Mediation and Ethics in Late Medieval English Literature

By

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Introduction
The Mediator in Medieval English Politics, Religion, and Literature

In medieval literature as in virtually all areas of medieval culture, ideas of the holy and the courtly coincide in the concept of the personal patron, as patron saint or powerful friend at court who mediates between a needy client and the source of power or justice. The basic social dynamics of the patron-client relationship in European political culture developed from the imperial Roman social order, which also definitively shaped ecclesiastical culture and the cult of the saints over the course of the first millenium.[1] In late medieval literature, the "patronal mediator" is still an abiding image of good social life, a powerful intercessor who intervenes on behalf of a favored or pitied subject who is in legal or political jeopardy, to help secure mercy, justice, and a good social position.[2] The client depends on the mediator to help make, or restore, the client's place in society, defining the way that the client and the lord or judge—above the mediator—relate to each other. The need for patronage in government and ecclesiastical careers was of course a historical reality in late medieval England, where "[i]ntercession was part of the day-to-day business of being a good lord and part of the mechanism of government," and managing "patronage relations" carefully was a constant necessity for city leaders as well as monarchs, aristocrats, and gentry.[3] The power of patronage did not go uncriticized, as the fact

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[1] For an extended discussion of the origins of personal patronage in imperial culture, see Richard P.Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For extensive discussion of the development of the concept of the saint as patron intercessor, see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[2] Saller, *Personal Patronage,* 57; see 55-58 for discussion of patronage as a customary means of obtaining the "beneficia" of the emperor in judicial decisions; notably, appeals for restoration from exile "could never be submitted in person and always required a patronal mediator" (57). See also Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), esp. Ch. 3: "The Queen as Intercessor: Power and Influence."

[3] Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens,* 62. See also Christian Drummond Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns*: *Bristol, York and the Crown 1350-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell,

that patron affiliations could amplify violence was all too clear when powerful lords called upon those in their debt to support them in bloody rivalries.[4] Yet despite evident problems with patron-client dynamics in practice, the ideal remained potent as an inspiration for piety in every context, as we see in courtly images of all types—religious, erotic, and political. Because figures of patrons as mediators were everywhere that power and need coincided, images of patronage facilitate constant crossover "in fruitful conjunction," as Miri Rubin puts it, between political and devotional iconographies and the social theories that correspond to them.[5]

No one could fail to see that the figure of the saint as a spiritual friend and helper before the throne of God, and the figure of the aristocratic lord or lady as a supporter and defender before the court of justice, dominate literary discourses in the late Middle Ages. In both religious and political literary contexts, these figures of power and care promote ideal behavior, particularly with respect to participation in the social order. As Miri Rubin writes, "Lordship suffuses the language of devotion, obedience and reward, the language of virtue."[6] In this study, I will identify some significant Middle English literary approaches to the cultural *topos* of the

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2005), 3, 63. And see also A.L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England, 1272-1461* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 51-53.

[4] Historian Philip Morgan explains how violence arose in the fourteenth century because of the actions of "gentry affiliations," which were disparate, localized patronage networks comprised mainly of small landowners and tenants organized by personal loyalty and friendship relationships (as well as financial agreements) under a leading larger landowner; a group of this nature could form "a military retinue" capable of serious factional violence in the countryside and towns, as occurred multiple times during the reigns of Edward II and Richard II (Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire, 1277-1403,* Vol. 3 [Manchester University Press, 1987], esp. 19-21).

[5] Miri Rubin, "Religious Symbols and Political Culture," in *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain,* ed. Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2004), 98. The relationship between holy patronage and earthly patronage is not, however, uncomplicated. For a discussion of how hagiography negotiates incompatibilities between images of saintly and worldly power, see Claire M. Waters, "Power and Authority" in *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, ed. Sarah Salih (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2006).

[6] Rubin, "Religious Symbols," 98.

mediator and examine the ethical dynamics they represent, as they promote or critique particular social theories and behaviors. Influential literary treatments of mediation sometimes idealize the mediator whose power serves to bring peace and justice to a troubled relationship, and at other times caution that mediators can reify relationships of injustice, conflict, and oppression. I explore the ethical implications of the mediator figure as it functions in narrative, in an attempt to discern what attitudes late medieval English writers are attempting to convey about the ethical potentialities of mediating activities such as intercession and patronage, and how these attitudes shape their purposes and methods as writers. I argue that the varying treatment of mediation in Middle English literature corresponds to a range of ideals of social goods—good relationships within established structures, and good individual actions within those relationships—in interrelated religious and political beliefs.

Ethical Beliefs in Literary Representations of Mediation

My interest in this study grows out of "the questions anyone would want to ask," to borrow Steven Justice's language, when reading certain medieval texts that prominently rely on and promote beliefs that defy rationality, insofar as they insist that impossibilities are facts. Justice turns a spotlight on the curiosity that must arise for a reader today "when reading medieval saints' lives and miracle stories, and prophecies and prodigies and visions, when feeling along the turns of biblical exegesis or theological argument" and bluntly articulates what we all want to know: "Did medieval people really believe all this? How did they believe it, in what sense, by what mechanisms, and with what degrees and forms of self-awareness? What sorts of 'truth' were apprehended in the putatively true reports of miracles?"[7] I wonder similar

[7] Steven Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" *Representations* 103.1 (August 2008), 3 [1–29].

things about medieval ethics, as I think most readers do, particularly with respect to ethical ideas that rely on the same seemingly unbelievable metaphysical beliefs.

For example, regarding social organization and identity, did medieval people really believe that the asymmetry inherent in relationships between lords (or kings) and their subjects was divinely ordained? Did they believe that it was ethical for a political patron to override the law in order to protect the interests of a subject? Regarding intercession, did they believe in the real value of prayer as a service to others, and, as an extension of this, that acts of faith honoring God or saints could compensate morally for acts of harm against living people? Did they believe that God would change his mind, judging sinners as just, if their patron saints or fellow Christians intervened on their behalf? And fundamentally, did they really believe that there *were* saints—still living after death—who would respond to their prayers and intervene in their lives, making miracles so as to reward or encourage their faith, and also intervening in heaven on their behalf to secure mercy for them from God the divine judge? If they did believe the saints were their intercessors, then how did their ideas of patronage on earth and patronage in heaven relate to each other? What was required of the living on earth, in the way of devotion and virtuous action?[8] As Jennifer Bryan has pointed out, late medieval readers were prone to seeking answers to such questions in devotional treatises.[9] Yet the popularity of moral and spiritual narratives,

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[8] Or as Langland's Will would ask it, what were "*Dowel*," "*Dobet,*" and "*Dobest,*" the models of decent, good, and perfect living that could guide the average man to reform his life and find salvation (William Langland, *The Vision Of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17,* ed. A.V.C. Schmidt [Rutland, VT, USA: C.E. Tuttle, 1995]); *Dowel* is first mentioned as an allegorical character in Langland's moral quest at Passus VII.170, and the search for this elusive guide to good living, along with the even more exemplary *Dobet* and *Dobest*, goes on for most of the poem, well into Passus XIX (see XIX.183). Though time does not allow me to attempt a discussion of *Piers Plowman* in the present study, it is worth pointing to Langland's poem as a fellow-traveler to the texts under examination here because Langland points to the distinction between Christian doctrine and the ethical life, even as he pursues the latter via the former.

[9] Bryan cites a long list of popular devotional texts of the period, including several that themselves note how numerous texts of the genre had become, and calls attention to "the fact that English men and women

apart from—and sometimes within—expository and pastoral writing suggests that late medieval readers craved not only ways of seeing and cultivating the inner self, but also stories about ethical actors and their adventures. In this genre I would include all autobiographical accounts of pointedly moral and spiritual trials and undertakings, a genre that flourished in this period along with advice about how to cultivate one's own devotional life. The aim of this study is to examine how late medieval writers and readers engaged with narratives that explored the ethical relevance of relationships with others, in their search to comprehend human beings' hopes for becoming good and for finding secure places within the mediated structure of their ethical universe. As I will argue, these writers and readers saw their ethical progress as their own problem, insofar as they accepted the responsibility to act appropriately by moral and social standards, and yet they also believed that their prospects for success were in others' hands to a great extent. They were conscious of the need to seek help from above and the corresponding responsibility to offer their own help to those in jeopardy, in the social hierarchies of both heaven and earth. This consciousness of the crucial role of mediation shapes representations and discussions of ethical life in stories about persons in society, which function very differently from devotional guides as ethical aids.

Like beliefs in miracles generally, medieval ethical beliefs about identity, status, legitimacy, justice, mercy, and moral rehabilitation rely on a view of the cosmos as a social order in which humans participate, interacting with supernatural beings like God, angels, and saints. Thus these ethical beliefs are extensions of the metaphysical beliefs that Justice is examining—beliefs in miraculous things. If medieval people were able to accept what the Church taught them

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owned and presumably read more devotional treatises than any other kind of English book" (Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008], 2.

about ethics because their thinking about ethics was so different from our own that it allowed them to swallow dramatic logical inconsistencies without special difficulty, then questions like the ones I have asked above are really not worth asking. Like the perplexing beliefs that Justice confronts, however, the metaphysically grounded ethical beliefs that I am discussing were examined critically. Moreover, these beliefs were held by people whose near descendents did not continue to hold them. The idealization of saints as spiritual advocates and of feudal lords as personal patrons should not be taken as givens in the medieval Christian worldview because both saints and lords would eventually lose their tendency to be idealized, and then ultimately fall out of credibility, over the course of a few centuries following the production of the literature I am studying here.[10] Moreover, as I will show, even among the approximately contemporaneous Middle English literary texts I am studying, all of them produced in the period from the early fourteenth to the early fifteenth centuries, we see attitudes of both adamant belief and strong

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[10] By the fourteenth century this shift was already well underway with respect to feudal bonds, the flavor of which would however be retained in urban social politics for centuries, and even longer in literary patronage, "patronage of the arts," and pseudo-aristocratic philanthropy generally. With respect to the saints the shift would very soon become explicit as a matter of public contention. For a vivid description of sixteenth-century controversies about the intercession of the saints as part of "the old religion" see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 416-17. As a counterpoint to Duffy, see historian Christine Peters' compelling book-length study of the shift in representations of saints in English devotional culture from intercessors to exemplars over the course of the fourteenth through the early sixteenth centuries, examining both "their role as intercessors, and the process of their humanisation"; Peters raises strong objections to Duffy's focus on cultural conflicts to the exclusion of more subtle cultural changes (*Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97. Notably for the present study, Peters observes a marked decrease after 1400 in testamentary evidence that saintly intercessors were believed to be crucial advocates for souls facing judgment. She records liturgical and literary evidence that the practice of praying for the saints' intercessory help with minor matters continued into the sixteenth century, apparently because it was compatible with "increasingly" seeing them "as ordinary human figures" (102) who were mentally or spiritually present in a way that was helpful for everyday affairs, but whose power was not adequate to protect fellow humans before Christ in judgment. This shift observed by Peters occurred at the same period in history when, as I argue, literary representations of third-party mediation begin to treat it as an ethical problem, rather than as an ethical given.

skepticism regarding the moral meaning of spiritual and political mediation—its meaning for those who act as mediators as well as for those seeking mediators' help.

No comprehensive medieval theory of best practices of social, juridical, or spiritual mediation exists, though literary, theological, and pastoral representations of mediation and references to it abound. Assumptions that persons (including the dead and God) were engaged in mediated relationships seem to have been so thoroughly interwoven with the fabric of social life and religious thought that abstract terms, imaginative stories, and formalized rituals served well enough to describe and promote the ways in which influential third parties shape relationships. What we know of late medieval English life does suggest that individuals were constantly taking roles as mediators or negotiating relationships via other mediators. In the "highly litigious society" of late medieval England, even those without much political or social clout were invested with the duty to support others' causes in legal disputes, both by appearing in person and by submitting statements to be recorded in documentary records; they also depended upon friends and relatives with good social standing to represent them in court, in turn, when the disputes concerned them.[11] Meanwhile, in the daily devotional lives of lay Christians as well as

[11] The quoted phrase is a commonplace; for just a few examples of the idea worded exactly this way, see Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137; Sara Margaret Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 150; Deborah Youngs, *Humphrey Newton (1466-1536): An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge, UK and Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), 42. Christine Carpenter introduces some level of nuance into this view by pointing out that it may apply to the "particularly litigious" and "violent" East Anglia in the late Middle Ages, more than to other areas (namely Oxfordshire and Berkshire) that were more stable, at least by the fifteenth century ("The Stonor Circle in the Fifteenth Century, in *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss,* ed. G.L. Harriss, Rowena E. Archer, and Simon Walker, , (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1995) 177 [175-199]. For detailed discussion of the many ways in which members of English society acquired a multivalent, ethically formative "legal consciousness" through practical rather than professional experience see Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants' Revolt* (Manchester, UK and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), Ch. 3. Professional lawyers were regularly involved in legal disputes by 1300, but this was due to the fact that legal disputes themselves had proliferated with "the expansion of royal justice and the increased demand for legal remedies," according

monastic clergy, participation in intercessory prayer was a constant duty—and for the clergy, of course, also a reliable source of income. Saints were understood to be dead on earth, but living in heaven in bodiless eternity in total contemplation of the glory of God; nevertheless, they might somehow respond to things happening on earth and give aid to those below. And among those on earth, both holy clergy and ordinary Christians participated to some extent in practices of intercessory prayer. Monastic clergy earned their commissions and justified their existence with prayer on others' behalf. Meanwhile laypeople in late medieval England prayed for others' souls

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to Anthony Musson and W.M. Ormrod (*The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics, and Society in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 139. Although for the most part my study does not deal explicitly with the intersection between legal and imaginative-literary discourses, the ethical culture in which this literature participates was heavily imbued with assumptions about the individual's likely participation as an advocate in court, or as one in need of an advocate in court. As James A. Brundage's history of the term *advocate* in the English legal tradition reflects, the term carried the sense that the advocate's position was in many ways a medial one, and also one that would expose the advocate to certain risks:

> [T]he *advocati* mentioned in court records from this period [of the eighth through the tenth centuries] at times represented or argued on behalf of a party in litigation, but at other times they seem to have been witnesses or legal advisers to judges. In other contexts, *advocatus* described the patron of a church, the holder of an advowson that carried the right to name a priest as rector of a church, or a champion who fought as the substitute for another in duels or ordeals. . . . Some of these individuals acted at times very much like lawyers: they advised clients, spoke on their behalf before the courts, and argued points of law as well as fact. Other men described as *advocati*, however, especially those who acted on behalf of women and children, were relatives of the parties they represented. They were, in all likelihood, family members who had some experience with the way the courts operated and were lending a hand to their less knowledgeable kinsfolk. *Advocati* in other cases were often clerics who came to court primarily in a pastoral role, to help parishioners or persons who lacked influence and high connections to pursue their rights or to defend themselves against accusations. (*The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008], 61-62)

This range of historical meanings for the role of the advocate refers to mediators in legal and political affairs. Because late medieval religious discourse of divine judgment shares many motifs with legal discourse, Brundage's historical overview is helpful to keep in mind when attempting to interpret ethical expectations of spiritual mediators as well as legal and political ones, even in the centuries succeeding the period he is describing here.

regularly and also on special occasions in the public rituals of parish life, as well as daily in their private devotions. According to Eamon Duffy, the most typical form of private liturgical devotion, the Book of Hours, featured the Office of the Dead as an "invariable component"; this set of prayers and readings was intended to assist souls in Purgatory in obtaining total absolution for their sins so that they could proceed to heaven.[12] Intercession involved securing God's grace with all of the benefits it brought; never mind that, according to the orthodox scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas, God's changeless perfection would allow no shifting in either his attention or intention.[13] And as for the possibility that saints in heaven might notice the prayers of the living and come down to earth to help them, Aquinas holds that if this really does occur, it is an exception to the laws of nature—though very likely, he argues, the saints never do notice the prayers of the living or appear to them directly, and what seems to be the saints appearing is probably just the work of angels whose job it is in any case to traverse the boundary between the spiritual and material realms.[14] These paradoxes, only tenuously resolved, were silently tolerated by most Christians in the late Middle Ages.

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[12] Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 69; see also 102-3 for an overview of contexts for recitation of the Office of the Dead.

[13] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume 1, Part 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 109. Aquinas does acknowledge that the changeless nature of God's will accommodates willing different things at different times, as (earthly) circumstances change; that is, God's will operates through a complex chain of causes and incorporates multiple things, corresponding to the vicissitudes of earthly life that he has, however, anticipated. Thus nothing can cause his will to change, including intercessory prayer. The logic of his explanation is circular, however (109).

[14] Aquinas also affirms the efficaciousness of the saints' intercession along the same lines, as part of the process of the unfolding of God's immutable order: "…predestination is said to be helped by the prayers of the saints" because "the salvation of a person is predestined by God in such a way, that whatever helps that person falls under the order of predestination; whether it be one's own prayers, or those of another…" (*Summa Theologica,* 133). He admits of some uncertainty regarding how the saints may be aware of what happens on earth, and by what means they appear to the living; his chief sources on the question, Gregory and Augustine "seem to be divided in opinion as regards the souls of the blessed in heaven" who are

Within the context of a mainstream theology that declines to acknowledge a direct connection between sinners on earth and saints in heaven—or at least declines to speak with certainty on the matter—Christians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries still willingly accepted, reproduced, and embellished countless stories of saints with bodies who take action in heaven and on earth to save souls and influence God to changes of heart. Certainly all of this raises questions about religious culture, but in this study I pursue questions about the human side of cosmic beliefs and the social implications of such beliefs. The questions I am interested in are ethical questions about mediation in relationships among persons: living human beings in the material world, the saints in heaven, and the figure of God as a person. I examine representations of mediated relationships in the context of religious and political culture with a focus on ethical dynamics. Using a vocabulary of ethics rather than Christian doctrine, I distinguish ethical reasoning in the literature from the religious and political concepts that shape it but do not wholly determine it.

It is worth looking critically at the virtually ubiquitous figure of the powerful mediator as a touchstone of ethical belief in the contexts of spiritual, social, and political discourse. To this end, in this study I trace writers' attitudes toward the presence and power of the saints as spiritual intercessors, and the obligation of all persons to act as social and political protectors and advocates on others' behalf. The idea that mediation is necessary in the soul's relationship with God finds support and development in one text, but challenge and repudiation in another. As for mediation in worldly relationships, both social and political, writers cry out for the intercessory

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"separated souls," "joined to the world of incorporeal spiritual substances," and Aquinas can only resolve the question by proposing that "the dead appear to the living…either by the special dispensation of God," making an exception to the laws of nature that govern the universe and separate the spiritual from the material world, "Or else such apparitions appear through the instrumentality of good or bad angels, without the knowledge of the departed" (*Summa Theologica,* 458).

support of patrons, invoking transcendent values in one text but in another expressing fading expectations that personal patrons actually will support their social inferiors in an increasingly bureaucratic political society. These late medieval English literary representations of the powerful mediator take a variety of orientations: celebratory, critical, renunciatory, and nostalgic. In order to articulate their ethical implications, I will explore these literary representations through a lens of contemporary ethics. Specifically, I will interrogate their correspondences with and differences from the philosophy of twentieth-century ethicist Emmanuel Levinas, whose ethical theory offers a particularly illuminating account of the nature of human encounter, responsibility, and justice. Levinas describes the dynamics at work in the encounter with an Other concerning questions of responsibility for the Other, alterity of the Other, and—beyond the Other—the crucial presence of a third party from whose presence moral reasoning and justice emerge. These correspondences make it possible and fruitful to talk about representations of the ethics of mediation *as ethics*, thus discovering attitudes about the human good that are intertwined with dominant religious and political ideas of the period, but not reducible to religious or political doctrines.

Medieval literary studies have already proceeded a good way down the path toward reading the literature via postmodern ethics, and Levinas in particular.[15] Amid the recent

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[15] A notable example of this direction in medieval literary studies is Ann W. Astell and J.A. Jackson's edited collection *Levinas and Medieval Literature: The "Difficult Reading" of English and Rabbinic Texts*, a collection of essays by twelve scholars who discuss medieval narratives in light of rabbinical, Christian-allegorical, and Levinasian interpretive approaches (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009). Evidence of the Levinas's current familiarity as a touchstone for ethical theory in medieval (and medievalist) narrative studies is Stephen Knight's use of Levinas's definition of alterity as foundational in his introduction to *Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood: Alterity and Context in the English Outlaw Tradition* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), xvii. Eileen Joy uses Levinas to bring ethics in medieval literature directly to bear on a current contemporary political issue in "Exteriority Is Not a Negation But a Marvel: Hospitality, Terrorism, Levinas, *Beowulf* (in *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages*, ed. Joy, Myra J. Seaman, Kimberly K. Bell, and Mary K. Ramsey [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007], 237-67). In the area of comparative literature, William Franke explores correspondences between the ethical projects of Dante and Levinas, both of whom theorize ethics as "more than one branch of

scholarship engaging with Levinas, the work of J. Allan Mitchell has been especially important as a model for the present study because Mitchell focuses on both questions and texts that are close to my own areas of interest. Mitchell's approach to ethics in late medieval English exemplary literature, literature that medieval writers and readers saw as didactic, is "basically phenomenological because of the way it seeks to describe conditions of practice *internal* to ethics, from the point of view of the moral subject" who reads or writes the literature Mitchell is studying; "in other words," he explains, he aims "to understand what it might be like to inhabit the cognitive and communal space where medieval exemplary narratives serve as guides to personal deliberation and action."[16] To understand "what it might be like" to take medieval moral literature as ethically compelling requires a framing of ethical problematics in the literature as ethically relevant now, not simply as artifacts of a former age that invented moral problems to facilitate social controls or that overlooked real problems in favor of spurious ones based on misunderstandings about how the world really works. If we seek to understand the

knowledge among others" and instead as "a comprehensive vision of the world and its conditions of possibility" ("The Ethical Vision of Dante's Paradiso in Light of Levinas," *Comparative Literature* 59.3 [2007]: 209–27); and Kathryn Banks compares arguments about enigma, interpretation, and ethics in Chrétien de Troyes and Levinas, engaging psychoanalytic criticism and spatial theory to illuminate ethical problematics ("The Ethics of 'Writing' Enigma: A Reading of Chretien de Troyes's Conte Du Graal and Levinas's Totalite et Infini," *Comparative Literature* 55.2 [2003]: 95–111). In the area of medieval theology and aesthetic culture, Michael E. Moore's "Meditations on the Face in the Middle Ages" discusses images of the face of God in medieval Christian devotional art with respect to their influence on the ethical concept of the face of the Other in Levinas (*Literature and Theology* 24.1 [2010]: 19–37).

[16] J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambrige, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3. Mitchell identifies literary lessons about processes of deliberation in the work of Chaucer and Gower. He interprets complex moral narratives as models of case-based judgement—or *casuistic* judgement—appropriate to fourteenth-century legal theory and practice. These critical readings are illuminating and, I believe, essential for understanding the didactic function of ethical ambiguities in the texts Mitchell focuses on.

"point of view of the moral subject" who is an authentic moral subject, then we must attribute rational and ethical agency to the one who espouses a moral "belief." [17]

In the present study, this involves taking another look at the cultural givens of figures of saints and political mediators to see how they represent selves in relation to each other, beyond rehearsing familiar dynamics of religious and social doctrine. To do so, I will draw from the philosophy of Levinas to a limited extent, borrowing terms and exploring the ways in which ethical ideas in Middle English texts become clearer in comparison with Levinasian ideas. Specifically, I will make use of three key concepts from his corpus: the concept of the third, the idea of the face as a locus of ethical encounter, and the concept of insomnia as a condition of ethical consciousness. Among these three, the concept of the third is most important for my analysis of intercession, mediation, and justice in the texts that form the focal point of this study. Levinas's theory of justice with the presence of the third party is interwoven in complex ways with his notions of the human self, the Other, goodness, and justice. Isolating these ideas from each other weakens their explanatory power, so in order to introduce the Levinasian concepts relevant to the ethical figures and dynamics I will examine in the literature, I here offer a brief account of Levinas's ethics of encounter. Although my account here presents only a limited and partial view of Levinas's difficult theory, I hope to provide a useful groundwork for reading the ethical messages in the literature that are my true object of study in the chapters that follow.

Levinas and the Ethics of Encounter

According to Levinas, the relation between one and an Other is itself prior to the very being of those individuals. In short, Levinas boldly claims the priority of ethics to ontology. The

[17] J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6. Here I am again citing Justice's use of "belief."

existence of the human self is contingent upon encounter with an Other. Before the encounter, there is no self to speak of. In the encounter between one and the Other, the self emerges. This emergence involves total self-offering to preserve the survival of the Other and ensure one's proximity to the Other, given the one's contingency on the Other's presence for one's very being. The self-offering is done without any expectation of reciprocity. According to Levinas, there is no question of whether this relationship with the Other is right, or of what to do about it; it is the very foundation of existence and has only this possible configuration, both asymmetrical and irreversible:[18] one has no choice but to live in total subjection to the other, existing to preserve the life of the Other. Levinas calls this relation a relation of responsibility, and expresses this responsibility in as extreme terms as possible, asserting that one is "hostage for the other."[19] Thus the human person is first and foremost a responsible ethical entity, and all goodness must promote living out this absolute ethical responsibility, which is "goodness" or "the Good" manifesting itself in humanity.[20] But the primary ethical relation itself does not come with rules for living it out. The relation is limited to initiating and sustaining human existence,

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[18] "In proximity the other obsesses me according to the absolute asymetry [sic] of signification, of the one-for-the-other: I substitute myself for him, whereas no one can replace me, and the substitution of the one for the other does not signify the substition of the other for the one" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998], 158).

[19] Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 140. Cf. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158 *et passim,* and cf. also an earlier passage in *Otherwise than Being* describing the orientation of "the one" toward the Other as "extreme passivity": "The uniqueness of the chosen or required one, who is not a chooser . . . . This uniqueness not assumed, not subsumed, is traumatic; it is an election in persecution" (56). Cf. also another, earlier passage in the same work: "the relationship with a neighbor . . . is found to be at the mercy of the freedom and the fate, unverifiable by me, of the other man" (47). The Other is free, and the ethical responsibility of the subject is to maintain this freedom even at the cost of one's own life.

[20] "Goodness is always older than choice; the Good has always already chosen and required, the unique one" (Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 57).

and it again exists prior to consciousness for the one formed by it, so that even the relation itself does not register immediately as an object of perception or thought. What does initiate perception and thought—about oneself, the Other, and everything else in human experience—is the entry of a third party, another person, into the subject's field of awareness.

As Levinas articulates it, the subject gains moral consciousness and engages in deliberation only within a social matrix that includes more than the originary two parties: "Becoming conscious is motivated by the presence of the third alongside the neighbor approached."[21] Levinas describes the entry of the "third party" (or simply *the third*) into the subject's awareness in a few different ways, as appearing "alongside the neighbor," but also as appearing "in the intimacy of the face to face." The Other is only a "neighbor" and a "face" when the subject has an idea of humanity as a category. This happens only when the self can see the Other and the third as comparable to each other and appreciate the uniqueness, the freedom, and the right to protection that belongs to each. Awareness of what makes the Other and the third comparable is awareness of their uniqueness and their freedom. Levinas's third can be perceived or conceived of by the self, but this third party does not impose responsibility on the self directly, as the Other does. Rather, the third is related to the Other in a primary ethical relation that confers responsibility on the Other. The third is thus the sign that others exist beyond the self and the Other, and that ethical relationships exist besides this one primary relation that is the very basis of the existence of the self. The third stands always outside of the primary ethical relation between self and Other, but the very presence of the third initiates one's awareness of others as related to each other, and thus one's development of standards of judgment regarding relationships between others, and between the others and the self. Of this figure Levinas writes,

[21] Emmanuel Levinas, "Essence and Disinterestedness," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 122.

"Justice is this very presence of the third party," arguing that while the self exists by virtue of relationship to another, justice in relationships requires yet another Other to be present.

Throughout his work, Levinas wrestles with articulating how to think and act within the limits of social interaction, when such thoughts and actions are always to some extent a denial of one's own subjection in light of the infinite nature of the Other who is the source and object of one's very being. Using the term *third party* is Levinas's way of pointing out that human relationships and human responsibilities for others are the only foundation for ethics—that is, for being human in the first place, and then for reasoning about what is right for human beings as social actors. With the consciousness born of the initial encounter comes the possibility of thought, of making choices, and of taking action—and with the presence of the third comes the possibility of justice or injustice. Thus ethics for the social self is a development upon ethics as the origin of human existence; the social self is capable of unethical thoughts and actions that are unethical precisely because they deny the responsibility at the basis of existence. Thinking about oneself and others will not change the nature of one's existence, but it may lead to ideas and actions that deny what one is and what others are to one.

Levinas acknowledges the paradoxical nature of his notion of the third party even as he maintains that it is crucial for applying ethics to social life. The presence of the third is undeniable: "The third is also approached; and the relationship between the neighbor and the third cannot be indifferent to me when I approach."[22] However, the awareness of the presence of the third fundamentally alters the relation with the Other. The paradox lies in the fact that such awareness and thinking involve approaching the Other no longer as an absolute singularity whose freedom and meaning are infinite. One risks losing one's ethical orientation, that which

[22] Levinas, "Essence and Disinterestedness," 122.

confers humanity upon one, in the very processes of attempting to understand what justice is and decide how to act based on it. Levinas is never very specific about what sorts of standards and rules of action are right, but he does clearly assert the contingency of justice upon the presence of the third in the encounter with the Other. The presence of the third introduces a perspective beyond the intimacy of the primary ethical relation, and with this outside perspective comes consciousness of the Other as a being, as human, and as a "neighbor," and thus to systematic thinking about right relationships among persons.

Again, this brief discussion of Levinas's ethics of encounter merely touches the surface. The present study does not aim to employ a wholesale application of Levinas's theory. Rather, each chapter of this study will make use of Levinas's concept of the third party to articulate ethical concepts at work in the literature, concepts that can be usefully described in Levinas's terms but that also depart from his ideas in illuminating ways.

Plan of the Dissertation

In my first chapter, "The Presence and Power of the Intercessor: Marian Mediation, the Encounter, and the Justice of the Third Party in Fourteenth-Century Miracle Narratives," I lay the groundwork for studying mediation ethics in late medieval English literary culture with an examination of the mediating roles of saints as intercessors in Middle English miracle narratives (called simply *miracles*, as a loosely defined hagiographical genre). I devote special attention to miracles of the Blessed Virgin because the figure of the Blessed Virgin virtually defines the genre of late medieval miracles, and also because she is an archetype of one human's mediation on behalf of another, in the face of divine judgment.[23] The late thirteenth-century miracle I have

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[23] In one of his two influential essays defining genres of medieval hagiography, Paul Strohm writes, "We learn to expect that a *miraculum* of the early Middle Ages will probably involve miraculous cures at the

chosen to read closely in this chapter, "St. Theophilus," offers a vivid figural representation of the Blessed Virgin taking action in heaven, on earth, and sometimes somewhere outside of either place, as a patron who mediates between a sinner and Christ by taking the sinner's place in the court of heaven and pleading his case for him. Narrativization of ideal mediation in the cosmic society of medieval Christianity illuminates ethical ideals in a variety of ways, reflecting stages and features of encounter between the human figures of saints, sinners, and (a humanized and personal) God. To uncover its ethical nuances, I will explore resonances between Levinas's theory of the ethical encounter and relationships in the narrative. As I argue, "St. Theophilus" is a rich representation of third-party mediation, first as it fails to develop, allowing injustice to perpetuate itself, and later as it develops properly to its full capacity, illuminating ethical realities of the relationships in the narrative and leading the protagonist to take action, enlightened by an awareness of the substitutive character of divine justice. Engaging the imagination through figural representation and narrative, intercession narratives like "St. Theophilus" encourage hope for salvation by representing justice as mercy, in the actions of the saint on behalf of the sinner. The ethics of mediation in miracle narratives is thus a starting point for studying comparable ethical dynamics in other literary forms.

While my first chapter argues for a relatively uncomplicated comparison between Levinas's notion of the third party and mimetic representations of intercession in miracle

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tomb of a saint, and that a *miracle* of the fourteenth century will more likely involve the Virgin" (Paul Strohm,'"Passioun, Miracle, Lyf, Legende': Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative," *Chaucer Review* 10.1-2 [1976], 165). While narratives of new miracles (or re-contextualizing narratives that frame old stories in new and local contexts) were only infrequently composed after the thirteenth century in England, by no means did the existing stories disappear or cease to be copied. In "working," "devotional," and "recreational" texts, such as homily collections, guidebooks, and miscellanies for household reading, such stories were ever-present in the reading and listening lives of clerics and laypeople at all social levels, throughout the late Middle Ages (Peter Whiteford, *The Myracles of Oure Lady, ed. from Wynkyn de Worde's edition*, ed. Whiteford [Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990], 21).

narratives, in my second chapter, "Beyond *Double Sorwe*: Pandarus, Mediation, and Community in *Troilus and Criseyde*," I argue that Chaucer places a model of failed mediation at the center of the tragic unfolding of injustice in Troy, in the relationship among Troilus, Pandarus, and Criseyde. Troilus and Pandarus's attempts to exit their roles as responsible third parties reflect the city of Troy's self-interested politics, characterized by a general refusal of the community to hear the voice of a responsible third party, Hector. Justice fails in Troy, to the extent that Criseyde is dehumanized, exchanged only for the sake of self-interest and aspirations of dominance, with no thought to the real possibility of peace. As the narrative closes with the disintegration of love and the imminent destruction of Troy, Chaucer turns abruptly to the ambiguous multiplicity of closing passages that work against closure. In these passages, the poet engages his audience in a virtual social experience of judging, being judged, forgiving, and being forgiven, without any clear end beyond the shared experience of judgment in community life. *Troilus and Criseyde* offers us a view of irresponsible mediation, as a social ill, specifically in its fear of judgment, followed by a celebration of judgment in a multiplicity of voices that ultimately resolves in forgiveness. As in miracle narratives, mediation initiates consciousness of ethical problems and articulations of justice in Chaucer's Troy poem, but rather than simply showing mediation at work, Chaucer problematizes its disappearance and then dramatizes its return.

In my third chapter, "Mediation and the Medium: Textuality, Thirdness, and Visionary Ethics in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*," I take up one of the best-known late medieval religious texts, Julian of Norwich's visionary account, to explore its messages about mediation between sinners and God. Julian's testimony is one of the most conspicuously mediatory textual acts ever undertaken: it is written by a spiritual medium who explicitly

attempts to articulate the relationship between God and humanity and to assist in perfecting it. In her book, the visionary reports and analyzes her direct encounters with Jesus, calling attention to the fact that she has added extensive commentary to her earlier report of the vision, actively mediating between God and her readers. Yet Julian is motivated by a sense of urgent responsibility to pass on the revelation itself, not her writing, to her "evencristene," her fellow Christians whom God wishes to reach directly. She attests that her meditative and analytical continuations of the text are all part of the continuation and unfolding of the revelation itself during the twenty-five years between her first compositional effort and this second, more definitive one; according to Julian, the text is all God's doing, and not her own. At both the ethical-metaphysical level, as I will show, Julian sees herself, her source texts, and ultimately even her own account as disappearing mediators, necessary to embody the encounter with Jesus and register his revelation, but disappearing into irrelevance as Jesus's presence itself replaces all mediating agents. According to her understanding of the ethical nature of the cosmos, no third party ever enters into the relationship between the self and God, and even conscious actions toward God—such as a Levinasian third party would initiate—are impossibilities. Julian calls her readers to see themselves in relationship with God alone and to see this relationship as ideally intimate and loving beyond questions of need and responsibility.

In Chapter 4, "Begging for Patrons: Patron Mediation in Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* and Some Shorter Poems," I turn to the work of Thomas Hoccleve, an author who, unlike Julian, cherishes a view of the cosmos, and worldly society within it, as properly organized through a network of mediating relationships between the individual and the seat of power. Hoccleve also represents himself as a professional mediator, capable of discharging his duties because he intimately understands the tensions between ethics and politics, but suffering under the heavy

responsibility of articulating and promoting both. I explore Hoccleve's begging poems in the context of two other short poems about lack of access to power and suppor, *London Lyckpeny* and George Ashby's *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463,* exploring the combination of nostalgia and skepticism in their representations of the possibilities for responsible mediation and patronage. I will discuss Hoccleve's prologue to *The Regiment of Princes* in detail, using Levinasian ethical concepts of insomnia and awakening to show how Hoccleve grounds his moral authority in his anxious experience as a certain kind of third, the king's mediating (and thinking) instrument. Hoccleve's moral consciousness develops in suffering a long, weary night of insomnia, in which he—as the narrator and protagonist of his poem—contemplates the social order and cannot rest in certainty about its proper arrangement, or the places of persons within it, least of all himself. Hoccleve's wakefulness gives a narrative and figural shape to the Levinasian concept of *insomnia* or *wakefulness*, in which the preconscious ego, in a body but not yet fully realized as a self, simultaneously retains its openness to encounter and responsibility, and at the same time its attentiveness to the thematic thought-structures necessary for order and peace in community life. Hoccleve's models of self-sacrificing rulers in the *Regiment*-proper urge the prince to offer himself in person to prevent the self-serving tendency of the powerful to ignore the rights of Hoccleve and his fellows. Finally, in two of his political poems written close to the date of the *Regiment*, "Richard II Interred at Winchester," and the "Remonstrance Against Oldcastle," Hoccleve presents an optimistic view of the prince's responsible patronage as akin to images of the Blessed Virgin as *mediatrix*.

Together, these chapters trace an illuminating variety of representations of mediation in late medieval literature, each offering a particular perspective on the role of a third party in personal relationships and the communities in which they are formed. I argue that the motif of

the social mediator as it appears in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Middle English texts anchors ethical questions about the nature of personal morality, responsibility for others, and good social life. The figure of the responsible mediator is a powerful intercessor who intervenes on behalf of a favored or pitied subject who is in legal or political jeopardy, to help secure mercy, justice, and a good social position. My study reveals that the varying treatments of mediation in Middle English literature promote a range of ideas about the ideal social order and the self as an ethical agent.

Chapter 1

The Presence and Power of the Intercessor: Justice Through the Third Party and Marian Mediation in Fourteenth-Century Miracle Narratives

This chapter is a study of mediation in Marian miracle narratives, which are first and foremost stories of saintly intercession. An understanding of the ethical dynamics of mediation in stories about Mary in late medieval English literature must include a theory of ethics that acknowledges the significance of mediating third parties in relationships, accompanied by an awareness of how the cult of the saints came to be a virtual society of patron mediators and their clients. Bringing ethics theory together with religious history, we can better see how the mediation of holy patrons, and the Blessed Virgin in particular, came to be represented in typical written forms in Middle English and what such representations show about the ethical culture in which they were produced. The first part of this chapter will provide theoretical and historical background for literary analysis. In this first part of the chapter I will explore a vocabulary for discussing the ethics of mediation, centering on the notion of the third party in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, using Levinas's ethics as a starting point to probe for ethics in the literature.

In this study my focus is on how mimesis lays out a theory of the cosmos—a way of thinking—for the audience, not on the "goal of ethical transformations" that Alexander Gelley has argued is the aim of exemplary literature generally speaking.[1] Thus I am discussing how texts represent the ethical basis that underlies behavioral choices, not how they promote specific behavioral paradigms. In fact I argue that reinforcing ethical belief, not modeling ethical behavior, is the primary target of Marian miracle narratives and, in a variety of ways, of all of the

[1] Alexander Gelley, *Unruly Examples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 3. Adrienne Williams Boyarin adopts Gelley's argument in her analysis of the figure of the Virgin Mary in English Marian miracles, reading the miracles as teaching lessons about Mary's particular powers and the specific benefits of venerating her (*Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010], 18).

texts I am exploring in this dissertation. Because the stories of Mary's miracles in Middle English conserve important features of the formative beginnings of the cult of the saints, I will accompany my introductory discussion of relevant ethical concepts with a history of the motifs of patronage and mediation in the cult of the saints, from their origins in late antiquity to the forms in which we find them in the late medieval English narratives of the miracles of the Blessed Virgin. In the second part of the chapter, I will conduct a close reading of the earliest and most widely disseminated fourteenth-century Marian miracle narrative, "St. Theophilus," exploring a typical feature of such narratives that is a significant representation of ethical beliefs: mediation by a third party who brings justice. In my analysis of the ethical matrix represented in the Marian story, I will explore the meaning of the entrance of Mary as third party in a relationship between a sinner and God. My aim here is to trace specific ways in which her role introduces hope for salvation through a particular representation of justice.

A Comparison of Third Parties in Levinas and Marian Miracles

The Christian narrative of saintly intercession expresses a theory of justice in relationships that fundamentally relies on the presence of three figures, rather than two, to bring peaceful reconciliation between a sinner and God. Instead of representing salvation as a matter of interaction between the sinner and God alone, intercession narratives depict the saints as agents of love who help the sinner reform or heal and who also successfully plead for mercy from God. In medieval Christian theology, the human subject exists only by virtue of relationship with God, the creator and sustainer of all being. Thus all exist in utter subjection to God regardless of their thoughts, intentions, or actions in relation to him. Yet hope for salvation, the goal of a Christian life, is in the human's intentional approach to God and God's welcoming acceptance of the

human into union with him. A narrative of salvation would then appear to require only two figures, the human and the divine. In the literature of saints' miracles, however, we see a triadic relational structure rather than a dyadic one: salvation involves the participation of holy others, the saints in heaven who are neither merely human nor fully divine.

It is important to understand the ethical dynamics of saintly intercession because this cultural motif was a pervasive feature of the religious imagination in the European Middle Ages. In this period, many theologically and ecclesially sanctioned forms of interaction with God worked indirectly, through a more direct appeal to the saints. All Christians understood the saints to give active aid in winning both God's forgiveness for their sins and his grace to make their lives holy. Evidence of this belief pervades the *Legenda Sanctorum,* an influential thirteenth-century text that gained such widespread circulation and approval as a pastoral and devotional aid that it became known as the *Legenda Aurea*. Its author, Jacobus de Voragine, reminds his audience that the feast of All Saints was instituted in part "to make it easier to have our prayers heard. On this day," Jacobus explains,

> …[W]e honor all the saints universally in order to have them interceding for us all together, and thus to obtain the mercy of God more readily, because if it is impossible for the prayers of many not to be heard, it is surely impossible that with all the saints praying for us their prayers would not be granted.[2]

Despite the confidence of Jacobus's description, his claims about the activities of the saints in heaven are paradoxical in light the universally accepted understanding of heaven—and the other world in general—as an eternally changeless domain in which no action occurs in an ordinary sense. Heaven, where the saints are understood to be, is a spiritual domain that is outside of time, not synchronous with life in the material world. And while Jacobus's description purports to be a

[2] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012): 665, and see also Ryan's introduction at xiii-xviii.

theory of intercession as an activity, the intercessory activities he describes do not really seem to be actions, given that they are predicated on the eternally changeless will of God:

> The saints intercede for us by their merits and their good will. Their merits help us and they desire the fulfillment of our wishes, but this only when they know that what we wish for is in accordance with God's will.[3]

Having merits and a good will does not seem to be quite the same thing as praying. To support his argument that the saints are powerful advocates before God, however, Jacobus recounts "a vision which, we are told, occurred a year after the institution of the feast."[4] The visionary reports seeing a formal procession of renowned holy people before the throne of God, "the King of kings"; in the vision, the King's "jumps up" to place a chair for "the Virgin of virgins" next to his own, indicating Mary's high status in the court of Heaven, and then crowds of holy persons distinguished by their garments follow the Blessed Virgin in a procession before the throne. The visionary's angel guide explains, "All these people had come before the King to thank him for the honor done them by mortals on this day, and to pray for the whole world."[5] Although the brief narrative of the vision reads like an allegory, the angel does not interpret it that way to the visionary. Rather, the angel affirms the literal sense of the images of God and the saints in this glimpse of the other world, reinforcing the idea that the social world of heaven operates like an ideal form of the social world on earth, a notion that was deeply embedded in medieval Christian consciousness.

While medieval narratives about saints vary widely in their particulars, all rely on a theological idea of the cosmos as a social matrix. In this matrix, heaven is the state of total unity

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[3] Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 665.

[4] Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 665.

[5] Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 665.

with God and each human life is a state of separation and difference between a sinner and God, in which, however, God may be temporarily and partially recognized. In narratives about saintly intercessors, these states of proximity or separation from God are imagined as actual places rather than states of relationship, and as an intercessor the saint moves within and between places, intervening in the life of the sinner in a moment of contact and synchronicity with life in the material world, to make God accessible. That is, the saint, who is understood to exist as a bodiless soul in the non-physical spiritual world and who has an intimate relationship with God outside the world of the sinner, appears in the sinner's world as a fellow human figure. The saint's appearance makes it possible for the sinner to pursue the way to God. When this happens, figural and spatial representations of God and his actions necessarily take the place of abstract descriptions of his infinite nature. Not only is the saint depicted as a person, but God, too, becomes a person. At the same time, God's radical freedom is bound temporarily by promises of grace and mercy that he grants to the sinner via the saint. He is a person who is acting according to social obligations. Writers and readers of medieval religious narratives understood God to be actually infinite, beyond the experience and knowledge of the human sinner and beyond any law that might bind him, yet the intercession of a saint in a narrative conjures God's temporary appearance as an actor on the level of the sinner and the saint, within the created world. In this position God may also be acted upon. God's appearance as an interlocutor, for example as a judge in the court of heaven, makes him available to receive appeals and arguments. Appearing as a character in the narrative who interacts with the human on earth, whether directly or through interactions with the human figure of the saint, imposes limitations on the image of God that allow a perceivable, intelligible, and intentional relationship to exist, a relationship in which the sinner can thus participate actively.

The twentieth-century ethicist Emmanuel Levinas's conceptions of human existence and justice do not articulate stories of reconciliation with God, nor do they anthropomorphize God as Christian narratives do. It is not my intention here to suggest that Levinasian terms match medieval Christian ideas. Yet two of Levinas's key ethical propositions are comparable to concepts of justice and the human condition in miracle narratives: first, the proposition that *existence* is an ethical relation, a condition of contingency upon the near presence of an Other who is radically free and an end in himself, and second, the proposition that *justice*, the perception and pursuit of right relationships, requires the presence of a third party beyond the initial ethical relation with the Other. My examination of ethics in the literature is informed by both of these, but most of all by the latter proposition. Because Levinas presents a theory of justice that parallels Christian theology in these particular ways, his terminology and descriptive systems offer a useful vocabulary for describing and analyzing ethical models in Christian narratives about ethical relations, justice, and the third party.

While he does not theorize the third party to be a mediator, Levinas does argue that the third party is a necessary catalyst for justice, and in fact for the emergence of any intelligible social system. The third is the initiator of critical perception itself, beginning with assessment of the relationship between self and Other. While the self comes into being in a state of contingency upon the near proximity of an Other, this primary ethical relation is pre-cognitive; this is existence, but not yet the existence of a thinking self that makes distinctions and judgments. According to Levinas, although the self arises along with the primary ethical relation between one and an Other at the birth of human existence, "A question would not have been born, nor consciousness, nor self-consciousness" without the presence of a third party to trouble the relationship and initiate the making of distinctions among individuals and social rules to describe

and govern their interactions.[6] In Levinas "the presence of the third party" does not necessarily mean that a third person walks up and speaks to one, but rather that one becomes aware of the fact that the Other is responsible to a third person (a person who is more distant, someone to whom the self is not directly or fully responsible, or at least not at the moment). Seeing the Other's further responsibility to someone beyond himself and witnessing the subjection of the Other to another creates a consciousness of oneself, the Other, and the third as present in the same time and place, so that relationships among them can be identified and negotiated. Identification and negotiation of relationships in this way is the beginning of justice.

In the literature of the saints, by comparison, human figures located in specific times and places take material positions that are like the ones Levinas describes abstractly. The third party is literally another person present in addition to the sinner and God, someone who affects the way that the sinner and God think and act in relation to each other. As I will discuss later in the chapter in regard to characters in "St. Theophilus," the third may mediate in other relationships, as well. In fact, the third party may be another person mediating between the sinner and God, or between the sinner and God's antagonist, the Devil. But whether the third is present in the relationship between the human and God or between the human and the Devil, it is the third whose presence initiates consciousness of relationships and, with it, the awareness of what should be in relationships—that is, awareness that theorizes justice and informs actions to make them just. By *justice,* again, I mean a rationale for how one should rightly treat another—and how all others should treat all others. According to Levinas, and also according to the ethical messages in "St. Theophilus," this rationale includes the mandate that one is responsible for one's neighbor and obligated to substitute oneself for that other to rescue the other from

[6] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 157.

condemnation and death. To take responsibility for another and substitute oneself for that Other is to fulfill the most fundamental obligation inherent in being human.

Only with the presence of the third party can such a rationale for radical interdependency among persons develop, in Levinas's philosophy; the third party is necessary because it is the third who initiates awareness of others' relationships in the first place, indicating that all people exist in relation to each other and are bound by obligations to others. As Levinas argues, with the presence of the third party questions of ethics arise, including questions about others' responsibilities to each other and questions about one's own responsibilities:

> The third party is other than the neighbor, but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow. What then are the other and the third party for one another? What have they done to one another? Which passes before the other? [i.e., Closer to me, making me responsible for him?] The other stands in a relationship with the third party, for whom I cannot entirely answer, even if I alone answer, before any question, for my neighbor. The other and the third party, my neighbors, contemporaries of one another, put distance between me and the other and the third party. "Peace, peace to the neighbor and the one far-off" (Isaiah 57:19)—we now understand the point of this apparent rhetoric. The third party introduces a contradiction in the saying whose signification before the other until then went in one direction. It is of itself the limit of responsibility and the birth of the question: What do I have to do with justice? [This is a] question of consciousness. Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, and in intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice. Essence as synchrony is togetherness in a place."[7]

Unfortunately this passage exemplifies Levinas's notoriously dense and recursive style of writing, but from it we can glean some useful terms for describing how the presence of a third party in a relationship not only initiates thinking in terms of obligations, standards, and rules, but

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[7] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 157.

also initiates a sense that one is part of such a system oneself and thus entitled to stand "on an equal footing as before a court of justice." I quote this passage at length in order to acknowledge how Levinas connects awareness of others' relationships with consciousness and justice, as secondary effects of encountering an Other. The key idea I wish to highlight, however, is that "[t]he third party introduces a contradiction." Amid Levinas's obscure references to the encounter as discourse and one's approach to the Other as an address ("the saying") he is making the point that the presence of the third implies that "there is also justice for me,"[8] a "limit of responsibility," in that it is not only I who am responsible for the Other, but others are also responsible for me. Before a third party witness, I stand with the Other "on equal footing" and "justice" moderates the relationship. This is in marked contrast—and "contradiction"—to the prior and more fundamental ethical relation between the self and the Other at the very basis of existence, a relationship in which "I substitute myself for him, whereas no one can replace me, and the substitution of the one for the other does not signify the substitution of the other for the one."[9] At the basis of my existence I am utterly vulnerable and unprotected; I am "hostage" to another's necessities with no inherent right to have my own necessities met, and I cannot exist apart from this relationship.

The primary ethical relation as Levinas conceives of it, like the relation between the human and God in Christian theology, is categorically asymmetrical. All responsibility is on one side, and all entitlement is on the other. But in Levinas, "[t]he relationship with the third party is an incessant correction of the asymmetry" of the primary ethical relation, and this ongoing correction is inherent in perceiving the Other as another person, present in the same time and

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[8] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

[9] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

place: "There is weighing, thought, objectification, and thus a decree in which my anarchic relationship with illeity is betrayed, but in which it is conveyed before us." *Illeity* is Levinas's term for the infinite alterity of God, of which one's experience of the Other is a trace. The "anarchic relationship" of one's subjection to the infinite freedom of the Other beyond all ideas of fairness, is "betrayed" even as it is perceived, since perceiving the relationship coincides with seeing the Other not as infinite, signaling the infinite mystery of the creator God, but as a particular and limited entity to whom social concepts apply. Recognizing the Other as a particular, finite one creates a risk of forgetting the Other's infinite alterity; one sees the other as an object (of perception and knowledge) and thus one may fall into denying the foundation of ethics. "[B]ut," Levinas acknowledges in an affirmation of the value of this "betrayal," with this new consciousness there is the beginning "also" of "a new relationship with it: it is only thanks to God that, as a subject incomparable with the other, I am approached as an other by the others, that is, 'for myself.' 'Thanks to God' I am another for the others,"[10] or, as one Levinas scholar has translated it, "'Thanks be to God' I am the Other for the others."[11] This statement of Levinas's raises questions even for scholars of postmodern ethics, to whom I defer, and I do not presume to interpret it fully here. My argument simply takes up Levinas's consistent, repeated use of the notion of the third party's presence as the beginning of a system of justice that includes the one among others as a logical and rightful beneficiary of ethical considerations. Thus the limiting recognition of the Other, and in the process the recognition of oneself, brings

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[10] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158-59.

[11] Tomáš Tatranský, "A Reciprocal Asymmetry? Levinas's Ethics Reconsidered," *Ethical Perspectives* 15.3 (2008): 293-307, 306 n. 1. Tatranský's article provides a helpful review of the debate about the implications of Levinas's statement for his ethics and ultimately argues for a resolution of the apparent paradox in his thinking about asymmetry and reciprocity in the notion of responsibility as gift-giving.

agency and also a sense of entitlement to protection and rescue from death; with these come both hope and gratitude.

When engaging with these ideas and terms from Levinas—*ethics, self, Other, third party, and justice*—in the present study it will be important to keep in mind that I am focusing on a narrative, which attempts to view all characters from an outside perspective and so does not explore ethics only from the perspective of the one, the responsible self, as Levinas usually does. Rather, in the late medieval intercession narrative all characters may inhabit the roles of the one, the Other, and the third at various moments. This allows the narrative to explore the role of the third party not only as a witness but also as an agent. Every person is a responsible self and an Other for whom someone takes responsibility, and every person is key to initiating justice. As representations of ethics in a material social world, intercession narratives, of which "St. Theophilus" is a representative example, show failures and recoveries of ethics taking place in space and time, among human actors who are all dependent upon others, all responsible for others, and all influential with respect to others' relationships. In Levinas's representation of the human condition, "God is not involved as an alleged interlocutor," but in medieval Christian narratives of the saints' intercession, God *is* an interlocutor with the saint, and by means of the saint, with the sinner as well. The saint makes it possible for the sinner to address God. Thus the face-to-face encounter with the saint explicitly told in the narrative should not be read as matching Levinas's notion of the primary ethical relation in the encounter between self and Other—or at least, not *merely* as an image of such a relation. Rather, the approach and encounter with respect to the saint are at the same time part of the process of approach and encounter with respect to God, who is represented as another Other, but also "my neighbor" in these humanized representations of the divine creator and judge. Again, these narratives imagine God temporarily

as a person, part of the human world, and in so doing they suggest the ethical meaning of human activity.

Without explicitly denying God's alterity, intercession narratives present an alternate view of the relationship between the human and God, emphasizing that there is some system of justice in which the rights and responsibilities of God (as if God were bound by social laws, albeit laws of his own making) and the sinner are equally considered. Within this system, the sinner is not the only responsible party. The sinner is "the Other for the others" who are responsible for him. Thus the saint may substitute himself or herself for the sinner in heaven's court of justice, taking responsibility for the sinner, or God may do so. Again, according to Levinas, in the ethical relation at the birth of existence, prior to social laws, there is no reciprocity and only the self is responsible, just as in Christian theology generally speaking the human owes all service to God and God is not in any way bound to serve, or save, the human. Nor is the saint obligated to serve the sinner on earth, having left the temporal, changing, fallen world—and with it all need for moral achievements. But narratives of intercession depict God and the saints serving the sinner nonetheless, becoming part of a sinner's world in the context of discussions about the nature of divine justice. Looking at this paradoxical joining of worlds in the application of justice with Levinasian terms in mind helps to identify some key ethical dynamics at work in the intercession story.

