones. It is an inner world; the mediator causes them to be seen from the perspective of the person who belongs to and is emotionally involved with it. The inner world is constituted in speech, in stories, by means of hints, descriptions, and names. (236)

Gebauer and Wulf discuss the internal medium in relation to Girard's early literary study *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*; but they stress its applicability in other forms of communication, particularly those (such as mass media, including print media) capable of "simulating oral or quasi-oral addressive speech situations" (360 n10). This latter insight will relate specifically to the linguistic and stylistic devices employed by the writers to be studied, particularly Richard Rolle and Richard Crashaw. The internal medium is artificial, not necessarily in the sense of being intentionally misleading or "untrue," but by reason of its status as a projection of the mediator. It "is produced out of the subjective view of the mediator and is perceivable only from that angle" (236), and functions as a model for the subject's own desire. Gebauer and Wulf note, "What exists as the instance prior to interpretation is not experience, practice, reflection, or similar cognitive instances recognized by philosophy, but rather an Other's verbally mediated

interpretation” (236),⁴⁶ to which the subject responds: “Under the influence of the medium, wishes and fantasies, which the hero [subject] has already formed in one way or another even if he has not yet articulated them, are respectively actualized and set free” (236).

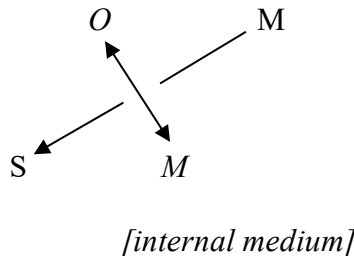
Gebaur and Wulf, however, present the internal medium negatively, in relation to the internal mediation that ultimately leads to conflict and rivalry, and that is critiqued within the novels Girard studies in *Death, Desire, and the Novel*.⁴⁷ But if there can be, as has been demonstrated above, a positive form of triangular mimetic desire based on the limitless divine (non)object and the mediator’s selfless effort to mediate a relationship with that (non)object to others, inspiring their desire, there would also be room for an equivalent positive, transcendent form of medium. Within the Christian context such a medium would be part of the broader *εὐαγγέλιον*, the “good news” that enables the chain of triangles emanating from Christ.⁴⁸ In such a circumstance the textual internal medium undertakes what Karmen MacKendrick suggests is a form of seduction: “The text is also seductive when it directs desires. . . . The text of pleasure need not be the text that describes pleasure, nor the text of desire one that directs desiring—but it

⁴⁶ In some ways this corresponds to Lacoue-Labarthe’s description of the function of art: “Since it replaces [nature] and carries out the poietic process that constitutes its essence, always produces a theater, a representation. That is to say, *another presentation*—or the presentation of *something other*, which was not yet there, given, or present” (257).

⁴⁷ See Gebhauer and Wulf 234-35.

⁴⁸ This is particularly true within the Christian tradition as the sequence of triangles initiated by Christ over time becomes primarily textual. Graham Ward observes, “The Gospel (as text) is the mediating and substituting chain of signifiers for the absence of Jesus Christ—the one who is no longer with us,” so that ultimately “Christology is about literary representation—the employment of language to represent the action of the constitutional representation” (12). Ward therefore sees Jesus’ parable of the readers in Mark 4:24 in terms of the interrelationship between mimesis and this representation: “The call is therefore also an empowering—of the twelve, those vaguely suggested ones who are with the twelve, the writer himself, Mark’s own listeners (the Christian Church, local and then, by extension universal). We are all caught up in the representational process, within a mimetic schema that calls forth and calls for interpretation and reinterpretation. Mimesis, I suggest, is the nature of the revelation itself (a revelation inseparable from its mediation).” (2-3)

just might. Such a text may even rewrite its reader” (174). The mediator’s presentation of this transcendent form of the internal medium⁴⁹ might be simply diagrammed in this way:



As the figure indicates, the representational divine (non)object-mediator relationship portrayed becomes the basis of mimesis, as the encounter with the internal medium projected by the mediator serves to activate or at least focus and intensify this pre-existing desire toward the divine (non)object. This has important applicability to the textual transcendent mimetic triangle I have described.

When Mechtild of Hackeborn inquires of the Lord concerning the ongoing value of her *Booke of Gostlye Grace* after her death, for example, the Lord promises, ‘All that sekene me with a trewe and faythfull herte schall be mayde gladde in this booke’ (qtd. in Barratt, *Womens Writing* 50).⁵⁰ Similarly, Richard Rolle, having completed an ecstatic rhapsody to God,⁵¹ advises the reader of his *Emendatio vitae*, ‘‘You ought to delight, still, in these and similar meditations, so that at some time or other you may rise up to the inmost part of love’’ (*In his eciam et huiusmodo meditacionibus delecteris ut quandoque ad medullam amoris ascendas*), a love that

⁴⁹ I will continue to use the phrase ‘‘internal medium’’ for this transcendent form, not in relation to Girard’s internal mediation, but to indicate its position within the texts studied.

⁵⁰ Mechtild’s late thirteenth-century book (likely written for the most part by Gertrude of Helfta) was translated from Latin at some time during the later fourteenth or early fifteenth century as *The Book of Ghostly Grace*. See the description in Wogan-Browne, 288-89.

⁵¹ The rhapsody concludes, ‘‘Set ablaze with your heat the penetrable places of my heart and, by illumining its inmost places with Your light, feed the whole with the honey-flowing joy of Your love, in order to snatch up mind and body.’’ (*Calore tuo penetralia cordis mei incende; et, intima quoque tua luce illuminando, mellifluo amoris iubilo cuncta pro captu mentis et corporis depasce.*) (*Mending of Life* 79, *Emendatio vitae* 11.29-31)

carries the soul “outside itself toward the Beloved” (*extra se rapit ad amatum*).⁵² It is in interaction with the text that the readers will be inspired with their own desire for the divine (non)object.

For this reason, although the subject is in reality responding to the internal medium, the resulting experience of her or his own relation to (non)object would not necessarily match the represented in the internal medium exactly. To do so may, in fact, suggest an artificiality to the subject’s relationship with the object, and (insofar as it may reveal the subject desiring to be “just like” the mediator) could indicate a metaphysical rather than transcendent desire. Nevertheless, insofar as the internal medium provides a particular portrayal to incite mimetic desire, that desire would likely bear a resemblance to the mediator’s own and be directed toward a similar relationship to the one portrayed. The internal medium’s representation may assume or openly state this expectation, as Rolle’s words in *Incendium Amoris* suggest: “And if you have loved in that manner (as I have shown), you will stand glorious with the best and the most honorable in the kingdom of God for that life-giving vision itself” (*Fire* 251).⁵³ This passage indicates that the love portrayed in the internal medium serves as the *modus* for the subject’s own love toward the divine (non)object, and that the subject’s assumption of this manner of love is integral to their participation in a similar relationship.

The donative aspect of certain mystical experiences compels the one receiving them to share these experiences for the common good. In a situation in which such mediation is of a textual rather than personal manner, fulfilling this donative purpose requires the portrayal of the mediator and divine (non)object in relationship within the text. It is ultimately the internal

⁵² *Mending of Life* 79/*Emendatio vitae* 11.32-34.

⁵³ *Et siquidem si isto modo, ut ostendi, amaueris, cum optimis et honorabilibus in regno Dei ipsi uisioni uiuifice assistes gloriosus.* (*Incendium* 268.1-3)

medium's representation of that relationship and the mediator's desire that the reading subject may appropriate and to which that subject may respond.⁵⁴ The writers to be studied, Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and the seventeenth-century poet Richard Crashaw, develop the internal medium of their texts in light of this fact. Approaching those texts with an awareness of their writers' donative intent uncovers the representational and stylistic methods by which the writers undertake a textual form of mediation and attempt to inspire a response of mimetic desire.

⁵⁴ Thus the writer of *The Orchard of Syon*, a fifteenth-century adaptation of the writings of Catherine of Sienna, encourages readers to taste the text's fruit: "Tasteþ hem wel inwardly, þat 3e mowe sauoure hem. Whanne 3e sauoure hem, chewiþ hem wel wiþ a desier feruently, þat 3e mowe be wel fed wiþ hem goostly" (421.1-3).

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLLEAN TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM: PORTRAYING THE MEDIATOR-IN-RELATIONSHIP

In the quote that began the previous chapter, the English writer Richard Rolle openly declares the donative intention underlying much of his writings. To understand how he attempts to fulfill this intention, one must examine the internal mediums of these works with particular attention to Rolle's self-portrayal as mediator and the portrayal of his mediator-(non)object relationship with the divine. Both of these portrayals are striking, and they have led to criticism of Rolle and his stylistic choices. But both, when approached through an understanding of Rolle's donative purpose, are revealed as carefully and intentionally constructed to inspire triangular mimetic desire on the part of the reader.

RICHARD ROLLE AND HIS DONATIVE PURPOSE

But let love always conquer all, and let it continually progress more and more;
and as long as you will have lived, let it stretch itself out toward higher things.¹

Rolle's words here, reminiscent of the apostle Paul's in Philippians 3:13-14 as well as the concept of *epektasis* that descended from that biblical passage via the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and others² could serve as an appropriate epitaph to both the writings and the life (to the extent that it is known) of this early fourteenth-century English mystic. They exemplify his own personal strategy and public guidance in relation to spiritual formation: the necessity of leaving behind hindrances (ideally via adopting an eremitic life) in order to pursue the greater goal of realizing one's desire for God.

¹ *Set omnia vincat amor semper et assidue magis ac magis proficiat, et quamdiu vixeritis ad alciora se extendat.* (*Melos Amoris* 159.29-31)

² "If nothing comes from above to hinder its upward thrust. . . the soul rises ever higher and will always make its flight yet higher—by its desire of the heavenly things *straining ahead* [*συνεπεκτεινομένη*] *for what is still to come*, as the Apostle says." (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II.225, 113)

Rolle's life, as it is described in the *Officium* created some time after his death,³ is characterized by such a pursuit. Although the details of his early life are unknown, the *Officium* states that he attended the University of Oxford, where "He desired rather to be more fully and perfectly instructed in the theological doctrine of Holy Scripture than in physics or the study of secular knowledge" (Comper 301).⁴ Rolle's purported attitude perhaps foreshadows his subsequent criticism of intellectual pursuits for their own sake, although the latter would extend to needless theological study and debate as well as secular knowledge. This soon led to a decision, at age nineteen, to leave studies for the life of a hermit. A local squire, John de Dalton, became his benefactor, although Rolle eventually left the Dalton household, dwelling subsequently in Richmondshire and apparently changing locations multiple times, as his own self-defense discussed below demonstrates. He also engaged in spiritual direction of Margaret Kirkby and others as well, ultimately residing at the priory of Hampole. At Hampole, in spite of the apparent community setting, he is described as having led a "solitary life" (*solitariam uitam*) until his death in 1349 (*Officium* 39-41).

Rolle himself was known only to the relatively small group of people mentioned in the *Officium* and others who had direct contact with him at some point during his generally unremarked life. Virtually all of Rolle's public reputation belongs to the era after his death and is based on his varied and rather voluminous writings, which include biblical commentaries (*Judaica Me*, Latin and English commentaries on the Psalms, etc.), lyrics, and texts of spiritual direction (*Ego Dormio*, *Form of Living*, etc.). They also include several mixed works of

³ Hope Emily Allen dates it to the 1380s, noting, "Miracles are described at the end of the *Office* which are dated 1381 and 1383, and would probably place the composition of the work at a short time after the latter date," although she adds, "the dated miracles may have been inserted sometime after the original *Office* was written" (51).

⁴ *pocius desiderauit plenius et profundius imbui theologicis sacre scripture doctrinis: quam phisicis aut secularis sciencie disciplinis* (*Officium* 23)

autobiography, biblical postils, theological argument, self-defense against detractors, contemplative guidance, and descriptions of mystical experience and desire in often strikingly lyrical prose. In this chapter and the one following, two of these will be jointly considered: *Incendium Amoris*, and the (less popular) text that has come to be known as *Melos Amoris*. These Latin writings are in some ways the most exemplary of his works, and *Melos Amoris* provides the most extreme example of his Latin style.

In chapter 34 of *Incendium* Rolle gives one of his many descriptions of the experiences of the solitary lover of God, but adds this caveat:

For that delight which he has tasted by loving Jesus overcomes every sense. Nor am I adequate to recount even a little way the least point of this joy—for who can express ineffable fervor? Who can lay bare infinite sweetness? On the contrary, if I wished to speak this ineffable joy as it might appear to me, it would be as if I were to try to empty the overflowing sea drop by drop, and to force it entirely into a small hole in the earth by dripping it in! (*Fire* 218-19)⁵

These words speak despairingly of the possibility of communicating such experiences, and in light of this situation one might expect that Rolle would have been reluctant to communicate them, or even speak of the (by definition) comparatively private eremitic life he had undertaken.

And yet Rolle proves to be a prolific writer, eager to encourage others in their spiritual journeys from his own often somewhat unique standpoint and to describe his encounters with the mystical phenomena (fire, sweetness, and music) for which he is most associated. He also engages in enthusiastic defense of the superiority of the solitary life and of his own particular living of it, and is aggressive in his responses to those who might critique any of these decisions,

⁵ Translations from *Incendium* will generally be taken from M.L. del Mastro, *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life* and will be noted as such. *Exsuperat enim omnem sensum delectatio ipsa quam diligendo Ihesum degustauit; nec sufficio uel ad modicum enarrare minimum punctum huius gaudii; quia ineffabilem feruorem quis exprimet? infinitam dulcedinem quis denudet? Immo si fari uellem hoc ineffabile gaudium sic mihi uidear, quasi inundans mare per guttam et guttam niterer exhaurire, et in modicum terre foramen totum instillando detrudere.* (*Incendium* 242.1-8)

actions, and experiences.⁶ Significantly, he ranks among the most popular writers of the late medieval era in England, if manuscript evidence is any indication.⁷

This seemingly paradoxical situation becomes more explicable, however, when viewed from the “donative” perspective put forth in the introduction. No matter how forcefully Rolle may proclaim the necessity of the solitary life to high-level spiritual formation, and stress the atypical (and even controversial) qualities of that which he has heard and felt, his ultimate purpose in his writings is not to proclaim his own unique superiority to his reader. Rather, he wishes to invite the reader to join him in his lifestyle and potentially come to know those same experiences. To use Girardian terms, Rolle presents himself as a mediator, portraying his own experience of the mediator-(non)object relationship in order to inspire the reading subject’s mimetic desire.

When in *Incendium* Rolle states that he has been “compelled” (*compellebar*) to describe his relationship with the divine “in order that the ones listening or reading may desire to imitate” (*ut audientes uel legentes studeant imitari*),⁸ he expresses the paradoxical reality that mystical experience is ultimately a gift of God, rather than something attained; yet it is only the one who is open to receiving that gift, who actively desires that experience, that attains its possibility.⁹ Given this necessity, Rolle must speak so as to inspire the reader, as he notes in his text of spiritual direction *Ego Dormio*:

⁶ Rolle is not the only loquacious English hermit: his island-dwelling near contemporary John Whiterig, the Monk of Farne (d1371), produced a passion meditation and meditations addressed to other biblical characters as well as to the prototypic English eremitic saint, Cuthbert. Whiterig boldly (and biblically, see Gen 18:27) begins his passion meditation, “I will speak to my Lord, though I be but dust and ashes” (*Christ Crucified* 33).

⁷ As Denis Renevey notes, “more than five hundred manuscripts or early printed editions containing whole texts or extracts” of Rolle exist (“Richard Rolle” 64), and the fact that various additional writings were incorrectly attributed to Rolle also serves to demonstrate his popularity.

⁸ *Incendium* 268.23-24

⁹ The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* makes a similar point: “3if þou be willy to do þis, þee þar bot meekly put upon him wiþ preier, & sone wil he help þee” (15.20-21).

Forþi þat I loue þe, I wowe þe, þat I myght haue þe as I wold, nat to me, bot to my Lord. I wil becum a messenger to brynge þe to his bed þat hath mad þe and boght þe, Crist, þe kynges son of heuyn, for he wil wed þe if þou wil loue hym. (*Prose and Verse* 26.6-9)

Rolle, using a common sexual analogy for the experience of oneness with the divine,¹⁰ presents himself as fulfilling a mediatorial role between his reader and the Lord using an image of a romantic go-between or *pandar* that Annie Sutherland notes as having biblical roots.¹¹ This self-understanding should be kept in mind when considering the often strident ways in which Rolle speaks of himself and confronts his detractors, as well as the at times startling methods by which he communicates his own experiences. These are not mere oddities, but form part of an intentional effort to fulfill a donative and mediatorial purpose in relation to the reader.¹²

Approaching Rolle's Writings

It is perhaps particularly important to see Rolle's writings in relation to this social aspect of mystical language, its task of preparing a place for others. Rolle, who has experienced a personal relationship with the divine, is not merely writing in order to speak of his experiences, but to bring others into the position of potentially experiencing a similar relationship: "He is a bride of Christ himself as well as the messenger/message figure of love" (McIlroy, *English Prose* 73). Given the prominence of this social focus in Rolle's own statements of intention, the

¹⁰ Compare, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux's words, "But there is a place where God is seen in tranquil rest, where he is neither Judge nor Teacher but Bridegroom. To me—for I do not speak of others—this is truly the bedroom to which I have sometimes gained happy entrance" (Sermon 23 *On the Song of Songs*, VI.15; 38.)

¹¹ Sutherland critiques Nicholas Watson's statement "that Rolle's 'placing himself in the centre of the picture as a mediator between the reader and Christ' is 'most untraditional,'" stating, "Watson ignores the strongly Pauline influence which lies behind this self-fashioning, for in 2 Corinthians 11: 2 Paul also characterizes himself as the jealous lover and go-between, in terms that clearly anticipate the Rollean phrasing: 'For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'" (704). Claire McIlroy also notes that Rolle here "desires to see the reader 'perfitly cowpled with God' (27/15), but only as a condition of true union within marriage" (*English Prose* 69), placing his self-presentation as *pandar* within the common understanding of divine-human union in terms of mystical marriage.

¹² As de Certeau notes, "Mystical language is a social language. Consequently, each 'enlightened one' [*illuminé*] is brought back to the group, borne towards the future, inscribed within a certain history. For the mystic, to 'prepare a place' for the Other is to prepare a place for others" (20).

recognition of his bride-turned-messenger status is essential to interpreting his self-presentation as mediator.

Yet this has not been typical to the critical literature on Rolle, which has tended to focus more on possible personal and psychological aspects and motivations underlying his writings at the expense of the donative social aspect that is of interest to the present argument. Older critics tended to consider Rolle's unique and artificial Latin compositional techniques in *Melos Amoris* and affective language in *Incendium Amoris* (invariably pejoratively) as an outrageous "style" by which Rolle is attempting to speak of his own private psychological states. Similarly, his various forms of self-presentation in these texts have been viewed largely in relation to Rolle himself and the reconstruction of his biography, particularly with regard to apparent contemporary criticisms and his own defensive and acerbic responses. Often this approach has been in the service of largely negative opinions of Rolle's place as a "mystic"—invariably based on the centuries-later scholastic definition of mysticism derived largely from the writings of the major seventeenth-century Carmelites in relation to the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition.¹³

Hoper Emily Allen, for example, claims in relation to *Melos* that Rolle "is here exhilarated beyond any thought of worldly prudence" in writing "this audacious work, which he evidently hoped would prove his sanctity," although "naturally, the effect seems to have been the exact opposite of what he expected" (129). Perhaps not surprisingly, Allen calls Rolle "the simplest type of mystic" (5). Similarly, David Knowles, noting that "in Rolle there is no trace of

¹³Nicholas Watson states of this situation, "Medieval contemplative writing is thus an often unconsciously politicized field. . . which scholarship—its attitudes to the field even now inflected by categories inherited from the sixteenth century—has difficulty analyzing without prejudice (that most telling indication of our collective acts of intellectual repression" ("Introduction," *Cambridge Companion* 3). Watson references a general tendency within the history of both ecclesial and academic commentary on the mystical tradition of Christianity to identify the highest form of mystical experience with infused contemplation, and thus to see the apophatic mystical theological tradition (and particularly the guidance of St. John of the Cross) as the standard for determining the quality of mystical experience.

either Dionysian or Dominican influence,” confidently asserts that Rolle “mistook the first glimpses of the life of contemplation for the plenitude of grace,” and that his experiences were, “in technical mystical terminology, the experiences of a ‘beginner’” (54).¹⁴

The critical landscape in the study of mystical writing has changed considerably over the past decades, with recent approaches critiquing elements of prior assumptions, such as the ahistorical nature of traditional definitions of mysticism. Bernard McGinn, for example, questions (specifically in relation to the critical opinions of Jacques Maritain) how the “basically Thomist approach” of such definitions, “because of its abstraction from the issue of historicity. . . can do real justice to forms of mysticism that do not fit its mold” (*Foundations* 310). McGinn suggests a more useful focus: “Theologically speaking, the issue is not, Was this person really a mystic because he or she claims to have had the kind of experience I define as mystical? but, What is the significance of her or his writings, autobiographically mystical or not, in the history of Christian Mysticism?” (*Foundations* xv). McGinn advocates a contextual approach, both in terms of production and reception, since “mysticism is only one part or element of a concrete religion” (xvi).

Recent works have been attentive to context, particularly in relation to developments in the area of cultural studies and the new historicism. Rolle’s writings have been examined in terms of his relationship to biblical texts and themes, his stylistic techniques within broader trends of the medieval era and medieval aesthetics, his place in affective spirituality, his

¹⁴ In *Mystics and Zen Masters* Thomas Merton faults Knowles for overly defining what constitutes true mystical experience and excluding those experiences (and writers) who lie outside the definition, “a kind of scholarly compulsion to deny and to reject, as if the most important task of the student of mysticism were to uncover false mystics” (147). Merton’s critique of Knowles could extend to Allen and others as well: “Knowles clings firmly to a single standard in judging mystics: it is the Doynysian standard of ‘unknowing.’ Therefore he cannot accept as genuine a mystic of light like Rolle. . . . But is it, after all, realistic to cling arbitrarily to a single set standard in such a thing as mysticism, in which the great rule is that there are no rules? . . . However much we may prefer the mystics of darkness, we cannot hastily reject the mysticism of light” (148, 150).

relationship with ecclesial authority, and questions of the communication of mystical experience. Such studies have questioned and even superseded the dismissive opinions of older scholarship.¹⁵ Nicholas Watson's *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* has been particularly influential and groundbreaking, supplementing and perhaps largely superseding Hope Emily Allen's as the standard study on Rolle, and he both avoids and critiques the prejudices of the older scholastic approach noted above,¹⁶ while mounting a carefully researched study of Rolle's relationship to his audience and his self-presentation as authoritative guide.

Excellent though such approaches are, there is still a tendency to place them in the service of a consideration of Rolle himself, his putative mystical experiences and underlying psychological motivations, his personal views and relationships, or the presence of certain unstated intentions and purposes influencing his texts and style.¹⁷ Even Watson's concern is ultimately Rolle's own desire for authorization: he opens his study by stating his argument that Rolle's writings "are manifestations of an overriding concern with his own spiritual status, and that the force behind most of his works is the determination to establish and exercise a form of eremitic and mystical authority" (*Authority* xi). Similarly, he describes *Incendium Amoris* as "a work written in a large part to carry out an agenda which must remain hidden from the reader, the canonization of its author" (259).¹⁸ Denis Renevey's study *Language, Self and Love* emphasizes Rolle's style, hermeneutics, and adaptation of the *Canticum* commentary tradition; yet it is largely in the service of psychological biography, as his afterword makes clear: "I hope this study has shown the difficulties which mark Rolle's personal journey toward interiority. . . .

¹⁵ See the bibliography entries on Zieman, Nelstrop, Albin, Roman, McIlroy, and Riehle among others for a sampling of these approaches, some of which will be dealt with more directly in the following chapter.

¹⁶ See, for example, his argument on 31-53.

¹⁷ As will be noted in chapter five, a similar situation has dominated critical approaches to the poetry of Richard Crashaw.

¹⁸ In such a view, the potential audience tends to become a contingent aspect of an ultimately self-focused project to which their consent is desired and sought.

Rolle reveals a self violated by the damaging events of everyday life.” Renevey adds that Rolle’s presentation of a “spiritual system” in his writings “is the way to measure his final success as appropriator of the Song of Songs for the construction of his own self” (*Language* 153, 154).

Such approaches are in no sense illegitimate, nor are their insights invalid; quite the contrary. It is a given that Rolle is—like all human beings—psychologically complex, and that there are a variety of motivations, some no doubt self-focused, underlying his writings. He certainly seeks to assert authority in various forms. But there has been comparatively little extended consideration of Rolle’s writings and self-presentation proceeding in unified way from the purpose he himself announces in the passages above. Rolle openly shares his donative self-understanding as the mediator-in-relationship leading his audience to desire the possibility of attaining a similar relationship. Therefore, it is worthwhile within the limits of this study to address the various attributes of his writings specifically as a function of their significance within an internal medium engaging in the intentional fulfilment of this purpose.¹⁹

In this chapter and the following, I will be examining the aforementioned presentational and stylistic elements in relation to Rolle’s donative understanding of his own experience. They will be considered from the theoretical perspective of Girardian triangular mimetic desire in order to elucidate how these elements constitute a “Rollean” internal medium acting to stimulate desire on the part of the subject/reader. When approached this way, Rolle’s stated mediatorial purpose is seen as the unifying factor to which all aspects of his self-presentation and rhetorical strategies relate, and in relation to which they (however unusual or even problematic they appear

¹⁹ Claire McIlroy deals to some degree with this Rollean self-understanding within broader study of Rolle’s English prose treatises and Steven Rozenski focuses on the exemplarism of Rolle and Henry Suso, although neither proceeds from the theoretical perspective of Girardian triangular mimetic desire. See the relevant entries in the bibliography.

in isolation) gain a level of credence as part of a complex whole. Rolle's self-presentation is revealed to be less about himself and self-focused motives than it is about representing the mediator pole of the mediator-object relationship as part of an effort to inspire the reading subject's mimetic desire.

THE TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM IN ROLLE

As has been mentioned, Rolle's literary output is vast and varied in genre, style, and even language, but this study will focus on two major works in Latin, *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris*. The former receives its title from Rolle himself while the latter is a later designation for a work Rolle himself leaves untitled, although the phrase *melos amoris* appears within the text. Both Carl Horstmann and Hope Emily Allen suggest that *Melos* is an early work revealing Rolle's enthusiastic response to his initial mystical experiences²⁰ while *Incendium* is a later more mature work, "well on in Rolle's life" (Allen 227). Watson (*Authority* 273-94) critiques this view, arguing both *Incendium* and *Melos* are from what he calls Rolle's "Middle Works" predating the text of spiritual direction *Emendatio Vitae* and his various English writings, and seeking to demonstrate that *Melos* in fact borrows from earlier Rollean texts. Arnould suggests a "comparatively late" date for *Melos* ("Introduction" lxvi). Although I find later datings to be more convincing, all such sequences are conjectural.²¹ My concern is less about an order of composition in relation to Rolle's own life and possible scenarios of his development than it is on the stated donative intention of both works in relation to the reading subject. In this regard it should be noted that readers often encountered these texts in compilations combining writings

²⁰ Horstman calls it "his earliest work" (*Yorkshire Writers* II v, n.1) while Allen refers to it as "the treasury to which he returned in writing other works" (120).

²¹ Riehle's comment on such efforts seems apt: "It is basically impossible to establish a convincing chronology of Rolle's works, since there are no reliable facts on which to ground such a chronology. . . . Any attempt to establish a chronology is also made more difficult by Rolle's practice of taking phrases and even extended passages from one text and incorporating them into another, which inevitably makes tracing the works' temporal sequence hazardous" (*Secret* 87).

from throughout Rolle's career. The reader of *Melos*, for example, would typically find it bound in a manuscript with *Incendium*, and thus the overall reading experience of the former could also include the latter whatever the circumstances and dates of their writing. Such a reading experience would therefore encompass the internal medium of both texts.²²

To reiterate the role of the internal medium as described by Gebauer and Wulf in relation to Girardian triangular mimetic desire, it is a "world . . . constituted out of inner images, affects, ascribed values, and designations," representing the "perspective of the person who belongs to and is emotionally involved with it." This world "is produced out of the subjective view of the mediator and is perceivable only from that angle" (236). The internal medium constitutes the mediator's representation of the mediator-object relationship, intended as an exemplar for the subject's own desire and as a stimulus for that desire. It may include representations of both the mediator *as mediator*, and the relationship of the mediator to the represented object.

A passage from *Contra Amatores Mundi* (written prior to *Melos* and an apparent source for at least one passage in the latter)²³ delineates aspects of Rolle's internal medium in relation to his donative purpose. "I try to show by both word and example in what way—and without measure—Christ has granted to me to rejoice in his love,"²⁴ Rolle states, adding that even if he were to wish to be silent he must speak, "for who, urged by love, would dare to resist? Or who,

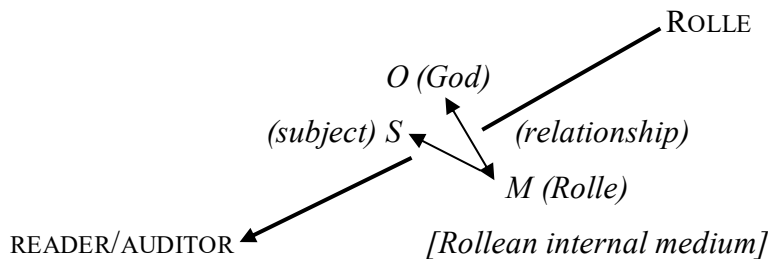
²² The inverse—that is, of finding *Melos* bound in manuscript with *Incendium*—is less common due to the latter's greater popularity. Seven of ten manuscripts containing full texts of *Melos* also contain *Incendium*, and one of the remaining has the spurious final *Melos* chapter taken from *Incendium* (see Albins' discussion in "The Melody of Love: *Ten Ways In*" 50-60). As will be noted in chapter five, this list would include the manuscript in the library of Richard Crashaw's father William. The far greater popularity of *Incendium*, however, means that a number of the many manuscripts containing *Incendium* (Hope Emily Allen lists 42 containing either the long or short versions) do not contain either full texts or fragments of *Melos*.

²³ See the comparison in Watson, *Authority* 294.

²⁴ *Illud et verbo et exemplo conor ostendere, quomodo et sine modo in eius amore michi donavit Christus iubilar* (81.133-34)

God impelling, would refuse to stand up? Thus we who love dedicate [ourselves] to preach love to others. . .”²⁵

This passage spells out the aspects of Rolle’s transcendent internal medium: his own representation of himself as mediator of the relationship he already enjoys with the divine (non)object; and a representation of elements of that relationship. Both of these are undertaken with an openly stated donative intention toward an audience of subjects (*aliis*, “others”). The internal medium within both *Incendium* and *Melos* could be portrayed as follows:



This chapter will consider the first aspect of Rolle’s internal medium—the representation of Rolle as a mediator-in-relationship with God vis-à-vis the reading subject in *Incendium* and *Melos*—and how it functions to fulfill Rolle’s donative purpose.²⁶

The Rollean Mediator. . .

An essential part of Rolle’s internal medium is his intentional presentation of himself as worthy mediator. Rolle’s intentionality in this self-presentation is suggested by a passage in *Melos* concerning his message about sinners, “conveyed in the character of a penitent,” (*portatus in persona penitentis*, 60.33-34). Rolle humbly notes his repentant sinner status by this phrase,

²⁵ : . . . *urgenti igitur caritati quis resistere audeat? Aut pulsanti deo quis assurgere contradicat? Amantes itaque etiam aliis amorem predicare studuimus.* . . . (81.136-38)

²⁶ The chapter following will consider the portrayal of the mediator-object relationship.

but the phrase also reveals an effort to consciously portray himself in a particular manner in relation to the message he wishes to convey.²⁷ When viewed from the standpoint of donative mystical experience such self-fashioning is revealed as primarily social in its intent: the portrayal of the mediator plays an integral role in communicating the legitimacy and value of the mediator-object relationship and inspiring the reading subject to mimetic desire. Examining Rolle's crafting of this voice and of the persona it conveys throughout *Melos* and *Incendium* discloses his concern with presenting himself as a worthy mediator-in-relationship and elucidates the means by which he seeks to accomplish this intention. My own theoretical approach to this self-portrayal will be in relation to aspects of the "wild man" figure in the medieval era, its biblical parallels and religious significance.

. . . as Wild Man

In his discussion of the development of the doctrines of mysticism and the elements of mystical discourse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Michel de Certeau speaks at length of the wild man, "that brilliant invention of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (*Mystic Fable* 205), while suggesting that by the period he examines, the wild man has become the nostalgic symbol of an increasingly repressed desire.²⁸ The term wild man may bring to mind a primitive forest dweller, and the "hairy man curiously compounded of human and animal traits" is indeed

²⁷ Andrew Albin says concerning this passage, "Rolle demonstrates keen awareness of the craftedness of the *Melos amoris*'s first-person narrative voice here" (Rolle, *Melody* 196 n.9).

²⁸ "It is not surprising that a mystic discourse of irrational desires, repressed by the reason of State that served as a model to so many institutions, should also reappear in the figure of the wildman. In that form, he appears—he can only appear—as defeated. But this defeated figure speaks of that which cannot be forgotten" (*Mystic Fable* 205). De Certeau is using the wild man figure here in relation to the seventeenth century pietist separatist Jean de Labadie, whose endless wandering and rejection reflects the nostalgic wild man he references, and the decline of mysticism. Rather than the single word "wildman" used in the English translation of de Certeau's *Mystic Fable*, I will follow the more typical usage "wild man" throughout.

his most notable form.²⁹ Gregory Mobley, summarizing Richard Bernheimer, notes certain aspects of the wild man's attributes:

In his mode of life, the wild man avoids human contact, living in inaccessible, unsettled places such as forests and mountains, sleeping in caves or crevices, and eating a primitive diet. . . . The wild man's personality is characterized by a "perpetual aggressiveness" and uncontrollable lust. (218)

While accurate, this description does not cover the entire spectrum of associations connected with the wild man image; this is particularly true in relation to the more distinctly religious forms of the wild man. Timothy Husband stresses the broader representations de Certeau references, noting the fifteenth-century theologian Geiler von Kayserberg's delineating five types of wild men including "the *solitarii*, or the penitent saints" (12). Husband suggests, "By identifying wild men with familiar ideas. . . Geiler dispels the superstitious and fearful notions associated with them" (12). Mobley notes one source of potential appeal; that "because of his kinship with nature," which has as a necessary counterpart his foreignness to common culture and its standards, the wild man "knows about things that are unknown in human society; this latter feature makes the medieval wild man attractive to society" (218). The wild man remains an extraordinary figure, one "foreign to ordinary laws and norms, incomparable in himself" (de Certeau, *Mystic Fable* 230).³⁰

Various aspects of Rolle's self-depiction in *Melos* and *Incendium* can be seen functioning in ways similar to that of the "wild man" in both its medieval religious connotations and its biblical forebears. These include Rolle's advocacy for the eremitic life coupled with repeated highlighting of his own disruptive behavior toward its common norms of conduct; his prophetic

²⁹ Bernheimer 1.

³⁰ De Certeau's comment occurs specifically in relation to the enigmatic young man encountered by seventeenth-century writer Jean-Joseph Surin. He reproduces Surin's letter concerning this encounter on 207-210.

attitude, message, and language in parallel with Biblical examples; and his self-presentation as a solitary holy man and related adoption of the persona of extra-ecclesial, extra-scholastic wise man. They allow him to assume characteristics de Certeau ascribes to the wild man figure:

He appears as the embodiment of ‘popular’ wisdom in contrast with the networks of the ‘civility’ and the professionalization of knowledge; as an ‘extraordinary’ case in comparison with a normalizing of behavior and methods... (*Mystic Fable* 204)

Examining instances of Rolle’s self-depiction in relation to the “extraordinary” elements of the wild man figure in these eremitic, prophetic, and holy forms reveals what the mediatorial role and the internal medium of both *Melos* and *Incendium* gain from these depictions.

THE ROLLEAN WILD MAN AS EREMITIC

Richard Rolle’s eremitic outsider status has proven fruitful for critical consideration in relation to his self-presentation, informing works as diverse as Watson’s *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, Riehle’s *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England*, and Roman’s *Queering Richard Rolle*. Nevertheless, Rolle’s self-presentation has not, to my knowledge, been examined in direct relation to the figure of the wild man and its significance. The wild man attributes in Rolle’s presentation of the eremitic life and his own complex embodiment of that life play a central part in the internal medium of *Melos* and *Incendium*. They serve to emphasize the extraordinary qualities of the mediator-(non)object relationship Rolle espouses as well as his self-portrayal as mediator.

While the figure of the wild man “invaded religious buildings and liturgical books, being found on the borders of illuminated manuscripts, on capitals, choir stalls, baptismal fonts, tomb plates, and as a gargoyle on the eaves of churches” (Bernheimer 2) his role in relation to and in

relationship with the divine was a matter of discussion and often negative opinion.³¹ But there were no such questions regarding the *solitarii*, who were frequently connected with the wild man. Roger Bartra, for example, notes, “At the heart of the ancient monastic tradition arose a structured collection of myths about wild and hairy anchorites, whose influence extended throughout the Middle Ages”(53), and he cites exemplary tales concerning St. Mark of Athens and the fourth-century ascetic Onuphrius, who body “was protected by the growth of long fur” (57). Various tales involving St. John Chrysostom also make use of obvious wild man imagery as well.³² Such figures were part of a tradition extending to the earliest monks of the Christian ascetic tradition, who “escaped to the desert in search of some sort of provisional paradise as well as to test their strength before the abyss and the demons” (49).

The hermits were thus wild figures whose extreme behavior, although atypical, derived from deep religious commitment worthy of admiration (see Husband 11-12). In his eighth-century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede, for example, describes the early life of the “holy and venerable” Cuthbert as monk and subsequently prior of the monasteries of Melrose and Lindisfarne, but adds, “Later on, as Cuthbert grew in merit and in the intensity of his devotion. . . he attained also to the silence and secrecy of the hermit’s life of contemplation,” becoming a solitary on the Island of Farne (IV.28; 225). Cuthbert’s eremitic life is suggested to

³¹ See Bernheimer’s discussion, 8-12, as well as Bartra’s presentation of the wild man in relation to medieval demonology (118-24).

³² “According to the late medieval legend of St. John Chrysostom, the hermit was caught alive by hunters, after having spent years in the forest under conditions of self-inflicted hints, walking on all fours in observing a vow of absolute silence. In the course of the year his weatherbeaten body had grown a protective coat of long hair, giving him so much the appearance of a beast that, when the Kings hunters stumbled upon him, they were at first deceived into thinking they had caught a clear and unheard-of animal, crawling on the ground” (Bernheimer 17). In some depictions Chrysostom’s wild asceticism is related to penance: see Bartra’s discussion, 74-77.

be esoteric and even extreme, but those attributes are presented as evidence of an existence of greater merit and transcendent focus.³³

Rolle reiterates this view of the superiority of the eremitic life in *Incendium*, even stressing Cuthbert's preference for it: "Similarly, blessed Cuthbert crossed over from a bishopric to the life of an anchorite," choosing the latter over the height of ecclesial attainment.³⁴ Rolle adds, "If, therefore, such men [Cuthbert and Maglorious, to whom he has also referred], pursuing greater merit, behave in this fashion, who of sane mind would dare to place any other state in the church ahead of the solitary life?" (*Fire* 138).³⁵ For Rolle, as for Bede, the solitary life, while extreme, is for that reason of greater merit. With an eye toward his reader, Rolle also states that aspiring for that life is itself the indication of a deeper level of spiritual desire given by God:

Indeed, certain people have been taught from Heaven to desire solitude for the sake of Christ, and to hold to this single intention. At once, in order that they may serve God more freely and more devotedly, when they have left behind the common life, they transcend temporal things by sublimity of spirit [*mentis*]—the transitory things of this world which they reject and despise. They desire eternal joys alone, they abandon themselves to devotion and contemplation and they do not cease to occupy the whole of their time with the desire for loving Christ. (*Fire* 137)³⁶

By affirming that eremitic desire has a godly origin, and by stressing individual volition in responding to that desire, he separates the eremitic life from common societal and ecclesial paths and norms. The wild man elements of Rolle's self-portrayal appear in another way that relates to this issue. While he lacks the hirsute appearance medieval literature attributed to eremitic wild

³³ Bede notes, for example, of Cuthbert's island hermitage, "So high was the rampart that surrounded his dwelling that he could see nothing else but the heavens which he longed to enter" (226).

³⁴ *Similiter beatus Cuthbertus ab episcopatu ad anachoriticam uitam transiuit* (*Incendium* 181.11-12).

³⁵ *Si ergo ad maius meritum assequendum tales uiri sic fecerunt, quis sane mentis audebit aliquem statum in ecclesia uite solitarie preferre?* (181.12-14).

³⁶ *Docti enim sunt quidam diuinitus pro Christo solitudinem appetere, singulare propositum tenere, qui statim ut liberius ac deuocius Deo seruiant, relicto communi habitu, seculi transitoria queque despiciunt et abiciunt, temporalia mentis sublimitate transcendunt, sola eterna gaudia desiderant, deuocioni et contemplacioni uacant, et ad amandum Christum totum sui temporis studium non occupare cessant.* (*Incendium* 180.13-20)

men like Chrysostom, his notably ragged clothing serves a similar purpose, and in *Melos* he references it multiple times, stating “I have been distained in derision because of vileness of attire,” and stressing that his rejection of the world included “assuming a degraded habit before everyone.”³⁷ The wildness of his appearance is indicative of the wildness of his lifestyle in relation to broader society. The solitary life as presented by Rolle is an exceptional calling in its immediate and unmediated divine source, in the immediate and unmediated response of the hermit, and in its emphatic rejection of common norms and pursuits. Rolle presents himself as one of those who have been divinely called to this exceptional life—the wild man as hermit. In this way his presentation of himself as mediator of such a calling serves simultaneously to stress the unique quality of the mediator-object relationship central to his internal medium.

The hermit’s desire will be rewarded, as Rolle repeatedly makes clear, saying of Cuthbert, Maglorious, and those who follow their lead, “Because of this, heavenly music resounds within them, and sweetly flowing song delights the solitary” (*Fire* 138).³⁸ Rolle equates the solitary and contemplative lives, saying in *Melos*, for example, that contemplatives “flock to the enclosure” (*concurrunt in claustro*, 84.30). Relatedly, he connects solitude directly with reception of the gifts he himself has experienced, noting in *Incendium*, “Certainly the perfect solitary burns intensely in divine love, and while he is snatched away, beyond himself, in the going forth of his spirit through contemplation, he is lifted up, rejoicing, to the jubilant songs of the singers and their heavenly music” (*Fire* 138).³⁹ In the *Incendium* passage noted, Rolle also associates these affective experiences of the solitary life, and therefore that life itself, with the approach to mystical union: “His heart is transfigured by divine fire; burning and shining

³⁷ *Despiciebar in derisione quia vilitatem vestium* (80.34); *habitum assumens pre omnibus abiectum* (98.29).

³⁸ *Unde et intra se sonus celicus resonat, melosque dulcifluum solitarium iocundat.* (181.17-19)

³⁹ *Perfectus enim solitarius in diuino amore uehementer ardet, et dum supra se in excessum mentis per contemplacionem rapitur, usque ad canorum iubulum et sonum celicum gaudens subleuatur.* (*Incendium* 182.3-6)

with extreme fervor, he is carried into his Beloved” (*Fire* 138-39).⁴⁰ In Rolle’s presentation of the mediator-object relationship the eremitic life is integral and even essential to that relationship. Therefore Rolle, as a solitary conversant in the experiences that characterize the highest form of that relationship, is given mediatorial credibility.

In *Melos* Rolle speaks more directly to his reader of the disadvantages of refraining from this life, telling them in such a circumstance, “You won’t catch the song of sweetest harmony.”⁴¹ In *Incendium*, Rolle similarly indicates that the divinely gifted aspect of the eremitic life excludes those without this desire from a true understanding of its value, claiming it “is, indeed, one which no one living in the flesh can know, except the man to whom God has given it to live” (*Fire* 136).⁴² Again the effect is to associate Rolle as mediator with others to whom the gift has been given, and who are thus capable of accurately judging the value of that gift and its giver. His own experiential knowledge is also portrayed as enabling him to wisely critique any disagreement with his assessment or eremitic superiority: “Without a doubt I know that if they knew this life well, they would praise it more to other people” (*Fire* 136).⁴³

Rolle stresses that he has chosen the eremitic life over continued association with the world and seems to have done so without any ecclesiastical sanction. Such a circumstance would be unusual although, as Riehle notes, “in isolated cases the anchoritic life was chosen without episcopal consent” (*Secret* 76). Rolle says of his own choice, “For I have fled into solitude because I have not been able to get along with men; indeed, they often block me from

⁴⁰ . . . cuius cor configuratur igni diuino urens et lucens superferuide fertur in amatum. (182.8-9)

⁴¹ cantum non capies dulcissimi concentus (*Melos* 78.17-18)

⁴² Est enim uita quam nemo in carne uiuens potest cognoscere, nisi ille cui a Deo donatum est habere (*Incendium* 179.28-31). This appears to be one of the various Rollean adaptations of Revelation 2:17 noted by Alford (*Biblical Imitatio* 8-9). Although he stresses that this desire is a divine gift, it is still a gift to which one must respond in openness, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁴³ Sine dubio scio si eam agnoscerent, plus aliis laudarent. (179.31-32).

joy” (*Fire* 190),⁴⁴ and he emphasizes the extraordinary and controversial nature of his choice by referencing the criticism that has been heaped upon him: “And because I have not done as they have done, they have laid both error and indignation upon me, on account of which ‘I have found tribulation and sorrow, but I have invoked the name of the Lord’ (Ps 114:4)” (190).⁴⁵ Such statements serve as part of what Christopher Roman calls “Rolle’s forging of eremitic identity through adversity” (16); but as with his prophetic scriptural references, the inclusion of the Psalm quotation links Rolle and his lifestyle preference with biblical predecessors whose (divinely inspired) choices led to criticism. He has chosen the better although “wild” way, receiving the unjust calumny that scripture suggests results from such an extraordinary choice. This portrayal emphasizes the marginal and suspect quality of eremitic life itself and presents that quality as essential in those who “will transcend the temporal by elevation of mind.”⁴⁶ In the internal medium of *Melos* and *Incendium* Rolle portrays himself as the eremitic wild man who has rejecting the common life in desire for the singular, and who rejects those who would criticize him for turning against typical paths out of burning intensity of love. It is this form of relationship to which he calls those who would desire and pursue a similarly extraordinary life and intense love; and this portrayal affirms his status as an appropriate mediator of that relationship.

