"WITH MEKENESS ASKE PERSEVERANTLY": ON READING JULIAN OF NORWICH
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"WITH MEKENESS ASKE PERSEVERANTLY": ON READING JULIAN OF NORWICH

Wisdom has built her house.... she calls from the highest places
... “You that are simple, turn in here! ... Live, and walk in the way of insight.” (Prov. 9:1-6)

If we simply listen without expectations, hearing the emptiness behind the sounds, we can become sensitive to its inner quality and the message it carries (Fremantle 2000:183)

This is not a conventional account either of studying or of teaching Julian of Norwich. The record of an extended process of collaboration and reflection, it does not ask—any more than did the process itself—for the readers’ suspension of their critical faculties. Rather, as the study of any mystical text will do, it asks readers to salt their critical faculties as with fire: to expand their range so that they can acquire a subtler palate of flavors and textures and colors. This is the admission price of crossing the threshold of Julian’s house and entering into her luminous textual universe whose words “are full lovesome to the soule and full nere touchen the will of God and his goodness.” Even to approach the threshold demands a patient stillness, sitting with the words, as before a painting, until the mind is clear enough to begin seeing. We begin by briefly outlining our different routes to the threshold and the baggage we carried on the journey, before going on to outline our methodology and some of its first fruits.

MAGGIE ROSS

It was late in 1988 that some fortuitous whim pushed me to attend a course of lectures on medieval poetry given by Vincent Gillespie. I had first come across Vincent as a fellow participant in what was supposed to have been a seminar to try to establish a working text for Julian of Norwich’s Showings, but which ended up being something quite different. The little Vincent had said (when any of us was allowed to get a word in edgewise), however, had seemed to me not only correct but penetrating. I had always wanted to become acquainted with Julian
for both personal and professional reasons. My original training was in history of ideas, theology and interdisciplinary psychoanalysis, all of which had been undertaken in the interest of my profession as a solitary. But something had held me back from reading the Revelation of Love in translation. The few short weeks we attended the abortive seminar convinced me that this instinct was correct, and that the text was far more important than I had suspected. In consequence, until I began working with Vincent Gillespie, I held myself innocent of the text.

It was a few weeks into the following term when I screwed up my courage and approached him after a lecture. I realized I was probably being presumptuous, I said (and I was), but I had always wanted to read Julian in Middle English, and while I realized that he was probably far too busy to do so, I wondered if he would be willing to work with me a bit. I stood there trembling. This was preposterous. I had no university-level training in English as the English understand that. Why would this Oxford scholar want to be bothered to help me? But Vincent had already found out who I was and had recently read one of my books and said so. He would be very interested in getting together to read the text. We set up a time.

At our first meeting I was absolutely terrified; I had no idea how this game was played. I imagined that there were arcane rules, known only to initiates. Vincent, however, was patient while I floundered about (though I suspect he must have thought me quite mad for a time). Slowly we began to trust each other. We moved our meetings from his office and its incessant interruptions to my flat. About this time we also began to tape our sessions.

VINCENT GILLESPIE

My academic background was in religious writing in the later Middle Ages, and in affective spirituality in particular. I had been lecturing for some years on the psychology of affective response in Middle English lyrics and mystical texts, and had begun to publish articles (1982, 1984, 1987) exploring the ways in which such texts might have been read, and how this reading differed from other kinds of textual reception. I had begun to argue that religious imagery always aspired to its own disappearance, whether it was used in the tradition of negative (or apophatic) theology, which explicitly distrusted the human imagination, or in the more positive (or cataphatic) tradition, that tolerated images as teaching and thinking aids. But I felt that I had reached something of a dead end; that I could
not make further progress in exploring the distinctiveness of style, texture and strategy that I felt in these works. I had recently read Maggie Ross’s *The Fountain and the Furnace* (1987), and been excited by the way it explored key mystical images such as tears, heat and fire, so her invitation to read Julian together was too good to miss. Not only did it give me a chance to talk to her about her experiences and ideas, but it also marked out a regular slot in a hectic timetable to read and think about one of the hardest texts I had yet encountered. Her flat, in the basement kitchen of Dr Pusey’s house at Christ Church, became both a sanctuary and a surrogate anchorhold for those few hours each week.