With the presence of the third party in Levinas, one must consider specific conditions for responsibility and acknowledge that "the reciprocal relationship binds me to the other man" in a social order, "an order of justice moderating or measuring the substitution of me for the other."[12] Thus the recognition of the Other in the presence of the third party "is precisely the reverting of

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[12] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

the incomparable subject into a member of society."[13] This reference to "reverting," a movement often described as "oscillation" by Levinas scholars, suggests that Levinas sees ethics in social practice—i.e., politics—as a dynamic of constant shifting and change in relational positions and states of awareness. In this dynamic, the "incomparable," infinite nature of each person, that which is of God, passes into and out of consideration in the social schema, with true justice existing in a social system that persistently recalls the infinity of persons and its implications, recognizing the alterity of each person. True justice is forever reconsidering and revising roles and rules in the attempt to acknowledge the radical freedom, as well as the fundamental responsibility, of each person.[14]

I argue that medieval intercession narratives represent problems of justice in a way that is compatible with this strain in Levinas's thinking, though the narratives represent such problems in specifically medieval Christian imagery. The presence of the saint as third party brings two incomparables, the sinner and God, together as members of a cosmic society, and the saint, another incomparable, participates in the same social system. Within this social world—really the material and temporal home of the living human person—the sinner may make claims upon God in light of a sense of the justice of reciprocity in relationships among "members of society," despite the fact that God is of course beyond answerability for such claims. Despite God's divinity, the human in the intercession narrative addresses God as a person by means of the intercession of the saint, working from the assumption that God should protect the sinner from

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[13] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

[14] For an illuminating discussion of the "never-ending oscillation between ethics and politics," as a persistent strain in Levinas's thought, see William Paul Simmons, "The Third; Levinas's Theoretical Move from An-Archical Ethics to the Realm of Justice and Politics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25.6, 84 [83-104].

damnation, while the sinner must engage in faithful self-giving on behalf of others. And according to this logic of justice, God does relieve the sinner of responsibility for his sins, reconfirming in the narrative what the overarching Christian story already teaches about the relationship between God and humanity in general, which is that Christ substituted himself for sinners and died for them.

Of course Levinas's ethical theory can only go so far toward providing a basis for explicating ethical dynamics in Middle English miracle narratives. Aside from the fact that Levinas is primarily concerned with problems of ethics in a twentieth-century philosophical context, rather than ethics in medieval culture, he resists narrativization of his theory or even application of it to actual political problems. This may be partly because the meaning of the primary ethical relation is always at risk of being effaced by the superimposing of social actions and identities upon those involved in it, and Levinas's main goal throughout his work is to point to this ethical relation and its implications. But following readings of Levinas scholars, I take him as arguing that with the entrance of the third party comes awareness that in a sociality everyone is responsible, everyone enjoys others' assuming of responsibility for one, and everyone stands as judge and initiator of justice among all. Everyone has the role of the self, the Other, and the third.[15]

[15] For a helpful elucidation of the relationship among "the subject, the other, and the third person" as coeval, copresent, and engaged together in pursuing justice, see Eric R. Severson, *Levinas's Philosophy of Time: Gift, Responsibility, Diachrony, Hope* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 292. In his discussion of the concept of God in Levinas's notions of peace and justice in Chapter 8, "The Time of Restoration" (267-302), Severson draws together paradoxical claims about diachrony and synchrony in Levinas to trace a consistent argument about the possibility of justice that does not forget the primary ethical relation, asserting that "It is in the concept of God, which can be read alongside Levinas's earlier invocations of the infinite, that he can introduce, at last, something that the subject, the other, and the third person have in *common*: diachrony"; that the paradox of having diachrony in common is the necessary basis of justice, and the concept of God incorporates the paradox into an idea that can be shared, so as to allow "The pursuit of justice [which] is . . . the pursuit of a sociality where egoism has been abandoned"; and the concept of God allows this pursuit because "the concept of God defies any synchrony within the horizon of the ego" (292).

A crucial difference between the way Levinas presents the notion of the third party and the way in which saints serve as third parties is that in Levinas the third party *as* third party, seems to be a witness, not a social agent, and certainly not an active mediator. In intercession narratives, however, the active mediation of the saint may be understood to mimetically embody and enact what Levinas describes in abstract terms. In a saint's narrative, the saint treats God as a participant in God's own divine system of justice. Witness to God's infinite power and mystery, the saint is thus also witness to the reliability of the system of heavenly rewards for the righteous. When the saint approaches the sinner in intercession narratives, passing between God (the Other) and the sinner (the self), it would seem that this third party is quite different from the passive third party described by Levinas, one who is always beyond the Other, disrupting the intimacy of the primary ethical relation, rather than bringing the one and the Other into right relation. But the saint's actions as mediator—taking responsibility for the sinner before God and calling upon God to take responsibility for the sinner—enact the understanding of justice that the third party brings in Levinas, in the very process of disruption. If the sinner in an intercession narrative is comparable to the Levinasian self, then with the entrance of the saint as third party this self enters a time and place shared with God who is the Other. With this, the sinner becomes conscious of existing within a system of justice in which others may substitute themselves for the sinner. In this consciousness lies the hope for salvation (i.e., for being saved) that is the achievement of justice according to a Christian view. The saint, as third party who brings the one and the Other into a shared system of thought and judgment, is thus a crucial part of the ethical sociality that makes up the cosmos. The mediation of the saint brings awareness—belief—that the sinner has an advocate, a blameless one who will take his or her place before accusers and thus secure salvation. While the notion of the third party is not a notion of mediation in Levinas,

yet we can work from Levinas's theory of justice and the third party to speak of the saint as an ethical actor who takes the role of the third party, specifically in the act of mediating to bring justice between the vulnerable, responsible, and condemned human subject on the one side, and God the Other on the other side.

Historical Context for Marian Mediation in Middle English Literature:

Mediation in the Cult of the Saints

Veneration of the saints as spiritual mediators is not quite as old as Christianity itself, but it comes close, and it predates the cult of the Virgin by some centuries. In his influential history of the rise of the cult of the saints, Peter Brown describes "the manner in which new invisible companions came to crowd in around the men and women of late antiquity and the early middle ages [*sic*]."[16] As Brown explains, belief in the saints focused on two roles they played in the life of the believer, *patronus* and *amicus*, and also two characteristic aspects of their activity: *praesentia* and *potentia*. *Praesentia* was the saints' immediate presence at specific locales where their relics were. *Potentia* was their power to cast out demons, and thus to heal sufferers and to bring outcasts back into the community, in response to the prayers of the suffering and of their loved ones. Thus the cult of the saints in the West was from the start a social-relational structure that included a theory of space and a set of expectations about the activities of both the one in power and the subject appealing to him or her for help.

The concept of the saint as intercessor was an adaptation of the late classical (pre-Christian) assumption that "the peaceable continuity between the self and the divine" included "the self as the last link in a chain of intermediary beings" who were not human but rather nearly

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[16] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 50.

divine, and this chain was so strong that in relation to the spiritual intermediary the self "continued under its protection after death. The abiding identity of the self," abiding as the self persisted in life beyond death, "was in its keeping."[17] With the development of Christianity, and as anxiety about the Last Judgment grew, the concept of the invisible companion shifted. Christians envisioned the spiritual mediator in distinct and comforting human form as the soul of a holy dead person, still part of a "chain of intimately joined beings" that included the self, but now in a structure of "interdependent figures" that included the living Christian, the dead one, and Christ, with this chain of intermediaries creating a "close bond in Heaven" between the living person and God. According to this model, the saint was a powerful patron who could accompany and assist the soul at death, bringing the soul into God's presence. And acting posthumously in the material world, the saint could use the power of God to drive away demons that interfered with the connection between a suffering living person's soul and God. Such demons were perceived in afflictions of the mind and emotions, as well as the body. In restoring health and social wellbeing, the saint was understood to restore the blessings belonging to everyone favored by God. God in this framework is understood as the constant source of existence; existence depends upon his life-giving power. Ethical identity, being good in the sight of God, and being itself are here one and the same. Thus relationships both with and through the saints keep the self in existence as a soul, and by driving away demons the saints keep the soul from annihilation. This is the origin of the belief in saintly mediation between humans and God.

Conserving and reiterating the sense of saintly, anti-demonic *potentia* of the late antique saints, stories of miraculous interventions by saints were produced and repeated at centers of devotion where their relics were kept. The faithful journeyed to these sites to get close to the

[17] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 51.

saints in order to request their help and healing. This practice continued throughout the early and high Middle Ages. Moving forward seven or eight centuries in history, we see that among the many shrines to saints, centers of veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary became popular. Mary's miraculous intercession at shrine sites centered on healing, conflict resolution, and reintegration of outcasts into the community. In these accounts, she is needed to bring peace and justice where there is strife, physical or spiritual, internal or external. Historian Miri Rubin describes a famous Continental Marian veneration site where a mysteriously powerful statue of Mary became the subject of a large collection of over one hundred miracle narratives (collected around 1172), the shrine of Rocamadour in France:

> The miraculous cures involved many simple folk and relieved them of extremely common and debilitating conditions: blindness, shriveled limbs, wounds, fevers. There were mental illnesses too: clerics seem to have been particularly prone to 'melancholy' and 'frenzy.' The miracles depict in lively detail just how important a healing shrine was to people's existence; at Rocamadour violent knights and lawless henchmen were among the social ills that the mysterious statue healed.[18]

The linking of physical illnesses to mental illnesses and social unrest in requests for the Virgin's help shows that the saint was understood by devotees as a powerful actor on the body, the soul, and the community all together. This combined approach to saving souls, such that the problematic individual's place in the community is considered akin to bodily pain or spiritual pain, includes two key components of the ethics of saintly patron mediation: First, the encounter with the saint is individualized and personalized by pain because it locates the interaction between human and divine in the particular body of the person who suffers. Second, the saint responds not only to bodily pain, but also to social pain, the pain of injustice and conflict, as it

[18] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 185; for further description of the shrine and its cult, see 184-86.

affects the lives of individuals. The ethical implications of these two features of saintly intervention suggest a point of connection between medieval patron mediation shaped by an early theory of the saints, and the idea of the encounter as the beginning of ethics, including an idea of the self as essentially relational.

The idea of the saint's social role in relation to the Christian devotee took shape according to late Roman social structures, fulfilling "the need for intimacy with a protector with whom one could identify as a fellow human being, relations with whom could be conceived of in terms open to the nuances of known human relations between patron and client."[19] For the late antique Christian, the beloved patron saint "was not a timeless idealized figure: he was very much a *patronus* and an *amicus*."[20] This original idea of the saint as patron and powerful friend at court is important in shaping the way saints would be understood in the later Middle Ages; through this motif, Christianity itself continually reinforced combined expectations that the power and love of the saints influenced human lives. Closeness to the saints did not typically continue to take the form of near-identification with them that characterized the early cult, and they were certainly idealized, as well as categorically understood to be timeless (because they were enjoying eternal life). But believers experienced intimacy with the saints nonetheless in the patron mediation motif, according to a perceived asymmetrical relationship, with need on one side and power on the other, between their own particular, needy selves and the generous saints who they believed took personal action on their behalf. Imagining the saints as having elite social status in the court of heaven intensified the sense that saintly attention and aid was a gift of self on the part of the saint. Like a queen, prince, or courtier, the saint would take the part of the

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[19] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 61.

[20] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 56.

weaker, less well-connected supplicant before the high throne; this was often imagined as an act of self-subjection on the part of the saint, testing-and-proving the security and strength of the king's—God's—favor.

The longing for face-to-face meeting between saint and praying sinner and the hope for the good—for one's own goodness, in subjection to the saint, and for the saint's goodness, in self-giving and in substituting himself or herself for the suffering one—is what makes this ubiquitous dynamic of devotion to saints an ethics of encounter. This motif in medieval Christian devotion is not applied ethics. Rather, it is a cultural-iconographic exposition of an ethical desire. As we will see in the discussion of fourteenth-century English miracle narratives, encounter with the saint in a narrative exposes and draws out the dynamics of encounter, allowing an examination of the features of an ethics of encounter in the specifically Christian and literary context of miracles of the Virgin.

Thus stories of the Blessed Virgin's miraculous intercession were in a sense an old and traditional genre by the fourteenth century. Narratives of miraculous healing and problem-solving done by the Blessed Virgin were brought from the eastern Mediterranean into Western Europe by the sixth century and Britain by the seventh. They are found scattered in monastic historiography and moral writings from Gregory of Tours to Aelfric, and in collections called *mariales* produced all over the West, first in Latin alone, and eventually in vernacular languages including English.[21] In medieval Christianity generally, Mary's miraculous power proceeds from her role as the chosen mother of God. Her closeness to God and her enjoyment of God's favor are unrivalled due to her maternal role, which allows her to channel the divine grace that performs miracles. Her responsibility for humanity, however, proceeds from her role as the

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[21] Peter Whiteford, ed., *Myracles of Oure Lady* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990), 13.

Queen of Heaven, as frequently depicted in medieval Christian iconography. Late medieval painted images of Mary as a protector often portray her covering sinners under her cloak or mantle. This gesture of closeness indicates warm care and intimacy that we might associate with a mother, but these same images emphasize Mary's queenly role: she is represented as a tall, majestic figure in a rich gown with a spreading cloak.[22] It is in this role that she exercises her power to help sinners. The idea that Mary would perform certain intercessory functions because she was a queen was reinforced by the actual political function of queens in late medieval society. Examples of queens acting as intercessors were ready to hand in English legend as well as contemporary politics in the fourteenth century; even beyond what the queens actually were doing, chroniclers of the period consistently promote the idea that queens *could* and *would* successfully take the part of a subject—or even the people as a whole—in an appeal to the king.[23] A queen acting as an intercessor before the king's throne took on the peculiarly dual role of a powerful one subjecting herself. She substituted herself for another, taking responsibility for this other, and her own total dependence upon the king (at least in theory) was emphasized in the process.

As political historian Lisa Benz St. John explains, queens could work as intercessors in several ways: as "peacemakers between the king and other people," by "securing a privilege, such as a pardon, grant, or appointment, from the king at the behest of someone else," and "on

[22] See Miri Rubin, *Mother of God*, Plate 20, for a representative example of this tradition in late medieval German art, along with a brief summary of its typical features (Rubin, *Mother of God*, 545). Another example, a detail from Piero della Francesca's fourteenth-century *Misericordia Altarpiece* in Sansepolcro, Italy, is featured on the cover of the 2009 edition of Rubin's book published by Yale University Press. Images of the *Madonna della Misericordia* abound in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century European art.

[23] Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), esp. 33-63 on queens as intercessors, and also 65-94 on queens as powerful heads of households and estates.

their own initiative, beseeching the king to grant them a request" because of his personal regard for her, as consort (wife) or as dowager (mother).[24] As an intercessor, a queen might write letters to participate in administrative activities, or she might appear in person before the king, kneeling before him as she begged him to fulfill her request. Historians record multiple occasions on which English queens undertook this conspicuous gesture of subjection before the king. Images of Mary, of course, present her as the queen undertaking all of these activities. As one historian writes of the image of Mary in late medieval Scotland, "Mary was a good match for the stern God of Judgement Day. She was a powerful young mother, protective older mother, celestial queen, and defeater of demons."[25] This image, which was pervasive in England as well, brings us to the context in which this common image of Mary's role and responsibilities functioned: the whole cosmos was a scene of judgment, with doom expected at death for every person, and enemies working actively to make sure that doom would mean damnation. In this cosmic judgment scene, malign spirits competed with Mary as intermediaries between each human soul and God who was the ultimate judge. Mary's special position as Queen of Heaven coincides with the doctrine that instead of dying she simply fell asleep, and she was "assumed wholly, in body and soul"—that is, physically lifted—into the spiritual realm of heaven, thus dignifying the human body as well as the souls of humans.[26] In the reading for the Feast of the Assumption, the

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[24] St. John, *Three Medieval Queens,* 33, 34.

[25] Audrey-Beth Fitch, "Mothers and Their Sons: Mary and Jesus in Scotland, 1450-1560," in *the Cult of the Saints in Medieval Scotland*, ed. Stephen I. Boardman and Eila Williamson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), 175 [159-76].

[26] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine,* Part Two, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1941) 456. Here I am citing a mid-twentieth-centure edition of William Granger Ryan's *Golden Legend* translation because the language in these passages is particularly evocative. Both editions are based on the same 1850 Latin edition; thus the 1941 edition is the same as the 2012 edition in most particulars, but the language has been further modernized in the newer edition. For comparison, see pp. 2012 edition, cited above at p.

influential thirteenth-century preaching resource *The Golden Legend* vividly describes the position of Mary in heaven. Jacobus cites various authorities to emphasize that Mary's crossing of the normal boundaries between physical and spiritual realms is a matter of great cosmic importance:

> Of this the bishop and martyr Gerardus says in his homilies: 'With joy the heavens have taken up the Blessed Virgin this day, the Angels rejoicing the Archangels jubilating, the Thrones, exalting, the Dominations psalming, the Principalities making harmony, the Powers playing upon the harp, the Cherubim and Seraphim hymning and leading her to the supernal throne of the divine majesty' . . . . She was assumed in an excelling manner; whence Jerome says: 'This is the day in which the inviolate mother and virgin went up even to the height of the throne, and being raised up in glory next to Christ, took her place in the royal seat.' And Gerardus, in his homilies, says: 'The most ineffable Trinity Itself applaudes her with unceasing dance, and since Its grace flows wholly into her, makes all to wait upon her. The most splendid order of the apostles extols her with unspeakable lauds, the host of the martyrs pay every reverence to so great a queen, the innumerable army of the confessors sounds and unending chant to her, the shining array of the virgins sings a ceaseless chorus in her honour, unwilling Hell itself howls to her, and the wanton demons shriek her praise!'[27]

This image of Mary in heaven clearly raises her in esteem and power above the orders of angels and also the orders of all other saints, classified as "martyrs" (the highest order below Mary herself), "confessors" (those who were heroically faithful, examples and teachers of the faith, next in greatness after the martyrs), and "virgins" (who died having consecrated their bodies to God). Further, the image points to the other set of mediators between heaven and earth, the fiends who also take action to affect the fates of human souls. The fiends are so highly displeased by Mary because she is their counterpart. She moves, as they do, between God and human souls,

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25n2, p.26n3,4,5, and below at p.64n3 and p.91n70. I have cited the 2012 edition wherever I am not using direct quotations from the text.

[27]Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* trans. Ryan (1941), 457-58.

and she also moves between the fiends and God's judgment to help save sinners. We can see in this how Mary embodies one of the most important features of the long tradition of saintly mediation: *potentia,* the power to free souls from demons. Like the chosen Apostles in the documents of the early Church and like the saints of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, Mary has the power to cast out demons.

The miracle narrative that I will discuss in this chapter, like others of its type, foregrounds the activity of Mary's good mediation as a counter to bad mediation by a fiend at the time of death, before the highest power of the divine court where Mary's intercession could help as no one else's could. By virtue of her identity as the mother of Christ and also the Queen of Heaven, Mary embodied the "intimacy with God" that "was the *sine qua non* of [saints'] ability to intercede for and, so, to protect their fellow mortals," as Peter Brown describes it.[28] The *Golden Legend* was influential in shaping the beliefs of priests and preachers, who were spiritual leaders and teachers, and its stories were the material of sermons on feast days like the feast of the Assumption. This feast and its doctrine are particularly important to keep in mind as we consider how Mary absorbed the powerful aspects of the traditional cult of the saints. The belief in the *praesentia* of the saints was based on relics, on being able to visit a saint's physical remains at a shrine site; but according to the doctrine of the Assumption, Mary had no bodily relics because she had not died. Her body was with her, and it might thus appear wherever she chose to go. In fact, according to Marian legends, Mary generated innumerable relics of other kinds, including her breastmilk and various of her garments, which she flung down sometimes to offer her help through increasing faith for certain luminaries, according to Christian lore. She

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[28] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 6.

was commonly understood by Christians to be both full of power through her intimacy with God, established as she was in the court of heaven because of the favor Jesus had shown her as his mother, and also especially present when she visited the living Christians on earth, by means of her special—uniquely portable—*praesentia*.

The authoritative theological and pastoral insistence on Mary's embodiment stressed the point that she was just as present as any living person in the material world. Believing in her unique bodily presence in Heaven, emphasized in exactly the same places as her queenship, made it possible to imagine seeing this powerful patron face-to-face. It was imaginable that she might arrive in person to meet with a human subject who called upon her for help and protection. Her mediation was personal, embodied, and powerful in unique and unparalleled ways. Thus in her role as *mediatrix*[29] the figure of the Blessed Virgin incorporated the power and appeal of all of the other saints, concentrating it in one named and visually represented human icon whose capacity and willingness to stand in for a human sinner at judgment thus was also unparalleled.

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[29] The link between mediation and miracle is indicated by the fact that one of the first known uses of the traditional title *mediatrix* for Mary is found in an early miracle of the Virgin from around the turn of the ninth century by Paulus Diaconus, who translated a Greek version of the Theophilus narrative into Latin; in this translation, Paulus says that the Blessed Virgin is "*mediatrix Dei ad homines*." Peter Whiteford follows the record of this first use with eight examples of twelfth-century Latin miracles of the Virgin, suggesting that the title appears in many more miracle collections as well as other Marian writings, and noting that it coincides with other terms for Mary's mediation, including "auxiliatrix," "inspiratrix," "interventrix," "advocata," and "arbitra," as well as "mother of mercy" (Whiteford, *Myracles*, 13). In his authoritative history of Marian devotion, *Mary Through the Centuries*, Jaroslav Pelikan differs slightly from Whiteford on a few points of dating with respect to the first uses of *mediatrix*, but Pelikan also points to the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the key period when Mary's role as *mediatrix* was fully theorized and established. Pelikan calls the title "a means of summarizing what had come to be seen as her twofold function," citing Anselm's descriptions of Mary as both the way Christ had entered the world and come to humanity, and also the way through which humans might be brought to Christ in Heaven (Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture,* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996], 130-132, quotation at 131). Although Pelikan does not focus on miracle narratives, he emphasizes the historical association between Mary's miraculous nature and her mercy, in the theory of her cooperative role in salvation (132).

The writing of miracles took a literary turn after the thirteenth century, setting "the new literature of miracles of the Virgin" in the fourteenth century apart from the older miracles in collections, with "their careful everyday setting, and their concern for the physical world," as Southern characterizes them.[30] Along with thematic content, the manuscript and reading contexts show a change in the fourteenth century, as well. By this time, Marian miracles were customarily found in "working" and "recreational" contexts, which Paul Strohm memorably describes as "the large, popular, and somewhat scrappy collections of *exempla, gesta,* and *narrationes* which arose for the assistance of sermon writers and the edification of general readers."[31] And this trend of literary enhancement for popular dissemination among literate audiences will continue after the period I am focusing on in this chapter. By the late fifteenth century, for example, we find miracle *exempla* in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61 (Codex Ashmole 61), a modestly bound miscellany of texts that seem to have been (of interest to any bourgeois English family). There, we find *The Incestuous Daughter* and *The Jealous Wife* in the company of the behavioral guides *Advice to a Daughter* and *Advice to Son,* as well as the twin narratives of "St. Eustace" and "Sir Isumbras." These last two texts tell nearly the same story with very similar characters, except that in one story the protagonist is simply a nobly suffering knight who finds worldly felicity at last, while in the other he becomes a saint by being martyred along with his entire family, to the satisfaction of all.[32] These are not ethics texts in any formal sense, but they continue the newer, more literary tradition of moral instruction for reading

[30] R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 255.

[31] Paul Strohm, "'Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende': Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative," *The Chaucer Review* 10.1 (1975): 69.

[32] *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffleton, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), 180-184; 170-179; 19-29; 39-58.

by the laity.[33] Specifically, they prescribe models of social and devotional propriety, along with offering material for consideration that encourages reflection on how to live. The moral subject, independently taking instruction from the text and enacting it in social life and self-cultivation, is assumed by these texts. Readers and listening audiences (i.e., for sermons) encountered such exempla in devotional contexts in the period under consideration here, the mid-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries, and these narratives informed their thinking on the ethical ideals about relationships with others—both divine or holy others, and ordinary human others in their earthly social world.

The History of Juridical Themes in Miracles of the Virgin in Middle English

The Blessed Virgin's role in any imaginative or theological text is entirely predictable, in a general sense. As Miri Rubin writes of medieval images of Mary, "Once in heaven, Mary's role was now clear—to pray for her adherents, for those who celebrated her feasts, who remembered her in their prayers, who chanted her hymns and recorded her life."[34] Miracles of the Virgin only occasionally imagine her at prayer, however. More active intercessory roles—

[33] These stories are not stories of intercession, though they are moral stories whose plots turn upon miracles. They are much more concerned with the experience of the moral subject in earthly society than in the cosmic sociality populated by saints in heaven as well as Christians on earth. Though the scope of this study does not allow me to pursue it further, this suggests an interesting point of difference between the most popular forms of devotional literature of the fourteenth century and that of the centuries immediately following. In her study of the history of the *Legenda Aurea* (a book that is full of intercession miracles, as I have noted) Sherry L. Reames points to the fact that although it was a "Medieval Best-Seller," its popularity plummeted in the sixteenth century was due in part, as she suggests, to Jacobus's dark view of humanity and God's relationship with it, in contradistinction both to the "gentle persuasion" she finds more characteristic of medieval Dominican theology written before the *Golden Legend* and also to the humanistic values of the Renaissance that followed (Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of its Paradoxical History* [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985], 197, 194).

[34] Rubin, *Mother of God*, 117.

both suffering and combative—dominate Marian miracle literature.[35] Whiteford records a high concentration of titles for the Virgin in miracle narrative that point to her mediation, judgment, and mercy all together, noting that the Virgin's power of eliciting mercy from Christ was located in her position as his mother and pointing to "the familiar image of the Virgin displaying to her son the breasts with which she fed him," found in many images of Mary from the twelfth century and often combined with the "equally common" image of the Virgin appearing as an advocate in the court of heaven as some human soul is being judged. In this juridical narrative motif, as the Virgin responds to the soul's call for help by turning to Christ to beg for his mercy she displays her breasts, to which he responds by appealing to the Father and displaying his wounds.[36]

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[35] To my knowledge, only one literary scholar, Mary Vincentine Gripkey, writing in 1938, has proposed a list of specific qualities that make "Marian intercession" itself, as something distinct from saintly intercession generally (and, Gripkey implies, more reliably orthodox):

> The role of Mary as Mediatrix in the Marial legends assumes three aspects which are in themselves theocentric: God performs the miracle because of her importunities or in her honor; the divine power uses her as an instrument or agent; Mary is a suppliant, dependent upon the good will of God for those favors which she petitions for her clients. (Sister Mary Vincentine Gripkey, A.M. "Mary as Mediatrix in Latin and Old French Legend Prior to the Fourteenth Century," PhD thesis [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1938], vii.)

Gripkey's list of aspects of Mary Mediatrix is helpful as a broad description of the overall role as it is informed by theology. Yet these categories are insufficient for use as analytical tools in interpreting the meaning of Marian intercession in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English miracle narratives I am discussing here. Generally speaking, the Marian intercessors in these narratives fall into Gripkey's categories of "instrument or agent" and "suppliant, dependent upon the good will of God for those favors which she petitions for her clients." Yet seeing only instrumentality and deferral to Christ in these Middle English narratives would ignore many features of the action of the narratives, eliding the significance of how she introduces justice. Most notably, Mary takes autonomous ethical action as a legal negotiator in both texts. And her way of negotiating—by appearing in person and participating in conflicts with established, codified law—is crucial to how ethics is imagined in these texts. Mary can only be understood as "instrument or agent" of God's power through prior understanding of the theological context in which such narratives were composed. God (or Jesus) does not actually appear in many of these narratives, including "St. Theophilus," which is representative of the genre. Mary's apparently independent actions as intercessor should be the focus of interpretation because her actions reflect significant ethical attitudes in the culture that produced the texts.

[36] Whiteford, *Myracles*, 16, 17.

Here, as in the pain of the sufferer, we see a way in which the supplicant claims individuality by means of presentation of the body—particularly the suffering body, which registers abject need and places responsibility on the one before whom she appears. In the court of heaven, Mary's suffering body becomes the specific, unique locus of an appeal that calls for the self-giving of a powerful Other—in this case, she makes her appeal in her role as the Virgin Mother, who pleads for this sinner. When the Virgin Mother turns her own body into a suffering body by pointing out her breasts as a sacrifice she has given, she takes up the suffering role of the specific sinner she is representing, becoming the new locus of the appeal and the focal point of Christ's mercy. As Karl Shoemaker has shown, there is legal precedent for Mary's baring of her breasts in court; she is claiming "the rights of motherhood" recognized by fourteenth-century canon law.[37] This is not a violation or warping of established law, but an instance in which the established law incorporates its own exception. The exception is based on specific, intimate relationships and the experiences of individual bodies. Christ, acting in turn, responds by taking up Mary's appeal. He exposes his wounds, and as a suffering body takes the place of Mary, thereby taking the place of the sinner who appealed to her.

In this peculiar courtroom scene, Mary the powerful patron mediator substitutes herself for the subject, taking the role of subject and sufferer; next the more powerful patron mediator Jesus does the same thing, subjecting himself and suffering on behalf of Mary; and in taking her place he takes the sinner's place. When Christ is in the role of a mediator, Marian intercession forms part of a "chain of intermediaries" between the sinner and God's judgment, recalling the earliest Roman concepts of the connection between the human and divine. Unlike the earlier model or relationship between human and God, however, this is not "peaceable continuity

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[37] Karl Shoemaker, "The Devil at Law in the Middle Ages," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 228.4 (2012): 585 [567–86].

between the self and the divine," but rather a highly conflicted relationship. In this medieval model of the chain of intermediaries, continuity is impossible, and yet the obstruction caused by sin is being overcome through conflict, disruption, and suffering which is the inversion of violence. Yet the obstruction caused by sin does not disappear. It is forever maintained as part of the Christian ethical landscape, and it is forever in a state of being-conquered. Suffering is a necessary sign of the responsibility that one is taking for another in order to participate in conquering sin, whether the responsible one is Christ, who in the core New Testament narrative suffers for the sins of humankind (experienced as a personal gift by each Christian) or whether the suffering one is the Christian sinner, suffering for Christ in an act of appropriate self-giving.

Thus the link to God is a series of encounters between the suffering one and the powerful one. In each encounter, the powerful one becomes subject to another for the sake of the suffering one. These encounters are marked by difference and struggle—the embattled state of sin-being-conquered is one dominant model of relationship between the divine and God, through the saints, in late medieval culture. Mary is the chief exemplar of saints who help to conquer sin; she intervenes to stand in the court of heaven in place of the sinner, to speak up for the sinner and in so doing to ensure that God's justice accomplishes what it must rightly accomplish: the saving of souls. Not only is Marian intercession a dominant ethical model in religious literature specifically, but also the crucial moment of encounter between two individuals and the suffering and self-subjection that this encounter properly entails are part of the ideal model of patron mediation in literature of social and political criticism in the fourteenth century as well. Tracing the contours of the patron mediation model in Marian literature as a specific type of ethical encounter, involving a third party who is crucial to the enacting of justice, lays the groundwork for an examination of a patron's mediation as a beginning of justice. Examining this ethical

model closely allows us to see how religion and politics change as ethical ideals of encounter, self-subjection, and substitution are explored, revised, and challenged in literary texts, as another current in the ethical consciousness of late medieval England rises to dominance.

Middle English Marian Miracles from the Turn of the Fourteenth Century

In England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as on the Continent, monastic writers produced large manuscript collections in Latin of narratives about miracles brought about by the intercession of various saints, with Mary included among these saints but not dominating the collections. As these collections multiplied, they expanded beyond the repertoire of stories with clerical origins, such that by the early thirteenth century they grew to include hundreds of working-class laypeople's reports of miracles, as well the reports of more authoritative persons. In the thirteenth century, however, dynamics of reporting miraculous occurrences changed, such that after 1220 comparatively few English miracle stories were written, though interest in miracles in England as elsewhere continued to be strong: relic shrines record countless pilgrimages purposing to request special help with problems no mortal could solve, or to thank the saint for such prayers granted. Ecclesiastical records include discoveries and translations of relics, debates by scholastic theologians classify the meanings of miracles, and Church records show that new canonizations occurred at a steady pace, in response to increasingly exacting and meticulously documented miracle investigations by the Vatican.[38]

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[38] For overviews of the history of increased monastic miracle collecting in England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and its rapid end in the thirteenth century, see Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) esp. 201-10. For the classification of Marian narratives as *miracles*, see Paul Strohm, "'Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende.'" R.W. Southern's important discussion of the genre in the context of romance, the veneration of relics, and affective piety is also still often cited: Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, esp. 246-257; in these pages, Southern provides bibliographic notes for locating the texts in their manuscripts and traces the manuscript history of the narrative I am using here: *Theophilus*.

All of these forms of writing about miracles, different from the collections intended for reading by the monastic community, were designed to incorporate the saints' categorically supernatural meaning into the fabric of spiritual, intellectual, and social life—the life of belief and its concomitant demands for proper behavior. The written records were to verify and explain miracles in ways that normalized them, in a sense, by making them part of everyday practices and using them as interpretive keys for experiences in the material world. This way of thinking about miracles, enhanced by inscribing them in systematic and documentary structures and forms, made believing in the possibility of miracles more rational than not in certain ways, although this particular kind of rationality is an eccentric form of rationality, peculiar to the circumstances of the social and intellectual culture in which it thrived.

Proposing an explanation for a medieval rationality that incorporates miracles, intellectual historian D.L. D'Avray cites Aquinas's influential theory of miracles, based on an Aristotelian idea of the world as a "regular causal order" that was "slotted neatly into his Christian world-view."[39] Aquinas argues: "God imparted a certain order to things in such a way as nonetheless to reserve to himself what he would do in a different way at some points in the future, for a reason. So when he acts outside this order, it is not changed."[40] Further, the papal Curia's canonization processes "began to subject both the miracles and the virtues claimed for the putative saint to a rigorous scrutiny of a quasi-legal character."[41] When a saint successfully

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The most authoritative history of the institution of the authoritative Roman process for canonization, including miracle trials, is André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 33-104. D.L. D'Avray summarizes the process briefly and vividly in *Medieval Religious Rationalities; A Weberian Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), at 77-80.

[39] D'Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalities,* 77.

[40] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.105.6; see D'Avray at 77.

[41] D'Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalities*, 77.

made the canon, then, he or she was understood by the faithful to have passed through such testing as was required to make sure that this saint was just as active as those putting forth the cause for sainthood claimed. Convergence of these two rational discourses thus reinforced belief in the desirable possibility that negative aspects of life in the material world could be altered by the saints, through their use of divine power. Documenting the saints made their miracles part of the fabric of the experience of reality. These documents cemented belief in the factual nature of miracles.

Meanwhile, during this period, miracle narratives meant for reading were for the most part no longer attempted as literary projects by monastic writers, a marked change from the literary practices of only a few decades before. Nor did anyone else take up such projects of making collections of diverse miracles for copying and reading in book form. This change began in the thirteenth century and had become definitive of the hagiographical landscape in England by the fourteenth. Miracles were presented in another written form, however: the documentary form designed to attest to their veracity and relevance to the Christian community as a community of souls: lists of miracles were posted on the walls of saints' shrines, along with written accounts of their holy lives and the histories of the shrines themselves, in the company of many non-textual signs of the saints' presence and power, such as images of the saints (which images were the explicit objects of devotional gestures, along with relics themselves) and *ex votos,* such as sculpted images of body parts that had been healed, ships that had not sunk, people who had not died, and other material signs of the saints' power and beneficence.[42]

As Rachel Koopmans points out in her recent book-length study on the history of the miracle narrative genre in England, we should thus see the shift away from writing miracles into

[42] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 197-99.

collections at the beginning of the thirteenth century as a critical moment in the relationship between miracle narratives and writing culture.[43] Miracle collecting peters out as systematic uses of writing, to analyze and document miracles (as well as everything else, in a wave of organizational enthusiasm) gains momentum and begins to dominate intellectual, devotional, and political culture. The relationship between miracles and writing is by no means a given. Notably for the present study, keeping in mind the thirteenth-century split between miracle stories and documentary writing helps to illuminate the peculiar way in which miracle stories and documents come together again in later medieval English literature.

Coinciding historically with the shift from collecting miracles for reading purposes to documenting them for verification and analysis, the sudden profusion of miracles of the Virgin focused on producing stories of miracles done by Mary. Existing Latin narratives about Mary were compiled into collections, and "accounts of benign intervention [were] crystallized in popular miracles of the Virgin."[44] That is to say, a good number of stories that had originally attributed miracles to other saints were redacted by English collectors to substitute Mary as the miracle-worker in place of the other saints.[45]

The qualities of miracles of the Virgin had shifted, such that these *exempla* no longer read as brief, simple narratives attempting to list the bare facts of the events of the miracle, like collectors' items. They begin to follow the conventions of romance, with complex, episodic

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[43] See Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate,* 201-10.

[44] Strohm, "'Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende,'" 158.

[45] Rubin notes that "Well-known miracle stories involving even a much-loved saint could give way to Mary," citing an eleventh-century narrative from the region of Mont St. Michel that credited St. Michael the Archangel with protecting a woman in labor, redacted by English hagiographers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to attribute the miracle to Mary, "'the Mistress of the World'" (*Mother of God*, 187-88).

narratives focused on the virtues—or often on the vices—of noble protagonists, functioning as ethical *exempla* for readers. At the same time, they begin to be imbued with the language of documentary culture, and particularly with legal discourse. Emily Steiner characterizes the convergence of documentary writing practices and literature of the middle of the fourteenth century as a time when writers in England began to merge documentary and literary culture in innovative and provocative ways. For example, the invention and spread of the "fictive legal document," such as the *Charters of Christ* "represent the point at which the stuff of documentary culture (charters, seals, coffers) and its agents (grantors, notaries, witnesses) were being translated into the rhetoric and ideologies of popular piety."[46] Dating this new literary development to the mid-fourteenth century helps to underline the divergence between documentary rhetoric and literary-devotional rhetoric before this time, as well as the productive convergence of miracles and written records in devotional literature of the fourteenth century.[47] The narrative I examine in detail in this chapter, "St. Theophilus," was actually written in a Middle English manuscript at the very beginning of the fourteenth century—or possibly in the last few years of the thirteenth—and thus its representations of document and established law show moments of convergence at the very beginning of the rush of documentary-style imaginative literature that Steiner is describing. As I will show, the narrative features a rejection

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[46] Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193, 194.

[47] Of course the complex negotiation of the uses and meanings of documents in the ethical-juridical culture of England (as elsewhere) does not begin in the fourteenth century. For an authoritative discussion of the troubled history of the incorporation of written records into English law and government immediately following the Anglo-Saxon period, see M.T. Clanchy's well-known study *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (2nd ed. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

of such formalized legality, reflecting a sense that what a devotional narrative means to show or do is in conflict with what stable legal forms represent.

Despite their long history, Middle English Marian miracles thus represent an innovative movement in fourteenth-century English devotional culture in several ways. Intercessory miracles illuminate a current of religious belief that interacts with ethical expectations and desires that are related to religion but not entirely explained by religious doctrine: these expectations and desires are the desire for encounter, the desire for self-subjection, and the expectation of justice by means of a mediating, self-giving patron. These ethical expectations and desires constitute what I will call a medieval "ethics of encounter," as I apply some important terms from postmodern ethics in precise ways. Using a vocabulary of postmodern ethics of encounter—again, taking care to acknowledge the cultural particularities that define ethics in a medieval English context—illuminates the ethical thought articulated in the Middle English narratives I examine in this and subsequent chapters. Seeing an ethics of encounter more clearly in these Middle English literary texts shows how some writers and readers have approached problems that also trouble postmodern ethics, as I have discussed.

Images of encounter and mediation in "St. Theophilus" and comparable narratives represent a distinct and important current of ethics in late medieval devotional and political writing, a set of ethical beliefs that cannot be explained away by scholastic attempts to unify humanity and divinity, or heaven and earth. To explain the miracle, even to affirm its place in the fabric of creation, is in a sense to explain it away; that is, to rationalize it is to explain away that crucial feature of the miraculous that makes it a face-to-face encounter with the divine. But to tell the miracle as a story of the meeting between sinner and saint, of the relationship this creates between them, and of the further relationship this relationship creates between the sinner and

God, is to embrace the miracle as an expression of the fundamentally ethical nature of the cosmos, and thus the ethical nature of God's justice.

"St. Theophilus": The First Middle English Marian Miracle

There are extant Anglo-Norman *mariales*, collections of Marian miracle stories, dating from the mid-twelfth century, but the earliest known Middle English miracle of the Virgin is a version of the story of Theophilus, or "*Teofle*," in the oldest *South English Legendary* (*SEL*) manuscript, Bodleian MS. Laud 108 (c. 1290-1300).[48] In this proto-Faustian narrative, the learned and powerful cleric Theophilus loses his wealth, status, and happiness when a jealous bishop revokes his ecclesial position. Despairing, Theophilus seeks the help of a sinister Jew who facilitates the cleric's offering of himself as liegeman to the Devil. In exchange for providing worldly prosperity, the Devil demands that Theophilus formally renounce all loyalty to God and to Mary, requiring that Theophilus sign a written charter binding him irrevocably to the Devil as his subject. When Theophilus later witnesses the Jew's ignominious death, however, the enormity of his error dawns on him: he realizes that the Devil does not protect his men from death, as Theophilus's former friends Christ and Mary might have done, and thus his bond of fealty to the Devil will be his doom. Theophilus desperately cries out to Mary for help, and she

[48] All selections here are from "Teofle" in *The Early South English Legendary, or Lives of Saints*, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 87 (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1887), 288-923. For the second-oldest version, see "St. Theophilus" in *The South English Legendary, from Corpus Christi College Cambridge Ms. 145 and British Museum Ms. Harley 2277,* Vol. 1, EETS 235 ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 221-27. For a third, fifteenth-century version of *Theophilus* from Bodleian Ms. Rawlinson Poetry 225, see Beverly Boyd, ed., *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1964), 3-8. Boyd also summarizes the history of the narrative from its Greek (11th c. or earlier) and Latin (9th c.) origins, its appearance in the writings of Hroswitha of Gandersheim (10th c.), and then its first known appearance in England in brief summary form in one of the sermons of Aelfric (c. 955-1020). The Aelfric version is the latest known in England before the early fourteenth-century version in the *SEL* (c. 1290-1300), which I am analyzing here (Boyd, *Miracles*, 127-28).

descends in an apparition, first to chastise him and then to secure his salvation by pleading for him before the throne of God while he prays for himself in a church. Mary returns from the court of heaven to inform Theophilus that his salvation has been granted in response to the combined efforts of her advocacy and his own proper penance. For the sake of Theophilus's peace of mind, however, she makes another journey on his behalf to take the charter away from the Devil and return it to Theophilus. Overjoyed, Theophilus bursts into the midst of the congregation during Mass, shouts out his tale to the crowd, and burns the document in the sight of all. Theophilus goes on to become a saint who dwells inside the church for the remainder of his days, and the text concludes with an acknowledgment that Mary helps all who pray to her.

As critics have noted, the Theophilus narrative is essentially a brief, pious romance, written in the rhyming octosyllabic couplets typical of the genre in Middle English.[49] The *SEL* version is a translation from the French "*Comment Theophilus vint a penitance*" in Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, a collection written in the early thirteenth century. Notably, the plot of Gautier's narrative is analogous to that of *Lanval*, an Old French Arthurian *lai*, or brief secular romance, written in a collection of such narratives by the late twelfth-century writer Marie de France.[50] Up to a certain point, in both of these narratives the event of falling into subjection to a mysterious other—the fairy lover in *Lanval,* first the Devil and then God in "St. Theophilus"—is comparable to a Levinasian idea of ethical formation in the unintentional encounter with the Other, for whom the moral subject becomes responsible. And noting the shared features of *Theophilus* and *Lanval*, as R. Howard Bloch has done, helps to underline the

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[49] Roberta L. Kruger, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

[50] See Marie de France (12th c.), "Lanval," in *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. and trans. Glyn F. Burgess and Keith Busby (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 73-81. For a modern edition of the Old French version, see See Marie de France (12th c.), *Lais*, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1994).

quality of eventfulness and moral luck, more than intention, that is inherent in the choices that arise from events in pious as well as secular romances: in both stories, a noble man falls into poverty and social exile, the main source of his suffering arising from alienation from the powerful patrons who should protect him. His problems are caused by another's jealous intrigue, rather than any initial moral failing of his own. Of Theophilus and Lanval, "both consummate devilish pacts, the condition of which is secrecy," thus becoming bound in intimate, exclusionary relationships that place them at the total mercy of another in a negative image of the patronage relationship that should define their lives.[51] And, as Bloch describes them, "both undergo loss, belated consciousness of loss, and eventual recovery"; this "belated consciousness" follows after the formation of relationships, allowing perception and understanding of social dynamics that are already in place, and with this arise fully intentional actions.[52] "Recovery" entails intentional establishment of properly ordered relationships, identifying the subject as a member of society and eliminating alienation. These moral processes resemble Levinas's description of the beginnings of existence in ethical relations, prior to consciousness and intentions, and also prior to justice. Noticing the resemblance helps us to read the narratives in moral terms, apart from specifically religious standards of judgment, and also helps us to see how romances show peace and good social order as coinciding with conscious and intentional actions, but with both consciousness and intentions following from an unintentional rupture in ethical relationships that are not chosen—asymmetrical and intimate relationships such as client and lord, subject and ruler, hostage and captor, lover and beloved. Establishing justice in these narratives involves the moral subject's falling into relationships that throw him into subjection to an Other, without his

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[51] R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 139.

[52] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 141

having sought such a relationship, and then, by some means, his coming to consciousness, acquiring the capacity to judge, and making choices that determine relationships thereafter. In fact, justice, too, is shaped by relationships of subjection, but these are intentionally chosen, and they are limited and ordered by a sense of the need for social protections for all concerned.

Above I have recounted the typical moral progress of the protagonist in a romance as beginning with unintentional self-subjection, then taking a turn toward consciousness, intentionality, justice, and intentional self-subjection "by some means," without yet pointing out what means this is. Looking closely at "St. Theophilus," we see that the means is the third party, another person present who mediates between the moral subject and the Other or Others whom he encounters and to whom he is subject. In fact, Theophilus's moral adventure turns not simply on encounters with Others, but on encounters that are mediated by third parties—the Jew as the third party in the encounter with the Devil (and to some extent, albeit momentarily, in the encounter with God), and Mary as the third party in the encounter with God. In each case, the third party's presence changes Theophilus's understanding of the relationships in which he already finds himself. As in Levinas, the entrance of a third party brings "consciousness and self-consciousness"; this initiates assessment of social relationships and, ultimately, decisions and actions that order relationships and so promote justice. In the following reading of "St. Theophilus" I will use Levinasian ethical-relational terms to show how a moral subject, Theophilus, comes to participate in justice. I will also point further, however, to specific cultural features that shape the representation of ethics in the narrative.

Most importantly, I will discuss the ways in which subjection within a patronage relationship represents ethical subjectivity in the narrative, and how the mediation of a sinful or a holy third party shapes consciousness of justice in the ethical subject and actions based upon

such a consciousness. While Levinas speaks of encounters between the one and the Other as singular, instantaneous events, separate from and (chronologically, it may seem) prior to the entrance of the third party, he is not speaking narratively. Some of the very apparent incompatibilities between his theory and the story's representation of ethical relations and the third party are due to the difference between expository and narrative forms. In the narrative structure of "St. Theophilus," ethical encounters are not represented as instantaneous events but as extended approaches, and third parties arrive while ethical encounters are taking place. Thus Theophilus is thrown into subjection in a way that forms him ethically, but this occurs over an extended period. His awareness of third parties also develops over time, rather than simply occurring at a certain moment and instantaneously causing him to realize who he is, who the Other is, and how society works. Further, the third party is not always "the one far-off." Rather, in the action of the narrative we see that third parties indicate relationships between the self and Other by passing between self and Other, relating directly to the self, and thus inviting "comparison" that leads to self-consciousness. In the narrative, ethical encounters are not singular events, and roles of self, Other, and third are not assigned exclusively to particular characters, frozen in static gestures of relationship. In fact, "St. Theophilus" is promoting an idea of justice that involves all parties playing all roles in relation to each other, as persons in society experience and negotiate roles of dependency and responsibility. The narrative explores ethics and arrives at a representation of justice by repeating the trope of subjection to a patron and mediation by a third party, in two phases of the story. The first phase shows injustice, a death-dealing social relationship (recognized as such because of the presence of a third party, the Jew) and the second phase shows justice, a life-protecting social relationship (recognized via the Jew as third party and then enacted via a different third party, the Blessed Virgin).

Injustice in "St. Theophilus": Failed Patronage and the Missing Third Party

The title character of "St. Theophilus" begins as "a swyþe gret man: And gret clerk he was al-so, / hext Maister bi-fore alle oþere : under þe bischop i-do" [a very great man, and he was also a great clerk, highest master before all others placed under the bishop] (1-2). Placing him in an ecclesiastical position puts Theophilus in a patronage system, hierarchically arranged and ostensibly organized according to merit and ability, as well as personal connections.[53] So, the context is a world organized according to patron-client relationships, relationships of responsibility and mutual service. The bishop has been Theophilus's patron, and Theophilus now has the position of a "maister," second only to the bishop himself. But when the bishop dies and the people rationally move to place him in the episcopal seat, Theophilus humbly demurs. If we read this narrative in the context of the lives of famous saints like St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Augustine of Hippo, who refused the episcopacy out of humility until they were forced to accept it,[54] we can see that if traditions of holiness ordered the world Theophilus's gracious protest "þat he nas nouȝt wuyrþe þare-to" [that he was not worthy of it] (5) would have led to his being pressed by the admiring people to take the position. However, the world doesn't work that way. In fact, the people take him at his word; they "made ane oþe[r]e sone" [they soon elected another](6). The one who assumes "poer" [power] (7) as the new bishop, jealous of Theophilus' having been favored in the first place, promptly takes away Theophilus's powerful position and

[53] The ecclesiastical setting for the narrative may relate to the fact that the Middle English text is a translation of a Latin one intended for a primarily clerical audience, though in the *SEL* it would have had a lay audience.

[54] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 230; 508.

his wealth, and with these, his sense of security, and the esteem of his former associates. His shame is so great that it destroys his happiness, and ultimately his very will to live:

> he dude him out of his mester and is guod him bi-nam
> So þat Teofle þare-aftur-ward : in-to grete pouerte bi-cam;
> Al-so riche man ase he was er : ase pouere he was þo;
> So þat Teofle nuste ȝware-bi libbe. : wel þat him was wo!
> Þo he was in Miseise ibrouȝt : him schamede swiþe sore:
> Men þat him onurede er : þo nolden huy non-more[.]
> Ech man tolde luyte of him-- : for of þe pouere Men wollez so.
> he ne miȝte for schame a –mong men come : he nuste ȝwat for-to
> do, þene deth he wilnede þingue mest.
>
> [He took from him his master's position and took away his wealth, so that Theophilus thereafter came into great poverty. To the degree that he had been a rich man before, he was now poor, so that Theophilus did not know how he would live. Of course he was miserable! When he was brought into misfortune he was terribly ashamed of himself. Men who had honored him before no longer held him in high esteem. Each man considered him of little account—for men will treat the poor this way. He could not come among men because of his shame; he did not know what to do. Then death was the thing he wanted most of all.]
>
> (9-17a)

Into Theophilus's orderly world, an unexpected event has broken the pattern of expectations, exposing the fact that sin disrupts even the ecclesial order, a social order that might be expected to function justly. But according to Christian theology this is a fallen world, in which the specific sin of the jealous bishop is merely the efficient cause of the trouble and not its origin; his injustice is part of the inevitable working of a greater system that continually falls away from justice even as it continues to function according to its prescribed rules. Insofar as the ecclesial social hierarchy grants freedom to the bishop to award or revoke offices, he breaks no official rule by ejecting Theophilus from his position. Yet Theophilus's fall from prosperity and honor is clearly a problem. The problem arises because the hierarchical system ought to function as a patronage system, in which the one in high office protects the one below him in exchange for good service. The problem, then, is that Theophilus has provided good service but is not

protected, and this is a failure of the patronage system, which has its own ethical requirements—requirements that constitute justice—apart from those of the ecclesial hierarchy.

When the patronage system fails, a patron (the new bishop) refuses to protect the client (Theophilus) who is dependent upon him for his livelihood, and even for his very identity. This ethical problem in the narrative, a reversal of fortune arising from mischance, does not fit neatly within a Levinasian model of ethical failure. We can see, however, that as in Levinas the injustice here arises from a failure to recall the primary ethical relation between persons. Theophilus is indeed in the position in which he has no freedom, and in which his identity is wholly dependent upon his relationship with the Other, the (jealous) bishop. He is thus placed in the position to suffer the rejection that the jealous bishop would otherwise suffer at the hands of the people, substituting himself for the jealous bishop. But there is no third party to awaken Theophilus (or anyone else) to the requirements of justice, limiting Theophilus's vulnerability or keeping him from bearing the whole weight of rejection and alienation. There is no "court of justice," and no one steps in to substitute himself for Theophilus. Levinas is not necessary to identify the ethical failure in the patronage system here; I am using Levinasian terms, however, to point out some parallels between the ethical requirements of the patronage system and those of Levinas's theory of the role of the third party. My purpose here is to keep Levinas at my side, as it were, as I explore what the narrative suggests about ethics in terms of medieval culture and its social institutions. This will aid me in the use of Levinas later in my reading of the narrative, as ethical framework of the Christian imaginary becomes more complex, and Levinas's terms become especially useful. In both ethical frameworks, Levinasian ethics and the ethics of patronage, a third person outside of the relationship between one and Other (or client and patron) is needed to bring a sense of justice in the first place, signaling the need for reciprocity of

responsibility. No one takes this role in the relationship between Theophilus and the jealous bishop, however; rather, all others who might potentially bring some objective perspective to the relationship between them instead maintain Theophilus's subjugated position, reinforcing the idea that he must be alienated beyond all measure, to the point of death.

This break in the patronage system shows a rupture in assumptions about mutuality and reciprocity within the system. It shows that the system cannot function independently according to preordained rules and still maintain justice. The wrong man will eventually end up in the job, and the best man for the job will be alienated completely. The impersonal mediating systems of social hierarchy and tradition fail when the third party, loving mediator and patron (the beloved bishop who is now "ded"), is missing. Thus in a Levinasian sense and also, in a parallel way, according to an ethics of patronage, Theophilus' community has forgotten ethics. Having lost his clerical position, Theophilus is now subject to no one, but this lack of a lord is precisely what makes him powerless and valueless in his social world, "tolde" as nothing. In his own estimation, his life may as well be over. To begin his life again, he must find a patron to confer identity upon him.

The rest of the story, the story of the salvation of Theophilus' soul, is also a return to justice within a patronage system, through mediation. It shows how patronage and mediation must occur together to create justice in the hierarchical social order represented and reinforced by the narrative. The return to justice plays out through two examples of patronage, first a negative example and then a positive one: in the first example, Theophilus subjects himself to the Devil as his patron, again with no third person to initiate self-awareness and justice; later, awakened at last to a critical and ethically informed understanding of patron-client relationships

through the mediation of two different third parties, Theophilus abandons the Devil's service and subjects himself instead to God.