⁴⁴ *Ego enim in solitudinem fugi quia cum hominibus concordare non potui, me nempe a gaudio sepe impediabant* (*Incendium* 220.34-35); Rolle’s description of fleeing into solitude suggests the desert fathers and other wilderness dwelling saints.

⁴⁵ . . .et quia non feci quemadmodum ipsi fecerunt, et errorem et indignacionem mihi imposuerunt: quamobrem tribulacionem et dolorem inueni, sed nomen Domini inuocauit (*Incendium* 220.35-221.2). Riehle notes that “anchorites were widely criticized precisely for their refusal to submit to ecclesiastical authority, and this was also the reason why the church was mistrustful of the solitary way of life” (*Secret* 76).

⁴⁶ *temporalia mentis sublimitate transcendunt* (*Incendium* 180.17-18). As Christopher Roman puts it, “the hermit is singular, the hermit bears insults, but knows that this is a proper life” (18). While Roman doesn’t consider Rolle’s self-portrayal in relation to the wild man image, his description of “eremitic identity” certainly shows its association with the extraordinary aspects of that image: “Eremitic identity cannot be formed without community rejection. . . . The worth comes out of the separation of eremitic identity from the ‘regular’ Christians” (14).

THE ROLLEAN WILD MAN AS ANTI-EREMITIC

Strikingly, Rolle openly extends his eremitic wild man rejection of broader societal and ecclesial norms to a further refusal to follow common views of eremitic norms, thus exhibiting apparent inconsistency in the eyes of those who criticize him. In doing so, he reaffirms his wild man status as one whose divine affirmation empowers him to flaunt standards, including those typically applied to the eremitic life. As this element of Rolle's eremitic life has received critical attention,⁴⁷ I will focus specifically on two passages with particular relevance to triangular mimetic desire and Rolle's mediatorial purpose in relation to his wild man self-portrayal.

Rolle repeatedly stresses the apparent waywardness of his solitary life while defending himself against the resulting critiques of his atypical embodiment of the eremitic vocation.

Although he states at one point in *Incendium* that he has left worldly things behind "on account of the one" (*proptor unum* 187.27), he also describes his continued involvement in the world, claiming that it results from worthwhile considerations:

Therefore, I have eaten and drunk of those things that seemed better, not because I loved delicacies, but that my nature might be sustained in the service of God and in the jubilant song of Jesus Christ. I conformed myself in a good way to those people among whom I sojourned for the sake of Christ, both lest I fain sanctity where there was none, and lest men might praise me too much where I was less praiseworthy. I also withdrew from many, not because they fed me more commonly or in a harsher manner, but because we did not agree in customs, or for some other reasonable cause. (*Fire* 130-31)⁴⁸

Rolle openly admits to controversial behavior, while stating that it derives from a focus on his mission. He needs to maintain his bodily health for serving God and for hearty engagement in

⁴⁷ In addition to Roman, who considers Rolle's unusual behavior in relation to the relationship of internal and physical space (32-38), Watson also deals with this aspect of Rolle's self-presentation (*Authority* 45-53), although neither focuses on the wild man motif in the medieval era.

⁴⁸ *Comedi ergo et bibi de hiis que meliora uidebantur; non quia delicias amavi sed ut natura sustentaretur in seruicio Dei et in iubilo Ihesu Christi, conformans me illis cum quibus morabar bono modo propter Christum, et ne sanctitatem fingerem ubi nulla est, et ne homines me nimis laudarent ubi minus essem laudabilis. Recessi eciam a plerisque non quia me communiter et duriori modo pauerunt, sed quia non concordauimus in moribus, uel propter aliam rationabilem causam. (Incendium 175.19-28)*

mystical song, and he does not wish to appear better than he is to those he is seeking to reach with his message.⁴⁹ In a passage in *Melos* Rolle practically revels in his seemingly scandalous anti-eremitic behavior. He asserts, “I have appeared among the carnal and have been familiar with the rich man of the houses” (*comparui communiter inter carnales et familiaris fueram cum divite domorum*), and admitting, “I have occasionally carried on a joke with the young people” (*iocum cum iuenculis raro gerebam*) and “laughed with the rest, as it appeared to others” (*ridens cum reliquis ut eis videbatur*). The latter phrase emphasizes the public aspect of such actions, giving his critics reason to “have found inconsistency and error” (*lubricum et lapsum iudicaverunt*) on Rolle’s part.⁵⁰ He is quick to defend these behaviors, however, explaining, “For this is the intention by which I was proceeding: that all might learn to love the Author; might leave behind vanity and the nets of ruin; might desire to serve God more than man, and to know heavenly and to scorn earthly things.”⁵¹ These words, as with his comment in *Incendium* noted above, “I conformed myself in a good way to those people among whom I sojourned for the sake of Christ” (*Fire* 130),⁵² suggest a purpose reminiscent of the apostle Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.”

The implication for a reader grasping the scriptural allusion is that Rolle’s actions, rather than scandalous self-serving hypocrisy, are actually a sacrifice of his preferred eremitic peace and solitude for the sake of leading others to repentance and the desire for a deeper relationship with God. These controversial departures from the eremitic norms are, he claims, undertaken for

⁴⁹ Of the former, Nicholas Watson notes, “His argument is not altogether untraditional: Walter Hilton, for example, writes in a similar vein about the need to avoid excessive fasting as much as excessive eating” (*Authority* 46). Rolle’s concern for the proper maintenance of the body, like his cautiously positive view of friendship between men and women in *Incendium* chapter 39, in some ways anticipates the wholistic spiritual approaches of more modern eras.

⁵⁰ *Melos* 132.21-26

⁵¹ *Nam hec est intencio qua sic pergebam, ut omnes addicerent Auctorem amare vanaque relinquerent et recia ruine, plus Deo quam homini desiderent servire ac sapere celestia contempnereque terrena.* (*Melos* 132.34-133.2)

⁵² *conformans me illis cum quibus morabar bono modo propter Christum* (*Incendium* 175.22-23)

the sake of a donative intent and resulting mediatorial task that also includes his writing endeavors. The scripture parallel also serves to connect Rolle's eremitic lifestyle decisions with those of the apostle, and this would also explain his defense in *Incendium* of his atypically mobile eremitic life:

For it is not wicked for hermits to leave their cells for a rational cause and to return to them again, if it seems appropriate. Indeed, certain of the holy fathers acted thus, although they suffered the murmur of men (but not of good ones!) for doing so. (*Fire* 146-47).⁵³

Rolle's desire is for sedentary solitude, but he has moved about for legitimate reasons associated with his calling, even as certain of the desert fathers did. In connecting the censure he has received with their similar experience (and critiquing those who criticized them) he intentionally places himself in exalted company, turning such criticism to advantage for his mediatorial self-portrayal.⁵⁴

Interestingly it is Rolle himself who repeatedly and at times eagerly brings up these complaints and catalogs his atypical behavior, perhaps because it witnesses his extraordinariness and the "wildness" of his position. As Bartra notes, the hermit by his unique and solitary behavior was already exceeding the boundaries of a medieval "ordered society in which each had his place" (113); but Rolle takes this excess one step further. In presenting his unique eremitic style, he not only adopts a wild man motif in turning away from the norms of society for a solitary life, but also in turning away from typical expectations regarding eremitic life itself. He thereby combines the wild man's rejection of society with a return to society as wild man,

⁵³ *Cellas namque deserere ex racionalbili cause malum non est heremitis, et iterum ad easdem, si congruum uideatur, redire; quidam enim sanctorum patrum sic fecerunt, etsi paciantur pro hoc murmur hominum, (non tamen bonorum).* (*Incendium* 188.7-11)

⁵⁴ Although not in relation to this particular passage, Watson's Rolls comment is apt: Rolle "does not only present his actions as exemplary; he implies that the fact that he is being criticized has exemplary significance in itself, as a manifestation of the persecution which the elect must always suffer" (*Authority* 51).

coupled with a rejection of any limitations broader eremitic expectations may place on his embodiment of the relationship he enjoys with the divine. As Christopher Roman describes it, “his often unorthodox movements reinforce his inner intentions to the holy life. Disruption and a rejection of orthodox practice reify the power of the holy life” (14). Within the internal medium they also serve to emphasize the extraordinary quality of Rolle’s mediatorial relationship with the divine (non)object, a relationship that enables Rolle to transcend ordinary patterns of behavior. Thus the wild man aspects of Rolle’s eremiticism in *Incendium* and *Melos* underscore the (human) independence of his (directly divine) sanctioning.⁵⁵ For the reader this serves to further reinforce Rolle’s suitability as mediator of a direct relationship with the divine, and to portray the empowering results of that relationship, emphasizing its desirability for anyone attracted to such a life.

THE ROLLEAN WILD MAN AS DIVINELY WISE *IDIOTUS*

Another related form of the wild man figure “appears as the embodiment of ‘popular’ wisdom in contrast with the networks of the ‘civility’ and the professionalization of knowledge” (de Certeau, *Mystic Fable* 204). De Certeau cites as examples “the ‘Friend of God,’ that poor layman whom Tauler presented as his master,” as well as “the ‘Idiotus’ celebrated by Nicholas of Cusa” (205).⁵⁶ The hermit is often such a figure, but so is the untutored layperson Rolle references as part of his critique of those who pursue intellectual knowledge while lacking true spiritual wisdom:

Alas, the shame! That a little old lady could be more experienced in the love of God (and less experienced in the pleasure of the world!) than a theologian, whose

⁵⁵ Riehle says of this independence, “He indicates unequivocally that in his total commitment to freedom he is not willing to bow down to any authority; he knows he owes obedience to God alone” (*Secret* 76)

⁵⁶ Rolle’s contemporary, the German mystical writer Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), was portrayed (possibly by his disciple Rulman Merswin), as being guided in his spiritual development by a mysterious layperson “rich in God’s grace” (Schmidt 7). Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) wrote *Idiota de Sapientia* and *Idiota de Mente* as dialogues between learned men and a fool who proves the wiser.

study is empty because he studies for the sake of vanity—that he may learn and appear glorious—so that he may acquire payments and dignities! (*Fire* 111)⁵⁷

Rolle directly associates himself (using stylistic complexities that perhaps are meant to suggest a more divine source of wisdom) with this same form of wild man in *Melos*. Speaking of critics who “burn with envy because I speak clearly” (*invidia uruntur quia lucide loquor*, 117.5) he states:

They were thinking that I was not able to preach purely nor be wise like the others remaining in saintliness. But let them plainly know that I loved the Author who satisfied my soul with Olympian burning in order that I might preeminently produce sermons of love, examining the Scripture that hides from the carnal.⁵⁸

In contrast to those steeped in knowledge yet “unfaithful,” Rolle—the committed hermit who has rejected the vices of the world—is in consequence divinely empowered to recognize the sense of the Scripture and elucidate its wisdom to others.⁵⁹ The source of his wisdom is neither academic achievement nor ecclesiastical authority, but eremitic commitment and resulting giftedness, unavailable to those who lack this intimacy with the divine.

De Certeau suggests that the popularity of the legend of Tauler’s lay master reflected “the emergence of the laity opposite the clerics; the taking up of questions common to all against the professionals who had appropriated meaning for themselves; the apparition of the nonpriest witness who reduced the master to a schoolboy and who, without having attended schools, without possessing the science of the Scriptures (the science of sciences), and by the sole fact of being illuminated, upsets the traditional hierarchical relations” (235). Rolle’s own self-

⁵⁷ *Proh pudor, uetula plus experitur de Dei amore et minus de mundi uoluptate quam theologus, cuius studium uanum est, quia pro uanitate studet ut sciatur et gloriosus appareat, ut redditus et dignitates adquirat qui stultus non doctus meretur reputari. (Incendium 160.8-12)*

⁵⁸ *Putabant quod non potui pure predicare nec sapere ut ceteri qui sancte subsistebant. Sed sciant simpliciter quod Auctorem amavi qui animum ardore olimpi implevit ut proferam precipue sermones amoris, Scripturam scrutans que latet carnalis. (Melos 117.7-11)*

⁵⁹ Walter Hilton makes a similar point in the the second book of *Scale of Perfection*. Speaking of the ability to “see Jesu in Holy Writte,” he states, “he may note be knowen ne feled bot of a clene herte. For why, sothfastnes wil not schewe itself to enemys bot to frendis þat lufen it and desyren it with a clene, meke herte” (326.9, 11-13).

positioning against educated and ecclesial critics, emphasizing his direct divine illumination, certainly implies a somewhat similar context. It suggests that Rolle is intentionally presenting himself as a mediator relevant to a particular implied audience; as Rolle himself puts it in presenting his purpose in writing *Incendium*, “Therefore, I offer this book for consideration not by philosophers, not by the worldly-wise, not by great theologians ensnared in infinite questionings, but by the unsophisticated and the untaught, who are trying to love God rather than now many things. For He is known in doing and in loving, not in arguing” (*Fire* 95).⁶⁰ While Rolle’s Latin in these texts would limit his audience to the educated,⁶¹ his internal medium is directed toward a readership guided by motives more affective and personally transformative than speculative, and attracted to an extraordinary commitment themselves, “Contemplative men who are burdened beyond the ordinary by the love of eternity.” They should not assume themselves prepared for such a commitment, he cautions, “unless, by chance, divine grace inspires them to make this judgment” (*Fire* 103, 104).⁶²

In spite of this call to prudence it is apparent Rolle’s anticipated reader is one already potentially open to recognizing such grace and therefore ready to respond in desire to his portrayal of the mediator-object relationship. In chapter ten of *Incendium*, for example, he prefaces various comments about the contemplative life with phrases such as “Therefore, whoever you are who think you love Christ, pay attention to this,” or “Also, O you who either

⁶⁰ *Istum ergo librum offero intuendum, non philosophis, non mundi sapientibus, non magnis theologicis infinitis quescionibus implicatis, sed rudibus et indoctis, magis Deum diligere quam multa scire conantibus. Non enim disputando sed agendo scietur, et amando.* (147.9-13)

⁶¹ This wouldn’t have excluded educated laity. Walter Hilton, for example, who studied civil and subsequently canon law before making the Rollean move to abandon academic life in the 1380s and become a solitary and later an Augustinian Canon (see Clark and Dorward, 13-15), would have been capable of reading Rolle’s Latin works. There is no direct evidence of his reading Rolle as a young man, although by some stage of Hilton’s life, as Clark and Dorward note, “He must have known some of Rolle’s writing firsthand,” and there are parallels in Hilton’s writings to Rolle’s later works of spiritual direction (24).

⁶² *Contemplatiui uiri qui excellenter uruntur amore eternitatis; . . . nisi forte diuina gracia eos ad hanc inspiret* (*Incendium* 153.2-3, 154.25-26). Rolle is nevertheless willing to assist divine grace in the process.

are a lover of God or wish to be one with your whole spirit [*mente*]. . ." (*Fire* 126).⁶³ The underlying assumption is that Rolle is speaking to those who consider themselves would-be contemplatives, and thus (by the standard his depiction presents) would-be solitaries as well.⁶⁴ In such a circumstance the very "wildness" of Rolle's eremitic life and its divine relationship—one presented as noticeably differing not only from the worldly, but also from the more typical forms of devotional and religious life—becomes part of the attraction of the internal medium.

THE ROLLEAN WILD MAN AS PROPHET

The figure of the wild man has considerable precedent in relation to prophetic activity, as the biblical association of prophets with striking and unusual behavior as well as wilderness locations is undeniable. Old Testament examples such as Jeremiah hiding his loincloth among the rocks (Je 13), or Ezekiel laying for days on his side, burning the hair of his beard, and cooking with human excrement (Ez 4 :1 -5:17) associate outlandish behaviors with prophetic insight and divine proclamation of judgment. Elijah's wilderness associations also connect him with the wild man figure and embody what Mobley calls the biblical wild man tradition of "the wild man as the prophet in the wilderness" (227). In the New Testament it is John the Baptist who is portrayed fully embodying the prophetic figure as wild man with his strikingly rustic attire and diet as well as his wilderness location for ministry.⁶⁵ John is "a true desert man . . . who came with his tough Bedouin asceticism to cleanse the sins of the Jews with the waters of the Jordan" (Bartra 49). The portrayal of John the Baptist in the gospels is coupled with

⁶³ *Quisquis ergo es qui te Christum amare putas ad hoc attendas. . . ; Tu quoque qui Dei amator aut es aut esse tota mente concupiscis. . .* (*Incendium* 171.29, 172.7-8)

⁶⁴ Albin somewhat humorously notes that Rolle in *Melos* "appears to anticipate a sympathetic readership perhaps caught in the first flush of the religious life and in search of a paradigm to aspire toward—himself" ("*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*" 17).

⁶⁵ Mobley adds to these aspects John's role as "wild counterpart to the primary hero," Jesus. Of the latter he states, "The Gospel traditions about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness express the motif of the prophet who enters the desert, like Elijah or John," although he stresses that "Jesus is not a wild man per se" (228).

descriptions of his blunt condemnations of sin (with particular wrath reserved for religious leaders) and warnings of impending judgment as well as calls to repentance (see Mt 3:1-12).

The linking of prophetic divine judgment and calls to repentance with the wild man figure and its biblical imagery continues in the medieval era, perhaps partly reflecting the idea of insanity as connected with oracular insight.⁶⁶ It appears in the sayings and actions of the desert fathers and mothers in the northern *Vitae Patrum* translations, depictions of the enigmatic wilderness-dwelling spiritual oracles about which Ralph Hanna states, “Certainly, texts like these were instrumental in Rolle’s self-presentation. Often, given the particularly crotchety and zen-master-like mien of the Fathers, they were inspirational in his rhetorical self-presentations as well” (lxx). Rolle’s condemnatory outbursts certainly parallel the blunt style of the statements emanating from the desert in such collections, thus connecting him with their acumen.

The wild man as prophetic figure also appears in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a text generally assumed to date from the late first to the early second century⁶⁷ and translated twice into Latin. One of these translations, the *Vulgata*, exists in 28 whole texts or excerpts from the ninth through the sixteenth centuries.⁶⁸ At one point within *Shepherd* (Similitudo VI), the central shepherd/angel who guides Hermas shows him several others: an attractive shepherd who is revealed to be a deceiver misleading the sheep (2.1); and one of a very different nature, described

⁶⁶ Bernheimer notes, referencing the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s interlude of madness, “It was in the high Middle Ages and in Celtic territory that this idea of the insane man of the woods was first applied, on a literary scale, to persons other than the fallen King of Babylon. The lunatic was now also a prophet, whom his mental waywardness had endowed with oracular faculties, while it compelled him also to forsake feeling company and to seek shelter in the woods. Among the creatures thus enhanced and degraded by their insanity was the Welsh prophet Lailoken of whose stay in the Caledonian forest and whose prophetic utterances we are informed in the so-called Lailoken fragments” (Bernheimer 13). Bartra adds that upon returning to sanity, Nebuchadnezzar “immediately elects to glorify the god of Israel. His wild state has permitted him to attain faith” (48). A sojourn in wildness can play an integral role in a relationship with the divine.

⁶⁷ See Osiek 18-20.

⁶⁸ See Tornau and Cecconi 10-27.

as a shepherd “large and in appearance as a wild figure.”⁶⁹ The fierceness of the shepherd’s appearance is repeatedly emphasized, Hermas calling him “this shepherd so relentless and harsh.”⁷⁰ Eventually he is revealed to be a punishing angel sent to deal with the straying sheep: “They are surrendered to him, who have wandered from God, and served the desires and pleasures of this age.”⁷¹ The pain the wild man shepherd inflicts on the errant sheep is indicated to be “as every one of them deserves.”⁷² Yet the purpose is not condemnatory but restorative in nature, in order that the errant sheep, recognizing and repenting of their errors, may have reason to glorify God (see VI.3.6); and this is in keeping with the overall theme of repentance (*paenitentia*) in *Hermas*.⁷³

There is no direct evidence that Rolle was familiar with *Hermas*, but the text does indicate an ongoing association of the wild man with prophetic behavior and biblical archetypes during the medieval era. It is certain that Rolle sees himself fulfilling this prophetic task of bringing a message of judgment and call to repentance, and he portrays this aspect of his function in the internal medium with overt reference to biblical examples and types that further support his claim as mediator-in-relationship with the divine.⁷⁴

In *Melos*, for example, Rolle frequently associates himself and his task with biblical prophets and apostles through his insertion of prophetic texts supporting his own observations.

⁶⁹ : ...*et ostendit mihi pastorem magnum et velut agrestem figura* (2.5, 87). The Greek is ἄγριον, “belonging to the field, wild; fierce, raging” (*Analytical Greek Lexicon* 5).

⁷⁰ *hic pastor tam implacabilis et tam amarus* (3.2, 87)

⁷¹ *Huic ergo traduntur, qui a deo erraverunt et servierunt desideriis ac voluptatibus saeculi huius.* (3.3, 88)

⁷² *sicut meruit unusquisque eorum* (3.3, 88)

⁷³ Osiek notes, “Though some have raised doubts, most scholars conclude that μετάνοια is the major theme or concern in *Hermas*” (28).

⁷⁴ That Rolle is conversant with the Bible is obvious, not only from his various commentaries and Psalm translations, but from the way in which that familiarity informs his rhetoric and his self-presentation as a mystical writer: as John Alford puts it, “Rolle’s interest in Scripture is not incidental to his mysticism: both are intimately related. . . Together they form the way” (“Biblical Imitatio” 7). In addition to Alford’s work, recent studies emphasizing Rolle and scripture include those by Annie Sutherland, who deals with the interaction between Rolle’s experience and biblical references; and Denis Renevey, who examines Rolle’s use of the Song of Songs in Latin and English works including *Melos Amoris*. See the relevant entries in the bibliography.

In the tenth chapter, for example, having condemned those who engage in vice and corruption, he quotes Psalm 54:16, “Let death come over them and let them descend into hell” (*veniat mors super illos et descendant in infernum*), adding, “I think that the prophet predicted the penalty of the perverse” (*puto quod propheta predixit penam perversorum*).⁷⁵ He then engages in a lengthy meditation on the punishment of evil-doers, ultimately addressing his own opponents by indirectly referencing an image from Luke 10, “Odious detractors of God, why do you vainly disparage God’s loved ones whom you see like lambs among wolves? (*detractores Deo odibiles, ut quid frustra dilectis Dei derogatis quos velut agnos inter lupos videtis*). Rolle then accuses, “and you desire to assail [Christ] in his servants” (*et in servis suis studeatis impugnare*), before turning to a further condemnatory Psalm text (38:7) about which he states, “Rightly therefore the prophet refuted the perverse” (*recte ergo redarguit propheta perversos*).⁷⁶ Rolle links his own declaration of impending condemnation with the Psalmist’s prophecy, associates himself with the disciples Christ sends out as lambs among wolves to proclaim the kingdom (Lk 10:3), and via the final clause connects his situation (and the opposition he faces) with the words of the prophet-psalmist. In chapter 33 he goes even further, referring directly to himself as “faithful prophet” (*fidelis propheta*, 100.8). As with various examples of Rolle’s biblical references, there tends to be a mingling of the biblical voice with Rolle’s own, rather like what Denis Renevey finds in Rolle’s *Ego Dormio*, where biblical “text and author seem to speak with the same ‘I’ voice” (*Language* 127). Rolle certainly appears to relish in the prophetic task of decrying sin, which takes up a large portion of *Melos*; he even adopts the standard Vulgate *vae qui* phrasing of Isaiah’s curses, exclaiming, “Woe to the dead in their daily malice!”; “Woe to those who don’t

⁷⁵ *Melos* 28.16-17

⁷⁶ These excerpts are taken from 30.12-16.

wish to come to the way of Life. . .”⁷⁷ Such phrasing not only connects Rolle to the prophetic tradition and its fierceness of language, but to the adoption of that phrasing in Jesus’ own various gospel condemnations.⁷⁸ At the same time, the biblical prophet’s message is not merely condemnation, but a call to repentance: the statements of impending punishment and divine wrath are based on the (divinely given) knowledge that the call will generally be ignored.⁷⁹ Similarly, Rolle states in *Melos*, “I desire Christians to continue constantly and the Highest’s lovers to fill the world” (*Christianos cupio constanter continuare et orbem impleant Altissimum amantes*), yet adds “But truly I don’t see it” (*Sed vere non video*), and links this situation to the prophet Micah’s words, “The holy man has perished from the earth, and righteousness is not among men” (*Periit sanctus de terra et rectus in hominibus non est*).⁸⁰

Rolle repeatedly presents prophetic calls to repentance, although like Isaiah he sees the paradoxical result of that call, admitting, “I descend to divide the rich from the poor” (*descendo ut diiudicentur divites a desolatis. . .*),⁸¹ words reminiscent of Jesus’ in Luke 12:51-53 concerning the divisiveness resulting from his appearance and message.⁸² At various points in *Melos* he refers to a net or snare (generally *retia* or *nodus*)—familiar in his Latin and English Psalm commentaries—to enable this call by depicting a cycle of entanglement in sin, potential

⁷⁷ *Ve mortuis in mundiali malicia! (13.31-32); Ve qui non volunt venire ad Vitam. . . (100.23)*. Compare these with the series of *vae qui* curses in the Vulgate fifth chapter of Isaiah.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the series of *vae vobis* curses addressed to the scribes and pharisees in the vulgate of Mathew 23; Rolle’s language, however, more closely duplicates Isaiah’s in its use of third person pronouns. On Jesus’ condemnatory language in Matthew 23, for example, as well as the wider biblical and ancient use of such language, see Davies and Allison, “Excursus XVI (2) *The polemic*,” in *Gospel According to St. Matthew* 258-61.

⁷⁹ Thus Isaiah, for example, declares the need for repentance (1:16b-20) while asserting the impending destruction of the evil (Is 2:6-5:30) and the blessedness of the righteous remnant who will be rewarded (3:10-11; 4:2-6). He is subsequently told his message will paradoxically create a lack of understanding and absence of repentance until the day of destruction (6:9-13).

⁸⁰ *Melos* 104.23-25,29-30

⁸¹ *Melos* 82.8

⁸² Similarly, in chapter 58 Rolle describes the fate of those who reject his message and laments, “Ah, why do men not fear the strict judgment of God?” (*Heu, cur non timent homines districtum iudicium Dei? Melos* 187.18-19)

deliverance from sin, and subsequent resistance to temptation.⁸³ He uses the biblical image to speak of the sin's entrapping consequences (38.35, 75.7), employing the passive *nodatur* ("knotted") to describe the sinner's condition (89.30); to note his own rescue from entrapment (56.30, 58.33) and to call others to the freedom of repentance (135.35-136.1); and (using *nexus*) to offer the promise of safety from further entanglement (34.33-34). The effect is to associate Rolle's own prophetic utterances with a familiar scriptural image and its meanings. Similarly, Rolle frequently turns to combinations of interjections, vocatives, and imperatives: "O fearful one, listen! (*O dire diligens* 60.22); "O miserable modern man of the world, remember. . ." (*O miser mundi modernus . . . memento. . .* 90.3, 6); "O one who walks among honors and is led into luxurious pleasures, turn. . ." (*O homo qui ambulat inter honores et delicate duceris in deliciis, advertete. . .* 90.35-36); "Therefore, foolish, understand! And O you carnal captives, consider the downfall toward which you run headlong" (*Ergo insipientes intelligite et, o vos carnales captivi, casum ad quem curritis concito considerate.* 59.13-14). Rolle's phrasing and style echoes various passages from the Psalms and prophets—the first phrase of the final quotation above, for example, uses the specific terminology of vulgate Psalm 93:8, *intelligite insipientes in populo*⁸⁴—again encouraging biblical prophetic associations for an aware reader.⁸⁵

Throughout *Melos*, Rolle continues "hammering" his reader, as he puts it (*concuicium*, 76.19), with repetitions of prophetic condemnations of sin interspersed with calls to repentance.⁸⁶ Even the frequent contrasts of the exultation of the saints and the eventual destruction of the

⁸³ For Psalm appearances see, for example, Psalm 34:8-9; 56:8, 139:5; and 140:10 (as numbered in Rolle's *English Psalter*). Referring to the snare (here *laqueum*) in Psalm 56, Rolle in the *English Psalter* calls it "the snare of dampnacioun undire bodily delite" (203).

⁸⁴ For Rolle's comments on the Psalm passage itself, see his *English Psalter* 338.

⁸⁵ As Sutherland says of other examples of this intentional tendency on Rolle's part, "Even when Rolle does not explicitly quote from the Scriptures, the form is characterized by a precise, albeit unattributed, adoption of biblical terminology" (701).

⁸⁶ Horstmann says of Rolle's efforts in *Melos*, "How he labours to win souls! (*Yorkshire Writers* xx)

wicked, shown by the alternating depictions throughout *Melos*, mimics a typical approach taken by the prophets and wisdom literature to encourage repentance.⁸⁷ John Alford suggests that Rolle's experience as biblical commentator influences his style, observing, "he frequently models his sentence structure on certain favorite biblical texts" ("Biblical 'Imitatio'" 10); but this is true at the level of the structure of entire passages as well. Rolle's employment of a markedly biblical style connecting himself and his words with prophetic models is essential to the whole of his internal medium.

What does the internal medium in *Melos* gain from the depiction of mediator as prophetic wild man relentlessly proclaiming his message of impending condemnation and call to repentance? It gains a form of biblical sanction, both via the biblical associations of its prophetic utterances achieved through stylistic parallels, and through direct and indirect scriptural references. This elevates Rolle as mediator of that divine message, while the internal medium itself is given greater claim as both inspired by God and in some sense proceeding from God. The mediator-(non)object relationship portrayed in the internal medium is suggested to be integral to the Judeo-Christian message itself as revealed in its biblical models. This marks it as not merely an esoteric and individualistic experience of peripheral value, but an element of the gospel appeal to repentance and salvation and a response on Rolle's part to Christ's call to "go

⁸⁷ Although Watson states that, "Unlike the rest of the work, the last [ten] chapters of *Melos Amoris* are no longer concerned exclusively with the 'glory of the saints' and the proclamation of *canor*, but with the need to save the lost and to exhort the Church to virtue" (*Authority* 188), the above analysis suggests there is not as abrupt a change of focus. I agree with Watson's description of Rolle's assertion of a "mixed life" for the hermit involving preaching as its active element (see *Authority* 182-87)—indeed it would seem a part of fulfilling his donative purpose—but would suggest that the passages considered above and in the *sanctus Dei amator* section below indicate its presence as an inspiration earlier in *Melos* as well as a specific association with prophecy. It should be noted that *Incendium* contains comparatively little in the way of prophetic utterance and self-presentation as its focus is more narrowly toward descriptions of Rolle's experiences, spiritual development, and the eremitic life; these elements form, however, an essential aspect of *Melos*.

and make disciples” (Mk 16:15-16; cf. Lk 24:47).⁸⁸ As Alford observes, it also has the effect of implying that the *nonnulli* (“some”)⁸⁹ who are critical of Rolle’s presentation of his experiences and their legitimacy are opponents of the gospel itself, and stand among those condemned by the prophets.⁹⁰ Rolle is portrayed through both message and stylistic associations standing with those biblical prophetic wild men chosen as unique channels of the divine message. By implication, through the mediator’s prophetic stance and underlying mandate, aspects of the Rollean internal medium are depicted as having divine derivation. This provides further support for the legitimacy of both the mediator and the mediator-divine (non)object relationship and emphasizes the divinely sanctioned and empowering elements of that relationship to those reading subjects who may be moved to mimetic desire.

THE ROLLEAN WILD MAN AS *SANCTUS DEI AMATOR* WORTHY OF IMITATION

The medieval image of religious wild man and its biblical sources was not merely limited to eremitic behavior and prophetic empowerment: it also involved the underlying idea of one set apart by a depth of loving desire for God. As Roger Barnra says of the *solitarii*, “The new Christian wild men not only rejected the ancient *polis* and its coercive laws; their liberty was also an act of rebellion against the original sin. . . . They were authentic athletes, as they were often called, who exploited all the forces of their human nature to destroy it” (59-60). Such exemplary figures, by their choice of atypical existence, demonstrated the compelling depth of their desire for the divine and the level of their spiritual attainment.⁹¹ Those such as Cuthbert, the desert

⁸⁸ Again, this is not to suggest that Rolle believes all will respond to his appeal. While his call to repentance may be general, Rolle recognizes, as has been noted above, that only a select group will respond. His donative purpose involves sharing his gift; those who would seek the same form of giftedness and its giver will respond.

⁸⁹ Rolle uses this term in *Melos* chapter 14 (71.35).

⁹⁰ “They are not merely the enemies of Rolle personally; they are the ‘*detractores Deo odibiles*’ mentioned by St. Paul” (Alford, *Biblical Identity* 24).

⁹¹ See Husband 11-12. There appear to be parallels in secular literature as well. Bernheimer, referencing figures such as Perceval and Hélias, states, “The existence in literature of figures such as these, whose wildness in their

dwellers of the *Vitae Patrum*, and the heroes of the biblical stories and prophetic texts with which Rolle associates himself all were understood as exhibiting unusual levels of commitment and sanctity that set them apart.

Carolyn Walker Bynum notes that for medieval biographers such individuals were not typically expected to “be imitated in their full extravagance and power” (*Holy Feast* 7); but Rolle as his own autobiographer obviously sees his reading subject as one potentially called to a higher life similar to his own, and therefore open to mimetic desire for what he himself has experienced and chosen as *sanctus Dei amator*, “holy lover of God” (*Incendium* 169.35). Even when presented as a paean of praise for the divine enabling of his spiritual ascent, Rolle’s descriptions of personal experience still seem to suggest this concern for portraying personal sanctity and inspiring mimetic desire:

Assiduously I shall give thanks with joy, because you have brought it about that I have shaped myself excellently to the singing, through clarity of conscience, in a soul burning with eternal love, while it loves and boils, sitting in fire. My spirit is transformed, burning with heat and vehemently dilated with desire. (*Fire* 149)⁹²

Rolle has known the burning fire of divine presence and the strength of corresponding desire. He is conversant in the song that he tells us lifts the contemplative “to the harmony of angelic praise” (149).⁹³ His unusual and striking experiences constitute a form of superior holiness directly related to his mediator-divine (non)object relationship; and through their depiction Rolle as mediator may move his reading subject to desire such experiences as well.

formative years is the cause and condition of their later eminence, affords us a first glimpse of an evaluation of wild-man life, not in terms of its imperfections as compared with civilized practice, but of superiority” (19).

⁹² *Agam assidue gracias cum gaudio, quia conformem me fecisti canentibus preclare per claritatem consciencie, in anima ardente eterno amore, dum amat et estuat incendio sedente, mente mutata, calore autem calente desiderio uehementer dilatato.* (*Incendium* 190.34-191.3)

⁹³ *uel ad consonanciam angelice laudis* (*Incendium* 191.10)

Examined from this perspective, such statements are not mere braggadocio, as they could be if Rolle's intentions were personal in nature. They are rather parts of his socially directed donative message to the community of those open to the possibility of similar experiences. Such a community may be small, but lack of quantity would be offset by quality of potential (mimetic) desire; and that desire by definition needs a model to imitate, and a mediator to arouse it by elucidating the beauty of the relationship. In such a circumstance affective language is not merely the overflowing of Rolle's own emotional interior life but is instead an intentional effort to portray his position as worthy mediator in relationship with the divine. In *Melos*, for example, he can write (with apparent reference to Rev 2:17), "How impetuous, how violent is the force of love; no one has known it except he who has loved."⁹⁴ Besides serving as an answer to his critics (who can thereby be dismissed with biblical authority as the inexperienced), the allusion also emphasizes Rolle's own experience: if he can speak of the loving relationship and its divine gifts with understanding, it must be due to his experiencing them.⁹⁵ Rolle's portrayal of his extravagant experiences functions to present himself as the one who has known them and thus can produce a text that expounds on them with understanding in order to inspire others.⁹⁶

Not only is Rolle's identity as a lover of God integral to authorizing the mediatorial position, but that mediatorial task is itself suggested as proof of Rolle's status as *sanctus Dei amator*: "Therefore abundance of love presses me in order that I should dare to reveal eloquence

⁹⁴ *quam impetuosus, quam violens, sit vis amoris, nemo novit nisi qui amavit* (9.32-33). Alford examines Rolle's reference to the Book of Revelation in "Biblical 'Imitatio'" 8-9.

⁹⁵ The late fourteenth-century marginalia noted by Albin in relation to these passages—"The song that he speaks about is not of the sort that many judge it to be, since no one can know it unless he's received it" (*Canticum de quo loquitur non est tale quale multi estimauerunt, quia nemo potest cognoscere illud nisi qui accepit.*)" (Rolle, *Melody* 141, n.2)—reveals an early reader understanding both its dismissive and authorizing aspects, an important element of Rolle's self-presentation as mediator.

⁹⁶ As Rozenski puts it, Rolle "depends on the validity of his portrayal of his own experiences in authorizing and authenticating his textual production" (101).

to the conception of others.”⁹⁷ It is worth noting Rolle’s biblicism here. The notion of the experience of divine favor satisfying God’s followers is widespread within the scriptures, with resulting eagerness to share the fulfilling joy of the experience of God.⁹⁸ Rolle recognizes this, commenting in his *English Psalter* on Psalm 62:6 (which he translates, “As with grese & with fatness, filled be my saule: &with lippes of joynge, laude sall my mouthe”⁹⁹):

By gresse is vnderstonden wisdom, by fatenesse strenghe of goste & gladnes in god, that makes men wele chered in all thair warks. He that thus is fillid, he shall with lippes of joynge love, that is, in clene consciens & syker, ‘laughe, as ay ioyand’ in christ. (219)

In the context Rolle obviously believes this fulfillment to be a present possibility, and in his commentary on Psalm 65:15-16 he references this biblical understanding of divine fulfillment as the source of the donative urge:

I sall tell what thyngis he has done til my saule, and if 3e wil he will do the same till 3oure saules. . . . Aswhasay, that he did till my saule, that I myght cri till him in a luf 3ernynge, and that I ioyed vndire my tunge, that is in my hert, that I hafe in mouth I hafe in hert. (228)¹⁰⁰

Rolle’s commentary on these verses is a virtual exposition of his own purpose: what he has experienced in his own relationship with God will be shared so that those who can hear will respond and enter into a similar relationship. Therefore, his donative endeavor itself serves to claim a place for him among those—including the Psalmist—who have experienced the highest degrees of the spiritual life, and now give to others. This also demonstrates a technique that reappears throughout the passages examined this chapter, in which Rolle mingles his own authority (by direct divine inspiration) with that of the scriptures (also by direct divine

⁹⁷ *Urget igitur amoris habundancia ut audeam aperire eloquium ad informacionem aliorum* (Melos 3.4-5).

⁹⁸ Compare in this regard 1 John 1:1-4 as well as the responses of the disciples in Acts 4:20, 5:29, 5:32, and 26:22; also see Isaiah 63:7 and 2 Corinthians 4:13.

⁹⁹ Doubtless the alternate reading *laud* is correct rather than *loue*, as the Latin is *laudabit*.

¹⁰⁰ Punctuation and capitalization are modernized to a degree here and elsewhere when necessary in quotations from Rolle’s *English Psalter*. In this passage Rolle chooses to treat *sub lingua* in a spatial sense: the heart is literally below the tongue.

inspiration).¹⁰¹ Such biblical associations further serve Rolle's donative purpose in the internal medium: portraying himself as the experientially wise mediator of a trustworthy relationship with the divine.¹⁰²

One of Rolle's most striking claims of *sanctus Dei amator* status occurs in *Melos*, where, having made one of his frequent laments regarding the inability to explain the ineffable experiences he has known, he then supplies the intrusive voice of an auditor, who impatiently demands, "Quick, lover-Author, show others what heavenly things you have received! One made friend of the Omnipotent, do not pretend to boil over, since the boys look to you." This allows Rolle to suggest an external affirmation to his transcendent experiences and relationship with the divine, as well as implying the existence of an eager and appreciative audience (to which the reading subjects can feel they are uniting) who demand Rolle leave his hermitage and share the valuable treasure he has received, exclaiming "Why do you remain in your retreat?"¹⁰³

In this carefully constructed scene Rolle is the experienced mediator of the transcendent, forced to depart from his eremitic solitude in order to share the fruit of his relationship with those needy souls, the subjects of the mimetic triangle, who call on Rolle to mediate his relationship with the divine (non)object to them. The portrayal of the eager seeker serves to associate Rolle with the desert fathers and mothers of the *Vitae Patrum*, who are frequently portrayed as approached by followers seeking wisdom and asking advice for their own spiritual lives.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Although certainly some, such as the Carthusian critic to whom Richard Bassett pens his defense of Rolle, were not convinced; see Sargent, "Contemporary Criticism of Richard Rolle."

¹⁰² As Annie Sutherland notes of this practice in Rolle's English writings, "For Rolle, personal experience and biblical authority are diagnostically connected. In other words, rather than standing in a hierarchical relationship with each other, the two are mutually informing and validating" (706).

¹⁰³ *Eya, amator Auctoris, aliis ostende quod celitus sumpsisti: amicus efficeris Omnipotentis, efferbere non fingas, nam pueri te spectant. Quid latitas in latebris?* (139.18-21)

¹⁰⁴ Among many examples is the following: "A fader was askede of breþire þat he walde tell þaim sume worde of edificacione, ande he helde his pese. Ande eft þai prayed hym, ande he ansuerde to þaim þus, 'Wyll ze here a sermone?' Ande þai sayde, '3a.'" (*Verba Seniorum* 162-65 in *Richard Rolle: Uncollected Prose and Verse* 107)

Portraying himself as convinced by these demands, Rolle goes on to state that he will indeed fulfill their expectations, adding, “It is right I not deny the goodness of the Holy One, because divine sweetness has delighted me, and ‘the One who is mighty has done great things for me, and his name is holy.’”¹⁰⁵ Rolle openly asserts his donative purpose, even as the elements of the internal medium are affirmed: Rolle’s mediator-(non)object relationship with God from whom he has received heavenly gifts, which he as mediator will now attempt to share so that subjects who look to him as mediator (potentially including the reader) may be inspired to imitation.

But the most audacious assertion of mediatorial status is merely implied by the quotation embedded in the above passage, as Rolle applies to his own experience the words of Mary concerning herself and her unique role as mother of the incarnate God in Luke 1:49. Rolle likely would not claim equivalency to Virgin and her position in salvation history as *theotokos* and intercessor (as well as her position in medieval devotion). Nevertheless, to an audience doubtless familiar with the biblical passage the import of Mary’s words concerning the “great things” she has received within a sentence describing what God has done for Rolle, and his consequential need to share that news with others, could hardly be missed.¹⁰⁶

Less daring but equally helpful in establishing Rolle’s position as mediator and the legitimacy of the relationship he portrays are the alternating statements of humility and implied divine authority in the fourteenth chapter of *Incendium* (185.15-27). Within them he stresses that he has received divine gifts “by my modest capacity” (*pro modulo capacitatis mee*) while calling

¹⁰⁵ ...*de iure non denego bonitatem Beati quia dulcedo divina me delectavit et quia fecit michi magna qui potens est et sanctum nomen eius* (139.26-28). This is in contrast to the desert father of the passage quoted in the above footnote, who refuses his wisdom because his hearers have asked for shallow reasons.

¹⁰⁶ Although not referencing this passage, Watson notes that in his early commentary *Super Magnificat* Rolle states he will be relating the Magnificat to the “lover of Christ” rather than Mary. Watson adds, “The decision to make the speaker of the *Magnificat* a lover of Christ turns the whole song into a description of the *electi*, heralding the dominance of this topic in Rolle’s mature biblical expositions and treatises” (*Authority* 103). In the present passage the Marian association is specifically applied to Rolle himself.

those gifts “signs of most perfect love” (*signa perfectissimi amoris*) Jesus has “given generously” (*largiente*) to him. Rolle here demurs at claiming any unusual superiority while simultaneously noting the presence of perfect love’s signifiers in his life. The result is to iterate not only the divine origin of these gifts (thus enabling his message and resulting mediatorial role at the highest level) but emphasize their superabundance as indicative of the divine largess granted him. However much Rolle may make claims of limited capacity and imperfection, a reader could hardly help but conclude from such a passage that Rolle is the most proficient guide for any spiritual journey inclusive of the phenomena described. On the one hand, he is a privileged lover in a relationship with God characterized by the experiences about which he himself may speak as an authority. On the other hand, he has been given (as a component of that experiential gifting) both the donative task and ability to inspire receptive others to pursue the possibility of a similar relationship with the divine.¹⁰⁷ In the internal medium, Rolle—portrayed as the holy wild man, *sanctus Dei amator*, reluctantly drawn from his retreat to enlighten others—has positioned himself as one particularly capable of sharing such a gift with those who may desire it.

PORTRAYING THE MEDIATOR-IN-RELATIONSHIP

Approaching Rolle’s self-portrayal in *Incendium* and *Melos* in light of his donative purpose and in relation to the figure of the wild man elements in that portrayal reveals Rolle’s carefully constructed presentation of himself as the mediator of an extraordinary mediator-(non)object relationship. In *Incendium* Rolle suggests that in his own era one may still be called into such an extraordinary relationship with the divine:

¹⁰⁷ For this reason I don’t agree with Staley’s comment, “the dazzling feats of this spiritual athlete seem only a vain aspiration in the face of our own clumsiness. We are rather invited to observe, to participate vicariously in, Rolle’s ecstatic union with Christ” (134). The stated purpose of Rolle’s writing in these texts is to invite the reader to desire a similar experience of God, and to encourage them to undertake actions intended toward fulfilling that desire.