**THE SETTING**

This physical context was important: informal and relaxed. We would share a pot of tea or coffee, and talk for perhaps a quarter of an hour about our personal and scholarly concerns. This unwinding process was absolutely essential for the sort of communication and exploration in which we engaged. We had basic scholarly tools: bibles in various translations, scripture concordances, and concordances of Julian’s text, which we made as we went along. When we began to realize how large a task we had undertaken, we created a large-type printout of the text with triple spacing and huge margins, printed on one side so there was plenty of room for scribbling notes. After a few meetings we decided to begin tape-recording the sessions as we found that note-taking interrupted the flow of thought and discussion. Then the work began in earnest.

**THE METHOD**

When we began a new chapter, we would read the whole thing aloud, slowly and deliberately, always in Middle English to savor the taste and texture of the words. This gentle falling of the word upon the ear was very important. Often it would begin to reveal to us both the narrative architecture and the key lexemes standing at the synapses of Julian’s thinking. Then, after an interval, sometimes brief, sometimes longer, one of us would venture a remark about the first thing in the passage that came into our mind. It was, as often as not, the first thing that was coming into the other’s mind. The text seemed to forge a lot of simultaneity of thought. But often one of us would have a sort of “bolt from the blue” insight. Sometimes these insights would leave us shaken and we’d quit until the following week to allow us time to reflect on them, mull over the implications, and perhaps
do some research on what we thought we had found. Whenever one of us said, "I can’t do any more," we would stop immediately. Our sessions ranged from 45 minutes to several hours. This work began in 1988 and ended in 1995.

We did not always agree on what the text was showing us, or the language we wanted to use for it, but we did agree that we would suspend any real head-buttting, not only for the sake of the work but also because we learned by experience that our disagreement would often be resolved by what the text would show us later on. The work was not at all serious and solemn. Such a merry text would not allow it. Punning, joking and general outrageousness could burst out at any moment. This sense of play was also essential to Julian’s world, not only to lighten our own minds, but as an everyday part of her contemporary context and inherent to her text. The building up of trust by these small and “homely” means was imperative, as was the ability to listen to each other beyond the words and any personal static that might be around. Most of all we learned to be comfortable with long silences, while the tape ran and the process of unknowing opened us up to whatever the text would show us that day. These silences were essential also to making lateral connections within our respective bodies of knowledge.

Central in this process was the agreement from the beginning that neither of us had any proprietary interest. This was a joint project; neither of us could have come to these insights without the process, without the effort, trust, presence and risk of the other. We agreed from the beginning that whatever we might publish on Julian individually, the other would be acknowledged. The whole was far more than the sum of its parts. And since the entire text (not to mention the method) is about un-grasping, it would have been absurd to speak of proprietorship in any event. The lack of an external deadline or a timetable proved one of the most liberating aspects: we did not begin with the intention of having concrete “outcomes” or “deliverables.” After an initial period of intellectual and personal adjustment (neither of us was used to collaborative work, and we were both shy of revealing ignorance or doubt), it became clear to both of us that our work was proving deeply satisfying. Above all, it allowed us to read SLOWLY, often spending weeks of meetings and hours of reflection on a single chapter or passage.

Once we had settled with each other and into the text, it quickly became clear that we were negotiating with an author whose creative genius escapes from and transcends any school or method. We found that we could read her text on her
terms or not at all. That is, we could either impose convention on the text and read it as a series of linked pious reflections, or we could inhabit a text that “wrappith us, halseth us and all beclosyth us for tender love” (ch. 5) so that all that is homely and familiar does not cease to be so but is also, simultaneously, transfigured and eternal. Every foray into her universe turns up something new.

Many scholars and readers of Julian have puzzled over the strangeness of her text’s structure and the curiously recursive and apparently involuted way that she expounds her showings. That struck us too, right from the outset, with her claim in the first chapter that the showing of the Crown of Thorns both “comprehendyd and specified the Trinite” in which “all the sheweings that follow be grounded and onyd.” This, we came to realize, was typical of her dizzying changes of visual and intellectual perspective: both comprehensive and specific; effortlessly moving from image (crown) to abstraction (Trinity); grounding and unifying all that follows in a single metaphor. We soon found that the linear approach—schematizing, programming, spotting medieval conventions—simply would not work. Her text refuses this kind of scholastic reading. Her ventriloquism, her range of voices demanded a different way of listening. We began to realize that to read this text demanded stillness and the suspension of our preconceptions. This did not mean that the linearity of standard critical method was totally excluded, but it did mean that it did not hold primacy. It was a servant, not a master.