The Devil's Approach to Theophilus as (Un-)Ethical Encounter

The unpleasant surprise at the beginning of all Theophilus's trouble—the people's decision to choose a different bishop—is simply an unfortunate turn of events for which no one is to blame, and his suffering that follows from this event reflects natural and conventional desires and values; there is no clear moral direction or moral of the story, at this point. It is akin to a world ruled by fortune. Yet because this is a world imbued with spiritual significance, something is at work beyond mere chance. Theophilus's suffering leads directly to sin, first in his mind as he succumbs to despair, and then in his actions as he decides to turn over his soul to the Devil. The half-line "Þene deth he wilnede þingue mest" [then death was the thing he wanted most of all] is completed by "so þat he him bi-þouȝte / Þat, ho-so þene feond serui wolde : in grete richesse he him brouȝte" [so that he thought to himself that whoever would serve the Fiend, he brought him into great wealth] (17b-18). Suicidal despair is a sin in itself, arising from Theophilus's failure to turn his thoughts toward a divine remedy for his troubles. Imagining the world a certain way, as a world circumscribed by merit and its rewards, he forgets the divine order that underlies events; he then "bi-þouȝte" himself accordingly, and it is with this turn of thought that he recalls that those who serve the devil are made rich by their demonic patron.

If we read the events of the beginning of "St. Theophilus" as a slow-motion record of an ethical encounter, we can see that the fact that no one is near when Theophilus falls from prosperity—in a sense falling out of his own identity—does not preclude encounter as the cause of his subjection to another. Rather, his decision to seek the Devil as a patron is a move that is

based on making sense of his world, to take intentional action and restore a systematic order to his experience. The third—in this case the Devil—has already entered the scene because the jealous bishop's sin is a sign that the bishop is subject to the Devil. There is another other, for whose sake the bishop acts, without freedom. In a special sense, relating to the moral effect of the third on the ethical subject, the Devil has already arrived on the scene with the jealous bishop's persecution, and the intrigue has begun. The evil moral effect of the Devil coincides with the thought that his entrance induces. An opposite effect occurs with the entrance of holy third parties, as we will see, but this first case is essential to the movement of narrative as a moral exemplum.

In the exemplum, a moral fall comes through an event, and that event is an encounter, i.e., with the bishop. In this encounter, Theophilus subjects himself to the bishop because he cannot do otherwise; he is the bishop's man, already subject to him before the bishop even arrives to take his office. But because this ethical encounter occurs in the narrative setting of a social world, the encounter is not represented abstractly, as simple intimacy between the one and the Other alone, with the effect of the moral subject's being thrown into subjection only to the Other. Rather, what the narrative illuminates is how social relationships are embedded in other relationships. The bishop as Other, in turn, has another to whom he is subject and whom he serves in his sinful jealousy—the Devil. In Levinas, the figure in the Devil's position would be the third, one for whom Theophilus would not be responsible, but whose presence would awaken Theophilus's consciousness of identity, social relations, and social rules. In the narrative, however, this subjection—rather than occurring only far-off, beyond the primary ethical relation, does impose responsibility on Theophilus even as it spurs self-conscious thought about society and his place in it. Theophilus thinks about his relationships with his former associates, his

hopelessly alienated position of poverty, and the way to acquire wealth. But the Devil standing somewhere beyond the sinful bishop does more than awaken social thought in Theophilus. He is approaching Theophilus, already imposing a power of subjection upon him, as Theophilus enters into a second encounter with the Devil as Other. Here we see how a narrative of social-moral development must break with a simple Levinasian model of ethics and justice through the third party by shifting the Devil from the role of the third to the role of the Other. And as the Devil's position shifts, he functions as a different kind of third party, working as a mediator between Theophilus and the bishop to bring them together and order their relationship unjustly. As third, the Devil thus interferes with the ethical relation between self and Other but not by limiting it; rather, the Devil removes all limitations on the asymmetry of responsibility. After the bishop has expelled him from his position in the ecclesial hierarchy and his very position in society, Theophilus may thus seem to be subject to no one, but in fact he passes into another phase of subjection: he is already at the Devil's command, caught in the power of the approach of the Devil as Other, and this is why his self-consciousness and social reasoning lead to despair and betrayal of God.

Reading Theophilus's fall in this way, we can interpret the narrative generally as a representation of a cosmos that is relational: evil in the world is not impersonal—not mere chance and moral luck—but rather a reflection of near proximity to the Devil, just as good in the world is a reflection of nearness to God. The encounter with the Devil works the same way as falling in love in typical romance fashion, in that Theophilus is already bound by the relationship before he is consciously aware of his total subjection to the Other. He does not realize that the Devil is near until it is already too late, and he is already in the Devil's power. And in fact, the effect is similar to that of falling in love in a romance, as it prompts a sudden shift in ethical

thinking, a new self-consciousness, new ideas of how relationships should play out, and new desires. Theophilus is drawn toward the one who has approached and has already taken him hostage, prior to any knowledge that he is near.

Of course, again, this dark version of the ethical relation is quite different from the ethical relation of the self's subjection to the Other in Levinas. In Levinas, the relation is ethics itself, essentially humanizing and purely good. And in Levinas, it is only in the wake of the disruption of the ethical relation, following from the third party's presence, that unjust thinking or wrongdoing may arise between persons. Without the third party there is no consciousness. Before consciousness, in abject responsibility for the Other, one can do no wrong, nor does one have any rights that may either to enjoy protection or to suffer violation. The parallel ethical model of "St. Theophilus," on the other hand, reflects a sense that the self may suffer and be doomed to death in subjection to the Other when there is no third party to limit the self's responsibility for the Other. Theophilus, the ethical subject, is in this situation when his encounter with the Devil becomes explicit. Not until a third party appears on the scene will Theophilus realize that he is in mortal jeopardy and begin to imagine some way to limit the guilt he has taken on.

As I have argued, Theophilus's encounter with the Devil has already begun before he meets him face-to-face, but the terrible implications of this encounter will only become explicitly clear (to the audience, not to Theophilus himself) when he finally comes to stand in the Devil's immediate presence. The narrator takes special note of this moment as an event, occuring in a certain fixed moment in time and space, "[i]n þat ilke stude þat othur niȝt" [in that very place on that certain night] (26), at a specific spot in the city and by appointment. Yet the approach to the Devil involves social moves prior to this moment. Theophilus's way of finding the Devil calls

for further interpretation because a new ethical problem is introduced with the appearance of the "giv" [Jew] (19) who is his guide to the Devil's lair in the city. Theophilus's move to seek the Jew follows immediately from his turn to despair, in which he desires death and remembers the Devil's promises of worldly wealth. In a Levinasian view of ethics, in which third parties bring objectivity, consciousness, and reasoning to bear on relationships, it might be expected that the Jew would lead Theophilus to recognize his own situation, to identify the Devil, and to begin acting with social rules in mind. We have seen that as a character in a narrative the third party may mediate between self and Other, as the Devil has mediated between Theophilus and the bishop, and certainly the Jew is a mediator between Theophilus and the Devil. Yet the Jew's mediation differs fundamentally from that of the Devil because the Devil is also an Other, humanized and made free by the bishop's responsibility for him. The Jew, on the other hand, takes action on behalf of the Devil, bringing Theophilus to him, but the relationship between the Jew and the Devil is that of an instrument to its owner. The Devil, as we will see, enjoys the position of Other but is never one for any Other; he does not substitute himself for an Other.

The Jew's instrumental position, his characterization as a sub-human entity, is reflected by the way Theophilus thinks of him, in a further echo of the pattern of relationships that Levinas has developed for ethics. In Levinasian terms, Theophilus's blindness to the Jew's humanity follows from the phenomenon of "thematization," a reduction of the infinite to a construct, to some combination of one's own perceptual and rational categories.[55] The conceptualization of another human being not as Other, but as categorically defined, manifests socially in

[55] For a notable example of Levinas's admission of the necessity of thematization for making meaning and thus for accessing truth even though it is a "reduction" of infinity, see Emmanual Levinas, "Truth of Disclosure and Truth of Testimony," in ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 106-7 [98-107].

preconceived concepts of identity and social position. When I thematize, I see another person as a collection of my own ideas, not as a self who cannot be fully captured by my understanding and whose freedom is absolute. The process of thematization is inherent in all perception and rational analysis—all consciousness—since my thinking will always be limited to what I can perceive and infer about the world. But Levinas's theory of ethics maintains that a truly ethical encounter with the Other involves a response to the Other as to a trace of radical alterity—a trace of God's infinity. Levinas maintains that the basis of human selfhood, as well as goodness, is encountering the Other *as other*, without any way of understanding the Other. Thus every rational move to identify the Other, thematize and recognize the Other, and take intentional action toward the Other is to some extent a departure from an ethical orientation toward the Other *as other*. Thematization is a threat to justice because it fixes persons in categories and roles, as part of a universal system of ideas. This opens the door to justifying dehumanization and oppression when people do not fit into certain categories that merit protection. Thus in political terms—and in Levinas's experience of twentieth-century Europe—thematization is a feature of totalitarian oppression. It leads to undermining persons' fundamental right to protections, including protection of their lives and their freedom. In the narrative, Theophilus identifies the Jew as a certain type, "thematizes" the Jew, and thus does not encounter him when he seeks him out. Theophilus knows ahead of time that the Jew, as "a giv" will be willing and able to connect him to the devil; he sees the Jew as the Devil's man, categorically. Thus the role of the Jew is similar to that of the jealous bishop whose sin has thrown Theophilus into despair at the beginning of the story, but not quite the same. The Jew is dehumanized in a way the bishop is not. Unlike the bishop, to whom Theophilus must be subject and whose alienation and failure Theophilus takes upon himself, the Jew demands nothing from Theophilus. He only serves

Theophilus's interests, fulfilling Theophilus's expectations and acting as Theophilus's instrument, just as much as he is the Devil's instrument.

The quality of the Jew's character when he enters the narrative is a reminder of the dehumanized identity of Jews in medieval European Christian thought generally, a cultural reality that the narrative does not recognize as problematic. Indeed, as Joan Young Gregg has noted, "While not all variants of the tale invoke the Jew as Theophilus's intermediary with the devil, this anti-Judaic element does appear in medieval manuscripts from England, France, and Germany."[56] Yet Gregg also points out that exceptions to this pattern exist, including one German version of the tale that "draws a favorable picture of the Jews"; in it, Theophilus attempts to join the Jewish community in the synagogue but is rejected by the Jews because he is "faithless," and then "Finally, after trying to persuade Theophilus to abandon his mission, one Jew does introduce him to Satan's domain but leaves him on the brink, stating that he would not, for all the world, become one of Satan's disciples."[57] "St. Theophilus," the Middle English text under examination here, is like more "[t]ypical analogues" in depicting the Jew as an unquestioning collaborator with the Devil, but this Middle English narrative does ultimately humanize the Jew, and the shift to humanize him is a crucial turning point in the narrative's representation of the ethical process of making Theophilus "revert into a member of society."[58]

At the moment when the Jew is executed for unnamed crimes, the Jew becomes an Other and a human mediator, without actually taking any action; rather, he suddenly creates a problem in Theophilus's mind that allows Theophilus to understand justice. When he sees the Jew die,

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[56] Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 216.

[57] Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews*, 216.

[58] See p. 38 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

Theophilus comes to the realization that serving the Devil places him also in jeopardy of death. Thus only in this moment of exemplarity will the Jew fleetingly become human in Theophilus's eyes, as Theophilus sees himself—as vulnerable moral subject, captive to the Devil and unprotected, and Other who should be cared for—in the figure of the Jew. The death of the Jew illuminates the Devil's lack of responsibility for one subject to him, and thus for Theophilus himself. At this moment Theophilus suddenly understands the relationship between the Jew and the Devil; he stands as a third-party witness to the relationship between the Jew and the Devil in same moment that the Jew stands as an Other, as one like himself but crucially different in that the Jew is dead. The Jew has passed out of existence in the shared time and space of Theophilus's world, and in this passing he has shifted out Theophilus's "thematization" of him. Thus he is humanized and his right to having his life protected is illuminated in the very moment in which it is violated. Theophilus conceives of justice in this moment, in the process of conceiving of injustice.

While the moment of the Jew's death and Theophilus's ethical coming-to-consciousness does not help to rehabilitate medieval English culture from its immense ethical failure of anti-Semitism—or, better, to use a term more appropriate to the ideological concerns of medieval English writers, anti-Judaism—the treatment of the dehumanization of a person in "St. Theophilus" does raise ethical questions. Knowledge of justice comes because of the Jew's presence, and in particular because of his presence as a fellow human being. Miri Rubin has claimed that "the quintessential Marian story is one of transgression and return, loss and recovery of the Christian self" in which "Christian truth was proven through the agency of sinners, heretics and Jews."[59] Indeed, Christian truth is proven in such a way here, but not so

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[59] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 183.

much through the agency of this Jew, as through the instrumental use of him. His exemplary function is that of a cautionary tale, behind which an idea of human solidarity flickers, but through which no move is made to dismantle cultural prejudices.[60] Insofar as his Jewishness indicates nothing but that Jewishness is a self-imposed exile and instrumentalization by the Devil, this representation of the Jew shows the usual medieval disrespect to Jewish identity. Yet I argue that the Jew shows something more in this narrative, not with respect to Jewish identity, but with respect to ethics. Injustice gathers strength in the narrative with Theophilus's initial orientation toward the Jew, not encountering him as Other but rather making use of him within an inherently unjust "theme." Seeing the Jew at first as the instrument he wants to use, reading him as he has already been written into a set of cultural ideas, Theophilus initially interacts with the Jew without any sense that the Jew is a true third party on the scene in Theophilus's own relationship with the Devil. The Jew does not awaken Theophilus's moral consciousness, or at least, not immediately. At the Jew's death, however, Theophilus sees comparability between the Jew and himself, because he fully appreciates the Jew's position as subject to the Devil; in subjection to the Devil, the Jew's role and his own are the same. Thematizing himself to some extent—seeing himself in terms of his role and its risks and requirements—is a necessary step in gaining some hope that he, too, can be a member of society.

To complete the discussion of how the Jew is a mediator—or what kind of mediator he is—it is important to recognize that initially (before his death) the Jew's mediation is of the same kind as that of the "chartre" that the devil requires Theophilus to sign. In this initial capacity the

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[60] As David Nirenberg notes in *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, from late antiquity on influential Christian cultural attitudes about the Jews centered on the use of Jews as exemplary objects of divine retribution; beginning with Augustine's argument that Jews should not be killed (nor forcibly converted) but treated by imperial law as "protected exiles" like Cain (133), the argument that Jews should survive to suffer dominated Anti-Jewish political discourse through the Middle Ages (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013), 129-134, 198.

Jew is comparable to a Levinasian third party and yet different from a third party because to a certain extent, without illuminating ethics, he does bring consciousness and a sense of a social system. He makes the relationship between Theophilus and the devil perceivable, fixing it in time and space by making Theophilus's appointment with the Devil and bringing the face of the devil before Theophilus. The Jew also literally brings the relationship to Theophilus's consciousness by giving him knowledge of the Devil: he describes the Devil to him and shows him where the Devil is; and in fact he does the same for the Devil with respect to Theophilus. The Jew gives the Devil a "theme," a set of characteristics by which he may understand who Theophilus is and what their relationship will entail: "A man he was of gret pouwer: þat is nouþe him bi-nome, / And for-to bringue him into richesse a-ȝein : þi Man he schal bi-come" [He was a man of great power that is now taken from him, and in order to bring him into wealth again he shall become your man] (37-38). Thus by the Jew's description the devil is invested with the identity of lord and patron, and Theophilus is represented as his "man." At this point, the Jew's introductory and descriptive efforts are the only signs of the relationship; it exists only in his words. These words clearly delineate the two roles in the relationship, however, fixing Theophilus and the Devil in their respective positions of abject subjection and sovereign patronage, with Theophilus entirely belonging to the Devil.

The creation of the charter repeats in writing what the Jew has already accomplished in speech, though certain aspects of the relationship are emphasized with its inscription. As a prerequisite to signing the charter, the Devil requires Theophilus to officially divest himself of allegiance to all others, consigning himself to the "se[r]uise" (52) alone. In particular he "most for-sake for-with god : Marie, is moder, al-so" [along with forsaking God he must forsake Mary, his mother, also] (50), and Theophilus quickly does so, rejecting "hire sone, and hire al-so" [her

son and her also] (53) as he tells the Devil, "And þe ich bi-take lijf and soule : al þine wille to do" [And to you I surrender life and soul, to do all your will] (54). The Devil requires this formal renunciation of ties to Mary and Jesus because they are potential third parties in his relationship with Theophilus—and as such, they are potential disrupters of the relationship's asymmetrical order of absolute subjection and absolute freedom. The Devil thus attempts to keep them disconnected from Theophilus so that he can preserve the intimacy of the relation between self and Other in which Theophilus is joining him. This is an unethical version of an ethical relation like that in Levinas; it highlights a requirement for justice that the narrative is promoting: the presence of a third party to mediate and bring justice. The Devil's demand that Theophilus inscribe his exclusive subjection to the Devil in writing is an attempt to shut out justice permanently by shutting out third parties who would be independent human participants and not simply instruments.

The formalization of the social order that the Devil is arranging culminates in his introduction of a written contract that will function as a non-human replacement for the third party. The contract is a competitor to and a protection against the intervention of Mary especially, whose interference has taken many sinners out of the Devil's hands in the past. Thus the Devil demands "guod chartres" [good charters] (60), two copies of the contract confirming Theophilus's obligation to him, signed and sealed by them both. Fixing their relationship according to this specific order—lord and client—in writing and by law, allows Theophilus and the Devil to achieve an intimacy in their relationship that is designed to allow no interference. Since the contours of justice and the meanings of identities and relationships are now defined by law, with the charter as a written witness to the arrangement, the thematic identification of Theophilus and the Devil seems total. They are locked into certain identities, and these require

Theophilus to be fixed in the position of the Devil's hostage, acting entirely according to the Devil's will. He cannot thwart the Devil's (categorically evil) intentions in any way.

Yet a third party does arrive on the scene nonetheless to disrupt the relationship the Devil has sought to defend by legal means. The material and eventful qualities of the narrative threaten and ultimately undo the bonds of seemingly universal legal definitions of persons and relationships. If the relationship between Theophilus and the Devil were an illustration of a Levinasian ethical relation, then in Levinasian terms the entrance of a third party would disrupt and limit the absolute responsibility of the one for the Other. In the case of the Devil and Theophilus, the intimate relationship subjecting one to the Other is not ethical, but it is broken up just the same with the disrupting presence of a third party. The third party's arrival is a new encounter, however, and as it disrupts the one-sidedness of subjection and responsibility between Theophilus and the Devil it also breaks the legal agreement that binds a man into suffering and ultimately damnation. Just as the eventful, seemingly chance happenings of the Devil's approach and the approach of the bishop disrupted the thematic totality of the ecclesiastical order of merit and honor, so does the eventful, seemingly chance approach of God and Mary disrupt the thematic totality of a man's unjust enslavement by the Devil.

Theophilus lives in blind acceptance of his new identity as the Devil's man, confidently enjoying the world from this position, until the Jew dies. The Jew's death marks a drastic turn in the narrative:

> ¶Hit bifeol þare-after-ward : In wel luyte stounde
> Þat þe giv þat him þere-to brouȝte : with tricherie was i-founde;
> I-nome he was and to dome i-brouȝt : and to strongue deþe i-do:
> Fur-barnd he was þoru Iuggement: and to late he was so!
> ¶Þo teofle him onder-stod— : In is heorte he þouȝte
> Þat þe Deuel, with ȝwam þe giv was : to þulke deþe him brouȝte.
> Þoutȝte he, "nam ich al-so with him? : and þei ich beo riche ane
> stounde,

> Ne schal ich neuere i-wite þe tyme : are he me bringue to
> grounde[.]
>
> [It befell later after a very little time that the Jew who had brought him there was found guilty of treachery; he was taken and brought to judgment and put to violent death. He was burned through judgment—and too late! Then Theophilus understood something—in his heart he thought that the Devil, with whom the Jew had been, had brought him to this death. He thought, "Am I not also with him? And though I am rich at one time, I will never know the time when he will bring me to the ground."]
>
> (83-90)

Again, as in the case of Theophilus's first misfortunes, we have something like chance happening: "Hit befeol." But Theophilus now identifies the Devil as the agent of such chances. He suddenly sees the Jew not as an instrumental medium, but as a truly human third party, other to the Other, who has mediated between Theophilus and the Devil. In this sudden knowledge of the Jew's finitude, with his death, Theophilus realizes his own finitude, seeing himself now in an Other—the Jew—who is marked off as Other by his death. Theophilus recognizes a human connection with the Jew in his mortality, and with this the Jew suddenly changes in Theophilus's perception; he becomes an ethical third party, awakening Theophilus's ethical perception of relationships, beginning with the relationship between the Devil and the Jew. Contingent upon this understanding is a new recognition of his own parallel relationship with the Devil, and of its unethical nature.

With the death of the Jew, as the Jew's humanness suddenly becomes apparent to Theophilus, Theophilus realizes the injustice that inheres in the fixed asymmetry of the relationship between the Jew and the Devil. The Jew's position as hostage to the Devil has made it so that the Jew has died on behalf of the Devil. The structure of their relationship requires it. But this death is not therefore ethical; it is not a proper sacrifice of self that the one makes for the other. It is not right that the Jew has substituted himself for the Devil when the Devil is in

jeopardy, as Theophilus now realizes, because justice requires equitable protection for all lives, in an expansion upon the primary ethical relation that subjects the one to the other. Universal laws tend toward injustice, but so also does isolation in the intimacy of the encounter, without the potential for human solidarity to demand equality "as before a court of justice." In Levinas, reciprocity as a feature of justice emerges when the third enters the scene: again, "the reciprocal relationship binds me to the other man" in "an order of justice moderating or measuring the substitution of me for the other."[61] This is an argument about how justice can arise; it must be a development from the original responsibility of every self for every other to an extended responsibility of any self for any other.

In the prolonged development of the first ethical scene in the Theophilus narrative, the Jew only achieves his entrance and becomes the third party when he dies and reveals his singular humanness to Theophilus. As Theophilus suddenly realizes only at the Jew's death, the Jew is an Other—the Other of the Devil who is the Other to Theophilus. Thus from Theophilus's perspective, the Jew is an Other for whom the Devil is responsible, and for whom the Devil should (according to good, human ethical standards) have substituted himself, to save the Jew's life. What Theophilus recognizes here is an inverted version of the Levinasian ethical relation. The powerful patron, the Devil, *should* have placed himself between death and the other. The Devil *should* have been a protective patron and *should* have preserved the life of the Jew. Instead, he has caused his death. Such murder, Theophilus realizes, is a fulfilment of the contractual relationship between the powerful lord who owns his man's life and the utterly vulnerable subject who substitutes himself in place of the lord to face condemnation and death. Yet although this arrangement fulfills the contract that fixes the relationship in an imitation of

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[61] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

justice, at a more authentic level it is a violation of ethics. Theophilus's own will to live cries out for true justice, as he is the conscious, self-conscious, and judging third party witnessing the Jew's fate. The justice Theophilus now sees as right is a rupture of the contract, a troubling or disruption of the pseudo-ethical relation between the Devil and his subject. The asymmetry of the relationship between Theophilus and the Devil has become injustice as soon as it is concretized and stabilized by contract, excluding any third party who is also a human Other who might interpret it and demand reciprocity of the right to live.

The triadic relationship among Theophilus, the Jew, and the Devil shows the meaning of the concept of the third party in the ethical values presented by the narrative: a third party is needed to witness, judge, and mediate in a relationship in order for the relationship to be just. The third party embodies and enacts the articulation or systematization of justice as an extension of responsibility that extends beyond the one's responsibility for the Other. And to bring about the action of justice, beyond initiating the process of judgment, the third party must also be a mediator, working between the one and the Other. The narrative compares two possible types of third party: first an ethically insufficient third party, an instrument that simply articulates without judgment; and second an authentically ethical third party, a human Other who judges and demands reciprocity. The former makes injustice grow out of the dyadic encounter because it articulates and so fixes the relationship of subjection of the one to the Other, but it does not necessarily require a recognition of the right to live on both sides. It does not necessarily prevent murder. But a human third party is a witness, a judge, and ultimately an advocate, one who makes comparison between the one and the Other—and the third party as well—and who thus registers the ethical certainty that protections must be equitable. Only this human third party, the mediator between one and Other, will necessarily judge murder to be wrong and move to prevent

it. As Levinas puts it in describing the role of the third party as "the judge," "His function is not limited to the 'function of judgment,' the subsuming of particular cases under a general rule. The judge is not outside the conflict, but the law is in the midst of proximity."[62] Here, Theophilus is "the law in the midst of proximity" because he is near and involved, perceiving the "conflict" between Jew and Devil that no one else can see. Theophilus has a stake in the outcome of judging the case of the Jew's death; if this is injustice, then he, too, is exposed to injustice. He is thus a third party in the relationship between the Devil and the Jew because he sees that the Devil cannot let the Jew die without denying a responsibility that *should* be written into their contract, but is not. Just as the Jew signifies at last, in becoming human and becoming an individual by his death that makes him comparable-but-different in relation to Theophilus, Theophilus now articulates the injustice in the contractual bond with the Devil. Instrumentalizing a person has been revealed as unjust; at the same time, a social order that develops from the encounter without the intervention of a mediating third party, thus isolating the self and the other in dyadic intimacy without anyone to judge their relationship further, has been revealed as inevitably unjust. A subject cannot justly be responsible for substituting himself for his lord in jeopardy if the lord is not responsible for substituting himself for his subject.

Theophilus now knows what justice is—by virtue of knowing what it is not—and also knows how it applies to him. But for all Theophilus's enlightened thoughts, he has no power. As a third party, he is not a mediator. He cannot intervene between the Devil and the Jew to help the Jew because his own relationship with the Devil is one of fixed asymmetry, with no possibility of reciprocal protection. Theophilus has no claim on the Devil and nothing to offer even if he should wish to substitute himself for the Jew. And as he now realizes, he has need of a third-party mediator, someone to step in and take responsibility for him when condemnation and death

[62] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

strike him, but there is no mediator to help him because the Devil's contract does not admit of any third party's involvement. Theophilus now laments his lack of patron mediators: "Nabbe ich fur-sake heom echone þat me scholden helpe and rede?" [Have I not forsaken both of them who ought to help and guide me?] (96). In fact, however, his next words suggest that he is not so alone (with the Devil) as it appears.

Although no one is visibly present yet, Theophilus's next words show that he is already being approached in another encounter: "hou miȝte ich hopie of grace" [how might I hope for grace] (95a). Theophilus's new ability to articulate his hope for grace, even to doubt it, suggests that he is being affected by some new Other's approach, and also by the approach of a third party whose presence brings consciousness. What is happening to Theophilus is another seemingly chance happening that is really an encounter with an Other, extended through time and encompassing a second encounter—like the Devil's approach heralded by the bishop's jealousy. A scribal detail suggests that at least one medieval reader identified two events occurring in close succession at this point in the narrative: first the event of the Jew's death that explicitly "bifeol" as a distinct happening in the narrative, followed by the second event in Theophilus's mind, "Þo teofle him onder-stod." Each of these statements is preceded by a sign in the manuscript that marks off a new beginning in the text, represented by the modern editor as a paragraph symbol, as I have reproduced it above. The new event, an event of thinking and understanding, follows from the prior one, but it is a new moment in Theophilus's adventure. Just as his encounter with the Devil occurred before he realized it and took intentional action, so here his encounter with God has occurred, marked by the change in thought, and Theophilus's movement toward God will occur not by means of instruments, but by means of another Other, the Blessed Virgin. As a personal patron and mediator, Mary will bring justice in the relationships she articulates, instead

of the injustice articulated by the Devil's written contract or described by the Jew in his dehumanized role. Because she is also engaged in an encounter with Theophilus, "not outside the conflict, but . . . law in the midst of proximity," she will respond to Theophilus as Other, acting out the obligation to substitute herself for him before her son who is his accuser.

Theophilus's Encounter with God

As in the encounter with the Devil, in the encounter with God, Theophilus will seek him at first through an instrument, an image of Mary at "ore leuedi auter" (101) in a church, as he sought the Devil through the Jew whom he took to be an instrument. For forty days and forty nights Theophilus prostrates himself before the image, crying out for Mary's mercy, and this suffering at last elicits a response. The response is not from God, the Other whom Theophilus ultimately seeks as he has sought the Devil in his court with "al his maynie a-boute him" (34). Rather, Mary comes to Theophilus as the Jew has come, representing God and giving Theophilus a chance to make contact with the one whose power he seeks. Her approach, however, is unlike Theophilus's dealings with the Jew because this meeting with Mary is another encounter within an encounter, like Theophilus's encounter with the bishop that is embedded in his encounter with the Devil. Again, Theophilus meets one who has another Other beyond her whose presence is already affecting Theophilus. The grace of God is changing Theophilus's thinking, initiating his action of throwing himself down prostrate, subjecting himself, but also "reverting" him "into a member of society," by raising hope in him and orienting him toward doing what is right according to Christian ethical expectations. Mary's approach is already marked by "the reciprocal relationship" that occurs "thanks to God."[63] Her move toward Theophilus is the

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[63] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 158.

beginning of a further move to prostrate herself before Christ for him. Later in the narrative, she will give an account of her actions on his behalf in which she takes on his responsibility to subject himself, subjecting herself for him and suffering in his place. Thus Mary is Other to Theophilus, but she is also third party, and she is also the one substituting herself for Theophilus who is now "the Other for the others." [64] In terms of medieval Christian culture and its expectations of the politics of saintly roles, Mary will mediate appropriately using her power and position according to the traditional formula of Marian intercession. As a queen, she appropriately accepts his subjection to her as his patron. But then, like a queenly mediator, she will turn toward Christ to subject herself, which will in turn initiate Christ's taking on the guilt of Theophilus, absorbing his guilt by forgiving him absolutely—forgiving Theophilus's crime which is a crime against the source of forgiveness itself.[65]

Significantly, Mary's response comes in two phases that help to outline the dual structure of mediation models in "St. Theophilus." Her first response to Theophilus points to his guilt, in the form of a question: "hov miȝte ich," heo seide, "þou wrechche Man : eny grace take, / And hou miȝte ich to mi sone for þe bidde : ȝwane þou hast him for-sake?" [how might I take any grace, you wretched man, and how might I pray to my son for you, when you have forsaken him?] (110). How indeed? Theophilus's approach to God seems to be precluded by his contract with the Devil, and particularly by the clauses renouncing his ties to Mary and God. If relationships between God and humanity are governed by contracts such as the formal fealty

[64] Levinas, trans. Tatranský, "A Reciprocal Asymmetry?," 306n1.

[65] Jacques Derrida, "On Forgiveness," in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (New York: Routledge, 2001): "Forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable" (32); "Nothing is impardonable but the crime against that which gives the power to forgive, the crime against forgiveness" (47).

relationship written into the charter held by the Devil, then there is no just method or rationale for Mary's help.

With her rhetorical question, Mary schools Theophilus in the nature of true justice by first proposing to take the contract at face value, as an expression of justice. She experimentally draws from it the inference that it rightly defends the Devil from the loss of his subject, since Theophilus has signed himself over in this formal manner. The Devil's express purpose in demanding Theophilus's statement renouncing Mary and God is to protect himself against them, his enemies, and the contract is intended to guarantee this. As the Devil understands it, it has universal power and should protect his rights just as much as it would protect anyone else's. In Levinas, "Universality and egalitarian law result from the conflicts in which one primitive egoism opposes another";[66] such law "proceeds from a war of all against all" in opposition to an authentically ethical type of law that proceeds from "the irreducible responsibility of the one for all" or, perhaps more clearly, from the responsibility of the one for any Other who is "the closest."[67] Mary's question refers to the unethical, though egalitarian, type of law, but in a gesture of questioning that undermines the idea even as she acknowledges it.

The difficulty of her question is important to notice because here Mary is acknowledging the enormity of the difference that Theophilus has made between him and herself, and the concomitant difference between him and God. Theophilus cannot answer this question of how—by what means, and also with what justification—she will bring him grace and ask her son to support him, the one who has already negated their relationship. He simply responds, "haue

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[66] Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Basic Philosophical Writings,* ed. Adriaan Pepezak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 14 [11-31].

[67] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 159.

merci." According to a systematic, universal application of social rules, Theophilus is out of Mary's jurisdiction. Theophilus asks her to move where she has no jurisdiction, however, into proximity with himself and the Devil, to judge, and to act based on this judgment. Such an interference would indeed disrupt the relationship between Theophilus and the Devil, and it would also constitute "merci." Mary is already in the role of the third party, however; her question invites thought, a critical appraisal of each one in relation to the others, of their responsibilities and of the means and reasons for acting upon these responsibilities. The question is whether she will be nothing but an instrument, performing 'the function of judgment,' or rather a human Other. The moment when she descends to Theophilus and addresses him is thus a key ethical moment, the moment of the third's mediating action, as judge, not only upon the relationship between Theophilus and the Devil, but also between Theophilus and God. At this moment, Mary introduces "law…in the midst of proximity,"[68] bringing considerations of equity into the very moment of encounter, including considerations of the categorical requirements of laws and the binding power of history and written record.

One way of reading Mary's question to Theophilus is non-theologically, within the limited field of the story and its events: Would there be justification for helping Theophilus if she were to break the contract, by stealing Theophilus away from the Devil who owns his soul? The Devil has acted up to this point as if the contract were universally binding, and to adhere to it would be justice. If a contract is unbreakable except by an unjust act, then there is no way Mary can save Theophilus without acting unjustly. And a second way of reading the question is theologically, in the context of the predominant theological doctrine of the Redemption, worked out over the course of five centuries and well established since the eleventh century: Is there any reason for Mary to do anything at all, since the Devil lost his rights over sinners at the moment of

[68] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 159.

the Crucifixion, and is not this problem really between Theophilus and Jesus, simply requiring a change of orientation on Theophilus's part, and proper penitence to fulfill his obligation to subject himself to God?[69] If the contract does not matter because the Devil can have no power over humans, and Theophilus himself is the one who has turned away from God, then how can she, Mary, accomplish anything by praying to Jesus? By this reasoning, she has no necessary place in this intimate relationship between the soul and God.

This leads to the second phase of her response, in which Mary descends with Theophilus into a different kind of language—moving from what Levinas would call the *the saying* to *the said*[70]—in which she leaves the moment of address behind, along with her hanging question, and begins to define persons and their relationships thematically, ultimately fitting them all into a cosmic vision that includes all, but does not reduce each one to a fragment of the whole, as in a totalitarian state. Mary's cosmic vision is entirely made up of relationships of responsibility for others. First she articulates Theophilus's identity, addressing him not as before, as a "wrechche Man" to whom she responds because of his abject need, but as "Þov sunfule man" [you sinful man] (115), a wrongdoer but one who is among the "cristine men" (116, 117) for whom she takes responsibility; of course she will be merciful. Here she also offers the rationale for her intervention. She loves (Christian) people, and thus she sustains their lives: "ich louie muche cristine Men : and norichi heom al-so" [I love Christian men very much and also take care of them] (117). Love for others is the responsibility that underlies Mary's political and social actions, both her responses to sinners and her interventions in the court of heaven on their behalf. Enacting love is suffering on others' behalf: "And swiþe muche ich þolie ofte : mine sone to

[69] See Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*), esp. 235-57 for discussion of Anselm of Canterbury's refutation of the Devil's rights in his articulation of the doctrine of the Redemption.

[70] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 6.

maken liþe, / þat he ne nimez of heom grete wreche : ase he wolde ofte siþe" [And I often toil and suffer very much to make my son yielding, so that he does not exact great vengeance from them as he often wants to do] (119-20). Here Mary indicates the need for her presence as third party in the ethical system of the cosmos that the narrative is presenting. Third parties are not only needed to bring justice between a sinner and the Devil, but also between a sinner and Christ. Both the Devil and Christ may damn sinners, if sinners are held responsible for their own sins. Thus a third, one who addresses the sinner as Other, must mediate by taking responsibility for the sinner. This is Mary's role, the role of the saintly intercessor.

Thus Mary gives Theophilus instructions about how to take part in a just relationship with Christ, which will include each suffering on behalf of another, each taking responsibility for the other, and in so doing, establishing a sociality that is just because it is based on this responsibility in personal encounters: "Ake sch[r]yf þe to him of þine sunnes : þat was i-bore of me / And þat tholede deth for sunfule men : and ichulle bidde for þe" [But confess your sins to him who was born of me and who suffered death for sinful men, and I shall pray for you] (121-22). This triad of sufferers, doing penance, pleading, and dying, is a configuration that places the third party amid the encounter, as one who takes responsibility for both one and Other—Mary has literally "i-bore" Christ, and she will now plead for the sinful Theophilus. Because I am working with Levinasian terms throughout this discussion, it bears noting that there appears to be an asymmetry here in the intercession narrative's ethical dynamics that does not match the asymmetry in Levinas's configuration of the primordial relationship. In Levinas, one substitutes himself for the Other. In encountering the Other one is thrown into subjection and total responsibility for the Other, exempting the Other from suffering or death. In the intercession narrative, however, the sinner appears to be doing penance for himself, suffering on his own

behalf rather than substituting himself for another. Certainly Christ, in the role of the self, is also suffering—has also "tholede deth"—on behalf of the sinner who is approaching him as the Other. His self-sacrificial offering is retrospectively invoked to rescue Theophilus from punishment for his betrayal. It would seem then that both Theophilus and Christ are suffering on behalf of Theophilus alone. According to Christian ethical culture, however, penitential suffering is every Christian's duty because it is an attempt to take up the cross of Christ. A good Christian must suffer not on his own behalf, but on behalf of Christ. When Theophilus endures the pain, the solitude, and presumably the boredom of spending forty days on his knees in the church, his suffering is not the pain of death or the torment of hellish punishment that would justly follow from his betrayal of Christ. He does not pay his own moral debt. Rather, the Christian must suffer in place of Christ, enduring pain and sorrow because Christ has endured them for all sinners. The good Christian must even die for Christ if the opportunity arises, becoming one of the martyrs who are the ideal Christians, honored with feast days throughout the liturgical year and first among the saints in the heavenly court depicted in the *Golden Legend*.[71] The penance to which Mary directs Theophilus represents a way of offering his own body and soul on behalf of Christ, and in this way Theophilus's penance is an offering of himself on another's behalf, rather than his own. Thus the ethical dynamic that seems to differ so markedly from Levinas's conception of ethics is yet comparable if we consider the significance of penance as a sign of self-giving. The correspondence between the two models helps to show how Christians conceived of themselves and their suffering as ethically engaged; in their penitential offerings they sought to lose themselves in order to allow themselves to be saved.

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[71] Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, trans. Ryan (2012), 665.

The Charter

The final step in Mary's moral rescue of Theophilus comes from a curious narrative detail: Theophilus expresses continued anxiety, even after Mary has attained God's forgiveness for him, because the charter he has signed still exists, still testifying to his former commitment to serve the Devil. The final step in Mary's service to Theophilus, after forgiveness and an apparent achievement of true justice, is to deliver the charter back into his hands, making the legal artifact into a personal object. With this return of the charter into Theophilus's hands, the illusion of its universal applicability no longer holds. This is a comment on the relationship between legalism and justice. In the Devil's court, Theophilus and the Devil had each identified the other in terms of his own self-interest, based on a universal social contract, before they had even spoken. They seek a legal means of ensuring mutual self-benefits. The Devil takes Theophilus in to offer to sustain him materially, but only insofar as Theophilus is nothing but what the Devil determines; if he were to present resistance to the Devil—this constituting resistance to being totally defined by his relationship with the Devil—he would suffer misfortune, the Devil's worldly "wovȝ." And from his side, Theophilus approaches the Devil as a manifestation of Theophilus's own material wants. According to a Levinasian view, the opposite of the ethical would be the projection of oneself onto all reality, in such a way as to block out the possibility to be in relation with another. Theophilus and the Devil see each other in precisely this way, as nothing but projections of their own wills; thus the narrative presents images of sin and evil that are parallel to the postmodern ethical concept. The contractual nature of the relationship between Theophilus and the Devil, in which Theophilus agrees to be the Devil's man in return for riches, simply mirrors how they have already seen each other since before their meeting. Thus the contract, which represents their relationship as an artifact of legalistic thinking, is a confirmation of their equity

in the community but reifies the injustice in their relationship. Only the death of the Jew, shocking Theophilus into seeing him as an Other, breaks up Theophilus's seamless concept of the world as a system of power and merit governed by laws and contracts. The Devil attempts to contain the Other by inscribing him into a contract that negates his alterity. The contract attempts to make Theophilus nothing but the Devil's own, and as such, to make him the Devil's to destroy. The contract is thus an image of a legalistic social system and the unlimited oppression it would allow.

Mary steals the Devil's copy of the contract from hell, however, and leaves it with Theophilus in a second visit. Her defiance of the document's power is a definitive comment on the capacity for a legal document to capture and determine justice. Rather than locating the responsibility for justice in the written document that identifies persons in relation to each other and measures their obligations as such, Mary's removal of the contract from the Devil's hands suggests that responsibility for justice is in the person who arbitrates, and not in the law itself or its written or material artifacts, however binding their rhetoric. Thus if anyone is to handle this contract, it must not be the Devil. Notably, Mary comes and goes while Theophilus is sleeping, in this second visit, leaving the charter in his hand to discover upon awakening (156-57). In so doing, she gives Theophilus himself the responsibility to decide what it means and how it is to apply.

Perhaps even more importantly, the charter exposes Theophilus's encounter with Mary to public consideration, making an event for the whole community to experience. The account of Theophilus's public reinforcing the idea that justice comes through mediation—the right kind of mediation. Theophilus's sanctity is established with Mary's help because his final act of penitence occurs as he prostrates himself before the bishops at a Sunday Mass:

Þe bischop and is clerkes : and muche folke al-so
To churche comen, ase riȝt was : godes seruise to do.
Riȝt þo the godspel was i-rad : Theofle forth him wende,
To þe bischopes fet he feol a-doun : and þene Deuel more he
schende :
He tolde þe bischope euerich del : and al the folk al-so,
Þat foreward and þe sikernesse : þat he had the Deuele i-do,
And hov of þe Deueles miȝte : ore swete leuedi him caste
And brouȝte him þe chartres þat he made : þat bi-loke was in helle
faste.
Þe chartre bi-fore al þat folk : he let þe bischope rede,
Þat ech man i-seiȝe is luþere sunne : and ore leuedie mildhede.
Þa[t] folk wolde þe chartre witen : for miracle, þat huy bede.

[The bishop and his clerics, and many other people also, came to church as was right to do service to God. Just as the Gospel was being read, Theophilus came forward; he fell down at the bishop's feet and renounced the Devil even more completely. He told the bishop everything, and all the people also: that he had previously committed himself to the Devil, and how Our sweet Lady had snatched him out of the Devil's power and brought him the charters he had made that were locked securely in Hell. He let the bishops read the charter in front of all of those people, so that each man might see his wicked sin and Our Lady's compassion. They demanded it so that the people would know with certainty that the charter was a miracle.]

(163-73)

Although Theophilus's express purpose here is clearly to show the miracle to everyone in his community, it is important to notice the specific context in which he makes his great confession of the miracle. The Mass occurs on a Sunday in Lent, reinforcing the sense that Lent is a time for penitence, and Sunday a day of redemption, but if we enter into the imaginative world of the narrative, we see that Theophilus chooses not so much an obvious time but more notably a particularly disruptive time to bring his miracle to public attention. As the Gospel is being read—one of the two most sacred moments in the Mass, the other being the moment of the Consecration of the Host—he conspicuously breaks up the sacred order of the liturgy by announcing his sins and proclaiming the miracle.

Each layperson among the "folk" is in the position of absolute subject, rightly bound to self-offering for the sake of Christ, with no right to consider his or her own needs. The priests, however, are exempt from this subjection because their role is that of the avatar of Christ. The Gospel is in their hands, and only their hands. To appreciate the ethical significance of Theophilus's entrance, it is helpful to describe the relation between the Christian and the priest during the Gospel reading as if it were a Levinasian ethical relation: the self (the layperson) is thrown into subjection in the presence of the Other (the priest, voicing the narrative of ultimate alterity, God's mysterious presence on earth in the person of Jesus). The layperson stands in the prescribed posture of respectful listening, head bared, and the priest intones the sacred text, emphasizing its difference from ordinary speech and creating the sense that the liturgical space is set apart from ordinary life.[72] But with Theophilus's disruption of the order of the Mass in the Middle English narrative "St. Theophilus," the immediate event of the miracle puts the ecclesial order into perspective, revealing that an individual's relationships with saints and with God, of which the miracle is proof, must be incorporated into an understanding of salvation.

This is not the moment when the miracle has occurred, and yet in a way it is a quintessentially miraculous moment in the narrative, as well as an illuminating moment with respect to the ethics of intercession. In the moment of Theophilus's confession in the midst of Mass, the individual soul's experience of God, mediated by the relationship with the interceding saint (Mary), takes precedence over the established order of events and the hierarchy of holiness, as well as the social hierarchy. At the same time, this disruption of temporal and social order is also a disruption of the ethical dynamic that is in process within the scene, in which the people

[72] Sven Helander, "The Parish Church in Medieval Sweden," in *The Liturgy Of The Medieval Church*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, 2nd edition (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, 2005), 173, 180 [145-186].

had come to the church to "do seruise" explicitly because it "riȝt was." The people are subjecting themselves to clerical authority, and the clergy are exerting power, all in proper obedience to Church law. But if all present are doing the right thing, then why is it right for Theophilus to interrupt the service, and this just as the people are obediently receiving the supremely authoritative text of the Gospel from their social, moral, and spiritual masters, the priests? The narrative provokes some questioning about the meaning of relational forms, reminding devout readers that a higher order of ethics exists over and above the fixed order of Christian practices and the social relations they maintain.

Because of the miracle, Theophilus becomes a third party in the relationship between clergy and lay congregation; he is compelled to disrupt the ethical relation between them and to remind all present that the liturgical order and each person's role in it take their meaning from the saving power of God. Theophilus's testimony awakens the people to the possibility that they are meant to be saved, and that this will not occur simply by their steady participation in ordered forms of worship or their dutiful discharging of obligations to the clergy. Divine justice will grant salvation, Theophilus's miracle suggests, only because a third party—the Blessed Virgin—will take the parts of sinners before the court of heaven and so rescue their souls from enslavement to the Devil. A message that liturgy is secondary to miraculous interventions might seem controversial, given the absolute dominance of ecclesial culture in the medieval Christian social world, and in practice, devotion to saints and celebration of their miracles did compete with traditional liturgies, particularly at saints' shrines.[73]

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[73] C. Clifford Flanigan, Kathleen Ashley, and Pamela Sheingorn present an illuminating historical discussion of the social competition between celebrations of miracles and prescribed liturgies in "Liturgy as Social Performance: Expanding the Definitions," in *The Liturgy Of The Medieval Church*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, 2nd edition (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, 2005), 695-714.

Certainly, not every story of a miracle—nor even every version of the Theophilus legend—recounts the interruption of a sacred liturgy. In the *Golden Legend*, for example, a Latin text predating the Middle English *South English Legendary* and "St. Theophilus," the end of Theophilus's story includes no such disruptive qualities. Jacobus writes that after receiving the copies of the charter "Theophilus was filled with joy, and recounted all that had taken place, before the bishop and all the people."[74] In this analog, part of the reading for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (i.e., Mary's birthday), Theophilus's confession clearly reinforces the established order of episcopal authority, rather than challenging its absolute relevance. The public nature of Theophilus's confession was clearly a consistent part of his story, however, and the story was certainly meant to inspire devotion to the Blessed Virgin as the guarantor of hope for all sinners, however depraved they might be. And as I have discussed in this chapter, devotion to Mary was part of the powerful and pervasive phenomenon of devotion to the saints in late medieval English culture. "St. Theophilus," the story of Mary's intercessory miracle, highlights the importance of the third party in late medieval Christian ethics, and particularly in Christians' hopes for justice.

The pious romance of Theophilus thus presents two types of relational scenario for comparison, first showing an encounter that is not mediated by a third party and then showing the effects of third-party mediation on relationships: the third party brings consciousness of ethical roles and responsibilities, and with this, a hope for reciprocal protections in a system of justice. Theophilus's first relationship, with its exclusionary contract, has no intrinsic guarantee of justice because it has no third party to register human solidarity with the less powerful side of the relationship.

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[74] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Rippinger (London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1941), 529.

Conclusion: Mediation and Salvation in the Intercession Narrative

In his still-influential discussion of the making of miracle narratives into Marian narratives, and particularly their collection into Anselm of Canterbury's *Miracles of the Virgin*, R.W. Southern sums up their "propaganda purpose" as "the encouragement of pious practices, which came in time to occupy a position at the very centre of medieval personal devotion."[75] Southern rolls Marian miracles into a continuous tradition of exemplary devotional literature. I argue that the importance of Marian miracles of the fourteenth century, as moral and devotional exemplars, is in their difference from both earlier and later types of exemplary devotional literature. Taking this earliest, and widely read, narrative as an exemplar for the genre, it seems evident that these narratives did "encourage pious practices," such as pilgrimage, penance, and prayer. Certainly Theophilus visits a shrine, does penance, and prays. But a focus on this aspect of narratives like "St. Theophilus" misses important narrative features as well as thematic ones.

"St. Theophilus" relegates adherence to formal devotional practices to a lower level of moral importance than the seeking of relationship with God, through the saints. After all, the rehabilitated sinner is already engaging in pious practices when he falls from grace—when in the humbly high ecclesiastical office, Theophilus is imitating famous saints like Augustine and Ambrose. And on the other hand, Theophilus's moment of social re-integration comes not when he prays or does penance, but when he finally disrupts the Mass to insist that Mary's miracle is authentic. Further, to point to one final narrative detail, the fact that Theophilus is in ongoing relationship with the saint is inscribed on his body, indicating an altered ethical status following from Mary's intervention: after he burns the charters in the midst of the church, in the sight of

[75] Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, 248.

all, Theophilus's face is transfigured "Þat non miȝt for briȝthede : bi-holde him in þat place" [so that no one in the place could look at him because of the brightness] (182), and he insists on maintaining a permanent physical connection with the saint by making his dwelling within the church where the miracle occurred, until the end of his days (184). Theophilus does live a holy life thereafter, marked by pious practices, but his piety does not overshadow the more significant aspects of his story. Signs of his miraculous encounter are more impressive and simply far more crucial to the narrative than his accomplishments of pious living.

The relational view of existence acknowledged by "St. Theophilus" carries with it a particular view of moral life. According to this story, one's ethical status does not center on self-cultivation in pursuit of virtue. The ethical self is formed by alliances, dependencies, and responsibilities. One never acts alone, morally speaking. This means that the moral status of any Christian is constantly under threat because the Devil and those who serve him are always on the approach, always threatening to shut out human and holy others, in order to subjugate a soul. Salvation, on the other hand, depends entirely upon the approach of God, which operates through the mediation of another Other, a saint, one who loves humans and offers himself or herself as intercessor before the court of divine justice. With this view of the world, there is every reason to seek nearness to the saints. Looking closely at how ethical and unethical relationships operate and how justice comes with relationships in "St. Theophilus," we get a clearer picture of how stories of saints' miracles functioned as ethical exemplars, not simply teaching pious practices but encouraging the idea that encounters with others—saintly and human others—are crucial to surviving the encounter with God in his court of justice.

In "St. Theophilus," the soul's struggle for good relationship with God is a battle for hope, against despair. Such hope comes only through relationships with mediators. In late

medieval culture, a Christian could imagine such relationships with saints in heaven, or with fellow Christians offering intercessory prayers for one's soul's delivery from Purgatory after death. Certainly the miracle narratives consistently suggest that humans must participate actively in their own salvation by turning toward God in relationships, seeking goodness in relation with others and subjecting themselves to suffering on behalf of others. But they also suggest that one's own morality is not fully under one's own control, nor are human laws adequate to maintain justice. Miracle narratives do present veneration of the saints, however, as a way of preparing for ethical "intrigues," the encounters that impose responsibility and third-party approaches that shape identity and community.[76] In this they correspond to many devotional practices that facilitate relationship-building with the holy dead, as powerful patron mediators who take the part of humans in trouble, intervening between these humans and the embodied representatives of infernal evil or heavenly righteousness who may bring about their destruction or save their souls. Interceding saints help sinners by bringing justice that is grounded in love.

I have read this signature Marian miracle, and interpreted its cultural background, in light of Levinasian ethical concepts. This is in a way so paradoxical that it could be taken as an affront to the scholarly efforts of this twentieth-century philosopher whose ethical thought was so explicitly informed by his Judaism. Notwithstanding the fact that I am not the first scholar to interpret medieval literature through Levinas, my work may raise questions because in this chapter I have worked with one text that is explicitly anti-Jewish, and throughout the dissertation I am pointing to ethical attitudes that are characteristic of its genre, one of the most pointedly anti-Jewish genres of medieval literature,[77] claiming that they harmonize with—and, I hope,

[76] Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 200.

[77] For a book-length discussion of the typical representation of Jews and Jewishness as problems in Marian miracles, see Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin*.

enrich—readings of Levinas. In fact, given the anti-Semitism of "St. Theophilus" and countless other Marian miracle narratives of the Middle Ages, it seems best to approach a reading of this literature together with Levinas's ethics with some caution. Medieval miracle narratives typically condemn the Jew in the very evil of thematization that Levinas identifies, freezing him as evil and thus dehumanizing him in the position of the irresponsible and unfaithful one, never including him in the justice that is due to the faithful one who takes responsibility. Mary is clear that she only has mercy on "cristine men." The narrative, like the devil within it, starts with totalizing "knowledge" and stays there, accepting and imposing a thematic order of history, theology, and society that categorizes persons and forgets the encounter at the basis of true justice. Thus these narratives do what is evil in both their own ethical estimation as well as in Levinas's. For Levinas to forgive the makers of medieval culture, and medieval Christianity in particular, would be a feat worthy of Derridean description. A Levinasian reading of any medieval Christian writing can never be unqualified, never let go of its inherent paradox.

But a paradox it is. Levinas's work engages religious concepts such as God and the idea of religion itself in dialogue with materialist philosophy. This religion in Levinas is not Christianity. Yet it remains true that the good as it is represented in miracle narratives is something very like a Levinasian good, and that justice in these narratives strives to reiterate the relationship at its foundation as a relationship of difference and mutual responsibility. Understanding ethics like Levinas does not make the narratives good. Yet they insistently reflect a desire for the good according to a Levinasian description. They insistently turn toward traces of encounter, resisting thematization even as they descend into it in order to articulate justice. Reading these texts in light of twentieth-century ethical insights helps to reframe our perceptions of ethical aims, desires, and sensitivities in their writers and in the culture that produced them—

ways of thinking that are beyond emotion, but inclusive of bodies and individuals' responsibilities for their neighbors.

To conclude, the tradition of saints' miracles that reached its peak in English literary culture in fourteenth-century Miracles of the Virgin, beginning with narratives like "St. Theophilus," reflects an ethical worldview that sees the cosmos as a sociality, and each individual person's ethical identity and status as powerfully determined by relationships with others. Relationships with other persons and especially saints are crucial in this ethical culture not for bringing human and God together in relationship, since God is understood to reach out to all continually, but for negotiating the state of the relationship and bringing justice to it. When I believe that others are responsible for me in the way that I am responsible for others, hope arises. And with the dawning of hope—itself an effect of God's grace and mercy according to the Christian conception of divine power—comes the possibility of holy living.