Moreover, if in former times the Holy Spirit inspired many men, why indeed will He not now raise up lovers to gaze on the glory of the Lord, when approved modern men are not unequal to those of former times? Moreover, I do not draw this approbation from men, who often make mistakes in their approvals. . . . But such men are entirely approved whom eternal love sets on fire in their inmost being, and whom the grace of the Holy Spirit inspires to every good. (*Fire* 216)¹⁰⁸

Rolle is obliquely describing himself here, but also implying that his reader may be among the “approved” as well and may be raised up among the lovers set on fire and enabled to gaze on divine glory even as he has been. As has been demonstrated, Rolle sees himself called to perform a part in this divine process. His self-presentation in the internal medium of *Incendium* and *Melos* is not focused simply on fulfilling his own desires or defending his own authority; it serves instead an essentially donative purpose. Rolle seeks to portray his own legitimacy as mediator and the legitimacy of his mediator-divine (non)object relationship because the convincing communication of that legitimacy is crucial to this divinely given donative task. The wild man elements in his mediatorial self-presentation further support this intentionality underlying the internal medium. Rolle creates a compelling mediatorial figure by portraying the extraordinary quality of his eremitic life (audaciously independent from human expectations and common understandings of the eremitic life itself); his prophetic message of judgment and repentance (and its implication of divine sanction and empowerment); and his self-fashioning as sought-after *sanctus Dei amator* capable of sharing mystical wisdom. This is done with consistent reference to biblical and patristic models.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, these elements also

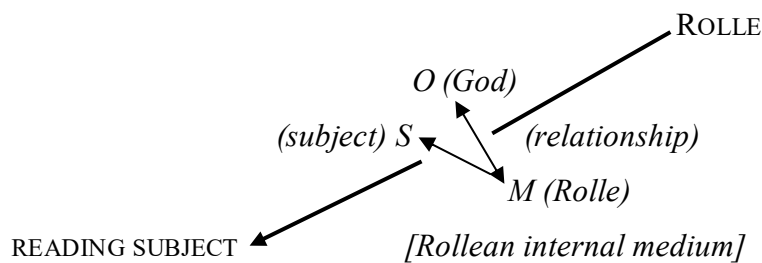
¹⁰⁸ *Si autem antiquitus Spiritus Sanctus plures inspiravit: cur eciam non nunc assumeret amantes ad gloriam Domini specularandam, cum ipsis prioribus moderni approbati non sunt inequales? Approbacionem autem hanc ab hominibus non appello, qui sepe in approbacionibus suis errant. . . . Sed tales omnino approbatos, quos amor eternus medullitus inflamat et Spiritus Sancti gracia ad omne bonum inspirat. (Incendium 240.27-36)*

¹⁰⁹ Although space does not permit it here, other aspects of Rolle’s self-presentation also relate to the wild man figure, including the irascible Rolle, who embodies the figure of “the wild man, at once benevolent and malevolent” (Husband 17); and the eccentric Rolle, happy to reference his refusal to join in external singing for fear of disrupting his own internal melody (*Incendium* 233.21-30; *Melos* 145.31-146.2). In these examples there appears to be an intentional effort at a self-portrayal paralleling the wild man figure as “an ‘extraordinary’ case in comparison with a normalizing of behavior” (de Certeau, *Mystic Fable* 204).

serve to assert the extraordinary quality of the mediator-(non)object relationship in his own life, a relationship potentially available to a reading subject thus moved to desire and seek it, thereby fulfilling Rolle's own donative purpose.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ROLLEAN TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM:
PORTRAYING THE MEDIATOR-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP

The internal medium, as Gebauer and Wulf suggest, presents “the subjective view of the mediator” (236) regarding the mediator-object relationship. As such it would necessarily focus on the mediator’s experience of the object in relationship, as the diagram of the Rollean internal medium illustrates:



As the diagram makes clear, the internal medium is not the relationship itself—the subject has no direct access to the mediator’s experiences—but the mediator’s *portrayal* of the relationship.

Much of Richard Rolle’s affective writing in *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris* as well as the stylistic choices he makes relate to this depiction. Rolle seeks to portray the qualities of the relationship itself (e.g., “what it is like, to the extent it can be communicated, to be in the divine relationship I espouse and enjoy”) as part of his donative effort to inspire or intensify the desire of the reading subject for those same relational qualities.

To understand how Rolle goes about this task, I will be adopting an approach informed by several writings of Jean-Luc Marion, supplemented by the critiques and observations of Christina Gschwandtner and Shane Mackinlay among others, as well as several writers from the realm of theopoetics. Although Marion is primarily known within the discipline of phenomenology, I will not be undertaking a phenomenological study of Rolle’s putative mystical

experience, given that we have no immediate access to Rolle's or indeed any mystical author's experiences themselves; what we have are texts. I am in full agreement with Nicholas Watson, who questions the legitimacy of attempting to reconstruct and judge a writer's mystical experiences from textual evidence:

The psychological events which lie behind any work of literature. . . can never be recovered by readers. Even where the nature of these events is important to our understanding of a literary work. . . we can do no more than to indicate the ways in which experience is formalized and deflected by language" (*Authority 2*).

What is available is ultimately the presentation of self and experience in the text, which is affected by a variety of concerns and contexts; and my interest, as in the previous chapter, lies in how that presentation functions as an element of the internal medium in support of Rolle's openly stated donative purpose. An approach based on the theoretical writings noted above will provide a useful framework for examining that presentation. It should also be noted that this approach will not directly involve Jean-Luc Marion's later, specifically phenomenological development of his theory of the saturated phenomenon, but several earlier, more overtly theological writings.¹ This is appropriate to Rolle's own theological-experiential emphasis; when he calls himself a theologian in *Melos* it is in relation to describing his experience of heavenly song (*canor*): "For you I define this symbol to the extent that 'theologian' applies to my duty" (*Vobis quantum parti mee pertinet theologum cathégorizo simbolum*, 144.5-6). Rolle's theological writing is of a particular sort, perhaps best described by turning to Scott Holland's definition of theopoetics:

Good theology is a kind of transgression, a kind of excess, a kind of gift. It is not a smooth systematics, a dogmatics, or a metaphysics; as a theopoetics it is a kind of writing. It is a kind of writing that invites more writing. Its narratives lead to

¹ These writings have phenomenological content as well, but their focus is more openly theological in nature. As will be noted below, I also feel these earlier writings avoid the excessive delineation of phenomena and the passivity of the subject for which Marion's later work has been criticized.

other narratives, its metaphors encourage new metaphors, its confessions invoke more confessions, and its conversations invite more conversations. (327)

Holland's words suggest the connection between the language of excess and transgression and the enticement to mimetic behavior. Mystical language tends to be theopoetic in nature insofar as it involves the evocation of experience and experientially-derived suggestions of meaning rather than statements or defenses of traditionally-derived doctrines.² Rolle as theologian acts in such a manner, seeking to fulfill his donative intent by speaking indirectly of God the (non)object through speaking directly of the overwhelming and displacing experiential content of his relationship with the divine.³

Openness and the Saturating Phenomenon

In "Nothing is Impossible for God" (1989, tr. 2017), Jean-Luc Marion initially considers the miracle as a phenomenological possibility, defining the miracle as "the possibility of what was formerly and certainly impossible, hence the real possibility—the possibility of the impossible" (88).⁴ It thus reveals the limits the subject imposes by being the exception to those limits: "In short the possible that has effectively come to pass has at least once gone beyond the possibility anticipated by me, by adding to it a part of what I held to be impossible" (89). This leads him to a consideration of the role of faith:

We have acknowledged from daily experience that the miracle puts a kind of faith into play; first of the faith of leaving even the tiniest possibility open when impossibility seems guaranteed; then, and above all, the faith of allowing that the real happening [*l'effectivité*]⁴—which at times overwhelms the impossibility that

² This will also be apparent in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*.

³ As Anthony Steinbock says of mystical writers' authority, it is "given *in and through* the experiences, and not from a commitment to a philosophical theory or by theorizing about the nature of God" (28). While theopoetics is a modern approach to theology, overtly mystical writings of any era have notable parallels with Holland's definition.

⁴ Marion's discussion revolves around the common phrase "It's a miracle." Marion says that within a general worldview excluding such occurrences, "What I call a miracle refers not to its effective occurrence but rather to the possibility within it of the very thing I know certainly to be impossible" (88). Therefore, the miracle "does not inevitably abolish any boundary between the possible and impossible. It proves only that one time at least the boundary that I had set up between them has been shown to be false by the event" (89).

so far was thought to be guaranteed—well and truly shows a miraculous surplus of possibility. (92)

This “kind of faith” is thus revealed as a form of hermeneutic openness allowing for the hypothetical discernment of that which would otherwise be excluded by the limits of possibility. Richard Kearney makes a similar point in relation to what he calls the “anatheistic wager” that opens one to the possibility of “the encounter with a radical Stranger who we choose, or don’t choose, to call God”:

For without the suspension of received assumptions we cannot be open to the birth of the new. Without the abandonment of accredited certainties we remain inattentive to the advent of the strange; we ignore those moments of sacred enfleshment when the future erupts through the continuum of time. (7)

An unwillingness to be open to that which exists outside of received assumptions and certainties leads, Kearney suggests, to inattentiveness to the potential occurrence of “the strange.” For Marion faith is similarly a bracketing out of such received commonplaces and assumptions as absolutes limiting experience in an *a priori* manner. Notice that in the above definition this faith exists prior to the impossible event through its leaving open the possibility, as well as in its *aposteriori* recognition of “miraculous surplus.”⁵

Marion subsequently considers the miracle as a form of revelation, which leads him to a discussion of the meaning of Christ’s miracles. He states that “far from ending in the wonder they provoke, these always point back as ‘signs’ (symptoms) to the God of all power and all possibility, and they explode once and for all in the resurrection of Christ,” which Marion calls the “paradigm of any miracle” (97), a paradox “challenging the limits” of the horizon in which it

⁵ To use a banal example, this hermeneutic openness would be illustrated by the response “It’s a miracle!” in contrast to the response “That can’t be!” The latter could reflect what Marion calls “the censoring of events. . . and the banning on principle of the possibility of ‘impossible’ events” (90)—that is, those that reveal by transgression my demarcation of the limit of possibility. Faith, it should be stressed, is not in this usage the affirmation of certain doctrines or beliefs, but rather an attitude of openness without reductive pre-limitations.

appears.⁶ In relation to this he asks, “How then can a phenomenon that challenges any horizon appear in the horizon of the world? By saturating it” (99). Marion goes on to describe what he calls a *saturating phenomenon*, in which “intuitive givenness infinitely surpasses what our intentional gaze can hope of significations and of essences, as well as what our intuition can bear of fulfillment” (99).⁷ The phenomenon is distinguished by the effect on the horizon in which it is experienced, saturating that horizon by its excess.⁸ He says of the resurrection, for example, that “as saturating phenomenon, [it] can only be detected by the interference of its horizon, like the luminous rays that, by being reflected in the frame of a mirror, interfere with and hinder each other or, in contrast, gather their lights in an unbearable bedazzlement”; its excesses “saturate not only the capability of any human gaze, but first of all the opening of any possible mundane horizon” (99). Shane Mackinlay further elucidates Marion’s claim, stating that “for a phenomenon to be revelatory of God *as God*, it must allow transcendence to appear without being limited to a finite horizon or reduced to concepts that are imposed by a subject” (218).⁹

The result of this exceeding of the horizon is to displace the constituting “I” that “receives givenness” and “ensures its constitutive synthesis.” In contrast, “The resurrection as a

⁶ In later works he will expand this notion in a less overtly theological direction in delineating his phenomenon of Revelation, “the ultimate variation on saturation. . . the paradox to the second degree and par excellence, which encompasses all types of paradox” (*Being Given* 235).

⁷ “Intuition is what is given to consciousness by the phenomenon; intention is what consciousness imposes upon the phenomenon” (Gschwandtner, *Postmodern* 112).

⁸ *Saturating* is a term interestingly distinct from, and for my purposes preferable to, Marion’s later choice of *saturated* phenomenon, as the former is more suggestive of this effect on the horizon. Marion develops this theory of the saturated phenomenon in a 1992 article translated as “The Saturated Phenomenon.” See Gschwandtner’s discussion of the theory’s development in *Degrees*, where she notes of the 1992 article, “This early articulation of the saturated phenomenon, which Marion later heavily qualifies, is hence primarily in religious terms” (6).

⁹ Raimon Panikkar likewise suggests, “God is unique, hence incomparable, and the same is true of every experience of Him. There is no prior space, both the neutral and common, that would permit us to establish comparisons” (11). As such statements indicate, revelatory phenomena need not be thought of as limited to the uniqueness of Marion’s resurrection example but would include all potential phenomena revealing the divine. In relation to Rolle’s, or any mystic’s, experience of the divine, it is useful to quote Marion (referencing Husserl): “All the lived experiences of consciousness, even those that make no claim to objectivity. . . appear as phenomena by full right, precisely because they appear insofar as they are given” (“Nothing is Impossible” 96).

phenomenon constituting its interlocutor as stunned [*interloqué*] and not as a phenomenon constituted by an *I*. . . indicates the position of the *I* that has become a *me* [*moi*]: responding to a givenness rather than objectifying it” (100).¹⁰ Marion adds, however, “in order nevertheless to receive it, the *I* must allow itself to be constituted, “revealed,” and stunned [*interloqué*] by this paradoxical phenomenon. Faith in the resurrection. . . gives itself, by converting itself from the *I* to the *me*, to givenness come from outside the world” (100-101).

Notice the hermeneutic aspect of the preceding statement in keeping with the earlier openness to the possibility of the impossible. Marion says something similar in a chapter concerning Pseudo-Dionysius from another early work, *The Idol and Distance* (1977), dealing with participation in Goodness and the distance of God:

The scope of participation therefore absolutely does not depend on the greater or lesser liberality of God, who, in distance, unreservedly gives himself imperceptibly to participation. The traverse through distance is measured solely according to the measure of welcome that each participant can or cannot offer. (158)

Here the divine gift is only limited by the human openness to it: “[the participant] gives himself every excess simply in welcoming it” (159).¹¹ Marion has often been criticized for inconsistency in his development of the theory of the saturated phenomenon, as he seems to suggest a hermeneutic aspect to the recognition of saturated phenomenon as saturated while denying this in his definitions, which make the self (*adonné*) entirely passive in the face of the phenomenon.¹²

¹⁰ Steinbock similarly says of what he calls vertical givenness, “Modes of givenness are ‘vertical’ in the sense that they take us *beyond* ourselves. These modes of vertical givenness are testimony to the radical presence of “absolutes” *within* the field of experience” (15). To reiterate, this displacement would also not be unique to Marion’s resurrection example but would be true of all horizon-saturating phenomena, as his subsequent development of the theory indicates.

¹¹ Ann Astell notes Bernard of Clairvaux’s similar view: “Paradoxically, for Bernard the way down is the way up. The rapturous fulfillment of the soul’s *desiderum*—which comes as a grace, as a result of divine initiative—depends on the degree of human longing” (102).

¹² “In many instances (e.g., anamorphoses, idols, icons, the face of the other person), Marion himself describes the appearing of the phenomenon as dependent on the recipient approaching it in the appropriate way (e.g., with reverence for icons, or by envisaging a face rather than objectifying it). In other words, the space needed for these

Shane Mackinlay nevertheless cites *The Idol and Distance* as one of the few works in which “Marion acknowledges the crucial contribution to faith of receptive openness and love, precisely in this role of making it possible for Revelation to appear” (211).¹³ Seemingly for Marion at this stage, and certainly for others such as Mackinlay who have, I believe correctly, criticized this claim of passivity in Marion’s later work, the hermeneutic of faith is necessary for the reception of revelatory phenomena as revelatory. It enables this reception by its openness to the impossible possibility and its recognition of the divinely revelatory aspect of the saturating phenomenon itself.¹⁴

Christina Gschwandtner, who like Shane Mackinlay critiques Marion’s typical discounting of the role of hermeneutics, says of the notion of a hermeneutic horizon, “It is not a limit placed on the given phenomenon, but an openness to it, a willingness to hear and encounter it on its own terms, but also against the horizon of previous experience and understanding” (145). Thus, as with the “kind of faith” Marion spoke of in “Nothing is Impossible for God,” experiential context and the openness and willingness of the subject form the initial horizon, Gschwandtner stresses, that the phenomenon saturates:

The manner in which a particularly “saturated” phenomenon crosses and unsettles the horizon may still bedazzle and stun precisely because previous experience has taught the recipient that this phenomenon is extraordinary and does not fit into the usual categories. At the same time, a hermeneutic circling back and forth between the phenomenon as it gives itself and the ways in which it impacts the recipient’s consciousness and shifts the horizons of understanding, enables to

phenomena to appear (as themselves) is only opened by an active and interpretive reception. Such an active reception is not compatible with the passivity of Marion’s *adonné*, nor with his claims that phenomena give themselves solely on the basis of themselves” (Mackinlay 217-218).

¹³Mackinlay references a portion of the passage I have quoted above from *Idol*, and I credit him for drawing my attention to this passage.

¹⁴ The gift Marion speaks of in *The Idol and Distance* is offered in a progressive series of interactions according to Marion’s quotation of Dionysius, who states, “the Good at first deals out the light in moderate amounts and then, as the wish and the longing for the light begins to grow, it gives more and more of itself shining ever more abundantly on them because they loved much.” Thus there is a circularity to the human-divine interaction that “keeps pushing [the former] ever forward (*ανατείνειν*) according to their analogical capacities of advancement” (*Divine Names* IV, 5, 700-701a, qtd. In Marion, *Idol* 159).

discern the level of saturation of the phenomenon and hence makes possible phenomenological depiction of a plurality and great diversity of experiences, distinguishing between their many types and degrees of saturation. (145)

An initial horizon open to the possibility of the impossible and capable of accepting the appearance of the phenomenon that gives in excess may then be saturated. As a result, it may be further opened to discern the phenomenon at greater depth, leading to desire for, and potential reception of, phenomena of increasing divine abundance; as Karmen MacKendrick notes, “To seek the mystery, then, must be not only to wonder, but to continue to seek to wonder, to seek to continue to wonder” (54).¹⁵ The above indicates it is an initial experience of wonder that inspires and to some degree enables both this desire to continue in wonder and the increased receptivity to potential fulfillment of this desire.

Openness, Displacement, and the Rollean Transcendent Internal Medium

How does this relate to the overall donative purpose of the Rollean internal medium? The answer lies in the concluding words of the prologue to *Incendium*: “Accordingly, because I am rousing everyone here to love, and because I will try to show the superheated and supernatural feeling of love to everyone, the title *The Fire of Love* is selected for this book.” (*Fire* 95).¹⁶ Rolle’s intention in portraying his relationship with the divine (non)object is to bring the subject to desire a similar relationship with the divine, so that Rolle might say of the subject as “lover of the Godhead” (*dilector siquidem deitatis*), “Uninterruptedly, when Christ wishes it (not through his own merit), he will receive within himself the song sent into him from the heavens,” for that song is “angelic delightfulness” (*Fire* 211).¹⁷ In the internal medium Rolle

¹⁵ Richard Kearney similarly refers to “the indispensable significance of a moment of dispossessive bewilderment if one is to become attuned to the acoustics of the Other” (7), a statement implying the value of the experience of displacement to such increased attunement.

¹⁶ *Proinde quia hic uniuersos excito ad amorem, amorisque superferuidum ac supernaturalem affectum utrumque ostendere conabor, iscius libri titulus incendium amoris sorciatur. (Incendium 147.29-32)*

¹⁷ *Continuo cum uoluerit Christus, non suo merito, sonum accipiet in se ex supernis immissum (Incendium 236.36-237.1); Est enim angelica suauitas. . . (Incendium 237.4)*

attempts in part to fulfill his donative purpose through portraying his own experience, showing “the superheated and supernatural feeling of love to everyone” in its initial overwhelming givenness and its saturating and therefore shifting effect on his own horizon. Rolle also intentionally makes an effort to guide the subject reading the internal medium of *Incendium* and *Melos* through a performative identification with the desires of the mediator-in-relationship. This at some level displaces the subject as constituting “I,” as well as encouraging an initial horizon of welcome open to any potential experience of greater givenness the subject themselves may thus be led to desire and enabled to discern.¹⁸ As Steinbock says regarding the Sufi mystical writer Rūzbihān Baqlī, “In the realm of vertical experiencing, what is required is the power *to evoke* the lived *experience* in such a way that it opens us to a possible experiencing and ‘seeing’ in a ‘like’ *manner*” (98); Rolle undertakes a similarly evocative strategy, with a similar intention, in his portrayal of the mediator-object relationship.

PORTRAYING THE RELATIONSHIP

This strategy is apparent in the arresting opening words of the preface to *Incendium*:

I was more amazed than I can say when I felt my heart in fact first begin to grow hot, and truly, not imaginatively, boiling as if with sensible fire. I was truly astonished by the way the heat boiled in my soul and by the strange comfort, on account of this inexperience of abundance; I very often struck my chest, as if by chance this heat was somehow from an outward cause.¹⁹

This passage introduces the main focus of both *Incendium* and *Melos*: expounding the affective gifts of divine love Rolle has experienced. They are *fervor*, *dulcor*, and *canor*, the experiences

¹⁸ I am not suggesting that Rolle’s writings are in some sense themselves saturating phenomena equivalent to the personal experiences Rolle will describe, but that Rolle’s stylistic techniques have a potentially overwhelming and displacing effect on the reader. See the discussion below.

¹⁹ *Admirabar magis quam enuncio quando siquidem sentiui cor meum primitus incallescere, et uere non imaginarie, quasi sensibile igne estuare. Eram equidem attonitus quemadmodum eruperat ardor in animo, et de insolito solacio propter inexperientiam huius abundancie: sepius pectus meum si forte esset feruor ex aliqua exteriori causa palpitauit* (145.1-7). The *Incendium* translations in the close readings of this chapter will be my own.

of spiritual heat, sweetness, and song.²⁰ Watson states that this typical order of occurrence is “to be understood as an ascending scale” (*Authority* 66), although it would be wrong to see it as a hierarchy entailing the exclusion of the prior gifts. They are interpenetrating experiences, and ultimately “what is most important for understanding his sensate mysticism is to see the three graces as interactive and reciprocal manifestations of divine love” (McGinn, *Varieties* 360).²¹ It is also important to stress that Rolle’s portrayal of the experience of these gifts has a holistic quality unusual in the medieval era, as McGinn notes:

Rolle does not make a distinction between our usual “outer” physical senses and a second set of “inner” spiritual senses attuned to God in the traditional manner that goes back to Origen. Rather, for Rolle, there is only a single human sensorium, the integral source of touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, and hearing, indeed, of all perceiving and loving. (*Varieties* 356-357)

This holistic sensing will be repeatedly invoked in Rolle’s descriptions in ways that serve to emphasize the displacing aspects of Richard’s experience of *fervor* and *canor*. These gifts have been discussed at length in the critical literature on Rolle, as have the descriptions of Rolle’s reception of them. I will therefore not attempt what would be a duplication of this literature but will instead focus on Rolle’s language in this passage through the lens of saturating phenomena described above.²²

²⁰ As the focus of this study is not on these gifts, but on a close reading of the strategies Rolle employs in portraying his reception of them and how this relates to his internal medium and its underlying donative purpose, they will be only briefly introduced.

²¹ William Pollard cautions, “While it is tempting to see the three as linear – heat leading to a sweetness culminating in song – the elements of the triad frequently overlap,” and they interact in a rather synaesthetic manner: “The normal attributes of one sensation often describe another, or the substantive form of one or two elements turns modifier to describe the second or third” (90). Nor, Pollard stresses, should they be paralleled with the typical purgation-illumination-union triad of spiritual development, or Rolle’s own three degrees of love (90).

²² When examining the experiential passages I will distinguish between Rolle as mediator/writer and as portrayed in the event by using “Richard” for the latter; this is not meant to imply that Rolle is disingenuous when portraying himself as the experiencing subject—a consideration outside my area of interest noted above, and pure conjecture anyway—but is merely to avoid confusion and to recognize that these are portrayals of events.

In the passage above Rolle opens a text in which he will present the gifts of divine love he has experienced with a striking portrayal of one of those experiences. Watson calls this move “audacious,” saying, “It does not even glance towards an obvious alternative strategy for opening the work: to expound biblical texts concerned with *fervor* and *dulcor*, introducing his experience by way of an example.” Instead, Rolle’s “only interest at this stage seems to be in convincing the reader that *fervor* exists and that he himself knows about it” (*Authority* 116).

This is certainly true; and in the sentences commencing his *Incendium* preface, Rolle’s style is just as audacious in its abrupt and immediate description of emotion and first-person address, which emphasize that it is the one who has experienced it who is now writing. The opening clause immediately establishes the emphases of the portrayal, with the imperfect passive “was amazed” (*admirabar*) expressing the ongoing nature of Richard’s astonishment, accentuated by the comparative indicating that the magnitude of this amazement exceeds Rolle’s capacity to put into language (*magis quam enuncio*). Richard’s initial misconstruing of this heat—striking his chest, wondering if there is an outward cause to what seems to be physically sensible fire (*sensibile igne*)—highlights its unprecedented character and defiance of easy categorization, epitomizing the saturating phenomenon’s exclusion of the “opening of any possible mundane horizon” (Marion, “Nothing is Impossible” 99). Multiple phrases underscore Richard’s passive position. His soul, for example, plays no active role but merely provides the space in which heat boils of its own accord (*eruperat ardor in animo*). Christopher Roman says of Rolle’s use of *quasi*, “as if,” within this passage, “Even in this sentence Rolle begins to contemplate the space between certainty and understanding divine mystery. . . as Rolle elides his experience so that by the end of the paragraph he writes, ‘it set my soul aglow as if a real fire was burning there’” (63). Rolle is able to maintain the uncertainty of a phenomena exceeding

constitution, and as Roman asserts, via *quasi* “to emphasize that his fire-heart contains an overflowing of meaning” (63).²³ Rolle’s word choices thus emphasize the horizon-saturating aspects of Richard’s reception of *fervor*.

Rolle’s grammar and vocabulary have an integral share in these aspects of the portrayal. Verbs are modified to emphasize their intensity: in addition to *admirabar magis, equidem attonitus* (“truly astonished”) gives an emphatic quality to Richard’s astonishment. Rolle uses “strange” (*insolito*) and stresses his inexperience (*inexperientiam*) to indicate the unparalleled and therefore unanticipated aspects of what Richard experiences, while “abundance” (*abundantie*) and the verb *eruperat* noted above stress its excessive and uncontrolled qualities.

This portrayal of the experience of spiritual heat is given prominence by its inclusion in the prologue, where it is specifically connected with the title *Incendium Amoris*. Fire-related imagery is relatively common in the Christian mystical tradition, although McGinn observes, “In English mysticism it was Rolle who set the standards for the use of these metaphors by attempting to exploit all the possible expressions they afforded” (*Varieties* 81-82). Rolle claims no separate experience of *dulcor*, which is instead presented in these narratives as being felt in connection with or resulting from the other forms of experienced gifts.²⁴ There is, however, a distinctiveness to *canor* that is exemplified by what Zieman calls the “experiential differences” that mark it as unique, and that play a role in its portrayal:

²³ While various critics deal with Rolle’s description of his reception of *canor*, Roman is unusual in considering the language of the reception of *fervor*. Roman’s approach uses “Heidegger’s definition of phenomenology to interrogate Rolle’s mystical experience” (61), and he appears to interpret Rolle the writer’s indefinite language as revealing a continuing attempt to understand his own experience: “On the one hand, he is attempting a first-hand narrative; on the other hand, he wants to know what it means—it significance” (63). My own view and approach is that Rolle’s intention as author is less personal and more directly donative: he wants to portray his divine relationship via its excessive and I-me displacing qualities that (as will be seen) have played a role in his own discernment of these gifts’ revelatory nature and divine source. The indeterminacy and displacement communicated by his language would thus be more related to his donative intention than to a continuing personal struggle with the meaning and significance of the experience itself, although this would not by definition exclude the latter.

²⁴ See Riehle, *Secret* 94.

Although Rolle perceives all three as species of divine visitation originating outside the body, *fervor* and *dulcor* are nonetheless experienced as relatively self-contained, internal stimuli. *Canor*, by contrast, is modelled on the experience of mediated divinity in the form of angelic choir and necessarily entails a relationship to that mediating presence. (“Perils” 139)

It is *canor* that Rolle portrays as hearing and participating in the very worship of heaven, and thus, as Zieman suggests, with a greater sense of active relationship.²⁵

While *canor* is more the focus of *Melos* than *Incendium*, it is in the latter that Rolle portrays the reception of this gift using similar techniques to those he employed portraying Richard’s experience of *fervor*:

Likewise, while I was, in fact, sitting in chapel and was singing the psalms in the evening before the meal as I was able, I heard ringing like instruments or rather singing above me. However, at the time I was straining toward these heavenly things, praying with my whole desire, soon—I am ignorant in what way—I felt a melodious singing in me and received a most delectable harmony from heaven that stayed in my mind.²⁶

Here Rolle depicts the unanticipated and startling nature of what Richard experiences, admitting that the gifts (*dona*) he has received are beyond his capability to understand, suggesting them to be out of his realm of expectation.²⁷ His use of “or rather” (*uel potius*), for example, is interesting in that he could have given a more straightforward depiction of the phenomenon, but instead chooses to create a sense of indeterminacy. This further emphasizes Richard’s initial confusion as to the type or source of the sound he is hearing, as if the sound in some sense exceeds any mundane comparison or commonplace analogy. Rolle’s use of “ringing” (*tinnitum*)

²⁵ For this reason, although “the relative importance of Rolle’s three contemplative sensations differs among the texts of his oeuvre,” nevertheless Zieman rightly asserts, “it is clear that *canor* holds a special place regardless of whether it is conceptually subordinated to the others” (“Perils” 138).

²⁶ *Dum enim in eadem capella sederem, et in nocte ante cenam psalmos prout potui decantarem, quasi tinnitum psallencium uel potius canencium supra me ascultavi. Cumque celestibus eciam orando toto desiderio intenderem, nescio quomodo mox in me concentum canorum sensi, et delectabilissimam armoniam celicus excepi, mecum manentem in mente.* (189.19-25). Passages from *Incendium* in the close readings will be my own translations.

²⁷ Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, the opening of his hermeneutic horizon following the reception of *fervor* will allow him to recognize *canor*’s transcendent source more readily.

communicates something similar, suggesting what Andrew Albin calls Richard's "process of coming-to-awareness of acoustic difference" ("Listening" 181): what Richard now hears is not the singing of words but an extra-lingual sound without meaningful verbal content.²⁸ Rolle may be suggesting the ineffability of Richard's mystical experience through this absence: such saturating phenomena problematize both easy categorization and interpretation. The earthly religious community's worship is portrayed as overwhelmed by that of the heavenly community, "one earthly, uninspired, and spoken, the other heavenly, transcendent, and profoundly musical" (Albin, "Listening" 181).²⁹ The use of *supra me* has received critical attention for its suggestion that the sound proceeds from above Richard.³⁰ But in another sense the general movement of the episode is portrayed as *supra me*, as Richard's experience is transformed by the horizon saturating and subject displacing qualities of the event. Thus, even as the transcendent music supplants the earthly, so Rolle indicates Richard's confusion as to the mode and occurrence of the experience (*nescio quomodo mox*), as the saturation of his horizon by the unexpected blots out more mundane forms of awareness. In another sense, the experience is portrayed as *supra me* by the use of passive constructions emphasizing that Richard is not governing the situation. He is able to responsively desire and strain toward this phenomenon (suggesting the further opening of his hermeneutic horizon, to be discussed below), but is unable to control it in any constitutive sense by defining or structuring what is occurring according to familiar models.

²⁸ Zieman says of this, "The choral presence thus mediates a particular experience of the sacred that initiates conversion by means other than the grammatical content of its song" ("Perils" 140).

²⁹ Albin suggests in this regard that *decantarem* has a pejorative note relating to the superiority of heavenly worship: "He disdains the night psalms he formerly chanted with his fellow religious when he uses the word 'decantarem' to describe their continued activity, a verb indicating chant as a kind of habitual or rote recitation, a reeling off" ("Listening" 181).

³⁰ This implies it to be, as Riehle puts it, "of supernatural character" (*Secret* 94), at least according to medieval cosmological standards.

When examined closely, these presentations of Richard's initial experiences of the gifts of divine heat and song are revealed as carefully modelled constructions. They are intended to both portray the experiences as encounters with saturating phenomena and depict the inversion of Richard's horizon and the "I-me" displacement resulting from these encounters. The language of Rolle's descriptions underscores that the heat Richard feels is unprecedented, beyond categorization and even ready description; that the sound of heavenly music overwhelms its earthly counterpart and other aspects of his horizon; and that both phenomena leave Richard confused and seized by wonder over the occurrence of things that had not occurred to him as possibilities, reducing him from constituting subject to stunned respondent.³¹

In Rolle's internal medium these elements allow him to indirectly represent the presence of the divine (non)object within the mediator-object relationship by emphasizing qualities of phenomenological excess indicative of a source exceeding human experience of givenness. His approach here and throughout his presentation of Richard's experience of the gifts exemplifies in this sense what Raimon Panikkar says of "discourse about God": that it "is radically different from every other discourse on whatever 'object,' because God is not an object" (113). The excessive qualities noted above mark the object-pole of Richard's relationship as the divine (non)object exceeding human capacity for understanding. They simultaneously depict that divine source as generously giving in an excessive manner. Because both the relationship and the divine giver are portrayed as abundant beyond human limitation and control, the relationship itself is also suggested to be nonexclusive. The mediator is depicted as incapable of possessing

³¹ Rolle's depiction communicates the "experience of contingency" that Panikkar describes as integral to experiences of the divine: that it is "in the recognition of tangentiality, when we touch our own limits, that our consciousness opens and we perceive a 'beyond,' 'something' that escapes our own limits, that transcends every limitation" (22). It is in experiencing such displacement that Richard, according to Rolle's portrayal, comes to recognize the activity of the divine.

the (non)object, and thus there is no possibility of mimetic rivalry between mediator and subject; there is, in a sense enough of God's gifting for all. For that reason, the mimetic triangle forms the basis for community, a succession of transcendent triangles as the gift of the relationship is given—unmerited and gratuitously, Rolle emphasizes—to those whom Christ wills.

Relatedly, by focusing on the saturating of Richard's own horizon via his startled and confused reactions, Rolle consistently represents the mediatorial role as contingent on divine gifting. This implies that others may be similarly gifted if Christ wills it, becoming further mediators in the mimetic chain. Rolle, in keeping with his general favoring of affectivity, also portrays the superiority of loving (rather than intellectual) knowledge: experiences may exceed understanding and prove ineffable, but their basis lies in divine love. Therefore, love may respond appropriately, however much the intellect may remain uncomprehending.³² Richard's experiences correspond to Girard's "good revelation" (see chapter one), worthy to be desired by all who wish to know the experience of divine excess. Rolle describes Richard's enthusiastic responses in a passage emphasizing the intensity of the love (and its gifts) to which he responds:

At the time I had come to know the fire of love which only boiled over from within, which was a gift of the Creator and was not from the flesh and the concupiscence in which I continued, I dissolved, rejoicing in a feeling belonging to a more abundant love, and especially because of the influence of the most pleasant delight and inner sweetness which soaked my mind to the inmost part with the spiritual heat itself.³³

³² As Zieman says of *canor*, "affectivity in his case is associated with the anti-intellectual and the extragrammatical: he explicitly opposes *canor* to book-learning, describing its effects as things 'that [he] never found in any way of the writings of the *doctores* nor heard expressed'" ("Perils" 144).

³³ *Cumque cognovissem quod ex interiori solummodo efferbuisset, et non esset a carne illud incendium amoris, et concupiscencia, in qua continui, quod donum esset Conditoris, letabundus liquefactus sum in affectum amplioris dileccionis, et precipue propter influenciam delectacionis suauissimae et suavitatis interne que cum ipso caumate spirituali mentem meam medullitus irroravit.* (*Incendium* 145.10-16)

Rolle's attractive portrayal not only makes such an experience, and the relationship it characterizes, appear attractive; it also makes the experience appear a possibility for the reading subject as well, thus helping to fulfill the internal medium's donative intention.³⁴

Nevertheless, Rolle's use of "had come to know" (*cognouisse*) suggests an important qualification in relation to the internal medium's mediator-object depiction and its message to the reading subject. While Rolle stresses the displacing aspects of Richard's experience in these passages, he doesn't imply that a hermeneutic role is lacking for the one who experienced them. Therefore it is helpful to approach what he has to say in relation to the hermeneutic openness Jean-Luc Marion describes as a "kind of faith" allowing for the recognition of that which exceeds the limits of the possible, both as the impossible possibility and as "miraculous surplus" in the excess of the hypothetical event itself. Rolle's own experience as portrayed in *Incendium* and *Melos* exhibits both aspects of this hermeneutic stance and depicts it as a developing rather than a static openness requiring both preparatory and ongoing commitment. This depiction is an integral part of the internal medium's presentation of the mediator-(non)object relationship as well as its guidance for the desiring subject.

This portrayal is centered on the fifteenth chapter of *Incendium*, in which Rolle gives a timeline of his reception of the gifts of *fervor*, *dulcor*, and *canor*. Rolle, who has spent the previous two chapters enumerating the spiritual superiority of the solitary life, describes how the Spirit inspired him to undertake this life "according to the small capacity of my infirmity" (Fire 146).³⁵ This leads to the initial segment of his timeline:

³⁴ This is not to deny what Gillespie notes: "Yet Rolle emphasizes throughout his description that the experience of *canor* is not likely to be achieved by many would-be contemplatives and that the majority will find the earlier disciplines too daunting or extremely lengthy" ("Mystic's Foot" 216). As will be seen, the disciplines needed to open the eye of the heart are not portrayed as easy.

³⁵ *pro modulo infirmitatis* (187.23)

For from the beginning of my alteration of life and spirit [*mentis*], up to the opening of the door of heaven (allowing the eye of my heart to contemplate heavenly beings with their beauty revealed, to see by which road it might seek its Beloved and to sigh continually for Him), there flowed past three years, except for three or four months. Almost one year passed with the door remaining opened, until the time in which the heat of eternal love was felt in reality in my heart. (*Fire* 147)³⁶

He has previously noted “the grace of the Creator poured forth” (*Fire* 146)³⁷ in his initial choice of the eremitic life. Here Rolle indicates a further stage which he describes as “the opening of the door of heaven,” an expansion of the vision of the heart’s “eye” allowing a greater capability to discern transcendent things.

Nicholas Watson treats this aspect of Rolle’s experiences as relatively peripheral: it “is notable as a sign of blessings to come, but it is otherwise of obscure significance.” For Watson this is an apparently “temporary state” which he suggests “is made insignificant by the experiences that succeed it” (*Authority* 67). But there is no reason to assume it to be temporary, or superseded by subsequent experiences, however compelling their portrayal. It seems, in fact, to form their comparatively unremarkable yet necessary ongoing basis. Rolle mentions this opening prior to the reception of *fervor*, but his description of the one-year period that the door remained open “until the time” (*usque ad tempus*) of that gift doesn’t mean the door then shut; the implication is rather that it provided the means by which *fervor* was bestowed, and by extension *canor* as well.

Louise Nelstrop, who feels the eye of the heart imagery in Rolle represents something more integral than does Watson, posits the influence of Richard of St. Victor’s understanding

³⁶ *Ab inicio namque alteracionis uite mee et mentis usque ad apercionem hoscii celestis, ut reuelata facie oculus cordis superos contemplaretur, et uideret qua uia amatum suum quereret, et ad ipsum iugiter anhelaret, effluerunt tres anni, exceptis tribus uel quattuor mensibus. Manente siquidem hoscio aperto usque ad tempus in quo in corde realiter senciebatur calor eterni amoris, annus unus pene transiuit.* (188.24-189.6)

³⁷ *affuit gracia Conditoris (Incendium 187.13)*

“that the opening or illumination of this eye is the raising up of the intellect, through which intellect and will are ultimately united in a love which transcends them both” (294). For Richard of St. Victor this transcendent love is an ongoing and essential aspect of the spiritual life.³⁸

Nelstrop claims “Rolle’s use of this image is notably similar,” and cites in this regard Rolle’s words at the conclusion of *Incendium* chapter 19:

When, therefore, a man perfectly turned to Christ has despised all transitory things and has fixed himself as immovably in the single desire of the Creator as is permitted to mortals on account of the corruption of the flesh, then, without a doubt, exercising his spiritual powers in manly fashion first he will see with his intellectual eye, as if by means of an opened door, the heavenly citizens. Afterward he will experience the most delightful warmth, as if it were a burning fire. Thereupon he will be imbued with wondrous delight and then he will glory in jubilant song. This, therefore, is perfect love, which no one knows unless he receives it. And he who receives it never loses it, lives sweetly, and will die securely. (*Fire* 165)³⁹

This passage implies the seeing eye, with its vision into heaven, is an ongoing state in relation to the additional gifts it enables.⁴⁰ Rolle himself gives every indication that this heavenly vision of the eye of the heart as both a “raising up of the intellect” and an ongoing loving orientation remains a central aspect of the spiritual life.⁴¹

³⁸ Pollard, who also considers the “gaze of the heart” important to Rolle, similarly notes his affinity for Richard of St. Victor, in whose “simultaneously affirmative (cataphatic) and negative (apophatic) theology, ‘the eye of the heart’ is a central and controlling image” (92).

³⁹ *Cum ergo homo ad Christum perfecte conuersus, cuncta transitoria despexerit, et se in solo. Conditoris desiderio immobiliter, ut mortalibus pro corrupcione carnis permittitur, fixerit: tunc nimirum uires uiriliter exercens, primo quasi aperto celo supernos ciues oculo intellectuali conspicit, et postea calorem suauissimum, quasi ignem ardentem sentit. Deinde mira suauitate imbuitur, et deinceps in canore iubilo gloriatur. Hec est ergo perfecta caritas, quam nemo nouit nisi qui accipit, et qui accipit nunquam amittit, dulciter uiuit, secure morietur.* (202.27-36)

⁴⁰ Nelstrop notes in relation to this a further passage from Rolle’s commentary on the Apocalypse identifying the open door with contemplation, “Which no one is able to close, that is, to remove you from that contemplation, because even if the world rages, the devil frowns, and the flesh groans, they are not able to carry you away from the sweetness and the exercise of the contemplative life. . .” (297, translating *Apocalipsis Ihesu Christi* 148.39-15.4; latter portion reproduced here). Nelstrop says in regard to this, “Rolle argues that once the heavenly gates have been opened it is impossible for them ever to be closed again” (297).

⁴¹ Bernard McGinn also affirms this view of the eye of the heart in Rolle: “Since the inner eye’s opening precedes the reception of the gifts of heat, sweetness, and song, the gaze of the *oculus cordis* has sometimes been thought to be inferior to them, but Rolle does not say this. What he does say is that looking upon heavenly mysteries with the eye of the heart is necessary for receiving the other gifts sent down into the contemplative. One must ascend in contemplative vision before celestial gifts can descend.” (*Varieties* 359)

From the standpoint of the internal medium and its portrayal of the mediator-object relationship, this opening of the eye of the heart can be seen fulfilling the role of Jean-Luc Marion's hermeneutic "faith." It is the awareness of the divine which serves to open Richard to the possibility of the impossible, and thus to receiving and correctly perceiving the saturating phenomena he experiences. It becomes therefore the initial hermeneutic horizon, what Shane Mackinlay calls (in relation to "faith" in Marion's writings), "an existential commitment that opens a hermeneutic space in which it is first possible for Revelation to appear at all" (218).

It is important to realize in this regard that Rolle's emphasis on the time involved in reaching this initial horizon directly connects it with the spiritual disciplines he has described in the preceding paragraphs. These disciplines include not only the quest for solitude and quiet (188.6), but also "throwing aside things of this [worldly] kind on account of the one,"⁴² giving up his soul in love and devotion for Christ,⁴³ and engaging in prayer.⁴⁴ These are preparatory practices and disciplines for Rolle, but essential to maintaining the hermeneutic space that is the open door of presence to the divine. Given the displacement characterizing the portrayal of Richard's experiences of excess, it is fitting that the value of these preparatory practices also involves displacement, as Rolle's language noted above indicates: they entail Richard leaving behind, casting away, giving up, following transcendent desire. The message of such phrases is that proper reception of experiences resulting in passive (I-me) displacement by the saturating phenomenon requires pre-engagement in intentional long-term practices of active self-displacement. The active displacement of the self from the hermeneutic horizon via these

⁴² *huiusmodi propter unum abiciens* (187.25-26)

⁴³ *animam meum dedi ut in deuocione diligerem Christum* (188.2)

⁴⁴ In his description of the reception of *canor* Rolle also specifically stresses the importance of what is typically called the "Name of Jesus" prayer. See *Fire* 148, and Renevey's survey of the name of Jesus prayer in Rolle in "Name Above All Names."

disciplines opens that horizon to receive and welcome that which exceeds the constituting self, and potentially to be expanded even further by any such resulting experience.