We used, instead, a version of an ancient monastic form of dialogue with the text derived from lectio divina (divine reading) of Scripture and akin to what today is called “free association,” although more traditionally described as rumination or meditation:

To meditate is to attach oneself closely to the sentence being recited and weigh all its words in order to sound the depths of their full meaning. It means assimilating the content of a text by means of a kind of mastication which releases its full flavor.... It occupies and engages the whole person in whom the Scripture takes root, later on to bear fruit.

Just as monastic reading generates what Jean Leclercq calls the “literature of reminiscence,” so we became sensitized to the nuances and verbal play of Julian’s text, so that key ideas and concepts (such as “enclosing” or “ beholding”) began to resonate for us:
The verbal echoes so excite the memory that a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations.... Each word is like a hook, so to speak: it catches hold of one or several others which become linked together. (Leclercq 1974, 90-91)

Colledge and Walsh had argued in their edition (1978, 131-2) that Julian was engaged in a process of lectio divina on her showings, and we found that her account of those showings required and repaid a similar approach on the part of her readers.

This process of analytical and critical effacement was both liberating and occasionally unnerving. It required us to relinquish the illusion of control. We realized that Julian’s re-enactment in ch. 4 of Mary’s yielding of control and self-will in the Annunciation was the key to her own openness to the showings, and her willingness to “conceive” of their truth (the gynecological pun is Julian’s, not ours), and that readers of her text needed to aspire to the same condition, which Julian calls “mekenes”: “Lo me, Gods handmayd.” In modern terms, this translated into a willingness to listen to the text without preconceptions and without a pre-formed interpretative agenda. This is how we put it in “The Apophatic Image”:

To achieve this loss of self-consciousness implies the abandonment of control. It is necessary to jettison the techniques of analysis which classify experiences, sights, words and sense impressions by defining them against and incorporating them into repertoires of signification. Discursive consciousness makes sense of its experiences by activating its mental archive which serves to delimit the play of any signifier by giving it contextual meaning, by fettering it into a system of likeness and difference. By contrast the stilling and letting go characteristic of contemplative experience facilitates the liberation into and assumption of the different perspectives of the apophatic consciousness. (Gillespie and Ross 1992, 56)

Thus Julian’s nearly-last remark about her book (ch. 86), that “it is not yet performid” is the prerequisite for beginning to read it. It permits and requires its readers both to perform the text and, paradoxically, to be performed by it. This necessary and radical openness to the theological and rhetorical strategies of the text—and especially to what we have called its “poetics of effacement”—seems to us to rest on a profound participation in the kenotic process.
Kenosis is a Greek term used by theologians to summarize Saint Paul’s description of Christ in Philippians 2: 5-11:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though being in the form of God, did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For this God also has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above all names.

Kenosis is a concept that is often misunderstood, particularly by contemporary theologians. Put quite simply, it involves strategies for laying aside self-consciousness. The unconditional and self-emptying love of Christ is one of the core images of Julian’s text. For us, the paradox of the exalted kenosis of the Cross also became a paradigm for the procedures of Julian’s text, for her approach to God, for her relationship to her audience, and for the audience’s performative relationship to the text. To inhabit the text, the reader must be prepared to inhabit the paradigm. Enclosure in the text will paradoxically deliver the reader into a limitless landscape, where none of our familiar maps and guidebooks will help.

In spite of its name, the kenotic process itself does not depend on religion or culture. It occurs many times a day in the normal course of things. Forgetting so that we can remember the word we have forgotten that is on the tip of the tongue is one example. Being so totally focused on an exam or a book so that we “come to our selves,” not quite knowing how the time has passed or the end of the story arrived, are other examples. In the context of reading this kind of work, the process depends on a willingness to sit in stillness with a text until one is drawn into the imageless silence surrounding the words. This imageless silence (apophasis) often involves a suspension of self-consciousness and therefore may not be specifically noticed. It is not an “experience,” which, along with language, is by definition self-reflexive. Nor is it discursive thought masking as something else. Rather it involves a quiet and focused attentiveness to the new and unexpected resonances and associations that may emerge. As Eliot notes in Burnt Norton, “Words, after speech, reach into silence.” In the silence the text begins to reveal itself, and Julian’s text in particular becomes a multi-dimensional universe into which one is imperceptibly moved. In keeping with its multiple and simultaneously presented showings and its shifting perspectives and points
of view, the reader often has the sensation of being at once inside and outside of this textually-generated universe. At times the reader may become aware that he or she is no longer the agent of reading but the text being read.