Chapter 2
Beyond Double Sorwe:
Pandarus, Mediation, and Community in *Troilus and Criseyde*

So far I have traced a history of intercessory mediation in English devotional literature up to the fourteenth century as the backdrop for studying fourteenth- and fifteenth-century religious, political, and social critique literature. I have shown how in "St. Theophilus," a Marian miracle narrative in the *South English Legendary,* composed around the turn of the fourteenth century, the figure of the Blessed Virgin as a devotional-literary figure exemplifies ideal ethical mediation, reinforcing hope that each individual will find a place in the cosmic sociality through the help of intercessors. Now, in this chapter, I will turn to look at mediation, responsibility, and justice in a fourteenth-century romance that purports to step outside of a Christian worldview, exploring ethics and intimate relationships in the legendary, literary, pagan world of ancient Troy, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, written sometime between 1380 and 1388, just prior to the composition of his most famous work, the *Canterbury Tales*.[1] In Chaucer's Troy poem as in pious romances like "St. Theophilus," characters' moral identities take shape through relationships with others. I argue that Chaucer shapes his tragic narrative of ill-fated love to show how private relationships relate to justice on a broader scale, and more specifically how justice fails in a social system that subverts good mediation. Thus the "tragedye" (5.1786) of Chaucer's narrative functions as a negative exemplar, grounding the narrator's call to his audience to take

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[1] All selections from *Troilus and Criseyde* are taken from Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde,* in *The Riverside Chaucer,* 3rd. ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 473-585. For the dating of the poem I am following Stephen A. Barney ("Troilus and Criseyde," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, 471 [471-72]). Scholars have put forward various arguments about the dating of individual Canterbury tales, but Benson dates the composition of the *Canterbury Tales* as a collection, "incomplete and without final revision," at somewhere between "the late 1380s" and the end of Chaucer's life in 1400 ("The Canterbury Tales," in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, 5, 3 [3-22]).

up their responsibility as ethical third parties who offer themselves as mediators on others' behalf.

An English redaction of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* (c. 1335-40), Chaucer's story itself tells how Troilus, son of Priam and prince of the besieged city of Troy, is struck with an invisible dart by the God of Love and falls in love with Criseyde, a wealthy widow whose father, the traitor Calchas, has left Troy to join the Greeks. At length, through the machinations of Pandarus, Troilus's friend and Criseyde's uncle, Criseyde's resistance and fear for her reputation are overcome, and she falls in love with Troilus in return. The lovers swear mutual fidelity and enjoy a brief period of secret love, but their happiness is destroyed when the Trojan city magnates decide to send Criseyde to the Greek camp as part of an exchange of prisoners between the opposing armies. Criseyde promises to return soon to Troilus, but she does not keep her promise. When Troilus learns that she has transferred her affections to Diomede, his chief rival on the Greek side, he flings himself into battle with suicidal abandon and dies on the field, ultimately ascending into the eighth celestial sphere, a pagan version of heaven where he is freed at last from all earthly passions.

As recent criticism has pointed out, chance events like falling in love and being traded as a hostage definitively shape ethical questions and moral decision-making in *Troilus and Criseyde*.[2] I argue further that Chaucer's representation of mediating third parties suggests that justice within a community, beyond the ethical adventure of the private self-and-Other relation, depends upon responsible third parties. While mimetically representing the problems and possibilities surrounding the role of the third party, Chaucer frames his story in a juridical scenario that confers upon his audience the very responsibilities that the narrative suggests are

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[2] J. Allan Mitchell's chapter on *Troilus and Criseyde* in *Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 27-46, explores this phenomenon in detail.

needed for true justice: the responsibilities to witness, to judge, and to intercede, substituting oneself for the Other whose place in the community is in jeopardy. While many have taken Chaucer's cues to identify dualities and doubleness as key social and ethical problematics in *Troilus and Criseyde*, I argue that the poem's representations of problems in dyadic relationships point further to the crucial role of a third party for bringing justice. In the poem, triadic relationships—some fatally flawed and others potentially redemptive—suggest ways in which the ethical subject has both agency and responsibility, when a responsible third party is present.

Mediation is a constant, determining feature of the relationships that matter most in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Two sides—a man and a woman, a city and an army—come into proximity, to stand in relationship to each other. Each side has its motivations and takes its actions accordingly, and a story takes shape that seems on its surface to be a dynamic system of pair relationships. This story is two stories in one: a story of two lovers in ancient Troy, and also a story of a storyteller, the *Troilus*-narrator, as he attempts to please and sometimes to instruct an audience that he expects to want some conflicting things—with pious sentiments, dirty details, and philosophical explanations among the most obvious. But in Chaucer's Troy poem, heavy extradiegetic framing and the highlighting of key mediator characters emphasize the intervention of outside parties in every important relational act. The intervention of these third parties is so important that the relationship between the lovers themselves ends up being defined by others' intervention. Mediators like Pandarus and the Trojan civic leaders intervene to shape the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde, and so does yet another mediator, the narrator, who shapes their story and so confers upon them the identity that they will have for posterity. Thus both the narrative and the extradiegetic features of Chaucer's poem are driven by mediators who intervene to shape relationships and to interpret them. In staging the play of social forces in the

ultra-mediated social milieu within his Trojan narrative, Chaucer reflects, enacts, and critiques mediation within the narrative and also beyond it, between the text of the poem itself and its audiences.

Mediation in *Troilus and Criseyde* is particularly worth noting because its critics have tended to focus on direct, binary structures and relationships within the narrative and between the narrator and audience. Many acknowledge that the dualism in *Troilus and Criseyde* is unstable, yet most critics have at least cursorily described *Troilus and Criseyde* as a story of *doubleness*, in a variety of forms and senses of the word. It is a critical commonplace to quote the phrase "double sorwe" (1.1) from the first line of the poem and focus at least momentarily on the various sorts of doubleness in it.[3] The poem gives good reason to read it with doubleness in mind, of course. Not only does "The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen" command special attention because it opens the poem, but it also does seem to be a direct statement of the author's—or at least the narrator's—intention. Certainly the poem purports to tell a story of a dyad by plotting the development of the two lovers' relationship, and especially the two causes

[3] In the critical literature citations of the phrase "double sorwe" as a focal point, or at least a passing consideration, are so numerous that it would be difficult as well as redundant to list them all. To appreciate the degree to which Chaucer scholars take the phrase as a thematic signature in the poem, consider that it is the only quotation used in summarizing the proem to Book 1 in Rosalyn Rossignol's, *Critical Companion to Chaucer* (Rosalyn Rossignol, *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, [New York: Facts on File, 2007], 271; Rossignol translates the phrase into modern English for her target audience of undergraduate or beginning scholars. Some influential studies of double structures of form and meaning in the poem include Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 151-52; Martin Stevens, "The Double Structure of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,*" in *CUNY English Forum, Volume 1*, ed. Saul N. Brody and Harold Schechter (New York: AMS, 1995), 155-174; and Ida L. Gordon, *The Double Sorrow of Troilus: A Study of Ambiguities in* Troilus and Criseyde (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). For more recent examples, see Molly Murray, "The Value of Eschaunge: Ransom and Substitution in *Troilus and Criseyde,*" *ELH* 69.2 (2002): 335 [335-58]; Michael Modarelli, "Pandarus' 'Grete Emprise': Narration and Subjectivity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature,* 89.4 (2008): 404, 406 [403-14]; Jamie Claire Fumo, *The Legacy of Apollo: Antiquity, Authority, and Chaucerian Poetics* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2010),141; and William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), especially Chapter 2, "'The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen': Petrarchan Inversions in Chaucer's *Filostrato*,"(69-108).

of Troilus' "double sorwe" (1.1), his sorrow "in lovynge of Criseyde, / And how that she forsook hym er she deyde" (1.55-56). Given that the narrator says that telling this story is his "purpos" (1.5), the phrase seems to be a handy interpretive guide. Further, the argument for Troilus' 'double sorwe' as "the organizing metaphor of the narrative" is borne up by plenty of later evidence that doubleness is key to the poem's meaning; as Martin Stevens summarizes it,

> the twos dominate the poem: there are two sorrows, two lovers, two rivals (Troilus and Diomede), two camps (the Greek and Trojan), two tragic women (Criseyde and Helen), two great warriors (Troilus and Hector), two prophetic voices (Calchas and Cassandra), and, in the eyes of some, two narrative spokesmen (the Narrator and Pandarus).[4]

Given evidence such as this—and further evidence that other critics have gathered about language, structure, and philosophical outlook in the poem—it seems clear that Chaucer is trying to point to the dualistic nature of love, of women, of language, of life, or of life itself. But in Chaucer's writing such apparent clarity, even about duplicity, should raise critical suspicions.

Much of Chaucer studies is devoted to the remarkable ambiguity of his narrative voices, in *Troilus and Criseyde* as in other texts.[5] Such a simple, tidy claim of authorial purpose—to tell

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[4] Stevens, "The Double Structure of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,*" 162.

[5] Studies that focus explicitly on "ambiguity" in Chaucer are even more numerous than studies of "doubleness." For a long list of influential critical readings of Criseyde's character as defined by ambiguity, see Patrick J. Horner, FSC, "'To speken in amphibologies': Reading *Troilus and Criseyde,* Book V, 763," *The Chaucer Review* 47.1 (2012): 84-86 [84-94]). For a book-length study of moral ambiguity as a function of textual ambiguity, see Rosemarie P. McGerr, *Chaucer's Open Books: Resistance to Closure in Medieval Discourse* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998). Particularly relevant to the present study is Beverly Kennedy's argument that Chaucer designed the morally ambiguous figure of the Wife of Bath to make readers "aware of the difficulties in forming moral judgments based on appearances" (Beverly Kennedy, "Withouten oother compaignye in youthe: Verbal and Moral Ambiguity in the *General Prologue* Portrait of the Wife of Bath," in *Chaucer and Language: Essays in Honour of Douglas Wurtele,* ed. Robert Myles and David A. Williams [Montreal, CAN: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001], 13 [11-33]); Kennedy's claim about the didactic nature of the text, as a lesson about the judgment process itself, parallels my argument. New scholarship on ambiguity in Chaucer continues to be done; see for example Yoshiyuki Nakao, *The Structure of Chaucer's Ambiguity* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013).

about the two sorrowful times in Troilus's life—is almost guaranteed to belie a greater complexity that is perceivable upon further analysis. In the case of *Troilus and Criseyde*, I certainly agree that paired relationships like those in Stevens' list do play a major role in the action of the narrative as well as the linguistic qualities of the text, and yet I contend that the *two*-ness of such pairs is an unstable quality, giving way to *three*-ness and further multiplicity in a controlled play upon crafted expectations of duality.[6] As the dyad of two lovers at the center of the narrative shows, in the intimacy of a relationship between one and an Other there are no necessary limits to the subjection of the one to the Other. Troilus takes his subjection to Criseyde as absolute, ultimately giving up his life in an attempt to give himself to her; but the asymmetry of the relationship, and the lovers' isolation within it, allows for no intervention that can save the life of Troilus, no imposition of responsibility on Criseyde that can bind her to him as he is bound to her. J. Allan Mitchell has described the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde in Levinasian terms to illuminate the correspondence of chance and infinite subjection in courtly love as ethical determinants, focusing on the positive aspects of the relationship as a representation of an ethical ideal and claiming that "the singular ethical relation is seriously compromised" by Pandarus's "unscrupulous interventions."[7] Mitchell is right to identify the third party as a disrupter of the primary ethical relation, a key point in Levinas's theory of justice in a community, yet his characterization of this disruption is skewed. This has implications for Levinasian ethics generally, but more importantly for the present study are its implications about what the third party means in *Troilus and Criseyde*. It is worth pursuing a more critical

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[6] See David Lawton on taking "double-voiced" Bakhtinian *heteroglossia* as "two or more," to open up readings of the narrator's voice as a multiplicity of perspectives (David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators* [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985], 5).

[7] Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness*, 46.

comparison between the Levinasian idea of the third party and Pandarus's interference, not only because the mediation of Pandarus does not resemble the way the third party troubles the primary relation in Levinas, but—more to the point—Pandarus's mediation shows what goes wrong when the third party does *not* function at all in the way Levinas describes. This distinction is useful for a reading of ethics in Chaucer because it helps to clarify what makes Chaucer's love story tragic. In effect, Pandarus is no third party at all because his role is denied, as he and Troilus both resist recognizing the meaning of his involvement. Troilus evades the reach of justice into his love relationship by ignoring the relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde, and Pandarus himself evades responsibility by denying his responsibility for her, merging his own role with Troilus's and claiming to be nothing but an instrument of Troilus. Yet Pandarus alone is hardly responsible for the failure of love between Troilus and Criseyde. As I will argue, Pandarus's problematic mediation reflects a problem that pervades the ethical landscape of Chaucer's Troy narrative, and that is the problem that responsibility for the Other—including the general extension of one's responsibility for the Other throughout society that is the signature of Levinasian justice as well as the ideal of intercession—is an impossibility in a social system in which each operates out of self-interest.

Reading *Troilus and Criseyde* as a study in mediation helps address interpretive problems that have troubled critics for generations, including the problem of the narrator's vociferous presence and the difficulty of interpreting Criseyde's changes of heart. I am not the first to focus on Chaucer's meaningful use of a tripartite relationship of personae, nor the first to focus on the particular triad of Pandarus, the narrator, and the audience.[8] But I will pursue this line of analysis

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[8] Modarelli calls Pandarus "third in this trinity" of "constructor[s] of the narrative"; in the "trinity of narrators" he identifies, the other two entities are the Chaucerian narrator and Chaucer the author ("Pandarus' *Grete Emprise,*" 404, 406). See also David Lawton's *Chaucer's Narrators*, in which Lawton discusses how the "Chaucerian narrator" of Chaucer's later poetry interacts with "the poet's public, or

further than prior readers, spotlighting threes beyond twos in important features of the poem that have not yet been studied in this way, particularly in the way in which Chaucer reaches out beyond the diegetic world of the narrative into the extradiegetic world of the audience, not through social or political commentary, but by invoking responsibilities for relationships. As I argue, at stake in the distinction between dyadic and triadic models of relationship is a clear view of Chaucer's conception of the moral formation of the self in the community.[9]

Critical attention to *Troilus and Criseyde* has very often focused on Pandarus and the narrator, and they are the most notable mediators in the poem, but only a few critics have paid special attention to mediation itself. Among these, Robert W. Hanning has devoted the most sustained attention to mediators and "mediated systems" of social and cultural activity as ethically problematic in late medieval culture, and as central to the meaning of Chaucer's poetry.[10] I am greatly indebted to Hanning for his clear, historically based arguments theorizing

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imaginary audience" and "mediates between the actual and specific poet, Chaucer, and the actual audience of any specific reading that Chaucer could possibly have foreseen" (76-77; For further discussion of these issues see 76-90).

[9] Patricia Lorimer Lundberg comes close to suggesting that *Troilus and Criseyde* reflects a cosmic vision that is relational, in her argument that the poem has a tripartite structure reflecting three kinds of relationship that are at the same time "three worlds of love"; however, Lundberg's argument does not consider that worlds may be contingent upon relationships, rather than the other way around, despite her equating of worlds with types of love relationship ("the Trojan world as an ideal one of medieval courtly love, the Greek camp as a world of expedient love between the victor and the vanquished, and the eighth sphere both as an antiworld in which earthly values must be rejected and as a divine world in which celestial love of God may be achieved") ("The Three Worlds of Love in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 3 [1986]: 34 [34-59]). Apart from disagreeing with Lundberg about the potential for relationship with God (or anyone else) in the eighth sphere, I am making a very different argument about relationships and worlds in general, as well as the ethical pressures at work in both; I argue that for Chaucer, relationships make realities, and in *Troilus and Criseyde* "love" is justice that depends upon a third party's presence, beyond the intimate relationship between a lover and a beloved.

[10] In an essay arguing for the centrality of mediation as a link between Boccaccio and Chaucer in texts other than *Troilus and Criseyde*, Hanning identifies "a pervasive interest in the problematics of mediation inherent in language and manifest in the culturally dominant late medieval European systems of institutional Christianity and international commerce," and argues that both Boccaccio and Chaucer ultimately suggest "that the manipulation of mediated systems for purposes of worldly advantage matters

mediation as a process and as a concept that operated with material effects, as well as philosophical and theological ones, in late medieval culture. In the same vein as Hanning, though with a more limited scope, I will consider the "mediated system" of the Church in the community; in this case my interest in the Church relates to intercessory prayer in private and parish devotions, social practices I will refer to as context for the ethical problematics relating to mediation within the narrative. From the outset, my reading benefits from Hanning's concise explanation of why Pandarus is a key to interpreting *Troilus and Criseyde*: because even more than the narrator, he is a mediator in the most obvious—and obviously problematic—ways; as such, this character raises ethical questions that point to cultural concerns of Chaucer and his audience of contemporaries. Chaucer problematizes mediation by means of signature mediator personae, placing his characters into potential mediating positions and highlighting the ethical motivations and effects surrounding these key moments. I argue that as failures of mediation push the plot forward and offer interpretive keys to ethical judgment of its events, they trouble and disrupt relational binaries, revealing mediation itself as the material crux upon which justice in a community rests. Thus Pandarus signals the problem of mediation's power, and the other figures that Chaucer places in medial positions take readers further, right to the core of what is troubling about *Troilus and Criseyde*: Chaucer's "tragedye" (5.1786) is nobody's and

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more (and works better) than relying on them to gain access to God, or the truth." (Hanning, "Custance and Ciappelletto in the Middle of It All: Problems of Mediation in the *Man of Law's Tale* and *Decameron* 1.1," in *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question,* ed. Leonard Michael Koff, Brenda Deen Schildgen (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000),177, *passim*). In an earlier essay, Hanning focuses on the more obvious problems of mediation in *Troilus and Criseyde*, finding mediation in the poem to be a model of the uncomfortable relationship between religion and translation in late medieval England, when "priestly authority and translation activity could be seen as diametrically opposed, quite incompatible forms of cultural mediation" (Hanning, "Crisis of Mediation," 159). In a book chapter published prior to Hanning's theorization of mediation as a cultural problem, R.A. Shoaf discusses the Wife of Bath's problematic exchange of her private experience for public value as "mediation," i.e., turning herself into a medium of exchange (R. A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* [Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983], 173.

everybody's fault. As critics have pointed out, the poem disrupts expected patterns of antifeminist narrative exemplified by Chaucer's source and his followers. And even those who may feel they are far outside the scope of responsibility are called to acknowledge some interest in the narrative's outcome and its implications, and perhaps even some blame for the way it all went wrong.[11] Although Chaucer's readers over the years have variously, and passionately, expressed approval and disapproval for Troilus and Criseyde, the poem sets up obstacles to either crediting or blaming them, given that their relationship's outcome and its very nature are shaped by the interventions of Pandarus—and virtually everybody else.[12]

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[11] See for example Evan Carton, "Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus's Bed and Chaucer's Art," *PMLA* 94 (1979): 47-61; Donald Howard, "Experience, Language, and Consciousness: *Troilus and Criseyde,* II, 596-931," in Stephen A. Barney, ed., *Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism* (Hamden, CT: 1980), 180 [159-80]; A.C. Spearing, "The Medieval Poet as Voyeur," in *The Olde Daunce: Love, Friendship, and Marriage in the Medieval World,* ed. Robert R. Edwards and Stephen Spector (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), [57-86]; and Sarah Stanbury, "The Voyeur and the Private Life in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 13 (1991):, 141-58.

[12] For summaries of moral criticism of characters in *Troilus and Criseyde,* including but not limited to the two lovers, see Alice R. Kaminsky, *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and the Critics* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980); Gretchen Mieszkowski, "The Reputation of Criseyde: 1155-1500," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 43 (1971): 71-153; and Robert B. Bechtel, "The Problem of Criseyde's Character," *Susquehanna University Studies* 7.2 (1963): 109-18. In late twentieth-century criticism, debate about the moral status of characters is often embedded in critics' perceptions of anti- or proto-feminism; for examples from two well known critics, see Susan Schibanoff's argument detecting antifeminist tradition, ironically deployed to expose Criseyde's own faults, in "Criseyde's 'Impossible' *Aubes*," *JEGP* 76 (1977): 326-33, and Jill Mann's argument in her influential book *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002) that Chaucer's extended representation of Criseyde's changing emotional state "cleanses the betrayal of its antifeminist implications," rehabilitating Criseyde's character by granting her a reasonable psychological process (*Feminizing Chaucer*, 19). In the same book, Mann objects to "irritable and reductive complaints about Troilus's inertia and weakness so familiar on the lips of Chaucer critics and students," on the grounds that in fact Troilus is playing an "admirably non-dominant role" in his relationship with Criseyde (83). To avoid oversimplifying Mann's *anti*-anti-feminism argument, it should be noted that she is not suggesting that female characters—much less women—are empowered in Chaucer; rather, she claims that "Chaucer does not so much attempt to redistribute power…as to *deconstruct* the idea of power, or at least ideas of simple 'possession' of it," part of a project which Mann says that she "admire[s]" (*Feminizing Chaucer*, xvii). Thus defending the character of Chaucer's characters is certainly not a central aim of Mann's study, but like other critics she does defend them in service of her central argument about cultural issues in Chaucer.

My close reading will identify a set of identity and relationship problems that Pandarus's mediation emphasizes. Pandarus is an intentional and self-conscious mediator, commenting on his medial position with some degree of concern about the ethical meaning of his role. Representing mediation in explicit ways, he enacts unethical mediation—manipulation, instrumentalization, and betrayal. In so doing, as I argue, the figure of Pandarus also highlights expectations of good mediation in contradistinction to his denial of his responsibility as a mediator. Thus by negative example he suggests ways in which all are responsible for others, in mediating others' relationships. Thus while Hanning has discussed "problematics of mediation" in terms of conflict among religious, economic, and cultural-linguistic systems of power and social control, I am examining a narrower set of problematics, with a tight focus on ethical expectations in personal relationships with others. Based on my discussion of Pandarus in light of the ethical concept of the third party I will explore a few key passages in which Chaucer foregrounds his audience's responsibility for mediation—spiritual intercession in particular—as ethical actors working between the poet and God. Through this lens, the boundaries blur between the narrative and extradiegetic levels of the text. The narrator's invocations of intercession draw the audience to take a charitable view of the characters in the poem, to reconsider damning prejudices, to consider circumstances as determining factors, and, as the narrator himself does, to "have . . . compassioun" (1.50) even at unlikely moments. More, they urge readers to take responsibility for Chaucer and his text, and in doing so, to acknowledge their own power as moral agents. This lesson in thinking about how mediation shapes an individual's role in a community is a model for participation in social, ethical activities that require mixing with and representing imperfect others; it is a call for good mediation. The poem's moral lesson, however, is also a thought experiment, a pointed examination of just how morally slippery mediation can

be. The problem with mediation is that it can turn from responsible mediation, involving the participation of a third party who acknowledges the responsibility of each one for another, to irresponsible mediation that denies responsibility.

Thus in *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer invites the audience to relish the ironies embedded in a social system that constantly relies on mediators, social and political actors whose motives are mixed and whose ethical responsibility is difficult to define. Meanwhile, in this poem about the impossibility of absolute judgment at a human, worldly level, Chaucer demands participation in the process of good mediation, drawing the audience to acknowledge their own responsibility *for* those who are in some ways blameworthy, as well as their responsibility *to* higher powers that determine moral laws and ultimate destinies. Responsibility for the Other, and especially the third party's responsibility, thus comes into question as part of Chaucer's "exploration of cosmic power, and his engagement with the questions of chance, destiny, divine justice and human free will," that Jill Mann reminds us are "bound up with" questions of social identity in Chaucer.[13] To help unpack cosmic questions intertwined with moral attitudes in the poem I will use Levinasian terms as a touchstone because these terms highlight the connections between transcendent and social questions. Broadly speaking, my aim here is to work toward a more comprehensive understanding of how Chaucer makes narrative part of the ethical landscape in the late medieval English moral cosmos, including authors, characters, and readers in an exploration of ethical beliefs.

[13] *Feminizing Chaucer,* xviii; Mann is specifically calling for more attention to the way cosmic questions relate to gender identities in Chaucer, but the spirit of her comment applies to my study of ethics, relationships, and society.

Pandarus as Problematic Mediator

A reading of mediation in *Troilus and Criseyde* must begin with Pandarus. Within the narrative, Pandarus is foremost among the mediators who make meaning in *Troilus and Criseyde,* making explicit the crafted nature of his mediating work. Pandarus mediates by design, in the sense of working intentionally, and also in the sense of working to arrange and manipulate multiple parts of complex systems, even as he denies that his mediation has the subtlety of "art," just as the narrator himself does (2.11; 2.257). But by embracing his problematic role as a purveyor of pleasurable arrangements, Pandarus serves as a foil for the narrator, offering a model of irresponsible mediation against which the narrator's equivocations can be judged. Pandarus shows what it looks like when a mediator denies his own responsibility to articulate justice in the relationship between two others. In the case of Troilus and Criseyde, Pandarus is the only person within the diegetic world of the narrative who knows about their relationship, and thus he is the only person who might judge it. But further, Pandarus has competing roles of responsibility to Troilus and Criseyde, and rather than attempting to promote some order between them that would acknowledge the needs of each, he abandons the one who needs protection in order to serve the one whose interests coincide with his own. Within the action of the poem, Pandarus represents Criseyde only at his pleasure, never at her need. Both the social rules he invokes and the actions he undertakes reflect a view of society in which self-sacrifice, or substitution of oneself on behalf of the Other in need, are fruitless undertakings.

Of course it is not possible to say with certainty what Chaucer's standards for judgment are, i.e., what he might think the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde *ought* to be like, as a standard for judging Pandarus's performance as mediator. Ethical standards of the courtly love tradition are not monolithic, and in any case Chaucer's incorporation of Christian discourse at

the opening and closing of the poem introduces values that run counter to idealized eroticism. Following the narrator's and the characters' own expressions of relational values, however, we can construct a set of ethical expectations that they, at least, claim to espouse. Beyond this, we can refer to the ideal mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the exemplary intercessor, whose image pervades Chaucer's culture, as we have seen in the history of miracle narratives like "St. Theophilus." Invoking Levinasian ideas of justice and the third party helps to articulate the Marian model in ethical terms, as an ethical ideal; according to this ideal, each individual takes responsibility for others and places himself in subjection to the Other, for the Other's sake. As Levinas puts it, for a communal order to function justly, "it is absolutely necessary to affirm the infinite responsibility of each, for each, before each."[14] That is, each individual member of the community is responsible *for* another, to protect and sustain this other with whom he is engaged in a dyadic relationship, *before* a third party whose presence is that of a witness. And as I have elaborated in detail in Chapter 1, the presence of this witness extends the consciousness of the ethical subject to consider further relationships of responsibility. In a widening awareness of each one's responsibility for each other, the subject can hope for salvation because others are responsible for the subject. To the arrival of the third party Levinas also attributes the beginning of the ethical subject's consciousness itself, and with this the beginning of rationales for social rules. To return to Pandarus: Like Mary in the intercession narratives, he is a third party "before" whom others' responsibilities to each other should become evident, not simply a witness. He is also in the position "of" responsibility, potentially taking responsibility "for" another—that is, Criseyde. As an unethical third, however, failing in exactly this capacity, Pandarus points to the possibility for affirming such responsibility and then conspicuously refuses it.

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[14] Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 23.

As a mediator, Pandarus manipulates conversations, social events, spaces, and bodies to fashion Troilus and Criseyde's relationship, establishing it first as a friendship and then developing it over time into a relationship of passionate affection and mutual longing, with the ultimate end of achieving their sexual consummation of the relationship. Yet for all of his eagerness to shape their relationship, Pandarus does not actually take responsibility either for Troilus or Criseyde, and in fact he disrupts their acting responsibly toward each other, as Mitchell has suggested.[15] He is an image of irresponsible mediation. As I will show, the warping of judgment and justice Pandarus introduces into the relationship reflects a larger problem of justice in the whole social world within the narrative: in this social world, although the values of self-sacrifice are referred to and considered, they do not motivate characters' actions ultimately, and no one can save another from destruction by substituting him- or herself in the other's place. Both self-preserving and self-destructive actions are only thinly masked as virtuous. Like the third party in Levinas, responsible third parties awaken others to their responsibilities, and like the saintly intercessor, they take action independently and substitute themselves for others. Without such responsible third parties who can not only articulate justice, but also carry it out, justice cannot ever come.

The problem of Pandarus's shirked responsibility for Troilus is held out for examination in three scenes in the first part of the narrative, once each in Books 1, 2, and 3, in which Chaucer establishes social expectations that Pandarus *should* sacrifice his own interests to protect Criseyde, while highlighting the fact that Pandarus evades these expectations and serves his own interests instead. The first scene, in Book 1, is the moment when Troilus first reveals his desire for Criseyde; the second, in Book 2, is the moment when Criseyde first becomes aware of Pandarus's plans for her; and the third moment is in Book 3 (3.232-424), when Pandarus and

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[15] Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness*, 46.

Troilus discuss the meaning of Pandarus's actions as go-between, ultimately denying Pandarus's responsibility by denying that his relationship with Criseyde has any relevance at all. No longer a responsible third party, Pandarus is reduced nothing but an instrument of Troilus's desire, his role collapsed into Troilus's. This makes a potentially triadic relationship—which has had the potential for justice—into a dyadic one. When the intimacy of the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde is reified, no third can intervene as a responsible actor, to articulate justice and to intercede in times of need, in a self-sacrificing act of protection. Thus the possibility for justice in the relationship is foreclosed even as the lovers' desire is consummated. As Pandarus's "bauderye" (3.397) is covertly acknowledged and then eliminated from the field of judgment, and the private relationship among Troilus, Pandarus, and Criseyde loses its potential ethical third party, the failure of justice through the incapacity or irresponsibility of the third becomes a motif in the poem. The problem of the third's incapacity to bring justice is reflected again in a public, political context in Hector's failed attempt to protect Criseyde from the city magnates' plan to turn her over to the Greek camp, and then even more broadly, in a literary-historical context, in the narrator's abortive attempts to take responsibility for Criseyde, to protect her from ignominy before the audience. The final amplification of the motif is in the narrator's appeal to the audience as intercessors, a feature of *Troilus and Criseyde* that reflects a Chaucerian concern with authorship and ethics that surfaces again in his later writing.

Pandarus as Problematic Third Party

Pandarus takes up the role of third party to Troilus and Criseyde's relationship early in the narrative, and his role immediately becomes central to the development of the relationship between the two principal characters. In Book 1, as Troilus lies in bed moping and pining after

the sudden onset of his desire for Criseyde, Pandarus must labor at length to draw out his friend's secret feelings because Troilus is actually painfully conscious of social standards that require the containment of erotic desire. Before he has even revealed the object of his obsession, Troilus warns Pandarus that "harmes myghten folwen mo than two / If it were wist" (613-15). Although Pandarus denies all such standards of appropriateness for love—indeed he suggests that he would have no reservations even if Troilus should desire "Eleyne / That is thi brother wif" (1.677-78), essentially repeating what caused the Trojan War itself—Troilus fears speaking of his "love that oughte ben secree" (1.746). Pandarus intensifies the claim that he refuses all responsibility to uphold standards of appropriateness in love, now verbally divesting not only Troilus but also himself from the duty to protect family members and swears that he would endure hell itself for the sake of delivering the object of Troilus's desire to him: "To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde, / Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe, / By my wil she sholde al be thyn to-morwe" (1.859-61). Amid Pandarus's displays of devotion to love and to Troilus are repeated denials of responsibility to protect those whom society enjoins adult males to protect: women family members whose chastity is the *sine qua non* of their social status. Of course, since Criseyde falls into precisely this category for Pandarus, he has already denied responsibility for her (or such as her) before Troilus even names her. Thus the contrast is sharp between Pandarus's lack of concern and Troilus's "wel neigh" mortal "feere" (1.875) to admit his desire for Criseyde, such that he refuses to do it until Pandarus actually resorts to force: "he gan hym for to shake / And seyde, 'Thef, thow shalt hyre name telle" (1.869-70). This fierceness is only mock anger, a "game" (1.868) in Pandarus's mind, but for Troilus the moment of admitting his love for Criseyde is a moment of suffering, since in fact he has reason to fear that Pandarus will take offense: "tho gan sely Troilus for to quake / As though men sholde han led hym into helle, /

And seyde, ‘Allas, of al my wo the welle, / Thanne is my swete fo called Criseyde!” (1.871-74). But Pandarus’s response, so feared by Troilus, is nothing but delight: “And whan that Pandare herde hire name nevene, / Lord, he was glad” (1.876-77). At this point, Pandarus gestures toward protecting his niece’s reputation, though vaguely, in the dialogue that follows Troilus’s admission (1.901-3), expressing no concern whatever for her chastity itself. Pandarus cannot be read as a third party who measures the responsibility of each in the relationship for the other, even the responsibility to give each other pleasure. He does express the expectation that Criseyde will feel “loves hete” (1.978), but even this description of her experience of the relationship slips toward a focus on her moral duty to “cherice” a “worthi knyght” (1.986), as Pandarus declares, “And but she do, I holde it for a vice” (1.987). Pandarus also speaks of Criseyde as an instrument, objectifying her as a source of pain or pleasure (1.944-45), holding her responsible without seeing anyone as being responsible for her.

It would be easy enough to read this part of the narrative without taking social mores so seriously, acknowledging a double standard for men and women in the cultural setting of the poem and then following Pandarus’s lead in viewing erotic adventures as morally acceptable, as long as they are kept from public scrutiny.[16] Yet as critics have noted, Criseyde does have much to fear in embarking upon an illicit sexual affair, given that public scrutiny is an ever-present

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[16] Indeed, Pandarus’s dialogue in this scene is rightly compared with that of Genius, the priest of Nature in Guillome de Lorris’s part of *Romance of the Rose*, a figure whose allegorical role is to encourage prolific sexual activity in harmony with the earth’s fruitfulness with no regard for social or religious restrictions. Chaucer translated the poem himself and has borrowed from it in his construction of Pandarus; see Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose,* trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). I submit, however, that rather than uncritically rehearsing the ideas expressed by Genius, Chaucer represents such encouragement of sexual freedoms as ethically problematic, as well as genuinely amusing. The audience for *Troilus and Criseyde* is invited to struggle with the conflict between the emotional fluctuations of the erotic affair and the ethical concerns that arise from comparisons between the narrator’s mediation and Pandarus’s—and, further, to manage their own responsibility as judges in light of their experience of such emotional pressures.

menace, and her situation is particularly tenuous because of her father's treachery.[17] Hector has vowed to protect her (1.113-26), out of his own "pitous…nature" (1.113) and "goodnesse" (1.116), but this vow itself is a response to threats from the Trojan populace to kill all of Calkas's "kyn" (1.90), disgruntled murmuring that has frightened Criseyde (1.106-7), and her own abject begging for "his mercy" in a public display "hirselven excusynge" (1.112). She has no sense of entitlement to her secure position in Troy, nor can she count on general public goodwill. As we learn later, in Book 2, the protection she receives from the royal family depends in large part on her impeccably virtuous reputation; Deiphebus openly acknowledges his alliance with Criseyde, calling her his "frend" (2.1424), and is confident that his brothers and Eleyne will support her in her legal troubles because Hector respects her (2.1450-55). Thus she is a woman in need of protection, and the protection of powerful others is contingent upon their esteem. Troilus's shame at admitting his desire to Pandarus does not seem to acknowledge her precarious social position *per se*. The fear of disclosing his feelings to Pandarus does reflect, however, that Troilus is convinced that his love for Criseyde is shameful, and that he can expect Pandarus to blame him for it out of a reasonable wish to protect his niece, in accord with ethical conventions for family alliances and their concomitant responsibilities. Given that Criseyde in particular is so vulnerable to shame and dishonor, the expectation is heightened. In this context, Pandarus's reversal of priorities is stark and surprising, calling attention to the fact that below the surface of

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[17] See Timothy D. O'Brien, "'Sikernesse' and 'Fere' in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 38.3 (2004): 276-93; O'Brien observes wordplay in the poem that suggests how "[f]ear and companionship are inextricably linked" in a continual shifting of alliances in connection with states of fearfulness and security in the poem, focusing mainly how Criseyde's fears are linked with her relationships with others (277). Suzanne C. Hagedorn notes that Chaucer invites a comparison between Criseyde's fear and Penelope's by giving her a line from Penelope's letter to Ulysses in Ovid's *Heroides* (an addition of Chaucer's not included in *Filostrato*); the comparison highlights the fact that while Penelope's fear is for her husband, Criseyde's fear of betrayal is for herself alone, again emphasizing the incapacity for self-subjection in the service of others that dominates central characters' actions in *Troilus and Criseyde* (Suzanne C. Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004], 141-43.)

acknowledged social norms that seem to require universal protection of the vulnerable, absolute subjection to the point of dehumanization is a possibility.

Moreover, the discourse between Pandarus and Criseyde reflects that the community does apply certain ethical standards to Pandarus with respect to his protective role in Criseyde's life, however willing he may be to flout them in secret. As has long been noted, Chaucer makes a deliberate choice to deviate from his source when he makes the lover's friend not only a male relative of Criseyde's, like the young "cousin" that Boccaccio's Pandaro is to Criseida, but rather her "em" (1.1022, *et passim*). The relationship is emphasized by repeated uses of the term "em," and even more of "nece" (1.975, *passim*), a word that occurs a full seventy-four times in the poem, if we count both nominative and possessive forms.[18] The responsibility that the relationship confers upon Pandarus—again, at least according to social expectations—is clear in the way Pandarus describes Criseyde to Deiphebus, Troilus's brother and fellow prince of the city. Pandarus brings up the relationship with the prince, "[w]hich hadde his lord and grete frend ben ay" (2.1403), in what appears to be a familiar context of name-dropping and pulling political strings: "Lo, sire, I have a lady in this town, / That is my nece, and called is Criseyde" (2.1416-17). Criseyde is a lady that Pandarus *has,* someone whose affairs directly concern him. And as he asks Deiphebus to support Criseyde in her legal troubles, Pandarus joins himself to her with a personal pronoun, "wherfore I of youre lordschipe yow biseche, / To ben oure frend" (2.1420-21). Chaucer's emphasis on the legal-political friendship between Pandarus and Criseyde, in this context of political friendships more generally, shows his intention of emphasizing the mediating role that Pandarus *should* have in relation to his "nece" legally and politically, in the patriarchal

[18] *Em* appears sixteen times, which is often enough to think that Chaucer is drawing attention to the specific, paternalistic nature of the relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde, even without the many more times *nece* appears. See the online *Chaucer Concordance*, *eChaucer: Chaucer in the Twenty-First Century*, http://machias.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer/concordance/tr/tr.txt.WebConcordance/framconc.htm.

legal and social system the narrative uncritically represents. That is, he should enact the paternalistic role of her "rightful protector," as Carolyn Dinshaw puts it, particularly appropriate in the absence of her father.[19] This proper role is invoked in order to expose the highly improper role that Pandarus actually does play in Criseyde's life, at least once he has begun approaching her in his capacity as Troilus' *frend*.

It might seem contrary to the impression the narrator gives of Criseyde's situation in Book 1, in the crisis period immediately following her father's ignominious departure from Troy, when he points out that "bothe a widewe was she and allone / Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone" (1.97-98), that as she reflects on her life in Book 2 Criseyde seems to enjoy her freedom from all of the problems that attend having a husband. She reflects that husbands are always contentious, jealous, "maisterfull" (2.754) or unfaithful:

> "I am myn owene womman, wel at ese --
> I thank it God -- as after myn estat,
> Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese,
> Withouten jalousie or swich debat:
> Shal noon housbonde seyn to me `Chek mat!'
> For either they ben ful of jalousie,
> Or maisterfull, or loven novelrie."
>
> (2.750-56)

In late medieval England, as in contemporary Western society, a *femme sole*, such as a widow like Criseyde, would have total control over her property and person, while a married woman would turn over her property to her husband according to laws of "community of property," just as she would turn over her body according to Christian marriage laws.[20] And as Jennifer Summit

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[19] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 58.

[20] Beattie and Stevens, *Married Women and the Law,* 3. For further discussion of the comparative legal freedoms of wives and widows in late medieval England, see Judith M. Bennet, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. 100-198; and Elizabeth Fowler, "Civil Death and the Maiden: Agency and

has noted, for Criseyde, either "a love affair or marriage could place both her reputation and her property in jeopardy."[21] Yet despite her enjoyment of the emotional freedom of living without a husband who would control her, as well as freedom from gossip linking her to personal indiscretions, Criseyde's freedom as a woman "allone" is already circumscribed by her political vulnerability. The anger of the Trojan citizenry is held at bay by the support of the royal family, which depends upon her reputation, and Criseyde's status as a woman alone must also be considered in light of the legal assistance from Pandarus that she constantly relies upon.

As her uncle, Pandarus may be considered a "frend" at a greater remove from her than her father or a closer male relative such as a brother or son, but he takes an active role as her legal defender. In fact, it is curious that Pandarus seems to have such a heavy hand in Criseyde's legal affairs, given that as a widow she would have had responsibility over her own property, at least by the time Chaucer was writing.[22] In his public actions Pandarus acts the part of the male protector, taking the lead in addressing the lawsuits that are threatened by Criseyde's enemies "Antenor and Eneas" (2.1474), along with her "foo that highte Poliphete" (2.1616). Deiphebus, Eleyne, Paris, and Ector certainly respond to Pandarus's activities in this capacity without question (2.1403-58, ca. 2.1601-87, etc.), even though (as the audience is well aware) at least some of the "advocacies" (2.1469) of "false Poliphete" (2.1467) are nothing but ruses Pandarus has constructed to serve his own purposes. Prior to his approaching her in his capacity as Troilus's friend, the legal and political protection of Pandarus thus seems to serve Criseyde well,

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the Conditions of Contract in *Piers Plowman," Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 70.4 (1995): 760-92.

[21] Jennifer Summit, "*Troilus and Criseyde,*" in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer,* ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 227.

[22] Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants' Revolt* (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 86-87.

as far as Trojan society and Criseyde herself are concerned, without his appearing to control her emotional life as far as they can tell. Nor does her connection with Pandarus bring her any of the emotional worries that come with a husband and his inevitable love of "novelrie." Pandarus's taste for novelty in matters of love is all more entertainment to Criseyde, at least as her jibes about his "joly wo" (1.1105) in "loves daunce" (1.1106) suggest.

Yet her situation of dependency upon Pandarus's protection has strong emotional resonance. From what we know of the way families worked in late medieval Europe, it can be assumed that any reader of Chaucer's would have pitied Criseyde the loss of her honor with the loss of her father's honor, and beyond this, the loss of his protection as *paterfamilias,* recognizing that Pandarus's protection is crucial to her reputation as well as to her legal-political prosperity. Such an audience would most likely have appreciated an emotional desire to be close to the rest of her "kyn" (4.1331) in Troy as an emotional as well as an urgent security need, intensified by how affectionate and well-connected a male relative Pandarus happens to be.[23] Evidence from the text suggests that Criseyde herself has a personal, emotional stake in the relationship, expecting Pandarus to step between her and the public world of Troy so that her feminine privacy can remain intact and she can avoid the "schame" of appearing in public. She thus sees his permissiveness not so much in legal-political terms but rather as a personal betrayal:

> "Allas, for wo! Why nere I deed?
> For of this world the feyth is al agoon.
> Allas, what sholden straunge to me doon,
> Whan he that for my beste frend I wende
> Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende?
>
> Allas! I wolde han trusted, douteles,
> That if that I, thorugh my dysaventure,

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[23] See David Herlihy, "The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment," *Journal of Family History* 8.2 (June 1, 1983): 116–30, esp. 116-118 and 127-30.

> Hadde loved outher hym or Achilles,
> Ector, or any mannes creature,
> Ye nolde han had no mercy ne mesure
> On me, but alwey had me in repreve.
> This false world -- allas! -- who may it leve?"
> (2.409-20)

Criseyde draws a clear distinction between the expectations of a stranger ("straunge") and her "beste frend," who should "defende" her from amorous entanglements. Her outburst reflects a view of the kind of justice that she regularly expects in an intimate relationship, and this is punitive justice with "no mercy ne mesure" that judges her absolutely guilty, without taking mitigating circumstances into account. Yet she imagines this capacity for total, abject judgment as the positive converse of Pandarus's shockingly amoral permissiveness. She takes his lack of concern for her chastity for what it truly is, a lack of concern for Criseyde herself. Further, she interprets Pandarus's disregard for rules of conduct as a sign that her whole social world is corrupt.

Criseyde is not referring only to her own past experiences of being judged, when she points to the controlling role she expects Pandarus to play; in fact, in this passage she refers to her past experiences of benefiting from others' mercy. In her own experience, when she has been thrown into a position of guilty responsibility for the wrongs of her family and when her security has been in question due to the tenuousness of her rights, she has been judged wholly guilty and reduced to abjection by one party, and then rescued and raised up again by the intercession of some powerful third party who takes her part before her accusers. Just a few lines prior to her outburst, in a conversation with Pandarus about Criseyde's legal woes, Deiphebus has offered himself as if he were a substitute for Criseyde in an ordeal by battle, calling himself her "champioun" (2.1427) and publicly opening himself to the attacks of her accusers ("I roughte nought though alle hire foos it herde" [2.1428]). And again, Ector has shown her his "mercy"

when she has prostrated herself before him and begged for it. Moreover (as far as she knows), Pandarus himself has gladly used his own political position to advance hers, when she has been helplessly vulnerable. But Criseyde's rebuke to Pandarus points to the fact that these instances of mercy and self-substitution are part of a broader system of justice based on social networks. The acts of mercy that have saved her reflect the crucial role of third parties whose presence signals some "mesure," some limitation on one's subjection, and who can reach even into intimate relationships, releasing the oppressed and guaranteeing protection through self-offering generosity. Ector's intervention in Criseyde's case does not permit the guilt of Calkas to extend to "al his kyn," but rather draws a limit on Criseyde's responsibility; meanwhile Ector himself stands as her advocate before the angry populace. His intercession articulates justice and also participates in it by extending responsibility beyond the intimate dyad of the wronged party and the guilty party. Ector's mercy—like Deiphebus's, and like that which Pandarus has pretended to support—promotes a kind of justice that allows a social equilibrium while recognizing responsibility. It is a kind of justice that functions via the responsibility of one for the Other.

As Criseyde's outraged response to Pandarus signals, however, his disregard for her potential guilt is part of a dysfunctional system of justice that does not recognize responsibility—not hers, and not his own. In Troy as the princes have run it, the threat of "oppressioun" (2.1417) is always at the door, keeping Criseyde continually subject to fear, but the involvement of others to judge and protect safeguards justice for those who are vulnerable as she is. Pandarus's news heralds a shift in the ethical climate toward a type of justice that he represents; Pandarus represents and also promotes a sociality in which relationships operate out of mutual self-interest, and self-sacrifice has no saving power. Later in the poem, in Book 4, when Criseyde finds herself in her moment of greatest jeopardy, no one can save her. As we will see, Criseyde is

rendered equivalent to a hostage, no third party can mediate between her and her oppressors, and no one steps in to take her place. Her subjection is absolute, with "no mercy ne mesure." Thus Criseyde's accusatory words to Pandarus highlight what is actually missing from Chaucer's tragic Trojan world: a vision of justice that reigns in the Christian idea of the cosmos, as we have seen it in "St. Theophilus" and comparable Marian intercession narratives, in which lasting peace and real security come from each one's self-substitution for another.

As a closer look at Pandarus's own expressed ideas of justice and responsibility will show, the idea of justice as responsibility of each one for the other is under constant consideration in Chaucer's Troy. In Pandarus himself, however, we also see an opposing idea of proper conduct that undermines responsibility. Taking note of how Pandarus's mode of moral reasoning and behavior ultimately shapes the outcome of the narrative helps to explain the tragic downfall of the lovers as well as the fall of the besieged city itself. Pandarus himself acknowledges his responsibility to respect Criseyde's honor in heightened emotional terms, citing the close connection between her public reputation and his own, as her uncle:

> "And also think wel that this is no gaude;
> For me were levere thow and I and he
> Were hanged, than I sholde ben his baude,
> As heigh as men myghte on us alle ysee!
> I am thyn em; the shame were to me,
> As wel as the, if that I sholde assente
> Thorugh myn abet that he thyn honour shente."
> (2.351-57)

In this image of Criseyde, Pandarus, and Troilus all being executed for their immorality, Pandarus seems to pledge his own honor as surety for Criseyde's, to the extent of placing his own life at risk as a party to their illicit intimacy. He seems, in other words, to acknowledge that he has moral responsibility for Criseyde beyond mere legal conventions. He claims that he would

share her shame, and it is *as though* he is willing to die for her sake. At the same time, however, Pandarus's image of hanging *with* Troilus and Criseyde reflects that even if he were to share their shame, he could not spare them from punishment in the event of their being dishonored. He can and will gladly represent Criseyde, but he cannot and will not substitute himself for her, rescuing her from social exile. What seems on the surface to be an embrace of justice, in Pandarus's image of offering himself, is on closer examination a fatalistic admission that justice does not exist—or anyway, that the kind of justice in Pandarus's social vision does not admit of one's sacrificing oneself for the Other. Although Pandarus is present as third party in his declaration of solidarity, he is subsumed into the relationship such that his participation only advances the others' progress toward destruction.

Pandarus's abdication of responsibility becomes fully explicit not long before the lovers' first sexual encounter in Book 3, when Pandarus calls Troilus to join him in confronting the meaning of his actions as go-between. An often-analyzed moment in the narrative that Dinshaw calls "a sort of *crise de conscience*,"[24] the dialogue's setting and tone identify it as serious deliberation that will definitively settle the question of whether Pandarus is or is not guilty of abdicating his responsibility for his niece. Selecting just the right moment when the two men are alone, "Whan every wight was voided but they two, / And alle the dores were fast yshette" (3.232-33), Pandarus pointedly takes a seat on the side of Troilus's bed and addresses him "in a sobre wyse" (3.237) to review his involvement in the relationship and hash out a justification for what exactly he is doing. As it stands, Pandarus' every effort is devoted to bringing Criseyde into successively greater intimacy with Troilus, culminating in Troilus's total possession of her. According to Pandarus himself, the problem with his role is that he has put Criseyde's virtue in jeopardy, and this is a socially unacceptable thing for him to do. Now, when he has at last

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[24] Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 58.

succeeded in drawing Criseyde to commit herself to Troilus as a lover, and consummation of the relationship is assured and imminent, Pandarus squarely addresses this most salient ethical problem with his mediation:

> "For shame it is to seye:
> For the I have bigonne a gamen pleye
> Which that I never do shal eft for other,
> Although he were a thousand fold my brother.
>
> That is to seye, for the am I bicomen,
> Bitwixen game and ernest, swich a meene
> As maken wommen unto men to comen…."
> (3.249-55)

Pandarus' admission that he has become "swich a meene" invites moral scrutiny of his activities, despite his squeamish avoidance of the term *baude* at this point in the text—a term that he has already invoked in order to deny it, in his negotiations with Criseyde (2.352-54), but apparently hesitates to repeat now, in the presence of Troilus. He is momentarily considering his actions as part of a larger system of social practices, some of them unethical. His own behavior, which he hurries to say is an exception and a singularity, is yet of the same sort that is generally considered wrong. Momentarily thinking of his actions in society, instead of thinking of them only in terms of his intimate connection with Troilus, he sees them as unethical. This is the kind of thing that bawds do. Thus we see that as he considers his own actions within a broad social context beyond the intimate relationship, Pandarus must confront the problem of how the activities he is engaging in with Criseyde should be interpreted.

Beyond stating baldly what he is doing, Pandarus points out what this kind of activity *means*, when one begins to think about it, to analyze and interpret it in a broader social context. One who sees Pandarus in a social context outside of the dyad of his friendship with Troilus would take into account his relationship with Criseyde:

> "But wo is me, that I, that cause al this,
> May thynken that she is my nece deere,
> And I hire em, and traitour ek yfeere!
>
> And were it wist that I, thorugh myn engyn,
> Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,
> To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,
> Whi, al the world upon it wolde crie,
> And seyn that I the werste trecherie
> Dide in this cas, that evere was bigonne,
> And she forlost, and thow right nought ywonne."
> (3.271-80)

At this moment, Pandarus fleetingly considers his own actions as if they were witnessed by a hypothetical third party, "if it were wist." This sudden and brief consideration of what would happen if anyone were to *think* about what he has done is like the appearance of a third on the scene of his encounter with Criseyde. Thinking coincides with ideas of justice, and these ideas coincide with consciousness of "al the world" as a sociality that must operate in categorical definitions of identity and relationship. The first stage of Pandarus's thinking here is that he acknowledges that he has a relationship with Criseyde—defining their roles in terms of the relational categories "em" and "nece" —and the second is that he sees the ethical responsibilities and rules for interaction that proceed from these roles. That is, when he sees Criseyde as a niece and himself as an uncle, he sees his own responsibility to protect her virtue, and in light of these considerations he sees that a term of moral judgment, "traitour," applies to him.

But the moment of Pandarus's thinking about his relationship, introducing the hypothetical third party who is "al the world" by his own self-conscious presence in the room, lasts for only these few lines. Quickly shifting positions, Pandarus ceases thinking about his own relationship to Criseyde and begins to call instead for absolute, exclusive secrecy in the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde; "al the world" must be kept out, and so Troilus must

"holden secree" the whole "matere" (3.286) of the lovers' connection. With this shift Pandarus drops his dawning sense of responsibility for Criseyde by recasting the description of what is happening between Troilus and Criseyde. In the succeeding lines he shifts his description of the seduction of Criseyde so that it now appears not as a set of actions that Pandarus has performed, but rather a set of actions that Troilus is performing. The "peynted proces" that Criseyde has attributed to Pandarus in Book 2, is now "thi proces" (3.335), Pandarus tells Troilus. Pandarus's actions are now mere extensions of Troilus's plans, so that with respect to the developing relationship between Troilus and Criseyde, he tells Troilus, "it shal be ryght as thow wolt devyse" (3.336). Pandarus thus attempts to shift the dynamic of the relationship so that the seduction process and its devising are entirely attributed to Troilus now, erasing Pandarus's responsibility even as he continues to take action.

Notably, Pandarus does not attempt to justify himself with respect to Criseyde. Rather, as I have described, he turns decisively away from considering his own relationship with Criseyde and moves on to consider the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde as though he is not part of it. With this turn, he also momentarily takes up a moralizing role, seeming to advise Troilus with Criseyde's best interests in mind. If we consider Pandarus's role in terms of the ethics of third-party mediation, it may seem that Pandarus is taking on the role of a responsible third party, one who articulates what justice is, and whose presence initiates thoughts of justice in the ethical subject. But the content of Pandarus's advice contributes to the removal of himself, as a responsible party, from the relationship between the lovers. In his moralizing, Pandarus points to a different type of unethical behavior, one that does not apply to his relationship with Criseyde at all: boasting about sexual conquests. This allows him to present the illusion of ethical mediation while effectually divesting himself of responsibility as a third party.

To maintain clarity about what is meant by "ethical mediation" and the "responsibility of the third party," at this point it is helpful to revisit the two concepts of justice through the third party that underlie my interpretation of the text. Of course, the role of a Levinasian third party is not one of responsibility, but rather signification of others' responsibility for each other. But a Marian intercessor, a comparable type of ethical third party whose image pervades late medieval culture, is both a sign of justice and also an agent of justice, taking responsibility herself for the one she rescues from moral exile. Calling for secrecy over the course of about fifty lines (3.281-330) plus a final admonition to "kep the close" (3.332), Pandarus diminishes his own role and even takes his leave ("and now good nyght" [3.341]), having suggested to Troilus exactly how much power Troilus is about to assume in his relationship with Criseyde and having told him how he should handle it. But Pandarus does not actually leave the scene. Instead, he stays to hear Troilus's lengthy answer assuring him that he will keep the relationship absolutely secret, that he is now in limitless debt to Pandarus, that his life is utterly at Pandarus's service, and finally, that Pandarus's own actions are not at all what he has suggested them to be. Thus, even though he has initiated thought about justice and has prompted Troilus to consider categorical social roles and their attendant responsibilities, he is not at all like a Levinasian third party. Rather, Pandarus's role is a dark inversion of a saintly intercessor's role: he accepts the subjection and service of the needy one he is helping, in return for promoting the interests of the one who serves him, but he does not take any responsibility upon himself.