The Circle of Reception and Expansion in the Internal Medium

This process of hermeneutic reception and expansion may readily be seen in the internal medium's portrayal of the mediator-object relationship, and again Rolle's language is central to this portrayal. In the fifteen chapter of *Incendium*, for example, Rolle briefly reiterates his initial experience of heat. But while the details of the event are similar to those in the prologue, he adds important context:

Indeed, I was sitting in a certain chapel and while greatly delighting in the sweetness of the prayer or meditation, suddenly I felt a strange and pleasant heat within myself. But at first doubting from what it was, over a long time I have proven it was not from a creature but the Creator, because I have found it more burning and pleasant.⁴⁵

While the displacing aspect of the experience is suggested through the use of *ardorem insolitum*, indicating the strange and unfamiliar aspect of the burning heat Richard feels, Rolle also emphasizes the hermeneutic factors at work in the incident and its aftermath. On the one hand, this portrayal (unlike that in the prologue examined above) proceeds from the earlier statement that it occurred around one year after the door to the vision of heaven was opened. On the other hand, it elucidates Richard's occupation at the time: delighting in the sweetness (*suauitate*) of prayer or meditation, among the self-displacing practices of hermeneutic openness. Thus the phenomenon of heat is portrayed against the "faith" horizon open to the possibility of the impossible, as is demonstrated by Richard's reaction: he does not reject the experience out of hand, but initially doubts (*dubitando*) its source, which Rolle tells us further experience has

⁴⁵ *Sedebam quippe in quadam capella, et dum suauitate oracionis uel meditacionis multum delectarer, subito sentiui in me ardorem insolitum et iocundum. Sed cum prius dubitando a quo esset, per longum tempus expertus sum non a creatura sed a Creatore esse, quia feruenciolem et iocundiolem inueni.* (189.7-12)

proven to be divine.⁴⁶ Rolle portrays this experiential proof as specifically based on its excessive qualities, indicated by the use of comparative forms. In the hermeneutic horizon Rolle presents, proof of divine origin is determined by the experience of excess that reveals that origin to be “more burning and pleasant” (*feruenciolem et iocundiolem*) than creaturely experiences.⁴⁷

This hermeneutic process is shown effecting receptivity to the experience of a horizon-saturating phenomenon and discernment of its divine attribution via its excess. Rolle also presents the experience and discernment of that phenomenon as capable of opening the horizon to even greater receptivity. This is portrayed in Richard’s reaction to the gift of *canor*, which Rolle tells us was given “nine months and several weeks” after *fervor*. In the passage partially examined earlier, having described the heavenly song Richard hears emanating from above him, Rolle continues:

However, at the time I was straining toward these heavenly things, praying with my whole desire, soon—I am ignorant in what way—I felt a melodious singing in me and took a most delectable harmony from heaven that stayed in my mind.⁴⁸

The first sentence was dealt with earlier in relation to the portrayal of displacement; but here it is important to briefly stress the way his reaction to this new phenomenon is portrayed. Unlike his hesitant reaction to the gift of *fervor*, here Richard, although surprised and confused (as has been seen) by the source and mode of the new song he hears and still very much displaced from the

⁴⁶ Rolle seems to assert his resulting confidence when answering critics in *Incendium* chapter 31, saying that his experience “is not from simulation or by imaginary things, as certain men have interpreted concerning me” (*Fire* 207). *...quia non est ex simulacione aut imaginaries quod feci suscepcionibus* (234.6-7). Others may doubt, but his own doubts have been resolved.

⁴⁷ He reiterates this in a prayer at the conclusion of *Incendium*: “Your true lover, excited in the joyful song of melodious meditation, is so seized that it is impossible that there be such sweetness from the devil, such fervor from anything created, such song from human ingenuity—in which things, if I should persevere, I shall be saved” (*Fire* 264). *Rapitur uerus amator tuus sollicitus in iubilum canori cogitatus, ut impossibile sit talem dulcedinem esse a diabolo, talem feruorem ab aliquo creato, talem canorem ab ingenio humano; in quibus si perseuerauero saluus ero.* (278.17-20)

⁴⁸ *Cumque celestibus eciam orando toto desiderio intenderem, nescio quomodo mox in me concentum canorum sensi, et delectabilissimam armoniam celicus excepi, mecum manentem in mente.* (189.22-26)

position of constituting subject, is nevertheless portrayed responding readily. His responsive desire is independent of the need for constitutive determinations and lengthy discernment, a change reminiscent of a phrase from one of Rolle's *Incendium* prayers: "What You have given me, ignorant of it and not recognizing it, now give to me again as one experienced and begging for it!" (*Fire* 263).⁴⁹ After discerning the validity of *fervor*, his hermeneutic horizon is now open to the excessive sensory-like phenomena of *canor*, however incomprehensible, as a potential form of divine gifting.

The resulting eagerness of Richard's response is stressed by the imperfect verb "was straining" (*intenderem*), a depiction of ongoing concentration intensified by "praying with my whole desire" (*orando toto desiderio*). Rolle's use of *excepi* ("took") to describe Richard capturing heavenly harmony within himself, emphasizes the active nature of Richard's response to his initial feeling (*sensi*) of heavenly harmony. Having previously experienced *fervor*, he now knows to welcome and actively desire the mysterious *canor* phenomenon without the necessity of understanding it.⁵⁰ Rolle's portrayal of the mediator-object relationship not only emphasizes the hermeneutic aspect of Richard's reception of, and response to, the phenomena of *fervor* and *canor* as revelatory, but also stresses the developmental aspect of this horizon. He describes the opening of the eye of the heart, the initial horizon against which the saturating phenomenon of *fervor* appeared and was recognized as such, and the further opening of Richard's horizon as a

⁴⁹ *quod dedisti nescienti et non cognoscenti nunc experto et petenti retribue!* (278.3-4).

⁵⁰ As Albin says of this passage, "After realizing that he is, in fact, listening to a kind of heaven-sent sound that he has never heard before, Rolle feels his being begin to respond and transform: the harmony permanently fixes in his mind, the psalms he performs take on a new character, and he commences a performance of spiritual song that will endure for the rest of his life" ("Listening" 181). I would stress that it is the further opening of Rolle's horizon of possibility against which the saturating phenomenon of *canor* appears that encourages this response, a response that suggests what Panikkar says of the paradoxical combination of constitutive displacement and active response in the experience of the divine: "Roles are exchanged: I am no longer its subject, but I place myself within the experience itself" (24).

result of that experience of excess, allowing him to respond receptively to the experience of *canor*.

This benefits the internal medium's depiction of the mediator-object relationship in several ways. On one level, it communicates to the reading subject the necessity of preparatory (and ongoing) disciplines that open the eye of faith's hermeneutic horizon of receptivity and discernment of saturating phenomena.⁵¹ The saturating phenomena Rolle experiences in the mediator-divine (non)object relationship are presented as gifts; and yet there is also the portrayal of essential activity on the part of the mediator, required for the subject as well if they desire equivalent experiences. The relationship is one of dedication and commitment, not to be taken lightly;⁵² and by implication, any experiences of excess the subject may feel they receive in the absence of such a commitment are likely false and creaturely rather than divine in origin, and should be suspect. At the same time, the portrayal of the hermeneutic aspect of Rolle's relationship encourages the reading subject to be expectant of similar forms of giftedness and open to recognizing them. The beauty of such gifts as portrayed includes not only their excessive character, but their expansive character as well. Those open to these gifts may (like Richard) find the eye of their hearts opened further as a result, capable of receiving further divine blessing.

⁵¹ That Rolle's readers recognized this importance is shown by the *Officium* prepared after his death: "So too this holy hermit, Richard, in chapter one of his first book of *The Fire of Love*, tells to what high and sweet delights he attained by contemplation, so that others may obtain hope of advancing likewise in acts of contemplation and of love for God, if only watchfully, constantly, and perseveringly they persist in those works which are ordained for the attainment of this most desirable state of perfection, and hate and cut off as poison all impediments to contemplation" (Comper 303-04). *ita et istesanctus hermita Ricardus in libro suo primo de incendio amoris capitulo primo narrat ad quam altas et mellifluas dilectiones attigit contemplando. ut alii per hoc spem similiter proficiendi in actibus contemplacionis et amoris dei accipiant. si tamen uigilanter instanter et perseueranter insistant illis occupacionibus. que ad adipiscendum huiusmodi perfeccionem desiderabilissiman ordinantur et impedimenta contemplacionis uelud uenenum abhorreant et abscondant. (Officium 30.5-14)*

⁵² In that regard Rolle openly admits in *Melos* chapter 43, "Ultimately I offer that which is impossible for many." *Postremo hoc profero quod plures non possunt* (134.20).

This ongoing enlargement of experience and receptivity serves to reveal the divine (non)object of the relationship, the limitless giver who, as Jean-Luc Marion puts it, “unreservedly gives himself. . . according to the measure of welcome that each participant can or cannot offer” (*Idol* 158). Relatedly, it also suggests that this relationship, in the excess and expansiveness of its giftedness, is a foretaste of the relational fullness to be enjoyed eternally, Rolle promises, by those who, “taking up the great and glorious song of love sung to Jesus, toward whom they were heading, will rejoice continually.”⁵³ The internal medium embodies Rolle’s donative effort to encourage his reading subject to desire and prepare for the possibility of receiving and joining that song and the relationship it represents. As such, the portrayal of Richard’s experiences as mediator-in-relationship plays an integral role in communicating the saturating and displacing qualities of those experiences. It also serves to elucidate the necessity of a hermeneutic horizon open to receiving such phenomena and subsequently expanded by them to the point of even greater receptivity.

PERFORMING THE RELATIONSHIP

Yet I would contend that in Rolle’s internal medium in *Incendium* and *Melos* the mediator-object relationship is not only portrayed through the depictions discussed above. The reading subject is also invited to a certain level of indirect participation in the mediator-object relationship itself, affectively experiencing aspects of the desire and the I-me displacement characterizing this relationship through the performance of the text.

Late Medieval Devotional Reading

To understand how this is possible, it is important to consider the elements of devotional reading in the late medieval era. Like all reading during the era, devotional reading was

⁵³ ...*gloriosi et grandes canticum charitatis concipientes, concinnando in Iesu in quem se gerebant iugiter iubilabunt.* (*Melos* 89.10-12)

characterized by what Coleman calls “bimodality,” being communal or private, oral or silent. The *Instructions for a devout and literate layman*, for example, advises, “Let there be reading, now by one, now by another, and by your children as soon as they can read. . . . Expound something in the vernacular which may edify your wife and others” (qtd. in Coleman 138).⁵⁴ Christ’s words to Margery Kempe, “dowtyr, I haue oftyn seyde on-to þe þat wheþyr þu preist wyth þi mowth er thynkist wyth thyn hert, wheþyr þu redist er herist redyng, I wil be plesyd with þe” (218.5-8), assure her that he attaches no shame to auditing another’s reading, although whether the phrasing indicates Margery had some reading capability is unclear.⁵⁵ This reference to reading is associated with vocal prayer as well as silent meditation.

Nevertheless, that such devotional reading “was normally done in privacy or within an intimate circle” (Taylor 363), for the literate at least, is suggested by Walter Hilton’s depiction of the practice in *Scale of Perfection II*:

And whan þe soule is þus abled and lyghtned þurgh grace, þan it list for to bene alon summetyme, oute of lettyng or comunyng of al creatures, þat it myght frely assayen his instrument, þat I kalle his reson, in beholdyng of sothfastnes þat is contened in Holy Wrytyng. (43.100-104)

Hilton’s words imply that privacy is the best setting for devotional and meditative reading, and his advice is far from unique; Paul Saenger notes, with the continental writings of Peter of Luxembourg and Ludolf of Saxony as examples, “In the vernacular literature intended for laymen, separation from the group for the purpose of private reading and prayer was emphasized repeatedly” (“Reading” 148). Similarly, the late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth century Middle

⁵⁴ The reference to vernacular suggests that the recipient is literate in Latin, but his wife is not, and may or may not be literate in the vernacular; illiteracy is one reason for communal reading, along with the comparative inaccessibility of texts noted above.

⁵⁵ Windeatt notes of this passage, “The distinction between reading and hearing works read may betoken that MK had some ability to read; but the language here echoes the ‘read or hear read’ formula often found in indulgences attached to prayers or books” (*The Book of Margery Kempe* 381n).

English *Soliloquies* states of its own meditations and prayers (“made to exite and stere the mynde of the reder to the drede of God and to the love of God, and to verey knowyng of hymselfe”), that “thei be not to be radde in grete hast and in grete tumultuosite but in quyetnesse” (in Wogan-Browne 225.1-4). Private devotional reading was encouraged for the laity as well: referencing the passage from Leviticus 6:12 concerning a temple priest rising at dawn to light a fire, Hilton tells the recipient of his treatise *Mixed Life*, “A man þat is lettered . . . 3if he haue þis fier of deuocioun in his herte,” should get “stikkes of hooli ensamples and seiynge of oure lord bi redynge in hooli writte, and norissch þe fier wiþ hem” (38.434-38). In such passages reading is directly related to “nourishing” transcendent desire.

Vocalized Forms of Private Reading

There is no reason to assume that private reading was invariably silent, and in fact some texts seem to assume that one reading in private will still to some degree read audibly. In his survey on monastic *lectio*, Jean Leclercq observes, “In the Middle Ages, as in antiquity, they read . . . with the lips, pronouncing what they saw, and with the ears, listening to the words pronounced.” This vocalization is not simply true of public reading, but of private, meditative reading, for “when *legere* and *lectio* are used without further explanation, they mean an activity which, like chant or writing, requires the participation of the whole body and the whole mind” (*Love of Learning* 19).⁵⁶

A logical source for this tendency toward vocalized religious reading is the popularity (noted in chapter one) of prayer books and books of hours among both religious and lay readers

⁵⁶ Rolle’s advice when providing his reader with a poetic interlude in *The Form of Living*, telling her to “synge this in þyn herte” (*Prose and Verse* 18), for example, wouldn’t preclude some level of vocalization as well. Albin suggests that the alliterative stylistic techniques in *Melos* anticipate vocal reading (“Introduction” 19-20, 27), but such reading would also contribute to the performative aspects (discussed below) of the prayers and aspirations within both *Incendium* and *Melos*.

in the late medieval era. Such books tend, in their printed prayers and hymns with suggestions of postures and ritual motions, to anticipate some form of vocalized and indeed performative recitation in private devotion. *A Talkyng of þe loue of God*, a work combining and expanding on several prior texts and included in two fourteenth-century manuscripts, assumes such a situation, instructing its reader to “reden hit esyliche and softe,” and stressing that it has been written with audible reading in mind: “Men schal fynden lihtliche þis tretys in cadence after þe bigynninge, zif hit beo riht pointed & Rymed in sum stude, to beo more lousesum to hem þat hit reden” (2.16-18). The sense presented by the word cadence—of a rhythmic alteration of speaking and pausing, and perhaps even of rising and falling inflection—suggests that the approach to reading encouraged here is based on speech patterns. As the introductory statement promises, *Talkyng*, following its sources, uses punctuation that appears to indicate the afore-mentioned cadence (see Westra’s introduction xiv), guiding the reader toward a ruminative style of reading suggested by the punctuation, with brief, typically two to three word phrases between pauses: “Thesu soþ God. Godes sone. . .” (2.21). This implies a connection to respiration similar to the “Jesus prayer” in the Eastern Christian tradition, and in that sense to the mechanics of vocalization.⁵⁷

Bella Millett, commenting on the source texts for *Talkyng*, stresses that they are “soliloquies, not public addresses, pious meditations of the kind recommended in *Ancrene Wisse* for the recluses’ private devotions” (95). Soliloquy is a particularly apt term, for the above passages demonstrate that the type of reading assumed and encouraged by *Talkyng* is vocal, either in overt (although private) vocalization, or subvocalization maintaining the form and

⁵⁷ Even subvocal forms of reading have been shown to have a connection with respiration: see the studies by McGuigan et al. and McGuigan and Rodier (318-19), for example, in McGuigan, F.J. “Covert Oral Behavior during the Silent Performance of Language Tasks.” *Psychological Bulletin* 74 (1970), 309-26.

qualities of vocalization during silent or near-silent reading.⁵⁸ Evidence of the occurrence of vocalization and the expectation that it would occur indicates the presence of performative qualities in private devotion, as when Walter Hilton speaks of those “euere crynge on God wiþ wordes of heere mouþ, or elles in heer herte bi desiryng wordis as 3if þei seiden þus: ‘A, lord . . .’” (*Mixed Life* 48.565-66). Such qualities would apply most notably to those texts reproducing the “oral or quasi-oral addressive speech situations” Gebauer and Wulf describe as particularly pertinent to the internal medium’s effect (360 n10). As will be seen, performative reading with regard to (although not limited to) vocative or quasi-oral passages plays a role in Richard Rolle’s internal medium.

Reading Rolle

Rolle’s prayers and *exclamatio*, particularly in *Incendium*, have often been characterized as more or less extemporaneous outbursts of his own spiritual fervor and longing while recording his relationship with the divine; and this seems true of some examples in *Melos* that devolve into complaints concerning, or condemnations of, Rolle’s detractors. Nevertheless, as elements of the text these prayers should be considered with regard to the donative purpose Rolle openly espouses: they are components of an internal medium intended to mediate transcendent desire and inspire mimesis. It is not simply that Rolle, as Rosamund Allen puts it, is “using himself as the Psalmists did, as an exemplum, an instance of prayers addressed to God in particular circumstances” (“Singular Lufe” 46). He also seems to anticipate that readers will make these prayers their own in the act of reading, and so their inclusion is at one level “designed to provide

⁵⁸ *Talkyng*’s source text *Wohunge of ure Lauerd* tells its reader in conclusion, “And for þi when þu / art on eise [ease] carpe [speak] to/-ward iesu & seie þise / words” (38.650-52), a passage suggesting Leclercq’s portrayal, noted above, of medieval reading as embodied.

readers with texts or models for their own devotions” (McGinn, *Varieties* 347). In reading Rolle’s prayers, readers may perform them as if their own.

As noted above, for readers familiar with the books of hours and other types of prayer books and devotions popular during the late medieval era, first-person prayers, psalms, and devotional lyrics in a text would certainly be understood as providing opportunity for personal prayer and devotion.⁵⁹ Rolle himself references this performative aspect when he introduces a lyric in *Ego Dormio*, telling his reader, “Now I write a songe of loue þat þou shalt haue delite jn when þou art louyng Ihesu Criste” (*Prose and Verse* 32.265-66). Even prayers directly reflecting the needs and desires of the writer could be prayed by the reader as their own, in keeping with the tradition of praying the Psalms that Rolle encourages in the prologue to his *English Psalter*:

Grete haboundance of gastly comfort and ioy in god comes in the hertes of thaim at says or synges deuoty the psalms in louyng of ihu crist, thai drope swetnes in mannys saule and hellis delite in thaire thoghtis and kyndils thaire willes with the fyre of luf; makand thaim hate, and brennand withinen, & faire and lufly in cristis eghen. (3)

The appearance of two of Rolle’s affective phenomena, sweetness and heat, in relation to the performance of the biblical text here is certainly striking, and in conjunction with his similar encouragement in *Ego Dormio* demonstrates his valuing of such textual performance as a means of openness to the divine.

There is every reason to believe the readers of *Incendium* and *Melos* would have held similar views, and this is confirmed by a compilation (*Orationes ad honorem nominis Ihesu*) of excerpts from various of Rolle’s Latin works including *Incendium* and *Melos*. Its compiler, as

⁵⁹ “The voice of lay prayer in the late Middle Ages is essentially ventriloquial. By and large, medieval people did not speak for themselves when they prayed. They articulated their hopes and fears, however deeply felt, in the borrowed words of others, which they made their own in the act of recitation.” (Duffy, *Marking the Hours* 104)

Nicholas Watson notes, “merely leafed through each work in order, copying passages that were detachable, usable as prayers, and contained the phrases ‘O bone Ihesu’ or ‘O Domine Deus’” (“Introduction” *Emendatio* 25). The result is what amounts to a Rollean prayer book functioning (as David Lawton says of the psalm/prayer combinations in the *Regularis Concordia*) as “an antecedent text in another’s voice to countless reiterations. . . revoiced as a personal act in the process of recitation” (65).⁶⁰ Obviously underlying such an approach would be the opinion that Rolle’s ejaculatory prayers, even though given in his own first-person voice in the texts, were ideal for first-person performative praying by the reader.

As elements of the internal medium of *Incendium* and *Melos* Rolle’s prayers, as will be seen, serve to reiterate the portrayal of the mediator-object relationship meant to inspire the reading subject with mimetic desire. They constitute in this sense a form of what Karmen MacKendrick calls “conversionary textual seductions,” which she suggests occurs “in texts that somehow incarnate the infinite desire for the infinite by telling of that desire . . . and by telling of the infinite in its relations to the world, such as creation and incarnation, which manifest that desire in the reverse direction” (175). Rolle’s prayers, however, go even further, in that their incarnation of desire occurs in a form that allows the reader to perform those aspects and express mimetic desire based on Rolle’s depiction of his own relationship and desire, thus making it all the more seductive. What Claire McIlroy says of Rolle’s English lyrics—that “the reader is invited to become the ‘I’ figure who expresses the personal bond, the burning love, between Christ and man” (*English Prose* 49)—is true for his prayers in the Latin works as well.

Importantly, the “I” figure in these passages is very much Richard Rolle, with his interests and

⁶⁰ Watson’s comment that collecting these passages would have been relatively easy “since such passages were often highlighted or annotated by early readers” (“Introduction” *Emendatio* 25) also demonstrates their personal meaningfulness to those readers, again indicating likely performative adoption.

concerns, often directly related to the unique qualities of the relationship he has portrayed. In a sense the reading subject is stepping into the mediator's shoes in order to "try on" various elements of Rolle's own mediator-object relationship, and to potentially be "seduced" in that performance by Rolle's own portrayed desire.

There are a number of such passages in both *Incendium* and *Melos* that could be examined,⁶¹ but I would like to focus on two in particular, one each from *Incendium* and *Melos*, that exemplify the possibilities of this performative rehearsal of the relationship. The first of these occurs early in *Incendium* and follows Rolle's acknowledgement of the difficulty of attaining the contemplative life and the rarity of the experience of *fervor*, *dulcor*, and *canor*. Rolle then significantly adds, "Hence the psalmist, *transforming himself into the person of the contemplative man*, says, 'I shall go over into the house of God in the voice of exultation and of confession' [Ps 41:5], that is, of praise" (*Fire* 100-101, emphasis added),⁶² thus positing the psalmist's adopting of a contemplative persona. Having further expressed in highly affective language the gifts given contemplative solitaries as well as their eternal reward, Rolle introduces a prayer that he states they have sung, "rejoicing in Jesus" (*in Ihesu iubilantes*):

O flame flowing like honey, sweeter than all delights, more enjoyable than all achievements! O my God, O my love: enter me, pierced by your care, wounded by your beauty; enter, I say, and sooth the languishing; you, medicine, become apparent to the wretched one loving you. Behold, all my desire is toward you, all that my heart pursues. My soul sighs to you; my flesh thirsts for you, and you do not open to me; what is more, you avert your face, you shut your mouth, you pass by and you refuse, and you laugh at the punishment of the innocent. Nevertheless, you carry your lovers away, meanwhile, from all earthly things; you bear them above every appetite for a worldly object, and you make them capable of your love and effective in love. Bursting out of the fire in spiritual song for this reason, they offer praise to you and feel with sweetness the dart of love. . . .

⁶¹ Other prayers include, for example, psalm-like requests for defense from the devil or deliverance from enemies as well as anticipations of future glory with reference to the eremitic life or the divine gifts.

⁶²*quia psalmista se in personam uiri contemplatiui transformans ait: Transibo in domum Dei in uoce exultacionis et confessionis. . . (151.27-28)*

Come into me, my beloved! I have surrendered whatever I had for you, but I have rejected all that is to be had so that you might have a mansion in my soul, and you might console her, and not desert me at any time. You see the one who burns with your great desire, and constantly holds on to your embraces, and attends with most burning desire; grant me to love you in this manner, and also to find rest in you, so that I might merit to be seen by you in your kingdom without end. Amen. (152.14-27, 29-36)⁶³

What is striking about this passage is its representation of virtually all the major aspects of Rolle's portrayal of the mediator-object relationship, delineated within a prayer expressing the desire for such a relationship.

The opening *apostrophe* introduces images common to affective mediation in the canticle tradition in various combinations, as well as references to the tradition of passion meditation.⁶⁴ Canticle-based language of languor is coupled with the secular romantic figure of the languishing lover and his pitiless love. In typical Rollean fashion scripture also plays a role, adding to a *canor* reference the loose psalm quotation "my soul sighs to you; my flesh thirsts for you."⁶⁵ The prayer sets up an affective context of longing that the reader may perform to encourage their own desire.⁶⁶

⁶³ *O mellifluus ardor omnibus deliciis dulcior, cunctis operibus delectabilior! O Deus meus, O amor meus: illabere mihi, tua caritate perforato tua pulchritudine uulnerato; illabere, inquam, et languentem consolare: medicina, tu, misero ostende te amanti. Eoce in te est omne desiderium meum, omne quod querit cor meum. Ad te suspirat anima mea; tibi sitit caro mea, et non aperis mihi, immo auertis faciem, claudis oscium tuum, transis atque declinas, et de penis rides innocentis. Interim tamen amatores tuos a cunctis terrenis rapis, supra omnem rei mundialis appetitum suscipis, et tui amoris capaces facis et in amando efficacis. Quamobrem in canore spirituali ex incendio erumpenti laudes tibi offerunt et amoris iaculum senciuunt cum dulcore . . . Ueni in me, dilecta mea! Quecunque habui pro te dedi, sed et habenda respui, ut mansionem habeas in anima mea, et consoleris eam, nec me aliquando deseras, quem tanto tuo desiderio cernis flagrare, et tuis amplexibus iugiter inherere, interesseque ardentissimo desiderio; ita mihi tribuas te amare, in te quoque quiescere, ut in tuo regno sine fine merear te uideri. Amen. (152.14-22, 29-36)*

⁶⁴ Sarah McNamer, who notes affective passion meditations were "one of the most popular and influential literary genres of the high and later Middle Ages," describes them as "richly emotional, script-like texts that ask their readers to imagine themselves present at scenes of Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart" (*Affective Meditation* 1). Rolle's own *Meditation A* and *Meditation B* are examples of this genre.

⁶⁵ Psalm 42(41):2

⁶⁶ Ann Astell notes of this tradition and its purpose, "Beginning in the twelfth century, the classification of the Song of Songs as affective literature brought to the fore not only the power of the literal text to engage the emotions, but also the *necessity* of affective integration as a basis for contemplative *unitas*. Only if the *affectus* can be won over from carnal desires to the love of spiritual things through an organic transference can the natural disharmony

While this opening is comparatively commonplace—readers familiar with affective texts such as *A talking of Te loue of God* would find nothing particularly surprising—the remainder of the prayer has far more direct relevance to Rolle’s portrayal of his own relationship. There are references to the solitary life, both as an act of the God who is addressed and later in the prayer as an act of the petitioner who says he has given away all he possessed for the sake of the relationship. In regard to the former of these there is a reference to the lovers’ increased capacity to receive and share the divine gifts of love that would seem to parallel the opening of the Rollean eye of the heart in relation to the preparatory exercises of self-displacement. Appropriately the gifts are then depicted in a dependent position. By these means the prayer relates the desire encouraged by the initial apostrophe to the elements of Rolle’s portrayal of the relationship.

The prayer then returns in the second excerpt above to aspiration, begging “Come into me, my beloved!” (paralleling the “enter me” of the opening apostrophe) and stressing what the petitioner has given up for the sake of the relationship. It concludes with more affective imagery, the excessive quality of the burning desire being repeatedly emphasized through the use of *tanto* (“great”) and the superlative *ardentissimo* (“most burning”). Encouraged by Rolle’s reference to the psalmist adopting the persona of the contemplative, the reading subject is enabled by performance of Rolle’s prayer to similarly adopt the persona of the praying contemplative hermit. Then, having rehearsed the details of the Rollean mediator-object relationship, the reading subject performatively expresses the lover’s desire for that relationship.

between the intellect in the will be overcome, giving the psyche access to the deeper truths that can only be known through the combined, concentrated power of intellect and emotion” (*Song of Songs* 111).

In *Melos* chapter 55, Rolle moves back and forth between a more direct postil on Canticles 2:5, “I languish in love,” and interludes of *exclamatio* and prayer.⁶⁷ In typical bridal mystical fashion Rolle connects the languishing lover with the soul that has ordered her affections, receiving seven “columns” of support,⁶⁸ which Rolle, shifting into the first person, relates to his own experience. He then describes the soul’s desire:

I am, in fact, carried away with most agreeable love, and languor purifies my mental mode; constant song embraces my heart in clear harmony and what I experience is not worldly which deceives those favoring it. But inwardly attentive, I watch the Hoped-for One, having scorned the obscene by means of the inspiring spirit, and looking up to heaven so that I may be raised to salvation and may truly see the one whom I long desire, because I languish in love. Inflamed, I remain in heavenly delight and sweetly perceive the saving sign by means of sonorous comfort. I am burning within, I recognize love, Olympian fire burns the soul, and I am unable to desire anything beyond the sought-for Christ, I am so devotedly detained in divine sweetness.⁶⁹

Rolle then directly addresses Christ: “O Jesus most just, delight nature!—come, you who bring back to life, flowing into the languishing one.”⁷⁰ Again an opportunity is provided for both first-person and second-person performance by the reader, the former including various affective verbs stressing desire,⁷¹ as well as references to the three gifts and to acts of preparatory self-

⁶⁷ Gabriel Liegey covers the basic argument of chapters 53-55 in relation to Canticles 2:5 in *Rhetoric* 55-58, and while not examining the below passage, he observes that chapter 55, “an account of his ecstasy” (57), is characterized by the heavy alliteration. Liegey sees Rolle’s use of alliteration as paralleling the “passion” and “feeling” of his writings (see 77-79), but Albin’s study indicates no “obvious correlation” in this regard (“*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*” 30). Katherine Zieman notes of Rolle’s exclamations that they “are generally interruptive: they are unannounced by any contextualizing cues or speech markers that would indicate a change in person or speakerly position beyond the exclamatory ‘O’” (“Monasticism” 707). In *Melos* in particular, there is frequently a complex interweaving of *exclamatio* and other genre. See also Liegey 111.

⁶⁸ Referencing Proverbs 9:1, but likely based, as Albin suggests in a footnote, on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. (*Melody* 320n3).

⁶⁹ *Rapior revera amenissimo amore, languor ac lustrat modum mentalem; canor continuus corda complectit in claro concentu, nec secularare quid sencio quod fallit faventes, sed tentus interius Speratum speculor, spretis spurciciis per spiritum spirantem, ac celum suspiciens ut sublever saluti et videam veraciter quem diu desidero, quia amore languo. Succensus subsisto superno sapore et sencio suaviter salutiferum insigne solacio sonoro. Uror interius, agnosco amorem, ignis olimpi animam incendit nec cupere quid queo preter Christum quesitum, tam devote detineor dulcedine divina.* (177:16-30)

⁷⁰ *O Iesu iustissime, ingenium iocunda, veni qui vivificas, illabere languenti.* (177.26-27)

⁷¹ Rosamund Allen indicates Rolle’s possible indebtedness to Richard of St. Victor for such imagery: “As in secular love poetry, the states are described metaphorically in terms of burning, wounding and piercing, binding, taste and

denial. Rolle again uses present participles—"looking," "languishing" (*suspiciens, languenti*)—to emphasize the active and ongoing qualities of both commitment and longing. The subsequent prayer directly addresses Christ, stressing that the soul is opened and begging to be united with him.

The pattern of this passage is subsequently repeated multiple times in the following passages, moving from first-person depictions of Rolle's desire and the elements of his relationship with the divine to second person aspirations—"O dearest Beloved" (*O Dilecte dulcissime*, 178.9), "most holy Enkindler" (*Succensor sanctissime*, 179.4)—begging Christ to look upon him, come to him, and even to end his exilic desire altogether through death and its promise of full union.⁷² For the reader as subject in the mimetic triangle, these passages, with their mixture of affective *exclamatio* and prayer, not only become what Sarah McNamer calls "scripts for the performance of feeling" ("Feeling" 246), but are in fact scripts for the performance of *Rolle the mediator's* feelings, as well as other facets of his portrayed relationship. They allow the reader to enter into them and performatively become the "I" figure of the prayer in a relationship with the "You" that is the divine (non)object.

But the *Melos* passage also exemplifies a further element of the performative aspect of reading as it relates to *Melos* in particular: that it is the performance of Rolle's striking and excessive compositional style. The reader of such passages performs the "hyperalliterative rhapsodies" (McGinn, *Varieties* 345) that have often been remarked upon and studied;⁷³

thirsting, sickness and strife; for the spiritual interpretation, Richard mainly uses imagery of taste, drink, melting and dissolution, all metaphors put to full use in his turn by Rolle" ("Singular Lufe" 34).

⁷² Two of the three aspirations (177.25-30 and 178.8-12) are reproduced in the above-mentioned *Orationes ad honorem nominis Ihesu*, lines 425-33, without the intervening first person sections.

⁷³ While Rollean scholarship has been almost universal in referencing this facet of his work, Gabriel Liegey has studied the elements of Rolle's style in *Melos* at length, and these elements have drawn the attention of Andrew Albin, Rosamund Allen, Katherine Zieman, Rita Copeland and Sara de Ford as well. In addition, Albin has particularly related Rolle's style to aspects of medieval music and performance, musical and aural theory.

rhapsodies composed, as Watson says, “with breathtaking eloquence and daring” (*Authority* 171), and present throughout almost the entire work.⁷⁴ As my own interest lies more in the function of the performance of these stylistic elements within the internal medium of *Melos*, I will restrict my own direct examination of them to noting the techniques appearing in the passage above.

Alliteration is the most obvious element of this passage, occurring throughout. Arnould states that in *Melos* it “often solely consists in a series of words beginning with the same sound” (“Introduction” lviii), but here there are various examples of secondary alliteration as well. The alliteration frequently occurs in chains broken only due to grammatical necessity, as when the preposition *per* interrupts the six-word alliterative chain of *sp* consonant blends, while also exhibiting the Rollean technique noted by Albin: “He regularly interrupts long alliterative chains with a brief contrasting consonantal span or two, then picks up the chain where he left off” (“*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*” 27). Similiter cadens (as in *solacio sonoro*, “sonorous comfort”) and isocolon are also present.⁷⁵ The combination *spiritum spirantem* (“inspiring spirit”) suggests what Liegey describes as Rolle’s *tradioctio*, “using the same root word in adjacent positions” (112).⁷⁶ The brief phrase *succensus subsisto superno sapore* (“Inflamed, I remain in heavenly delight”) provides examples of a number of Rolle’s techniques: alliterative

⁷⁴ While alliteration is a common technique in the era and Rolle was influenced by various Latin and Middle English precursors (see Albin, “*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*” 31-36), *Melos* is certainly an alliterative tour-de-force. As its editor E.J. Arnould notes, “The only non-alliterative passages in this work are those in which lyricism makes way for earnest argumentation against dialecticians of the monastery of the Schools” (“Introduction” lviii). It should be noted that *Incendium* also contains alliterative passages, albeit comparatively few in number.

⁷⁵ See Rosamund Allen’s discussion of Rolle’s use of these stylistic techniques in various Latin writings in “Singular Lufe” 37-40.

⁷⁶ There is also the suggestion of several forms of the “figures of thought” described by Liegey: itemizing (*distributio*), “dividing something into parts and distributing these amongst various people or things” (107), and iteration (*expolotio*), which he states in Rolle’s case is “by speaking in a different manner about the same subject” (108).

sibilance, partly in what de Ford would term a “cluster” of consonants⁷⁷ in primary/secondary alliteration; consonance; assonance and internal rhyme; and *similiter desinens*.⁷⁸

That Rolle’s use of an elevated style is generally related in some sense to his desire to speak of elevated subjects appears self-evident,⁷⁹ yet as Albin notes in *Melos* generally there is an “absence of any clear alliance between alliteration and content” (“*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*” 29). This naturally leads to the question of what purpose, if any, underlies what Riehle calls “its ‘uncontrolled’ exuberance,” particularly since this wildness is actually the work of a “virtuoso author” (*Secret* 121, 133). A common answer is provided by McGinn’s observation, “Rolle is not interested in writing about the experience of ecstatic mystical song and melody so much as he is in writing such song and melody” (*Varieties* 345): the hyper-alliteration and other techniques are meant to mimic *canor*, or at least “the perceptible musicality of *canor*” (Zieman, “Perils” 44). Yet as Albin points out, “Any mimetic understanding of Rolle’s alliteration, though, must ignore his repeated and emphatic pronouncements on the inimitable singularity of *canor*, on *canor*’s complete divorce and categorical difference from all sounds perceived from without by the ears” (“Listening” 184). Rolle does not consider *canor* reproducible by human effort: phenomena that overwhelm human receptivity and understanding would hardly be capable of human creation. Therefore, his heavy alliteration and associated elements would be unlikely as an attempt to reproduce such phenomena.

⁷⁷ “Alliteration” 60.

⁷⁸ Liegey’s discussion of Rolle’s techniques focuses on his use of rhythm in addition to such stylistic elements, but this is critiqued by Albin (“*Melody of Love: Ten Ways In*” 28-30), who concludes, “While there’s no denying that Rolle’s chains of alliteration, in combination with his fondness for parallel constructions and isocolon, do frequently produce rhythmic effects, the evidence for deliberate and regular rhythmic patterning is simply lacking” (30).

⁷⁹ Rita Copeland nicely delineates the parallels between Rolle’s style and subject matter in *Incendium* and his English works; she also relates this to the classical “three levels of style,” although as she admits, “It is not clear that [Rolle’s] stylistic procedure represents a deliberate favoring of Ciceronian theory or a reversion to classical norms” (“Richard Rolle and the Rhetorical Theory” 64).

What, then, is the purpose of these striking elements, and (more to the point), what part do they play in this portrayal of the mediator-object relationship? I believe a remark Watson makes about the overall qualities of *Melos* points to the answer:

Viewing *Melos Amoris* from a distance. . . the work already seems like a kaleidoscope, in which every idea, image and structure we have encountered in Rolle's earlier works appears, divorced from its old context, part now of a luminous shifting pattern whose strange beauty holds ear and eye even while the mind slides off in confusion. (*Authority* 172)

What Watson sees from a distance in terms of an overall impression of *Melos* could also be said of the effect of the overwhelming language of the above passage at close quarters. Familiar aspects and imagery of the portrayed Rollean mediator-(non)object relationship appear in conjunction with prayers of longing desire for divine encounter. Yet (to borrow Watson's terminology) the compositional techniques result in a linguistic "luminous shifting pattern" of "strange beauty," excessive and even overwhelming, causing the mind to "slide off in confusion." The text foregrounds its challenging and attention-drawing complexity and resistance to easy reading due to the intrusive repetitiveness of the alliteration and other stylistic techniques, and the extent of its vocabulary and word choices required by the alliteration.⁸⁰ All of these techniques result in a text that embodies at a lesser level the effects Marion ascribes to the saturating phenomenon: its "interference" with the subject's horizon, its "bedazzling" quality, and its resistance to easy constitution.

This suggests that the excessive style of *Melos* may serve to make the reading experience itself a reduced form of "I-me" displacement, occurring simultaneously with the other aspects of performance noted earlier. Rolle cannot create *canor* and cannot put into words the

⁸⁰ This is common in *Melos*; see Arnould's reference to the "well over one hundred terms" for God (several of which appear above), "distributed over seventeen letters of the alphabet" in *Melos*, and a number of other words "which do not seem to have been recorded from other sources" (*Introduction* lx), as well as his index of unusual words and uses (239-44).

astonishment he felt when he experienced *fervor* (see *Incendium* 145.1). But he can use overwhelming and dislocating language to challenge the reader's constituting ability in a way that may give some sense (however comparatively paltry) of what it is like to be amazed by the exceptional. The ubiquity of the alliteration and other stylistic techniques in this passage certainly appear to be at least partially intended as an overpowering and displacing experience for the reader, even as Rolle the mediator portrays personal experiences of being overpowered by the gifts of divine love and shares his aspirations of desire.⁸¹

Referring to Rolle's popularity in the late medieval era in comparison to the writings of the *Cloud* author, Claire McIlroy states, "it seems clear that Rolle's brand of affectivity and his extended use of reader-engaging elements. . . had more far-reaching implications for medieval devotional reading tastes and habits in fourteenth-and fifteenth-century England" (40). Those elements, as the above survey has shown, rely on pre-existing spiritual reading habits, although Rolle uses these elements in particularly striking ways in creating his internal medium. They would seem to be a factor in the appeal of his writings and of the spiritual relationship they portray, a popularity shown by compilations such as *Orationes* and by the later writers (ranging from Margery Kempe, John Norton, and Richard Methley in the fifteenth centuries to Robert Parkyn in the mid-sixteenth) who reference Rolle, claim similar spiritual experiences, and in some cases even adopt similar language and stylistic approaches.⁸²

⁸¹ This is undertaken by an author who in *Incendium* had stated his intention to "try to show the superheated and supernatural feeling of love to everyone" (*Fire* 95); the full phrase is *amorisque superferuidum ac supernaturalem affectum utrumque ostendere conabor* (*Incendium* 147.30-31). Albin suggests Rolle's alliteration to be a form of "canonic aesthetics" that "urges mystical aspirants to press on in their efforts to attain Rolle's rapturous states, thereby bolstering *canor*'s authenticity, Rolle's authority, and the aspirant's desire" ("Listening for *Canor*" 186-87). However a reader may perceive or respond to the canonic quality, though, I would suggest the "overwhelming" aspect is present, and this serves as one element of the internal medium in passages such as the one examined.

⁸² See Michael Sargent, "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of some late-medieval spiritual writings." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 225-40; James Hogg, "Mount Grace Charterhouse and Late Medieval English Spirituality." *Analecta Cartusiana* 82.3, ed. James Hogg. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1980), 1-43; Katherine Zieman, "Monasticism and the Public Contemplative in Late Medieval

Rolle communicates the mediator-divine (non)object relationship he enjoys via portrayals of his own experience of its saturating and displacing qualities. He also undertakes compositional techniques that encourage performative rehearsal of the relationship's attributes and Rolle's own desire, as well as effecting potentially displacing reading experiences. These elements contribute to the efficacy of the transcendent internal medium in *Incendium* and *Melos* that appears to have had some success (at least in the late medieval era) in fulfilling Rolle's openly stated donative purpose.

England: Richard Methley and His Spiritual Formation.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42 (2012), 699-724; and Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translations of the Flesh*. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2017). For Robert Parkyn's writings, see Dickens, A.G., ed. *Tudor Treatises* (Record Series CXXV), (York: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1959.)

**CHAPTER FOUR:
“AND I SAW NO DIFFERENCE”: THE HERMENEUTIC OF IDENTIFICATION
AND POSITIVE MIMETIC COMMUNITY IN THE
TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM
OF THE *SHOWINGS* OF JULIAN OF NORWICH**

Showings intentionally reveals very little about its author. While it is known that at some point during the latter part of the fourteenth-century, that author—a woman whose background and perhaps even given name are unknown—was enclosed in the anchorhold attached to St. Julian’s, a small church located near the docks of Norwich, even this vague information is absent from her text. The lack of personal detail is an intentional aspect of the internal medium of this text, an extended meditation on a series of revelations, or showings, given to one individual but intended, the author states, “in comfort of vs alle” (8.39; 320).

The donative purpose implied by this statement—that the one who received it would share this comfort with the community for which it was given—is accomplished via a unique transcendent internal medium involving multiple forms of identification between mediator, subject, and divine (non)object. The result is a message of inclusivity unique in its era, in keeping with the breadth of its intended audience and reflecting the nature of its author’s anchoritic position. It ultimately serves to facilitate the desire the woman known as Julian wants to engender in the reading subject, a desire suggested by the rubric (not written by Julian) that begins the surviving copy of the Short Text of *Showings*, which notes that her visions contain “fulle many comfortabyllle wordes and gretly styrrande to alle thaye that desires to be Crystes looverse” (1.4-5; 201).¹ In responding to that desire and to the content of Julian’s internal

¹ Quotations are from *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*. Ed. Edmund Colledge O.S.A and James Walsh, S.J. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978. All citations from *Showings*, short text and long text, are from this edition. I prefer the Paris manuscript reproduced in this edition, as it contains several passages missing from the Sloan manuscripts. As the line numbering in this edition is according to chapter, I add the respective page numbers to citations as well.

medium, its comfortable and stirring words, her reader will intentionally and fully take their place in the community of positive mimesis resulting from and embodying these identifications.

JULIAN AND HER TEXT

The single major detail the woman known, as noted, during her lifetime as Julian (possibly in reference to the location of her enclosure) chooses to reveal—with great exactitude—is that on the eighteenth day of May, 1373, when she was “xxxth yere old and a halfe” (3.1; 289), she was suffering from an illness that had brought her close to death. Although at what she assumed to be the point of death she was suddenly delivered from her pain, Julian felt no resulting confidence in surviving, and notes that she in fact hoped to die, “for my hart was willfully set ther to” (3.41-42; 292). It occurred to her that in her own suffering she might identify with Christ in his passion, and Julian’s description of her aspiration suggests a very specific understanding of this identification:

...for I would that his paynes were my paynes, with compassion and afterward langyng to god. Thus thought me that I might with his grace haue the woundes that I had before desyred; but in this I desyred never no bodily sight ne no maner schewing of god, but compassion as me thought that a kind sowle might haue with our lord Jesu, that for loue would become a deadly man. (3.46-51; 292-93)

As was seen in the previous chapter, Jean-Luc Marion’s early work suggests the importance of an initial horizon, a “kind of faith” that facilitates proper reception and recognition of saturating phenomena.² Julian’s own description of her revelations begins by presenting the specific receptive attitude that seems to open this hermeneutic space and constitute her own initial horizon: it is her desire for identification with Christ, in terms of both compassion and union.³

² Shane Mackinlay likewise states that “all saturated phenomena should be understood as appearing in a hermeneutic space that is opened by the active reception of the one to whom they are given” (219).

³ A desire to share in Christ’s suffering through bodily sickness is not unusual, being, as Liz MacAvoy notes, “fully in keeping with accepted late-medieval ascetic practices, particularly those associated with women” (“Reading with Eyes Closed” 117).