It is important here to make a distinction between the process itself and the interior cultural matrix which each person brings to such a process. The nuances and strategies that a text reveals when read in this way may or may not be related to the reader’s cultural repertoire. Julian’s text is of a particular time and place and language. Her allusions are many and layered. The resonances and subtexts that a particular reader picks up are related to that reader’s specific interior archive and concordance. But there are also elements—of syntax, for example—that are technical and not necessarily culturally linked. And Julian’s text, with its wholehearted focus on the big questions of love, life, sin and death, combines breathtaking doctrinal freshness with surprising freedom from the minutiae of contemporary ecclesial concerns. Even readers with no technical knowledge of theology or church history (beyond a very broad outline of key Gospel events like the Annunciation and the Crucifixion) can engage and identify with these big issues about human existence before and after death.

To perform (or be performed by) this process, the reader must have enough confidence in the text and its silences to allow the structure of the critical house of cards with which we normally surround our selves to fall away. To yield the hermeneutic initiative, to be willing to relinquish our ordinary ways of thinking can be frightening at first, and this method can be learned and deepened only through practice. But Julian herself records her fears and uncertainties at key moments of her showings and only gradually comes to accept with trust that “all shall be well.” So there is no reason why modern readers should shy away from acknowledging their own fears and uncertainties in the face of her text. At the same time, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that this process does not demand the “sacrifice” of reason in the sense of its denial; rather, reason has been exercised to the utmost, and we are asked to pass beyond it to be open to a higher reason. To undertake this method does not mean that our normal faculties of reason are left behind. Rather, they are incorporated and transfigured into a new way of knowing, understanding, “werking, thankand, trostand, enioyand” (ch. 86), all of which, Julian would say, are “Godds werking” (our emphasis). Thus we give up the illusion of our activity and initiative, our only activity being that of attentive receptivity, or disponibilité, to use the untranslatable French word for it. With each insight, there is a point at which it becomes apparent that it is
appropriate once again to exercise the linear critical faculty. Fundamentally the method demands that we abandon the comfortable noise of information-retrieval for the uncertainty of what the silence and the text may teach us.

To enter apophatic consciousness, the seeker must simultaneously desire it intensely and give up all desire. This paradox is deliberately subversive. It threatens the logical, hierarchical command and control structures that motivate the human need to resolve, categorise and classify. It challenges our sense of the ordinary, threatens our usual interpretative patterns and displaces our dominant modes of perception. Like the self-emptying humility of Christ on the Cross, it defies reconciliation to the logic of the world. It is a sign of contradiction, allowing the creative tension between its conflicting significations to generate a precious stillness, a chink in the defensive wall of reason that allows slippage into apophatic consciousness. (Gillespie and Ross 1992, 56)

As Eliot puts it in Ash Wednesday, "Teach us to care and not to care/ teach us to sit still." To read in this way is not a short-cut; it is rather a quantum leap.

There is nothing of mystical moonshine about this method, nor any exaggeration of the dangers that may be lurking in the depths of our narcissistic unconscious. The challenge of an unfamiliar landscape is that it may harbor unpleasant surprises for the traveler, and contemplative landscapes are no different in this respect. But part of the test of Julian's authenticity is that her showings are rooted, are earthed, in the Love of God manifest in this world, as she shows repeatedly in her homely imagery. The "thankand, trostand, enioyand" of God aspired to by the text is not achieved by cutting off of mind from body or by retreat into hermetic abstraction, and neither is this method of reading and being read. The ways into this setting-aside of preconceptions are very simple and practical, "trostand and enioyand" being primary.
A LATENT THEOLOGY

Julian's syntactical choices express a latent theology. We first noticed this in our consideration of her use of the preposition “in” in ch. 6. Our exploration then flowed into surrounding words and contexts. We became aware, for example, that Julian was playing riffs on the word “mene.” This is one of Julian’s most characteristic lexical procedures which we would later come to call a “word-knot.” Typically she takes a nucleus word and winds around it strands of homonyms, grammatical variants, near-puns and half-rhymes that constitute the genetic code of her theology. The lexical and theological relationships that such “word-knots” generate are both playful and profound, but they revealed themselves most fully to us in the interaction between text, reflective silence and speculative gropings for understanding. The other important insights that manifested themselves through this method of approaching the text contributed to our emerging sense of a visual hermeneutic (discussed in more detail in “The Apophatic Image” and “Postcards from the Edge”). Some of the techniques that contributed to our understanding of the text are briefly considered here, and could provide points of entry for class discussion of sample chapters from early in Julian’s showings.