As Pandarus has shifted the view of the triadic relationship of Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde such that he himself seems to have disappeared from it, now Troilus shifts the view again, such that Criseyde disappears as one in need of protection, and the relationship is reconfigured as an intimate dyad between Pandarus and Troilus. What Pandarus has suggested

might be "a bauderye" (3.397) Troilus now decisively redefines in terms that simply disregard the presence of anyone besides the two men. Immediately after telling Pandarus that he will "serve" him as his "sclave" (3.390-91), Troilus begins with uncharacteristic readiness to tell Pandarus what to do, rather than to take direction from him. From a psychological perspective we can see that Troilus is motivated to make such an emphatic response because by expressing social concepts of justice—i.e., by suggesting ethical expectations that include protecting Criseyde—Pandarus has suddenly begun to suggest ways in which Criseyde needs and deserves protection, and this makes Troilus uncomfortable. And reading for mediation ethics, we see that Pandarus begins to appear in Troilus's consciousness as an ethical third party, and this troubles Troilus's sense of the rightness of his relationship with Pandarus. It moves Troilus's own understanding of his relationship with Criseyde in a direction he does not want to go. If Pandarus defines himself as the mediator and his mediating actions as immoral, then the relationship Pandarus is orchestrating appears to be immoral, too. This is intolerable for Troilus; his solution is to remove Criseyde from consideration.

Straining to define "this that" Pandarus is doing, Troilus draws a distinction between doing something for pay, and doing the same thing for free:[25]

> "me thoughte by thi speche
> That this which thow me dost for compaignie,
> I sholde wene it were a bauderye
> . . . .
> It is nought so, that woot I wel, parde!"
> (3.395-99)

[25] For specific discussion of the conflict between material exchange value and ethical values in Chaucer, see R. A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word,* especially Chapter 11, "The Wife of Bath and the Mediation of *Privitee*," 173-84. On the cultural and ethical implications of money and exchange in the late Middle Ages, see Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Lianna Farber, *An Anatomy of Trade in Medieval Writing: Value, Consent, and Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Because it is for him unthinkable that Pandarus' mediation is a *bauderye*, Troilus rushes to supply Pandarus with alternate terms:

> "But he that gooth for gold or for richesse
> On swich message, calle hym what the list;
> And this that thow doost, calle it gentilesse,
> Compassioun, and felawship, and trist."
> (3.399-403)

Thus Troilus attempts to redefine Pandarus' actions by dismissing the role of the bawd, now scorning even to name such a person, and suggesting instead many positive, non-sexual terms for the activities that both he and Pandarus know—and that the poem's audience also knows—are more properly expressed in terms of illicit sexual matchmaking. But more to the point here, in considering the definition of Pandarus's role, Troilus considers only terms that define the relationship between Pandarus and Troilus, and none that refer to what a man does to or with a woman.

To observe the broad ethical implications of Troilus and Pandarus's redefinitions of the relationship, it is necessary to take note of the fact that each of them is moving to make it a dyad and to eliminate any grounds for considering anyone's responsibility for Criseyde. Pandarus attempts to cut himself out of the relationship, in effect, by converting his own role to that of an instrument of Troilus, one who simply carries out the "proces" that is really Troilus's. Troilus attempts to leave Criseyde out of the triadic relationship in which all three are already involved; he is attempting to redefine the relationship as dyadic. Looking ahead to Book 5, when Criseyde is long gone, we see that Pandarus' relationship to Troilus is still a relationship of instrumentality, with Troilus seeing Pandarus as nearly identified with Troilus himself. The two men are constant companions, eating their meals together and going to bed at the same time (5.518, 682). But Pandarus's role in Troilus's life is essentially that of a tool Troilus carries with

him—or more specifically, a mirror. Together, Troilus and Pandarus "spaken of Criseÿde the brighte" (5.516), bringing her image before Troilus much as her old letters do, "Refiguryng hire shap, hire wommanhede / Withinne his herte" (473), and with no more power to help his friend see his beloved than the written documents that Troilus finds to be such unsatisfying substitutes for Criseyde herself. As he wanders miserably to see the empty house of Criseyde, in the company of "his owen brother deere," Troilus recounts "his newe sorwe and ek his joies olde" (5.558), but gets no relief from venting his pain because Pandarus cannot connect him to Criseyde, only reflect his own sorrow back at him.

Contrasting Chaucer's version of the lovers' separation with Boccaccio's is helpful, to show how Chaucer erases Pandarus' mediating role at this stage. In *Filostrato*, Troiolo "[o]ften" sends Pandaro to visit his beloved on the Greek side, "whenever a truce or treaty was arranged" (*Filostrato* 8).[26] But *Troilus and Criseyde* never puts Pandarus between the lovers after Criseyde's departure. He is a fixture by Troilus's side, and Chaucer's narrator is silent regarding the means by which the lovers' letters cross the plain between Troy and the Greek camp, as the narrator retreats into the passive voice: "This lettre forth was sent unto Criseyde" (5.1422). David Wallace argues that Chaucer is simply correcting an implausible narrative device of Boccaccio's at this point in the poem, but Chaucer's particular interest in the roles of mediators in the narrative suggests that there is more to the fact that although Boccaccio's Pandaro can "shuttle back and forth between the lovers" now and then to carry their letters, Pandarus does no such thing.[27] Pandarus will not interpret Criseyde's actions—or more precisely, her inaction—to

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[26] Selections from *Il Filostrato* are from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato* in *The Story of Troilus,* trans. R.K. Gordon (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 121 [25-126].]

[27] David Wallace. *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 102.

Troilus, despite the fact that he privately guesses that Criseyde is gone forever long before Troilus realizes it (5.505-11). Pandarus' role as a mediator is not that of a responsible third party, but a dehumanized, instrumentalized alter ego to Troilus, expressing only the thoughts that Troilus wants to hear. By this point in the narrative, his whole function is to reflect Troilus's own view of Criseyde back at him, without suggesting anything about her that would lead Troilus to consider the distance between them or the difference that now distinguishes her from him, as a member of the Greek war party with ties to others beyond him.

Troilus applies courtly terms, terms that draw on assumptions of an unmediated, binary connection between a lord and his retainer, to his relationship to Pandarus, but in this case, each man is retainer to the other who is his lord, in a closed circuit of mutual service that is ultimately self-serving. This relationship cannot participate in a just social system.[28] By leaving Criseyde (along with everyone else, as we will see) out of the picture, Troilus attempts to semantically reconfigure his relationship so that responsibility and ethical considerations apply only with respect to Pandarus. Neither he nor Pandarus bears responsibility for anyone else, beyond their mutually self-serving relationship. He acknowledges only that Pandarus is doing something *for* him, not that Pandarus is doing something *to* Criseyde. Thinking of Pandarus in relation to himself only, and of himself only in relation to Pandarus, in his own way Troilus converts the relational triad to a dyad. Like Pandarus, he removes the third party from his representation of the relationship as a way of ignoring the moral problematics at work in it. Both Pandarus and Troilus, then, attempt to keep justice out of the relationship among the three—Troilus and Criseyde and Pandarus—by focusing on dyadic relationships rather than acknowledging triadic

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[28] For an illuminating examination of the many problems with intimate relationships of "brotherhood," particularly reading Troilus and Pandarus's friendship as a problematic "brothers-in-arms" relationship, see Timothy O'Brien, "Brother as Problem in the *Troilus*," *Philological Quarterly* 82.2 (2003): 132.

one. They try to see dualities rather than seeing the group of three that is the true center of their social world and of Chaucer's story of Troy.

The ethical difference between the dyadic and triadic relationships here is the difference between a relationship that involves awareness of another's responsibility for "another Other," to recall the Levinasian terms, and a relationship that requires no such awareness and so can serve self-interest alone. Of course, as we have seen, in Levinas the third opens the door to a broader vision of justice for a community, bringing the ethical subject to consider "what have I to do with justice" as a responsible actor, and also as a beneficiary of justice. Interestingly, Troilus speaks of his relationship with Pandarus as an ethical relation, in which he is utterly subject to Pandarus as his *sclave*, but the relationship is an attempt at a closed circuit of mutual service, rather than a relationship of selfless service leading to further service of others beyond itself. Once again considering the ethical dynamic in Levinasian terms, we can see that the dyad articulated by Troilus insists upon reciprocity between the two men, rather than a self-giving on either's part without expectation of return.

Unlike the ethical relation in the presence of the third in Levinas as well as in Marian intercession narratives, the friendship promoted by Troilus closes itself off from expansion of responsibility to others in the community, including and beyond Criseyde. Thus the collapsing of dyad into triad in Troilus's redefinition of his relationship with Pandarus (and not Criseyde) is a refusal on the part of the ethical subject to accept responsibility beyond the reciprocal relationship that is essentially a relationship of mutual self-interest. Chaucer has written sufficient ambiguity into the poem to keep critical readers from ever satisfactorily answering the question of what Pandarus really wants, in a psychological sense, but the problem is rather that there are too many self-serving reasons for Pandarus to serve Troilus than too few. Critics have

argued, for example, that serving Troilus, prince and hero of Troy, gives Pandarus access to power, wealth, influence, security, companionship, and sexual gratification.[29] Because there is evidence for observing all of these many motivations for Pandarus's actions, readers can at least feel secure accepting the idea that Pandarus serves Troilus to satisfy his own desires, at least to a great extent, and is gratified by Troilus's response to serve him.

Had he been forced to acknowledge Criseyde as Pandarus' *nece*, Troilus might have engaged in deliberation at a deeper moral level than the material, taking into account not only money—the mediating agent he chooses to acknowledge and then to dismiss—but persons, whose defining power as responsible mediators is much more powerful, and much more ethically significant. Here, as Troilus and Pandarus collude in redefining Pandarus's role as mediator, it becomes clear that when a mediator refuses his own responsibility as an engineer, a definer, and a judge of relationships, the possibility of judgment disappears, and with it, justice. In Levinasian ethics, a third party cannot choose to disappear, but in the ethical matrix suggested by Christian intercession, a third party is a responsible agent who can choose to disrupt the asymmetry of power and responsibility in an intimate dyadic relationship between two others, bringing justice to bear on their relationship—or choose to evade this responsibility, hiding justice and promoting oppression in the intimate relationship between the others. In the case of Troilus and Pandarus, each attempts to divest himself of his responsibility by attributing responsibility for himself to the other man, Pandarus attributing the *proces* to Troilus, and Troilus redefining himself as Pandarus's *sclave*. In terms of the relationship with Criseyde, the two men merge into one, with neither to be held responsible for what comes next. In fact, the merger is so complete that it is easy enough to imagine that Pandarus assumes Troilus's position in bed with Criseyde the next

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[29] For examples, see Beryl Rowland, "Pandarus and the Fate of Tantalus," *Orbis Litterarum* 24 (1969): 3-15; Tison Pugh, "Queer Pandarus: Silence and Sexual Ambiguity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Philological Quarterly* 80.1 (2001).

morning, as many readers agree he does.[30] Certainly not Pandarus, Criseyde, nor the narrator seriously suggests that Pandarus has entered where he does not belong when he visits her bed in the morning. In this moment, Criseyde is as much Pandarus's as Troilus's, as neither will deny the other anything he wants, and Criseyde's own perspective is not under serious consideration. In telling about Pandarus's prying under her sheet, grabbing her around the neck, and kissing her, the narrator glibly remarks,

> I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye.
> What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so
> Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye,
> For other cause was ther noon than so.
> (3.1576-79)

Drawing attention to Criseyde's lack of agency at this moment, the narrator raises some question regarding her feelings about being sexually used, by referring to her "forgiveness," and then dismisses such feelings, in a comic inversion of the Christian narrative of self-sacrifice and forgiveness. Indeed Criseyde's body has been offered up, the narrator suggests, but no matter—she forgives as Christ has forgiven his crucifixion. The extreme understatement in the narrator's final words about Criseyde's perspective here, "For other cause was ther noon than so" (i.e., she had no other reason to be angry with Pandarus, besides this one) is juxtaposed dramatically with the comparison to the Crucifixion, highlighting a moment when Criseyde, along with the audience, can choose either to be mightily offended (since the situation is comparable to the death of Christ) or else to accept the situation without moral objection (since it was only this one

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[30] As Richard W. Fehrenbacher notes in a 1997 article, the ambiguity of the scene and its suggestiveness generated much critical debate in the late twentieth century; Fehrenbacher lists many arguments affirming the incestuous encounter and many others denying it, from the 1950s through the 1990s, and ultimately argues that readers are ethically obligated to recognize Pandarus's incestuous desire for Criseyde: Richard W. Fehrenbacher, " 'Al That Which Chargeth Nought to Seye': The Theme of Incest in *Troilus and Criseyde," Exemplaria* 9.2 (1991): 344 [341-69]. For one especially strenuous, point-by-point objection to reading incest in the poem, based on textual evidence and evidence from analogous narratives in medieval and classical sources, see T.A. Stroud, "The Palinode, the Narrator, and Pandarus's Alleged Incest," *The Chaucer Review* 27.1 (1992): 16-30.

offensive thing Pandarus had done, and otherwise she had no reason to be angry with him). There is no clear moral position to take, and judgment seems arbitrary.

The line recalls an earlier moment in the poem when Chaucer's narrator has used mock-pious terms to commend Criseyde's cheerful acquiescence to sexual force ("For love of God, take every womman heede / To werken thus, if it comth to the neede" [3.1224-25]), and now he comically suggests that there is extreme—even divine—virtue in her response to the necessary self-offering that Pandarus has imposed on her in giving her to Troilus, an imposition that he takes as increasing the intimacy between Criseyde and himself, now that she is bound to keep secret Pandarus's activities as a go-between, as well as Troilus's actions and her own. But the futility of Criseyde's "forgiving" at this point signals heavy irony. Keeping in mind Criseyde's compromised position in Troy, as well as every woman's compromised position under sexual double standards in the cultural context of the poem, there is no question of her condemning either Troilus for his taking advantage of the sexual trap nor Pandarus for his arranging it, much less of her punishing them in any way. Her survival in Troy depends upon secrecy concerning the night's—and the previous months'—events. Meanwhile it is evident that her self-sacrifice is not redemptive for anyone, and in fact it is apparently trivial. Neither commentary from the narrator nor consequences within the narrative follow from it. The playfulness of the scene suggests that Pandarus's role as a responsible party has been completely neutralized, and at the same time it reflects the way that Criseyde is now an object available for use, rather than a vulnerable party to be protected. Following the refusal of Pandarus and Troilus to take responsibility for her, judgment has become impossible, and as the remainder of the narrative shows, the change in Criseyde's role corresponds to an ethical shift in the social context within the narrative.

Although Troilus and Pandarus come to an understanding of Pandarus's mediation that explicitly denies the imputation of "bauderye," the spectre of offering women for sale lingers, reappearing in the following book at another crucial moment in the poem, the moment when the private intimacy of Troilus and Criseyde's relationship is explicitly contextualized within the unjust social world of Troy. In contrast to the fleeting, illusory view in Books 2 and 3 of Pandarus, Deiphebus, and the rest of the royal family as a personal network of protectors for Criseyde, in which each connection is an expansion of responsible mediation, the public scene of parliamentary judgment in Book 4 shows that public government in Troy suppresses attempts at justice through a third party and precludes one's taking responsibility for another. The problem is presented as a conflict between two possible ways of working, the just one, self-sacrifice to protect Criseyde, and the unjust one, self-serving use of Criseyde as an object of exchange.

Priam calls his "parlement" (4.143) to deliberate upon the Trojan ambassadors' request that Criseyde be delivered to her father among the Greeks, in exchange for Antenor, a powerful lord of Troy who is being held prisoner on the Greek side. Ector alone famously protests against the exchange, gesturing toward ideals of justice in Troy that would prevent the commodification of a woman for the Trojans' own advantage: "We usen here no wommen for to selle" (4.182). Equally pointedly, Ector "sobrely answerde" (4.178) for Crisdeyde, "she nys no prisonere" (4.179). Against Ector's declarations, the public's self-interest in denying the very idea of protecting Criseyde is explicit. The people of Troy react to Ector's idea "[t]his womman thus to shilde" (4.188) as nothing but "fantasies" (4.193) mysteriously inspired by some "goost" (4.187). Their own desire, on the other hand, is materially motivated, to swell the ranks of powerful men in Troy, among whom Antenor is "oon the grettest" (4.192). The scene reflects the values of the whole society of Troy, "here and howne" ["master and members of his household alike"]

(4.210).[31] The crowd is loud and volatile ("The noyse of peple up stirte thanne at ones, / As breme as blase of strawe iset on-fire" [4.183-84]), and the narrator points out that the people's thinking about Criseyde's case represents a larger problem: the moral thinking of the whole city has gone awry. He points to their "confusioun" (4.186) and marvels,

> That they ne fynde in hire desir offence,
> For cloude of errour let hem to discerne
> What best is. And lo, here ensample as yerne:
> This folk desiren now deliveraunce
> Of Antenor, that brought hem to meschaunce,
> For he was after traitour to the town
> Of Troye.
>
> (4.200-05)

The narrator avers that Criseyde's exile, the result of the Trojans' offensive desire and their failure of discernment, "delibered was by parlement" (4.211), "and it pronounced by the president" (4.213). In other words, the decision is an act of state that reflects the majority's will: "it moste ben and sholde / For substaunce of the parlement it wolde" (4.216-17). Intensifying the point that justice has failed in Troy as a community, the narrator points to the irony of Antenor's taking Criseyde's place. With the decision to send Criseyde away, the Trojans unwittingly demand that a traitor come among them, one who will contribute to the city's destruction. What might have been a truce and an act of peace is actually a covert act of war, a betrayal on a grand scale, a manipulation by Calkas and Antenor. The act of ejecting Criseyde in her total vulnerability is thus also an act to usher in Troy's fall, by attempting to embrace power.[32] As the narrator emphasizes, no one can stop this injustice by attempting to take the part of Criseyde.

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[31] The translation of this unusual phrase is from Benson, *Troilus and Criseyde*, at 541n210.

[32] As literary historians have noted, Antenor's plotting the destruction of Troy with Aeneas is part of the Trojan history of Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygias that Chaucer and his audience knew in a general way, at least through hearsay, and that Chaucer seems to have known most directly through the version of Dares written in Latin verse by Joseph of Exeter (Barney, "Troilus and Criseyde," 472); Gower recounts Antenor's part in Troy's downfall in Book 1 of *Vox Clamantes* (Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003], 14, 34).

“Altheigh that Ector ‘nay’ ful ofte preyde” (4.214), Criseyde will be treated as though she were a hostage, dehumanized as though she were an object of exchange, and traded to the Greeks. And according to the narrator, Ector’s failure to advocate on her behalf stands for a general incapacity to save her by taking her part before the parliament: “what wight that it withseyde, / It was for nought” (4.215-16). Yet the question of what might have happened had Troilus spoken up for Criseyde hovers in the air, as Troilus witnesses the parliament in horror but refuses to make a decision or take action personally.

Interwoven with vivid images of injustice as the status quo in the Trojan community, reflected in the parliamentary debate, the narrative depicts the private failure of responsibility in the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde (and Pandarus) through Troilus’s inaction. Intimacy that disallows judgment from an outside perspective makes it impossible for Troilus, the one who is professedly bound to serve Criseyde, to take her part before the crowd as Ector has done. For some thirty lines he deliberates inwardly as the “lordes” (4.170) argue the matter and his brother endures scorn and failure on Criseyde’s behalf. The narrator tells us that Troilus is of two minds, one dominated by “Love” (4.162) urging him to stop her from going, and the other “Resoun” (4.164) cautioning him that she will turn against him and become his “fo” (4.166) if he exposes their affair. Troilus’s fear of the exposure of his relationship with Criseyde, grounded in his fear of her rejecting him, restricts him to such a degree that he cannot speak up in public on her behalf. He thus allows the moment of public deliberation to pass by without taking part in it, meanwhile attempting to reframe the whole question of his own actions in terms of Criseyde’s private relationship with him, rather than framing the question in terms of Criseyde’s place in the Trojan community as Ector does. Troilus explicitly disregards the

decisions and actions of the city leaders, electing to act outside of and against the community instead:

> For which he he gan to deliberen, for the beste,
> That though the lordes wolde that she wente,
> He wolde lat hem graunte what hem leste,
> And telle his lady first what that they mente;
> And whan that she hadde seyde him hire entente,
> Therafter wolde he werken also blyve,
> Theigh al the world ayeyn it wolde stryve.
> (4.169-175)

The character of Troilus's decision to avoid acting on Criseyde's behalf before the community is explicitly in contradistinction to Ector's public defense of her. Ector acknowledges the community's responsibility to Criseyde as he takes her part, while Troilus ignores the community's responsibility for Criseyde as well as Criseyde's—or his own—responsibility to the community. Rather than taking part in the deliberations of the community, Troilus will only "deliberen" privately, meanwhile planning to defy the community's decision if it should suit his personal agenda.

Indeed, the protection of Criseyde and the protection of Troy come together in this moment. Troilus's passivity can of course be seen as an exposition of his faulty masculinity, particularly in comparison with that of his older brother, and in this he is bound to fail both as a man and a citizen. As Peter G. Beidler remarks, "Troilus fails to act with the wisdom and nobility of Hector with regard to his support of Criseyde," and the parliament scene is one more example of the way "[t]hroughout the poem, the narrator emphasizes Troilus's being second to Hector."[33] As For Ector, a move to protecting the city's values is at the same time a move—albeit and unwitting one—to protect the city, as he alone among the lords of Troy stands against

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[33] Peter G. Beidler, *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the* Canterbury Tales *and* Troilus and Criseyde (Cambridge; Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 206, 219.

the agreement that will bring a traitor in as it throws a woman out. In this moment of temporarily, perilously open boundaries between Troy and the Greeks outside, Ector is the "townes wal" (2.154), while Troilus claims no voice in its government. On the other hand, Jill Mann sees Chaucer as wrestling throughout his poetry with "the difficulty of how to write of the pitiable sufferings of women without appearing to patronize them, to arrogate the right to 'rescue' them with a gallantry that assumes their inability to defend themselves"; with this in mind, she contends against a long list of critical complaints that read Troilus's passivity as a character flaw, and particularly a failure of masculinity. According to Mann, Troilus's deferral to Criseyde's wish to hide their love—even at the risk of her being exiled to the Greek camp—is a model of respect and self-control, and Mann commends Chaucer for resisting in Troilus "the male assumption of . . . the need to exercise responsibility on [a woman's] behalf."[34] While I agree with Mann's argument that Chaucer is making a point about responsibility in Troilus's distinctly articulated restraint from rescuing for Criseyde, I contend that Chaucer is not offering Troilus's refusal to rescue Criseyde as a positive model of respect in a relationship. Contrasting Troilus's refusal to carry off Criseyde with Pandarus's strenuous urging that he do so (4.526-39, 4.617-23), Mann argues for what I find to be a false dichotomy between virtuous passivity that avoids antifeminist norms of coercion, on the one hand, and on the other hand the unethical forcefulness of "acting vigorously in one's own interests and letting the rest of the world go hang," as Pandarus would.[35] As we have seen, Pandarus has a fatalistic view of justice in which one may as well act from self-interest, since no one escapes suffering anyway. He envisions himself hanging right along with the rest of the world. And for his part, Troilus has taken a

[34] Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer*, 38, xii-xiii, 131.

[35] Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer,* 131.

position in which his self-interestedness neutralizes his agency. His very passivity is part of his plan to "let the rest of the world go hang" while he continues to enjoy Criseyde.

The evident problem of Troilus's relationship to the community is bound up with the way his relationship with Criseyde attempts to exclude "the multiplicity of persons" who are rightfully "involved in any ethical relation," when it is incorporated into a just social order.[36] As in Levinas the third party—and beyond this, the many others—cannot be shut out, as the presence of the third party is always present in human life. But Chaucer's narrative exposition of ethics in relationships shows that elective choices may either "affirm" (as Levinas puts it) or deny the third party's judgment and social placement. When Troilus chooses to deny his responsibility for Criseyde to the community, he contributes to the injustice that already undermines the community's prospects for survival. Criseyde's conversion into a hostage and an exile is more importantly a problem of conflict between relational intimacy that resists judgment and the expanded sociality that is crucial for justice. The tragic irony of the scene results from Troilus's attempting to protect not Criseyde herself, as a community member deserving justice, but her attachment to him as an object he possesses. Ironically, by keeping silent Troilus seems to serve Criseyde and to sacrifice his own desires on her behalf, and by precisely this process he fails to save her.

We have already seen how Pandarus and Troilus collude in divesting themselves of responsibility for Criseyde by making themselves servants of each other, but of course in exemplifying ideals of courtly love Troilus also makes himself subject to Criseyde. His inability to act in parliament reflects the same manner of service, a subjection that attempts to remove agency and responsibility from the servant. In Book 3, as the lovers profess their passion for each other, Troilus articulates the manner in which he feels he is meant to serve Criseyde: "…God

[36] Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness,* 46.

hath wrought me for I shall yow serve / As thus I mene: he wol ye be my steere, To do me lyve, if that yow liste, or sterve" (3.1290-92). He promises to obey her, claiming to accept death as the rightful penalty if he should ever do anything against her wishes (3.1299-1301). Criseyde's response to these offers of service, however, is to call him "my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce" (3.1309). The mismatch between his offering of himself and the roles she actually names for him points to a conflict between what service should mean—self-sacrifice that rescues the Other—and what the relationship makes it out to be—self-interest that entraps the Other.

Indeed, avoiding the loss of Criseyde is Troilus's only motivation in life, until seeking relief from suffering at the loss of her—by taking his revenge upon Diomede—becomes his motivation for pursuing death. Retreat from responsibility has shaped his whole relationship with Criseyde, and in the end Troilus's irresponsible death echoes Pandarus's vision of all three hanging together. It is a proffered self-sacrifice that does nothing, however, to promote another's well-being, much less the other's salvation. When Troilus eventually learns with certainty that Criseyde has taken a new lover among the Greeks, he throws himself into battle with suicidal intentions for which he holds her responsible, as though his death were a self-offering in service to her (5.1716-22).[37] Yet given that Criseyde's indifference to Troilus is the very cause of his seeking death, and she does not materially benefit from his death in any way, Troilus's suicide is

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[37] Troilus blames Criseyde obliquely for causing his death by blaming her for his suicidal feelings. The responsibility seems to be hers in light of his representation of their relationship as a deal, in which he deserves her affections in return for his "service":

> "And certeynly, withouten more speche,
> From hennesforth, as ferforth as I may,
> Myn owen deth in armes wol I seche;
> I recche nat how soone be the day!
> But trewely, Criseyde, swete may,
> Whom I have ay with al my myght yserved,
> That ye thus doon, I have it nat deserved."
> (5.1716-22)

no service to her. The narrator explicitly tells us that vengeance motivates Troilus in his final battles, his power a direct expression of "his ire" (5.1755) directed primarily at Diomede. Insofar as his death relates to Criseyde at all, it is a futile self-annihilation that Troilus himself acknowledges to be meaningless once his soul has ascended to the eighth sphere and shed all of his passions (5.1819-25). Troilus dies to serve his own desires rather than to protect Criseyde's honor, her happiness, or her life. Thus his death recalls Pandarus's declaration long before, in Book 2, that if Criseyde were exposed to shame he would hang together with her and Troilus. In both instances one professes willingness to die *because of* another and in doing so gestures toward the idea that self-sacrifice *for* another is good, but both instances also show that self-sacrifice does no good when self-interest is its motivation. All may suffer and die together, but none are saved.

Pandarus does not function at all similarly to a Levinasian third party, however, since for all of his meddling he evades the third's role of moral catalyst. Levinas describes the third as a fundamentally humanizing agent, though not an intentional actor; in Levinas the presence of the third makes the ethical subject capable of comparing the Other to himself and thus capable of generalizing ethical imperatives like the rightful prevention of harm to all and the responsibility of each one in society for all of the others. Thus justice proceeds from the third's presence in Levinas, while in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the would-be third party, Pandarus, facilitates and perpetuates injustice. But while reading Pandarus—and the rest of the poem—in terms of Levinas is illuminating to a considerable extent, Levinasian terms can only take us so far toward the ethical culture in which the poem was produced, and which it reflects. As I have shown in detail in Chapter 1, the narrativized, personified image of an ethical third party pervades late medieval Christian culture: the image of the saintly intercessor, with the Blessed Virgin Mary as

the prime exemplar. In fact, Mary's presence as *mediatrix* is so ubiquitous that she shows up, with and through Jesus, in the very last line of *Troilus and Criseyde.* At this point, the voice of the poet is seemingly distinct from the narrator, since he has directly addressed his associates "moral Gower" [5.1856] and "philosophical Strode" [5.1857]) and moved on to pray to the explicitly Christian God.

Mediation, Judgment, and Community

As we have seen, Chaucer foregrounds the problem of the elision of the responsible third party in the triadic relationship among Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus—a relationship that Pandarus and Troilus attempt to reconfigure as a dyad, with Criseyde on one side and Troilus and Pandarus together on the other—each of them subject to the other, and neither of them taking responsibility for Criseyde. Thus within the relationship of three there are private, intimate alliances—Troilus and Criseyde, of course, but also Troilus and Pandarus, whose intimacy is a constant throughout the poem, from the time of Troilus's first revelation of his pains of love, through his suffering at the loss of Criseyde. This world of secret intimacies and avoidance of judgment stands in sharp distinction to the sense of the crowded, highly vocal, and also quite judgmental social world the narrator seems to enter at the end of the poem.

Virtually all readers acknowledge the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a text that raises problems, raising questions about meaning, even as it expresses anxiety and uncertainty that the words on the page do not match the real meaning of the story. Indeed, the narrator does speak in an anxious tone, as though something is wrong, when he is "bysechyng every lady bright of hewe" (5.1772) not to blame him for Criseyde's infidelity when he would much rather have told a nicer story, and yet he also speaks in other tones, as well: defensively, shrugging and telling his

unsatisfied readers, “Rede Dares” (5.1771) if they want a list of all of Troilus’s exploits in battle; sententiously, advising women, “Beth ware of men, and herkneth what I seye!” (5.1785); deferentially, as he sends off his “litel bok” (5.1786) to be “subgit” (5.1790) to great poetry and “kis the steppes” (5.1791) where the great poets walk; exasperatedly, to “prey…God that non myswrite the / Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge” (5.1796). And then the tone grows at once more passionate and more serious: “Swych fyn!” (5.1828, 29, 30, 31, 32) he repeats five times over, demanding that his audience stop and attend to the outrage of Troilus’s untimely death and all of the losses it entails. Next he again becomes impassioned, in the prayerful plea to the “yonge, fresshe folk” (1835), and then offers the disgusted “Lo here” (5.1849, 50, 51, 52, 54) five times over, as with “Swych fyn!” Finally, there is the verse conspicuously speaking in the poet’s own voice, to his associates, “moral Gower” and “philosophical Strode” (5.1856-57), humbly imploring their attentive correction. And the final stanza is one very last invocation, to God himself in the Trinity (5.1863), with a special added prayer to Jesus (5.1868) invoking Mary (5.1869).

Why rehearse these fifteen verses, with almost as many tones of voice and addressees? My aim here is to point out the sudden rush to judgment—judgment of many, by many—that Chaucer demands at this point in the poem. Suddenly, after deferring judgment so long and laying out a tragedy whose ultimate cause is secrecy due to fear of judgment, he moves in every stanza either to anticipate judgment, conspicuously ward it off, deliver it conspiratorially out of the side of his mouth, or openly ask for it. But what kind of judgment can take place in such a context, with too many things to cast judgment on, and—particularly with regard to the most important questions, such as whether Troilus’s end was a bad one or not—inconclusive evidence upon which to judge them? Rosemarie McGerr points out that in the context of literary

expectations for narrative closure in Chaucer's literary *milieu*, his inconclusive endings constitute deliberate messages to the audience that something is amiss, including the "almost parodic 'piling on' of traditional medieval closure devices" here at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde,* which, as McGerr argues do not "resolve the questions raised by the poem."[38] As she argues, the audience should take a lesson from this poem and Chaucer's other puzzlers, to the effect that the obvious, preconceived judgments they might expect to arrive at are insufficient, and instead they should learn to hover in uncertainty, becoming more open-minded in the process. The point of this ending is to frustrate judgment, according to McGerr, and it is precisely in the impossibility of judging that the poem is edifying. I find McGerr's reading compelling, and in fact, I will argue in Chapter 4 that Thomas Hoccleve asks something along very similar lines of his princely patron, in *The Regiment of Princes* (1415). But the ending of the poem can say something more about judgment, given that, as we have seen, the narrative traces the road to the destruction of Troy through open avoidance of judgment.

Of course, at some level the audience obviously must have wanted to see everything go wrong in Troy, or they would hardly have read past line 56, in the proem to Book 1, when the narrator matter-of-factly announces the plan to tell "how that she forsook hym er she deyde." As Alexandra Cook has argued, "Chaucer saw in his culture's fascination with the ill-fated Troy a fascination with obliteration and utter loss."[39] And no doubt the palinode's frenzied repetitions elicit a sense of excitement at how terrible the story really is; thus in a sense, countering McGerr's argument, it seems that Chaucer is delivering on what has been eagerly anticipated all along. Disaster is expected, as is the chance to respond to it. At the same time, as I have pointed

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[38] McGerr, *Chaucer's Open Books*, 96.

[39] Alexandra Cook, " 'O swete harm so queynte": Loving Pagan Antiquity in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*," *English Studies* 91.1 (2010), 39.

out above in my list of judgment-oriented lines, Chaucer is also offering the chance to judge his poem, and the poet himself, and this is something more than an opportunity for *Schadenfreude* about the failures of pagan society.

In fact, Chaucer suggests that there is something to blame him for in *Troilus and Criseyde,* though he is not clear about what it is. As Michael P. Kuczynski has noted, Chaucer directly addresses the question of authorial responsibility for the moral impact of his writing on his audience with a signature phrase, "Blameth nat me," twice in in two well-known passages in the *Canterbury Tales,* and once here in *Troilus and Criseyde*, in the invocatory proem to Book 2 of *Troilus and Criseyde*: "Wherfore I ny have neither thank ne blame / Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely, / Disblameth me if any word be lame, / For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I" (2.15-18). As Kuczynski explains, Chaucer highlights the phrase from the Penitential Psalms in such a way that all of his readers would have recognized. Thus when he writes, "Blameth not me" for a story, he is openly playing at a kind of moral failing that actually requires correction, speaking fully satirically, playacting at being the one with the problem he is chastising in his writing. As Kuczynski notes, to "disblame" –an adaptation of the French *desblamen*, comparable to "unloven"—is to take blame away once it has been conferred (and deserved). This is a call for forgiveness of an infraction committed, not a call to overlook an infraction. The excuse comes after recognition of the problem. It is a deliberate release of the one who makes the mistake—from shame as well as blame.[40] In other words, Chaucer gives us a chance to confront the fact that he is to blame, and then to forgive him. At the same time, in the swirl of accusations and

[40] See Michael P. Kuczynski, "'Don't Blame Me': The Metaethics of a Chaucerian Apology," *The Chaucer Review* 37.4 (2003): 316 [315-28]. See *Miller's Prologue, CT,* I.3171-3186; "Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve," *CT,* X.1081-1092.

implications at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde,* he also invites us to blame various others, presumably as the first step toward forgiving them, too.

And further, if we stand among those judging and forgiving, then we are in illustrious company, from the immortal poets, to Gower and Strode, to Jesus and Mary. In the "Retraction," Chaucer will go still further in arranging the ranks of those he asks to judge, and then to forgive, including not only "Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder," but "alle the seintes of hevene."[41] And specifically here in the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer prays for the "grace" to expose what he has done wrong ("biwayle my giltes") and then take the necessary penitential steps to cleanse his soul from sin so that he will not wind up in Purgatory: "verray penitence, confessioun, and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf."[42] These public confessions at the end of Chaucer's two latest and most major works express that Chaucer values not only confession, but the social experience of it. Again, in contradistinction to the silences and secrets in Troy, Chaucer evokes a community experience of judging and being judged, forgiving and being forgiven, to work against a very specific kind of social degeneration in Troy (that he perhaps also sensed in London), the degeneration of responsibly mediated relationships in which each party stands ready to take responsibility—taking part in the community experience of judging and being judged, in the confident expectation of forgiveness.

[41] Geoffrey Chaucer, "Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve" in *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. Benson, 328.

[42] Chaucer, "Heere taketh," 328.

Chapter 3
Mediation and the Medium: Intercession, Tradition, and Visionary Ethics in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*

In the two previous chapters, I have discussed Middle English texts that represent mediation as a necessary feature of human relationships as well as relationships with God. Intercession is key to salvation and social integration in both "St. Theophilus" and *Troilus and Criseyde*, two vastly different literary projects that were composed under very different conditions and with very different aims, but that reflect parallel ethical beliefs about the need for mediation in a social cosmos. In this chapter, however, I will turn to a late Middle English text that explicitly works against the belief that mediation is necessary between God and humanity even as the text itself represents what is arguably the most serious possible attempt at responsible mediation a medieval Christian writer might undertake. The anchoress Julian of Norwich's account of her visionary experience of God, *A Revelation of Love* (ca. 1395-1416), is intended to mediate so well between her readers and God that his loving presence will be fully manifest to them, Julian's own presence as the spiritual medium will pass from their minds, and they will see that all intermediaries between God and themselves are unnecessary and illusory as they look forward to total union in God in the end times to come.[1] Charitable love among all "evencristen" (*Rev.* 8.22) seems to be a high priority, in her vision of the Christian cosmic sociality, but her

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[1] Although I acknowledge that Julian saw herself as a medium, in the sense that she is a vessel for divine revelation, my reading approaches Julian not as a "mystic" but as a "visionary writer"; for studies of Julian in the context of the medieval Christian mystical tradition, see Denise N. Baker, "Julian of Norwich and the Varieties of Middle English Mystical Discourse," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz McAvoy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 52-63; Baker aligns Julian with "continental mystics like Hadewijch of Antwerp, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, or Meister Eckhart," all of whom claimed the "pre-existence of the soul in God" as Julian does (62-63); Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

interpretation of her visions undermines the traditional belief that Christians must rely on each other for spiritual instruction and aid in order to attain salvation.[2] Thus the entire text problematizes mediation while enacting it.

At an obvious level, Julian's method of bringing God's love to her fellow Christians is to write the story of how God revealed himself to her, recounting revelatory events as a series of episodes building up to a meaningful whole. Yet these revelations raise questions that call for further evidence to resolve them. The specific content of the message she is trying to transmit to her readers calls for further textual work. To give the full message of her revelation, Julian turns to the divine revelation embodied in sacred scripture for images that evoke God's mysterious relationship with humanity. She borrows passages from the Bible and incorporates them into her own story, revising them so radically in the context of her new vision that their meaning is reversed. Inscribing Old Testament images of God into her vision of the suffering face of Jesus, Julian makes images of God's inaccessibility, dominance, and retributive violence begin to embody his self-sacrificing love, rather than his judgment, anger, and retribution. Through this textual-visionary mediation, Julian extends her argument that spiritual intermediaries are and illusory to the teachings of the Church and the canonical texts of the Bible. Julian's message takes its relevance from the threat of imminent moral judgment that all Christians in her culture were conscious of facing—that is, the individual judgment at the time of death awaited by every Christian, as well as the general time of judgment of souls at Doomsday, ordained to come at some unknown future date. Once she has received her revelation from God, Julian attempts to remove all anxiety from her fellow believers' minds by giving them what she believes is a proper

[2] Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 145. All references to Julian's writing will be taken from Watson and Jenkins except where I have indicated in the text that I am referring to versions edited by others.

sense of God's wholly positive relationship with humanity; her theology teaches that God's judgment is not to be feared. Meanwhile, she indicates that her own proper role as the transmitter of this message is, most importantly, to try to get out of the way of her readers' direct experience of God—and this is a challenge given that her persona as the receiver of revelation is a key element of the image of God's personal accessibility.

To show how God makes himself present in the lives of his beloved creations, Julian must ground her account of God's revelation in her visionary narrative, telling the story of the revelatory events that develop a relationship between God and herself, the individual believer. This story requires personal details and first-person vocalization of her turns of thought, to draw out theological ideas. Yet in the telling she attempts to disappear as an individual mediator, creating a role for the receiver of revelation but erasing her autobiographical persona from that role to allow others to mentally inhabit her place. Julian's self-erasure helps make her argument that Jesus is revealing himself to all those who love him, and not especially to Julian herself, by his revealing of himself in the visions she transmits. At a more subtle level, Julian is a disappearing mediator in a second way, as well: her method of using sacred scripture covers over her textual work, blending images from the Bible with her visions and erasing signs of her textual mediation. She avoids turning readers' attention to her use of scripture in the imagery of her visions by decontextualizing the images from their original narrative settings and recontextualizing them in the narrative of her experience. Thus she argues, through new images combining ancient scripture and recent revelation, that God has replaced his old, authoritative persona with a new one, in the even more authoritative revelation she has received: no longer an angry judge and avenger of infidelities, God is now a joyful nurturer whose action toward humanity is to sustain and console.

Julian's own disappearing maneuvers—both biographical and textual—suggest a point of further relevance for the present study. Silently, without indication of her acts of reading and rewriting, she overwrites the text from which her own images have come. And with this, in turn, she intends the scriptural text to appear briefly, yoked to her revelation, but ultimately to disappear, replaced by her new and more authoritative visionary text. Julian's use of scripture in her visionary account thus corresponds with her explicit suggestion that traditional mediators between God and humanity, even those learned persons who were traditionally invested with the responsibility to interpret the Bible, are unnecessary. Though Julian never explicitly suggests that the Bible itself is open to the interpretive experience of any reader, without need for teachers and preachers—and potentially against commonly accepted readings—her way of seeing the images in the Bible models a radically independent re-reading that does not simply mirror the teachings of the Church, as she herself acknowledges.

A detailed examination of Julian's use of a few key passages from the wisdom books reflects her immediately concerned to serve well as an intermediary between God and her fellow Christians. As I will argue, Julian's intertextual work serves a didactic purpose in its style as well as its content, obscuring as it does the original message of the Scripture she consults, in order to focus readers' attention on her own revelation. As Edmund Colledge and James J.Walsh have commented, Julian's knowledge of the sapiential books must have informed her understanding of "the mysteries of faith, the Trinity, and the Incarnation," as evidenced by her treatment of "the triune God speaking of his active presence in creatures and events."[3] Julian's engagement with

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[3] Edmund Colledge and James J. Walsh, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 43; Julian's editors confidently assert that she was "deeply familiar" with the sapiential books of the Bible, along with the rest of it: "Julian already knew all the Vulgate; especially, she can be seen to be deeply familiar with all four gospels, the Pauline and Johannine epistles and Hebrews, the Psalms, the sapiential books, and Deutero-Isaias." See also their

the wisdom literature includes a vocal response to contradictions she finds in it, as in the teachings of the Church, particularly with respect to doctrinal and scriptural claims about sin, in a world that has been redeemed by an all-powerful savior. Regarding Julian's controversial theory of salvation, Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out "how far her understanding of incorporation or representation took her toward universalism," noting that Julian hedges her claims when she must articulate doctrine explicitly; she will not contradict Church teachings, but she is willing to hold them in tension with competing truths until the end of time.[4] In fact, most of Julian's writing does not articulate doctrine explicitly. Rather, she constructs visual arguments that raise questions and promote certain theological possibilities. As Mary Carruthers has explained, making verbal pictures to stimulate and sustain thought was "a universally used trope of medieval homiletic rhetoric and meditational invention," and it was part of the storehouse of preaching techniques.[5] In accord with this tradition, in Julian's writing, images are the most prominent and essential tools of teaching and learning; God teaches Julian through images, and she eagerly passes them on, relying on them to authorize her revelation's message to her readers.

Julian wrote two versions of her visionary experience of Jesus, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* (ca. 1385) and, over twenty years later, *A Revelation of Love* (ca. 1395-1416)

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brief mention of the sapiential books in discussing Julian's theory of the Trinity and the Incarnation (*Book of Showings*, 84).

[4] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 206.

[5] Mary Carruthers, "Moving Images in the Mind's Eye," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages,* ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 288; Carruthers notes that although it was not taught in the course of classical literary-rhetorical training, it was universally accepted practice: "the preachers called it *pictura*, or 'a picture,' *painture* in medieval French, and they regarded it as a highly useful tool."

(often referred to as the Short Text and the Long Text, respectively).[6] In both the earlier and the later versions, she recounts an extended episode of seeing the face of Christ on her crucifix come alive and communicate with her, as it all the while displays the visual effects of the Passion on Christ's body, such as bleeding, bruising, and bodily decay. In this chapter I will focus mainly on her later version, *A Revelation*, which incorporates extensive commentary on her visions and also includes descriptions of visionary imagery that she does not include in the shorter, earlier text of *A Vision.* In her writing, Julian's vision of Jesus's face is accompanied by images that are common in medieval Christian devotional discourse, including glimpses of the Blessed Virgin and the Devil, as well as many other images that are much less common. As she describes the context of her visionary experience, Julian recalls her youthful desire for "more knowinge" (*Rev*. 2.10) of the physical suffering of Christ in the Passion and of the emotional experiences of Mary and of Jesus' other disciples. Her desire is to gain personal, even physical, knowledge of the suffering of the Passion for herself, in order to increase her own understanding of God, not necessarily to represent such knowledge to others. But the knowledge Julian tells us she initially sought is of a different kind from the knowledge she ultimately comes to long for and then finally attains, via the "fair shewinges and techinges of endelesse wisdom and love" (*Rev*. 1.5-6) first presented in *A Vision* and then perfected in *A Revelation.* In gaining experience of the Passion—though not quite the narrativized experience of the Passion she seems to have had in mind—Julian is given a task by God. Her work, as she sees it in *A Revelation*, her later and

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[6] Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins, "Introduction," in Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. Watson and Jenkins (University Park, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 1-2. Throughout this chapter, I will use these titles of the Short Text and Long Text adopted by Watson and Jenkins. Some scholars, including Julia Bolton Holloway, dispute the dating of the two texts, maintaining that Julian redacted her longer text to remove controversial aspects of her writing that might have attracted the attention of ecclesiastical censors, in the midst of public concern about Lollards, most infamously recorded in the Constitutions of 1409 written and publicized by Archbishop Arundel.

longer account, is to make her revelatory experience manifest to her even-Christians as communication directly from God, not from Julian herself. Thus she must disappear as a mediator even in the act of mediating.

Julian as Mediator: The Disappearing Medium

Julian's account of encountering an eternal and infinite god is situated within a narrative from her own life, the story of a series of moments when she saw, heard, and felt God communicating with her, and through this came to a deep awareness of his love for humanity. The first and major part of my argument in this chapter will center on Julian's discussion leading up to and including her first "showing," the time during which she saw the face of Jesus on her crucifix bleeding from under its crown of thorns, while other images and their explanations arise in her mind in succession. Here, early in her account, Julian offers her own body and mind as the instrumental media of God's manifestation, as if her composition process were primarily a process of witnessing God; in this way she represents herself as an exemplar of receptivity to God and desire for him, a role she promotes by likening herself to the Blessed Virgin at certain points in her account. Like "St. Theophilus" and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Julian's story takes its meaning from its cultural context of imminent judgment. From the beginning, the central problem motivating this explicitly religious text is the divine judgment of God that every Christian expects to face at the end of an individual life, while expecting the whole world to face judgment all at once at the end of time. Here Julian shows herself, at the time of the visionary experience, focusing on the best way to think and act toward God and his creations in order to avoid punishment; meanwhile, however, at the same time she reports that God has begun to

reveal that her conventional attitudes and actions are misguided, both in her expectation of imminent judgment and her sense that she is responsible for others' spiritual welfare.

Although Julian prefaces *A Revelation of Love* with a brief summary of the revelation itself, organized into "sixteen shewinges" (*Rev*. 1.1), or visionary experiences, she begins the visionary account proper in the same way her earlier version of the visionary account begins: with a brief identifying description of herself and a note on the dating of relevant events. In the earlier version, however, the introduction offers more autobiographical details. It is a rubric passage thought to have been written by a scribe, perhaps a priest who was her spiritual adviser, one interested in promoting her text, who calls Julian "a devout woman" and adds that "hir name es Julian, that is recluse atte Norwiche" (*Vis.* Rubric, 1.1-7). In *A Revelation*, however, Julian seems to have taken personal control of the composition of the text, which now describes her in the elaborately humble terms that she will continue to use throughout her later version: "a simple creature unletterde, living in deadly flesh" (*Rev.* 2.1-2). As others have noted, in the earlier version the scribe is concerned with verifying who Julian is (someone who "yit is on life, anno domini 1413" [*Vis.* Rubric, 1.3]), while the later version focuses instead on the vision rather than the visionary, stating the time when the vision happened, "yer of our lord 1373" (2.2), rather than focusing on who Julian is in the reader's social world. This slight difference in the description of Julian, evident from the very first lines of *A Revelation,* is an indication of a trend that continues throughout the text: Julian chooses to de-emphasize her personal presence, foregrounding the story of the revelation that authorizes her account as if it had not happened in a particular social setting, to a particular person.

As readers of both texts will immediately notice, even beyond downplaying her merit, which is a typical move in medieval devotional rhetoric, in *A Revelation* Julian cuts out certain

personal details from the autobiographical record of her sickness and initial visionary experience, such that her self-image and specific social situation become less clear. In her later account Julian no longer recalls that she had drawn her desire for “thre woundes” (*Rev.* 2.34) from hearing a story of a martyred saint (“Seynt Cecille” [*Vis.* 1.36]) whom she would like to imitate. Because devotion to saints was a marker of identity in late medieval Christian culture, omitting mention of her personal connection with a holy patron blurs the image of Julian herself, while also detaching her from a recognizable heroic figure.[7] Further enhancing her anonymity, Julian de-emphasizes her own gender in the later version, removing a passage in which she calls attention to the fact that she is a woman (*Vis*. 6-36).[8] Julian also removes references to the people who cared for her while she was ill. She simplifies the scene of her illness such that no specific persons are mentioned apart from Julian and her curate. Even the curate’s acolyte (“and a childe with him” [*Vis.* 2.20]) disappears from Julian’s later version, and the scene becomes more impersonal because the curate himself no longer speaks to her tenderly, calling her “Doughter” (*Vis.* 2.22). Julian also removes her reference to her “modere,” who, she says in a later passage in *A Vision,* “stode emanges othere and behelde me” (*Vis.* 8.26-27). Thus the mother, loving pastor,

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[7] For a discussion of patron saints and identity in the late Middle Ages, see Nagy Balázs’ “Saints, names, and identities: the case of Charles IV of Luxemburg” in *Promoting the Saints: Cults and their Contexts from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period; Essays in Honor of Gabor Klaniczay for his 60th Birthday* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2011. Catherine Sanok reviews several reasons that scholars have suggested for Julian’s decision to excise St. Cecilia from her text; to my knowledge, none of them considers the possibility I am suggesting here; see Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints’ Lives in Late Medieval England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 25, 172.

[8] Because of this passage and other provocative references to gender, Julian’s writing has stimulated a great deal of scholarship focusing on gender, spirituality, and religion in late medieval English literature and society. For discussions of gender in Julian by some influential Julian scholars, see Liz Herbert McAvoy, “‘For We Be Doubel of Gods Making’: Writing, Gender, and the Body in Julian of Norwich,” in *A Companion,* ed. McAvoy, [166-80]; and Nicholas Watson, “Yf wommen be double naturally”: Remaking “Woman” in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of Love, Exemplaria* 8.1 (1996): 1-34. See also Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006).

and group of concerned family members, friends, or servants who stand near Julian's bed fade out of her image of her visionary experiences, as a result of her deliberate revisionary work to create *A Revelation.* She does refer to the actions of others in the later version when necessary, to move the narrative from one event to the next, but she frequently rephrases her references to them to speak in the passive voice ("My curate was sent for to be at my ending" [*Rev.* 17-18]), thus retaining the essential details of the progression of events leading to her visionary experience but effacing any impression that others have played a significant part in her encounter with Jesus or shared the experience with her. Later, when she goes so far as to mention what the others in the room were thinking, she renders their participation as passive and impersonal, merely confirming the extent of the illness's progress: "I wened oftentimes to have passed, and so wened they that were with me" (*Rev.* 3.4-5).

The curate who offers Julian the cross to look at is the only ordinary human figure given direct dialogue, besides Julian herself. His speech to Julian is shortened from its form in *A Vision*, in such a way as to devote less attention to the curate himself and in the process to avoid reporting that it was he who told Julian what to do with the image of Jesus on the cross. In the early version, the curate tells her to "comforthe" (*Vis.* 2.24) herself with the knowledge that Christ "diede for the and me" (*Vis.* 2.25). In its revised form, this episode still includes the priest's giving her the cross and inviting her to comfort herself with it, but it no longer includes mention of Christ's death or the phrase, "the and me." Julian's revision lightly reduces the sense of solidarity and human companionship communicated in the earlier version by removing "the and me," but beyond helping to make the sick room scene more impersonal, the omission has a further effect, as well. It also helps to keep the ordinary experiences in Julian's bedroom separate from her extraordinary experiences of communicating directly with God. In the earlier version,

the priest is telling Julian that Christ's death will be a source of comfort to her, but her revision removes the key theological point of his pastoral advice and thus makes the vision itself the only source of this idea. Because Julian's discovery of joy rather than sorrow in the Passion (when Christ "diede") will be one of the central points of her revelation, removing the priest's words helps to set apart the special knowledge that is soon to be revealed to her by God, from what she has already known through ordinary life experiences, before her visions have begun. Thus Julian removes a sign that her curate, his personal concern for her, and his intentional guidance helped her to encounter Jesus and shaped her relationship with him.

In fact, Julian is explicit in crediting Jesus alone with showing her his suffering and giving her a positive feeling about it, as we see in her later words in Chapter 4 announcing that she "saw the red bloud trekile downe" (*Rev.* 4.1): "Right so, both God and man, the same that sufferd for me. I conceived truly and mightly that it was himselfe that shewed it me, without any meane. And in the same shewing, sodeinly the trinity fulfilled my hart most of joy" (*Rev.* 4.3-6). Here Julian reports that she looks at Jesus's suffering for her and feels "joy," a process of perception and emotional response that is very similar to what the curate prompts her to see and feel but Julian emphasizes that Jesus "himselfe" shows his bleeding face to her, "without any meane" (*Rev.* 4.5), a point she has emphasized in *A Vision* and now retains in her revised version. The general effect of Julian's revisions to this beginning part of her visionary account, including her description of her initial situation before the visions and the experience of her first showing, is to create a stronger image of the visionary role as an anonymous one, a role that may be inhabited by anyone at all, and in which one connects with Jesus alone without help or guidance from others. Thus Julian attempts to make herself disappear from her autobiographical

description of the visionary experience, and she also begins to downplay the importance of intermediaries more generally between the soul—her own, in this case—and God.

Julian's representation of her own social role, specifically with respect to her sense of her responsibility for other Christians, raises questions about ethical expectations for Christian life in her culture. In the same passage in *A Vision* in which Julian refers to herself as a woman, calling herself "a woman, lewed, febille, and freylle," she claims emphatically that she is not a "techere" (*Vis.* 6.35-36). In *A Revelation,* she has excised her explicit denial of the teacher's role along with her self-deprecating identification as a woman. This means that in the later text, she softens her denial of personal intellectual capabilities, a change that we might expect to suggest an increase of confidence and personal responsibility for the revelation she is communicating to her fellow Christians. The change is notable to the extent that some influential scholars, including Grace Jantzen and Denise Nowakalski Baker, use this passage as support for the argument that Julian learned Latin and educated herself in scripture and theology during the decades that passed between writing her earlier text and her later one. Their argument has merit, though in light of it the overall drift in the later text away from emphasis on Julian herself causes "much puzzlement," as Grace Jantzen puts it, among Julian scholars.[9] Julian's confidence seems to increase, even as her expressed ownership of the text decreases. She shows more signs that she has taken an active part in preparing the text, while effacing signs that she personally is responsible for it.