For Julian, however, this desire goes beyond mere sharing of physical suffering to include a dispositional identification with Christ's own compassion toward humankind and his self-sacrifice undertaken "for loue" of others. As such it constitutes an attitude of preliminary "self-displacement" on Julian's part that provides a rough parallel to the self-displacing disciplines Richard Rolle describes as leading to his experience of the saturating gifts of *fervor*, *dulcor*, and *canor*. In Julian's case she also expresses an accompanying desire, a "langyng" for the intimacy associated with mystical union. Strikingly, it is as she experiences this desire that she tells us, "And in this sodenly I saw the reed bloud rynnyng downe from vnder the garlande" on the crucifix (4.1 -2; 294), beginning the first of sixteen revelations she would receive over the hours to follow.⁴

It is important to recognize the role that this initial desire to identify with Christ plays in Julian's revelations. As I will demonstrate, a focus on identification—between Julian as mediator and her reader/subject, and between the (non)object and the subject—will also prove integral to the internal medium of the two texts of *Showings* that eventually grew out of Julian's experience. These include a shorter text described in its opening rubric as "a visionn schewed be the goodenes of god" (1.1; 201), and a longer, the "reuelacion of loue" (1.1; 281), hereafter ST and LT respectively. The hermeneutic of identification and its role within the internal medium of *Showings*, particularly in LT, will be the focus of this chapter.

The process of development from the revelations of 1373 to ST and LT is a lengthy one, important to the distinctions between them that will be noted in relation to Julian's self-displacement as mediator. Julian describes seeking further elucidation of her vision's meaning "xv yere after and mor" (86.14; 732), and states that she "had techyng inwardly" on the lord-

⁴ Thus, as Wolfgang Riehle notes of this circumstance, "Julian's visions, on her own account, were received not as a sudden occurrence, but in fulfillment of detailed requests" (*Secret* 203)

servant example “for twenty yere after . . . saue thre monthys” (51.6-87; 520). Her words in both cases describe what is, at the completion of the long text, *past* activity; thus the length of gestation for the ultimate LT would be longer than twenty years, and possibly considerably longer.

The initial result of this process is the short text.⁵ Colledge and Walsh assume it to have been written relatively quickly after the events of 1373,⁶ Nicholas Watson (“Composition” 680) has suggested a longer compositional period, placing its completion in the 1380s, but the evidence is slight, and all such conclusions conjectural. The exclusion from ST of an insight Julian dates from 15 years after the event would seem to suggest the latter’s completion prior to that point, at least in the broad sense that the insights given her from that point on only appear in LT.

As to LT, Colledge and Walsh presume that Julian’s words concerning “twenty yere” noted above mark the approximate end of her writing process.⁷ But their support for this view comes from observing that the LT chapter outline makes no reference to the lord-servant example and its attendant reflections. They conclude from this that Julian had written a “first edition” of LT lacking this section, into which the explanations she had been seeking were then comparatively quickly inserted, after which she apparently set it aside as complete.⁸

⁵ As Denise Baker notes, “The omission from the short text of all the material in Revelation Fourteen except the discussion of prayer in the first three chapters appears. . . to corroborate the assumption that the short text precedes the long” (*Julian* 5).

⁶ “We may suppose, though we cannot prove, that the short text was recorded soon after the event” (“Introduction,” *A Book of Showings* 19).

⁷ They state, for example, in the introduction to their English translation *Julian of Norwich: Showings* that her conclusion to the long text is written, “as she tells us elsewhere, in 1393” (“Introduction” 20)—apparently referencing the above quotation, as there is nothing else in the text resembling such a statement—and they later add that the conclusion “was being written in 1393” (23). These passages are noted by Watson, “Composition” 640 n8.

⁸ See the discussion in the introduction to their edition of the Middle English text, *A Book of Showings* 25; Watson notes of this, “What enables them to consider that L [the long text] was then completed in the same year [e.g., 1393] has eluded me” (“Composition” 675 n89).

The problem is that this is thin evidence on which to base a rather elaborate hypothesis, particularly as it is, as Watson notes, “an argumentum ex silentio” (“Composition” 676). It also implies one of two rather unlikely scenarios: that Julian never reread her text (to thereby notice and correct the omission) or that she did notice and nevertheless chose to intentionally leave her central theological insight out of her opening description while including it in her text.⁹ In reality, there is nothing in the text from which to draw any conclusion beyond that LT was completed sometime after 1393. It may have been completed well after that date, as it seems rather hard to imagine that a woman who admits to spending several decades ruminating on a single particular aspect of her visions would be capable of declaring her work finished at some point and engaging in no further rumination on its meanings and adjustments to its language unless she knew her life was near its end.¹⁰ Ultimately, Bernard McGinn’s summation, because put cautiously, serves nicely: “The LT seems to have gone through several revisions before it was finished, probably in the first or even the second decade of the fifteenth century” (*Varieties* 425). The explication of her revelations and their meanings would appear—as her several comments concerning the considerable amounts of time given to seeking particular aspects of these meanings would suggest—to have constituted for her the major (although not singular) work of her life. It results in a text carefully constructed over a long period of time, as the

⁹ Watson makes a more plausible suggestion: that the master-servant example simply doesn’t fit Julian’s criteria for inclusion in the outline because it is not actually part of the original revelation, but an insight from much later (“Composition” 677). Staley presents the possibility that Julian intentionally leaves out her most controversial insights (“Julian and Crisis 159). Although also conjectural, these serve to demonstrate that Colledge and Walsh’s hypothesis need not be deduced from the text itself.

¹⁰ This seems particularly so given the “unfinished” quality of LT noted by Denis Turner: “One gets the feeling that Julian is also one who must keep writing in order to work out what she thinks. There is, after all, no course one can complete in the deepening of prayerful insights into the mysteries. . . . The Long Text extends but does not complete the unfinished business of the Short Text” (*Julian Theologian* 9).

distinctions between the short text and the long text, which is in fact almost six times as long, indicate.¹¹

JULIAN'S DONATIVE PURPOSE AND THE HERMENEUTIC OF IDENTIFICATION

What can certainly be deduced from Julian's own words is that her purpose in writing is donative in nature, and that this purpose is based on a divine intentionality underlying the experience itself and its subsequent process of elucidation. In ST Julian says of her vision of the passion and its meanings that it is a "techyng that is of Jhesu Cryste to edificacion of 3oure saule" (6.9; 219), and states, "I am sekere I sawe it for the profytte of many oder" (6.17-18; 220). Similarly, in LT she affirms that although she was the original recipient of this same vision of Christ's passion, it was given by God "that of hys curteyse loue and endlesse goodnesse wold shew it generally in comfort of vs alle" (8.37-39; 320).

De Certeau notes of the mystic's experience, "The exceptional nature of what happens to the mystic ceases to be a privilege in order to become the index of a particular place that the mystic occupies within his or her group, with a history, within the world. The mystic is only one among many others" ("Mysticism" 20). Julian purposefully presents herself (as will be examined at greater length below) in such a light: she is one whose exceptional experience is granted her with a specifically communal, and thus donative, divine intention. Both the initial revelations she receives and the subsequent years of further elucidation (with corresponding further visions and locutions) are for the benefit of her fellow Christians. The result within the text's internal medium is the positing of a recipient community encompassing both Julian and all her *evyn cristen*. While Julian uses that term simply as a designation for the audience of her "fellow Christians," the internal medium presents a sense of mimetic community embodying

¹¹ See McGinn, *Varieties* 425.

both aspects implied by it. On the one hand it is a community, encompassing non-rivalrous mimetic relationships of mutuality; on the other, a community in Christ, the source of positive mimesis.¹²

As with Richard Rolle's *Incendium* and *Melos*, the transcendent textual internal medium of *Showings*¹³ plays an integral role in the fulfillment of this donative purpose; but this internal medium is of a decidedly different character than the Rollean medium examined in the previous two chapters. As has been shown in chapter two, one of the main intentions of the Rollean internal medium in *Incendium* and *Melos* is the portrayal of Rolle as mediator, setting him apart by emphasizing the qualities suggesting him to be a uniquely appropriate mediator for the relationship with the divine that he describes. There is, in addition, Rolle's assumption within the texts of certain mediatorial roles (such as prophet) that both further this presentation and to some degree fulfill the mediatorial function itself. In contrast, *Showings*, while portraying Julian's experiences and the meanings she assigns to them, nevertheless exhibits a different approach. As will be examined in the section on Julian as mediator, the internal medium tends to conflate and identify the mediator with the reading subject in a composite subject persona, as well as actively seeking to displace Julian as a unique individual so as to better enable that identification between herself and her community of *evyn cristen* in relation to the divine (non)object.¹⁴ Julian in this way embodies a sense of non-rivalrous mimesis and positive mimetic community within the text.

¹² Julian suggests this type of community in her assertion, "For yf I looke syngulerly to my selfe I am ry3t nought; but in generall I am, I hope, in onehede of cheryte with alle my evyn cristen" (9.9-10, 322). Julian is certainly not alone in using the term *evyn cristen*; Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton, for example, use it as well.

¹³ In my usage *Showings* will refer broadly to both ST and LT; however, I will be focusing on LT due to its important additions and modifications to ST, central to my study of the internal medium's hermeneutic of identification. I will refer to ST when necessary to discuss these changes, and passages from ST will be introduced as such.

¹⁴ This displacement is particularly true of LT.

A similar distinction can be made concerning the presentation of the object-mediator relationship. Within *Incendium* and *Melos* the portrayal is very much that of God and Richard Rolle, as chapter three has shown. It is a portrayal seeking to give an idea or impression of Rolle's own experiences through various means, allowing the reader to perform Rolle's own textual prayers and potentially experience a personal sense of displacement while reading the account of Rolle's own overwhelming and displacing experiences. Nevertheless, the experiences described within the text are definitely presented as Rolle's and occur within an internal medium seeking to facilitate the reading subject's mimetic desire for the relationship Rolle enjoys. The achievement of that relationship involves in one sense the subject taking on some of the characteristics of Rolle's own persona and life (e.g., as hermit).

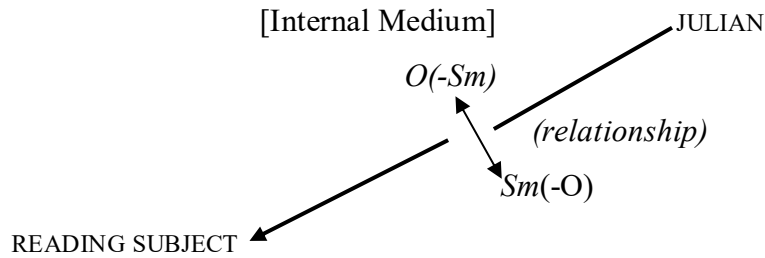
In contrast, the internal medium of *Showings* involves a hermeneutic of identification between mediator and subject that minimizes Julian's personal details and self-references (particularly, as will be demonstrated, in LT) in order to increase the reader's ability to identify with the "voice" of the text, while also allowing and encouraging the reader to perform the text's narrative as that voice. The result is not, for example, to encourage the reading subject to adopt Julian's anchoritic calling and suggest its superiority: Julian's anchoritic situation is, in fact, elided from the text. Rather, the internal medium seeks to inspire reading subjects to recognize themselves as divinely intended recipients of the divine message of comfort given to Julian, who is, like them, one of the recipient community rather than distinct from it. An examination of the internal medium will reveal the effort to displace Julian as a distinct individual in favor of a more generic persona enabling greater identification. Through this hermeneutic the typical mediator-

subject element of the internal medium is transformed into a portrayed composite subject-mediator recipient.¹⁵

Likewise, the internal medium's portrayal of the relationship between the divine (non)object and the composite subject entails, in Julian's theology, a hermeneutic of identification of God with humankind. This involves portraying the incarnate Christ's identification with Adam and the soul in the lord-servant example, linking divine and human substance, and using maternal imagery in relation to the second person of the Trinity. Thus, as will be seen, the (non)object of the internal medium is not portrayed in a relationship with the mediator to which the subject may aspire, but in an ongoing relationship with the composite subject-mediator and thus the community of *evyn cristen*. As Christ is not only the basis of that community but the source of positive mimetic relationships, the divine-human relationship of identification portrayed in the internal medium plays an integral role in the inclusivity of the human community within *Showings*, an inclusivity the internal medium portrays through a variety of means, most notably its maternal imagery.

The internal medium of *Showings* in its full development in LT could therefore be depicted as the central portion of the following diagram. Within it, *Sm* represents the composite subject-mediator and by extension the community of *evyn cristen*, recipients of the revelations; *O* represents the divine (non)object; and the parenthetical aspects suggest the level of inter-identification between them, as well as the enabling aspect of divine (non)object identification in relation to positive mimetic community among Julian's *evyn cristen*.

¹⁵ This is not to suggest that Julian does not perform the mediator role in the actual triangle: she is the mediator responsible for projecting the internal medium and sharing its mediator-divine (non)object portrayal with the reading subject. What is portrayed within that internal medium, however, is a composite subject-mediator.



In keeping with Julian's self-displacement as mediator in favor of identification with the reader/subject, the internal medium does not present Julian's own relationship with the divine for the sake of emulation. Rather, it elucidates the relationship both she and her reader may have with God as ensouled humans who are among those that shall be saved, and suggests the relationship they also have with each other in the community the message of *Showings* is intended to "profytte." These aspects of the internal medium will be presented and developed in greater detail below, as I elucidate the ways in which Julian uses the hermeneutic of identification to portray the inter-relationships of mediator, subject, and object, as well as the role the hermeneutic plays in fulfilling the donative purpose of *Showings*.

Julian's text does not, however, exist in a vacuum: its composition was part of a broader life about which the available information is scant and yet revealing, a life that gives every indication of also having had a donative purpose for Julian. Therefore, any examination of *Showings* focused toward its asserted donative purpose and the means by which that purpose is fulfilled should also include an examination, to the extent it is possible, of the anchoritic role Julian assumed in the community of Norwich. The hermeneutic of identification through which Julian communicates the meaning of her visions reflects the divine-human reciprocal dynamic her anchoritic life itself symbolized, and the sense of identification with the community and with the divine that is among the characteristics of the anchoritic life in the medieval world.

MEDIATORIAL IDENTIFICATION AND THE ANCHORITIC ROLE IN COMMUNITY

Whatever its date of completion, at least a portion of the composition of LT occurred in the anchorhold in which Julian was enclosed, perhaps soon after her reception of the revelations if not before,¹⁶ but certainly (according to the bequest records noted below) by the 1390s. The depth of rumination within the text itself suggests that LT at the least was developed in an environment allowing considerable time for reflection.¹⁷

Yet as the evidence of her life will demonstrate, for Julian such seclusion was not merely a refuge from the world around her. It served to enable the fulfillment of her desire to serve both God and the community in whose midst she lived as an embodied symbol of the divine-human relationship, and with whom she deeply identified.¹⁸ When Julian's life and text are examined it becomes clear that the desire for identification that makes her receptive to the initial showings is paralleled by the way Julian and her community in Norwich understand her significance as an anchorite in their midst, and the way in which Julian's text interprets the meaning of her visions for her readers.

To consider Julian's presence as an anchoress in Norwich it is important to briefly delineate relevant aspects of anchoritic life in fourteenth-century England. Throughout Christian history, individuals had pursued solitude in order to lead a life more fully dedicated to God, and while some who followed this calling in the Middle Ages became hermits, others sought a different lifestyle. These latter were officially enclosed under the authority of a Bishop in a

¹⁶ Riehle (citing Benz and Lichtmann in support) favors the idea "that Julian was a recluse from early youth" (*Secret* 244); but in the absence of external evidence there can be no certainty.

¹⁷ As Jantzen puts it, "It is clear that this depth of prayer has been developed over some considerable time; and although it is of course possible that this could occur in a secular situation (or in a convent) it might well be thought that this points already to the life of deep devotion of a recluse" (*Julian Mystic* 25).

¹⁸ Anneke Mulder-Bakker notes of anchoresses, "These believers sought to free themselves from the entanglements of family and society as Jesus did, but not to turn their backs on society as such" (14). The evidence of Margery Kempe noted below indicates Julian's involvement with the community as a spiritual guide.

small anchorhold attached to a church and, in Warren's words, "undertook their solitary life by encamping in the heart of the community" (*Anchorites* 7). Although Anneke Mulder-Bakker is writing of earlier continental anchoresses, her words are equally applicable in the late medieval English context:

Living in their anchorholds in the midst of their fellow citizens, anchoresses did not lead the isolated existence that Roman Catholic theologians and church historians imagined. . . . Instead, they were strong, self-assured believers who chose to live at the heart of the community and to serve God in a way that included service to their fellow human beings. Often members of the upper social classes and blessed with a seemingly innate spirit of independence, they dedicated themselves to God without turning away from the world. (12)

This communal anchoritic role is particularly important when considering Julian's life and text in relation to her *evyn cristen* in Norwich. Her words in the sixth chapter of LT, "for oure kyndely wille is to haue god, and the good wylle of god is to haue vs, and we may never sesse of wylling ne of louyng tylle we haue hym in fulhede of ioy" (6.57-59; 308-09), suggest a relationship of divine-human reciprocity: to use a spatial metaphor, a movement involving the general soteriological and formational activity of God toward humans, to "have us"; and a corresponding human movement toward the divine, to "have God." The anchoress can be identified with both aspects of this reciprocity as a representation of the religious aspirations of the community and as an embodied and enclosed sign of divine desire for the community.

Saint Julian's, the church to which Julian's anchorhold was attached, was (and is) located in the area near to the docks along the River Wensum; it was therefore in the midst of the activity associated with the city's commercial shipping industry.¹⁹ Within such an environment, the

¹⁹ Norwich was a prosperous city, shipping textile products and other goods overseas as well as importing various goods for its own populace: Penelope Dunn observes that in 1388 seventeen Norwich merchants were trading abroad (221). River vessels were used to take goods down the twenty miles of the Wensum and the connecting River Yar to Yarmouth for transshipment to larger ocean-going vessels, and the amount of goods being shipped is suggested by the quick turnaround for ships docked at Yarmouth; Dunn remarks by way of example, "the *Seintemarschipp* of Ollard Johansson arrived on 6 December 1388 with a mixed cargo belonging predominantly to Norwich entrepreneurs. She set sail only two days later, on 8 December, laden with Norwich-owned worsted,

anchorhold attached to the church wall would therefore serve as a reminder of human aspiration for the divine, “oure kyndely wille to haue god,” in immediate proximity and juxtaposition to the surrounding environment. Julian’s cell was located within the daily lives of those working and living in the area, yet symbolic of a life far beyond the commonplace;²⁰ and in the highly religious society of the middle ages such a presence was unlikely to go unappreciated. Julian was secluded by enclosure from the community of Norwich yet simultaneously an integral and valued part of it.²¹ She could be identified by the people of Norwich with an exemplary version of their own desire to “haue hym in fulhede of ioy,” and therefore Julian’s enclosure would be less a separation than an identification between the anchoress and her community:

Just as her body was sealed within the physical boundaries of the parish church, so was her own soul inextricably bonded with the unified soul of the mystical Church of her ‘evencristen’, a particularly incarnational realization, of course. (Miles 163)

Such identification would be aided by the fact that, as Denis Turner suggests, “Technically, then (that is, by canon law), she is a common lay parishioner, attached to a parish church” (*Julian Theologian* 13). Julian, even as one uniquely set apart, is still able to be seen, in some sense, as “one of us” by the laypeople of Norwich.

While thus identified with the human side of divine-human relational reciprocity, Julian as anchoress among the Christians of Norwich would also represent the divine side, “the good wylle of god to haue vs” that she speaks of in *Showings*. The location of her anchorhold is again instructive, for the anchoress living in the midst of the community and yet enclosed, a presence

cheese, and skins” (225). Given that multiple river-vessel loads would be required to fill an ocean vessel, it can be assumed that the docks area at Norwich would have constant activity.

²⁰ “Anchoritism in the fourteenth century became part of the urban world, where there were new winds in the air and where anchoritism remained the calm eye of the storm” (Warren 287-88).

²¹ As LeClercq notes, “It was because men and women felt recluses were close to them and yet close to God that they had confidence in them” (“Solitude” 77).

in one sense perceived *indirectly*, would be the appropriate metaphor for the transcendent God seen indirectly under the accidents of the sacrament, or through the spiritual insight of the “goostly” eye of faith.²² Because of this identification of the anchorite with the divine, “identification with the anchorite provided the villager with a private conduit to heaven and salvation” (Warren, *Anchorites* 282); thus people came to anchorites for guidance and wisdom, seeing them as channels for the divine presence to address their situations and needs.²³

The direct evidence of Julian’s activity as a recognized source of spiritual guidance and transcendent wisdom comes from Margery Kempe, who, while sojourning in Norwich, “was bodyn be owyr Lord for to gon to an ankres in þe same cyte, whych hyte Dame Ielyan” (*Book of Margery Kempe* 42.7-9). Margery’s use of the phrase “bodyn be owyr Lord” suggests a direct revelation of some sort, but this is certainly not unusual in her autobiography, and need not exclude human agency.²⁴ In the eighteenth chapter of her *Book* Margery depicts her time spent under Julian’s guidance, describing the various aspects of her spiritual life “whech sche schewyd to þe ankres to wetyn yf þer wer any deceyte in hem, for þe ankres was expert in swech thyngys & good counsel coud ʒeuyne” (42.14-17). Margery’s statement, which implies a common opinion of Julian’s expertise, demonstrates that the latter enjoys a reputation as a spiritual guide.²⁵ Julian’s advice to Margery as portrayed in the latter’s text shows her fulfilling the

²² Compare, for example, Walter Hilton’s description of encountering Jesus in the reading of scripture, “hid an hilid þerinne, wounden in a softe sendel vnder fayr wordis, þat he may note be knowen ne feled bot of a clene herte” (*Scale* II, 43; 326.6-7)

²³ “This freedom for God was a privilege which connected the anchoress even more intimately with her parishioners, as she was expected to use that divine access to bring a new sense of holiness to the heart of the community. She accepted the spiritual responsibilities of praying for their souls, providing counsel and serving as a model of extreme sanctity; in return the community often supported her with bequests and gifts.” (Miles 155)

²⁴ Setting aside any questions of the origin of her choices, Margery had obviously heard of Julian, perhaps from Richard Caster, vicar of St. Stephen’s, Norwich, or from William Sowthfeld, the Carmelite friar she also visited while in the city, both of whom she references immediately prior to introducing her visit with Julian.

²⁵ Liz McAvoy notes of this, “Julian is the only anchorite in Margery’s text who is actually named. This offers her an identity which moves beyond textual anchoritic trope and again suggests an important sphere of influence” (“Reading With the Eyes Closed” 129).

anchoritic role mediating reciprocal divine and human desires, “counselyng þis creatur to be obeydynt to þe wyl of owyr Lord God & fulfyllyn wyth al hir mygthys what-eyr he put in hir sowle yf it wer not a-geyn þe worshep of God & profyete of hir euyn-cristen, for, yf it wer, þan it wer nowt þe mevyng of a good spyryte but raþar of an euyl spyrit” (42.19-24). The fact that she serves within Margery’s text as one of the voices authorizing Margery’s spiritual practices indicates that Margery views Julian as a worthy reference.

It is also important in this regard to note the record of several wills making bequests to Julian, thus reflecting the bequesters’ desire to support her anchorhood.²⁶ Such bequests were not that common in Norwich during the period: Norman Tanner’s research shows that only eight percent of wills in Norwich between 1370 and 1439 included a bequest for anchorites and/or hermits (cited in Warren, 223). Julian nevertheless receives two known bequests from members of the Norwich community²⁷ and several wills from outside the immediate vicinity of Norwich mention her as well, indicating a regional awareness of Julian and her position.²⁸ Magill suggests that such bequests imply that “Julian may have been identified as a good investment for benefactors who wanted her to act as an intercessor” (39),²⁹ although they also may reflect the gratefulness of those who had benefitted from her wisdom. Similarly, the fact that two of the wills not only leave further bequests for Julian’s maids, but mention them by name (Alice and Susan)—a situation unusual in such bequests—could indicate, as E.A. Jones notes, “that they

²⁶ See Watson and Jenkins, “Appendix” 431-35, from which the bequest particulars below are taken.

²⁷ Roger Reed, Rector of St. Michael’s, leaves 2 shillings to “Julian, ankorite,” in 1394; and John Plumptre, citizen of Norwich, bequeaths 40 pence to “the anchoress” in 1415.

²⁸ One (dated 1404) is from Thomas Edmund, chantry priest of Aylesham, about twelve miles from Norwich, and a second is from Isabel Ufford, countess of the adjoining county of Suffolk (dated 1416). Edmund and Ufford mention no other anchoresses in their bequests.

²⁹ Although to a degree involved with the community, anchorites were still “withdrawn from society, begun on that ladder that reached to heaven” (Warren, *Anchorites* 124), and thus, as Mari Hughes-Edwards says of the anchoress, “Paradoxically, it is precisely because of her solitude that they [the anchoritic guides] construct her as able to intercede for the world she seeks to reject” (42).

enjoyed a degree of status by their association with her,” thus witnessing to Julian’s own reputation (78).³⁰ These bequests show that people representing four different positions in society—“a chantry priest, a merchant, an aristocrat and a career cleric: [a] range of testators” (Jones 77-78)—consider Julian to be a presence worthy of support.³¹

The direct evidence of Margery Kempe’s description and the indirect evidence derived from the bequest records indicate that Julian, through her anchoritic identification with the divine, is perceived as fulfilling an intercessory role in the community. From the standpoint of the mimetic triangle, she embodies the mediator-divine (non)object relationship also available (in a non-anchoritic mode) to the *evyn cristen* who are the subject(s) of the triangle, even as she embodies their own desires toward that divine relationship. Julian’s community in Norwich and throughout the region can be seen interpreting her significance through a hermeneutic of identification, not only identifying Julian with the presence of God, but also identifying *with* Julian as one who brings their questions and concerns to God, and who provides God’s wisdom to them. Julian’s anchoritic identity expresses their own higher longings and desires even as her ongoing enclosed presence within the community both displaces her individuality via enclosure yet maintains her identity as one of them. In addition, she is one whom they are willing to support in this unique yet simultaneously representative calling.³² Julian, as will be seen, seeks

³⁰ The wills are those of Plumpton and Edmund; the former mentions Julian’s current maid (unnamed) and her former maid Alice. This may imply they or members of their households had some personal knowledge of Julian, perhaps through seeking counsel or intercession of some sort.

³¹ They also reflect the reciprocal relationship that could exist between anchoresses and supporters, each playing their role in the continuation of that relationship. As Warren puts it, “The medieval Englishman who passed by the cell of the anchorite was more than a passive observer. He was part of a network of support that enabled the anchorite to exist and persist” (15), again suggesting a level of communal identification with the anchorite.

³² As such Julian’s position exemplifies the *Ancrene Wisse*’s depiction of the relationship of the anchoress to the community, that involves her leading a holy life so that “al Hali Chirche-þet is, Cristene fole” can lean on her. This is described as a “foreward”—that is, an agreement—between the anchoress and the church by which she is obligated to her task for the good of the community. See *Ancrene Wisse* 3.325-38 (I, 56).

to be identified with them just as deeply as she attempts to communicate the full meaning of her mystical experiences of 1373.

SELF-DISPLACEMENT AND SUBJECT-MEDIATOR IDENTIFICATION IN THE INTERNAL MEDIUM OF *SHOWINGS*

Denis Turner notes, “. . . there is a closeness of fit between [Julian’s] theological style as vernacular and demotic and her condition of life as anchoress in that cell in Norwich, situated in multiple senses ‘between’ . . .” (15). I would suggest that the textual form of this “betweenness” relates to the forms of identification noted above. Julian is not only identified with both aspects of the reciprocal relationship between divine and human in her mediator role as anchoress in Norwich; divine-human identification plays an integral role in the form Julian’s internal medium takes in *Showings*, and her own self-presentation as mediator. As has been briefly referenced above, this self-presentation, particularly in LT, is striking in its self-displacement and encouragement of subject-mediator identification. As will be seen, this has a profound effect on the internal medium.

This is partly shown in Julian’s reticence, noted above, concerning herself and the details of her life and situation, including, as Grace Jantzen observes, not only personal details but references to current events:

She shares with her readers the deepest and most significant experience of her life, and her sustained reflection upon it. Yet in another sense we hardly know her at all. She tells us nothing of what was going on around her at the time, though it was a tumultuous age. She says nothing about where she lived or in what conditions she grew up. She does not mention how or when she came to be an anchoress, or what she did before that time; nor anything about how, if at all, she was educated. (4)

The reluctance Jantzen notes reflects Julian’s tendency to exclude everything not directly related to communicating her revelations and their meaning. In keeping with her essentially donative purpose, she avoids giving peripheral details about herself and her context any appreciable role.

This coincides with an expressed desire for the reader to identify themselves with the personal voice of the text.

ST already stresses this identification by encouraging the reader to ignore the mediator and assume her position within the events of the text, and to consider the message as one intended directly (rather than secondarily) for them. Julian advises her reader, for example, “And 3e that hyerys and sees this visionn and this techynge that is of Jhesu Cryste to edificacion of 3oure saule, it is goddys wille and my desyre that 3e take it with als grete ioye and lykyng as Jhesu hadde schewyd it to 3owe as he dyd to me” (ST 6.8-11; 219-20). Her use of the words “hyerys” and “sees,” while true of the reading or auditing activity of her audience, also encourages a performative identification with her own hearing and seeing processes in the original visions and their subsequent elucidations as presented in the text. More directly, she notes of her own descriptions, “Alle that I sawe of my selfe, I meene in the persone of alle myne evynn cristene” since, she tells us, God “meenys so” (ST 6.1-3; 219), a passage in which, as Staley puts it, “she insists on her lack of singularity” (118). In light of this situation she directs her reader to “leve the behaldynge of the wrechid worme synfulle creature, that it was schewyd vnto,” and focus instead on God, “that of his curtays love and of his endless goodnes walde schewe generalye this visyonn in comforthe of vs alle” (ST 6.4-8; 219). LT continues such encouragement, reproducing the last two of the above passages without serious modification (see LT 8.33-39; 319-20). Julian wishes to be identified by her reader with the community of *evyn cristen* for whom the revelations are given, presenting herself as one among “alle.”³³ This is the opposite of a self-assertion of singularity with its resulting potential for mimetic rivalry. Instead,

³³ Elizabeth Robertson determines that Julian’s “most frequently used words are ‘all,’ ‘love,’ ‘oneing,’ ‘general,’ and ‘common,’ implying that Julian’s work is not for any one individual, but for everyone, for the general, and her concept of the general is of a community joined by love, a community ‘oned’”(148).

by focusing on the common relationship with the divine (non)object who has gifted her for common good, Julian epitomizes the basis for non-rivalrous mimesis and positive mimetic community noted by Petra Steinmair-Pösel:

The experience of having gratuitously received forms the foundation of positive mimesis. It is cultivated wherever human beings experience themselves as having received a gratuitous gift and consequently are willing to pass on what they have received freely and without calculation. (10)

What has been given to her for the sake of others she willingly mediates to others, presenting this donative element as the basis for her writing, and thus exhibiting (and specifically portraying) a further quality capable of creating a positive community of mimesis.

In the development from the short to the long text Julian makes changes that markedly strengthen this mediatorial self-displacement and subject-mediator identification. This is most noticeable in LT chapters eight and nine, in which Julian consistently reduces the uniqueness of her self-portrayal in ST. Given that, as McGinn notes, Julian in composing LT treats ST “as a kind of relic, employing about 80 percent of its words” (*Vernacular* 437), and that her general tendency is decidedly toward expansion rather than contraction in LT, omissions and modifications from the shorter work take on an added significance. A large number of these alterations have been catalogued and examined by Windeatt (“Julian of Norwich and Her Audience”), but I will confine my consideration to those occurring in the LT passage (8.22-9.34) in which Julian directly presents her unique understanding of her mediator role, and in her description of her illness. Certain of these changes suggest that Julian, over the course of the lengthy period of reflection and adjustment between the two versions, intentionally chooses to further displace herself as a unique presence in order to enable the reader to more comfortably assume the identity of the visionary recipient.

At times such changes are slight, as when, in reproducing the passage from ST 6.8-11 above, Julian drops the phrases “and my desyre” (see LT 8.39; 320) and “as he dyd to me” (see LT 8.40). The former eliminates a reference to her private desire for the reader (“goddes wylle” is retained); the latter eschews a distinction between the “showing” to Julian and to the reader. These changes avoid the appearance of a joint charge to the reader originating from both Julian and God, a situation that would certainly set her apart and identify her more with the object than the subject. Instead, by stressing the directive’s divine origin—“For it is goddes wylle that 3e take it. . .” (LT 8.39)—Julian displaces herself from an apparent position of distinctive authority. Similarly, by eliminating the preceding ST phrase “And 3e that hyerys and sees this visionn and this techynge that is of Jhesu Cryste to edificacion of 3oure saule,” Julian further reduces the first person/second person aspect of the ST sentence and its mediator/subject distinction.³⁴

Other apparent minor attempts to avoid such distinctions occur in LT 8.30 (where “be me” is dropped as a modifier in reference to the word “exsample”); and LT 8.24, in which, regarding a reference to the message as a comfort to Julian’s *evyn cristen*, the phrase “as it es to me” (ST 7.10-11; 224) is dropped. In the same passage, LT drops from the phrase “this syght was schewde in generale” (again referencing her audience of *evyn cristen*) the ST addition “and nathynge in specyalle” (ST 7.11). While this may simply be the purging of a redundancy, it also has the result of eliminating a reference (even in the act of denial) to Julian as the specific recipient, by implication in a different position than the reader. This approach is also apparent in the tendency in LT to replace first-person singular pronouns with plural pronouns.³⁵ Staley notes

³⁴ Windeatt comments that in such changes “Julian moves away from the personal context of revelation towards a more generally based assurance” (“Julian and Her Audience” 4); I would add that they also have the further effect noted of displacing Julian as a mediator in some sense privileged over the reading subject in relation to the object.

³⁵ Laura Saetveit Miles finds 32 examples of such omissions from LT (162). McGinn likewise observes “the shift between the more Julian-centered narrative in the ST and the ‘message-centered’ presentation of the LT, notable in a number of ways, not least the fact that the ‘I’ of the earlier version is replaced by ‘we’ in the LT” (*Vernacular* 439).

of Julian's overall approach, "Like Rolle, she claims a special sight, but disclaims singularity, and like Hilton, aligns herself with a great company of the faithful, her 'evyn cristen'" (141). Julian's is an intentionally communal voice: Rolle's self-portrayed uniqueness is missing in *Showings*, and LT accentuates this lack of singularity.

While the above-noted changes are minor, Julian also engages in greater editorial acts as well. ST includes, for example, a statement again expressing Julian's desire for the reader, here coupled with a reference to her own private desires and their role in the initial revelatory experience:

And so ys my desyre that it schulde be to euery ilke manne the same profytte that I desyrede to my selfe and þerto was styrryd of god in the fyrste tyme when I sawe itte; for yt ys comonn and generale as we ar alle ane, and I am sekere I sawe it for the profytte of many oder. (6.14-18; 220)

Julian eliminates this entire passage from LT chapter nine, retaining only the modified phrase "we be alle one," to which is added "in loue" (LT 9.5; 321), now functioning as a transition to her statement that she is personally no more loved "than the lest soule that is in grace" (LT 9.6-7).³⁶ The effect is again to reduce Julian's unique presence and privileged position. Similarly, Julian eliminates an entire ST passage in which she reveals herself to be a woman, shares her concerns about speaking as an unlettered person, and denies her role as a teacher while simultaneously defending herself for fulfilling her (donative) purpose by sharing what the "sovereign teacher" has revealed to her:

Botte god for bede that 3e schulde saye or take it so that I am a techere, for I meene nou3t soo, no I mente nevere so; for I am a womann, leued, febille and freylle. Botte I wate wele, this that I saye, I hafe it of the schewynge of hym that es souerayne techare. . . . Botte for I am a womann, schulde I therefore leve that I

As the message is intended for all *evyn cristen* equally, including Julian's readers and herself, this shift emphasizes their identification.

³⁶ In the Sloan text of LT the resulting shortened phrase is "for we arn al one in *comfort*," thus making it refer not to the love reference that follows, but the preceding reference that the vision is granted "for ese and comfort" of the "simple" (see *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation* 13). In either case the reduction of Julian's unique presence remains.

schulde nouȝt telle ȝowe the goodenes of god, syne that I sawe in that same tyme that is his wille, that it be knawenn? (ST 6.40-43, 46-48; 222)

The elimination of this statement with its self-deprecatory comments has been suggested as a sign of Julian's greater authorial assurance in composing LT.³⁷ It has also been proposed as a move reflecting and seeking to circumvent the potential danger involved for laywoman authoring a theological text in late medieval England. In this view, Julian avoids controversy by eliminating any reference to her gender and thus avoiding "a response—and perhaps reprisals—predicated upon gender," while allowing her to present a level of theological analysis considered more appropriate to male authors: "By deleting references to her gender from her second version, she implicitly adopted a 'male' voice, one that allowed her to explain or to objectify the subjective text of the visions she originally recorded" (Staley 138, 139).³⁸

It is certainly probable that such considerations underlie Julian's editorial choices. Nevertheless it is also worth noting that Julian does not directly adopt a "male" voice (although a late medieval reader would likely assume it in the absence of contrary evidence, as Staley suggests), but rather eliminates gender-specific self-references altogether. This is a move that, in light of the elimination of other forms of singularity, may also be a further technique of mediatorial self-displacement. Julian "genericizes" herself from the short text's specificity, both as a woman and as "leued, febille and freylle"; the latter terms, although "no more than modest self-disparagement" (Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings* 222 n41), are nevertheless self-descriptive and thus may serve to limit audience identification.

³⁷ Anna Lewis, for example, says, "Julian can omit this statement because of increasing confidence, not in her role as teacher, but in her ability to express God's meaning (to understand the vision) and because of the need to convey this meaning with effectiveness and authority" ("Directing Reader Response" 17).

³⁸ Windeatt notes in this regard the "self-conscious insecurity of her position" in the passage omitted, and "Julian's defensiveness about the unusualness of publication by one of her sex" ("Julian and Her Audience" 14).

Purging of such descriptors is common in the long text. In LT 3.22-23 (291), for example, Julian eliminates “dow3tter” from the priest’s address to her (ST 2.26; 208), again avoiding gendered uniqueness. This extends to the source of Julian’s own initial desire for suffering as well, which ST specifies as based on hearing a story of St. Cecelia:

For the thirde, I harde a man telle of halye kyrke of the storye of saynte Cecylle, in the whilke schewynge I vndystode that sche hadde thre wonndys with a swerde in the nekke, with the whilke sche pynede to the dede. By the styrrynge of this I conseyvede a myghty desyre, prayande our lorde god that he wolde grawnte me thre wonndys in my lyfe tyme. (1.47-50; 204-205)

In LT Julian eliminates this reference in favor of the vague statement, “For the third, by the grace of god and teching of holie church I conceiued a mightie desyre. . .” (2.40-41; 288). This could be another intentional attempt on Julian’s part to downplay a gendered community and influence,³⁹ but it is certainly true that this excision more broadly eliminates a specific source for Julian’s own desire, one that would quite possibly not be shared by or relevant to particular readers. Eliminating it in favor of what Windeatt calls “a more conventional explanation” (“Julian and her Audience” 13) thus allows for potential greater identification between the reader and the voice of the text. The same could be said of excising references to “my modere that stode emangys othere” (ST 10.29; 234) and “a childe” who accompanies the priest (ST 2.23; 208), unnecessary details that Staley lists among the ways “Julian inserts herself into the Short Text” (*Powers* 114), and that add a specificity to her sickbed scene that Julian eliminates from LT.

³⁹ As Staley says of the ST version, “I would go even further and suggest that the community she adumbrates is a female one, as the reference to Saint Cecelia, a saint whose life seems to have been particularly important to female piety, implies” (114).

Julian chooses to share very little about her own life and situation, and what little she does share in ST is further reduced in LT.⁴⁰ The effect of these techniques of self-displacement is to enable reader to more readily identify with the one receiving the vision, an identification which (as has been shown) Julian openly encourages. This suggests Julian choosing (in Girard's terminology) to renounce the "autonomy" of her desire in favor of a "positive undifferentiation" between mediator and subject (see Girard, "Battling" 131). Such a choice models a transcendent rather than rivalrous mimetic triangle with her reading subject in keeping with the limitless nature of the divine (non)object. The result is an internal medium that identifies subject and mediator to a sufficient extent that they are largely conflated into a single entity. This does not in reality eliminate the mediatorial triangle, as Julian continues to mediate her divinely given experience and in fact serves as a much more involved explicator of its meanings in LT than in ST. But Julian models the transcendent quality of her own desire by her renunciation of its autonomy. She is eager to share the revelation of the divine relationship with others via a first-person voice shorn of unnecessary personal details.

This non-specificity also allows the voice's dramatic narratives and depictions of internal processes to better enable readerly performance of the visionary experience and its subsequent elucidation.⁴¹ Bernard McGinn says of this aspect of LT, "Julian does not maintain a single or consistent narrative or point of view but introduces long meditations (e.g., LT 44-63) that allow

⁴⁰This makes the recent attention and conjecture her life and persona has attracted in the scholarly world rather ironic. I suspect Julian would not be pleased with the extent to which such attention can involve the personal and individual details she seeks to eliminate from consideration, although there is certainly much attention focused on her theology as well.

⁴¹ "The sight or locution sets a theme for each showing that is reiterated and developed throughout that division. Julian conveys the gradual enhancement of her inward understanding by returning to this initial motif or theme throughout the showing, each time elaborating on it in more detail. Through this recursive, cumulative method of developing the revelations, she imitates the ruminative process of meditation" (Baker, *Julian* 140). Through this structural approach the overall narrative quality is maintained even in the often-complex theological elaborations that follow the initial sight, and the reader is invited to reproduce the ruminative process in the act of reading.

us to become a part of her inner struggle for contemplative understanding. She also makes use of internal dialogues with Jesus as learning devices for herself and her audience” (*Vernacular* 437). While functioning in the didactic manner McGinn suggests, these also allow the reading subject to perform the role of Julian, identifying with her experiences and reactions, so that the text functions “like a visionary script” (Lewis, “Directing Reader Response” 18). The reading subject is able performatively to themselves ask the questions, express the confused reactions, and repeat the received assurances that Julian, as the voice of *Showings*, asks and expresses within the internal medium of the text.

These narrative and depictive qualities, even within more analytical sections, can be seen in the consistent dramatic portrayal of Julian’s frequent requests for further understanding. When she is shown the “little thing, the quantitie of an haselnott” (5.9; 299), for example, rather than simply explaining its meaning to her readers, she instead narrates her response, “What may this be?” (5.12; 300), thus identifying herself as one of those seeking understanding and allowing the reader to performatively identify with this response. This extends to more profound questions as well. In the third revelation, for example, when she is shown that God “doth alle that is done” she notes, “I merveyled in that syght with a softe drede, and thought: What is synne?” (11.5-7; 336), again stressing that she shares what would be a common reaction to such a revelation. In effect, Julian is telling her readers “I am one of you” and allowing the reader to performatively voice the reaction themselves. Similarly, when confronted by God’s unwillingness to blame fallen humanity, Julian goes to some length narrating her incomprehension and confusion, not only asking “How may this be?” but stressing her “merveyle,” “grett feer,” and “perplexite,” adding, “my reson was grettly traveyled by my blyndnes.” Ultimately she dramatizes herself crying out to the Lord and wondering, “how shall I

be esyde, who shall tell me and tech me that me nedyth to wytt, if I may nott at this tyme se it in the?”(see 50.10-38; 511-12).⁴²

Anna Lewis says of *Showings*, “Julian is, after all, the absolute example, representing in herself the struggles, the questions and the ups and downs of Everyman’s Christian life” (“Directing Reader Response”16).⁴³ Nevertheless, the dramatized quality of these struggles and questions not only allows the reading subject to voice these questions and concerns; it also gives the divine responses an immediacy for the reader as well, answering the questions the reader has performatively asked. As such they become one of the means, as Jessica Barr puts it, by which, via the reading experience, “we will *see through* Julian to Christ, surpassing the mediating influence of her narrative persona (and actual/authorial self) in order to come directly into contact with the lessons that her visions impart” (87). Barr adds, “Yet this self-erasure seems self-contradictory, as it is by virtue of her individual experience and her relation of that experience that we are to gain access to Christ’s words and to ‘forget’ her presence” (87). But considered from the perspective of the mimetic triangle, this is not so much self-contradictory as it is suggestive of an intentionality on Julian’s part to merge subject and mediator in the internal medium’s portrayal.⁴⁴ Even as Julian the anchoress would have been a “hidden presence” in the

⁴² This marks the theological aspect of *Showings* as theopoetic in nature, eschewing confident statements of doctrine in favor of experientially-derived suggestions of provisional meaning and significance. Elizabeth Robertson notes that “Julian’s narrative voice both wonders and hesitates to claim final or complete knowledge of the events she presents” (147).

⁴³ In “A Picture of Christendom,” Lewis expands on this observation: “Nevertheless, Julian becomes the template for reader response . . . not because she considers herself a suitable role model, but because she knows herself to be one with other believers (who are also readers) and because she is party to the essential meaning of the text as revealed by its author. . . . Thus, the interpretive commentary in *A Revelation* becomes the possession, or rather the product, of an entire community” (86, 87). Lewis’s approach in “A Picture of Christendom,” while focused on issues of reader response and interpretation, emphasizes that through the creation of this interpretive community Julian creates “a picture of perfect Christian concord, the ideal Christendom” (80). This dovetails with my own focus in this chapter on the internal medium’s portrayal of a community of positive mimesis with its divine source and example of transcendent triangular relationships.