SYNTACTICAL AND GRAMMATICAL AMBIGUITY

At the level of syntax, we began to notice what seemed to be conscious ambiguities in the relationships between subjects, objects and referents, and the deliberate placement of words in clauses, clauses in sentences, sentences in paragraphs, and paragraphs in chapters. In the beginning of ch. 4, for example, the conflated subjects of the phrase “liveing in wretched flesh” turned out to be both the Christ in the Incarnation, the Virgin Mary, Julian and (by implication) the reader, a theological effect achieved by word order alone. In ch. 10, her play with the word “wil” allows another interpenetrating layering of meaning to build up in the sentence, “He will be sene and he wil be sowte; he wil be abedyn and he wil be trosted.”

The future tenses imply an idealized future perfect; will as a modal auxiliary implies the determination of God to reveal himself to his creatures; and the mood allows a sense of God tolerating his creatures’ feeble attempts to conform themselves to his will. (Gillespie and Ross 1992, 70)
STYLISTIC VENTRILLOQUISM

We also became aware of Julian's skilful command of different linguistic codes and registers, narrative voices and rhetorical levels of style. Shifts between such registers and codes often signaled themselves with verbal punctuation ("as if"); "as thus"; "as if he had said"). But just as often her ventriloquial employment of, for example, the adjectively supercharged language of affective meditations on the Passion would be signaled only by a sudden and unheralded change in the specific gravity of the prose. (Students with expertise in stylistics would, for example, find much to comment on in ch. 12 of Julian's text.) Indeed the word "sodeynly" emerged as an important signal for the sometimes dizzying and usually unsettling changes of viewpoint or perspective performed by the text (e.g. the end of ch. 3 and the beginning of ch. 4).

APOPHATIC IMAGES

Like many readers of Julian's text, we had registered the progression of core images from the Crown of Thorns, through the blood-covered face of Christ and up to the lingering, thirst-tormented death scene on Calvary. We had also noted the increasing abstraction of later chapters, and the way the text (with the exception of the late and, for Julian, troublesome addition of the Lord and the Servant showing) becomes a series of ruminations on gnomic utterances by Christ. But our lectio helped us to realize that her presentation of these images encouraged them to efface themselves and to pull our attention into an imageless and apophatic contemplation, preparing for the later abstraction. The hazelnut, offered in ch. 5 as an analogy to the whole of creation held in Julian's hand, is in fact never there. The bleeding head of Christ in ch. 10 disappears behind an apophatic curtain of blood. The face of the dying Christ in ch. 21 suddenly and unexpectedly changes its cheer, and Julian's, from sorrow to joy. Julian and the reader are invited to disappear into the side of Christ in ch. 25. Apophatic images, as we came to call them, can prove to be effective teaching tools in the classroom.

Water, wine [in a glass or chalice], pearls, the moon, clouds, a flame, all partake of a play of light and darkness and offer neutral surfaces on which images can resolve and dissolve themselves....

But even representational images can become springboards into the apophatic. Intense, unwavering attention to an image can
cause it to lose its primary figurai significance and to dissolve into constituent shapes, colors, patterns or textures. (Gillespie and Ross 1992, 57)

Julian frequently describes with meticulous care such deconstructions of figurai referentiality caused by her beholding of her showings.

**BEHOLDING**

Implicit in our attentiveness to the shifts of linguistic tone and register and to the ebb and flow of the visual referents was a growing awareness of the unusually intense focus placed by Julian on her own processes of perception, reflection and intellection. A challenging feature of this is her fastidious transcription of her flickering and inconsistent mental processes. Verbs like “mervelyng” and “thinkyng” signal the presence of distracting levels of discursive self-consciousness which erupt into her beholding of her showing, as at the beginning of ch. 11:

> And after this I saw God in a poynte, that is to sey, in myn vnderstondyng, be which sight I saw that he is in al things. I beheld with avisement, seing and knowing in sight with a soft drede, and thought: ‘What is synne?’.