In fact, Julian's sense of her own responsibility for her account is part of her discussion at several points, and these show a progression in her thinking as well as a consistent strain in the

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[9] Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 15; for further discussion of this issue see 16-24. See also, for example, Denise Nowakalski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 6-7, 135.

text. She progresses from a sense of responsibility as fear, urging her to admonish others to live better so as to escape final damnation, to a sense of responsibility as desire, urging her to console others with assurances of God's love. Throughout the story of her revelation, Julian expresses her sense of responsibility in terms of "charite" to her "evencristen" (*Rev.* 8.22), to whom she wishes to be an edifying example. But initially, as she sees herself in the early part of the revelation narrative, her charitable exemplarity is to be enacted by displaying the terrifying imminence of death and final judgment with her own dying body. She hopes to serve as a warning by calling attention to her mortality and reminding others of their own, thus motivating them to live holier lives. She wishes to suffer for others, in a sense, in order to teach them a moral lesson. At this point in her story Julian has already been taught that the fear of judgment is mistaken according to the visions she has just received, yet her habit of fear based on traditional ideas of divine judgment is so powerful that initially it keeps her from transmitting the revelation that she has experienced.

Julian tells her readers that from the time of her youth, long before her visions have begun, her sense of the importance of her experience is focused on eternal judgment, which she fears for herself and also expects her fellow Christians to fear. The reason for both her first pious desire, to suffer the "bodely paines" of Christ and feel the "compassion of our lady, and of all his true lovers that were living at that time and saw his paines" (2.11-12), and also her second, "siknes…so hard as to the deth" (2.18-19) is that she hopes to gain "the marcy of God" (*Rev.* 2.15) and "be purged" (*Rev.* 2.25) such that afterward she will be able to live more perfectly and attain heaven more easily when she dies: "for I hoped that it might be to me a spede when I shuld die. For I desired to be soone with my God and maker" (*Rev.* 2.24-26). Thus holy living is in no sense an end in itself for Julian, according to her description of her youthful desires, originating

long before her visionary experience. Rather, for the naïve, youthful Julian, as the writer recalls her younger self in *A Revelation*, holy living is most importantly a means to shorten the time she expects to spend in the misery of purgatory after death.

Nor does Julian move past her fears of final judgment even as a mature witness of divine revelation, when her visionary experience has begun and she has seen Jesus's living face on her crucifix. After enduring a week of excruciating suffering that feels to her like death, at last she experiences some measure of relief and then a new awareness that, as she says, "cam sodeynly to my mind" (*Rev.* 3.36), prompting her to ask for her second wish to be fulfilled, the wish to experience "compassion" for Jesus and his disciples as if she had been present during the events of the Passion. With the renewal of this wish, Julian's visions begin: "And in this, sodenly I saw the red blood trekile downe from under the garlande [i.e., the crown of thorns on the sculpted head of Christ on her crucifix]" (*Rev.* 4.1-2). From here, Julian gazes upon the sight of the bleeding head of Jesus while various other images play in her mind's eye, accompanied by explanations that all contribute to a "lesson of love" (*Rev.* 5.54). The lesson works against orthodox doctrine on divine justice and salvation, and I will address the significance of the specific images of Julian's vision later in this chapter, in my discussion of her work as a textual mediator. First, however, this part of *A Revelation* can show Julian's deconstructive description of herself as a mediator. Her description reports her mistaken intention to mediate as a physical exemplar and a spiritual guide, an intention that her visions have already taught her is mistaken. I will discuss her intention to mediate first, in Chapter 8 of *A Revelation,* and then look backward to Chapter 6, a chapter which Julian has added to her later account and which explicitly discusses the role of mediators in the relationship between the soul and God. As I will show, by interpolating new revelatory material revealing the illusory value of spiritual mediators, Julian

contextualizes her later representation of her own intention to mediate on behalf of others and reveals this intention to be an ethical mistake.

In Chapter 8 of *A Revelation*, concluding Julian's report of her first set of visions, the conflict between the teachings of her visions on final judgment and the teachings she has received through the Church should be clear. After seeing the face on her crucifix come alive and bleed in a marvelous fashion, accompanied by six revelatory messages that, as she says, "dwelled in my undirstonding" (*Rev.* 8.19), Julian is "mekille sterede [greatly stirred, i.e., excited and compelled] in cherite to mine evenchristen, that they might alle see and know the same that I sawe, for I wolde that it were comfort to them" (8.22-23). She is filled with desire to share the encouraging message that Jesus has intended to show "in generalle" (8.25) to all human beings. Her visions have taught the essential reason that God's creations need not fear his final judgment, which is that as creator of the universe he loves his creations and will not destroy them, but rather will sustain them eternally: "he hath made alle thing that is made for love. And by the same love it is kepte and shal be withoute ende" (*Rev.* 8.14-15). And again, God has shown Julian that "he is the endlesshead, and he hath made us only to himselfe and restored us by his precious passion, and ever kepeth us in his blessed love" (*Rev.* 5.35). As Julian carefully admits elsewhere in her text, none of this directly contradicts the traditional doctrine that doom and punishment await sinners, but doom and punishment are certainly not part of the message she has just received by Chapter 8. Even with these generous new thoughts in mind, however, when she addresses the others near her she does not use comforting words or share her new insights; rather, she immediately issues a warning that is familiarly traditional, but jarringly out of context:

> Than saide I to them that were with me: 'It is todaye domesday with me,' And this I saide for I wened to have died. For that day

> man or woman dieth is he demede as he shal be withoute ende, as to my understanding. This I saide for I wolde they loved God the better, for to make them to have minde that this life is short, as they might se in exsample. For in alle this time I wened to have died. And that was marveyle to me and sweme in perty [a cause of great anxiety] for methought this avision was shewde for them that shuld live.
>
> (*Rev.* 8.24-28)

Although this revised, later version of the account shows Julian attempting to use strictly positive terms for how her even-Christians may amend their lives, the example she offers here is dark and cautionary. In the earlier version of this passage in *A Vision*, Julian's words point more even more directly to her even-Christians' tendency toward sin: "This I saide for I walde thaye loved God mare and sette the lesse prise be the vanite of the worlde" (*Vis.* 7.16-17). Julian's revision does show, then, that she intends her later text to focus on the positive way to God, through love, rather than on the fear of final judgment and purgative suffering or possible damnation. Yet even in her revised version, she recalls thinking that final judgment hovers over her and everyone else, a threat looming over her deathbed experiences of suffering—suffering which she has requested and welcomed in order to avoid far worse suffering after death.

Julian's attempt to mediate between her fellow Christians and God by exemplifying suffering and death also indicates how mistaken she is at this moment, of course, simply in that she expects to die presently—an eventuality that obviously does not occur at this moment in the story, since she lives to tell the tale. Her mistake about her own relationship with God fuels her intention to serve as a mediator for her fellow Christians. Because of her failure to grasp the revelation communicated by her vision, Julian does not fully experience the consolation that it expresses. Rather, she is both confused and upset by receiving the vision when she believes that she herself is no longer able to make use of it because it is "for them that shuld live." The experience is "merveyle" (mystery) and "sweme" (anxiety or trouble) to her. In this context of

fear of judgment based on a lingering misunderstanding of God's relationship with humanity, Julian cherishes the misguided intention to mediate between her fellow Christians and God, specifically to help them in the imminent moment of their final judgment by reminding them of what everyone fears. Her hope is a familiar one in the culture that produced narratives of saintly intercession, as well as penitential manuals and other pious literature and iconography focused on death and fear of judgment as ethical motivators. Along with modeling death itself, with her body serving as a *memento mori*, Julian intends to serve as a spiritual guide as she nears the other world by offering advice to those who will live on. Although she does not propose to plead for her fellow Christians before the throne of heaven, Julian's self-positioning does resemble a typical role played by Mary and other saints in intercession narratives, as a giver of advice to sinners for amending their lives, for example as Mary has advised Theophilus on how to do penance. But in the context of expecting final judgment, even as she means to offer consolation Julian can only manifest fear based on a rationale that follows from impending doom. In this early phase of her narrative of revelation, when she is mistaken about divine justice, she actively seeks to mediate between her fellow Christians and God's judgment, reminding them of their responsibility before God and urging them to seek mercy. It is important to note, however, that Julian introduces the idea that she is a spiritual guide only under erasure, as part of a display of her own failings. In fact, she calls direct attention to her inability to serve as a guide, in a paradoxical exhortation at the end of Chapter 8:

> And therfore I pray you alle for Gods sake, and counceyle you for youre awne profite, that ye leve the beholding of a wrech that it was shewde to, and mightely, wisely, and mekely behold God, that of his curteyse love and endlesse goodnesse wold shew it generally in comfort of us alle. For it is Goddes wille that ye take it with as grete joy and liking as Jhesu had shewde it to you.
>
> (*Rev.* 8.32-37)

Ironically, Julian takes up the role of counselor in the act of directing her readers to stop paying attention to her. Ultimately she does serve as an exemplar in *A Revelation*, but only by modeling her steady desire for God and her steady focus on his visionary revelation, despite her intellectual and moral incapacity to respond immediately and fully to the message. Certainly in the recollected moments of her habitual fear of doom and damnation she is not an exemplar at all for her neighbors around her, and only a negative exemplar for her readers.

In all of Julian's recollection of her misdirected attempt to position herself as an intercessory mediator, she does not name mediation as a process. Yet mediators between God and humanity are a matter of special concern in *A Revelation,* much more than they are in *A Vision*, the earlier version. In fact, Julian has added an entire chapter to *A Revelation,* Chapter 6, in which she explores the value of prayer and all other mediating activities between the soul and God. She places this discussion the midst of her account of the first showing, the head of Jesus bleeding under the crown of thorns. We have seen that Julian's later representation of herself in Chapter 8 as a would-be *memento mori* and spiritual guide shows a failure to transmit God's message to others, and Chapter 6 helps to explain why such an intention must fail.

Chapter 6 of *A Revelation* begins with Julian's assertion that the "shewing" of Jesus's bleeding head "was geven, as to my understanding, to lerne our soule wisely to cleve to the goodnes of God" (*Rev.* 6.1-2). This chapter purports to extend God's lesson about how to "cleve" solely to his "goodnes." Julian continues with a report that she now recalls that "in that same time," while she was seeing the head bleeding,

> the custome of our prayer was brought to my mind: how that we use, for unknowing of love, to make meny meanes. Then saw I sothly that it is more worship to God, and more very delite, that we faithfully pray to himselfe of his goodnes and cleve therto by his grace, with true understanding and stedfast beleve, then if we made all the meanes that hart may thinke. For if we make all these

> meanes, it is to litle and not ful worshippe to God. But in his goodnes is all the hoel, and ther faileth right nought.
> (*Rev.* 6.2-8)

Her introductory words about teaching and wisdom ("to lerne our soule wisely") reinforce the idea that Julian's concern here with "meanes" is focused on a failure to love that is at the same time a failure of knowledge. The "unknowing of love" that she identifies here is enacted in orienting oneself not to "all the hoel" entity of God himself, but to mediating constructs, "the meanes that hart may thinke" that recognize only fragments of his nature and thus obscure and reduce the devotee's sense of his ultimate "goodnes." Julian goes on to point out the illusory nature of the rhetorically and iconographically conventional "meanes" by which Christians in her culture tend to address God. Although Christians address him via his various personal attributes and also via other holy objects and persons associated with him, all of these seemingly distinct entities are really the same thing, manifestations of "his goodnes":

> We pray to God for his holy flesh and for his precious bloud, his holy passion, his dereworthy death and worshipful woundes: and all the blessed kindnes and the endlesse life that we have of all this, it is of his goodnes. And we pray him for his sweete mothers love that him bare: and all the helpe that we have of her, it is of his goodnes. And we pray for his holy crosse that he died on: and all the helpe and all the vertu that we have of that crosse, it is of his goodnes. And on the same wise, all the helpe that we have of special saintes, and of all the blessed company of heaven, the dereworthy love and the holy endles frenshipe that we have of them, it is of his goodnes.
> (*Rev.* 6.9-18)

Julian presents the problem as primarily a problem of awareness, exacerbated by rhetorical "custome," or tradition. The metonymic rhetoric of typical forms of devotion, speaking of God through his attributes and associated concepts, conjures mediating agents in the mind between God and humanity. Julian's concern is that these constructs of thought about God mask his nature and at the same time his relationship of intimacy with humans. Here Julian points to the

ignorance of God's love that is represented by the practice of invoking such mediating agents as the love between Jesus and his mother, as well as seeking "helpe" from her directly, from "special saintes" (here we may recall Julian's deletion of St. Cecilia, her personal inspiration, from the text), and from the holy dead in general.

As these passages from Chapter 6 show, Julian's revelation from God has given her the idea ("it cam into my mind") that it is important to reject the belief that the saints act independently to offer help and friendship to Christians seeking God: "all the helpe that we have of [them]," she carefully explains, should really be understood as God's goodness in action. One may have the help of the saints, but this does not actually mean that the saints are doing any helping, or that their help is at all needed, in the first place. Julian's observation here about the nature of the saints' "helpe" is perfectly orthodox from a theological perspective. She accords with accepted theological arguments such as those of Aquinas, who asserts that (although certain knowledge of such things is impossible to attain) probably the saints do not know that Christians on earth are asking for their help nor do they personally give it—and if somehow they do, this is really an action of God because it occurs through God's making an exception to the laws of nature that separate the spiritual and material realms. In any case, Aquinas argues, the saints' intercession does not occur through any natural connection between the saints and people on earth, much less through any special influence the saints may exert over God.[10] Much later Julian will briefly exhort her readers, "desyer we to be like oure bretherne which be the saintes in heven," whose blessed state has nothing to do with charity for fellow Christians; rather, Julian encourages her readers to join her in becoming models of obedience of the will, like the saints who "wille right nought but Godes wille" (*Rev.* 33.26-27).

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[10] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume 1, Part 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 458.

As she does the other saints, Julian will describe the Blessed Virgin Mary several times in *A Revelation* only as an exemplar, never as an intercessor. First, she tells us that before her visionary experience, in her eagerness to see the Passion as a time of suffering that will induce contrition and compassion in herself, Julian has hoped to see Mary as the best exemplar of "compassion" (*Rev.* 12.11) for Christ's pain, a pain that Julian wishes to experience in full. Later, in the visions themselves, Mary is again an edifying image with which Julian strives to identify fully, the image of one who loves God "more than alle other" (*Rev.* 18.5, 1-10) and contemplates his sublime relationship to her (*Rev.* 4.24-35; 27.2-34). These images of Mary are not controversial, but they are notably oriented toward God alone, suggesting no relationship between the saint and earthly sinners like Julian except the relationship of exemplar to potential imitator. Mary's strictly exemplary function explains to a great extent why she plays such a relatively minor role in Julian's revelation, occurring in Julian's visions only three times, and not always in an embodied visual image. All together, then, rather than intermediaries, in Julian's revelation Mary and the saints are models only, exemplifying the universal possibility of human unity with God. Mary's strongest love for Jesus, thanks to his special nearness to her, is the only thing that sets her apart from other lovers of Jesus. Thus despite her theological orthodoxy, Julian pushes against established Christian ideas when she objects to the "custome" of seeing mediating agents between God and humanity. She calls into question devotional traditions that were actively promoted by the Church and that also harmonize with widely held social values of concern and advocacy for others, as we have seen above, in previous chapters of the present study.

Julian's rejection of mediators as objects of devotion is closely related to her strictly limited sense of her own responsibility as a mediator between God and her even-Christians. A

much later passage, in Chapter 35 of *A Revelation*, echoes the issues and language of Chapter 6, encouraging Julian and, through her, all Christians, to see God "in alle," in his totality, rather than focusing on particular manifestations of his goodness. The passage confirms that relationships of love and care between individual Christians do not warrant special concern for others' souls:

> I desired to wit of a serteyn creature that I loved if it shulde continue in good leving [living], which I hoped by the grace of God was begonne. And in this singular desyer it semed that I leted myselfe, for I was not taught in this time. And then was I answered in my reson, as it were by a frendfulle mene: "Take it generally, and beholde the curtesy of thy lorde God as he sheweth to the. For it is more worshipe to God to beholde him in alle than in any specialle thing."
> (*Rev.* 35.2-7)

This vaguely autobiographical passage touches on Julian's intimate relationship with another person, a rare occurrence in her writing. As she has done with her other autobiographical references, however, Julian keeps details to a minimum here, and in fact she has revised this passage in *A Revelation* to make it somewhat more impersonal than it is in the earlier version. She changes her original words in *A Vision,* "a certaine person" (*Vis.* 16.13) whom she calls "hire" (16.13), to "a serteyn creature" in *A Revelation,* whom she calls "it." These changes accord with Julian's general emphasis in *A Revelation* on the belief that human beings are "creatures" at the basis of their existence, drawing their existence from God's eternal sustaining as their creator; the identity of Julian's friend, like that of Julian herself, disappears into the generalized image of human contingency upon God.

In fact, the passage is mainly concerned with promoting general over "singular" views of God and his relationship with humanity, and only incidentally with instructing Julian about her role as an even-Christian to others and the responsibilities that relationship may imply. This

passage is important to consider in the present study, however, because through it we see that Julian encourages a view of idealized detachment in social relationships in the Christian cosmos. Her view is notable for its difference from the conventional moral imperative, promoted by traditional intercessory prayers in the liturgy and penitential guides leading pious persons to exercise sympathy and generosity toward others. It is a commonplace in Julian's culture that as a Christian one should charitably concern oneself with others' salvation. This passage in *A Revelation* thus raises the question of how Julian can affirm the value of "charite," given her detachment. There is no question of whether Julian believes that the cosmos is a social phenomenon, functioning according to ethical dynamics. By her account, eternal bliss—heaven itself—is a relational experience, the experience of looking upon the face of God. Sin, on the other hand, is the inability to see God.[11] The relationship between the self and God is the entirety of existence, according to Julian's revelation. Yet as an ethical subject, Julian is a curiosity. Her singular concentration on the fundamental relationship between the self and God that sustains existence closes out relationships with all others.

In accord with her general shift away from characterizing herself as a spiritual guide, Julian makes a further change from her earlier text to more firmly assert in this passage that it is not her role to direct others' spiritual lives. In the earlier version, *A Vision,* Julian wonders about her friend's final judgment itself, "howe it shulde be with hire" (*Vis.* 16.13), while later, in *A Revelation,* she has an eye to praxis and potential correction, asking whether her friend will continue in "good leving." Julian's mistake here is specifically to concern herself with the other's conduct, as if Julian herself had some stake in it. The emphasis on Julian's (misplaced)

[11] "The highest blesse that is, is to have God in cleerte of endlesse light, him verely seing, him swetly feling, him all peasable having in fullhede of joye. And thus was the blisseful chere of oure lorde God shewde in perty. In which shewing I saw that sinne was the most contrary, so ferforth that as long as we be meddled with any part of sinne we shall never see clerly the blisseful chere of God" (72.4-8)

concern with her friend's way of living is clearest when we consider that her question about her friend occurs as Julian has just wrestled at length in the immediately preceding chapters with the broader question of what will happen to sinners in the end times. The disembodied friendly advice that Julian should "take it generally" specifically recalls the revelation that she has just received over the course of several preceding chapters, arguably the most controversial in her writing, in which she tentatively and equivocally raises the question of how anyone at all can be damned—ultimately affirming that she believes hypothetically that some will be, but only hypothetically, insofar as they are "of the devilles condition in this life, and therin ende" (*Rev.* 33.9). Of course, given that she has no clear sense that anyone will (or can) die in a state of sin comparable to the devil's total denial of God, Julian's proposed solution leaves the question open with respect to whether any real person will actually suffer the fate that, as "holy church techeth" (*Rev.* 33.4), awaits sinners.

As her troubling question hangs in the air, as to whether "hel and purgatory" (*Rev.* 31.3) will actually hold anyone, Julian proceeds with an equivocal affirmation of her faith in the teachings of the Church, and it is this passage that leads most directly to her question about her friend's conduct. As Julian's revelation informs her, God is pleased by Christians' receptivity and obedience to the teachings of the Church:

> God shewde fulle gret plesance that he hath in alle men and women that mightly and mekely and wisely take the preching and the teching of holy church. For he it is, holy church. He is the grounde, he is the substance, he is the teching, he is the techer, he is the ende, and he is the mede wherfore every kinde soule traveleth.
>
> (*Rev.* 34.12-15)

In this conspicuous affirmation of her fidelity to Church teachings, Julian also equivocally authorizes her own revelation, suggesting that Jesus himself, whom she has of course

encountered, is exactly equivalent to Church teachings ("For he it is, holy church"). Yet this attempt to meld Jesus with the Church and its teachings leaves Julian unsettled, in light of the question at hand about the fate of sinners at the end of time.

This is where the account stands at the beginning of Chapter 35, where we find the passage in which Julian concerns herself with her friend. With the troubling previous discussion in mind, we can now see that it is with adherence to the traditional teachings of the Church in her mind that she experiences a momentary return of the fear of looming judgment, the same fear that motivates her in her mistaken attempt to be a spiritual guide in the early passages of *A Revelation*. Julian openly acknowledges her mistake in asking about her friend, explaining, "in this singular desyer it semed that I letted myself [hindered my own progress, i.e., understanding], for I was not taught in this time" (*Rev.* 35.4). The answer that comes to her guides her to let go of the urge "to like in onything in specialle" (*Rev.* 35.9), seemingly simple advice to let go of all particular attachments. But in fact, the advice goes further than a neutral answer telling Julian she should not care. It is not simply that she should not "be glad for [anything] in specialle" but further, she should also not be "gretly disesed for no manner of thing, for alle shalle be wele" (35.9-11). Thus after telling Julian that she ought not to assume any responsibility for her neighbor, the revelation leads her to see this detachment as part of a generally joyful acceptance of good things to come for all of God's creatures, "for alle shalle be wele." Of course Julian leaves open the theoretical possibility that some people will be so determined to sin that they will go the way of the devil, but her revelation and her own "reson" (*Rev.* 35.5) in interpreting it suggest that the reason she need not concern herself is that there is simply nothing to be concerned about. Julian's charity has no strings attached; she need not worry about others. She can simply express her love in happily sharing the new image of God that her revelation offers.

As we have seen in previous chapters of this study, the idea that friends are anxious for each other's souls and, more, that they suffer for each other and advocate for each other before the seat of power—and particularly the throne of God in heaven—pervades late medieval English social life. The duty to intercede on others' behalf is an ethical imperative in Julian's culture, channeled and also reinforced by devotional practices such as praying the Office of the Dead. And the convention of offering to pray for others and asking others to pray for oneself was a commonplace in literary texts, as well. As we have seen, even among mainly secular writers like Chaucer, requests for intercessory prayer were frequently incorporated into authorial comments, framing passages and transitions, and other literary flourishes. And beyond the social context in which she wrote, even in the context of devotional literary tradition, Julian need not have seen her concern for her friend as a distraction from God's all-encompassing love. She might, for example, have supported an attitude about spiritual concern for one's friends like that of the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167), who wrote in his monastic devotional classic *Spiritual Friendship* that concern for a friend's soul, and active intercession on that friend's behalf, would intensify one's own experience of God's love.[12] Julian tacitly rejects the role of a spiritual friend, however, by exposing the illusory power and "frendshipe" of the blessed and also by undermining her own expectations that she should be concerned about her friends' and

[12] "Thus praying to Christ for a friend and desiring to be heard by Christ for a friend, we focus on Christ with love and longing. Then sometimes suddenly, imperceptibly, affection melts into affection, and somehow touching the sweetness of Christ nearby, one begins to *taste* how dear he is and experience *how sweet* he is" (Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship,* trans. Lawrence C. Braceland, ed. Marsha L. Dutton [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010], 126, italics in the original text). For discussion of Aelred's writings for anchoresses as background for medieval anchoritic devotional culture, see Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (London: Penguin, 1987), 30-46, 118, passim. For discussion of a notable theme in Aelred that Julian shares, specifically both writers' discussions of the relationship between God and humans, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing," *The Harvard Theological Review* 70.3/4 (1977): 257-284; Aelred's attitude about relationships among fellow Christians relates to his characterization of the relationship between Jesus and the human person.

neighbors' spiritual welfare.[13] Because her newly revealed theology assures her that "alle shal be welle," it nullifies the need to restore right relations between humans and God, and so no intermediary has a place in the human-divine relationship.

My argument here works against a reading of Julian that assumes she adheres to typical expectations of anchorites, namely that their primary work, like that of most other monastics, is to engage in intercessory prayer. For example, Grace Jantzen observes of anchorites generally, "it was taken for granted that their prayers would include intercession for the town in which they lived," and "[t]he life of prayer which an anchoress led was not prayer only on her own behalf. She sought holiness of life and communion with God in order to be able to intercede more effectively for others."[14] Jantzen defends Julian and other anchorites from the suspicion that their solitary spiritual lives were self-involved, by calling intercession "a method of involvement" in the Christian community outside the anchorhold.[15] I contend, however, that however generous and charitable Julian's attitude toward her fellow Christians may have been, her writing promotes neither "involvement" in others' spiritual lives generally, nor anyone's engagement in intercessory prayer on anyone else's behalf.[16] While she neither affirms nor rejects the practice

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[13] Julian's identification of the "creature" as such, is a modification of her first version, in which she calls her friend a "persone." Although it would be worthwhile to pursue an extended examination of the meaning of friendship in Julian's social and religious culture as it relates to her writing, such an analysis is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present project; my focus here is solely on Julian's representation of the responsibility that each person bears for others. For an illuminating discussion of representations of friendship and social networks in medieval monastic writing that goes beyond the limiting distinction between "affective" and "instrumental" friendships, however, see Julian Haseldine, "Friendship, Intimacy, and Corporate Networking in the Twelfth Century: The Politics of Friendship in the Letters of Peter the Venerable," *English Historical Review* 519 (2011): 251-80.

[14] Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich,* 29, 46.

[15] Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, 46.

[16] In a notable argument to the contrary that is, however, not yet substantiated, Felicity Riddy suggests that Julian's text may have been designed to help make peace among factions among the Norwich community, as they negotiated responsibility for city governance. In the context of this public debate, any

of intercessory prayer *per se*, Julian's sustained, explicit objection to seeing "meanes" between the self and God is a sweeping disavowal of belief that mediators of any kind—even those traditionally perceived as most powerful—operate between God and any human soul. In this cultural context, Julian's elision of responsibility for fellow Christians, and especially for their spiritual welfare, is a notable statement of a very unconventional ethical belief.

Of course, it may seem that Julian's report of her vision gestures toward the familiar belief that the cosmos is a social world full of "invisible friends," like saints and angels.[17] Her editors Watson and Jenkins suggest that the "frendfulle mene" who advises Julian is "[p]erhaps an angelic or saintly voice."[18] Yet Julian later denies any experience of angels, as she professes, "I beleve and understonde the ministration of holy angeles, as clarkes telle," but immediately adds, "but it was not shewde me" (*Rev.* 80.18-19). It seems more in line with Julian's idea of the cosmic sociality to assume that she perceives the voice to be God's alone, or perhaps the voice of her own faculty of "reson," reminder her of the lesson she has just been taught and encouraging coherence in her social-spiritual and intellectual life. Indeed, her careful phrase, "as it were," conspicuously distances Julian from the belief that any such friendly mediator would in fact speak to her, even as she acknowledges that she experiences her revelation *as if* one does. This slight internal conflict in Julian's representation of what she thinks and believes exemplifies a tendency in her writing that is part of her signature as a mediator between human and divine

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acceptable idea of the common good would have included moral and spiritual considerations, and in fact, Riddy cites "an indenture . . . between the mayor, the sheriffs, and the commonalty" on St. Valentine's Day, 1415, whose preamble promises to "make pees unite and acord poore and ryche to ben oon in herte loue and charite neuermore fro this tyme forth to ben disseuered" (W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, vol. 1 (Norwich, 1906-10), 93-94; quoted in Felicity Riddy, "'Publication' before print: the case of Julian of Norwich," in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700,* ed. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 29-49.

[17] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 50.

[18] Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 228 n. 5.

perspectives. Distancing herself from her limited human perception even as she acknowledges it, Julian performs a double-sided representation of the relationship between God and humans, showing both God's perfect knowing and her imperfect human perceiving, both at once. Of course she promotes the divine over the human view. In the case of the "frendfulle mene," Julian both acknowledges her human (late medieval Christian) habit of seeking the powerful mediation of "frendfulle" others who may shape one's perceptions of God definitively, determining one's relationship with him; yet at the same time she circumscribes this belief with a more comprehensive and authoritative view of the universe that precludes the action of such mediators.

It could be argued that up to this point I have overstated Julian's rejection of mediators, since she also uses very positive terms in her discussion of about "meanes." Indeed, even in Chapter 6, as she exposes the fundamental misunderstanding that prompts prayer through mediators, Julian confers pious, honorific epithets upon the "meanes," such as "holy," "precious," "dereworthy," "worshipful," "blessed," "sweete," and "endles/se." In a passage so explicitly focused on rhetoric, it seems likely that Julian intentionally evokes the sense that she is quoting typical prayers when she uses such terms. Her contemporary English readers may have heard their own voices and those of their neighbors in her examples, perhaps sensing that Julian is not actually praising the "meanes" at this moment but rather sharpening her criticism with direct (if not satirical) quotes. Yet the passage that follows initially seems to counter the critique, showing that in Julian is not openly rejecting mediators but carefully maintaining tension between a negative and a positive representation of "meanes" in devotional customs. In this passage, immediately following her catalogue of the various illusory mediating agents such as

saints that are all actually manifestations of God's "goodnes," Julian seems to change direction suddenly:

> For God of his goodnes hath ordained meanes to helpe us full faire and fele. Of which the chiefe and principal meane is the blessed kinde that he toke of the maiden, with all the meanes that gone before and come after, which belong to our redemption and to our endles salvation. Wherfor it pleaseth him that we seke him and worshippe him by meanes, understanding and knowing that he is the goodnes of all.
>
> (*Rev.* 6.19-24)[19]

With this seemingly definitive statement asserting that God is pleased by prayer through mediators, it would seem that Julian has closed the question—now having made the opposite point to her prior one. She now seems to say that praying via mediators is good practice. Yet embedded in her affirmation of "meanes" is the perplexing suggestion that God is his own "chiefe and principal" mediator, in the incarnation of Jesus, "the blessed kinde that he toke of the maiden." Moreover, the whole of salvation history leading up to the Incarnation and following it ("all the meanes that gone before and come after, which belong to our redemption and to our endles salvation") is subsumed into this "chiefe and principal" mediating agent that is actually God himself—and not really a "meane" at all. Everything about God and everything associated with him is his "goodnes," Julian asserts. And ultimately, although it is possible to seek God through attributes and associations, Julian maintains that this only happens under the condition of "understanding and knowing that he is the goodnes of all," a mental attitude that renders all mediators illusory as Julian has already done just above, in her list of mediators earlier in the

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[19] Later Julian invokes both St. Paul and St. Peter, claiming, "And in the time of joy, I might have said, with Saint Paule: 'Nothing shalle departe me fro the charite of Crist.' And in the paine, …I might have saide with Saint Peter: 'Lord, save me, I perish' (*Rev.* 15.13-15). This uncharacteristic textual reference invoking the authority of saints should be noted because it runs counter to Julian's general practice, but it is well to note that she does not pray to either saint for help. The reference is an exception to use of scriptural authority, but it aligns with her repeated statements that godly wills are identical in the love of God.

chapter. Julian pushes the tension between human and divine perspectives further as she goes on, celebrating the extreme closeness of God's nature to the souls of his human creations. Momentarily she seems to promote petitional prayer ("we may ask of oure lover, with reverence, all that we wille" [*Rev.* 6.47-48]), but to the contrary, she continues, "For oure kindely wille is to have God, and the good wille of God is to have us, and we may never blin [cease] of willing ne of loving till we have him in fulhede of joy" (*Rev.* 49-51). We may pray for whatever we want, that is, but we can really only want one thing, and it is what God wants. Thus petitional prayer, like praying to intermediaries, is rendered unnecessary. In this image of humanity and human prayers, Julian conflates the image of the ordinary Christian with that of the "saintes in heven," whose wills, as she tells us, are also perfectly aligned with the will of God. This oscillation between human and divine perspectives, with the divine always overcoming the human, is a pattern that marks Julian's mediating work throughout the text. Meanwhile, her denial of the means by which humans approach God is part of a broader theory of relationship with God: maintaining that divine forgiveness is a logical impossibility because there is no divine wrath, Julian argues that Christians have no need to seek divine forgiveness, the primary motivation for prayer.[20] In fact, Julian's vision famously does not include revelatory signs of the traditional doctrine that damnation awaits sinful souls after death.[21] Yet she encourages participation in the

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[20] See Michael P. Kuczynski, "'Don't Blame Me'": The Metaethics of a Chaucerian Apology," *The Chaucer Review* 37.4 (2003): 320, 328 n. 20; Kuczynski includes Julian among other writers of the period, most notably Chaucer, who problematize judgment and blame in light of conflicting scriptural references to God's anger and his love. As I will discuss later in this chapter, in Chapter 38 Julian affirms that she believes the teachings of her "faith" regarding punishment in the other world, but she undermines such teachings via imagery (and, sometimes, lack of imagery that she calls special attention to).

[21] Julian's near- (but not quite) espousal of the heretical doctrine of universal salvation is well-known. For a theologian's recent argument summing up the ways in which Julian supports the doctrine, see Maureen L. Walsh, "Re-imagining Redemption: Universal Salvation in the Theology of Julian of Norwich," *Horizons* 39.2 (2012).

sacraments and learning about God through Holy Church, not as requirements of God, but rather as psychological aids provided as a comfort to (merely) human minds.

Up to this point I have focused on how Julian erases her own identity from her revelation narrative, even as she retains vague references to the events and personae that frame the episodes of her visions and accompanying realizations. I will now turn from Julian's autobiographical mediation to her textual mediation—or more precisely, her intertextual mediation—which is also a form of disappearing mediation that argues against the need for intermediaries.

Julian as Textual Mediator: Disappearing Readings

As we have seen, in *A Revelation* Julian's representation of her role as witness of a divine vision expands beyond her representation of it in her earlier version of her visionary account. To give a general sense of the scope of this expansion, we may note that in a recent edition, Julian's shorter, earlier version, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* occupies about thirty pages, while *A Revelation of Love,* her longer, later version, occupies about one hundred thirty.[22] Julian explains this dramatic change somewhat late in *A Revelation,* in an added passage that indicates what has occurred in the years since the visions began. As she explains, her visionary did not end with the time of her illness, when the visions took place; over a period of years, it was "renewde by lighteninges and touchinges" in even further dialogue with her divine interlocutor (*Rev.* 65.30).[23] Julian reports that "twenty yere after the time of the [final] shewing, save thre

[22] See Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 61-120 and 121-383; (Julian's text is on the right side of each folio, with editors' notes occupying the verso side).

[23] Julian actually acknowledges some question regarding whether God is really the one guiding her, at this point in her account. She reports that she was enlightened by a "spirite" whom she hopes is "the same spirite that shewed them alle (*Rev.* 65.30). This intriguing admission of doubt is followed by confident

monthes," she received "teching inwardly" to the effect that she must pay close attention to the details of the example in this final vision, in order to properly understand it (*Rev.* 51.73).[24] Her divine interlocutor tells her, "It longeth to the," to Julian herself, to carry out this focused, analytical work (*Rev*. 51.73-4). With this message, Julian recognizes what she must do with her visions, and especially with her final vision, the example of the lord and servant. She must probe the images she has seen, "seeing inwardly, with avisement, all the pointes and propertes that were showed," and by this process of conscious, careful examination she must determine their symbolic meanings (*Rev.* 51.7). No passive recipient of the visions, Julian must reinterpret what she has seen and take part in shaping the message that emanates from God through them. These meanings she must then pass on to her even-Christians, to whom (she emphatically argues) the vision has been given as much as it has been given to Julian herself.[25]

Because she expresses her further work in terms of internal dialogue and turns of thought, Julian's description of her process of studying the visions gives the impression that she herself did nothing but converse with God and think quietly. Perhaps meditation was indeed the major part of her work. As many have noted, however, the meanings Julian draws from her visions suggest engagement with many other thinkers, including some devotional writers from her own

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interpretive discussion, suggesting that Julian's misgiving is more rhetorical than real, and thus I do not pursue a discussion of it in the present study; it is an intriguing reflection, however, of the active interest in discerning spirits in Julian's cultural world.

[24] For detailed analysis and discussion of *A Revelation* as "the history of how [Julian] comes to understand" her visions, shifting in genre from "narrative self-account of an experience" to analytical "commentary," see Barry Windeatt, "Julian's Second Thoughts: The Long Text Tradition," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz McAvoy (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), 102-15, at 102-3.

[25] For example, Julian declares, "For the shewing I am not good but if I love God the better, and in as much as ye love God the better, it is more to you than to me" (*Rev.* 9.1-2), and "Alle that I say of me, I mene in the person of alle my evencristen, for I am lerned in the gostely shewing of our lord God that he meneth so" (*Rev.* 8.31).

time as well as some who came much earlier and, most notably for the present study, the definitively authoritative text of the Bible.[26] Some critics have argued that Julian avoids mentioning sources as a self-protective strategy, to avoid calling attention to her theological work. Yet Julian does call attention to the interpretive work she has done in the years following her initial visionary experience, suggesting that although she may not have wanted to be seen as a woman writer, she actively promotes herself as an "intellectual visionary," whose visions can be trusted as orthodox and true representations of God's wisdom.[27] Consulting traditional sources of wisdom about the nature of God's relationship to humanity was evidently an important part of Julian's contemplative process. Yet according to Julian's view of mediators between the soul and God, other texts—biblical, theological, or devotional—should be unnecessary.

Julian's claims that the new revelation is itself the definitive word of God to all people could seem disingenuous, in light of her evident work to modify it. In keeping with her other treatment of intermediaries, however, Julian's willingness to incorporate texts that mediate between her reader and the image of God in her revelation is not necessarily a contradiction

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[26] In their important edition of both texts, which includes an additional volume of editorial notes, Colledge and Walsh acknowledge the Bible as a source for Julian, focusing especially on New Testament sources and, to a lesser extent, Isaiah, with only brief mention of the wisdom books, which will be the focus of my analysis of Julian's engagement with the Bible; see Edmund Colledge and James J. Walsh, *Showings*, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 19-20; see also *Book of Showings,* esp. 43, 84. In her bibliography for Watson and Jenkins' edition, Amy Appleford lists over fifty sources and analogues for Julian's writing. She does not, however list the Bible itself or any liturgical texts, only devotional writings. This is not to suggest that Appleford, or Watson and Jenkins, is arguing that Julian consulted all of the texts listed, nor that they argue that she knew nothing of the Bible or liturgy; either suggestion is absurd. I simply point to the bias toward devotional writings because I think that it reflects a blind spot in scholarship on Julian's literary work with sacred texts. See Amy Appleford, "Bibliography," in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 457-74, esp. 4-6.

[27] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, 312; Kerby-Fulton focuses on the fact that Julian hid her female identity and emphasized the "intellectual" over the emotional aspects of her vision.

either of her belief in the vision's divine nature or her belief that God is speaking directly to everyone through the revelation. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Julian argues that intermediaries are useful to the extent that they communicate the goodness of God and contribute to a comprehensive view of his perfect love—that is, to the extent that they disappear with a close look, revealing themselves as manifestations of God. Julian aims to make texts do this. She does not compare her revelation with other texts in the manner of a scholastic exegete, testing and verifying the new message by identifying and resolving contradictions between the old authorities and the new.[28] Rather, she intensifies meaning through intertextual work, enriching and complicating her visionary imagery with texts that help her to transmit the message that she believes God wishes all to know: the message that no one need fear judgment, since he has already accomplished the grand salvific project manifest in the Incarnation and the Passion, and his immanent presence guarantees a mysteriously blissful solution to the seeming problem of evil in the world. The incorporation of biblical images into Julian's vision, meanwhile, reflects back on the Bible, the text from which they have come, expanding and altering their original meanings to make Christian tradition support Julian's provocative new theology. The original messages of Julian's revelation are meant to alter tradition so radically that the old images disappear in light of the new.

To identify how Julian manages the responsibility to inform her visions with images from the Bible while making them appear to her readers to be the direct manifestation of God's immediate presence, I will examine the most evident and most definitive means by which she

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[28] For an illuminating discussion of Julian's work as exegesis, see Nicholas Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays,* ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1998), [61-90]; Watson describes Julian's exegetical technique as giving the "sense that the revelatory process is still at work even as Julian sets out to record an experience that is far in her past" (Watson, "Trinitarian Hermeneutic," 68).

and her sources disappear into the revelation: her evocative imagery, framed by the controlling image of the face of Christ. While Julian's work with scripture is subtle in a certain way—in her silence regarding her sources—at the same time her scriptural images are attention-getting, and some of them would have been immediately evident to readers who were familiar with other devotional treatises circulating in England when she was writing, such as the early Middle English guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse* (c. 1225-1240) and contemplative treatises like Walter Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection* (c. 1380-1396) and the anonymous *The Chastising of God's Children* (c. 1379-1383).[29] As Denise Nowakalski Baker argues, "common participation in the rich discourse of the contemplative tradition" links Julian to other visionary authors, all of whom offer distinctive representations of the literary-religious culture of late medieval England.[30] Her fellow devotional writers and their readers would almost certainly have caught Julian's textual references, particularly her references to certain passages of the Bible that influenced them all. Certainly Julian acknowledges that her work will have different effects on different audiences; she claims that she intends it "for them that be simple, for ease and comfort" (*Rev.* 9.3), but she acknowledges that she is passing on knowledge that the "wise" (*Rev.* 9.3) already "wit . . . wele" (*Rev.* 9.3). My examination of some of Julian's most celebrated images, in light of the image of Jesus's face that inflects them all, will point to ways in which she engages with existing texts that other devotional writers used, as well as some that are more

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[29] It has become standard practice to read Julian's writing in comparison with other four major visionary writers in Middle English, including Hilton but also Richard Rolle, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Margery Kempe. Recently, Denise N. Baker has argued compellingly, based on historical, manuscript evidence as well as textual evidence comparing their theologies, that there is no strong evidence that Julian was influenced by any of the four (Baker, "Julian of Norwich," 55). My argument does not rely on an assumption that Julian read these authors, but rather that the images common to them all were present in a variety of strains, two which Julian responds.

[30] Baker, "Julian of Norwich," 62-63.

unusual. Julian's new new arguments are clearest in contradistinction to the arguments her contemporaries develop in their writing, based on similar imagery.

In order to transmit the message she takes as God's new revelation, Julian must contend with existing ideas of God and his relationship to humanity. As we have seen, she undermines certain ideas, including the "custome" of seeking God through intermediaries and attempting to be an intermediary oneself, by expressing them in terms of her own mistaken ideas, which are corrected by the imagery of her visions and their accompanying explanations. Like her work with social conventions, Julian's work with textual tradition aims to show the world that God's judgment is not to be feared, since the history of his relationship with creation is that of successively more intimate unification between God and his creatures, even to the point of being unified with them as they sin. As she announces midway through *A Revelation,* in Chapter 36, "Oure lorde God shewde that a deed shalle be done, and himselfe shalle do it, and it shall be wurshipfulle and mervelous and plentuous." Julian speaks as though this "deed," which will solve the problem of sin for good and fill all heaven with eternal bliss, will be done in relation to her personally, though we assume that she speaks here "in the person of alle my evencristen," as she has put it in Chapter 8. But the most remarkable feature of this amazing feat is how Julian will participate in it: "I shalle do right nought but sinne. And my sinne shall not let his goodnes working" (*Rev.* 36.4-5). This passage expresses her apocalyptic vision as an incorporation of sin into salvation—the deed will not be done by sinners' overcoming or defeat of their sin, nor will it mean the rejection of sinners from heaven. Sinning, Julian will take some part in God's amazing future act of redemption. This is the core message about the new relationship between humans and God that Julian must transmit.

In order to promote her new message, Julian must acknowledge and transfigure old ideas about God's relationship to the world. To do this she presents them in images, which she introduces within her continuous visions of the mysteriously changing face of Jesus on her crucifix. In fact, one important implication of Julian's message is that the image of God is changing, from a human perspective, though God of course remains the same in essence. The first image Julian chooses to incorporate and revise is an image of the world from which writers traditionally inferred an image of God. Julian selects certain features of this traditional image, the image of all creation as a tiny thing, to argue that human ideas of God and his relationship with the world must be understood as relative to human perception, and from this to gesture toward the redemptive possibilities indicated by the Passion, from a new, divine perspective.

Julian's first vision is first and foremost an image of the bleeding head of Jesus on her crucifix, a sight she gazes on with wonder and takes as a sign that God has chosen to become "homely" with her. This is the beginning of the face-to-face encounter with God that constitutes Julian's visionary experience, framing all of the visions that occur while she is regarding God and enjoying his direct look in return. While Julian does occasionally report moments when she is not actively looking at the crucifix (when she falls asleep, for example, much later in the visionary narrative) she makes it clear that the crucifix is always before her eyes, and thus, in a sense, God is always looking at her. This makes the image of Jesus's face into a context for all of the other sights she sees, as well as the thoughts accompanying them.

Accordingly, Julian introduces the first of the ancillary visions, the image of a tiny object that represents all creation, in Chapter 5, in the midst of her first sight of the Passion. At this moment, she has just begun to see "the sight of the head bleeding" (*Rev.* 5.1) on her crucifix. Gazing at the sculpted face of Jesus, Julian watches his blood trickle down his face from under

the crown of thorns. And within the bloody face she simultaneously sees "a ghostly sight of his homely loving" (*Rev.* 5.2). This is the image of all creation in relation to God:

> And in this, he shewed a little thing the quantity of an haselnot, lying in the palme of my hand as me semide, and it was as rounde as any balle. I looked theran with the eye of my understanding, and thought: "What may this be?" And it was answered generally thus: "It is all that is made." I marvayled how it might laste, for methought it might sodenly have fallen to nought for littlenes. And I was answered in my understanding: "It lasteth and ever shall, for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God."
> (*Rev.* 5.7-13)[31]

As Julian's editors Watson and Jenkins suggest, Julian's image echoes an analogous passage in the Book of Wisdom, also known as the Wisdom of Solomon, a text considered apocryphal but included in the medieval Bible and as well as the liturgy cycle of readings, mainly because its prophetic content was valued.[32] The passage in Wisdom also depicts creation as a tiny, round thing, in similar style to Julian's both in the language and in the awed tone of the description:

> For as a poynt of [speck on] a balaunce, so is befor thee the roundnesse of erthis; and as a drope of morntid dew, that goth down in to the erthe. And thou has merci of alle, for alle things thou maist; and forberist the synnes of men, for penaunce. Forsothe thou loouest alle thingus that ben, and no thing thou hatedest of hem, that thou madist. Hou forsothe myʒte any thing abide stille, but thou haddest wold? or that of thee were not clepid, shulde ben kept? Thou sparist forsothe to alle; for thine thei ben, Lord, that loouest soulis.
> (*Wis*. 11.23-27)[33]

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[31] Cf. *Vis.* 4.7-8

[32] See Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Contexts of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96.

[33] Throughout my discussion of Julian's work with the wisdom literature, I will refer to the Wycliffite Bible. There is ample and growing evidence that translations of the Bible in English, or parts of it, were very numerous in England even in the years immediately following Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409, when Julian is thought to have composed *A Revelation of Love*. Correspondences between Julian's language and the language of the Wycliffite Bible (particularly the earlier version) prompt me to provide this text for comparison. I believe that Julian consulted an English Bible or else worked closely with someone who did. She may also have been an unskilled translator of Latin or have worked with a

For Julian, the biblical text here asserts a relationship between God and humanity that is perfectly amenable to her theology. She sees God's sustaining love for all of his creation as the essential truth about the human position in the cosmos. As we will see in her later images, to Julian sin itself only exists in the suffering it causes, and suffering makes up for sin, so there is no question of failing in "penaunce"; she does not assert that this means that everyone will be sustained eternally by God, in heaven, but she provides all of the steps of the argument up to the conclusion. A closer look at the scriptural passage in biblical context shows, however that Julian's use of it elides the broader message of the biblical text, in its context.

The verses of Wisdom 11 leading up verse 23 do not support Julian's all-encompassing view of God's mercy. They sharply divide those God favors from those he punishes, and they also lay out his system of reward and punishment: "For by what things their enemies were punished, when their drink failed them, the children of Israel abounded therewith, and rejoiced. By the same things they in their need were benefited." (*Wis.* 11:5-6). Thus when the Israelites are thirsty, "water was given them out of the high rock" (*Wis.* 11:4), but as for their enemies, "instead of a fountain of an ever-running river, thou gavest human blood to the unjust" (*Wis.* 11:7). In the Bible, the enemies' "thirst" (*Wis.* 11:9) is precisely what shows God's favor on his chosen people, through perfect opposition: "their thirsting being unlike to that of the just" (*Wis.* 11:15) who enjoy "abundant water" (*Wis.* 11:8). The episode ends with a summary point: "That they might know that by what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented" (*Wis.* 11:17). This chapter on the retributive power of God's justice, as he visits afflictions on the enemies of the children of Israel, disappears from Julian's use of the image of the "little thing"

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poor translation of the Vulgate, however. See Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 138n7-13.

and its accompanying words of awe and praise, reassuringly marveling that "all thing hath being" by God's sustaining love.

It seems initially that Julian simply makes her choice to lift out a message that matches her views best, leaving behind the entire story of the punishments of the enemies of Israel. Julian does not simply repeat the image, however. She yokes it to other images to make it further the message of her revelation, specifically contextualizing it within the image of the face of Jesus, which determines its ultimate meaning in her text. And as I will discuss below, as *A Revelation* proceeds and Christ's blood flow changes from a "trekile" (4.1) to "plentuous bleding of the head" (8.1) and then eventually to the even more "plentuously bleding" (12.1) body, the unused lines of this passage seem to remain in Julian's mind, as she revisits them later. Recontextualizing the images of thirst, blood, and flowing water in her Passion visions, she transfigures them to contradict their meaning in Wisdom and support her redemptive view of salvation history.

In attending closely to Julian's work with imagery from the wisdom literature, I have departed significantly from the approaches of other Julian scholars who have discussed Julian's engagement with the sapiential literature of the Bible at length in that my interest is not in the allegorical or divine figure of Wisdom, or "Sophia," but rather on the biblical representation of divine justice.[34] My argument parallels that of Kevin Magill, however, who sees Julian's

[34] See Barbara Newman, "Some Mediaeval Theologians and the Sophia Tradition," *Downside Review* 108.371 (1990): 111-130, esp. 127, 125; Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 43; Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 205-234; and Joan M. Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 66; despite its title, Nuth's book discusses neither the biblical book or figure of Wisdom at length. Denise Nowakowski Baker also discusses the feminine *imago Dei* in Julian, with specific mention of the Wisdom books; like Newman and McAvoy, Baker's interest is in the female divine figure of Wisdom, rather than the prophetic, intellectually challenging content of the books themselves; see Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's* Showings*: From A Vision to Book*

engagement with divine knowledge as central to the didactic, pastoral purpose of her visionary writing. Magill places Julian "firmly in the context of an educative, communal, and visionary project"; he sees *A Revelation* as accomplishing a "redemption" of Julian's limited visual insights through a "dramatic encounter of human and divine perspectives" that re-interprets her seeing through a divine lens.[35] As Magill argues, in the longer version Julian's new insights replace a previous fear of annihilation, present in the first version. This fear is based on awareness of the contingency of all existence when the relationship between God and creation is seen from a human perspective. Julian replaces this perspective with a divine perspective; in so doing, she attempts to foster joyful security grounded in the "irreducible value of the human person" when the relationship is seen through the loving eyes of God.[36] Indeed, along with the image as it is found in the Book of Wisdom, other analogues for Julian's "little thing" appear in devotional texts circulating in her time, suggesting that the image was considered an important one to contemplate for those meditating on the relationship between God and his creation, particularly his human creations. Julian's version promotes her intervention in this discourse to promote her distinctive message about the creative love and power of God, as well as her argument about perceptible reality.

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. 119-134. In a study of Julian's theory of exegesis, Michelle Karnes does briefly acknowledge the applicability of the prophetic and wisdom texts to Julian's work, via a reference to Bonaventure's commentary on Ezechiel 1:6 (350-2); Karnes ultimately jumps over the scriptural echoes in Julian to develop a theory of Julian's text as a commentary on exegesis itself, "giving interpretation the status of narrative" (356); see Michelle Karnes, "Julian of Norwich's Art of Interpretation," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42.2 (2012): 333-63. I agree with Karnes that Julian writes interpretation as a story, but it remains true that Julian's actual use of the biblical wisdom texts goes largely unmentioned outside of this chapter.

[35] Kevin J. Magill, *Julian of Norwich: Visionary or Mystic?* Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2006), 133, 98; see also 121-29.

[36] Magill, *Julian of Norwich*, 129

Watson and Jenkins note an analogous passage in Walter Hilton's devotional guide *The Scale of Perfection* (c. 1380-96) a book they call "the single most influential Middle English treatise of its kind."[37] Hilton's image is explicitly dismissive of a little nut-like thing, however; he argues that although "our lord is withinne alle creatures," it is

> not on that manere as a kirnel is hid withinne the schale of a note [shell of a nut], or as a litil bodili thinge is hid and holden withinne anothir mykil [a larger one]. But He is withinne alle creatures as hooldynge and kepynge hem in here beynge."
> (*Scale* 2.33.2254-56)[38]

Thus while Hilton affirms God's sustaining presence, as Julian does, her use of the imagery contradicts his, in that she suggests that she sees God's creative and sustaining love "[i]n this little thing" (*Rev.* 5.14) while retaining the suggestion that his presence is somehow hidden within, reminiscent of a "haselnot" within its shell. Hilton finds nothing to discover in unpacking layers of symbolic meaning in the material world. Hilton's dismissive attitude toward the world itself is akin to that of the tough-minded author of *Ancrene Wisse* (c. 1225-1240), an earlier Middle English text that also refers briefly to Wisdom 11:23, imagining creation as a little round object. In *Ancrene Wisse,* discussion turns upon a different topic from God's merciful love, but like Hilton's treatise, the anchoresses' guide too promotes a dismissive attitude toward the material world, suggesting that even the most intense suffering in material life is trivial, "nis bute bal-plohe" [is nothing but ball-play] (*Ancr. Wis.* 4.69). In this case, the "bal" and its companion image from Wisdom, the image of "a lutel deawes drope" [a little dewdrop] (*Ancr. Wis.* 4.70),

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[37] Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich,* 464.

[38] Selections from Hilton are taken from Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection, Book II,* ed. Thomas H. Bestul, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, Robbins Library Digital Projects (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).

represent suffering in the world compared with suffering the pain of hell.[39] The sense is similar to that in Julian, in that both texts use the ball image to represent the world and what it holds as small and unworthy of respect. *Ancrene Wisse* scoffs or winks at the world, however, while Julian is inclined to worry about it; as she gazes at the little thing in her hand, she repeats her anxious thought: "methought it might have fallen to nought for littlenes" (*Rev*. 5.19-20).[40] Here Julian again emphasizes the mistaken anxiety that arises within a human perspective on the cosmos. Holding the "little thing" in her own hand, Julian sees it as primarily fragile. But from God's eternal perspective, it enjoys the benefit of his endlessly sustaining power.