⁴⁴ Barr’s later comment regarding ST, “Her particular narrative persona’s experience is necessary, in other words, in order that it may be erased and thus rendered sanctifying for a much larger community” (88), would nicely connect this intentionality with Julian’s donative purpose. Barr notes the muting of Julian’s particular experiences in LT, but

midst of the docks of Norwich, so she seeks to be a hidden presence in *Showings*, subsuming her own identity into the communal “person of alle my evyn cristen.”⁴⁵

In the internal medium of *Showings* Julian engages in authorial self-displacement—a self-displacement that is increased by the editorial choices in LT’s use of its ST source—vacating her authorial voice and narrative of uniqueness and personal detail as much as possible. In doing so she openly encourages readerly identification with that voice and facilitates a performative reading allowing the reader to express Julian’s own experiences, questions, and ruminations, and hear divine answers as if directed to them. She herself, via her choice of positive non-differentiation and her emphasis on the communal nature of her message, models a relationship embodying mutuality of desire between subjects and mediator in relation to the object, and thus epitomizes those Girard calls “models who never become obstacles and rivals for their disciples because they desire nothing in a greedy and competitive way” (*I See Satan Fall* 40). In focusing the internal medium away from herself as mediator and toward God the divine (non)object who has given the revelations for the benefit of all, Julian undermines the possibility of mimetic rivalry and instead provides a basis for positive mimesis and thus a positive mimetic community. As she says of herself in perhaps the most direct and striking expression of this attitude, “For yf I looke syngulerly to my selfe I am ryȝt nought; but in generall I am, I hope, in onehede of cheryte with alle my evyn cristen” (9.9-10; 322). Julian desires to be one in the mutuality of love with others within the community of Christ.

Portraying herself in this manner as mediator serves to encourage the reading subject’s desire to

I have tried to show above that as Julian’s dramatic style in LT continues to associate her more analytical sections with the primary experiences, the overall performative aspect persists.

⁴⁵ As Miles, who makes a similar connection, notes of Julian’s presence within the text, “Rather than project a distanced, exclusive construction of the authorial self, Julian instead uses the text to blend her own identity with that of her fellow Christians” (161).

similarly become one in charity with the community of *evyn cristen*. The result is an internal medium intentionally making this hermeneutic of identification between subject and mediator an integral part of its message, creating what amounts to a composite subject/mediator as one of the essential means of fulfilling the donative purpose of Julian's experiences.

OBJECT-SUBJECT/MEDIATOR IDENTIFICATION IN THE INTERNAL MEDIUM OF *SHOWINGS*

The hermeneutic of identification is not limited to subject and mediator. The internal medium of *Showings*—particularly in the expanded theological reflections of LT—elucidates the meanings of her visions through a series of identifications between God and humanity; that is, between the divine (non)object and the composite mediator/subject that is both Julian and her reader. These identifications further underscore and facilitate the subject/mediator identification, as well as portraying the divine foundation for transcendent, non-rivalrous community. Julian's theological interpretation of her revelations is complex and wide-ranging and has elicited a large amount of recent critical analysis and explication. My purpose is not to reiterate this material by examining the breadth of the theological presentation in *Showings*. Rather, I will focus narrowly on a brief exposition of two elements that relate directly to divine-human identification, suggesting how they impact the non-rivalrous aspect of positive mimetic community Julian exemplifies in her own choices as mediator.

INCARNATIONAL DIVINE-HUMAN IDENTIFICATION AND INCLUSIVE MIMETIC COMMUNITY

The most striking element of Julian's theology is also the most striking example of the hermeneutic of identification, the double interpretation of the lord-servant "syght," with its emphasis on the incarnational identification of Christ with humanity.⁴⁶ This identification takes

⁴⁶ "Whych syght was shewed double in þe lorde, and . . . double in the servant" (51.4-5; 514). It can briefly be sketched, as far as those points relating to identification: a lord has a servant who sets out to do his will but falls into

on greater significance given Christ's role as the source of the non-rivalrous imitation that facilitates a progression of relationships embodying positive triangular mimesis, and thus enables the resulting community.⁴⁷

In the first of these interpretations the servant is understood to be Adam and, through his exemplary position, all of humanity, "For in the syghte of god alle man is oone man, and oone man is alle man" (51.103-04; 522). The hermeneutic of incarnational identification in Julian's lord-servant explication is set up by this initial identification of the servant with Adam. It leads to the first of Julian's elucidations of soteriological meaning, her unique presentation of the unbroken divine relationship with post-lapsarian humanity. Although the servant falls into a ditch it is only through his eagerness to serve the lord, and she notes that "he was as vnlothfull and as good inwardly as he was when he stode before his lorde, redy to do his wyll" (51.36-37; 516), a statement Riehle rightly describes as "an uncommonly bold, certainly not orthodox reinterpretation of the fall" (*Secret* 227). Julian is shown that the fall does not disrupt the godly will in those who are to be saved, although due to sin the servant is "lettyd and blyndyd of the knowyng of this wyll" (51.108-09; 522). Nor, she discovers, does it disrupt the reciprocal divine love for the human: not only does the lord refuse to impart to the servant "ony maner of blame" (51.34; 516), but promises to "reward hym his frey and his drede . . . [and] geve hym a 3yfte that be better to hym and more wurschypfull than his owne hele shuld haue bene" (51.49-50, 51-52; 517-18). This illustrates her earlier "beholdyng" that although humans have done much "wherefore we deserve payne, blame, and wrath," yet "nott with stondyng alle this I saw verely

a ditch and is injured. He lays there suffering, while the lord (whom he cannot see) looks on him with pity. Julian provides two symbolic interpretations of its meaning.

⁴⁷ See the discussion in chapter one.

that oure lorde was nevyr wroth nor nevyr shall” (46.28-30; 492-93).⁴⁸ The relationship is not broken, for as Julian herself states in chapter twenty-seven, God shows “no maner of blame to me ne to none that shalle be safe . . . sythen he blamyth nott me for synne” (27.35-38; 407).⁴⁹ Julian’s initial interpretation of the lord and servant, with its touchingly absurd image of the servant wallowing in the ditch, unaware of the loving and sympathetic lord seated nearby, functions as a critique of traditional understandings of human fall and culpability.⁵⁰

Julian is troubled by the apparent heterodoxy of this idea.⁵¹ The alleviation of this concern is suggested by her eventual understanding that “oure fader may nor wyll no more blame assigne to vs than to hys owne derwurthy son Jhesu Cryst” (51.233-34; 535). It is Julian’s second interpretive “syght” that provides this answer, and it is the central example of the hermeneutic of incarnational identification of *Showings*. Julian states that she had almost twenty years of “techyng inwardly” from the Lord (51.87; 520), carefully considering all the aspects of the lord-servant example. The ultimate soteriological understanding she is given is that of the identification of Christ with Adam/humanity: “In the servant is comprehendyd the seconde person of þe trynitye, and in the seruannt is comprehendyd Adam, that is to sey all men” (51.211-

⁴⁸ While this assertion might seem to go against various scriptural references to God’s wrath, Julian makes a distinction between the lack of divine anger and the perception of *apparent* divine anger: that while “oure curtesse lorde . . . kepyth vs so tenderly whyle we be in oure synne,” yet when we recognize our sinfulness, “then we wene that god were wroth with vs for oure synne. Than be we steryd of the holy gost by contriscion in to prayer, and deyer amending of oure selfe with alle oure myght to slake the wrath of god” (40.1-8; 454). As del Mastro notes of the lord-servant image, the servant “assumes his lord is angry with him and that he himself is far separated from his lord; accordingly, he is miserable. In fact the lord is very near the servant the whole time, does not blame him at all for his fall, and loves him greatly, never slackening in that love” (87).

⁴⁹ Christ’s words to Margery Kempe, “I xal neuyr ben wroth wyth þe, but I xal louyn þe wyth-owtyn ende” (*Book of Margery Kempe* 30.14-15), parallel these ideas as well as Julian’s depiction of the saved soul knowing God’s love “with outyn ende” (86.27; 734). Perhaps they may reflect Julian’s guidance during their time together.

⁵⁰ It suggests what Kenneth Burke’s logological terminology terms a “spirit of solemn comedy” (235). In Burke’s epilogue to *The Rhetoric of Religion* his “logological Lord proves ‘more loving’ than Augustine’s theological God,” and “embraced by the Lord, Burke’s Satan never falls, for instead of opposing God, he proves apposite” (McMahon 58). Similarly, Julian’s human servant never rebels or falls in a culpable sense, nor does the Lord condemn, while sin itself is revealed to be “behovely.”

⁵¹ The lord-servant example is, in fact, the divine answer to her earlier feeling, “yf I take it thus, þat we be no synners nor no blame worthy, it semyth as I shulde erre” (50.23-25; 511-12).

12; 532).⁵² This is not a denial of Christ's divinity. Julian repeatedly emphasizes his divine sonship and declares "that he is god, evyn with the fader as anenst the godhead," yet the Son must also take on the identity of the human, "that he woulde be man to saue man" (51.238-40; 535). Julian enlarges upon this incarnational identification by the striking phrase, "For in alle this oure good lorde shewed his owne son and Adam but one man" (51.228; 534),⁵³ and this becomes the basis for her soteriological understanding:

When Adam felle godes sonne fell; for the ryght onyng whych was made in hevyn, goddys sonne myght nott be seperath from Adam, for by Adam I vnderstond alle man. Adam fell fro lyfe to deth, in to the slade of this wrechyd worlde, and aftyr that in to hell. Goddys son fell with Adam in to the slade of the meydens wombe . . . and myghtely he fechyd hym out of hell. (51.218-25; 533-34)

For Julian the incarnation is the crucial form of divine identification with fallen humanity, an identification suggested by the image of the twin "falls" into sin (Adam) and into the incarnation (of Christ).⁵⁴ It is therefore the crucial example of the identification of the (non)object and composite subject-mediator in the internal medium.

Through the second interpretation of the servant, the internal medium portrays Christ modeling a desire for selfless sharing, choosing to join and identify with Adam/humanity for their benefit. In doing so, it also portrays the source for a positive mimetic community of mutuality among Julian's *evyn cristen*, for as Schwager says of Christ's actions during the incarnation, "his behavior departs completely from the lawlike pattern of escalating mimesis"

⁵² Kerrie Hide says of this passage that Julian "blurs the boundaries between Christ and humankind," and "emphasizes the ontological union between Christ and humanity. This implies that Christ does not merely represent humanity: he is humanity" (126).

⁵³ Riehle notes, "she obliterates the dividing line between them. For her, they are linked inseparably to one another" (*Secret* 228).

⁵⁴ This identification is revealed to include Christ taking on the two-part nature of the human soul: in the incarnate Christ, "The hyer perty was evyr in pees with god in full joy and blysse. The lower perty, whych is sensualyte, sufferyd for the saluacion of mankynd" (55.50-52; 569). As Sandra J. McEntire puts it, the incarnation is "where the new Adam, and God, become like humanity. This likeness is not a similitude, but real" ("Likeness of God" 15).

(37). The internal medium's presentation of Christ is a model for human behavior characterized by the selflessness, mutuality, and sharing that epitomize a non-rivalrous, transcendent mimetic triangle. Such behavior is imitative, involving the desire to identifying with Christ even as Christ desired to be identified with humanity. This positive human desire is also enabled by divine empowerment, for Julian's internal medium asserts that the result of divine incarnational identification with humankind is a corresponding human identification with the risen Christ, for "we haue in vs oure lorde Jhesu Cryst vp resyn" (52.10; 547). Thus, even the fallen sensual nature is transformed by Christ uniting it with his own:

For ther was ryghtfully endyd the walowyng and the wrythyng, the gronyng and the monyng; and oure foule dedely flessch, that goddys son toke vppon hym, whych was Adams olde kyrtyll, streyte, bare and shorte, then by oure savyoure was made feyer, new, whyt, and bryght, and of endless clenness. . ." (51.303-07; 542-43).

Julian's reading subjects will be enabled in the fulfillment of their desire for Christlike behavior by the transformation accomplished through Christ's incarnational identification with fallen humanity. So Julian, earlier in *Showings*, shares Christ's statement that he will remove people's "veyne affeccions" and gather them together, making them "meke and mylde, clene and holy by onyng" with him. She says as a consequence, "And than saw I that ech kynde compassion that man hath on hys evyn cristen with charyte, it is Crist in hym" (28.17-22; 409-10). The mimetic community of mutual charity among all that shall be saved proceeds from Christ himself via the reorientation of desire to Christlike channels, and thus embodies the transcendent form of triangular mimesis.⁵⁵

This understanding of the incarnation is also relevant to the unusually positive view of the body throughout *Showings*, as the memorable reference to the beauty of the digestive system

⁵⁵ Girard describes Jesus' message as, "The only way to avoid violence is to imitate me, and imitate the Father" (Adams, "Violence" 23).

as a “purse” that opens to be emptied suggests.⁵⁶ It also has implications for the inclusivity of Julian’s message, for as Riehle notes, “since God himself chose the incarnation, he enhanced the value of the human body, both male and female. A further consequence is that Julian does not accept that women should be granted less esteem on account of being equated with the body” (*Secret* 217). Julian’s message is not simply about a disembodied “soul,” but about an embodied being and therefore an embodied savior, and her internal medium reflects this valuing of the body in a way that shuns the gender-based devaluation of any member of her *evyn cristen*. Incarnational identification becomes another source for the inclusiveness of the internal medium.

So, interestingly, does Julian’s description of the servant’s garb: “Outward he was clad simply, as a laborer which was dysposyd to traveyle” (51.165-66; 527). Lynn Staley notes that this description “defines the distance between social degrees in a world where lords dressed and behaved very differently from servants,” suggesting, “Where her contemporaries assigned brutish and barely sensate qualities to those who occupied its margins, Julian finds Adam’s face, our face, the face of God’s love” (166, 169). Again, seen from the standpoint of the internal medium’s overall suggestion of its implied subject, the depiction of the servant (who is ultimately revealed doubly as both Adam and Christ) supports the inclusivity of the audience for Julian’s donative message, extending to even the lowest of society’s classes. It also serves to suggest the common humility of humanity’s position in relation to God, yet simultaneously the breadth of a divine incarnational identification with humanity that extends to all, regardless of apparent worth or position.

⁵⁶ 6:35-39; 306-07. See Staley’s discussion of this analogy and Julian’s focus on “the details of humanity that unite us to [Christ’s] triumphantly conceived flesh” (119-20). The Sloan manuscript eliminates this passage, perhaps due to its earthiness, although Watson and Jenkins note that it could also be a result of incomprehension (see *Writings of Julian of Norwich* 391).

A notable element of Julian's hermeneutic of identification, a counterpart to the identification of Christ and humanity in the incarnation, is the identification of Christ and humanity within the economy of the godhead itself. This forms a further basis for a community characterized by positive mimesis and the sharing of the mutual relationship with the divine (non)object. Julian portrays it as the explanation she has been seeking regarding the lack of blame shown to sinners:

Ande for the grete endlesse loue that god hath to alle mankynde, he makyth no depertyng in loue between the blessyd soule of Crist and the lest soule that shall be savyd. For it is full esy to beleue and to truste that the dwellyng of the blessyd soule of Crist is full hygh in þe glorious godhede; and truly as I vnderstode in oure lordes menyng, where the blessyd soule of Crist is, there is the substance of alle the soules that shall be savyd by Crist. (54.2-8; 561)

The lack of blame for sin is answered through the hermeneutic of soteriological identification: the victorious Christ is now identified with Adam/humankind. God makes no distinction in love between Christ's sacred soul and the soul of any he has saved, and that soul is now brought in Christ into the interrelationship of the Trinity.

From a Girardian standpoint there is a fascinating parallel in the lack of a distinction between Christ (the mediator of salvation) and the souls of the saved on the one hand, and between Julian as mediator of this message and the reading subjects of her text on the other. This parallel is suggestive of the enabling of positive human relationships by the underlying positive relationship of divine trinitarian love. To reiterate Fodor's observation from the first chapter, "Because the Fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit is distinguished by continuous self-dispossession and self-giving, a certain space is opened up whereby we, as God's creatures, are enabled to share in God's Trinitarian life" (257). God in saving humanity models the attitude of giving that exemplifies non-rivalrous relationships and the transcendent mimetic triangle, through a willingness to share the divine relationships with "alle the soules that shall be savyd by

Crist.” Julian stresses that this divine gifting in love, because of the breadth of inclusivity, becomes the basis for a further identification that leads to a mimetic form of love at the level of human community: “What may make me more to loue myn evyn cristen than to see in god that he louyth alle that shalle be savyd, as it were alle one soule?” (37.13-15; 443). The relational gifting from the divine (non)object to the subject-mediator community becomes the source for mimetic relational gifting within that community.

In presenting this divine sharing, the internal medium portrays an exemplary positive mimetic community to its reading subjects, inviting them to desire to know that divine community and share it with others even as God has done. This suggests what Steinmair-Pösel says of positive mimesis: that it “doesn’t aim at replacement” of the mediator subject in a rivalrous manner, “but at gratuitous participation—ultimately participation in the divine life. The experience of having gratuitously received forms the foundation of positive mimesis” (10). The divine (non)object’s modeling of giving results in a sharing of divine life that enables the human positive mimetic community. As has also been noted, the internal medium stresses that this human embodiment can only be accomplished through imitation of Christ the source of non-rivalrous mimesis, and therefore in the community of positive relationships suggested by the term *evyn cristen*.

DIVINE-HUMAN SUBSTANTIAL IDENTIFICATION AND INCLUSIVE MIMETIC COMMUNITY

Given its centrality, it is not surprising that her presentation of the incarnational identification of Christ and Adam/humanity causes Julian to speak of the human being’s purpose in relation to God. She states in the fifty-fourth chapter, “Our soule is made to be goddys dwellyng place, and the dwellyng of oure soule is god, whych is vnmade” (54.10-12, 561-62). This leads her to add, in what Kerrie Hide calls “an almost pantheistic statement” (79), the

striking assertion, “And I sawe no difference between god and oure substance, but as it were all god,” although she hastens to qualify this identification in an acceptably orthodox fashion by noting, “and yett my vnderstandyng toke that oure substance is in god, that is to sey that god is god and oure substance is a creature in god” (54.17-20; 562-63). Nevertheless, as Riehle notes, Julian sees “the substance or ground of the soul, as being so linked with the divine nature that . . . she is no longer able to perceive any distinction between the two” (*Middle English Mystics* 156).⁵⁷ This identification with the divine substance occurs in the soul’s own substance that, while typically understood as the “higher” of the two parts of the soul in contrast to the lower, sensual nature, is for Julian something more, akin to our being.⁵⁸ According to Julian, who we are is intimately connected in a profound way with who God is.

This understanding of the (qualified) identification between human subjects and divine (non)object needs to be brought into the equation when considering Julian’s previous identification of mediator and subject. It is in relation to the limitless (non)object—in light of which mimetic rivalry is excluded⁵⁹—that the “positive undifferentiation” exhibited in Julian’s internal medium is made possible. The divinely based identification precedes and enables the inter-human identification: one is intimately connected to the other by reason of the other’s intimate connection to God. The reading subject not only already shares a substantial relationship with the divine (non)object, but with other subjects who share that same substance and substantial relationship in a community of mutuality.

⁵⁷In *The Secret Within*, Riehle stresses with regard to this “bold notion” that Julian treads carefully: “By adding that human substance is subject to creation (562-63), she escapes the possible charge that her assertion of the identity of God with the human soul is heterodox” (219).

⁵⁸Denise Baker notes, “Like Augustine, Julian uses the term substance as a synonym for existence.” She quotes Augustine, “For since God is the supreme existence. . . the things that He made He empowered to be, but not to be supremely like Himself” (*Julian* 119). Kerrie Hide similarly says of this Augustinian interpretation that for Julian “substance includes soul and body, all that human nature is” (80).

⁵⁹See the discussion in chapter one.

The bond between human and divine is strengthened by this linking of human and divine substance (with the created/uncreated caveat to retain the orthodox distinction of being).

Similarly, when Julian speaks of human reason in chapter 80, she notes, “God is the ground of oure kyndly reson,” so as to stress this further connection to the divine nature (707.6). As noted by Denise Baker, a passage from her English contemporary Walter Hilton provides an interesting comparison in this regard:

For þou schalt vnderstondyn þat a soule hath two partyes. þat on is kalled þe sensualite; þat is þe fleschly felynge be þe fyue owtward wyttes . . . þat oþer partye is kalled reson and þat is departed in two: in þe ouer partye and in þe nether partye. þe ouer is likned to man, for it schuld be maistre and soueraygne, and þat is properly þe ymage of God for by þat only þe soule knoweth God and loueth him. An þe neþer is likned to wumman, for it schuld be buxom to þe ouere partye of reson as wumman is buxom to man. . . (*Scale of Perfection* II 13.8-18; 68)

Hilton’s association of the “nether” reason with woman highlights the inclusivity of identification in Julian’s anthropology: for Julian, women are not associated with a lower rationality resulting in ersatz substantial identification; rather, such identification is equally inclusive of all.⁶⁰ Julian’s hermeneutic of identification is neither limited by nor contingent upon gender, be it in terms of divine imagery or human capability. This inclusivity is paralleled in her presentation of the fall and the identification of humanity with Adam, about which she states, “For in the syghte of god alle man is oone man, and oone man is alle man” (51.103-04; 522). Julian avoids distinguishing the guilt of Eve and Adam, a move which, as Sandra McEntire points out, functions “to exonerate Eve from blame” (“Likeness of God” 14), and to counter the

⁶⁰ See Baker’s discussion in relation to an Augustinian gendered understanding of reason exemplified by the Hilton passage (*Julian* 127-29). Elsewhere Baker similarly observes, “Julian, however, refuses to gender these two parts of the soul as is common in the Augustinian tradition” (“Image of God” 44).

misogyny common to medieval portrayals of her.⁶¹ The result is an emphasis on the inclusive nature of the community of *evyn cristen*. Julian feels herself chosen as the mediator of a message meant for the benefit of all; similarly, the internal medium she constructs to share that message with others portrays the inclusivity of divine identification without traditional gender-based limitations. The community of divine-human identification in *Showings* is an inclusive community.

The hermeneutic of identification between the divine (non)object and the human subject can be summed up in Julian's phrase, "And thus is mannys soule made of god, and in the same poynte knyte to god" (53.39-40; 558). The uniqueness of Julian's internal medium relates directly to this hermeneutic of identification. Julian's presentation of substantial identification furthers the idea of a human community based on transcendent, non-rivalrous mimetic relationships imitating divine sharing. The fact that Julian avoids gender-based distinctions serves to increase the inclusivity of both identification and community in a way (as has been noted above) rather exceptional in the medieval era.

HUMAN MOTHERHOOD AND THE DIVINE MATERNAL

But the most striking example of inclusivity in *Showings* occurs through its use of maternal imagery for the second person of the Trinity, which brings this inclusivity into the divine side of divine-human identification and further portrays the inclusive nature of the human beneficiaries of divine identification as well.

⁶¹ Liz McAvoy notes of the Chester Mystery Cycle depiction of Eve, for example, "It is a similarly socially and morally transgressive Eve who brings about human downfall and effects permanent alienation from the paradisiac allocated to Adam and herself by God" (*Authority* 1).

Maternal imagery for God (and particularly for Christ) was not uncommon in the medieval era,⁶² but as McGinn notes, “no one before or after Julian explored the theology of divine motherhood with greater depth, sophistication, and insight” (*Vernacular* 459). To this should be added that, given the internal medium’s focus on divine-human identification, its presentation of divine maternity has an unusually direct significance for its understanding of the human person and for the overall donative message of the internal medium.⁶³ The identification with the maternal occurs throughout Julian’s presentation of the second person of the Trinity’s role in creation, salvation, and spiritual formation. Within her explication of the lord-servant image, Julian states:

For the furst I saw and vnderstode that þe hygh myght of the trynyte is oure fader, and the depe wysdom of the trynyte is oure moder, and the grete loue of the trynyte is our lorde . . . [T]he seconde person, whych is oure moder, substanncially the same dereworthy person, is now become oure moder sensuall, for we be doubell of gods makyng, that is to sey substannciall and sensuall. (58.34-40; 585)

Julian here identifies the second person with the “moder” both in relation to substance and sensuality, with reference to the personification of wisdom as a woman in Hebrew wisdom literature:

There Wisdom is a female figure who existed before the beginning of the world (Prov 8:22-31) and who is associated with the act of creation: “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Prov 3:19). She is also responsible for the work of recreation: “while remaining in herself, she renews all things” (Wis 7:27), and the work of salvation: “the paths of those on earth were sent right, and [they] were saved by wisdom” (Wis 9:18). She is involved in the work of sanctification: “in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets” (Wis 7:27). (Nuth 66)

⁶² The French Carthusian mystic Marguerite d’Oingt (c1240 - 1310), for example, compares Jesus’ motherhood with that of a human mother by noting that “in one day you gave birth to the whole world”; and this causes her to say, “For are you not my mother and more than my mother?” (qtd. in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 153; see Bynum’s discussion of twelfth-century maternal imagery, 111-69).

⁶³ In “The Exploratory Image,” Sarah McNamer suggests elements of motherhood underlie the presentation of divine attributes—immanence (and thus created human nature), unconditional love, and mercy—throughout Julian’s text. See bibliography.

Via Julian's use of these images and associations, the maternal and, more broadly, the feminine, are brought into the Trinitarian economy,⁶⁴ and as a result the image of God in the human soul is itself revealed as multigendered, allowing for a more inclusive quality of identification in the substance of the soul. Further, in making this identification Julian brings an inclusivity into the creation of the human through the mother by whom "we be doubell of gods makyng."⁶⁵ Humankind in general, as well as the individual among Julian's *evyn cristen* in her or his essence, are identified with the substance of God who is Mother as well as Father. They may therefore value the divine image in themselves without a gender-based degree or reductive quality to this likeness. Julian's elimination of personal gendered references to herself as a woman, "leued, febille and freylle," noted above, is paralleled by an intentional portrayal of the feminine within the Godhead. Staley suggests, "Julian's decision to remove references to literal femininity from the Long Text allows her to develop a Trinitarian theology that incorporates the feminine into what is more often described as a masculine zone of power" (174). This might imply a loss at the human level to facilitate a gain at the divine; but from the standpoint of the internal medium both these elements positively serve her hermeneutic of identification, the former by reducing human gender specificity, the latter by increasing divine gender inclusivity.⁶⁶

The identification of second person of the Trinity with "oure moder" in relation to the soul's creation also forms an integral part of Julian's soteriological presentation and its inclusiveness. This is accomplished partly through birthing and nurturing images not uncommon

⁶⁴ As McAvoy puts it, "this 'thre' is defined by Julian in multigendered terms" ("Reading with Eyes Closed" 123).

⁶⁵ Denise Baker suggests of this latter aspect, "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" (*Julian* 134). In its divine gender-inclusivity, the internal medium via divine-human identification facilitates a corresponding human gendered inclusivity.

⁶⁶ "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." (Baker, *Julian* 113).

in the medieval era, and partly through parallels to human parenting that have major implications for the internal medium's inclusivity.

Regarding the former, Julian states, for example, "But oure very moder Jhesu, he alone beryth vs to joye and to endlesse levyng, blessed mot he be. Thus he susteyneth vs with in hym in loue and traveyle . . . [until] he had done, and so borne vs to blysse" (60.19-23; 595-96). Not only is Christ's role in salvation described in terms of a mother giving birth, but the sustenance of the eucharist is identified with maternal milk: "The moder may geue her chylde sucke hyr mylke, but oure precyous moder Jhesu, he may fede vs wyth hym selfe . . . with the blessyd sacrament, that is precyous fode of very lyfe" (60.29-32; 596-97). Here spiritual nourishment in the form of the eucharist is associated with the maternal body, causing Sandra McEntire to note that Julian's "Jesus as Mother imagery. . . is grounded in gendered physicality, the body and the breast in terms of the nature of female nurturing" (22). McEntire's characterization is certainly true, and yet Julian's presentation of the maternal metaphor simultaneously affirms and exceeds this physically-maternal association, suggesting that while Jesus is "oure precyous moder," his nurturing and therefore his maternity is nevertheless distinct from that of any human mother in that he feeds us "with hym selfe" and that this feeding is with "precyous fode of very lyfe." Julian suggests that while an infant is nourished *from* the maternal body, the soul is nourished *by* the maternal body of Christ.

Julian identifies this latter maternal nourishment with the eucharist and its sacramental identification with the male-gendered body of Christ on the cross,⁶⁷ and thus her meditation on the sacrament results in a gender-simultaneity in its portrayal of Christ. Julian's ongoing use of

⁶⁷ In relation to Julian's language here there is every reason to assume she is making a relatively direct reference to Jesus' words in John 6:54-56, in which he expresses the necessity of feeding on his flesh and blood. David Aers comes to a similar conclusion in "Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*" (99).

masculine pronouns in relation to maternal imagery has a similar effect, and such elements have further implications for the breadth of divine-human identification, as McAvoy suggests:

In Julian's theology, God can be male and female, father and mother . . . Christ can be son, brother, and mother. . . . The arbitrary lines of delineation between these categories are no longer relevant, and the motherhood of Mary, of Christ and of God creates a unity in which we as men, women, but primarily as humans are 'oned' with the Holy Trinity. (*Authority* 85)

All of Julian's *evyn cristen* are reflected in her multi-gendering of the divine and are equally capable of the relationship characterized by that inclusive identification.⁶⁸

The uniting of what would normally be thought of as opposites also serves to stress that in speaking of God Julian is speaking of one beyond definitions and limitations.⁶⁹ Through this paradoxical uniqueness Julian stresses the (non)object quality of the divine, which cannot be limited to the categories and capacities of human thought; as Jean-Luc Marion notes, God "is the Unthinkable. . . . The relation to God escapes the conceptualization in which we comprehend idols" (*Idol* 24), and indeed, "The experiential verification that the unthinkable is not illusory consists precisely in the fact that thought does not manage to think it" (141). The irregardability of Julian's multi-gendered depiction becomes its validation as (an inherently inadequate) portrayal of the transcendent and an affirmation of divine (non)object status, even as it simultaneously emphasizes the breadth of divine-human identification. It is a further representation of the limitless quality of the divine (non)object, thus capable of satisfying the desire of all without the possibility of mimetic rivalry. The God who exceeds our concepts and

⁶⁸ Jay Ruud also observes the presence of a variety of masculine images for God and Christ in *Showings*, particularly those associated with romance, in juxtaposition with maternal images. He says of this situation, "The romance hero, tempered by female love, is, like Julian's God, androgynous, possessing the ideal qualities of both genders" (202). Aers also comments on the masculinity of Julian's metaphors for Christ in the lord and servant example (see 95).

⁶⁹ Staley says of Julian's paradoxical combinations, "In the Long Text, Julian goes well beyond contemporary usage, employing terms that were conventionally treated as opposed pairs, but, at the same time, refusing to emphasize the distance between head and heart, authority and experience, gloss and text, masters and servants, male and female, father and mother. . . . Rather than establish terms that seek to contain—and inevitably delimit—the objects they signify, Julian creates a system wherein identities flow almost imperceptibly into one another" (178).

upends our distinctions (and therefore by implication denies our possibility of possession) is for this reason available to all without limit, thus fostering positive triangular mimesis.

As noted above, the presentation of Christ as mother in birthing and nurturing is not unique; Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109), for example, asks Christ in relation to his fellow monks, “Gentle nurse, gentle mother, who are these sons to whom you give birth?” and suggests that Christ has “labored and accomplished more in this than all the others” (qtd. in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 114). But Julian extends the maternal nurturing metaphor to associate it with parental roles in childhood development:

The kynde lovyng moder that woot and knowyth the neyde of hyr chylde, she keypyth it full tenderly, as the kynde and condycion of moderhed wyll. And evyr as it waxith in age and in stature, she channgyth her werkes, but nott her loue. And when it is wexid of more age, she sufferyth it that it be chastised in brekyng downe of vicis, to make the chylde receyve vertues and grace. (60.51-57; 599)

Julian’s maternal images here are those of day-to-day familial life.⁷⁰ Having portrayed these varying manifestations of a mother’s love overseeing and enabling her child’s maturation, Julian concludes by saying, “This werkyng with all þat be feyer and good, oure lord doth it in hem by whome it is done. Thus, he is oure moder in kynde by the werkyng of grace in the lower perty, for loue of the hyer” (60.57-59; 599-600). In doing so, she identifies God’s actions in regard to the sensual nature’s ongoing reformation with those of a mother toward her child.⁷¹

⁷⁰ “There is no question that for Julian, mothering is *praxis*; she. . . identifies it with a series of activities that are concrete, engaged, variable, and adaptable” (Donohue-White 22).

⁷¹ Hide says of this portrayal of Christ, “Always consistent in love, the heavenly Mother gradually enables human beings to mature or *increase*, though often they make mistakes and feel reproach” (142). The fact that this consistent divine love is identified with the actions of the “kynde lovyng moder that woot and knowyth the neyde of hyr chylde” (60.51-52; 599) serves to affirm human maternal care and wisdom. “Where so many medieval accounts of the feminine emphasize weakness, Julian describes, not simply femininity, but maternity, and describes it in terms of strength” (Staley 174).

Julian's identification of the divine with the maternal includes a complete portrayal of the maternal in terms of wise guidance and oversight as well as birthing and feeding.⁷² The effect is to communicate the value of motherhood in and of itself as well as by association with the divine role. God is portrayed in the internal medium choosing to act in multiple ways as a human mother would, identifying divine activity in the life of Julian's *evyn cristen* with wise maternal oversight. This assertion elevates the human maternal role multi-directionally: on the one hand God's choice of the maternal role honors it as one worthy of divine emulation; on the other hand, it reveals that to function in the maternal role in parenting is to be like God, which—as will be discussed below—has important implications for the inclusivity of the internal medium.

The identification of Christ with the maternal may also play into Julian's restraint regarding the Virgin Mary.⁷³ Since the maternal has now been brought into the Trinitarian economy, its locus within Christian theology need not be limited exclusively or even primarily to the Virgin.⁷⁴ The internal medium's shift in maternal focus from the virgin motherhood of Mary to the motherhood of Christ, coupled with Julian's down-to-earth associations of that maternity with daily oversight of childhood development, is telling. Medieval theology often served to enshrine the Virgin as an "alternative" uncompromised and immaculate maternal body that McAvoy can call "a fully idealized construct, in reality unattainable but . . . develop[ing]

⁷² Alexandra Barratt's observation relates to this wholistic portrayal of the maternal role: "In considering medieval ideas on motherhood, it is useful to distinguish motherhood as a socially-constructed and learned role from motherhood as a biological fact. Julian uses both concepts" ("In the Lowest Part" 248).

⁷³ While in the eleventh vision Christ lauds her as "the hyghest joy that I myght shewe the, and most lykynge and worschyppe to me" (35.7-8; 398), she is nevertheless displaced to a degree by Christ's own motherhood, for "oure lady is oure moder . . . and oure savyoure is oure very moder" (57.47, 49; 580).

⁷⁴ The scribe of the Sloan manuscript of LT or the source of that copy, apparently uncomfortable with this shift away from Mary, adjusts 60.45-47 (598) in order to give her a share in the praise of transcendent motherhood by changing the gender of one pronoun and modifying what in Paris manuscript is a reference to Christ as "very mother of *lyfe*" into a reference to Christ as Mary's son: "This fair lovely word 'moder' . . . may ne verily be seid of none but of him, and to *hir* that is very moder of *hym* and of all" (*Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love* 98, emphasis added). Watson and Jenkins say of this adjustment and the distress it suggests, "[Sloan's] irrelevant inclusion of Mary in the sentence is an indication of how radical Julian's application of the term 'mother' to Jesus could be. But it detracts from the focus of the argument" (*Writings of Julian of Norwich* 408).

alongside—perhaps even as a counter measure to—traditional misogynistic discourses pertaining to the female body” (91). Julian’s maternal Christ (seen in relation to the image of a woman nurturing, guiding, and supervising her growing child with understanding) would seem a comparatively affirmative portrayal of the form of maternity associated with women not modified into “idealized constructs,” even if Christ’s divine maternity in some senses transcends the comparison. The effect of this identification is to further emphasize and enable the internal medium’s representation of its expansive intended audience of *evyn cristen*. Julian writes not merely to those who have undertaken the vowed life symbolized by the Virgin Mary and often treated as an ideal in ecclesial thought,⁷⁵ but to those living in the world, in the settings and relationships familiar to laypeople.⁷⁶ The relationship portrayed in Julian’s internal medium is available to those in all walks of life.

Given its association with all aspects of the portrayal of the human soul’s salvation and spiritual growth in the internal medium of *Showings*, the image of Christ as Mother, as Nuth puts it, “acts as a summary symbol for Julian’s whole soteriology” (67). But the maternal identification of the second person of the Trinity also becomes a source of further divine-human identification. The divine is revealed to have both the attributes of masculine and feminine; the strength and authority of the maternal role—human and divine—is emphasized along with its creative and nurturing aspects; and the incarnational adoption of the maternal role further stresses the inclusivity of divine-human identification.⁷⁷ The result for the internal medium is to

⁷⁵ “For most of the medieval centuries, saints were seldom mothers, or mothers saints (unless they were mothers of saints) for excellent physiological reasons. Hagiographers emphasized the saints’ avoidance of sexual intercourse by persistence in virginity, or by continence if they were married” (Atkinson 46). This emphasis is among those forming the context for Margery Kempe’s obsession with virginity and chastity; see, for example, *Book of Margery Kempe* chapters 11 and 15.

⁷⁶ Reflecting the connection between here text and her anchoritic role, these would include the people in whose midst Julian lived in Norwich, and those—such as Margery Kempe—who came to her for guidance.

⁷⁷ Baker alludes to this latter point in suggesting, “Conceiving of these embodiments enacted by Christ as motherhood, Julian of Norwich transforms the Augustinian denigration of woman as sign of the body. By

emphasize the universal availability of the object-subject/mediator [*O(-Sm)*] relationship, the universal identity of the possible recipients for Julian's donative intent and message, and the breadth and inclusivity of the positive triangular mimetic community proceeding from that identity.

THE HERMENEUTIC OF IDENTIFICATION AND THE INTERNAL MEDIUM'S DONATIVE PURPOSE

The above examination has demonstrated that in *Showings*, and particularly LT, Julian's transcendent internal medium presents a thoroughgoing hermeneutic of identification between mediator and subject, resulting in a composite subject-mediator with which the reader (the "subject" of the actual triangle) may identify.⁷⁸ Julian, by choosing to adopt a position of positive undifferentiation, models for the reading subject an attitude that exemplifies the qualities of a non-rivalrous triangular mimetic relationship. The internal medium also invites, and its literary style facilitates, readerly performance of the mediatorial voice. This performative identification, aided by the dramatic qualities of the text's narrative, extends to the entire presentation within the text of the initial revelatory event and subsequent elucidations, all of which the reader is enabled and encouraged to consider as personally addressed.⁷⁹ Rather than presenting Julian's own relationship with the divine for the sake of emulation, the internal medium emphasizes the divine relationship already available for Julian and her *evyn cristen* to possess in its fulness in a triangular mimetic community with the divine and with one another.⁸⁰

envisioning a God who is both Father and Mother, she affirms that both literally and symbolically woman is created and re-created in the *imago Dei*" (*Julian* 132).

⁷⁸ "Alle that I say of me I mene in person of alle my evyn cristen, for I am lernyd in the gostely schewyng of our lord god that he meneth so" (8.33-34; 319-20).

⁷⁹ "For it is goddes wylle that 3e take it with a grete ioy and lykyng, as Jhesu hath shewde it to yow" (8.39-40; 320).

⁸⁰ Anna Lewis, focusing on reader response and interpretation in relation to Julian and her readers, comments, "By incorporating every Christian into herself, Julian extends her unity with God and with Holy Church to her fellow believers." Lewis suggests the result is "a picture of harmony" ("A Picture of Christendom" 87). I would stress, though, the ultimately and essentially "positive mimetic" aspect of Julian's portrayal of the relationships of the community within the internal medium.

In that regard, the hermeneutic of identification extends to an identification between the composite subject-mediator and the divine (non)object. This occurs through the portrayal of Christ's chosen incarnational identification with Adam/humanity via the lord-servant example and the identification of Christ with the human soul in the eyes of God. The giving qualities of both the trinitarian interrelationship and Christ's incarnation are also presented. The identification is also portrayed by linking divine and human substance (however couched in carefully orthodox terms). These elements of the internal medium portray the divine source of a mutuality enabling a non-rivalrous, positive mimetic community that (to again quote Steinmair-Pösel), "is cultivated wherever human beings experience themselves as having received a gratuitous gift and consequently are willing to pass on what they have received freely and without calculation" (10). The inclusivity of the maternal imagery in *Showings* encourages the widest possible audience of *evyn cristen* for this donative message.

This message is disclosed in the text's ultimate focus on the love of God, which is revealed to be the "meaning" of the entire experience for Julian—"Wytt it wele, loue was his menyng" (86.16; 733)—and therefore (via the internal medium) for her reading subject. But this love is not merely to be the private possession of an individual subject in relation to the divine (non)object, any more than the revelations themselves were Julian's private possession. Julian's hermeneutic throughout *Showings* has stressed the identification of subject-mediator (and thus by implication "alle the soules that shall be savyd by Crist") and divine (non)object, capable of producing a community of mutuality in and through Christ that exemplifies the qualities of positive triangular mimesis and thus embodies divine love. Her donative intent in relation to this image of community is shown by her words in the text's final chapter:

This boke is begonne by goddys gyfte and his grace, but it is nott yett performyd, as to my syght. For charyte, pray we alle to gedyr with goddes wurkyng, thankyng, trustyng, enjoyeng, for thus wylle oure good lord be prayde, be þe vnderstandyng þat I toke in alle his owne menyng, and in þe swete wordes where he seyth fulle merely: I am grownd of thy besechyng. (86.2-7, 731-32)

The reading subject is called upon to “perform” the text, desiring and praying to embody its meaning. Appropriately, this is not done in isolation. It is “we alle to gedyr with goddes wurkyng, thankyng, trustyng, enjoyeng,” the combined *Sm(-O)* relationship portrayed within the internal medium, who form this inclusive performing community. It is a community Julian’s internal medium seeks to enlarge by inspiring its reading subjects to join their own performance to that of the human-divine communal transcendent triangle via a positive mimetic desire inspired by Julian’s textual mediation, thus fulfilling her stated donative intent:

For truly I saw and vnderstode in oure lordes menyng that he shewde it for all he wyll haue it knowyn more than it is. In whych knowyng he wylle geve vs grace to loue hym and cleve to hym, for he beholde his hevynly tresure (with so grete love on erth that he will give us more light), and solace in hevynly joye, in drawyng of our hartes fro sorow and darknesse whych we are in. (86.7-12; 732)

CHAPTER FIVE
LOVE-SLAIN WITNESSES: TRIANGULAR MIMETIC DESIRE
IN THE TRANSCENDENT INTERNAL MEDIUM
OF RICHARD CRASHAW'S TERESA POEMS

It would be incorrect to describe Richard Crashaw as a donative mystical writer in the sense that term has been applied in the preceding chapters to Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich; that is, as a writer whose direct personal experiences of the divine form an integral part of his writing corpus and serve as the basis of a donative purpose exhibited throughout his writing.¹ Crashaw's poetry as a whole contains a variety of themes, sacred and secular, suggesting varying intentions and occasions both important and banal, the latter including, for example, lines occasioned by sending two apricots to Abraham Cowley.²

Nevertheless, at various points—most notably in the poems concerning the life and writings of the great Spanish Carmelite reformer Teresa of Avila³—Crashaw could be described as a mystical poet in the sense that he writes poetry portraying mystical experience. The mystical experience portrayed in these poems is not Crashaw's own, but Teresa's: even the title "Flaming Heart," for example, references Teresa of Avila's experience of transverberation.⁴ Nevertheless, approaching these poems critically from the standpoint of triangular mimetic

¹ Such experiences would include Rolle's *fervor* and *canor* or Julian's revelations. The question of whether Crashaw himself could be defined as a mystic must, of course, remain open, as any attempted answer would be based on the confusion of poetic technique with personal devotional utterance discussed below, as well as bringing up the vexed issue of the meaning of the word "mystic" itself. The relevance of any such question is a more foundational consideration, and critical judgments regarding who is and is not "a mystic" often appear to reflect what Thomas Merton calls "a kind of scholarly compulsion to deny and to reject, as if the most important task of the student of mysticism were to uncover false mystics" (147).

² "Upon two green Apricoakes sent to Cowley by Sir Crashaw"

³ These poems are "A HYMN to THE NAME AND HONOR of the Admirable SAINTE TERESA," "An APOLOGIE for the Fore-going Hymne," "The FLAMING HEART," and "A SONG." While the last poem is not addressed to Teresa, it continues the themes and imagery of the three preceding poems. Only the first two of these appear in *Steps to the Temple* (1646), the former titled "In Memory of the Vertuous and Learned Lady Madre de Teresa that sought an early Matryrdome" in the 1646 and 1648 editions. The poems only achieve their final form and sequence in *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652), and my discussion will be based on that edition, while noting changes from the 1646 and 1648 editions where applicable to the argument. The poems are reproduced from the edition edited by L.C. Martin.

⁴ The transverberation episode will be discussed below.

desire reveals Crashaw's donative intent and his effort to stimulate the reader's mimetic desire to "dy in loue's delicious Fire" ("A Song" 4).

CRASHAW'S *DERIVATIVE* DONATIVE INTENT

That certain of Crashaw's overtly religious poems have a donative intention in the sense of seeking to guide others to positions or experiences broadly similar to his own is readily discernable. In "To the Same Party Covncel concerning her Choise," for example, Crashaw presents himself, much like Richard Rolle, as a go-between, telling his recipient that he will "venture to speak one good word / Not for my self alas, but for my dearer Lord" (6-7), and encouraging her, "'Tis time you listened to a brauer love, / Which from aboue / Calls you vp higher" (20-22). Similarly, his 1652 "To The Noblest & best of Ladyes, the Countesse of Denbigh" openly indicates its intention to persuade her "to render her selfe without further delay into the Communion of the Catholick Church" Crashaw has already entered.