But Julian states in ch. 10 that “It is God wille that we seke him [the Paris manuscript reads: in] to the beholdyng of him.... And how a soule shall have him in his beholdyng he shal teche himselfe.” “Beholding” emerges as a transactional state in which God beholds us and we behold him. Julian states that the skills necessary for seeking into this “beholding” will be taught by God: that is, they go beyond normal human modes of inquiry and analysis. Seeking into “beholding” is the core work of the text. We came to realize too that it was the core of our own methodology. The exploration of the complex and limitless resonances of this key term in Julian’s lexicon must be begun (even if not yet performed) by each reader. As always, Julian shows us how to do it: “I beheld the shewing with al my diligens; for in this blissid shewing I beheld it as one in Godys meaning” (ch. 9).
Her beholding allows her to see from God’s perspective (as one who shared God’s meaning); her beholding allows her to see the irreducible unity of the showing (I beheld it all in one, by means of God’s showing); and she beholds it as one who has herself become a means of showing, a signifier for those who, she expects, will survive her:

‘And that I say of me I sey in the person of al myn even cristen, for I am lernyd in the gostly shewing of our lord God that he menyth so’ (ch. 8)....

This is how God ‘menyth’ or speaks: she becomes the word spoken by God. (Gillespie and Ross 1992, 68-9)

CONCLUSION

Julian is not merely being polite when she says her text is for her “fellow Christians.” She deals with basic and universal questions of life and death, sin and guilt, redemption and love. Beginning with Julian’s own near-fatal illness, much of the text is dominated by existential fear and dread, only gradually lightening as she begins to behold and understand the power and purpose of her showings: “Love was his mening” (ch. 86). In her dialogue with the teachings of the Church, Julian emerges as both intelligently forthright in her questioning and thoughtfully obedient (but by no means cowed) in her responses to ecclesiastical authority. Julian responds to the fears that are commonly brought to religion, and the fears that institutional religion often engenders in order to control its members. But she sidesteps them, as she sidesteps much of the paraphernalia of institutional religion, as “means” that may become a hindrance to the end of knowing, loving and, above all, beholding God (ch. 6). Julian is generous and permissive in the invitation she extends to other readers to perform her text in their own voices and from their own conditions and experiences of life:

Take everything with other and trewly vnderstonden all is according to holy scripture and growndid in the same, and that Ihesus our very love, light and truth shall shew to all clen soules that with mekenes aske perseverantly of hym. (ch. 86)
Her ideal reader must be “meke” (in the kenotic sense we have discussed above) but above all “perseverant.” She plunges such readers into “enjoyand” the God whose love and thirst for mankind will not be sated until “all that shall be saved” are brought up into heaven, “for in mankind that shall be savid is comprehendid al” (ch. 9).

Returning to the text together after a break of eight years, we have found new resonances to attend to and new directions to explore. We are still seeking into the beholding, for “thus was I lernyd to myn vnderstondyng that sekyng is as good as beholding for the tyme that he will suffer the soule to be in travel” (ch. 10). We are, above all else, still “enjoyand” her challenging and protean text: just when we make ends meet, somebody always moves the ends. Our book is “begunne ... but it is not yet performid.” Or, as Eliot puts it in East Coker:

There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been.

Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross
NOTES

1. All references are by chapter number to the Sloane version of the Long Text of A Revelation of Love (Glasscoe 1976, rev. ed. 1986). Most of our examples are deliberately taken from the early chapters of the text to help students understand our approach. Colledge and Walsh 1978 use the so-called "Paris" version of the Long text as the basis for their edition. We prefer Sloane to Paris because of our sense of its greater theological subtlety and complexity, and a feeling that Paris has been "tidied up" by post-Reformation readers and consistently avoids the theological lectio difficilior, preferring the orthodox to the audacious.

2. Compare the following comment by Richard Wollheim (1987, 8): "I evolved a way of looking at paintings which was massively time-consuming and deeply rewarding. For I came to recognize that it often took the first hour or so in front of a painting for stray associations or motivated misperceptions to settle down, and it was only then, with the same amount of time or more to spend looking at it, that the picture could be relied upon to disclose itself as it was."

3. However, the work did result in several publications, especially Gillespie and Ross 1992. See also Gillespie 1993, Ross 1992, 1993, 2000. More widely, the collaboration has profoundly changed both our approaches to this kind of material, a change that is reflected in our other publications.

4. On this point, see for example Shaw 1988.

5. See, for example, the discussions in Sells 1994.

6. See the detailed footnote on this word in Gillespie and Ross 1992, 61, n. 28, and the comment in Gillespie 1993, 159: "God's words to her eschew physical means: He means (or speaks) without means (or intermediary) and his meaning (intention and signification) is resonant for the meaning of all the showings of the passion."
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