Julian vocalizes the conflict between the two perspectives, briefly appearing in the role of the mediator receiving the vision, in a manner that is consistent with her use of the fear of destruction and annihilation throughout *A Revelation.* She points to her fear of disappearing—as she does when she refers to those who are damned, of whom "there is no more mention made of them before God and all his holen [holy ones]" (*Rev.* 33.10)—and counters it with evidence from her revelation, evidence from God's perspective, that there is no chance of being abandoned by God. And she has done even earlier in the text, as she describes her intention to exemplify death, Julian uses fear of doom as a way to introduce the superior logic of the creator's loving care for his creation. In this way, her own imagery mirrors both the visual aspects of the passage from

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[39] "Godd hit wat, leove sustren, al the wa of this world is i-evenet to helle alre leaste pine.
Al nis bute bal-plohe. Al nis nawt swe muchel as is a lutel deawes drope toyeines the
brade sea ant alle worldes weattres"

[God knows (lit., God knows it), dear sisters, all the suffering of this world is compared to the least of all of hell's pain. All [suffering in the world] is [nothing] but ball-play (i.e., a very easy and pleasant thing). All [of it] is not so much as a little drop of dew against (i.e., in comparison to) the broad sea and all the world's waters] (*Ancr. Wis.* 4.68-71). Both text and translation are taken from *Ancrene Wisse*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series, ed. Robert Hasenfranz (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 209.

[40] Cf. *Vis*. 4.34-35.

Wisdom 11:23 and its concluding message, that humans belong to God, who “lovest soulis.” Yet Julian does more with the image than rehearse its positive view of creation as an answer to fears about the possibility of its coming to an end. Julian’s work with the image also addresses an issue of knowledge and understanding, the problem of how humans may perceive God’s power and eternal support when they can only see the ephemeral material world.

Julian offers the image of creation as a little thing to emphasize how material experience works as a mediating agent between God and human souls, suggesting something utterly other than and beyond itself through God’s presence in the material world. Her idea of material creation as a mediator mirrors her attitude toward more specific devotional “meanes,” seeing them as illusory signs of the divine presence behind them, but useful insofar as they point to that presence. As her editors suggest, “perhaps” Julian makes a specific comparison with a hazelnut, “despite the *Scale,”* which she almost certainly knew, to create “an evocation of the idea that meaning is hidden inside appearances like a kernel inside a nut.”[41] Julian’s image certainly affirms that God “made,” “loveth,” and “kepeth” the little thing, but she introduces the image just after she imagines God’s love in layers around his creation, like “clothing, that for love wrappeth us and windeth us, halseth us and all becloseth us” (*Rev.* 5.3-4). The tiny and insignificant hazelnut-like image suggests that the little thing that is “all that is made,” is complex, its internality a mystery, and the layers of meaning that surround it like a nutshell are themselves manifestations of divine love, much as the “meanes” by which Christians pray are actually God’s goodness. Thus although Julian argues that mediating agents between the soul and God should be exposed as God in action, rendering them irrelevant, at the same time she presents creation itself as an image that is mediated lovingly by God, given substance and intelligibility by the layers of love and protection with which he surrounds it.

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[41] Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 138n7.

Julian’s interpretation of her vision uncovers a paradox inherent in the image of the hazelnut-like cosmos. The “little thing” is “betweene” God and herself. What it is *to her* is its meaning about God’s role in relation to all creation, herself included. Little as it is, by its existence it stands for God’s creative, sustaining, and lovingly devoted power. She cannot really perceive God without it, and yet it stands between her and God, an insignificant mediator which she is instructed to think of as “naught” but which God lovingly sustains. Julian thus begins to understand herself by looking at what she is part of—the created world—from the outside. This image expresses the mediating function of material reality and the paradoxical relationship of a Christian to it. The only way beyond the separation from God caused by human limitation is the Incarnation, the “chiefe” among mediating agents. Yet wisdom, or knowledge, in the teaching offered by Julian’s revelatory visions, seems to offer a way to grow closer to God by seeing through his perspective, if not to become entirely one with him. Thus Julian’s work as mediator is to make knowledge of the Incarnation more comprehensive, using concepts of the Incarnation as powerful tools to revise and remake the scriptural image. Julian’s placement of the image *within* an embodied image of Jesus, the “bodely sight lasting of the plentuous bleding of the hede” (6.10, cf. 5.1), works toward this revision of the Scriptural image to point to the powerful and sustaining love that she now perceives in the physical world through Jesus’s entering it. Julian sees that the physical world either links her to God or separates her from him, either hides or reveals him, depending on whether she sees it from God’s perspective or her own.

Julian’s further point in her treatment of this image is that no image of God is an absolute representation of him. Rather, images of God are relative to human perception, and God intends them to be so. This argument in Julian becomes apparent when we read her image of the “little thing” in light of another English devotional text circulating in the latter years of the fourteenth

century, *The Chastising of God's Children* (c. 1379-1383), a guide to contemplation written for a community of English religious women. Chapter 3 of *Chastising* elaborately develops an image comparable to the "little thing," the image of a "lytil white stone" (234.3) that is held in the hand of the contemplative, as Julian holds the "little thing" in her hand. Examining the image from *Chastising* helps to further clarify Julian's intentional use of the scriptural image of the "little thing" in her text as a way to ground her unconventionally redemptive view of the cosmos in authoritative scripture while calling into question the original sense of the scriptural image.[42] Like Julian's "little thing," the scriptural "poynt," the "bal" in *Ancrene Wisse,* and even Hilton's "not," the white stone or "calcalus" (234.5) in *Chastising* is "litylle and rownde" (234.8-9) so insignificant that it has no weight and "ȝyf alle a man trede it with his fete, ȝit he is not hurte þerwith" (234.6-7). Unlike Julian's image and the others, however, its "rowndenesse" (234.35) does not represent creation. Rather, the *Chastising*-author tells us, "Be þis litel stone we vndyrstande oure lorde iesu cryste" (234.10), his bright whiteness symbolizing his pure perfection, the "burning love of the euerlastynge worde" (234.18) for all of his creation. Even though it represents Jesus himself, the stone is little because "the sonne of god sete hymselfe atte nouȝt" (234.23-24) and "he is botte litle in þer hertes that loues hym nouȝt, and þerfore thay sette hym atte nouȝt" (234.32-33). In other words, the stone shows how the appearance of God's nature depends upon the perspective of the one who considers him.

[42] All passages from *The Chastising of God's Children* are taken from pages 234-35 of *The Chastising of God's Children and The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957). See also Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich,* 463. The source of the passage in *Chastising* describing the stone is Chapter 4 of *The Sparkling Stone,* by Jan Van Ruusbroec (1293-1381); see Van Ruusbroec, *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, The Sparkling Stone, The Book of Supreme Truth,* ed. Evelyn Underhill (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1916), 187-89. The *Chastising* did circulate in England in Julian's time, while according to Watson and Jenkins its Dutch source was not "much known in England" (Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich,* 13).

While Julian remarks that the world seems little when one sees it in the presence of its creator, the *Chastising*-author remarks that the creator, too, seems little under certain conditions, both when he is seen without love, and also when he is seen through his own eyes, in his sovereign choice to "sete hymselfe atte nouȝt." In fact, as I will note in somewhat more detail below, Julian's vision will also include an explicit image of God's degrading himself by taking the abject position of sinning humanity. More generally, however, here in Chapter 5 the parallel theme in *A Revelation* and *Chastising* of shifting sizes and values, contingent on shifting levels of awareness, shows Julian's engagement with specific themes in devotional discourse, drawn from shared source texts. Julian wrote among writers and readers who considered the Book of Wisdom a key text for exploring how God's image may change, relative to human perspectives, while remaining "grounded in Goddes worde." She does more with the image, however, by pairing it with Mary's "beholding of God" (*Rev.* 7.5) that she sees "in the same time" (*Rev.* 7.2), an exemplar of the ideal human perspectival position. And even more definitively, Julian contextualizes this whole set of images within her own constant beholding of the bleeding head of God: "And in alle that time that he shewd this that I have now saide in gostely sight, I saw the bodely sight lasting of the plentuous bleding of the hede" (7.9-10). Julian insistently points to the suffering of the Passion in the *head* of God, an image that embodies the idea of God's submitting his supremacy itself to degradation in the form of helpless bodily suffering.

In the context of her contemporary devotional discourse, Julian's selection of certain features of the image of creation as a tiny object shows that she is working against a view of materiality as trivial or ephemeral, even as she attempts to expose creation for what it really is: like the intermediaries upon which Christians were accustomed to focus their prayers, the material world is a manifestation of God, and in particular of his essential goodness. As Julian

argues, this goodness includes his generous reversal of positions with human beings. If we step back from the image of the little thing to consider it in the context of the bleeding head of Jesus, as Julian directs us to do, we see that her interpretation of the Passion itself informs her interpretation of the hazelnut-like world. The very familiar image of the crown of thorns is an image of the Godhead as material, in the hands of his human creations. This correlates with the image of "our lady, Sent Mary" (7.1-2), "as she was when she conceivede" (4.24-25, which Julian also presents in the image of the "little thing" and the bleeding face of Jesus. Mary at the time of her conception holds Jesus's tiny material body, as Julian holds the little thing in her hand. While Julian does not explicitly suggest that material creation *is* God delivered into the hands of a human being, correspondence between her image and that of the *Chastising*-author would evoke the possibility for readers familiar with the other English devotional text. And the image of Jesus's bleeding face confirms the suggestion.

Julian makes two essential points, then, via the image of the "little thing": First, creation itself is a wondrous manifestation of the goodness of God, less explicit but essentially equivalent to the body of Christ, the "chiefe" mediator between the human mind and God. Second, the image of God shifts and becomes inverted, appearing overwhelmingly mighty or seeming "as naught," according to human perceptions. Thus although God may seem different from one authoritative image to another, new perceptions of him are equally authentic insofar as they make his goodness manifest. This is an important point for justifying the revisionary images her visions have produced. Even the image of the Passion is under erasure, indicating not the suffering it obviously manifests, the sins of those who tortured Jesus, or the guilty horror of those who love him, but rather joy in its underlying meaning, which is that God loves his creation to the extent that he trades places with his creatures, becoming an object of their judgment that is

under their power. God's image is thus relative to human thoughts, not statically or absolutely true in any given text. New images and new ideas are as authoritative as old ones, insofar as they can reveal the single, absolute fact of his goodness. According to Julian's argument about the meaning of materiality, and also according to traditional Christian assumptions of which she is conscious, looking into the living, bleeding face of Jesus in the Passion is the closest one can come to direct perception of God's nature; thus whatever ideas about God proceed from such a sight can be trusted to represent him in the most edifying way. With this established, Julian is free to make surprising suggestions about God's relationship with humanity, through new, transfiguring images.

After the image of the "little thing," Julian moves on to less conventional imagery, now combining additional scriptural references with the changing image of the face of Jesus that dominates her revelation. The next focal point for her meditation is the "plentuous bleding of the hede" (7.9) that authoritatively concludes her representation of the changeableness and relativity of God's image by revisiting the face of God as a controlling context. Julian enters a new set of images framed by the plenteous bleeding of the head, however, to advance a new, and more controversial, argument about the nature of sin, suffering, and redemption. Her contemplation of the bleeding head leads her to take comfort in it as evidence "that oure good lorde, that is so reverent and dredfulle, is so homely and so curteyse" (7.25-26). From this observation, and through images of the face of God in terms of lordship, suffering, and service, Julian works her way from the traditional Christian assumption that suffering is redemptive toward her further, much more controversial suggestion equating sin and suffering. Julian's argument relies heavily on interpretation of the face of Jesus, and specifically its "chere" [expression] (7.30), a feature of the face that indicates judgment and that she calculatedly conflates with other images of

judgment. As I will show, from her controversial idea about sin and suffering, manifest in the plenitude of Jesus's bleeding, Julian goes further to argue that the experience of sin itself is actually integral to the experience of redemption, an idea that will be echoed in Chapter 36 with her announcement of the marvelous "deed" to come. Even later, Julian will indicate the centrality of the face to her visionary experience in a summary of her visionary lessons as a series of facial expressions: "thre manner of cheres of oure lorde" (71.6). This reflects the fact that Julian's imagery relating to plenteous bleeding makes a crucial ethical statement about sin and salvation, and that these ideas are definitely shaped by her encounter with the face of God.[43]

Because Julian incorporates scriptural and devotional images within the images of her visions, she gives the sense that the only source of her ideas is the visionary experience itself, shaped by the mental experience of divine promptings. Her complex argument about the relationship among suffering, sin, and redemption, however, grows out of intertextual references embedded in her lengthy description of "the plentuous bleding of the hede" of Jesus. Within the central image—a face with blood running down it—Julian inscribes a set of images that seem incongruous, to the extent that her editors and critics have remarked upon their strangeness, originality, and disjunction from other images in her writing.[44]:

> And in that time that he shewd this that I have now saide in ghostly sight, I saw the bodely sight lasting of the plentuous bleding of the hede. The gret droppes of blode felle downe fro under the garlonde like pelottes, seming as it had comen oute of the veines. And in the

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[43] The full summary reads:

> I have mening of thre manner of cheres of oure lorde. The furst is chere of passion, as he shewde while he was with us in this life, dying. And though this beholding be morning and swemfulle, yet it is glad and mery, for he is God. The seconde manner of chere, it is pitte and ruth and compassion, and this sheweth he to all his lovers with sekernesse of keping that hath nede to his mercy. The thirde is the blisseful chere as it shalle be withouten ende, and this as oftenes shewed, and longeste time continued. (71.6-12)

[44] See Barratt, *Stabant matres dolorosae*, 68; and Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 146n17-18.

> coming oute they were browne rede, for the blode was full thicke. and in the spreding abrode they were bright rede. And whan it came at the browed, ther they vanished. and notwithstonding the bleding continued tille many thinges were sene and understonded, nevertheles the fairhede and the livelyhede continued in the same bewty and livelines.
>
> The plentuoushede is liek to the droppes of water that falle of the evesing of an house after a grete shower of raine, that falle so thicke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wit. And for the roundhede, they were like to the scale of hering, in the spreding of the forhede. Thes thre thinges cam to my minde in the time: pelettes, for the roundhede in the coming oute of the blode; the scale of herring, for the roundhede in the spreding; the droppes of the evesing of a house, for the plentuoushede unnumerable. This shewing was quick and lively, and hidous and dredfulle, and swete and lovely. And of all the sight that I saw, this was most comfort to me: that oure good lorde, that is so reverent and dredfulle, is so homely and so curteyse. And this most fulfilled me with liking and sekernesse in soule.
>
> (*Rev.* 8-26; my emphasis)

The seeming disconnect between Jesus's bleeding face and the concept of a lord's solidarity with his subject (a "lorde" "is so homely and so curteyse") is a reference to the Book of Proverbs, another of the sapiential books of the Bible. Julian points to the idea as the interpretive key to her image, a few lines later, "to the understonding of this," i.e., the image of the blood falling like rain, "he shewde this open example":

> It is the most worship that a solempne king or a gret lorde may do to a pore servante if he wille be homely with him, and namely if he shew it himselfe of a fulle true mening and with a glad chere, both in previte and openly.
>
> (7.27-30)

This passage is an addition to the earlier text, part of the material that Julian has added in the intervening years. Her acknowledgment of it as an "open example," distinct from revelations shared "in previte," subtly marks it as an idea that is available not only to those who experience

the mysteries of personal revelations, but to everyone in common, in the revealed text of the Bible.

Julian's new idea comes from a line in Proverbs that makes a clear statement about the importance of the lord's showing his glad face to his servant, though on the surface it does not suggest anything to do with bleeding:

> Lijf is in the gladnesse of the cheer of the king; and his merci is as a reyn comynge late.
>
> (*Prov.* 16.15, later version)[45]

It is likely that Julian was familiar with the metaphor of "merci" as "reyn," as it is noted and explicated in a marginal gloss of the passage in the Middle English Bible: "*as a reyn*; for as a reyn comynge late is good and swete to the . . . erthe, so the mercy of the king is good to hem that han nede to remyssioun."[46] Both images from this verse, the rain and the king's expression, appear in Julian's representation of the bleeding of Christ's head, one in the image itself and one in the commentary that follows. The scripture verse gives form to her vision and provides a basis for meditation on the nature and attitude of God, as well as the nature of his mercy. Julian remarks upon the "blisseful chere" of Christ in Chapter 21, as she recounts the last moments before the end of her series of visions of the Passion (*Rev*. 21.9). As Julian explains, at that time she was anxiously awaiting the moment of Christ's death in the vision, waiting in tense expectation for the moment when she would see "the body alle dead" (*Rev*. 21.6). Christ's death is a sight that she never ends up seeing, however. Instead, she sees a "glad chere" that signifies life: "And right in the same time that methought by seming that the life might no lenger last, and

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[45] I have used the earlier version for most of the Wycliffite Bible quotations in this dissertation, but in this case I am using the later version because the language is both easier to understand and closer to Julian's, though the sense is the same in both. For *Prov*. 16.15, the earlier version reads, "In gladnesse of the chere of the king lif; and the noble mercy of him as euetid weder."

[46] Forshall and Madden, *Holy Bible*, 26.

the shewing of the ende behoved nedes to be nye—sodenly, I beholding in the same crosse, he changed in blisseful chere," which change in Christ's face, Julian says, "changed mine, and I was as glad and mery as it was possible" (21.6-10).

In the earlier version of Julian's account, *A Vision*, the discussion of Christ's "chere" stops here for the moment, but in *A Revelation* the significance of Christ's sudden happy expression has grown in Julian's mind, such that her emotional experience is no longer the focus of her writing; rather, her purpose is to interpret "our lordes mening" (*Rev.* 21.12) with respect to the change in his face. After her long years of thought, in *A Revelation* she now interprets her vision of Christ's "blisseful chere" as a prefiguring of everlasting life. For Julian, God's change of expression from the sorrowful "chere of passion" (the expression of the suffering Christ on her crucifix) to a "blissfulle chere" at what seems like the end of his life, is an exemplar of what happens when human beings suffer and seem to die. Suffering leading to death is actually what leads to life in heaven: "we be now, in our lordes mening, in his crosse with him in oure paines and in our passion, dying," but at "the last point, sodeynly he shalle change his chere to us, and we shal be with him in heven" (*Rev.* 21.12, 14-15). Bodily life in the material world is the process of "dying," and life in "heven" is truly life. The signal of the connection between suffering and life, given by her visions, is the changing face of God. This part of Julian's message supports her promotion of a new vision of the relationship between God and humanity, including the newly joyous apocalyptic expectations that she mysteriously announces.

This line from Proverbs 16, which combines the image of the glad face of God that brings life with the welcome rainfall that is mercy, is also helpful in explaining Julian's expansion of her description of the blood from Jesus' forehead as drops of rain falling thick and fast, like droplets from the eaves of a roof: "The plentuoushede is like to the droppes of water that fall of

the evesing of an house after a grete shower of raine, that falle so thicke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wit" (*Rev.* 7.17-19). Thus although Julian's comments following her description of the plenteous blood do seem oddly off-topic unless they are considered in light of the passage from Proverbs, they cohere with her imagery of the face of Jesus if we acknowledge her scriptural reference. Further, noting the reference to Proverbs 16 also helps to show how Julian's own images are connected, and how they further the argument of her revelation with respect to suffering, sin, and salvation.

In the chapters reporting visions that occur while Julian is beholding the "plentuous bleding," she explores the meaning of sin and suffering together, adding to the bleeding a description of other signs of suffering manifest in Jesus's face. Her account continually returns to the sight of Jesus's face, as she describes its bruising under torture (10.2-4) and repeated staining with "drye blode" (10.5). Although Julian never sees the torturers themselves, these images point to the most sinful acts that humanity has ever committed, according to Christian belief. But rather than interpreting sin as something that separates humans from God, Julian's revelation instructs her to see God's solidarity with humanity in suffering—the very suffering that is caused by sin. Following the sight of Jesus's face suffering beatings, "when he was in his hard passion, wilfully going to his death" (10.31-32), Julian suddenly reports that God accompanied her soul into the ocean, to the very "sea grounde" (10.16), an image Watson and Jenkins correlate with passages from Psalms and the story of the prophet Jonah, who falls into the sea and is miraculously preserved.[47] Accompanying this image of God's descent with her, and his sustaining power in the act of descent, Julian calls attention to Jesus's downward movement in another way, in the degrading act of bearing of human skin.

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[47] Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 158 n. 16-22; Cf. *Ps.* 139:9-10 (Vulgate 138), *Jon.* 2:1-7.

Julian interprets Jesus's wearing of human skin as a form of suffering in solidarity with his creatures, making his "blessed face, which is the fairhede of heaven, flower of earth, and the frute of the maidens wombe" (*Rev.* 10.35-36) display horrible ugliness, as Jesus bears "the foule, black, dede hame [mortal skin] which oure faire, bright, blessed lord bare for our sinne" (*Rev.* 10.29). Julian argues that "Betwenes thes two," the creation and the fall of man, "he would, for love and for worshipe of man, make himselfe as like to man in thi deadly life, in our foulhede and in our wretchednes, as man might be without gilt" (*Rev.* 10.46-48). If Jesus's redemptive act of incarnation somehow occurs at the moment Julian insists it does, before the fall, then in his humanity he is unmarked by the sin of the fall, and thus "without gilt." This argument is necessary to complete Julian's broad, and very unorthodox, argument about the nature of sin.

In the following chapter, as the suffering face of Jesus is still before her, she confronts the problem of evil directly with Jesus's incarnation and the omnipotence of God in mind: " "What is sinne?" she asks, given that "God doth alle thing, be it never so litile" (*Rev.* 11.4-5). The answer, according to her revelation, is that "sinne is no dede" (*Rev.* 11.17-18). As she reaches this crucial point of emptying sin of its meaning by denying that it is any action at all, Julian pauses to conspicuously take the position of a passive listener to this unorthodox message—rather than the creator of it. She carefully points to the fact that she awaits an explanation directly from God, in her face-to-face encounter with Jesus: "And I would no longer marveyle in this, but behelde our lorde, what he would shew" (*Rev.* 11.19-20).

God does not show her sin itself, but rather reveals that sin is an effect of the limited human understanding of reality: "For man beholdeth some dedes wele done and some dedes eville, and our lorde beholdeth them not so" (*Rev.* 11.30-31). As she will later elaborate:

> I saw not sinne. For I beleve it hath no maner of substance, ne no part of being, ne it might not be knowen but by paine that it is

> cause of. And this paine, it is somthing, as to my sighte, for a time.
> For it purgeth and maketh us to know ourselfe and aske mercy.
> (*Rev.* 27.22-25)

Thus Julian's idea of the relationship between suffering and sin is that sin itself does not exist. Suffering, despite the fact that it is caused by sin, can only be understood as a movement toward God, a part of the recovery process, and thus a good thing. In fact, in a still later passage, Julian will anxiously acknowledge that her argument has strayed into questionable territory when she claims of God's suffering due to sin, "alle that he suffereth is wurshipfulle" (*Rev.* 35.17), including "that is eville oure lord suffereth" (*Rev.* 35.19). But, she protests, "I say not that eville is wurshipfulle, but I sey that the sufference of oure lorde God is wurshipfulle" (*Rev.* 35.18-19). Again, she argues, suffering, which comes of sin, is a glorious thing—and in fact, of itself, sin is nothing at all. Her theological claim that the incarnation is prior to the fall makes the fall itself no longer a complete separation from God, since God has already joined himself to humanity when humanity sins. All of this discussion, even the much later passages, is centered in Julian's vision of Jesus's incarnate manifestation of his love, love embodied in suffering and thus, in a sense, furthered by sin.

The passage that begins Julian's vision of the "plentuous bleding" in Chapter 7 is the beginning of this extended discussion of Jesus's suffering, manifest in the sight of his face, through which Julian undoes normative concepts of sin and evil, rendering them illusory as she has done with intermediaries like devotional conventions and even materiality itself. Her discussion is entirely grounded in interpretations of the vision of Jesus's face and its manifest suffering, beginning and ending with the sight of his flowing blood. Her argument about sin is that it is nothing in itself but the beginning of human suffering, which is the way to salvation. Thus Jesus's bleeding, which flows like raindrops from his head in Chapter 7, is a manifestation

of the action of salvation—the action of divine mercy. While the description in Chapter 7 does not equate Christ's blood with mercy, Julian's next lyrical meditation on the "plentuous bleding" several chapters later, in Chapter 12, does explicitly identify the flood of Jesus's blood as the universally saving mercy of God, breaking the "bondes" of those in hell who "belong to the courte of heven" (12.18-19) and flowing right up to fill "all heaven, enjoying the salvation of all mankind that be ther and shall be, fulfilling the number that faileth" (12.24-25).

In this image of the blood that accomplishes the harrowing of hell, the sign of God's physical suffering is a triumphal image. It is depicted as cleansing water ("blode to wash us of sinne" [12.11]) that has become a flood (cf. 12.8), recalling biblical images of cleansing floods of waters, including the commonly known story of the Old Testament flood in Genesis, and the notoriously mysterious account of life-giving flood from under the doorstep of the temple in the heavenly Jerusalem, depicted in the apocalyptic Book of Ezekiel.[48] Yet as usual Julian makes no mention of these possible sources; she alludes to them only through imagery, collecting them and incorporating them into her view of God's face, the image that she promotes as the highest authority, into which all others are subsumed.

As the Passion visions continue, Julian witnesses a curious, non-biblical moment that is, however, based on biblical images. Chapter 16 reports Julian's sight of the drying of Jesus's face in "a parte of his passion nere his dying" (*Rev.* 16.1), in which he appears so discolored and distorted in the dryness of his body that he looks like a corpse that has been dead for a week (*Rev.* 16.21, 22). Julian meditates lyrically on Jesus's "long paining" (*Rev.* 16.20), reporting that she sees "the swete flesh dry in my sight, parte after parte, drying with mervelous paine" (*Rev.* 16.18) over a long period of time. Barbara Newman has noted the emotional power of images of

[48] Cf. *Gen.* 6:9-9-17, *Ez.* 47:1-12.

Christ to "puncture a heart," citing Julian's experience in particular as representative of the importance of images in late medieval affective devotion.[49] But as Alexandra Barratt has argued, Julian's imagery is not intended so much to call forth feelings as it is to clarify theological concepts. As Barratt puts it, Julian "does not dwell on Christ's 'pains' for their own sake. Rather, they act as a frame for other revelations."[50] Although she does focus closely on the suffering body of Christ and responds emotionally—and powerfully so—she will find her pain to be an object of analysis and a support for a new theological understanding.

The moment of Jesus's drying stands out because of its apparent originality; there is no special reason to suggest that Jesus suffered so long in this particular way, based on the story of the Passion in the Bible or in contemporary religious literatuer. Rather, the reason for the dramatic reflection on his drying becomes clear in the climactic moment when she hears him in her mind, saying, " 'I thurst'" (*Rev.* 17.1). Jesus's extreme thirst, at the moment of the most intense possible suffering, pointedly recalls the imagery of the Book of Wisdom that Julian has left out of her image of creation as a tiny thing. Thus in Chapter 16, having laid out her paradoxical argument that Christ's suffering itself is "wurshipfulle" and suffering for anyone is simply the merciful return to God, she completes a perfect inversion of the imagery of retributive justice in the Bible. As we have seen, in the Book of Wisdom, in the lines leading up to the image of creation as a tiny thing, God punishes the enemies of Israel by giving them "human blood" instead of "an ever running river." And in the lines leading up to this moment of Jesus's

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[49] Barbara Newman, "Christ as Cupid in Art and Devotion," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages,* ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 283.

[50] Alexandra Barratt, *"Stabant matres dolorosae*: Women as Readers and Writers of Passion Prayers, Meditations, and A Visions," in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late Medieval Culture*, ed. A.A. MacDonald, H.N.B. Ridderbos, and R.M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 68 [55-72].

drying, as I have discussed here, Julian makes the river of his blood into a sign of favor, a "licour" that is "most plentuous, as it is most precious….and it is our owne kinde [i.e., human]" (*Rev.* 12-14). As for the other punishment inflicted on the enemies of Israel, the most extreme possible thirst, Julian confers this on Jesus. Indeed, as the biblical passage says, this thirst is far worse than normal thirst, "unlike to the thirst of the just," like the extreme thirst that Julian attributes it to the only perfectly just man. In this way, the biblical imagery of a vengeful God that Julian has refused to acknowledge earlier now reappears, altered in its message.

From this new imagistic message, new ethical perceptions arise. The sufferings of the unjust, in the face of Jesus, fill Julian with intense compassion ("I loved Crist so much above myselfe that ther was no paine that might be suffered like to that sorow that I had to see him in paine" [*Rev.* 17.50-52]), and in this she at last experiences likeness to "our lady, Saint Mary" (*Rev.* 18.1), leading directly to "a gret oning betwene Crist and us" (*Rev.* 18.11). The union of souls with God thus comes through suffering, and this through sin. In this union, the distinctions between punishment and blessing disappear, along with the distinctions between the unjust and the just. All are revealed as manifestations of the same love, which propagates itself in those who behold it. My aim here has been to show how Julian revises a scriptural passages with the specific effect of dismantling their image of God—God as the avenger, who punishes the unjust with the very means by which he rewards the just. Julian's image of God collapses the differences between just and unjust, uniting all in suffering that is the overcoming of all of the world's sin. This message, which contradicts Church teachings on the punishment from God that awaits sinners as much as it contradicts the Bible's image of God, constitutes a new image of God and his intimate relationship with humanity. Julian amplifies her revelation's challenge to tradition by revisiting a passage she has already called attention to, with her familiar image of the

"little thing" like a hazelnut. Those among "the wise" who know the passage in context will see her change for what it is and notice the surprising nature of her claims. Yet she does not question the authority of the Bible; she simply subordinates its meaning to that of her revelation, by her revised interpretation of its images in light of the face of Jesus. Thus the mediating text of the Bible disappears behind the new images of Julian's revelation.

Throughout this chapter, I have called attention to the way in which Julian seeks to replace all mediators with the face of Jesus, and in a sense she seeks to replace all experience with this face. In this message is a call to see a cosmic sociality, but it is the intimate sociality of the face-to-face encounter in which ethics operates without intermediaries. As I have shown, Julian works against a traditional view of cosmic justice in which each one is responsible for the other. In fact, it seems that according to Julian, no one is responsible for anything except to behold the face of God, and the sight of his face sustains one's very being, superseding all desires and attachments. But here Julian's imagery of the face of God as the focal point of ethics suggests a correspondence between her idea of ethics and the very ethical system that her images have seemed to contradict by seeking to eliminate third parties. That is, Julian's argument through the image of the face of God corresponds not to the ethical system of intercession that was current in her culture, but rather the twentieth-century system of Emmanuel Levinas. In Levinas, the encounter with the face of the other is "moral consciousness" itself.[51] Within the face, for Levinas, is a trace of the infinite Other, sometimes called "God," who has conferred a radical uniqueness and alterity onto the human face, while making each face still "human" and recognizable. Because the face marks the other as Other, but also as human, it makes relationship possible. In Julian, while the face of Jesus is human, yet it is still only a mediating agent that she

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[51] Emmanuel Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Michael Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 10.

sees also as an effect and manifestation of God's goodness, rather than a simple view of God as he is. Like the face in Levinas, the face of Jesus in Julian signifies something beyond itself. But here the similarity ends.

The fundamental difference between Julian's concept of the vision of the face and Levinas's is that in Julian the end of the encounter is unity; in her visions of bliss, God's alterity is not to be preserved, but surpassed. When Julian is "oned" with him, he will no longer be Other to her. In Levinas, however, the alterity of the Other is what makes the face itself, unique, and also what makes the ethical subject responasible, infinitely responsible, like a bondsman owing his life to his lord. The ethical encounter, in which the face emerges, preserves the alterity of the Other, so that the one and the Other can always look at each other, face-to-face, confronting the nearness and the difference between them. This key difference from Levinas, in turn, marks Julian as a different kind of ethical thinker from the Middle English writers whose work we have studied so far. In "St. Theophilus," the struggling Theophilus rejoins the Christian sociality and in fact lives within the Church forever after. His lesson is a public lesson, and it evokes a world full of people whom he may know and bless. In Chaucer, the importance of the third party is perhaps even more pronounced, in its fading and ultimate absence in the diegetic world of the narrative, and then with the energetic return back to sociality—and with it, judgment and forgiveness—in the closing passages. With a multiplicity of persons, a sense of responsibility arises, a consciousness of the self and others, and with this a consciousness of the need for ethical modes of interaction and government. Responsibility is crucial for the exercise of love itself in a social world beyond the intimate encounter of the self and God, and with love, salvation. Justice comes with movement away from the face-to-face encounter, as others come

into view. Because Julian considers only herself in relation to the Other, however, with God manifest in the face of Jesus, she can propose ethics without responsibility

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Julian argues for the acceptability of her revelation through a broader argument about the illusory nature of mediating agents between the soul and God. At the level of autobiographical narrative, telling the story of her visionary experience, Julian shapes the image of herself as medium in such a way as to demystify traditional images of spiritual mediation and the spiritual mediator, exposing the mistaken understanding of God represented by the figures of the saintly intercessor, *memento mori*, and spiritual friend or moral guide. By comprehensively devaluing relationships of responsibility between human beings, Julian is denying the relevance of any third party to one's relationship to God. In this she is rejecting normative ethical concepts that ground human hopes for personal goodness and ultimate salvation in social relationships with other Christians, living and dead.

Yet Julian's vision of the cosmos is a positive one. She calls for a new appreciation of divine immanence as it is represented by material creation itself. As a textual mediator, to give her revelation the highest possible authority Julian embeds signs of her own textual work within her visions of the face of Jesus, present to her in the physical form that constitutes the "chief meane" between humanity and God. Julian treats inspired writings as so many illusory mediators, conflating and transfiguring their images of God and humanity to expose a unitary underlying message that salvation is achieved for all in God's incarnation. Reading all creation—including devotional conventions, scriptural tradition, and the Church itself—as parts of the image of the incarnate God, Julian argues that the soul is essentially alone with God. This is true

despite her consistent invocation of “charite,” a concept that to Julian means unity of desire for God—with all eyes fixed on God.[52]

While mediating agents may present multiple and changing views of God, to perceive him beyond all mediation, in a face-to-face encounter, is to experience a personal perfection that is heavenly bliss. Julian thus raises questions about the role of tradition generally in Christian ethics, including devotional “custome” and “points of doctrine.” Her new images of redemption argue for a changing concept of God within and even beyond her own revelation. In her final chapter, Julian declares that God’s work is still unfinished, and it cannot be known fully until it is revealed at some future date: “This boke is begonne by Goddes gifte and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as to my sight” (*Rev.* 86.1-2). Thus in the end, her apocalyptic suggestion of unknown joys to come pushes even her own mediating revelation to the side, encouraging readers to let Julian and her text disappear, superseded by future revelation that will reveal a new face of God.

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[52] Indeed, there is notable example in her closing chapter, “For charite pray we alle togeder, with Goddes wurking” (*Rev.* 86.2-3).

Chapter 4
Begging for Patrons: Mediation and Patronage in Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* and Some Shorter Political Poems

The concept of lordship as the ideal social order is so engrained in medieval discourse that we can take it for granted as a typical feature of medieval social thought. Images of lord and servant like Julian's are as much at home in medieval political discourse as Christianity itself, grounded as they are in a long tradition of biblical images of ideal monarchy. Yet as is well known, the form and meaning of kingly lordship could not be taken for granted in England in the Ricardian and Lancastrian periods, when a period of less than twenty-five years saw four different monarchs on the throne, as well as the deposition (and possible murder) of a king, the establishment of a new royal dynasty, the sudden, untenable expansion of the realm to make it straddle two different cultural regions, and the accession of yet another child to rulership over this complex, French-English realm.[1]

While lordship itself as the basic form of government was not questioned by the political establishment even during this period of political upheaval,the relationship between a monarch and his subjects had to be negotiated rhetorically in the process of recovering and maintaining public order. Among those responsible for representing the king in writing was Thomas Hoccleve. As a clerk in the office of the Privy seal from about 1387-1426, Hoccleve was an essential intermediary between the king and his subjects, a biographical fact he refers to frequently and with such surprising specificity that literary historians consider him to be the first

[1] Richard II had succeeded to the throne as a child in 1377 (A.L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England, 1272-1461* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 35). The story of his forced abdication in 1399 and mysterious death in 1400 is well known, but see Brown, *Governance,* 9; or Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998). Strohm callsRichard's death simply "murder" (*England's Empty Throne*, xi).

autobiographical poet in English.[2] But what makes Hoccleve most interesting to twentieth- and twenty-first century readers is the subjective nature of his literary work. In it he expresses personal angst about his role as an overworked and inconsistently paid government mediator, just as he expresses anxiety about virtually every other aspect of his life, including a mental breakdown and social alienation in its wake. In his self-referential writing, Hoccleve represents social problems not only in the terms of a moral thinker, but in the terms of a professional writer who is a relatively clearly defined social and economic actor. In this chapter I will explore how Hoccleve approached one aspect of his political and social culture—political, professional, and social patronage, or lack of it—through his writing.[3]

In the *Regiment of Princes* (c. 1410-11), written for Henry, Prince of Wales, just before his accession to the throne, Hoccleve complains explicitly about how he is trapped, with his fellow Privy Seal clerks, in a tense and unstable web of status relationships, aristocratic

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[2] The seminal work on Hoccleve as an autobiographical poet is J.A. Burrow, "Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982): 389-412. In her much more recent book, Stephanie A.V.G. Kamath provides a review of the extensive critical writing on Hoccleve and autobiography from the 1980s into the second decade of the twenty-first century in her chapter entitled, "'Thereof I was noon auctour': Allegory and Thomas Hoccleve's Authority" (in *Authorship and First-Person Allegory in Late Medieval France and England,* ed. Kamath [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012], full page range, at 103n1). For a notable discussion of the phenomenon of separation from himself in Hoccleve's autobiographical writing, see also Ann M. Scott, "Thomas Hoccleve's Selves Apart," in *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices*, ed. Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 89 [89-103]. J.A. Burrow sums up the argument that Hoccleve's "best" or most interesting work is autobiographical and anxious: "Hoccleve's best imagined narratives concern encounters between himself and another—the old almsman in the *Regiment* prologue and the friend in the *Series*. These scenes display the poet's undoubted skill at rendering dialogue in verse; but he can hardly be said here to get outside the 'situation wherein he stood,' for the energy of the scenes is drawn most precisely from that situation, which is the chief subject of the conversation in both" (J.A. Burrow, "Hoccleve and Chaucer," in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55-56 [54-61]).

[3] A recent article explores Hoccleve's treatment of literary patronage in his personal writing, with a reading of Hoccleve's *Dialogue* as promoting a model of literary patronage in the form of the Friend's "intellectual and emotional support"; see Amy N. Vines, "The Rehabilitation of Patronage in Hoccleve's *Series*," *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 2.2 (2013): 202 [201-21]. My own argument does not address literary patronage *per se,* but rather some political and social forms of patronage that, as I argue, shaped Hoccleve's writing.

entitlements, and political loyalties that compromise his economic and social security.[4] As a mediator, his normal and expected function is to represent the king to his royal subjects as directly as possible, thus disappearing into his intermediary role. As long as he does his job competently, however, he may be ignored or forgotten, and that may mean going unpaid.[5]

As Hoccleve explains in the Prologue to the *Regiment,* the system of patrons and mediating agents is still the status quo, but government administration has fallen outside of it, leaving those in positions like Hoccleve's in a uniquely vulnerable position. Ethan Knapp, who classifies Hoccleve as a member of a "petitioning class," points out "[t]he issue of intercession, financial rather than spiritual, is a constant motif in Hoccleve's topical verse."[6] In a vivid description of shady dealings among aristocratic clients and the representatives they send to his office for letters of appeal, Hoccleve reports that "ful many" (1534) abuse the system of aristocratic connections to evade responsibility for payment to the Privy Seal clerks.[7] For example, he explains, when "sum lordes man" (1500) appears to order a letter written for his lord and the lord fails to pay, the clerks have no recourse but to sue the king, with whom the lord has superior influence—the clerks can do nothing but ask for what they want without real hope of getting it (1499-1512). And in other cases, Hoccleve continues, the lord later claims that the man for whom the work was done is a "straunger" (1521) who has only pretended to represent the

[4] Hoccleve's career is well-documented and well known. For dating of the poem and discussion of it within its specific political context in 1410-11, see Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 196-214.

[5] See *Regiment,* ll. 816-40.

[6] Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 36, 154; for Knapp's discussion of Hoccleve's passage in *Regiment* about the clerks' lack of financial intermediaries, see also 155-57.

[7] All selections from the poem and prologue are from Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes,* TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

lord, in which case, of course, the lord cannot be expected to pay (1520-26). Then of course there are the cases in which a "bribour" takes his lord's money for himself and falsely claims that he has ordered a document and paid the clerks, so that when they claim otherwise they are "desclaundered, and put in wit and lak [blamed and disparaged]/ Ful giltelees" (1530-31[1527-43]). The problem, in Hoccleve's mind, is not the system of personal mediation itself, but rather the absence of patrons who will take the part of people like him. Only "Nemo," he satirically declares,

> …helpeth hem
> By him been they chericed;
> Nere he, they weren poorely chevyced [provided for];
> He hem avanceth, he fully here freend is;
> Sauf oonly hym, they han but fewe freendes.
> (1487-91)

This memorable and detailed description of the troubles of the clerks, who have no aristocratic "freendes" to take their part, may well document a serious problem with corruption, reflecting the ironic disempowerment of the king's own administrative representatives. Yet it is also carefully crafted to produce an image of Hoccleve, his fellows in the Privy Seal office, and by extension, the people of the realm, as victims of a clash between political systems. Although Hoccleve's artistic freedom (and personal dignity) inhere in his being "nobody's man," as critics have noted, his repeated calls for a return to an ideal model of mutual subjection between subject and lordly patron, including the potential substitution of the lord for his subjects in their times of need, constitute an important strain in his poetic voice.[8]

Part of what makes Hoccleve in particular so insecure is that his personal, social position

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[8] See James Simpson, "Nobody's Man: Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," in *London and Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Boffey and Pamela King (London: Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies, 1996), 149-80; Simpson argues that Hoccleve strategically represents flawed relationships with patrons to emphasize connections while distinguishing himself creatively and socially.

does put him outside of the traditional network of hierarchies and patronage in English government.[9] He is an independent householder, married head of his own family and living apart from the king's retinue, when the traditionalistic preferences of the current regime call for a return to the old way of organizing a government—or anyway a venerable idea of government organization—as a partnership between ecclesiastical orders and an extended form of the king's household, with no place in the system for independent, married clerks like Hoccleve.[5] According to Brian Tierney, such egalitarian ideals as the right to receive generally equal treatment by a judge in legal disputes and even the "natural right of the poor to the necessities of life," were supported by law as by religious doctrine, though at the same time, as favors and benefits bestowed by God who had ordered society hierarchically, it was natural that in practice rights would be passed through (and controlled by) a network of personal connections of dependency on power, emanating downward from the papal and English crowns.[10] Thus while he can count on a certain level of respect and security, Hoccleve describes his insecurity as an effect of having placed himself outside of the "natural habitat" of the "graduate careerist" among those

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[9] On the incompatibility of Hoccleve's married state with Henry V's requirements for royal clerks, see John M. Bowers, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition," *The Chaucer Review* 36.4 (2002): 359.

[10] Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law: 1150-1625* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 239, 217, 329, 56-93. See also Tierney, "Hierarchy, Consent, and the 'Western Tradition," *Political Theory* 15.4 (1987): 650 [646-52]: "All through the Middle Ages there were two attitudes—not just one—to the problem of equality and inequality. One could emphasize that hierarchical ranking was necessary in an ordered society; or one could emphasize that, because all men shared a common humanity, they were all by nature equal, and also by nature free (for no one had a natural right to dominate his equals)…The two attitudes coexisted side-by-side in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they still existed side-by-side in the seventeenth-and-eighteenth centuries." Of course networks of power that organized late medieval city life were non-feudal in a strict sense, and they were dominated by interactions among "associational forms" like brotherhoods and guilds, but they repeated general patterns of hierarchy between and within themselves in their negotiations of power, amid the unstable social environment of late fourteenth-century England (David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997], 79, 78-79).

increasingly enrolled as councilors of the king in his time, that habitat being not married life as an independent householder, but rather "the superstructure of the church," where patronage and professional advancement were comparatively secure and predictable.[11] Even though he identifies himself as an outsider, Hoccleve is far from advocating for the new way, in which government functionaries are defined as social independents, and yet as Knapp has noted, he is interested in "the self as its own end," specifically "in opposition to bureaucratic anonymity" that he represents as having (over-)determined his life.[12]

Hoccleve's Begging Poems: *Envoys* as Media of Patronage

Hoccleve's nostalgic pleas for lordly patronage are in a sense transgressive appeals, expressing his personal anxieties—about money, about his own mental breakdown—in ways that reflect directly upon the social order in England in his time.[13] Although Hoccleve's self-exposure in his writing was tolerated, perhaps appreciated, and also perhaps utilized to serve political ends, it is not polite poetry. Nor is Hoccleve the only one to write in this transgressive way, though he is among the most famous. I will discuss two short political complaint lyrics by other authors, Hoccleve's contemporaries: the anonymous political critique "London Lyckpeny" (sometimes attributed to John Lydgate) and George Ashby's *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463.* These brief poetic critiques help to contextualize my reading of Hoccleve's work, offering

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[11] See Jeremy Catto, "The Burden and Conscience of Government in the Fifteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (2007): 83-99; 91.

[12] Knapp, *Bureaucratic Muse,* 36.

[13] Lianna Farber notes that late medieval writers worked to negotiate traditional incompatibilities between religious and commercial values, notably exploring the ethical imperative to "value the valuable" (i.e., the intrinsically valuable), and the incorporation of "common profit" into ideals of good government and social life; see Lianna Farber, *An Anatomy of Trade in Medieval Writing: Value, Consent, and Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 83.

examples of comparable complaints about the deterioration of ethics with respect to the mediation of prospective patrons in English society in the early to mid-fifteenth century. Ideals of good mediation are embedded in these poets' complaints about alienation due to irresponsible or absent intermediaries. At the same time, all three poems show marked detachment from the religious hopes that traditionally ground appeals for patronage. Rather, the poems read social evidence to glean religious truths, gesturing toward uncertainty about the promises of faith as they do so. Together they suggest a shared attitude of nostalgia for a time when a personal appeal would get a helpful response from others, by the grace of God and thanks to a common Christian sense of responsibility to give of oneself. Yet their nostalgia is combined with skepticism regarding expectations of help given the insufficiency of current modes of appeal.

Hoccleve points to the fact that his relationships are mediated through written forms, rather than through the intervention of a human third party, as a constant problem in his life. In the bidding poems that epitomize his role as the "beggar laureate,"[14] Hoccleve's style of begging is in a sense perfectly conventional; he asks for a powerful patron to mediate between a higher power and the poet himself, echoing conventions in religious bidding poems.[15] In fact, a conventional stance typically adopted at the opening and closing of poems by late medieval

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[14] This epithet for Hoccleve was coined by Robert Meyer-Lee in *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); see especially Chapter 3: "Thomas Hoccleve: Beggar Laureate," 88-124; like Scanlon in "The King's Two Voices," Meyer-Lee sees an effective poetic strategy of self-definition in Hoccleve's foregrounding of his alienated and needy persona, and specifically Meyer-Lee argues that Hoccleve claims an identity of "beggar laureate" in competition with and contradistinction to Lydgate, the "laureate poet" of Hoccleve's time.

[15] The best known example of this convention are Chaucer's complaints and envoys, including "The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse," in which he comically conflates religious and courtly-love language, addressing his purse as his "lady dere" (2), "Quene of good comfort and of good companye" (13), and earthly saviour ("saveour as doun in this world here" [16]) (Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson [Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 656; for Chaucer's other satirical complaints and petitions, see *Riverside Chaucer*, 640-49, 655-56.

writers of all kinds of poetry—religious and (more or less) secular—is that of the humble fellow Christian asking his readers to pray for him, and particularly for the success of his efforts at writing. Hoccleve, however, hits the familiar keys of this polite fiction on the way to more pressing business. Typically, he points beyond his addressees to others who can take responsibility and take action in the material world rather than the spiritual cosmos, asking his addressee to work between himself and those more powerful persons he needs to approach.

In one short begging poem, the "Balade to My Maister Carpenter," Hoccleve complains of living in fear of his creditors and asks his "maistr Carpenter" (1) for help, specifically asking him to be a mediator between the creditors and himself:

> If that it lykid un to your good nesse
> To be betwixt hem and me swich a mene
> As that I might kepte be fro duresse,
> My hevy thoghtes wolde it voide clene
> (22-25)[16]

The ethical response Hoccleve desires from Carpenter is to relieve his suffering by working between the supplicating Hoccleve and the one to whom he has responsibility, the one who makes a rightful demand upon him. This dynamic dramatizes the essence of the Levinasian triadic relationship, in which the self is at the mercy of the Other, but for the presence of the third party who recognizes each one, requires mutual recognition, and authorizes respect for both. Jennifer Bryan reads Hoccleve's style in begging poems as didactic, though not specifically moral, in the sense that it enacts a behavioral model, following the script for a kind of courtly "discipline" of placing oneself at the mercy of a powerful patron, with the poem thus offering "a

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[16] Selections are from Thomas Hoccleve, "Balade to My Maister Carpenter," in *Hoccleve's Works*, EETS e.s. 61 and 73, ed. Frederick James Furnivall and Sir Israel Gollancz (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 63-64.

guide to subjection."[17] Indeed, as John J. Thompson points out, along with other manuscript evidence, the fact that Hoccleve seems to have addressed the same poem to various potential reader-benefactors (scratching out the name and writing Carpenter's in its place, in fact), suggests that it "may have been written to be recycled."[18] As Bryan argues, here Hoccleve shows a will to take control of courtly power dynamics, and in this, to promote patronage relationships.

Taking a reading of Hoccleve's intentions with respect to "courtly power dynamics" further, it is worth exploring how subjection to patrons might both work in Hoccleve's favor personally in ways other than elevating his position as a writer, and at the same time reflect his attitude toward the writing itself. I will direct attention to a struggle that Hoccleve highlights in his *Balade to Maistr John Carpenter* that is at once ethical and textual. At a literal level, Hoccleve writes to remove the financial and mental strain that is upon him due to debts he cannot pay. It is important to consider here that Hoccleve has very likely already engaged in securing a mediated relationship with his creditors. In the "documentary culture" of late medieval England, the practice of getting a patron to stand surety for a debt had faded by the late fourteenth century, and by Hoccleve's time a written bond took the place of a mediating patron: "the written bond was itself proof of the debt; the seal represented the actual body of the debtor over which the creditor had power until his debt was repaid."[19]

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[17] Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 202.

[18] John J. Thompson, "A Poet's Contacts with the Great and the Good: Further Consideration of Thomas Hoccleve's Texts and Manuscripts," in *Prestige, Authority, and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts,* ed. Felicity Riddy (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2000), 92 [77-102].

[19] Anna Baldwin, "The Debt Narrative in *Piers Plowman,"* in Robert Edwards, ed. *Art and Context in Late Medieval English Narrative: Essays in Honor of Robert Worth Frank, Jr.* (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1994), 38 [37-50].

Thus Hoccleve writes to ask Carpenter to take the place of the document that has taken the place of Hoccleve himself; Carpenter has money and social status, as the town clerk of London, and in fact he was also known for his charitable work. He can take Hoccleve's place in a way that the written bond cannot, and perhaps Hoccleve knew that he was the sort of person who would want to, given his reputation as having been "associated with many charitable ventures in the 'common profit' culture of the time," as well as "many small acts of piety and generosity," as Thompson and Wendy Scase have discussed.[20] The problem of the poem is an explicitly material one: Hoccleve can't pay his bills, and he is in danger of his creditors' taking legal action against him. But Hoccleve frames the solution in abstract, ethical terms. In a Levinasian sense, Carpenter is called to substitute himself for Hoccleve, to stand in his place directly before to the creditors as a "mene," and to take responsibility for his debt. The burdens Hoccleve carries will pass to Carpenter who, like an ideal image of Mary in a prayer for intercession, will bear their weight. And this weight is not only material. Apart from the "duresse" of paying the debt, Hoccleve bears the burden of "hevy thoghtes," which torment him. Writing the *balade* is an attempt to make a textual mediator who can take these thoughts away and give them to someone else, but Hoccleve cannot really divest himself of his thoughts until Carpenter, the personal patron, and non-textual mediator, takes them on and begins to think them himself. Hoccleve does not tell Carpenter the content of his thoughts, but a reader knows that they include his own powerlessness, together with the threatening, legally justified power of his creditors. Carpenter will have to think about this, as he affirms his recognition of Hoccleve as a faithful servant. The dynamic of mediation of patrons that Hoccleve constructs in the poem is not dyadic but triadic; it not only takes the "hevy thoghtes" away from Hoccleve, but also places

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[20] Thompson, "A Poet's Contacts," 92; see also Wendy Scase, "Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter, and John Colop's 'Common-Profit' Books: Aspects of Book Ownership and Circulation in Medieval London," *Medium Aevum* 61 (1992): 261-74.

them upon Carpenter. As the potentially mediating patron, Carpenter must work (with money and advocacy, and in the position of subjection and possibly some degree of affective suffering) between legal rights on one side, and a plea for preservation on the other side; from him, justice must emerge for Hoccleve. In Hoccleve's view, justice would entail his becoming "a member of society," the effect that Levinas argues proceeds from the presence of the third party.

Prefacing a gift copy of his major work *The Regiment of* Princes with another short begging poem, the "Balade to my Gracious Lord of York," Hoccleve carries forward Chaucer's personification of his "little boke" *Troilus and Criseyde*, by beginning "Go litil pamfilet."[21] The "Balade" comically refers to the lengthy *Regiment of Princes*, to which the "Balade" is attached as a dedicatory preface.Jennifer Bryan notes that Hoccleve asks his patron to "intercede for him with his creditors, "after the fashion of a Marian plea for intercession" and includes it among Hoccleve's writings that foreground "shame" to invite examination of the shameful, and then cover the shame (but only temporarily).[22] But Hoccleve is conjuring an intercessor more like Pandarus than Mary here. The whole text of the "Balade" centers on the idea of the poem as a go-between, working between the poet and the Duke and Duchess of York, to whom he addresses himself indirectly by addressing the text itself. As we have seen in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus's irresponsibility brings the lovers together and accomplishes what is shameful between them, but disappears into his identification with Troilus rather than standing for his niece's protection as well as his friend's. In Chaucer's poem, the bad mediator chooses to help not his vulnerable dependent, but powerful friend, and the consequences are disastrous. Hoccleve's envoy to the Yorks alternately begs that his poem be examined and pleads that it be

[21] All selections are from Thomas Hoccleve, "Balade to my Gracious Lord of York," in *Hoccleve's Works,* ed. Furnivall and Gollancz, 49-50.

[22]Bryan, *Looking Inward*, 181.

hidden out of "shame" (45), as Bryan has discussed. It implies the intimate faults of Hoccleve's poverty and state of debt, though the only insufficiencies he acknowledges explicitly are the conventionally rhetorical faults in his writing. But if we consider the poem in comparison to an image of Mary *mediatrix,* rather than complaint, the poem is Marian only in the most cynical way, as it does not evoke the presence of a responsible mediator, or even an able one who can set things to rights, because this mediator will not separate itself from Hoccleve and somehow indicate what should rightly be done to protect the vulnerable—even Hoccleve himself. As a representative of him, it will only collapse back into his persona.