But a different form of donative purpose is also apparent in the poems revolving around the figure of Teresa of Avila. In "An Apologie" Crashaw provides several clues concerning this intent, noting humbly (in words addressed to Teresa) that he has "transfus'd the flame / I took from reading thee, tis to thy wrong / I know, that in my weak & worthlesse song / Thou here art sett to shine where thy full day / Scarse dawnes" (2-6). This poetic "setting" of Teresa is related to the "mighty Love" contained in her own words:

'Tis heau'n that lyes in ambush there, & breaks
From thence into the wondring reader's brest;
Who feels his warm HEART hatch'd into a nest
Of little EAGLES & young loues, whose high
Flights scorn the lazy dust, & things that dy. (24-28)

Crashaw suggests that his own experience of such effects underlies an intention to sing her praises:

. . . O pardon if I dare to say
Thine own dear bookes are guilty. For from thence
I learn't to know that loue is eloquence.
That hopefull maxime gaue me hart to try
If, what to other tongues is tun'd so high,
Thy praise might not speak English too. . . (6-11)

As Diana Trevino Benet says of Crashaw's reason for writing, "His reverence for her, combined with his experience of the effect of her writing, everywhere apparent in these poems, resulted in his elevation of the word" (155).⁵ From the perspective of triangular mimetic desire, his experience of the Teresan mediator-divine (non)object relationship portrayed in the internal medium of her texts inspires his own project to portray that same relationship to a wider audience. Crashaw indicates that in the "fore-going hymne" he has attempted to present Teresa to an English-speaking (and, as the subheading in *Carmen Deo Nostro* "as hauing been writt when the author was yet among the protestantes" implies, predominantly Protestant) audience largely ignorant of her writings. He has personally witnessed a power present in the Spanish mystic's life and words that can cause her readers to "wonder" and be "warmed" so that their hearts might take "high flights." Now Crashaw's experience of the "heau'n" Teresa speaks is to

⁵ Crashaw's Laudian sympathies (discussed below) may have made him particularly responsive to Teresa's *Life*. The descriptions of her mystical experiences and her use of sensory and erotic language would seem attractive from a Laudian standpoint, given that movement's appreciation of beauty and mystery as well as its openness to the medieval religious legacy. Various critics including Stella P. Revard, Paul Parrish, and Maureen Sabine have also noted Crashaw's tendency to be attracted to and write about feminine figures—Venus, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Teresa among them. (See in particular Revard, "Crashaw and the Diva.") His attraction to Teresa's *Life* may be an example of this affinity as well.

be passed on through his own words for the sake of those capable, like himself, of hearing its meaning:

. . . no law controwlls
Our free traffique for heau'n, we may maintaine
Peace, sure, with piety, though it come from SPAIN.
What soul so e're, in any language, can
Speak heau'n like her's is my souls country-man. (18-22)

Crashaw does not portray himself as the primary translator of Teresa's works into English.⁶ He is attempting to praise her, to reiterate events of her life—as portrayed by Teresa herself in her *Life*—and transmit her universal heavenly language (from which he has “learn't to know that loue is eloquence”) to an English audience via his poetry.⁷

“An Apologie” demonstrates that Crashaw intends these poems to be read and to potentially fulfill this donative purpose. As an apology for “the fore-going Hymne” the poem seeks to answer objections a reader might have to its poetic portrayal of the divine relationship enjoyed by a Spanish Catholic Carmelite, seeking to uphold its appropriateness in an English Protestant context. It initially expresses Crashaw's own response to Teresa's “eloquence.” But the shift in lines 24-28 from first-person pronouns to third-person references concerning the “wond'ring reader” whose heart is transformed by encountering Teresa's *Life* expands the portrayal of the responding subject beyond Crashaw. Any reader of Teresa's self-portrayal in her “rare WORKS” (and by suggestion Crashaw's own reiteration of that portrayal in “the fore-

⁶ They had been translated, notably by Toby Matthews in 1623 and in a further 1642 edition. George Walton Williams suggests the title of Crashaw's “Flaming Heart” likely references the title of this translation: *Vida, The Flaming Hart or the Life of the Glorious S. Teresa* (see *Complete Poetry* 61). It is reasonable to assume that Crashaw also wishes his poetry might inspire its reader to turn to Teresa's own *Vida*.

⁷ This has relevance to claims (noted below) of Crashaw's “non-Englishness.” As John N. Wall says, “Here, Crashaw's employment of the figure of St. Teresa is explicitly to enrich English devotional life, not to escape his “Englishness” (119).

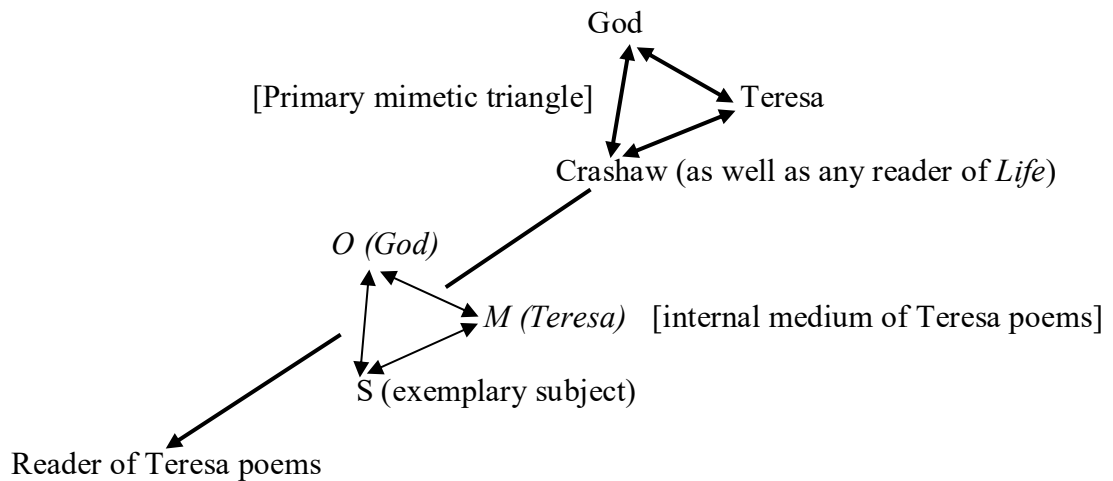
going Hymne”) may feel “his warm HEART hatch’d into a nest / Of little EAGLES & young
loues.”

Crashaw is not, as has been noted, comparable to Rolle or Julian, the mediators of direct divinely given mystical experiences. He is himself a responding subject whose mimetic desire has been enkindled by another’s internal medium, and this has become a donative gift to be shared with others through his Teresa poems. In that sense, his is a *derivative* donative purpose: Crashaw’s poetry furthers the donative effect of Teresa’s own *Life*, that has already demonstrated its transcendent power to warm and transform hearts via the thousands of “virgin-births with which thy soueraign spouse / Made fruitfull thy fair soul” (“A Hymn” 168-69). Those who would respond to his own poetic reiteration of her self-portrayal will be adding to that number.⁸ Crashaw’s portrayal of the donative success of Teresa’s own self-portrayal and its ability to transform readers’ hearts becomes in effect a statement and potential fulfillment of his own derivative donative purpose insofar as his poetry reiterates that self-portrayal.

The derivative nature of Crashaw’s donative intent has an important effect on the internal medium of the Teresa poems. Crashaw functions in one sense as the secondary mediator of a further transcendent triangle, and to a degree presents himself as such in “An Apologie.” Nevertheless, within “A Hymn” and “Flaming Heart” Crashaw’s internal medium focuses on Teresa as mediator in relationship with the divine (non)object, often with direct reference to her own self-portrayal in her *Life*. These poems’ frequent use of Teresa’s own language describing her experiences further asserts her mediatorial position even as the poetic voice of the poems lauds Teresa for her desire and for her effectiveness as mediator. Within the internal medium,

⁸ As R.E. Young puts it, “Teresa is a flame that kindles fire or “sparks” in other souls, the children of her “virgin-births”; and these souls form her crown in heaven” (119). Crashaw will attempt to share that flame with another audience.

that poetic voice joins the reader in the community “subject” of the portrayed triangle, the first person plural “our” whose souls are fed by Teresa’s works (“A Hymn” 155, 158) and who are described as “Sons of thy vowes,” the previously mentioned “virgin-births,” and “loue-slain wittnesses of this life of thee” (“A Hymn” 167, 168; “Flaming Heart” 84). These latter “sons” function as exemplary subjects. In addition, the poetic voice will ultimately become a personified exemplary subject, particularly in “A Song,” modelling appropriate responses to the Teresan mediator-(non)object relationship. Thus, the transcendent internal medium of the Teresa poems portrays a version of the primary Teresan triangle⁹:



When approached from an understanding of Crashaw’s derivative donative intent, the internal medium is revealed moving beyond a mere portrayal of a mediator-object relationship. It portrays instead a complete, and specifically Teresan, transcendent triangle, including a responding subject.

⁹ A more detailed depiction of the internal medium will conclude this chapter.

A Different View of Crashaw

Elucidating the intentionality and subtle complexity of Crashaw's technique may also help to counterbalance the often-negative critical reception he has received. Michael McCanles claims that the usual reaction to Crashaw's imagery has been "quite simply embarrassment" (189), and in many instances McCanles's characterization proves overly optimistic. The introduction to Crashaw in the fourth edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* states that he exaggerates his imagery "toward the grotesque," engaging in "the exploitation of far-fetched, almost perverse parallels . . . distorted by extravagant spiritual pressures" (Abrams 1:1355).¹⁰ *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* accuses him of "extravagance" (Ousby 220), and Douglas Bush, who defines baroque poetry as "poetry like Crashaw's," adds, "Its motto might be 'Over-ripeness is all'" (147). Elsewhere, his poetry has been critiqued for its "hysterical intensity," "spiritualized voluptuousness," and "cheap glitter" (qtd. in Rambuss 498).

The response is often no better from those approaching him in relation to the study of spirituality. Louis Bouyer pays Crashaw the rather backhanded compliment of calling him "a very touching figure, certainly very sincere, if a little hysterical in his way." Yet Bouyer says of Crashaw's poetry, "His conceits are the most baroque liquefactions and incandescences of the whole of English literature," and of the imagery of the Teresa poems, "This falsely sensual liquor can only burn on a sea of sugariness" (133).¹¹

Although Bouyer himself is Catholic, there is an anti-Catholic prejudice which can often be discerned in the critical response to Crashaw, particularly in the nineteenth century;¹²

¹⁰ The eighth edition notes, "Although some have pronounced his images grotesque, Crashaw is alone among English poets in rendering the experience of rapture and religious ecstasy" (Logan 1639), a more judicious statement that nevertheless references negative opinion.

¹¹ Bouyer's comment would seem to ignore that the source of much of Crashaw's language is Teresa's writings.

¹² See the discussion of Crashaw's reputation from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries in Austin Warren's articles and the survey by Roberts and Roberts (noted in the bibliography).

William Hazlitt, for example, calls the poet “a hectic enthusiast in religion and poetry, and erroneous in both” (156, qtd. in Rambuss 498). Twentieth century criticism may continue this prejudice in a more subtle form, as when Mario Praz states, “Perfect poems are rather rare in the body of Crashaw’s work . . . perhaps because Crashaw himself is living in a world of imagination that does not have its roots in England” (*Wit of Love* 135). The implication is that perfection is equated with degree of “Englishness” in opposition to continental Counter-Reformation influences.¹³ Lorraine and John Roberts, citing several similar examples, note “The extent to which religious prejudice influenced literary judgments about Crashaw’s poetry in the nineteenth century, and continues to shape critical opinion, cannot be overestimated” (10).

When not embodying underlying prejudices, critiques may still suggest reductive views of the complex and contentious religious world of seventeenth-century England. Barbara Lewalsky, for example, states that Crashaw represents “very different aesthetics emanating from Trent and the Continental Counter-Reformation, which stresses sensory stimulation and Church ritual (rather than Scripture) as a means to devotion and to mystical transcendence” (12). But such a generalization doesn’t take sufficient account of similar ritual and liturgical views within the English church. While Crashaw appears influenced by Counter-Reformation poetry, the view of ecclesiology and liturgy often associated with Bishop William Laud also encouraged sensory stimulation and church ritual,¹⁴ and as Thomas Healy observes, “The Cambridge [Crashaw] arrived at in 1631 was increasingly becoming dominated by Laudian elements whose

¹³ Similarly, in Austin Warren’s words Crashaw “found the models for his style not in Jonson and Donne but in Marino and the Jesuits,” and the resulting style was therefore foreign, Warren claims, for “As it remains today, so the tone of English Catholicism was sober and austere” (*Richard Crashaw* 203).

¹⁴ “Laud’s (and of course Charles I’s) vision of a ceremonial churchmanship defended by *jure divino* episcopacy and kingship, and committed to the forceful subjugation of preaching to the church’s liturgy, especially the eucharist” (McCullough xii). Ruth C. Wllenstein notes that in such circumstances, Crashaw’s turn to continental springs of spirituality “was not necessarily alien to large elements in the English temper; unless the whole Laudian movement is to be considered so” (36).

views he adhered to” (93).¹⁵ This latter claim can be demonstrated by Crashaw being chosen to write a poetic inscription on the frontispiece to the 1632 edition of Lancelot Andrewes’s sermons, a collection which Laud co-edited with John Buckeridge and which contained sermons chosen for their appropriateness to Laud’s high church cause.¹⁶ As Healy suggests, in such a situation “Crashaw was not forced to look abroad to discover the formal reverence he desired, his life at Peterhouse provided him with a native base where both the style and devotional direction of his poetry would be appreciated” (93). Although Crashaw’s Teresa poems “A Hymn” and “An Apologie” were written, as the latter notes, “when the author was yet among the protestantes,” Crashaw had converted by 1646 and “Flaming Heart” and “A Song” were written subsequently. Nevertheless, the spirituality the Teresa poems reflect is not simply that of baroque Catholicism but is present within the varieties of seventeenth-century English Protestantism as well. Indeed, the concluding section of “Flaming Heart,” added in the 1652 edition, echoes the litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*,¹⁷ suggesting an ongoing English influence on Crashaw’s style even at that point.¹⁸

¹⁵ Anthony Milton states of such elements, “Principal among these was the restoration of the ‘beauty of holiness’—a conviction that the churchy building was God’s house and should be treated as such, reflected in the more elaborate decoration of church interiors and furniture, and in enhanced importance placed upon the inherent ‘edifying’ value of the public worship and ceremonies conducted within” (“Unsettled Reformations” 70).

¹⁶ “*XCVI. Sermons* consciously presented [Lancelot] Andrewes’s writings as a Laudian manifesto. The overwhelming majority of sermons included in it were preached at court on high feast days after Andrewes’s consecration as bishop under James I. And the editors’ organizing principle for the sermons in their folio was not chronology or place of preaching (as was conventional), but the church’s liturgical year” (McCullough xii). McCullough’s quote in footnote 14 concerning Laud’s vision is in reference to the editorial procedure undertaken in this text. George Walton Williams also notes, “It is likely that Crashaw’s reputation as a youthful poet of high church sympathies recommended him to Laud and Andrewes’s friends and secured for him this privileged and honorific appointment” (*Complete Poetry* 490).

¹⁷ See Williams 61.

¹⁸ J.A.W. Bennett notes in this regard that Crashaw’s “forms of devotion, we now know, were fixed long before he left Peterhouse and the Anglican fold” (145). Given this situation, John N. Wall’s point is well taken: “No one questions Herbert’s or Donne’s Englishness, even though they differ from Milton quite markedly in poetic style and religious sensibility. I see no grounds to argue that Crashaw is any less ‘English’ than Donne or Herbert” (113).

Prior to the increasing opposition to Laudian forms of worship and ecclesiology at Cambridge and elsewhere that left him a kind of high-church refugee, Crashaw's views were part of an important, if contested, aspect of the Church of England's landscape. As Kuchar notes, it was only in the atmosphere of increasing hostility toward such views that Crashaw turned elsewhere,¹⁹ as is suggested by David Lloyd's 1668 account of Crashaw's conversion to Roman Catholicism:

This Divine poet . . . seeing Atheism prevailing in *England*, embraced Popery in *Italy*, chusing rather to live in the Communion of that corrupt Church, in the practise of fundamental truths . . . than to stay here, where there was hardly the face of any Church, after the overthrow of those to make way for all errors. (qtd. in Kuchar 295)

While Lloyd's description is likely colored by his own views, and perhaps a concern to downplay Crashaw's conversion, it still implies Crashaw's apparent satisfaction with the forms of worship and devotion that he knew at Cambridge and at the Ferrar family retreat at Little Gidding.²⁰ Crashaw's own native religious context would be amenable to the sensory and affective qualities of the poetic language and imagery he adopts in the Teresa poems.²¹ The

¹⁹ "These included bouts of popular and official iconoclasm, the overthrow of Laudian ceremonialism, the imprisonment of Laud himself, the investigation of parochial clergy for scandalous or popish conduct, and, most significantly, calls for the 'root and branch' reform of episcopal government and the abolition of the established liturgy. . . . Meanwhile the noose tightened for disaffected clergy and dons: a significant minority were sequestered from their livings in the mid-1640s, and both universities were purged, first Cambridge in 1644-5 and then Oxford in 1647-9." (Fincham and Taylor 459). Crashaw was among those directly affected by the university purges. Wall points out that Crashaw's initial exile in Leyden was not a flight into Catholicism but "to join a community of the Church of England in exile." He also notes of Crashaw's ultimate conversion, "We have no idea what Donne or Herbert might have done at this point in their careers, since they both had the foresight to die in the 1630's, thus avoiding what was a serious career crisis for all English clergy not of the Puritan wing" (113)

²⁰ Warren asserts, "Had the Civil War not rudely terminated an epoch, Crashaw would probably have died an Anglican" (*Richard Crashaw* 50). The premise of a settled Laudian and royalist epoch terminated by a Puritan intrusion is not tenable; as Jessica Martin states, "Only a dangerously heavy reliance on hindsight provides any unambiguous narrative of the beginnings of a distinctive 'Anglican' sensibility and pious observation before 1663" (410). Nevertheless, Warren's phrase serves as a reminder that it was ultimately the iconoclastic hostility toward forms of religious life with which Crashaw had apparently been satisfied that set him on the road to "embrace Popery" and ultimately die at Loretto. Fincham and Taylor observe of the battles during the period, "The real winners of this inter-Protestant quarrel, as Robert Sanderson and others feared, would be the joint enemy, the Church of Rome" (466), and in the case of Crashaw, this would certainly appear to be true.

²¹ See W.J. Sheils's description of Laudian devotions and their concern for "beauty and holiness" as well as medieval precedents and sources, 310-311. The close reading below will involve certain of Crashaw's English

relatively widespread presence of such viewpoints prior to the increasing opposition leading into the Interregnum, as well as their revival following the Restoration, would also indicate that an audience of potentially responsive readers—Crashaw’s “country-men”—existed as prospective subjects for his Teresian internal medium.²²

A further commonplace of the history of Crashaw criticism which this chapter will challenge is the idea that his poetry is merely an outpouring of the poet’s own private devotion. Sean McDowell’s survey of early reactions to Crashaw reveals that this idea (although not held by the poet’s contemporaries) appears by the beginning of the eighteenth century. In that period his biographers begin to “read the poems strictly as the products of Crashaw’s own devotions, [and] are not as interested as the earlier commentators in the sophistication with which it engages readers” (257). Crashaw comes to be viewed as an effusive communicator of his own spiritual responses who, in Alexander Pope’s words, “writ fast, and set down what came uppermost” (qtd. in McDowell 258), and this view has tended to influence critical reaction up to the present.²³ When viewed from this perspective, Crashaw’s intensity of language and striking stylistic choices can appear to be excessive outbursts of passion, not signs of a purposeful approach.²⁴ Various twentieth-century critics have resisted this viewpoint, elucidating Crashaw’s careful technique and editorial revisions, and demonstrating that his writing is far more than a spontaneous outburst or a piece of unrestrained devotionalism.²⁵ This study will go beyond such

influences and parallels, both contemporary and medieval. Ruth C. Wallerstein suggests that continental influences on Crashaw would also not mark him as “alien to large elements in the English temper; unless the whole Laudian movement is to be considered so” (36).

²² See the discussions in *Oxford History of Anglicanism I*, particularly Fincham and Taylor, Martin, Sheils, and Peter Lake. See also Felicity Heal’s discussion of “Art and Iconoclasm” during the period in the same volume.

²³ George Williamson, for example, speaks of the poet’s “acts of Christian devotion, out of which he made his poems” (124).

²⁴ Thus Douglas Bush, a generally sympathetic commentator, nevertheless writes that “motives of adoration and self-surrender issue in an undisciplined fervor which has never been rational and never ceases to be sensuous and excited” (150).

²⁵ See the survey in Roberts, 16-29, and the critics referenced in the analysis below.

a recognition to a consideration of the means by which the poet's stylistic and linguistic choices serve his donative intention within the internal medium of the Teresa poems.

It is important to note that Crashaw's contemporaries recognized the existence of a specifically donative purpose motivating his style. In lauding Crashaw, his Cambridge schoolmate Joseph Beaumont, for example, speaks of "*Nazianzum's* and the World's immortal Glory; / *Him*, whose heav'n-fired Soul did sweetly soar / Up to the top of every stage and story / Of Poetry . . ." (*Psyche: Or Love's Mystery* IV.106), thus connecting Crashaw with the fourth-century Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nazianzus and his mystical poetry. Beaumont then adds, "And by this heart-attracting Pattern *Thou / My only worthy self*, thy Songs didst frame: / Witness those polish'd *Temple Steps*, which now / Stand as a ladder to thy mounting fame" (IV.107). As McDowell says of these passages, Crashaw's poetry has been framed according to a "heart-attracting pattern," suggesting an intention to engage the reader, "winning over the hearts of those who read it sympathetically" (245). As such it parallels Teresa's own descriptions of her mystical experiences (in language Crashaw often reproduces and develops), the means by which Crashaw suggests "Our hard Hearts shall strike fire" ("A Hymn" 160).²⁶ In considering Beaumont's paean, McDowell notes that the word "attraction" had a specific meaning in seventeenth-century psychological writing: "In brief, when confronted with beauty or things pleasurable, the appetites desired to spur the soul-body toward greater appreciation or possession of it" (245). Beaumont presents Crashaw as intentionally framing his poetry in order to draw the reader's heart toward what is, in Girardian terms, a form of triangular mimetic desire. In the Teresa poems, the heart-attracting pattern serves to inspire the reading subject's desire for

²⁶ These sympathetic readers form the group of "Thousands of crown'd Souls" that Crashaw sees forming Teresa's own crown, and to whom Crashaw applies the light and flame imagery otherwise reserved for Teresa and her relationship with the divine ("Hymn" 159-77).

the divine love that has taken “a private seat” in Teresa (“A Hymn” 12), and can also enter “into the wondring reader’s brest” with transforming power (“An Apologie” 25). Via its portrayal of Teresa’s mediator-(non)object relationship, Crashaw’s internal medium seeks to advance the “fruitfull” use that Teresa’s “soueraign spouse” has made of her own textual *Life*.²⁷

PORTRAYING THE MEDIATOR-(NON)OBJECT RELATIONSHIP

The internal medium of “A Hymn” and “Flaming Heart” portrays Teresa’s mediator-(non)object relationship partly through a biographical overview highlighting Teresa’s life-long desire for God as well as the transverberation episode from her *Life*. In “A Hymn,” for example, Crashaw focuses on Teresa’s childhood wish for martyrdom, suggesting the precociousness implied by such lines as “Scarse has she learn’t to lisp the name / Of Martyr; yet she thinks it shame / Life should so long play with that breath / Which spent can buy so braue a death” (15-18) indicates a level of spiritual desire beyond her years:

LOVE touch’t her HEART, & lo it beates

High, & burnes with such braue heates;

Such thirsts to dy, as dares drink vp,

A thousand cold deaths in one cup.

Good reason. For she breathes All fire. (35-39)

This episode introduces the depth of Teresa’s relationship with God, a depth and desire Crashaw portrays as proceeding from the divine as well as the human relational poles: “SWEET, not so fast! lo thy fair SPOUSE / Whom thou seekst with so swift vowes, / Calls thee back, & bids thee come / T’embrace a milder MARTYRDOM” (65-68). Through such means Crashaw reveals

²⁷ Crashaw portrays this donative fruitfulness in “A Hymn” 155-82; the terms here are from 168-69.

Teresa as the reliable mediator of a desire that was in her case continuous and was rewarded with a relationship of great mystical depth with her “fair SPOUSE.”

As for the transverberation episode,²⁸ it is merely necessary here to note its central importance within “A Hymn,” in which it is introduced as the example *par excellence* of that “death more mysticall & high,” and supplies the subject of lines 79-109; and within “Flaming Heart,” where it supplies both the titular image and the theme for the poem. Crashaw reverses the roles within this latter poem by suggesting that Teresa, rather than the angel, should be portrayed as the archer of the flaming darts as well as the one wounded.²⁹ Reversing the position of the angel and Teresa allows Crashaw to portray her in a more active manner, enabling him to explicate both the mediatorial role she performs and the exemplary ability of her mediator-(non)object relationship to encourage mimetic desire:

Say, all ye wise & well-peirc't hearts
That liue & dy amidst her darts,
What is't your tastfull spirits doe proue
In that rare life of Her, and loue?
Say & bear wittnes. Sends she not
A SERAPHIM at euey shott?
What magazins of immortall ARMES there shine!
Heaun's great artillery in each loue-spun line.

²⁸ Teresa describes seeing “an angel in bodily form” who stabs her repeatedly in the heart with a “large golden dart” on which “there appeared to be a little fire.” She says of this experience, “When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God” (*Life* chapter 30; 1.252). This will be subsequently covered in greater detail in relation to Crashaw’s language.

²⁹ As Deneen Senasi notes of this reversal, “What follows is a detailed re-reading of the symbols associated with the figure of the saint as opposed to that of the seraph. The conventions of representation, according to the voice of the poem, do not ‘read it right’ and as a result misrepresent the dynamic exchange of power and divinity between the two” (“A Matter of Words” 14-15).

Giue then the dart to her who giues the flame;

Giue him the veil, who kindly takes the shame. (“Flaming Heart” 49-58)

From the standpoint of triangular mimetic desire, it is notable that in the lines (85-108) added in the 1652 edition Crashaw directly relates Teresa’s mediatorial ability to the internal medium of her own writings, what he calls in an obvious parallel to the angel’s flaming dart, “thy scatter’d shafts of light, that play / Among the leaues of thy larg Books of day” (87-88). Perhaps even more striking is the fact that, prior to the 1652 addition, the location of the “leaues” in line 77 remains undefined in what are at that point the final verses, leaving the impression that it is through Crashaw’s own poetic depiction of Teresa “here” that her great heart lives to wound readers and enable “mystick DEATHS”:

O HEART! the æquall poise of loue’s both parts

Bigge alike with wounds & darts.

Liue in these conquering leaues; liue all the same;

And walk through all tongues one triumphant FLAME.

Liue here, great HEART; & loue and dy & kill;

And bleed & wound; and yeild & conquer still.

Let this immortall life wherere it comes

Walk in a crowd of loues & MARTYRDOMES.

Let mystick DEATHS wait on’t; & wise soules be

The loue-slain wittnesses of this life of thee. (75-84)³⁰

Crashaw, particularly in “A Hymn,” creates an internal medium portraying the depth of Teresa’s mediator-(non)object relationship with the divine, and the ability of that relationship (as well as

³⁰ This is not to suggest that such an impression would be excluded in the 1652 edition, as these lines, preceding the reference to Teresa’s books, could certainly still be read as referencing Crashaw’s poetry.

its depiction in Teresa's *Life* and Crashaw's own poetry) to cause others' hearts to "strike fire" with mimetic desire ("A Hymn" 160). But to expand what was noted earlier, this depiction is distinct from those of Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich in its comparative complexity. While in the latter cases it is the mediators themselves presenting their own relationships, here Teresa's mediator-(non)object relationship is presented by another voice: the voice of the poem. This voice expresses the broader admiration "Of thousand soules, whose happy names / Heau'n keeps vpon thy score" (174-75), and the effect in "A Hymn" and much of "Flaming Heart" is to keep the reading subject's focus on Teresa, her mediatorial role and relationship with the divine.³¹

SPEAKING HEAVEN

According to "An Apologie," in the Teresan poems Crashaw is attempting to transfuse to the reader some of Teresa's "flame," so as to inspire a desiring mimetic response. What is striking about this attempt is, in fact, the very aspect that has caused such critical consternation: Crashaw's intense poetic language.³² When understood as part of an intentional effort seeking to elicit a specific response, the overwhelming quality of this poetic style is revealed, not as an excessive and uncontrolled outpouring of emotion, but rather as an attempt to "transfuse the flame" from Teresa and the divine love that has made its mansion in her soul ("A Hymn" 13-14) to the heart of the responsive reader. As noted above, Crashaw states in "An Apologie" that Teresa's words are a transcendent, mystical language—"O 'tis not spanish, but 'tis heau'n she

³¹ Excluding the unique circumstance of "An Apologie," in which Crashaw as author speaks directly to the reader, the poetic voice is not individually personified in the first-person singular until the 1652 extension to "Flaming Heart" and the addition of "A Song" in the 1648 edition discussed below.

³² In spite of the overtly mystical subject matter in the Teresan poems, little attention has been paid to the critical implications of understanding Crashaw as a poet intentionally using a language and style that itself communicates to the reader the saturating attributes of mystical experience, and what such an understanding might say about his overall purpose. Crashaw has also seldom been considered as a poet intentionally attempting to "move" his audience in a specific way through language, rather than simply communicating his own private devotion in poetic form.

speaks!” (23)—and that he himself has responded to it. But he also asserts that from reading Teresa’s own words, “I learn’t to know that loue is eloquence,” and that this “hopefull maxime gave me hart to try” (8-9). His Teresa poems will attempt to share that *heavenly speech* with their readers even as her descriptions of mystical experience have “spoken heaven” to Crashaw.

In the poems’ internal medium Crashaw employs several methods to fulfill this intention. On the one hand, he describes Teresa’s own mediator-divine (non)object relationship utilizing spiritual-sensory and erotic language traditionally employed to communicate the ineffable quality of mystical experience. This has the effect of stressing the overwhelming, saturating nature of Teresa’s relationship with the divine, as well as legitimizing her as the mediator of such a relationship. It also serves to emphasize the desirability of Teresa’s mediator-(non)object relationship for those inspired to “kisse the light” and be counted among the “happy names / Heau’n keeps vpon [Teresa’s] score” (“A Hymn” 174-75).

On the other hand, Crashaw manipulates and foregrounds his own poetic style in a way that becomes itself analogous to the saturating quality of mystical experience, an approach similar to Richard Rolle’s techniques in *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris*. As in Rolle’s texts these stylistic elements have a displacing effect on Crashaw’s reader by problematizing straightforward readings of the poems.

Spiritual-Sensory Language and Erotic Imagery

To consider one means by which Crashaw’s internal medium portrays the overwhelming nature of Teresa’s mediatorial relationship with the divine, it is important to examine his frequent spiritual-sensory language. Mario Praz, speaking of the “spiritualization of the senses” in baroque art, seeks to ground Crashaw’s usage in the baroque (*Flaming Heart* 204). But the source for the sensory language in the Teresa poems is not merely the baroque movement but the

broader mystical tradition's use of sensory language, a language utilized by Teresa herself in describing her transverberation experience.³³ The idea of the *spiritual senses*, various senses of the soul equivalent to those of the body, was stated by the early church father Origen (c185-254), and forms the basis for such language.³⁴ It appears in various ancient authors and was influential in medieval mystical writings.³⁵ Spiritual-sensory language is often coupled with erotic imagery derived from the biblical Song of Songs; the late fifteenth-century English Carthusian Richard Methley, for example, titles the first chapter of his *Scola Amoris Languidi* "Concerning love and languor, concerning fear and song, and also sensible fire."³⁶

Teresa of Avilla asserts the presence of spiritual senses in her *Spiritual Testimonies*, observing "It appears that just as the soul has exterior senses, it also has other interior senses" (1.425-26).³⁷ In *The Interior Castle* she describes a situation in which "the soul will feel pierced by a fiery arrow," adding, "I don't say that there is an arrow, but whatever the experience, the soul realizes clearly that the feeling couldn't come about naturally. . . . And in my opinion, it isn't felt where earthly sufferings are felt, but in the very deep and intimate part of the soul" (2.422). Teresa's words indicate that spiritual-sensory language does not merely provide random

³³ See the discussions on spiritual-sensory language by Karl Rahner and Bernard McGinn in *Theological Investigations* XVI, 92-100, and *Foundation of Mysticism* 121-24 respectively, which guide my own presentation of the subject.

³⁴"For the names of the organs of sense are frequently applied to the soul, so that it may be said to see with the eyes of the heart . . . So also it is said to hear with the ears when it perceives the deeper meaning of a statement. So also we say that it makes use of teeth, when it chews and eats the bread of life which comes down from heaven. In like manner, also, it is said to employ the services of other members, which are transferred from their bodily appellations, and applied to the powers of the soul." (*De Principiis* 245)

³⁵ Its appearances in Rolle and centrality to his understanding of spiritual progress and its accompanying "gifts" has already been examined. As has been noted, his experiences tend to blur the distinction between spiritual and external senses in a more wholistic manner. Rolle exerted an influence throughout the late medieval period and even following the English reformation: see, for example, the mid-sixteenth century devotional treatises of Robert Parkyn.

³⁶ *de amore et languore, de timore et canore, ac igne sensibili* (*Works of Richard Methley* 2). See also Michael Sargent, "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of some late Medieval Spiritual Writings."

³⁷ All pagination for Teresa's writings will reference the *Collected Works* edition.

analogies but expresses the sense of the experience itself; these sensory terms, to quote Peter of Ailly, “communicate to us an ‘experimentalis notitia’ of spiritual realities” (qtd. Rahner 129).³⁸

Mystical experiences have a meaning exceeding signification and are (to use a classic definition) *ineffable*, existing beyond our ability to fully comprehend or communicate. As saturating phenomena, they resist constitution according to mundane categories. Teresa herself admits, “My words fall short because the experience is unexplainable” (2.422). But to the extent that mystical experiences are described, mystics often turn to the spiritual-sensory language common to the tradition.³⁹ Thus having said, “You can’t exaggerate or describe the way in which God wounds the soul” (1.251), Teresa nevertheless proceeds to do so using imagery such as fire, burning, pain, thrusting, wounding, delight, and pleasure (1.251-53).⁴⁰

In the Teresa poems, Crashaw attempts to share Teresa’s *heavenly speech* partly by reproducing these sensory images from her descriptions of mystical experience and emphasizing them through repetition. In “A Hymn,” for example, Crashaw emphasizes in light and fire imagery to the divine “radiant Name” that “shines, & with a soueraign ray / Beats bright vpon the burning faces / Of soules. . .” (82, 84-86) and, by means of further repetition of these same images, connects this flaming power with Teresa’s own writings:

³⁸ Riehle notes, “this is no mere makeshift language but rather one in which the mystical experience itself takes place . . . and therefore the language that expresses such experiences is something rather different than mere metaphor” (*Middle English Mystics* 104).

³⁹ McGinn says of Augustine’s use of spiritual-sensory language, for example, “Augustine never thought that our immediate experiences of God in this life could be clearly expressed. The images he used, whether those of vision or of the other spiritual senses, were all strategies meant to suggest and not to circumscribe the inexpressible. Without enunciating a formal theory of the spiritual senses of the soul, as Origen and other Eastern authors had done, his emphasis on a form of synaesthesia as helpful in conveying the inexpressible richness of immediate consciousness of the divine presence made an important contribution to the history of western mysticism” (*Foundations* 253).

⁴⁰ Crashaw’s attraction to such terms is demonstrated by their appearance in the non-Teresan poems “Ode on a Prayer-Book” and “Letter to the Countess of Denbigh.” Even “Hymn in the Glorious Epiphany” has a somewhat unexpected reference to “darts” and “pierced harts” (78-79). His awareness of Teresa’s use of such language would appear to predate these poems. There is certainly the possibility that this attraction is a reflection of his Laudian sentiments noted above: Nandra Perry, for example, referencing Shelford’s *Five Pious and Learned Discourses*, suggests the relationship between sensual language and ritual of the type that appealed to Crashaw; see Perry 6-10.

Each heaunly word by whose hid flame
Our hard Hearts shall strike fire, the same
Shall flourish on thy browes, & be
Both fire to vs & flame to thee;
Whose light shall liue bright in thy FACE
By glory, in our hearts by grace.” (159-64).

“Flaming Heart” also has frequent repetitions of flame, fire, and burning imagery (as befits its source in Teresa’s transverberation), as well as numerous images of wounding and even death due to fiery, flaming, or radiant darts, including specifically “mystick DEATHS” (83). The latter also relates to Teresa’s own description of her mystical experience: speaking of the “delightful” pain caused by divine wounding of her heart, she asserts, “The soul would always want, as I said, to be dying of this sickness” (1.251).⁴¹

In taking up Teresa’s own spiritual-sensory terminology Crashaw inserts her mediatorial language (again, as should be noted, authorized by the underlying mystical tradition) into his text, not merely ventriloquizing it but expanding its application to suggest her effect as mediator on those who would respond to her.⁴² The result within the internal medium is to portray Teresa’s experiences, and therefore her mediator-divine (non)object relationship, as legitimately mystical in nature (and in consequence desirable to one potentially drawn to such a relationship) while simultaneously depicting her as the effective mediator of that relationship to others.

This is also true of Crashaw’s erotic imagery, which Nandra Perry notes was “labeled by an earlier generation of critics as foreign, withdrawn, infantile, and even perverse.” These

⁴¹ Crashaw’s combinations of death and love terminology will be considered in relation to his “dazzling” language.

⁴² Anthony Low’s comment about Crashaw’s “To The Name Above Every Name” applies to the sensory language of the Teresa poems as well: “The senses are not just appealed to, they are overloaded” (123).

elements have more recently drawn Crashaw recognition and appreciation “as an ambassador of baroque and medieval aesthetics in historicist treatments of the period, and within feminist circles as a champion of what Paul Parish has called ‘private feminine virtues’” (Perry, “Crashaw” 1-2). Such language is based on a tradition deriving from the Song of Songs and common to spiritual writers of the medieval church (particularly the Cistercians), in which analogous erotic metaphors are used to describe the soul’s experience of union with God.⁴³

Teresa’s own description of her transverberation falls into this linguistic tradition, as she notes that her experience of the angel’s flaming arrow “left me all on fire with great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan, and the sweetness this greatest pain caused me was so superabundant that there is no desire capable of taking it away” (1.252). In “A Hymn,” Crashaw takes up the language of the woman he describes as “love’s victime” (75) in a series of sensual images: “O how oft shalt thou complain / Of a sweet & subtle PAIN. / Of intolerable IOYES” (97-99); “How kindly will thy gentle HEART / Kisse the sweetly-killing DART! / And close in his embraces keep / Those delicious Wounds. . .” (105-08). Even the description of her death has an erotic quality:

Like a soft lump of incense hasted
By too hott a fire, & wasted
Into perfuming clouds, so fast
Shalt thou exhale to Heaun at last
In a resolving SIGH. . . (113-17)

⁴³ See, for example, the exposition of the Middle English term “daliaunce” in Riehle, *Middle English Mystics* 102. Bernard of Clairvaux’s Sermon 8 on the Song of Songs exemplifies this tradition; see *Bernard of Clairvaux, Selected Works*. Tr. G.R. Evans. (New York: Paulist, 1987), 236-41.

Similarly, in “Flaming Heart” Crashaw presents Teresa’s death in terms of consummation, “the full kingdome of that finall kisse / That seiz’d thy parting Soul, & seal’d thee his” (101-02), while “A Hymn” imagines Christ calling the now-transcendent Teresa “my rosy loue” (172). Crashaw’s imagery is based on Teresa’s own and stresses the overwhelming quality of her mystical experience, thereby gaining what R.E. Young calls “a sense of intensity and of surrender to an overpowering force” (88). It simultaneously furthers the portrayal of Teresa’s legitimacy as mediator of a mystical relationship while also serving to humanize her.⁴⁴ Teresa is as overwhelmed as Crashaw’s reading subject would be by what she has experienced.

For Crashaw, his own use of erotic imagery in the internal medium goes beyond reiteration: he intensifies Teresa’s language through its concentrated occurrence in poetic form.⁴⁵ The association of such language with the tradition of bridal mysticism derived from the Song of Songs also allows Crashaw to utilize it in legitimizing these experiences and Teresa’s resultant mediatorial position, particularly for a reader aware and appreciative of the tradition.⁴⁶ In addition, by stressing the divinely-given intensity of Teresa’s mediator-(non)object relationship Crashaw also portrays its desirability,⁴⁷ an important element of his donative intent since, as he states, it is through the portrayal of the “noble history” of Teresa’s relationship with the divine that souls are fed and hearts enflamed (“A Hymn” 155-64).

⁴⁴ Paul Parrish emphasizes that Crashaw’s “careful working out of the ecstatic and sexual roles of St. Teresa adds subtlety and complexity to his effort” (151); but it also adds subtlety to the presentation of Teresa by portraying her affective reactions that in ways help to humanize her as the recipient swept away by these experiences.

⁴⁵ “The imagery is concentrated at all moments, and into something larger than sensuous ecstasy. In these hymns the anguish and the assuaging vision of rapture lie bare before us, in the radiant pictures and in the cry of the epigrams which abound in the poems” (Wallerstein 147).

⁴⁶ In this regard it is worth again noting Crashaw’s own “Laudian” religious history, and the likelihood that his imagined ideal reader will be receptive, like Crashaw himself, to the qualities of the poetic language and the associations noted.

⁴⁷ Again, the similarity in this regard to Richard Rolle’s portrayal of his own mediator-(non)object relationship discussed in the third chapter is apparent.

Dazzling Style

Crashaw uses language traditionally associated with mystical literature to portray the phenomenologically saturating aspects of Teresa's own experiences. But he also adopts a style that will displace the reader via its overwhelming elements in an experience analogous (at an aesthetic level) to the saturating phenomenon's displacement of the subject, "the position of the *I* that has become a *me* [*moi*]: responding to a givenness rather than objectifying it" (Marion, "Nothing is Impossible" 100).⁴⁸ Crashaw's style in the Teresa poems, much like Richard Rolle's in *Melos Amoris*, exhibits a grammatical and even visual complexity problematizing straightforward interpretation. It is a dazzling quality that dislocates the reader from constituting to constituted, encouraging an open horizon enabling the further possibility of being "kindled to starrs" (see "A Hymn" 177). Like Rolle, Crashaw isn't creating saturating phenomenon; rather (to again borrow Steinbock's description of Rūzbihān Baqlī), his excessive style evokes Teresa's mediator-divine (non)object experience "in such a way that it opens us to a possible experiencing and 'seeing' in a 'like' *manner*" (98).⁴⁹ Crashaw takes up this excessive quality via a poetic language and style again suggestive of the intensity of Teresa's own mystical experience. Crashaw's use of death terminology has already been noted, but in "A Hymn" he relies in particular on combinations of "death" and "love" language in order to portray the intensity of the mediator-object relationship, indicating the power of Teresa's desire for and experience of divine union using the common metaphor descended from medieval mystical writing:

Undoubtedly the most impressive use made by the mystics of metaphors of death occurs when these are chosen to express concretely the intensity of mystical love-longing. . . . The erotic mysticism of the of the Passion of St. Bernard and St. Francis in particular is fond of identifying love and death. There the soul 'dies'

⁴⁸As Christina Gschwandtner says of Marion's "constituted witness" to such a phenomenon, "The witness does not impose meaning, much less constitute it, but merely responds to what is already given" (*Degrees* 48).

⁴⁹ Initially quoted in chapter three.

from longing for the beloved or desires to be united with him in a death in love.
(Riehle, *Middle English Mystics* 138)

Death and love imagery are traditionally used in combination to portray the mystic's desire for union with the divine,⁵⁰ and in "A Hymn" Crashaw repeats and emphasizes these interrelated images. In the childhood section, lines 18-35, "death" appears three times, with additional conceptual parallels through references to martyrdom and shed blood, while "love" is repeated eight times, twice in combination with "heart." A number of these repetitions are emphasized further through full capitalization: "She can Love, & she can Dy" (24); "How much lesse strong is Death then Love" (28); "Love touch't her Heart, & lo it beates" (35). These repetitions continue into the overtly mystical section of the poem, but are here given their full mystical weight:

THOV art love's victime; & must dy
A death more mysticall & high.
Into loue's armes thou shalt let fall
A still-suruiuing funerall.
His is the DART must make the DEATH
Whose stroke shall tast thy hallow'd breath; (74-80)

Similarly, lines 100-104 feature an interweaving of *death* terminology with *life* and *love*, based on Teresa's claim that in mystical experience, "The soul dies with the desire to die" (2.425):

Of a DEATH, in which who dyes

⁵⁰ See Riehle's discussion in *Middle English Mystics* 139. In Richard Rolle the death-longing imagery is directly related to the experience of heavenly music that is his ultimate experience of the divine. "Richard Rolle too feels himself close to death as a result of the intensity of his love – 'En, morior amore,' he cries out on one occasion. Man's death and the experiencing of divine reality in the form of heavenly music are for him one and the same thing, for 'mors . . . mihi esset ut melos musice, quanquam iam, tanquam in paradiso positus, subsistam, sedens in solitudine.'" (*Middle English Mystics* 138)

Loues his death, and dyes again.
And would for euer so be slain.
And liues, & dyes; and knowes not why
To liue, But that he thus may neuer leaue to DY.

Such passages indicate another common technique undertaken by Crashaw, who not only engages in frequent repetition, but also places the repeated words in what R.E. Young calls “interlocking alliterative and syntactical patterns” that create “an atmosphere of ritual incantation” (88). He thus emphasizes their status as symbols of the ineffable and suggests interrelationships surpassing the ordinary. The patterns at times overpower the reader with grammatical and conceptual complexity: they are challenging to read, forcing the reader into a close, slow reading (and perhaps multiple readings) in order to comprehend. This appears to be part of a process in which, as Deneen Senasi suggests, the poem is conceptualized “as the material embodiment of divine rhetoric” (6), and creates an ersatz linguistic parallel to the phenomenologically saturating mystical experiences known by Teresa herself, interfering with the subject’s mundane horizon via a style resistant to straightforward interpretation.

Similarly, the almost constant use of the preposition “by” to begin lines 94-105 of “Flaming Heart” echoes the litany of the *Book of Common Prayer*, invoking the power of ritual language to represent the transcendent.⁵¹ Nandra Perry (referencing the work of the seventeenth-century divine Robert Shelford, for whose *Five Pious and Learned Discourses* Crashaw wrote a poetic dedication) observes, “For Shelford, the special power of material signs and ritual language to communicate spiritual truths is analogous to the power of the sacraments,

⁵¹ “The persistent and moving parallelism of the conclusion forms a Litany; as an Anglican, Crashaw must have heard its rhythm in the cadences of the Prayer Book: “By thine Agony and Bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension . . .” (Warren, *Richard Crashaw* 142).

which, in addition to their ordinary properties as signs, are also miraculous vehicles of the very 'grace' they represent" (7). The incantational quality of these lines in "Flaming Heart" serves to heighten their building imagery of thirst and desire, fire and light, and their suggestion of insatiable desire, fulfilled and yet constantly returning.⁵²

The overall effect of the above techniques (as with those observed in Richard Rolle's writing) is to create the feeling of an internal medium alluding to that which is beyond what can be fully expressed by language except indirectly through extraordinary combinations, moving beyond common usage to communicate experiences that are themselves beyond easy conceptualization. Alexander T. Wong says of this style, "Superficially Crashaw's profusion of divine images, symbols, and metaphors places him far from the via negative. Yet this would be to ignore the way in which the profusion functions" (352). What Wong notes of Crashaw's "Hymn to the Name of Jesus" is just as apt to the Teresa poems: "the chaotic flux of images seems to represent a consistent strategy, or syndrome, related to the ineffable nature of the subject" (353); thus, as he puts it, such a style "is not truly positive, but extravagantly negative also" (354). The effect is to emphasize the non-object status of the divine object, asserting that God is beyond containment by human language and conceptualization, and thus not to be possessed and controlled by such means; the divine frustrates human understanding and pushes human communication to the limit.⁵³ The same could be said for several appearances of images that cannot be fully visualized; the previously mentioned "How kindly will thy gentle HEART / Kisse the sweetly-killing DART!" ("A Hymn" 105-06), for example, is an image that "refuses to take shape as a scene" (Young 88), again serving to suggest the incomprehensibility of an

⁵² Crashaw will expand on this paradoxical notion via the portrayed poetic voice in "A Song."

⁵³ To reiterate Raimon Panikkar's observation, "The discourse about God is radically different from every other discourse on whatever 'object,' because God is not an object" (8).

experience that saturates the horizon of one experiencing it, undermining the ability to create any mundane form of description.

These complex linguistic interrelationships are taken even further through the use of capitalization, particularly in the 1652 *Carmen Deo Nostro* edition with its various initial and full capitalizations of words. (These latter words are italicized rather than fully capitalized in the 1648 versions of the poems to a similar, although less pronounced effect, although the correspondence of italics and full capitalization between the two editions is not exact.) Visually, the reader is confronted not only with the close relations of words within lines and adjoining lines, but also with the broader relationships of capitalized, fully capitalized, and uncapitalized words on each page as printed.⁵⁴ The effect is to problematize the reading experience as the reader is confronted by choices at times seemingly suggestive (as with the consistent capitalizing of Teresa's "heart" in "Flaming Heart") but at other times apparently inexplicable, as when in "A Hymn" 100-111 death language is seemingly randomly presented in either upper or lower case.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, frequent repetition and capitalization of a fairly small number of words—outside of names and pronouns, those capitalized or fully capitalized more than three times throughout

⁵⁴ The italicized words in the 1648 poems at times also have initial capitalization, as do a variety of other non-italicized words. While it is always difficult to know the reasons underlying such printerly effects, their frequency and appearance in multiple editions suggests some form of intentionality. Crashaw's friend Thomas Car ultimately edited *Carmen Deo Nostro* after Crashaw's death while another anonymous friend edited the prior volumes. Crashaw's wishes would seem to have been followed by his editors; Car says in relation to the process that Crashaw "shar'd his thoughtes, and did comment / (While yet he liv'd) this worke," adding, "t'was his intent / That what his riches pen'd, poore Car should print" (qtd. in Williams, "Introduction" xxi).

⁵⁵ While capitalization is certainly not unique within Crashaw's poetry, or indeed to Crashaw among the seventeenth-century English poets, its use in the 1652 edition Teresa poems is striking. A study of words fully capitalized in *Carmen Deo Nostro*, for example, demonstrates that "A Hymn" and "Flaming Heart" exhibit a comparatively large number of these capitalizations. Excluding divine names and pronouns as well as pronouns for Teresa, "A Hymn" still has well over forty fully capitalized words; only "Hymn to the Name," with its various references to the "NAME" and capitalized euphemisms, has a comparable number. Similarly, "Flaming Heart," with over two dozen full capitalizations is only exceeded by the above and Crashaw's translation "*Lauda Sion Salvatorem*. The Hymn for the Blessed Sacrament," the latter buoyed by various fully capitalized sacramental references and metaphors. Other poems in the collection have a considerably smaller number: "The Weeper," for example, which immediately precedes the Teresan sequence in the 1652 edition, has eleven examples, of which seven are references to the Magdalene's tears and two are related words. The comparison suggests an intentionally underlying the number of full capitalizations in the two major Teresa poems.

the Teresan poems include fire/flame, life, death, love, heart, dart, and Seraphim—also serves to control, as Deneen Senasi notes, *how* we read the poems.⁵⁶ Rather than allowing the reader to determine meaning, the text imposes itself and its emphases on the reader through visual indicators.

These stylistic approaches form an interesting parallel to the visionary mystical experiences common to the medieval era (as with Julian’s various “showings”) and exemplified by Teresa’s transverberation. Teresa’s own descriptions of her responses to such experiences—that having felt the sweetness of “the loving exchange that takes place between the soul and God,” she “went about as though stupefied” (1.252)—suggests their displacing effect. The techniques in the Teresa poems may be intended to create an analogous reaction; at the very least, they have a displacing effect by complicating any straightforward reading. While Crashaw’s poetry reflects the advent of mechanical printing through its use of elements such as various forms of capitalization, the effect of these visual techniques also has parallels with Richard Rolle’s extreme alliteration in *Melos Amoris*.⁵⁷ In both cases the appearance of the text itself becomes an element of its “interference” with the subject’s horizon through visual complexity and density.

The language of the poems also seems intentionally to suggest meanings beyond those of the immediate context. The seven repetitions of the word “still” in “A Song” (6-10) function in

⁵⁶ What Senasi says of Crashaw’s poem written to the Countess of Denbeigh could also be said of this aspect of the Teresa poems: “structural conceits” are used “that serve to intensify the visibility of certain aspects of the poem, while simultaneously complicating the conventions of both poetic composition and reading. ‘Right reading’ is therefore inextricably linked to what some might see as the ‘wrong writing’ of Crashaw’s poem, as strategies which appear to obscure legibility in conventional terms enforce a heightened awareness of the material force of words and their arrangement” (8). Turning to the Teresa poems themselves, of “A Hymn” Senasi observes “Once again, Crashaw employs capitalization and repetition to structure a ‘right reading’ of the poem” (17), and “In ‘The Flaming Heart,’ as we have seen elsewhere, that sense of authorial control is not merely a question of what is being read, but how it is read” (14).

⁵⁷ Crashaw’s poetry uses frequent alliteration as well, but not unusually so for his era, and certainly not at the extreme levels Rolle attempts three centuries earlier.

this way, for while they serve adverbially in the sense of implying something ongoing, they also appear to allude to the importance of stillness and its results in the literature of contemplative practice—“that I / Still may behold” in relation to the common understanding that in stillness one is more capable of beholding the transcendent; “Though still I dy, I liue again” in relation to the stilling of the self in the form of annihilation of the soul’s will by which one acts in divine will;⁵⁸ and “Still longing so to be still slain” (again with death/love imagery suggestive of divine union) in relation to the stilling of cognitive function coupled with ongoing desire by which one is more receptive to infused contemplation and its foretaste of divine union. All these are commonplaces of contemplative literature, and they appear in contemplative passages among the works of several of Crashaw’s fellow seventeenth-century English poets, as well as being present in Teresa’s *Life*.⁵⁹ Crashaw’s apparent allusion to them in “A Song” appears to have an intent of invoking aspects of contemplative practice and passive and infused contemplation beneath the more obvious uses of “still” within the lines.

In the Teresa poems as a whole they are joined in their allusive quality by the many paradoxical word-combinations which Crashaw has to some degree appropriated from Teresa’s own descriptions. He subjects these to the same technique of thematic repetition in order to create apparent logical conundrums: “intolerable IOYES” (“A Hymn” 99); “delicious Wounds,

⁵⁸ As in Galatians 2:19-20a, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

⁵⁹ Henry Vaughan, in his contemplative poem “Night” (*Silex Scintillans* II, 1655), speaks of “Dear night! . . . my souls calm retreat / Which none disturb!” (25, 27-28), and describes God’s “dark Tent, / Whose peace but by some Angels wing or voice / Is seldom rent” (38-40). Bernard McGinn says of the poem that Vaughan places experience of Christ “not in light and illumination but in night (in French, *la mystique nocturne*), in stillness, and in hints of the divine presence” (*Mysticism in the Reformation* 248). Thomas Traherne, in “The Preparative,” says, “My body being dead” (1), meaning stilled, “A meditating inward eye / Gazing at quiet did within me lie” (27-28), and describes the experience as “Unbodied and devoid of care, / Just as in Heav’n the holy angels are” (37-38); he adds, “A disentangled and a naked sense / A mind that’s unpossesst, / A disengaged breast, . . . An even spirit pure and serene, / Is that where beauty, excellence, / And pleasure keep their court of residence.” (61-63, 66-68). For the Vaughan and Traherne poems, see *George Herbert and Seventeenth Century Religious Poets*, 176-77, 187-88. For the occurrence of these images in Teresa’s works, see, for example, the lengthy discussions in *Life* chapters 18 and 22.

that weep / Balsom to heal themselves with” (108-109); “delicious Fire” (“A Song” 4); “living DEATH & dying LIFE” (“A Song” 14). In light of the history of paradoxical language in the mystical tradition, these combinations again serve to allude to the ineffable aspect of mystical experience.⁶⁰ Within the internal medium of the Teresa poems they further stress the divine (non)object status of the object pole in Teresa’s relationship as well as reproducing the descriptions of her own conflicted responses.⁶¹ Crashaw’s use of paradoxical language functions as a stylistic parallel to Teresa’s feeling of displacement by the extraordinary and thus incomprehensible aspects of her mystical experiences, while enabling the possibility of a displacing reading experience for the subject.⁶²

The last section of “Flaming Heart” (lines 85-108), added to the poem for *Carmen Deo Nostro* (1652) and among the last extant poetry written by Crashaw, exemplifies many of the poetic techniques of saturation mentioned above. The overpowering build-up of imagery, the inclusion of multiple adjectives in virtually every line, the use of paradoxical combinations, and the frequent appearance of spiritual-sensory and ritual language combine to exemplify the “multiplied and modified significations” by which, according to Jean-Luc Marion, language pursues the expression of such phenomena (*In Excess* 112). What Mario Praz says of Crashaw’s far more restrained style in “Hymn to the Nativity” could certainly be said of this passage: “What we see is a throbbing and dazzling chaos instead of a definite pattern” (*Flaming Heart* 249).

Stephen Greenblatt notes, “In the sixteenth century, the Neoplatonist Francesco Patrizi defined the poet as principal ‘maker of the marvelous,’ and the marvelous is found, as he put it,

⁶⁰ Gary Kuchar observes, “such mutually canceling paradoxes work to generate the kind of “disorder” that [Denis] Turner describes as the essential effect of negative theology” (280).

⁶¹ In *The Book of Her Life*, for example, Teresa says of one such response, “This pain and glory joined together left me confused; I couldn’t understand how such a combination was possible” (1.251).

⁶² These logical paradoxes extend to the presentation of Teresa herself, who is described as being both love’s victim and warrior, for “the wounded is the wounding heart” in a realm in which “Love’s passives are his activ’st part” (“Flaming Heart” 99, 98).

when men ‘are astounded, ravished in ecstasy’” (30). This description of the “marvelous” provides an important approach to understanding Crashaw’s intent in undertaking this saturating poetic style within the internal medium of the Teresa poems. Through it the poet is attempting to create a “marvelous” counterpart to Teresa’s mystical experience, a style that astounds the reader, conveys a sense of uniqueness, and thus induces an exalted attention.⁶³ To call Crashaw’s poetry in some sense analogous to mystical experience, when viewed from this perspective, is not to imply that it attempts a merely aesthetic parallel to transcendent experience. Rather, it suggests that Crashaw uses language and style of an excessive and extraordinary quality in order to resist and undermine typical frames of reference and displace the reader as constituting subject after the manner of saturating phenomena, including transcendent mystical experience. Crashaw, like Richard Rolle three centuries before him, employs a style that overwhelms and dazzles through its complexity and impositional elements, regularly using and developing the language of Teresa’s own descriptions of her mystical experiences. The sense of displacement that may result for the reading subject parallels Teresa’s own description of being “suddenly thrown on the fire,” of paradoxical combinations of feelings that “left me confused,” and of experiences sufficiently overwhelming “that the soul doesn’t know what has happened or what it wants” (1.250-51).

⁶³ Greenblatt connects the marvelous with the experience of “wonder” and its results, noting that ideally “wonder . . . then leads to the desire for resonance” (34). To define this movement he quotes the thirteenth-century theologian and philosopher Albert the Great:

Wonder is defined as a constriction and suspension of the heart caused by amazement at the sensible appearance of something so portentous, great, and unusual, that the heart suffers a systole. . . . The effect of wonder, then, this constriction and systole of the heart, spring from an unfulfilled but felt desire to know the cause of that which appears portentous and unusual. (qtd. in Greenblatt 34)

Resonance for Greenblatt is the power of the object/text to evoke the forces “for which—as metaphor, or, more simply, as metonymy—it may be taken by the viewer to stand” (19-20). Thus the result of wonder, the exalted attention created in the viewer/reader, is a desire for that resonance, in other words, to come to know these forces behind that which has evoked wonder. While beyond the scope of this study, Greenblatt’s understanding of wonder and resonance suggests certain interesting connections with Girard’s understandings of mimetic desire and Marion’s saturating phenomenon and its results.

Yet Teresa's statement, "The soul would always want, as I said, to be dying of this sickness," reveals the connection between her displacing experiences and desire for the mystical relationship they epitomize; and this suggests Crashaw's purpose as well. The dazzling style of the Teresa poems and their complex combinations of Teresa's own descriptive terms serve to give the reading subject a sense of the displacing aspects of Teresa's own mediator-divine (non)object relationship, and potentially increase desire for a similar relationship. The poems function as examples of what Karmen MacKendrick calls the seductive text, "a text about the direction of desire" (174), and in this case the reading subject's desire is directed by the language in the same direction as Teresa's own depicted desire: toward the divine (non)object. As Crashaw says of Teresa's own works, "'tis heau'n she speaks! / 'Tis heau'n that lyes in ambush there, & breaks / From thence into the wondring reader's brest" ("An Apologie" 23-25); but for Crashaw's reader it is the poems themselves through which the heavenly ambush occurs.

This result, the opening of a receptive horizon, appears to be the meaning of the preface to *Steps to the Temple*, composed by "the Authors friend," who writes to those "not yet seized into admiration" for Crashaw of his poetry's effect on the reader:

They shal lift thee Reader, some yards above the ground: and as in
Pythagoras Schoole, every temper was first tuned into a height by severall
proportions of Musick; and spiritualiz'd for one of his weighty Lectures;
So maist thou take a Poem hence, and tune thy soule by it, into a heavenly
pitch; and thus refined and borne up upon the wings of meditation, in these
Poems thou maist talke freely of God, and of that other state. (75)

The anonymous "friend" indicates that the poetry may serve to bring the reader into a relationship with the divine.⁶⁴ In the Teresa poems, this is accomplished, as has been shown, by a reiteration of Teresa's own life and the language of her mystical experience, developed and

⁶⁴ Anthony Low says of these words, "The writer nicely describes the kind of effect Crashaw's poems are meant to produce" (133).

poetically intensified in ways that can overwhelm and displace the reader. The reading subject who has been thus transported to a sense of wonder by Crashaw's Teresa poems may be more susceptible to the heaven that lies in ambush in their portrayal of Teresa's divine relationship, and thus more open to the possibility and recognition of similarly saturating experiences.

Contexts, Medieval and Rollean

The suggestion that the poetic language and style examined above would mark Crashaw as "un-English" does not take into account the possible influence of late-medieval English writings on the seventeenth century.⁶⁵ Such influence would be even more likely within the Laudian movement, with its "greater sense of identity with the medieval Church" and its "nostalgia for the past that is evident in a range of lay authors" (Milton 71, 73). Crashaw himself demonstrates an interest in the medieval era in his various translations of medieval prayers, which, as J.A.W. Bennett notes, "show him to be well-read in the medieval meditative writers" (169).⁶⁶ While Thomas Healy cautions concerning seventeenth-century writers that "their overall stylistic indebtedness to such sources is more limited" (38), nevertheless, as the parallels in technique noted above suggest, there are notable similarities between Crashaw's style and use of language and the medieval mystical tradition as well as Richard Rolle's approach in particular. While Teresa herself reflects that medieval tradition, this doesn't exclude a more direct medieval (and English medieval) influence on Crashaw.

Surprisingly few commentators have noted Crashaw's resemblances to Rolle. In a 1911 book review in *The Catholic World*, the reviewer states in passing, "The note of Richard Crashaw is the note of Richard Rolle, and of all really Catholic inspiration, devotion of the most

⁶⁵ Thomas Healy notes this possibility, stating, "Seventeenth-century Anglican writers may have turned to patristic and mediaeval sources for examples of amplification of scriptural images and language, and for examples of affective devotional expression" (38).

⁶⁶ See Bennett's discussion of these translations, 169-77.

passionate and personal kind to our Lord Himself' (532), but even this statement falls into the tendency to see both Crashaw's poetry and Rolle's writings as somewhat spontaneous outbursts of personal devotion, rather than as considered literary productions. More recently, Maureen Sabine, in discussing what she calls Crashaw's "feminine spirituality," makes the following general observation:

No one, to my knowledge, has speculated that the authors contained in [Crashaw's] father's library may have actively incited Crashaw's feminine spirituality. The remarkable similarity between the key authors that Bynum notes, *Jesus as Mother*, p.140, for their conviction of the motherhood of God and those enumerated by Warren, *Richard Crashaw*, pp.210-211, n.2, as chief examples of William Crashaw's eclectic taste in religious works, is too close to be passed over as simple coincidence. (*Feminine Engendered Faith* 210 n.10)⁶⁷

As Sabine indicates, the relationship of the contents of William Crashaw's library to Richard Crashaw's poetry has not been considered at any depth, and part of the reason may be the impossibility of knowing what manuscripts were actually within the Crashaw house while Richard Crashaw was a youth. A large number of Crashaw's manuscripts and books were stored by the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, at Southampton house pending the completion of St. John's College, Cambridge library, to which they were subsequently donated.⁶⁸ William Crashaw's correspondence reveals that "almost 200" of his "some 500" manuscripts were at Southampton by May, 1615 (qtd. In Wallis, 224), but he retained others beyond that date (Wallis 227).

It is, however, striking that among the manuscripts possessed by Crashaw and eventually donated to St. John's is a compilation of Rolle's writings which includes not only *Incendium*

⁶⁷ Sabine also references this connection in "Crashaw and Abjection," again in relation to "a 'feminine' style of mysticism" (428).

⁶⁸ The books were donated in 1626 and the manuscripts, which would have included the Rollean works, in 1635 (James, vii-viii).

Amoris but one of the few extant copies of *Melos Amoris* (James 32-33).⁶⁹ Given the uncertainty regarding the location of these manuscripts during the period in question, the presence of these texts in the library of William Crashaw's household does not in itself indicate that Richard Crashaw was familiar with Rolle's work, but it does open up this possibility. Also present in the collection are manuscripts of Richard and Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and tracts on the biblical Song of Songs from Bernard of Clairvaux (see James 165-66, 222-23), indicating further potential medieval inspiration for Crashaw's frequent sensory and sensual language. The sheer number of medieval manuscripts in the Crashaw household suggests that some of Richard Crashaw's purported "un-Englishness" could be more an indication of a spirituality reflective of fourteenth century England, and perhaps Richard Rolle in particular, as well as other medieval precursors.⁷⁰ The Rollean connection can only remain a possibility; yet it is certainly tantalizing given the presence of *Incendium Amoris* and the rare *Melos Amoris* in the Crashaw household. It is all the more fascinating given both writers' use of a similarly overwhelming and reader-displacing style that I would suggest serves a similar purpose for both writers.

CRASHAW'S DONATIVE PURPOSE AND THE "UNCONTROLLABLE FACTOR"

Within the internal medium of the Teresa poems Crashaw develops elements of Teresa's own mediatorial depiction of her relationship as well as portraying its effects on others. In that sense, Crashaw's is a *derivative* donative purpose: the internal medium of the poems is an extension of the donative success of Teresa's life, and more specifically of her textual *Life*. This

⁶⁹ There is also a manuscript of *Pore Caitif*, the Middle English text of spiritual direction containing certain direct or modified passages from Rolle's writings.

⁷⁰ As Alison Shell notes, assuming the "*uniqueness* of Crashaw" has, among other things, "the effect either of vastly overemphasizing his originality, or of abnormalizing much of medieval spirituality" (100). Crashaw's Teresa poems often seem more in tune with English spirituality of the fourteenth than the seventeenth centuries. What Thomas Merton says of Crashaw's near contemporary, the exiled Benedictine Augustine Baker, might also be a description of Crashaw himself: ". . . we cannot help feeling that he was a creature of the fourteenth century who would have blossomed as happily as any Rolle or Lady Julian in an East Midland hermitage, but who had the misfortune to be born two centuries late" (147).

intent underlies the approach of the poems. Crashaw portrays Teresa's mediator-(non)object relationship through sensory and erotic mystical language, often using and stylistically amplifying the language of Teresa's own descriptions, in order to communicate the overwhelming power of that relationship and legitimize Teresa as mediator. In addition, the poems' intentionally overwhelming and dazzling style challenges and resists the reader, forming an aesthetic counterpart to the displacing experiences Teresa herself relates, and that she indicates have served to increase her own desire.

Those who would respond to the poetic portrait add to the number who have already responded to her *Life*, and join the "Thousands of crown'd Soules" that form Teresa's crown of achievement in Crashaw's portrayal of her heavenly reward ("A Hymn" 165-77). They portray the positive form of triangular mimetic desire, the group of subjects who now come to share in a positive mimetic relationship with that mediator and divine (non)object. Such triumphal images of transcendent recompense and rejoicing not only laud Teresa but form an appealing community the internal medium's reading subject may be inspired to join, fulfilling the poet's derivative donative purpose in sharing Teresa's life and relationship with the divine.

Is Crashaw's internal medium successful in achieving this donative purpose? The poetic technique in the Teresa poems, particularly in its most striking moments, seems capable of dazzling the reader and providing an analogous "taste" of the saturating qualities of mystical experience, and its portrayal of the depth of Teresa's mediatorial relationship may be compelling. But ironically, given the effort Crashaw expends to control readers' experience of the poems and stylistically overwhelm them, the ultimate determining factor for the success of his donative intent lies beyond such techniques.

As the discussion of saturating phenomena in chapter three indicated, Jean-Luc Marion stresses the necessity for an initial approach of openness, a “kind of faith” that allows for discernment of the saturating qualities of a phenomenon; that “in order nevertheless to receive it, the *I* must allow itself to be constituted, ‘revealed,’ and stunned [*interloqué*] by this paradoxical phenomenon” (“Nothing is Impossible for God” 100-101). Shane Mackinlay says of this necessity that such phenomena require a particular “hermeneutic space” in which to appear, a “space that is opened by the active reception of the one to whom they are given” (219).

In Crashaw’s case, this positive affirmation and the hermeneutic space it affords cannot ultimately be created or imposed by the poetry but must come from the reader. While the imagery of the Teresa poems may dazzle and their portrayal of the relationship impress, their effect (and success in relation to Crashaw’s donative intent) is to some degree dependent on the reader approaching them in a certain way, with a recognition of the underlying significance of the linguistic saturation and an acceptance of the reality of the divine relationship toward which the saturating imagery and mediatorial portrayal point.

In the Teresa poems Crashaw suggests that these “faithful” attitudes and desires are not universal. “An Apologie,” for example, contrasts those who “drink vp al SPAIN in sack” and “drink from men to beasts” (30, 35) with Crashaw’s own longing for the “strong wine of loue” whose effect will “turn not beasts, but Angels” (31, 37). Not everyone is naturally susceptible to the “heau’n that lyes in ambush.” He indicates that those with a transcendent openness thus form a distinct community: “What soul so e’re, in any language, can / Speak heau’n like her’s is my souls country-man” (22). There are those not as fluent in speaking heaven as Teresa and Crashaw, and who thus may not respond in the same manner. Although he encourages a “faithful” approach to Teresa’s writings and, by extension, his own Teresa poems, he also

apparently recognizes that not all of his potential readership will necessarily adopt that approach and its desires.

This situation becomes the source of a contingency that can undermine Crashaw's donative intent, as a particular reader may come to the poems with what, from his perspective, would be an inappropriate or even hostile approach, or a wrong type of receptivity. Crashaw's "An Apologie" attempts to ward off one particular form of hostile reading that rejects Teresa due to her national and religious "foreignness."⁷¹ But there can be more subtle problematic readings as well: a reading may be aesthetically rather than spiritually focused, concentrating exclusively on the language itself; or it may be a reading that interprets Crashaw's language with a referent other than a relationship with the divine.

The erotic imagery of the Teresa poems, for example, can be subject to such a misreading. Although Crashaw writes from his awareness of the tradition of mystical spiritual-sensory language, using erotic language to "speak heaven," his audience is not necessarily reading with that same awareness or intent. Crashaw's contemporary and acquaintance Edward Thimelby complains (in verse) about the problematic aspect of such images:

A rapture, altar, sacrifice, a vowe,
A relique, extacye, words baudy now,
Our fathers could for harmeles termes alow.
But now the very spring of poesy
Is poysond quite . . . (qtd. in Shell 99-100)

Alison Shell notes of this issue, "Crashaw, like many other mystics, designedly uses the linguistic commonplaces surrounding sexual surrender as metaphors for religious ecstasy" (100).

⁷¹ There is an obvious irony to this, given the critical tendency to view Crashaw's poetry as somehow "foreign."

Such usage can backfire, however, if the referent to physical ecstasy becomes the reader's focus rather than its spiritual parallel—as Thimelby's complaint suggests common seventeenth-century parlance has made likely—and the language “becomes invalidated by double-entendre” (Shell 99).⁷² Thimelby's critique points out that at least some of those in Crashaw's audience familiar with the erotic meanings of such terms and unable to move beyond them may be distracted or limited in their interpretation and response by those referents. Crashaw may have been moved to transcendent mimetic desire by textually encountering the mediator-(non)object relationship described in Teresa's *Life*, and his poetic techniques may seek to inspire a similar reaction on the part of his own readers, but he cannot be sure that they will approach his poems with the prerequisite understanding and openness.⁷³

THE PORTRAYED SUBJECT

It is interesting in this regard that Crashaw chooses to portray within “A Hymn” the effect of Teresa's own *Book of Her Life* on those who have responded to it, the “Sons of thy vowes / The virgin-births with which thy soueraign spouse / Made fruitfull thy fair soul” (167-69). He explains the process through which these new births have occurred, noting, “Thy bright / Life brought them first to kisse the light / That kindled them to starrs” (175-77): that he refers to her written *Life* is made clear by his prior reference to her “rare WORKES” (155). Teresa's *Life* has inspired these readers with desire for the same type of relationship Teresa has enjoyed (“kisse the light”), leading them to similar relationships and kindling them “to starrs.” The description of these “virgin-births” indicates what Crashaw considers the appropriate response to

⁷² Shell suggests an ongoing issue in this regard: “Thimelby has a small place in literary history as the first of Crashaw's hostile critics, and he anticipates a very usual twentieth-century objection to Crashaw's work. . . a reductionist approach within Crashavian criticism, where his religious ecstasy has been assumed to be totally sexual in origin, albeit veiled with the lies of repression” (100).

⁷³ Richard Strier's words, written in regard to a different context, nevertheless seem apt to this dilemma: “For himself, Crashaw could be sure, for others he could not” (136).

Teresa's works, and thus the same fire and light imagery that he has applied to her is here applied to them.

But the internal medium of the Teresa poems also provides a more direct portrayal of this response. Crashaw supplies the reader with a persona—the poetic voice of the poem—that models active reception of Teresa's mediation and resulting mimetic desire within the poems themselves.⁷⁴ The voice of the poem had not been personified in the first-person singular in “A Hymn,” and appears only twice in the initial version of “Flaming Heart”—both somewhat amusing references (lines 8 and 40) to reversing the roles of Teresa and the Seraphim, neither of which address Teresa.

But Crashaw extends “Flaming Heart” in its 1652 *Carmen Deo Nostro* version with the addition of lines 85-108, featuring multiple first-person singular references, in which Crashaw's poetic persona requests Teresa to “shew here thy art, / Vpon this carcasse of a hard, cold, hart” (85-86), and begging that “the leaues of thy larg Books of day” might “take away from me my self & sin” (88, 90). Ultimately, he asks of her, “By all of HIM we haue in THEE; / Leave nothing of my SELF in me. / Let me so read thy life, that I / Vnto all life of mine may dy” (105-08). The persona fulfills the role of the desiring subject of the transcendent mimetic triangle, looking to the mediator Teresa and desiring the depth of mediator-(non)object relationship Crashaw's Teresa poems portray.

While lacking Girard's triangular mimetic language, Mario Praz makes an insightful comment relevant to Crashaw's procedure here:

⁷⁴ After defending the dissertation, I discovered an article by Walter R. Davis, “The Meditative Hymnody of Richard Crashaw,” that also briefly deals with the voice of the Teresa poems as a desiring exemplar within a broader discussion of the meditative and liturgical aspects of Crashaw's poetry. While not in relation to questions of misreading or triangular mimetic desire, it is still relevant to, and supportive of, my own approach to this aspect of the poetry.

In the original end of *Flaming Heart* he admonished the wise souls to be the love-slain witnesses of the Saint's life. Witnesses, but not partakers in a common ardour. However, in the ill-welded fragment which stands by itself in its own halo of flame, without intimate connexion with what precedes, the intonation becomes very personal and deeply felt and soars dizzily into an impassioned invocation, so that the rather rhetorical summons of the close of the preceding passage becomes a direct, fervid experience: the poet wants to tear himself from his own life, and his yearning for ecstasy is so powerful and desperate that he almost seems to have reached it. (261-62)

I have argued that Crashaw always intends that his readers ultimately become "partakers in a common ardour" and not mere witnesses, and I find Praz's insinuation that this passage is merely Crashaw's own outburst of ecstasy inaccurate to its complex intentionality.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in these added lines the poetic voice as exemplary persona portrays responsive mimetic desire in the striking manner Praz describes. In reading the poem the reader becomes the performer of both the persona's admiration for Teresa as mediator and passionately expressed desire for a similar relationship with the divine. This desire functions structurally as the concluding realization of the expanded poem's progression.

"A Song," which immediately follows "Flaming Heart" in *Carmen Deo Nostro*, repeats much of the imagery of the preceding poems. In the 1648 edition, "An Apologie" was placed after "Flaming Heart" (its title pluralized to present it as an apology "for the precedent Hymnes," referring to both "A Hymn" and the newly added "Flaming Heart") with "A Song" (at that point titled "A Song of divine Love") following. In *Carmen Deo Nostro*, however, "An Apologie" is restored to a position following "A Hymn" (and its title returned to the singular). The effect of this shift is to more closely connect "A Song" with "Flaming Heart," and

⁷⁵ This is not to imply that this personified voice is strictly an artifice unrelated to Crashaw's own feelings. I have suggested that Crashaw's own response to Teresa is the source of his donative intent in relation to the poems, and his own feelings would logically be reflected. Yet for the reader the poetic voice portrays a response to Teresa's mediation, and the sequence of poems in *Carmen Deo Nostro* and the language of "A Song" suggest this to be Crashaw's intent.

particularly to the themes and language of the latter's newly added lines and their responding persona.

In "A Song," as the soul seeks the face of the Lord, "Thy blessed eyes breed such desire, / I dy in loue's delicious Fire" (3-4), suggesting the lines that conclude "Flaming Heart," with their request to "Leaue nothing of my SELF in me. / Let me so read thy life, that I / Vnto all life of mine may dy" (106-08). Reading the poems in sequence gives the impression of the request concluding the former poem being completed in the latter. Besides continuing the fire and flame imagery of "Flaming Heart," these lines also resonate with the "hid flame" of Teresa's writings that can "strike fire" ("A Hymn" 159, 160). Similarly, the reference to Christ's gaze—"Be still triumphant, blessed eyes. / Still shine on me, fair suns! that I / Still may behold, though still I dy" ("A Song" 6-8)—suggests the name of Christ that "shines, & with a soueraign ray / Beates bright vpon the burning faces / Of soules..." ("A Hymn" 84-86). The second stanza of the poem includes the complex paradoxical combinations of death, life, and love noted earlier:

Though still I dy, I liue again;
Still longing so to be still slain,
So gainfull is such losse of breath,
I dy euen in desire of death.
Still liue in me this louing strife
Of liuing DEATH & dying LIFE.
For while thou sweetly slayest me
Dead to my selfe, I liue in Thee. (9-16)

The images in combination directly cite the reference in "A Hymn" to "a DEATH, in which who dyes / Loues his death, and dyes again. / And would for euer so be slain" (100-102). This again

gives a sense of fulfillment to the poem, implying the position of “A Song” as the culmination of the Teresan sequence, and thus of the internal medium.

Yet in spite of the parallels with the earlier poems, “A Song” makes one significant departure that is essential to its meaning: the addressee in this poem is not Teresa but the Lord whose “sweet grace / Sends vp my soul to seek thy face” (1-2). The relationship portrayed in “A Song” is no longer the Teresan mediator-(non)object relationship the poetic voice describes and lauds in “A Hymn” and “Flaming Heart.” It is instead a subject-(non)object relationship between the now personified poetic voice and the Lord in a completed transcendent mimetic triangle. The persona is a responding subject whose desire has been awakened by (textually) encountering Teresa as mediator as well as her relationship with the divine, and that relationship is now replicated (as the parallel language suggests) in the subject’s own ongoing desire and relationship. Thus the final line of “A Hymn,” which says of the Teresa/mediator’s relationship, “Which who in death would liue to see / Must learn in life to dy like thee” (181-82), is complemented by the final line of “A Song,” in which the persona/subject now says concerning his own relationship with the directly addressed divine (non)object, “Dead to my selfe, I liue in Thee” (“A Song” 16).

Richard Stier says of Crashaw’s “characteristic voice” that it is “exultant and assured, vibrant with the richness of satisfied religious ardor” (135-36); yet he also adds (specifically in relation to Crashaw’s “To the Name Above Every Name”), “There is no personal self-consciousness here; indeed, there is no subjectivity. The ‘I’ is an objective entity” (149). The same could be said of the voice of “A Song”: it is filled with ardor and excitement, and yet it is also a voice that has no individuated qualities. Lorraine Roberts, who references Stier’s latter comment (Roberts 69), suggests Crashaw uses dramatized pronouns “not because he wants us to

The transcendent internal medium of Crashaw's Teresa poems taken together as a sequence ultimately becomes not merely a depiction of mediator and divine (non)object—Teresa and her “fair Spouse” (“A Hymn” 65)—in relationship, but of a complete transcendent mimetic triangle. This allows the reader of the poems to experience not only the Teresan relationship that has so captivated Crashaw himself, but also the portrayed subject responding with mimetic desire to the life of Teresa, and enjoying a resulting subject-(non)object relationship reflective of, if not as heroic as, Teresa's own.

Crashaw portrays Teresa as an exemplary mediator in relationship with the divine (non)object, while also using spiritual-sensory and erotic language as well as stylistic elements reflecting the attributes of saturating mystical phenomena, providing a reading experience of displacement that is to some degree analogous to the saturating quality of Teresa's own mystical experiences. But he also seems to accept the reality of hermeneutic contingency, realizing that the poem's ability to move the reader to desire and ultimately to transformation is conditioned upon the reader's own antecedent openness and, Crashaw would doubtless believe, the work of divine grace in the reader's own heart. The portrayal of a responding subject within a completed transcendent mimetic triangle models both that openness and its result for the reading subject.

Crashaw's efforts may or may not succeed; nevertheless, he has the “hart to try,” undertaking a poetic style that creates—for those who are his “souls countrymen” (even as he is Teresa's) and who share his desire for “liuing DEATH & dying LIFE”—the opportunity to “kisse the light that kindle[s] them to starrs,” and to “dy in loue's delicious Fire.”

CONCLUSION

Approaching the works of Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and Richard Crashaw from the standpoint of Girardian triangular mimetic desire reveals each of these writers seeking to fulfill their donative intent via a transcendent internal medium portraying both the mediator and the mediator-(non)object relationship. These portrayals as well as the stylistic aspects of the texts themselves are intended to encourage the desire of the reading subject for the relationship portrayed. Yet while these writers share a broadly similar intention they attempt to achieve through the same textual means, the analysis in the preceding chapters has shown that the resulting internal mediums differ significantly.

In *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris*, Richard Rolle emphasizes his suitability as mediator of an affective mystical relationship with the divine (non)object by portraying his own eremitic rejection of the world for the sake of a higher calling, as well as his controversial rejection of eremitic norms as proof of divine authorization. He also associates himself with the biblical and ecclesial traditions of prophetic and holy figures in touch with the divine as a further means of emphasizing the desirable, empowering, and transcendent aspects of his mediator-(non)object relationship and his donative calling. Examining these elements in relation to the image of the wild man reveals their integral role in furthering the internal medium's overall portrayal. Rolle also describes his own overwhelming and displacing experiences of the divine and their horizon-saturating effect. He portrays within the text the desire that both enables and is enabled by these experiences, at times through first-person articulations of that desire which the reader performs in the reading experience itself. He engages a variety of stylistic means to produce a text resistant to a straightforward reading, displacing the reader as constituting subject in a manner to some degree reflective of the displacement he himself has felt in his experiences.

His texts form a complex effort to communicate some semblance of the mediator-divine (non)object relationship and its saturating qualities to the reading subject. The resulting internal medium attempts by these means to nurture the subject's mimetic desire for a similar form of relationship.

The internal medium of Julian of Norwich's *Showings* differs markedly in its approach, and these differences reflect her understanding that the revelations she has received are in reality given to all her *evyn cristen* by means of Julian, who is merely one among them. As a result, she, as mediator, functions within the internal medium as the voice of the one receiving the revelations (a voice the reader performs in reading) but displaces herself as a unique individual in favor of identification with the reader in a composite mediator/subject. This identification (reflecting elements of her anchoritic position in Norwich) is paralleled by a portrayal throughout her text of divine-human identification. This identification is related particularly to the role of Christ, who is not only the servant identifying and identified with fallen humanity, but also the Mother who guides spiritual formation. The inclusivity of Julian's maternal imagery in relation to Christ and its human counterparts furthers the breadth of inclusive identification that constitutes the main element of the internal medium. Throughout the text Julian models and portrays positive mimetic desire and its divine exemplar and source, encouraging the formation of a community embodying that desire and focused toward the divine (non)object that has gifted the community with the message she mediates.

The internal medium of Richard Crashaw's Teresa poems might also be described in terms of identification, but it is the identification of Crashaw's donative intention with the donative elements of Teresa of Avila's own *Book of Her Life*. Thus, while Crashaw's stylistic techniques have parallels to Rolle's in their use of sensory language and "dazzling" and

displacing style, the portrayal of the mediator is distinctive. The mediator portrayed within the poems is Teresa, with the voice of the poem joining the admiring subjects of her mediation. In the additions to “The Flaming Heart” as well as the final poem of the sequence, “A Song,” Crashaw’s poetic voice becomes a personalized responding subject joining the “thousand soules” of “A Hymn” in modeling appropriate responses of mimetic desire for the reading subject who performs that desire in the reading process. Crashaw’s internal medium ultimately portrays a complete mimetic triangle in an attempted fulfillment of his derivative (Teresan) donative intent.

Each of these writers constructs their transcendent internal medium in unique ways, yet in each case the effort is ultimately in service of a donative intention. Each in some sense feels they have been gifted and are now mediating that gift to others. Considering these texts through the primary lens of triangular mimetic desire and the transcendent internal medium in conjunction with other secondary theoretical approaches from a variety of disciplines reveals how each internal medium uniquely embodies that donative calling so that, as Richard Rolle puts it, “the one hearing or reading might strive to imitate.”

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that an appreciation of donative intention coupled with an application of elements of Girardian mimetic theory—triangular mimetic desire and the role of the transcendent internal medium—can prove useful in elucidating the purpose and internal aspects of certain mystical texts. While applicable to those examined above, it could certainly be applicable to a variety of other such writings as well. Texts with visionary or revelatory bases, such as those by Hildegard of Bingen or Gertrude of Helfta, would seem particularly capable of elucidation by such an approach. Margery Kempe would be an interesting subject in relation to both positive and rivalrous mimesis. Texts with an autobiographical basis and an apologetic intent, including writings by various Puritans and

Quakers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would also benefit from studies emphasizing their mediatorial and mediator-divine (non)object portrayals. Mystical writings of a more overtly apophatic nature could be potential subjects for consideration as well. The poetry and commentary of John of the Cross's *Spiritual Canticle*, for example, given their apparent donative intent and portrayal of the divine relationship, would be receptive to study from the standpoint of triangular mimetic desire.

Considerations of the subsequent adaptations of primary internal mediums could be quite fruitful. How, for example, is Rolle's mediatorial self-presentation modified when he becomes the object of the *Officium*'s mediation? Similarly, the middle English translator of Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls* provides commentary passages within the translation, and the resulting modification of Porete's internal medium would be worthy of consideration.

Attentiveness to triangular mimetic desire and the transcendent internal medium could prove a useful avenue of study in such situations. But it may also have a broader value than simply as a methodology for research. Approaching these forms of writing with a recognition of their donative intent and concern for mimetic desire may also help a reader to avoid treating them as mere relics of interest only for historical purposes.

In Dawn Powell's satirical novel *The Locusts Have No King*, one character (Dodo Brennan) makes the following assertion:

“Nobody wants to read all that tiresome blah
about old dead people nobody ever heard of.” (256)

While comical, her statement does express the reductive result that can occur if texts are, however subtly, relegated to the status of mere artifacts to be studied and critiqued, curated and put in their appropriate cabinets. Julian of Norwich emphasizes near the end of *Showings* that her text is meant to be performed: she intends it as a gift for her reader, shared in order to inspire

both that reader's desire for a particular object and movement toward it. Such texts are meant for performance; not naively, as if Richard Crashaw's world (let alone Richard Rolle's) is just like ours and our desires just like his—this is where informed understanding and therefore scholarship is essential—but creatively. Philip Sheldrake, noting that “musicians, in their performances, are interpreting a text,” makes the following observation concerning such performances and their implication for the appropriation of texts:

It is possible to be faithful to the composer in a limited sense simply by being technically faultless and by a literal observance of the composer's instructions. Yet a “good” performance seeks to be more than technically correct. It is also creative. Faithfulness certainly involves technique, but linked to imagination, because the composer did not merely describe how to produce certain sounds but sought to create an experience in the listener. . . . Without ignoring the historical context, we reveal new and richer truths which the author never knew, by bringing a text into contact with new questions. The pursuit of meaning undoubtedly begins with a prior understanding of what the text is about. However, in dialogue with it, our understanding is enlarged. We put questions to the text which are, in turn, reshaped by the text itself. (179, 180)

There is value in an informed creative dialogical “performance” of texts from distant eras and worldviews than our own, not in a historically naïve way that ignores that distance, but in a manner that nevertheless takes the texts seriously. There is value to engaging such texts not solely as subjects for examination, useful though that may be in its own right, but with the intention to interact with them from our own horizon, *subjects to (textual) mediators*, allowing them to speak from their world while also speaking from our own, bringing about a dialogue of sorts that may lead to a creative result worthy of performance.

Richard Rolle stylishly presents the possibility of experiences that escape our efforts to confine them within our handy horizons and categories, exposing and exploding our assurances. How might Rolle's message interact with our modern age, so prone to turn

to reductive and exclusive definitions, so impressed with itself; and yet increasingly presented with the evidence of our past mistakes resulting from overconfidence, while simultaneously discovering the existence of possibilities and realities capable of inspiring types of awe Rolle's world couldn't imagine?

Richard Crashaw is touchingly eager to share poetically the beauty of a story that has so obviously transformed his own life, and he stresses to his English-speaking audience that although the author/subject of that story is a woman who speaks Spanish, that doesn't somehow exclude her from speaking heaven to them. What does that say in relation to the stories or people that our culture or our privately held viewpoints might be prone to dismiss as outside our comfortable zones of homogeneity, keeping them from "speaking heaven" (in whatever form) to us?

Julian of Norwich writes with confidence of a love that is the force of our very existence, and can be the source of a deep and harmonious sense of identification between ourselves, "others," and all that is, at the level of our very being, meaning, and purpose. She models a community based on relationships embodying this inclusive love rather than self-focused rivalry. How would such a message dialogue with our fractured and stricken world? What might that dialogue need to include, and where might it lead in our relationships with one another, and with this planet?

Julian says of her message, "it is not yett performyd, as to my syght" (86.1-2). Perhaps recognizing the donative nature of such texts and the means by which their writers go about

fulfilling that donative intent can help them to remain living documents for us, texts originating from very different worlds and worldviews than our own, and yet still capable of gifting us in some manner. Perhaps that recognition may help us engage with them in dialogically creative ways that could open horizons of meaning as we seek to navigate our own complexities, challenges, and opportunities.

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