In this poem, Hoccleve writes that the text itself will act like a person, a "messageer," but he makes a special point that he is longing for a human messenger who *wants* to help him. Emphasizing his solitude as he addresses the poem itself, he remarks,

> Yit ful fayn wolde I have a messageer
> To recommande me with hert enteer,
>   To hir benigne and humble wommanhede;
> And at the tyme have I noon othir heer
> But thee & smal am I, for the, the neer
>   And if thow do it nat than shal þat dede
>   Be left & nat kepte I out of drede.
> (28-34)

Hoccleve describes himself through his address to the poem, with nothing but the written text to represent him, and this not the kind of representative he needs. The text is purely instrumental, with no "hert" of its own. An "other" like this cannot work as a responsible third party to mediate between Hoccleve and his potential benefactors. In a Levinasian model of relationships and the responsibilities they imply, a third party who is responsible and to whom the Other is responsible, in a web of connections of absolute obligation, initiates assessment of the relationship between the subject and the Other. This makes for a new ordering of connections between them, allowing the subject to see that someone is responsible for him, and he is thus

protected. As we have seen in "St. Theophilus," in a spiritual sociality this triadic model relieves the subject of mortal fear of damnation, when the responsible saintly intercessor works between the Christian and God. And in according to a similar model of social expectations in Hoccleve's earthbound sociality, a responsible third party would also have the capacity to relieve his "drede" by assuring him that someone will take responsibility for him. His textual envoy, however, cannot bring him "neer" to the Duke and Duchess of York, and his verse shows that he must be near to them in order for them to begin to care for him. In Levinas's terms, this is the nearness or "proximity" that makes the responsibility inherent in the ethical encounter to take hold. Yet Hoccleve exploits the illusory crossing of distance that a letter may evoke, in a set of vignettes in which he associates the spatial movement of the envoy—near to and among his prospective patrons—with acts of intercession and judgment.

The poem clearly represents Hoccleve, speaking for him to any reader who takes it up. He submits it—and thus himself—to the judgment of his patrons, admonishing his poem,

> My Lord, nat I, shal have of thee poweer;
> Axe him license, up on him crie and grede.
>
> Whan that thow hast doon, than aftirward
> Byseche thow that worthy Prince Edward
> Þat he the lay apart for what may tyde,
> Lest thee beholde my Maister Picard….
> (35-40)

Having entered the Prince's private quarters, Hoccleve imagines that the poem will be seen by "my maistir Picard," presumably the prince's tutor.[25] Hoccleve continues the name-dropping fiction, gathering imaginary patrons to interact with his poem. Of this Picard, he says, "Let him look on; his herte is to me ward / so freendly, that our shame wol he hyde" (44-45). Placing himself under the "correction" (54) of his new chosen mediator, Picard, Hoccleve concludes at length with a humble intercessory prayer to "the holy Trinitee, / And our Lady the blessid

mayden free" (64-65) on behalf of his initial patrons, and then with a final remark that is perhaps directed obliquely at the Trinity and the Blessed Virgin, but explicitly directed at no one in particular:

> …and if any plesance
> Happe mighte on my poore suffisance
> To his prowesse and hir benignitee,
> My lyves joie it were, and sustenance.
> (69-72)

The vague, hypothetical structure of these final words points at the very core of Hoccleve's anxiety: the equivocal "if . . . Happe might" is not the phrasing of a believer. Nothing can make him feel secure about the power of his writing to achieve its aims. After the conventional invocation of divine helpers, Hoccleve rests in uncertainty about the presence of some benevolent power that would form the necessary connection between his own "poore suffisance" and "his prowesse and hir benignitee," whether the "plesance" would be going in his direction or theirs. Will his abilities give pleasure to the Duke and Duchess? Will their strength and goodwill give him what pleases him? To articulate the gap between them in terms of happenstance gestures toward the missing mediator, a problem that frustrates Hoccleve's attempted approaches to his patrons. Unlike Julian's vision of God, who is both manifest and beyond, mediating between himself and the one who seeks to behold him, they cannot mediate between him and themselves—or even if they do, the mediation they effect is an illusion. Hoccleve really believes that there must be some other agent, some agent who is Other, that is, to extend the network of responsibility. Yet he has no choice but to rely on manufactured mediators that cannot take responsibility themselves. These final lines show little confidence in the patronage of the Trinity and the Blessed Virgin, at least with respect to the financial and social needs that prompt him to invoke them in this case. And his impersonal written text, lacking a "hert enteer" of its own,

cannot substitute for a person who can stand between.

The anonymous political critique poem *London Lyckpeny* invokes the same problem from another perspective, that of the supplicant seeking the help of mediators—at court and in various offices of royal administration. Before a lawyer at Westminster, the speaker writes,

> I crowched and kneled before hym anon,
> For maryes love, of help I hym preye.
> "I wot not what thou menest," gan he say;
> to get me thence he dyd me bede,
> for lack of mony I cold not speede.
> (38-42)[23]

In this scene of failed patronage, the speaker kneels before the lawyer as though he were a powerful lord. He asks for the lawyer's help in an unnamed cause that already looks hopeless by this point in the poem, as by this sixth stanza he has already been summarily refused help by "a man of law" (4); a "Iuge" (12) at the "kynges bench" (11) where a great crowd of clerks "dyd wryte by one assent" (15); an official at "the common place" (Court of Common Pleas) to whom he "dyd … reverence" (24); and at the "Chavcerye" (30) which he describes only in terms of the "Rolls" (29) and the money-earning "Clarkes" (30), though of course by the time this poem was written in the fifteenth century, the Chancery was a court of appeals in its own right.[24] Thus the *London Lyckpeny*-author describes his fruitless appeal to one prospective patron after another as a trip from office to office, emphasizing the anonymity of the representatives of government, his own stylized gesture of subjection in begging for their patronage, and the written business with which they are all busying themselves. This is Hoccleve's world, from the other side of the

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[23] All selections from *London Lyckpeny* are from"London Lickpenny" (Harley MS. 367) in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 130-34.

[24] Brown, *Governance*, 56.

document, as it were, evoking the frustrated hopes of the one who is seeking support from those in professional positions like Hoccleve's—one for whom Hoccleve would function as mediator.

Of course the phrasing of the speaker's request for help in the name of "maryes love" is conventional, but the poet certainly does not waste words in this brief and pointed satire. If the speaker invokes "marys love, that holy saynt" (5) and "gods sake" (13) and receives such insensitivity (and even incomprehension) in return, we can safely say that he is underscoring the cynicism of the officials he appeals to. Mary's love and God's sake don't move them, and the poem reminds us that these appeals *should* move someone. As Lawrence Manley has suggested, *London Lyckpeny* is part of a tradition of complaints of conscience, in which a conscience figure, a rural observer from the countryside, critiques the rampant corruption in his modern (late medieval) times.[25] Although it does not ascend to prophetic emotionalism like that of the early modern *Lamentacyon of a Christian Agaynst the Cytye of London* (1540), the speaker in *London Lyckpeny* invokes religious ideals as a matter of course, as common shorthand for the values of common decency. Thus the anonymous poet is casually acknowledging that Christian belief has no force, as pleas for Christian charity are virtually meaningless in his degenerate social world. Sacred mediation, habitually invoked in the form of oaths, cannot be expected to have any effect at all.

London Lyckpeny's objections to the impersonal and un-Christian methods of mediation in royal administration voices a common complaint in late medieval political writing in England, echoed for example in Book Six of Gower's *Vox Clamantis,* which complains at length about the

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[25] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 110-11; Manley suggests a generic affiliation between *London Lyckpeny* and "The World Upside Down," (in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries,* ed. Robbins, 150-52). The voice of the conscientious Christian in *Lamentacyon* cries, "Repent, therefore, repent, London…" (*The Lamentacyon of a Christian Agaynst the Cytye of London* in *Four Supplications,* 96-97); for brief discussion of this poem, see Manley, *Literature and Culture,* 113.

deceits of paid lawyers, pointing out how their careers take them into the positions of judges, though righteousness is never their true concern.[26] Gower's concerns were taken up by other vernacular poets, and by Hoccleve's time, such complaints were being made from both sides of the political system—by those working outside of it, like the voice of the "London Lyckpeny" and by those working inside of it, like Hoccleve.

Hoccleve's opinion was better informed about the powers and limits of royal patronage than most people's in his time. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the three royal writing offices were "the heart of late-medieval administration" in England, through which "all business passed"; tens of thousands of letters, all in the name of the king or his Council, were issued each year for every purpose.[27] In Hoccleve's Office of the Privy Seal, this meant that he and ten or twelve other clerks personally generated thousands of letters each year. Hoccleve's formulary gives an idea of the scope and variety of this documentary business: he included over 900 models of privy-seal letters.[28] Along with generating the documents that constituted royal patronage, the keeper of the Privy Seal had patronal mediating powers of his own intervening between subjects and judges either to stay or to further certain court proceedings.[29] We should thus see Hoccleve near the center of administrative government, actively interested and well placed to observe the realities of rendering subjects, patrons, their appeals and responses, and the nature of their relationships into impersonal, instrumental media.

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[26] See John Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, Book VI, trans. Robert J. Meindl, *Vox Clamantis* Translations, The Gower Project Translation, https://gowertranslation.pbworks.com/w/page/53715438/Vox%20Clamantis%20Translations.

[27] Brown, *Governance*, 52.

[28] Brown, *Governance,* 50.

[29] "The keeper had authority to stay proceedings of the Court of the Constable and Marshal and he may have had authority delegated by the Council to further poor mens' causes which eventually led him to become president of the Tudor Court of Requests" (Brown, *Governance*, 51).

The "Balade to York," which traces the process of Hoccleve's appeal—rendered impersonal by being written into a book—ends without resolution. Hoccleve envisions his text passing through the hands of many mediators, all of them authorizing it to go forward into the hands of another, but none of them engaging directly with Hoccleve himself through it. None of them solves his problem. The poem ends on a point of uncertainty about happiness, invoking substitution but doubtful of the help of the absent supporters he must ultimately rely on—God and Mary. As Jennifer Bryan sums it up, Hoccleve asks his patron to "intercede for him with his creditors, after the fashion of a Marian plea for intercession."[30] The effect of this invocation, ironically, is to emphasize his desperation, rather than to propose a true solution or create closure. By turning religious ethics onto immediate, social, material needs, Hoccleve creates a sense of the religious ideal's contingency on social evidence, thus undermining the ideas that ground his hopes and expectations in the first place.

The convention of invoking the help of God and Mary as a way of indicating desperation—rather than faith—is present elsewhere in political poetry than Hoccleve's. For example, a complaint poem by another fifteenth-century political poet, George Ashby, lamenting his imprisonment, uses the desperate invocation topos in an equally transparently hopeless way.[31] It may be that Ashby is echoing Hoccleve directly here, but certainly his poetic complaint draws from shared generic conventions. Ashby's desperate invocation is a sign of increasing distance

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[30] Bryan, *Looking Inward,* 202.

[31] George Ashby, "Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463," in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, Robbins Library Digital Projects (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Press, 2005), http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/mooney-and-arn-kingis-quair-and-other-prison-poems-ashby-complaint-of-a-prisoner-in-the-fleet.

between conventional, reflexive invocations of divine intercession, on the one hand, and writers' and readers' capacity to see futility in an evocation of faith in divine mediators' accessibility and efficacy. It expresses nostalgia and skepticism together, pushing for a demonstration of points of religious faith in the actions of those within the poet's community of readers.

After summing up his pitiable situation—imprisonment "geynst ryght and reason" (7), Ashby expresses an attitude about the situation that is so bleak as to highlight the futility of religious hopes for intercession:

> Yet I must hyt for a lesson record,
> Theryn abydyng without help singlere
> Sauf of God and Hys blessyd modyr there.
>
> But oth or other declaracion
> Coude at no season be herd ne takyn,
> By no prayer ne exhortacion,
> But of all pité and grace forsakyn….
> (12-19)

Ashby claims that his only "help" would come from "God and Mary," but that in fact there will be no help. He is "of all pité and grace forsakyn." These are contradictory beliefs, if God and Mary are the best and most compassionate helpers there are. But if the poet is not concerned with promoting belief in divine intercession, and in fact is satisfied to undermine it, then the rest of the poem makes sense.

The remainder of Ashby's complaint is about the virtues of patience given that "In all thy [i.e., one's] lyfe there ys contrarytė" (165), such as a happy marriage but no children; or plenty of children, but troublesome ones; and a fine career that one is, unfortunately ill-suited for, or various other frustrations and disappointments. What to make of the fact that life is a mixed bag? Ashby says that he takes it as encouragement to cultivate holiness, but his tone is disheartened, and his hopes for success are dim. His prayer, "Besechyng God I may take my dysease / In dew

pacience oure lord God to please" (34-35), expects no answer from without in the form of material help from above, but only change from within that he must undertake himself. Among all of his friends, no one remembers him, and no one will help him with his biggest problem:

> The grettest peyne that I suffyr of all
> Ys that I am put to unpayable det,
> Lykly to be therfore a wrechyd thrall
> For the enprisonment that I am in set
> Without Goddes grace, woll hyt sonner let!
> Whereopon to God I clepe, call, and cry
> To help me out of det or I dy.
>
> (43-9)

Unless ("Without") he gets some special grace from God, he is going to be stuck in prison indefinitely. And given that the remainder of the poem is about how to handle such inevitable suffering in life, Ashby is not expecting any relief from his material troubles by the grace of God, unless other people take it upon themselves to be the agents of such grace. Faith in the action of metaphysical actors is not requisite for Ashby's desires, and his matter of expressing them continually Thus he asks for relief—repeatedly—but also proceeds on the assumption that he is not going to get it, and any good that he gets from the experience will have to be a result of his own virtue (which, granted, he dutifully says that he hopes God will engender in him). The weak potential for help from God in Ashby's "Complaint" mirrors the weak potential for help from patrons on earth, and in fact the poem leaves all burden of proof of God's grace on its audience who may choose to respond, or not.

Hoccleve's doubt of divine mediators, like Ashby's, corresponds to doubt of human ones; the invocation of divine mediators—from whom help is not really expected—arises as each poet emphasizes his need for mediation of powerful earthly friends. As in both cases, the poet avers that he does not expect to get the mediating patronage he needs from earthly helpers, whose support would be a sign of divine grace. Thus we can see in the case of each poetic complaint

that the poet does not expect help from above. Again, nostalgia and skepticism arise together—nostalgic longing for saintly intercession together with disbelief that it could possibly be forthcoming. And at the same time, conventions of prayer in these complaints push upon readers the responsibility to represent faith—not necessarily their own faith, but the faith of the Church, in the form of edifying generosity that would work as proof of the mercy of God, avert the poet's impending despair, and convert the poet back to Christian belief. This shared quality in Ashby and Hoccleve is a point of significant coincidence between political and religious beliefs about social relationships, as well as ethical hopes and expectations relating to social life. Hoccleve will not rest in the sense "that God alone is the solution to heaviness and sorrow," as Eleanor Johnson writes, but rather insists upon turning spiritual hopes back upon social life.[32] As we will see, Hoccleve's political writing, aiming to serve his prince and promote good government, is at once both more pious and more worldly than his devotionally inflected personal poems. He does "turn spiritual hopes back upon social life" in the *Regiment of Princes*, but an ethical sensibility that precedes Christian devotional convention infuses his optimistic didactic text about society and government, such that when Hoccleve gets to Christianity, his voice is not skeptical. Rather it is as hopeful and celebratory as it is nostalgic.

The Regiment of Princes

As Paul Strohm and others have suggested, Henry IV and Henry V both needed legitimation after the fall of Richard II, and in many ways Hoccleve's framing of his own anxieties seems to have been an attempt to claim solidarity (and support) by framing his nations' and his rulers' problems as mirrors of his personal troubles. Although Hoccleve's representation

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[32] *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 207.

of the tension and the longing adhering to the ideal of government through patronage does reflect a time of uncertainty in English political-administrative culture, I disagree with Strohm's suggestion that we should read Hoccleve's artfully anxious self-representation primarily as a mirror of Lancastrian unease and self-doubt, or that idealization of kingship in the *Regiment* is fundamentally self-interested and offers no significant challenges to the Prince of Wales.[33] Rather, I contend that in the *Regiment* Hoccleve foregrounds his own "problems" hoping the prince will come to identify with them, but not in the sense that he is simply trying to elicit compassion from Henry or win his trust; rather, he hopes Henry will take on such problems for himself, not simply in support of Hoccleve, but as a way of approaching his role as king. My argument thus follows that of David Greetham and Eleanor Johnson in holding that Hoccleve's crafted persona has genuine "sociopolitical goals," that accord with his personal ones, though my particular focus is on how Hoccleve represents the ethical subject as a participant—whether clerk or aristocrat, king or subject—who can promote justice in an unstable society by serving as a personal mediator for others, relying on intermediaries for protection in turn.[34]

Certainly what we know of the poem's reception suggests that his readers took the personal introduction to the *Regiment* as an integral part of the edifying project of theorizing and teaching good government. The large number of extant manuscripts suggests that readers found the book itself valuable, aside from any personal relationships they may have had with the poet.[35]

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[33] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 141, 181. See also James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History: Volume 2: 1350-1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 212.

[34] Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory,* 203n5; see also Greetham, "Self-Referential Artifacts: Hoccleve's Persona as a Literary Device," *Modern Philology* 86.3 (1989): 248.

[35] Although the *Regiment* enjoyed "clear and immediate success" as evidenced by "forty-three extant manuscripts, six of them deluxe," all of these manuscripts were produced close to the time of Hoccleve's writing them, and all were produced in the area of London; "the text's transmission appears to have been

As Rory G. Critten has recently shown in a close study of manuscript evidence, Hoccleve's personal poems that exposed his inner life and its intimate details, such as his *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend* (c. 1421-22) were far less likely to be copied than his more conventional work.[36] Yet Critten points to the Prologue to the *Regiment* as a notable exception, citing Nicholas Perkins' conclusive manuscript study demonstrating that Hoccleve's contemporaries almost never copied the Prologue without the *Regiment*-proper, and they clearly saw the Prologue as a necessary frame for the work: "although late medieval readers responded to the work's opening section in a variety of ways, suggesting that they did not often encounter works like it, the manuscript evidence…argues for an early awareness of the integrity of the *Regiment* among its fifteenth-century readers."[37] Hoccleve's personal narrative in the Prologue is directly connected with his approach to the traditional project of the mirror for princes, to guide the prince "as reader of a literary text and as interpreter of the text of politics," as Perkins puts it.[38]

Hoccleve's discussions of patronage reflect beliefs about ethics that I will open up to further examination with some key concepts in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, most of which I have already used as touchstones for ethical meaning in this study. As I have discussed,

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limited in time and place. William Caxton chose not to print it," (John M. Bowers, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition," *The Chaucer Review* 36.4 [2002], 352-369; 353, 358). See also Charles R. Blyth, "Introduction," in Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes,* ed. Blyth, TEAMS Middle English Series, Robbins Library Digital Projects (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/blyth-hoccleve-regiment-of-princes-introduction.

[36] Rory G. Critten, "'Her Heed They Caste Awry' The Transmission and Reception of Thomas Hoccleve's Personal Poetry," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 64.265 (2012): 386-409; see esp. 386-87: "When late medieval readers selected for reproduction those Hocclevean items which could most readily be incorporated into their own self-defining compilations . . . the acutely personalized texts . . . were the first to be sidelined."

[37] Critten, "Her Heed," 403; for Perkins' discussion of the evidence, see Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes: *Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 151-91.

[38] Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes, 57.

Levinas theorizes that subjection to another is the very ground of humanity, and infinite responsibility for another, activated in a face-to-face encounter with the Other, is the essence of ethics. The ethical subject in Levinas participates in these, and moving beyond them he may participate in a just society with of the arrival of a third party to the encounter. In an ideal relationship, the third party is one who brings the ethical subject to recognize the Other and also himself as human, each of them a neighbor to the other and to others beyond themselves. And yet, crucially, each person is also unique, possessing a radical alterity from all others. In this social vision of being itself, according to Levinas, justice is the establishment of a social order that does not "thematize" people, defining them as manifestations of certain stable roles or positions that separate and limit their responsibilities and their protections, setting them apart from each other in competitive self-interest. Rather, as we have seen, according to Levinas, a just social order maintains its recognition of each one's infinite responsibility for the others, remaining open to the infinity of each individual. Thus, the ethical subject is infinitely responsible for every Other he encounters, and the ethical subject himself deserves others' protection in turn.

***The Regiment of Princes*: Thinking, Suffering and Justice**

In the Prologue to *The Regiment of Princes,* mediation is an ethical *topos* because in it Hoccleve contextualizes his rhetorical approach to the prince in a relational ethical framework that includes himself, the prince, and the fictional Old Man, as a third party who works between them. The Prologue's narrative has two parts: first, Hoccleve's insomniac struggle with "Thoght"; and second, his dialogic encounter with the Old Man. I will discuss each of the first two parts in relation to a particular concept in Levinas' ethics, as they help to highlight ways in

which Hoccleve conceptualizes his role as an ethical actor, as well as the ethical longings that motivate him to seek and promote personal patronage in political governance, a theme that continues in the representation of kingly responsibility in the *Regiment* that follows.

As the poem opens, Hoccleve is paralyzed by isolation. Or, more precisely, Hoccleve is paralyzed because although he wrestles with his problems without any help from others, pure solitude is impossible for him. "Thoght," his "cruel fo" (73) is his constant companion. "And for I sholde nat allone be, / Ageyn my lust wach [wakefulness] proferred his servyse, / And I admittid him in hevy wyse" (75-77). In fact, the oppressive presence of "Thoght," supported by "wach," heralds the proximity of someone else, an Other who is outside Hoccleve himself, though Hoccleve cannot perceive who it is who approaches him in such a troubling way, nor is the Other aware that he approaches. As in the intercession narrative "St. Theophilus," we can identify two encounters in Hoccleve's account, one within and heralding the other, as the encounter with Mary heralds the approach of God. The first encounter is with the Old Man, a fellow subject of the prince (as Mary is a fellow human subject of God the king), who will also prove to be a manifestation of God (as Mary also represents God's grace in action), and a reflection of Hoccleve's own conscience. In representing Hoccleve's conscience as embodied in a man who reflects his own wisdom back at him, Hoccleve creates more than just an alter ego for his narrator, or for the would-be princely counselor himself. The Old Man is not half of a dyadic representation of Hoccleve but rather—crucially—one who is other, with responsibilities to others beyond and outside of his relationship to Hoccleve. This allows the Old Man to take up the responsibility to help Hoccleve the narrator, the poet creates an image of a responsible third party who mediates between the prince and himself, enlightening them both with respect to their responsibilities toward each other, and all others.

The second encounter in the Prologue is Hoccleve's encounter with the prince himself, a movement that occurs over the whole course of the work—including the *Regiment*-proper and its epilogue, as if Hoccleve were on his way to meet the prince in person, but not quite there yet when the work ends. In this the prince's role is like that of God in an intercession narrative, the judging mind observing, waiting, and subtly supporting the whole enterprise of the Christian's life, while the intermediary saint goes first to encounter the Christian and mediate the coming moment of the Christian's total self-offering to God. Of course, Hoccleve presents himself as a wholeheartedly willing subject to the prince, but he is a suffering one because he is so tenuously dependent upon his professional relationship with the monarchy. His work gives him no security that he will be protected and sustained, although he already devotes himself to protecting and sustaining his monarch. As I will show, the *Regiment* is a movement toward confirmation that the prince offers himself in return, even undergoing the same mental training that Hoccleve has undergone to make him a responsible mediator on others' behalf.

Like the figure of Mary in "St. Theophilus," the intervention of the Old Man ultimately helps Hoccleve to recognize his own proper role as "a member of society," as Levinas puts it—not simply as a functioning instrument but as a responsible actor for whom others are also responsible. According to Hoccleve's new understanding of society, the prince must learn what he himself has learned, through a process of suffering, and so learn to offer himself for any needy subject. Hoccleve's story of his ethical awakening—and the key moment of wakefulness preceding it—is an expression of beliefs about the individual in society that embraces metaphysical view of persons in terms other than Christian ones. As the story of an ethical subject's entry into society through the presence of a third party who articulates and promotes justice, however, turning others into similarly responsible subjects who are also responsible third

parties. Thus it echoes the key figures and dynamics of the Christian intercession narrative as a descriptor of the ideal processes of ethical development for a soul in a social cosmos.

Although Hoccleve's wakefulness is a form of suffering, it is a necessary discomfort that keeps Hoccleve from descending into a comfortable acceptance of the social order as a total description of the possibilities for human identities and relationships—for if individuals were described fully by their social roles, they would be bound by them in unjust imbalances of power, without hope for empathy. Encountering the Old Man in person—as the Old Man shakes him awake—Hoccleve begins a transition out of his insomniac experience, and finds a way to his knowledge gained from suffering to good use.

As the Prologue to the *Regiment* begins, the scene is Hoccleve's room at Chester's Inn at night, the lodging place reserved by the king for the clerks of the Privy Seal.[39] Here Hoccleve struggles with insomnia brought on by his financial and professional worries. For Hoccleve, worrying takes the form of allegorical exposition, creating the effect of a social struggle while his suffering literally takes place in private solitude. Hoccleve's "small-scale personification" represents a way of imagining the interaction of material and intangible phenomena, bringing them together into one plane of metaphysical and ethical, though not Christian-religious, experience.[40]

As the saints were understood to be "invisible intimates" hovering all around each Christian,

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[39] Brown, *Governance*, 46-47.

[40] A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 199. Spearing suggests that Hoccleve's "persistent use of small-scale personification . . . one of the hallmarks of his style throughout his work" warrants comparison to the allegorical style of *Piers Plowman* (119). In his editorial introduction to *The Regiment of Princes*, however, Blyth contends that unlike *Piers* Hoccleve's style of personification does not lend itself well to narrative readings, much less to "Langlandian dramatic scenes" (Blyth, "Introduction," in Hoccleve, *Regiment*, 202n7). On Hoccleve's allegorical style, see also Stephanie Gibbs Kamath and Rita Copeland, "Medieval Secular Allegory: French and English," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Allegory*, ed. Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 147.

Hoccleve's vision of the aspects of his mind and circumstances of his life creates a world of invisible intimates—made strange to him—that obscure the world beyond his own consciousness. This establishes the space of his nighttime ordeal as a place where others are near, though they cannot be seen or identified clearly. The effect begins with "Thoght" (7) personified by a mild rhetorical gesture: Hoccleve's claim that *thought* has "byrefte" (7) him of the ability to sleep seems like nothing more than a minimally artful way of saying that he has been having trouble sleeping because he worries too much. By the next line, however, Thought is a "wikkid hyne" (8), and soon after is one with whom the speaker is "aqweynted" (13), a certain "he" (14) who has been bullying the speaker and has exhausted him "to the deeth" (14). A familiar female "Fortune" (17) persona appears next—an allegorical commonplace to be sure, but she is followed by a quick characterization of "estat rial" (23) represented as a "lord" (24), and then by a personified "sikirnesse" (security) (26), by a feminine figure of "seuretee" (surety, or taking on responsibility for someone else's debt or transgression) (28), and then "poore estat" (29), "deeth" (32), and eventually a few others. Hoccleve does not create visual descriptions of the allegorical figures, but the effect of his describing the actions of each of these states of social thought, activity, and wellbeing (or lack thereof), is to depict the poet surrounded by phantom forms, flitting about him in the darkness.

Along with naming what seem to be mental states, and what actually are social forms, as persons, Hoccleve inserts himself into the allegorical action, articulating the link between the world of allegorical figments and the world in which the worrying man seeks comfort and longs for rest. This is a representation of belief, not religious, but ethical belief in a division between one's self, and one's social position and its corresponding identity. Jennifer Bryan has argued that Hoccleve's representations of himself outside himself, in the mirror and through the

opinions of others, suggest an anxiety in his cultural community, a common sense of shame that finds solace and renewal in self-exposing writing like Hoccleve's:

> The alienation of the self from its social identity is everywhere assumed to be permanent and universal, a condition that can never fully be mended. It can only be remedied, in stop-gap fashion, if the inner is compelled to confess itself over and over again, offering itself to public power without ever being able to fully cement the transaction.[41]

Here and elsewhere, Bryan groups the Prologue to the *Regiment* with Hoccleve's confessional poems—and for good reason, as it is true that in the *Complaint* he will again describe an episode of worrying about instability in the world (8-14), a night without sleep (18-21), struggling with a "thowghtfull maladye" (21), and a sense of having been thrown outside himself (42).[42] All of this echoes what we see in the *Regiment* Prologue, written about ten years earlier.

Yet the Prologue represents a very different treatment of Hoccleve's painful mental gymnastics than as a "sycknes" (22) essentially like the "wyld infermitie" (40) of the *Complaint,* despite the Old Man's misguided and ineffectual attempts to diagnose and treat Hoccleve like a morally sick man. In fact, the controlled observation of his thoughts at play that Hoccleve shows in the *Regiment* puts Hoccleve in the position of the one judging what he sees, rather than being demoralized by his phantasmagoria. Although it has been unpleasant to think the way he has been thinking, the only "wownde" (775) that needs healing at this point is problem of his "estat" (784), which is indeed ailing; but fortunately, the Old Man plainly tells him that the prince will be the needed "salve" for his "indigence" (1834). When he later meets the Old Man and begins to express his thoughts, Hoccleve's description of the obstructions to his success and stability, as well as the more egregious injustices around him, show a rational response to his night of

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[41] Bryan, "Hoccleve, the Virgin, and the Politics of Complaint," 1185.

[42] Selections are from Thomas Hoccleve, "Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint," in *Hoccleve's Works*, ed. Frederick Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, 1970, 95-110.

unsettled meditation. As we have already seen in the description of corrupt mediation among aristocratic appellants that I have excerpted above, Hoccleve responds with moral outrage, pragmatic concern for himself and also for his fellows and society itself, and then, with the Old Man's help, a will to make some good come of what he has suffered.

Sometimes, in certain allusions to his "poore goost" (9), Hoccleve pictures himself as another persona among the allegorical figures. The *goost* operates at the same level of reality as the other figures. It is the sufferer or would-be beneficiary of the status personae's actions upon it. In this case, Hoccleve is envisioning his own social identity as separate from himself, acting in some parallel world of ideas. This highlights the critical position he is in; he regards himself as inhabiting social forms but not identified with them, a key to observing the insufficiency of such roles and positions to define and describe the whole of a person. When he looks upon his soul struggling among social forms, Hoccleve feels compassion for his "poore" self, in a new way. Thus the power of the social system to define persons is disrupted by Hoccleve's rendering of it as a flat, mundane allegory—one which elicits compassion in the mind of an objective observer. The shifting actions upon the soul are painful, and even from outside himself, Hoccleve shares this pain. With this demystification of the social order, however, persons are rendered more mysterious. Hoccleve temporarily understands himself as a soul, beyond and potentially different from any social forms he might inhabit, because the themes of social discourse—the social roles and social positions—have no capacity to hold him as a person.

At other times during his insomniac meditation, Hoccleve seems to be a single self directly experiencing the presence of Thoght and Fortune, as well as the other shadowy forms, as if they were real and independent social actors in the material world with him. As he ruefully explains, "And for I sholde nat allone be, / Ageyn my lust wach proferred his servyse, / And I

admitted him in hevy wyse" (75-77). "Wach" or *wakefulness* appear here as an unwelcome but necessary companion to Hoccleve's body, negotiating for a place at Hoccleve's side through the night when he would rather be visited by "reste" (72) and her companion "sleep" (74). With this interaction, Hoccleve displays his intuitive mental openness. He has a special capacity to suffer because he consents to a special kind of thinking that is not pleasurable, but serviceable, like the "servyse" of "[W]ach." This thinking is necessary for maintaining an enlightened social awareness.

We have now seen that Hoccleve's insomnia represents a state of ethical awareness that troubles his perceptions of persons as manifestations of social roles. For Levinas, too, the concept of *insomnia* describes a particular state of uncertainty with regard to the self and its approach to being and ethics. In insomnia, the self hovers between on the one hand a metaphorical state of *sleep*, a state of certainty in which the world is viewed as a limited, knowable totality, entirely shaped by one's own vision of it, and on the other hand *awakening,* a state of radical displacement, in which the self cannot know the world or exercise power over it. In awakening, the self is subject to the ethical demand that has "awakened" it to the ethical foundation of reality, but that denies it the freedom to define reality rationally. Levinas writes,

> The irreducible categorial character of insomnia lies precisely in this: the other is in the Same and does not alienate the same but awakens it. Awakening is like a demand that that no obedience is equal to, no obedience puts to sleep; it is a 'more' in the 'less.' Or, to use obsolete language, it is the spirituality of the soul, ceaselessly aroused from its state of soul, in which *wakefulness* itself already closes over upon itself or falls to sleep, resting within the boundaries it has as a state. We find here the passivity of Inspiration, or the subjectivity of the subject aroused, sobered up, out of its being. There is a formalism in insomnia, a formalism more formal than that of any defining, delimiting, confining form, more formally formal than that of a form that closes into a presence and an *esse*, filling with content. Insomnia is wakefulness, but a wakefulness without intentionality, —dis-

> interested. Its indeterminateness does not call for a form, is not a materiality. It is a form that does not *terminate* the drawing out of a form in it, and does not condense its own emptiness into a content. It is uncontained—Infinity.[43]

Much of Levinas's language focuses on "being," pointing to the limits of ontology to describe the intrinsically ethical nature of existence, and of course these terms are mismatched with Hoccleve's language and experience. On the other hand, although the terms "spirituality" and "soul" are obsolete for Levinas the twentieth-century Continental ethics scholar, for Hoccleve the late medieval thinker they are not. His "poore goost" becomes animated in his wakefulness. With this, for Hoccleve, comes the essential insight that a disinterested appraisal of individuals in society must reveal their infinite natures, the souls that will never quite be contained in the social forms that attempt to circumscribe them. Thrown out of alignment with social norms by his circumstances in life, but also by his extreme sensitivity, Hoccleve sees the world objectively.

The allegorical "formalism" of Hoccleve's thoughts about society keeps them separate from him, regarding them, in a position is wakefulness, but not yet fully awake to the investment of ethical being that will come with encountering another. In Hoccleve's figural, narrativized account of his ethical subjectivity, "Thoght," nags at him; in Levinasian terms, this thought is an extension of "the other" who is "in the Same." For Hoccleve, such thought is an awareness that within Hoccleve's flat, ordinary perception of the social world, a field of perception that reflects everything back to him in terms that are determined by his own perspective ("the same" as him, all manifesting himself), there is another person who is *not* the same, but radically other than himself. According to Levinas's description of the ethical encounter, the ethical subject owes his whole existence as a human being to his bond with the Other. And the Other is anyone at all with whom one is close enough to form a relationship. These encounters are fundamentally

[43] Levinas, "God and Philosophy," 132-33.

humanizing, but they do not necessarily –or usually—define the ways in which individuals interact in society. As Levinas writes, society tends to take the form of a self-interested struggle, a "war of all against all."[44]

Hoccleve's experience of ethical insomnia appears to differ greatly from Levinas's if we read Hoccleve as simply alone with his thoughts, rather than troubled by the approach of another. But the presence of two allegorical figures who seem to be in the same dimension of reality with Hoccleve, "Thought" and "[W]ach," prefigure the arrival of two others—human Others—on the scene. The nearest Other is the Old Man Hoccleve will meet upon leaving his room in the morning, and as the Old Man performs his mediating function counseling Hoccleve to appeal to Prince Henry, Hoccleve will acknowledge his protracted approach to the Prince. Of course, given that the prince is the reader of the Prologue, his as-yet-unidentified presence is already exerting a power over Hoccleve the writer, and the narrator-Hoccleve registers this power in the very fact of his troubled sleep. As in Levinas, "the other is in the Same" and "awakens it," the prince is an intrinsic part of the character of Hoccleve, seemingly sitting alone but surrounded by the troubling facts of society and its dynamics.

As Levinas theorizes human existence as sustained by the encounter with the Other, and the Christian worldview theorizes human existence as sustained by God (encountered in the proximity of fellow Christians and saints), Hoccleve's character cannot simply be, by himself. Rather, he is subjected—as loving, approaching subject—to his prince, and even nearer than the prince is the imminent arrival of the Old Man, to whom Hoccleve is also subject, as a Christian in an intercession narrative is subject to Mary. Although Hoccleve does not describe his insomniac experience in terms of perception of his subjection to the prince, or anticipation of meeting another who will help him find justice in his relationship with the prince, the figures of

[44] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being,* 159.

"wach" and "Thoght" that keep him company are shadows of the Old Man who will soon shake him and exhort him to awaken, and of the prince who will accompany him through his thoughtful consideration of the kingly political duties and strategies in the *Regiment*-proper.

Levinas writes that

> Insomnia—the wakefulness in awakening—is disturbed in the core of its formal or categorial *equality* by the *other*, which tears away at whatever forms a nucleus, a substance of the Same, identity, a rest, a presence, a sleep. Insomnia is disturbed by the other who breaks this rest, breaks it from this side of the *state* in which equality tends to establish itself.[45]

Levinas's political language here, emphasized by his editor's italics, is helpful in understanding what Hoccleve's terrible wakefulness is like, as well as what wakes him up fully out of his wakefulness, in terms of a metaphysical ethics applied to politics. The social and economic categories that flit around Hoccleve in his insomniac state but do not stabilize or become part of a total theory are aspects of his political orientation; he does not enjoy regarding them, but he cannot shake them off because they are the very forms of political and social organization. They are the sociopolitical world as he knows it. Yet when he regards them as forms without content, a disorderly way of thinking caused by the approach of the other, he is poised to critique them, to see them emptied, rearranged, and reframed around persons who belong in them. In Levinasian terms, Hoccleve is thus reconsidering "the *state*" in his state of ethical insomnia. This experience is part of a dawning of justice –the recognition of each person's infinity and infinite responsibility for every other, within a social order—in Hoccleve's own mind. Thus Hoccleve embodies the experience of coming to understand justice by perceiving a metaphysical reality beyond the social order, a reality that should ground the social order.

The justice Hoccleve will ultimately come to understand as the ideal for his society is a

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[45] Levinas, "God and Philosophy," 132.

social order that acknowledges the responsibility of each one for every other, grounded in awareness of the infinite, metaphysical worth of each person. This is consonant with a basic Christian understanding of human nature and human solidarity, in which all are called upon to intercede on behalf of others at a spiritual level, seeing to it that all basic needs are met at a material level, as a support to the spiritual claim. But neither Hoccleve's description of his awakening nor his promotion of it to the prince is primarily Christian. Rather, each is secondarily Christian, ultimately embracing Christian ideals and hopes after and beyond the recognition of responsibilities and hopes for happiness and security through responsible relationships within the material world. As I will discuss below, after exhorting the prince to take up his responsibility to engage himself and offer himself on others' behalf, as an embodiment and a model of good government, in the final movement of the poem Hoccleve will embrace Christian hopes for the soul. But his moral advice to the prince finds its foundational idea of justice in a metaphysical sensibility that is not specifically Christian. His advice bases its elaboration of good social order on this sensibility. And from this sensibility it develops a view of society as a manifestation of Christian goodness. As Levinas writes,

> Politics tends toward reciprocal recognition, that is, toward equality; it ensures happiness. And political law concludes and sanctions the struggle for recognition. Religion is Desire and not struggle for recognition. It is the surplus possible in a society of equals, that of glorious humility, responsibility, and sacrifice, which are the condition for equality itself.[46]

The struggle over personal patronage—for it, against it, or for a better version of it or a more limited one—coincides with the tension between religion and politics, in Hoccleve's late medieval English society that is not "a society of equals," Hoccleve yet observes (in a Boethian vein) that differences in status are unstable. And although political society relies on

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[46] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 64.

"recognition" of the person in terms of some politically relevant identity, persons are not their sociopolitical positions. Once the social order recognizes this, society can sanction the "surplus" of "glorious humility, responsibility, and sacrifice" that are characterized as religious. At the same time, as Levinas indicates here, the just social order cannot arise without these as a foundation. In Hoccleve, we see that a foundational precept of religious ethics grounds his view of a good social order, in his shaking the person as a soul loose from the constraints and illusions of social positions and roles. And after this fundamental establishment of the infinity of the human individual, Hoccleve will embrace religion as a guiding set of principles and behavioral rules. For Hoccleve, as for Levinas, religious ethics is a "surplus" beyond the view of a good social order that is, in another sense, already grounded in a religious understanding of human existence.

As the metaphor of insomnia implies, for the ethical subject awareness of justice is not comfortable, much less a state of happiness. Rather, the awareness of justice is a state of suffering necessary for understanding the foundation of justice in social life. What his night of insomnia establishes is that Hoccleve has seen the central idea that grounds a just view of society, but it is important to note that he does not enjoy it. "[W]ach" pulls at Hoccleve throughout the night, keeping him from falling asleep and in the process, it keeping him from feeling wholeness. "Thought," too, is a form of nagging desire that will not let him rest, as he might if he could only bring his thoughts back together into one perspectival view, his own, and see the world through and in the familiar order of social forms. This seems at first like a longing for a positive reality, a desire for a wholeness that is healing. Yet the separation from knowledge, from his own "konnynge" (110) and "wit" (111), is so intolerable for Hoccleve that he slips into a darker version of the same will to sleep: "[F]ul often," he admits, he longs for the total rest of

"deeth" (112). With this Hoccleve shows the suicidal character of the will to rest completely in a stable, undisturbed view of society. To let himself slip into acceptance of the social status images before him as if they were reality itself—to enter his "angry dremes" rather than remaining outside of them—would be to accept annihilation as a human being. Awareness of the insufficiency of social roles to define a person is crucial to the survival of the person in a society that always tends toward the oppression and dehumanization of persons in the service of keeping order.

I think that I have demonstrated that we can read Hoccleve's insomnia narrative in the Prologue to the *Regiment* as a dramatization of the Levinasian concept of insomnia. But what is the benefit of this reading? There are two answers to this question: First, there is great benefit for understanding Hoccleve. His Prologue, exemplar in some ways of the resolute, persistent strangeness and self-alienation of Hoccleve's personal poetry, warrants further explaining as a self-authorizing narrative that gives Hoccleve moral authority to advise the prince. How is this Prologue a demonstration of Hoccleve's readiness to be the prince's ethical guide? It is a demonstration of this because Hoccleve demonstrates his total subjection to the prince, wholly replacing his own needs and interests with the prince's responsibilities. Of course, the prince's responsibilities are *to him*, in two senses: first, he is a subject of the prince, an English subject, and thus he belongs to the prince; second, the prince is subject to him in a Levinasian sense, as they are both recognized by the Old Man as the third party and must mutually recognize each other (as they must also, by extension, recognize and take responsibility for all others whom they encounter). Thus the Old Man, the ethical third party who is a person, another other, is crucial to the fulfillment of the ideal of social responsibility that has begun to dawn on Hoccleve as he has meditated alone through the night.

The second part of Hoccleve's Prologue to the *Regiment*, the dialogue with the Old Man, is emblematic of his work as a whole, in that it centers on the moment of a rude awakening, in which a well-meaning, moralizing figure, the Old Man, struggles to be heard, even as he sincerely places himself in the service of another, until he finally exposes his own moral weakness. This similarity between the Old Man and Hoccleve the well-meaning but unskilled kingly counselor has led Andrew Lynch to claim that the Old Man and Hoccleve the narrator are an imaginary "dyadic body," representing yet another of Hoccleve the poet's split selves. It is true that Hoccleve makes the Old Man a mirror of himself, but to claim that they are meant to be one person overlooks textual details that show Hoccleve's deliberate depiction of an actual Other,[47] another person who is not simply a projection of his own ideas, maddeningly cast outside of himself. The Old Man's alterity is crucial to the narrative of mediation that sanctions Hoccleve's next move, to present the prince with a *speculum principis.* In Hoccleve's poem, the moment of coming to recognize the Old Man as Other is an epiphany that functions as the final impetus needed to push him toward addressing the young prince in the *Regiment* proper.

After his night of insomnia, Hoccleve wanders out of the inn while still ruminating on the meanings of social forms and positions. Lost in his thoughts, he enters the presence of the Old Man without being aware of it. With this, he is drawn into an ethical encounter that does not happen instantaneously but rather develops gradually over the course of his dialogue with the Old Man. Outside in the daylight, Hoccleve meets at last with this flesh-and-blood Other, the "poore old hoor man" (Pro. 122). In fact, the Old Man approaches long before Hoccleve is aware of his presence, a moment that has been compared to the opening passages of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, in which the poet-narrator approaches the sorrowing Man in Black and observes

[47] Andrew Lynch, "'Manly Cowardyse: Thomas Hoccleve's Peace Strategy," *Medium Aevum* 73.2 (2004): 318n.8; See also Antony J. Hasler, "Hoccleve's Unregimented Body," *Paragraph* 13 (1990): 167.

him for some time before intruding upon his reflective solitude. Unlike the polite poet-narrator in *Book of the Duchess* who awakens the pensive man, however, the Old Man approaches the oblivious, melancholy stranger who is Hoccleve with a careless confidence, first tossing out a conventional greeting, and then realizing that Hoccleve's unresponsiveness is a sign of distress. Upon seeing Hoccleve's face, the Old Man realizes that Hoccleve is incapable of answering and needs to be roused for his own good. Given this, that he "stirte" (131) toward him and starts shaking him "wondir faste" (132) is a move of empathy, although it looks like transgression and even violence. The Old Man perceives Hoccleve's state and cannot leave him alone. Shaking him awake is a moral imperative.

Hoccleve, for his part, cannot recognize the man; as he is being shaken out of his reverie, he can only say, "A, who is there?" The Old Man gives no name but identifies himself as a singularity, in an even more fundamental way, "I . . . Am heer" (Prol. 134-35). In Levinasian terms, the Old Man is responding in the only perfectly ethical way a soul can respond to another, with an indication of selfhood and presence, but without the "thematizing" label of a name that would circumscribe his identity. In the passages that follow, after an initial struggle over mutual subjection—that is, a struggle over whether Hoccleve will submit to the Old Man's offer to serve him, and specifically to "cure" (161, 162, 163) him—the Old Man attempts to explain Hoccleve to himself, grasping the nature of his problem as first and foremost a problem of being alone:

> "I fond thee soul and thy wittes echone
> Fer fro thee fled and disparpled ful wyde,
> Wherfore it seemeth thee needith a gyde,
> Which that thee may unto thy wittes lede."
> (Prol. 208-11)

The Old Man sees Hoccleve as a fractured soul, his "wittes" scattered, and he proposes to lead him back to himself. Hoccleve will soon describe himself in much the same way as he excuses

himself for his initial rudeness (757-63). The Old Man's initial technique is an examination but also an exposition, a series of questions followed by long accounts of possible causes for Hoccleve's possible sorrows. He asks:

> "Now, goode sone, telle on thy grevance:
> What is thy cause of thoght in special?
> Hast thow of worldly goodes habundance
> And carist how that it ykept be shal?
> Or art thow needy and hast nat but smal,
> And thristist sore a ryche man to be?
> Or lovest hire that nat loveth thee?"
> (Prol. 232-38)

Not waiting for an answer, however, the Old Man launches into ruminations on how such problems develop from moral errors, and how to amend one's character, or "governance," and so find happiness:

> "I have herd seyn, in keepynge of richesse,
> Is thoght and wo and bisy awayt alway…."
> (Prol. 239-40)

The Old Man is looking for the moral problem and the moral solution at the heart of Hoccleve's experience. He carries out a kind of general sermonizing not unlike what we find in Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, taken from a penitential manual designed to aid priests in helping penitents to examine their consciences.

Mysteriously, Hoccleve's initially aggressive attitude toward the Old Man becomes neutral, and even "somdel" positive, after approximately 156 lines of apparently irrelevant and patently disapproving talk about dangerous excesses that Hoccleve is not guilty of, a tirade that culminates in an indirect accusation of heresy. This accusation Hoccleve emphatically—but not angrily—denies. It seems to surprise, rather than offend him: Marking Hoccleve's improved appearance and more energetic demeanor (perhaps in response to the heresy suggestion), the Old Man asks:

> "Hast thow in me any gretter savour
> Than that thow haddest first whan thow me sy,
> Whan I opposid thee of thy langour?
> sey on the soothe."

To which Hoccleve replies tepidly:

> "Yee, somdel," quod I.
> (Prol. 394-96)

Hearing this, the Old Man is not satisfied with Hoccleve's replying so "feyntly" (Prol. 397); he perceives that Hoccleve's "savour yit ful smal is" (Prol. 398). Yet this comic exchange points out the subtext of relationship-making that underlies the content of the discussion as an act of control by the Old Man to reform Hoccleve according to traditional moral precepts.

The shift out of awakening to being awake comes in a moment of epiphany that arises from the Old Man's turning away from Hoccleve toward a third party whose presence he invokes in a prayer:

> "Lord, as Thee list, right so Thow to me do;
> But evere I hope seur been of that place
> Which that Thy mercy boght us hath unto,
> If that us list for to sue Thy grace.
> A! Lord almighty, in my lyves space,
> Of my gilt graunte Thow me repentance,
> And Thy strook take in greable souffrance."
> (Prol. 736-42)

The first line of the Old Man's direct address to God as he nears the end of his tirade echoes Mary's words to the angel Gabriel in the Gospel of Luke: *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* [be it be done to me according to thy word] (*Lk.* 1:38).[48] Not only does the Old Man place himself in submission to the will of God, giving himself to God as a sacrifice (like Jesus) but he takes the role of the archetypal human-divine mediator for the Middle Ages, the Blessed Virgin. In the

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[48] *Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatam Clementinam* [The Holy Bible; Douay-Rheims Version], ed. Richard Challoner and Michael Tweedale (London: Baronius Press, 2008).

following line, he asks for a particular "place" in the cosmic order, secured by the intervention of Jesus. The Old Man's prayer invokes the changing state of the soul through "mercy," the divine currency that "buys" the opportunity to call upon God's patronage. The turn from an invasive (and unproductive) relationship of social control to a relationship of love occurs not because the dialogue includes one more example of Christian discourse, but because in this invocation of religion the Old Man expresses the key ethical idea that Hoccleve has learned in the night: hope for salvation for the individual lies in recognizing that souls are not bound by the states in which society and politics may place them. As Hoccleve's later invocation of religious ideals, at the end of the *Regiment,* will show, changing political "*states*" through self-sacrifice is also the best hope for England (and also France). In the dialogue that follows, Hoccleve gladly accepts a position of obedient subjection to the Old Man, confirming the ethical encounter, characterized by Hoccleve's "submittynge unto correccioun" of the Old Man (Prol. 756) and specifically correcting his misrecognition of the Old Man. As he explains,

> "Fadir, as wysly God me save and speede,
> Yee been nat he whom that I wende han fownde;
> Yee been to me ful welcome in this neede.
> I woot wel yee in hy vertu habownde;
> Your wys reed hope I hele shal my wownde;
> My day of helthe is present, as me thynkith;
> Your confort deepe into myn herte synkith."
> (Prol. 771-77)

Rather than another figment of Hoccleve's fragmented self, the self Hoccleve had been seeking and so assumed he must have "fownde," the Old Man is someone else, Other than Hoccleve, and this Other is "ful welcome." In the Old Man Hoccleve has found a responsible patron, and this patron will mediate between Hoccleve and the higher power upon whom he depends, the

prince.[49] In the remainder of the dialogue, the Old Man works with Hoccleve to sort through the causes of his unhappiness, concludes with Hoccleve that moral error is not to blame, but rather social and economic problems, thus ending with the Old Man's confident exhortation—and Hoccleve's equally optimistic resolve—to seek a solution to his professional and financial problems in a direct appeal to the prince, by means of the gift of a *speculum principis* the text of the *Regiment of Princes* that follows the Prologue.

In accord with Hoccleve's insight into the foundation of justice during his night of insomnia, and his following lesson of the ethical encounter with the Old Man, the *Regiment* offers positive images of good princes who see the ways in which their subjects are oppressed by social positions and roles, and who offer themselves as personally as responsible mediators on their behalf. Hoccleve explicitly acknowledges that the prince's security lies in preserving the social order, and particularly the law:

> Lawe is bothe lok and keye
> Of sueretee; whyl lawe is kept in londe,
> A prince in his estat may sikir stonde.
>
> And doutelees, if that fordoon be lawe,
> A princes power may go pleye him thenne;
> For they that naght ne han, with knyf ydrawe
> Wole on hem that of good be mighty renne
> And hurte hem and hir houses fyre and brenne,
> And robbe and slee and do al swich folie,
> Whan ther no lawe is hem to justifie.
> (2778-86)

The fearful prospect of the poor rising up in violence against the rich, a sight that many in fact saw in Hoccleve's time and in the preceding generation, points to the need to "justifie" the

[49] Knapp points out that in the language in which the speaker transitions out of the dialogue with the Old Man, the Old Man has become "Hoccleve's *auctour* and surrogate patron, whose *entente* is crucial to the undertaking" (*Bureaucratic Muse,* 82). I argue further that Hoccleve places the Old Man as patron and mediator between himself and Henry because it is in the context of a relationship of three that justice becomes clear. The Old Man can tell Hoccleve to hie himself to the prince, as Hoccleve can tell Oldcastle to hie himself to the king.

claims of the poor. But the poor are trapped by the way the social system, “commun lawe,” fails to recognize them as persons. Here Hoccleve speaks for the poor man who has no audience under normal circumstances.

> …and the poore speke worth the tweye,
> His seed nat sprynge may—it nis but lore.
> They seyn, “What is he this? Lat him go pleye!”
> O, worthy Prince, beeth wel waar, I preye,
> That your hy dignitee and sad prudence
> No desdeyn have of the poores sentence.
> (4887-93)

Hoccleve demands that prince listen as no one else will do. The prince needs to embody the law in his person, in fact, to put it correct use by rescuing those without voices.

Forgiving the guilty and letting the transgressor go free is the prerogative of the king alone, the one who can exercise the right of grace. Hoccleve conjures a heritage for the prince as a man of mercy to authorize his demand. John of Gaunt, Henry’s “grauntsyre” (3347) (grandsire), “never was in his lyfe vengeable / But ay forgaf the gilty and coupable” (3550-51), Hoccleve claims, going so far as to insist, “Our lige lord your fadir dooth the same; Now folwe hem two, my Lord, in Goddes name!” (3552-53). The specter of bloodshed and destruction evoked by the uprising of the poor cannot be dispelled, but the “love” is the only proper response against it.

Introducing one of his most radical claims with an easy message, Hoccleve warns the prince that he must be on his guard and ready to control the powerful. But beyond this, advising Henry to beware of counselors who advise levying taxes rather than offering their personal wealth to meet the needs of the realm, Hoccleve frames the image of a generous counselor as one who is willing to suffer: “For him is lever to suffre penance / Himself than that your peple sholde smerte” (4912-13). And the suffering one, whom the prince should “cherice” (4910), is one who

loves: “There is preef of treewe lovynge herte” (4914). And from here, Hoccleve moves into an ideal image of the prince himself.

The virtue of suffering for the other takes a more extreme form in Hoccleve’s image of the ideal prince as a responsible, mediating patron—this is not an image of generosity, but of mortal self-sacrifice. Hoccleve invokes the example of “Coadrus” (Codrus), the Athenian king who substituted himself for his people, making himself a stranger and giving up his life for them. Hoccleve tells us that he has read

> How in the feeld a lawe maad was thus
> Twixt his oost and hem of Polipolens:
> With triumphe sholde that part go thens
> Whos duk or prince were unarmed slaw
> In habyt strange—lo! Swich was the lawe.
> (3949-55)

Hoccleve’s curious insistence that “Swich was the lawe” calls attention to the absolute and specific binding power of Codrus’ position. Placing himself under the law—and *only* himself—he substitutes himself entirely for his subjects by wearing their clothing and taking on their defenselessness. By way of comparison, Gower’s version of the Codrus story in *Confessio Amantis*, like all known sources for the narrative, attributes Codrus’ decision to die not to his institution of a law that he applies only to himself, but rather to his learning from an oracle that he has no other choice if he is to save his people.[50] A significant detail in Hoccleve is that Codrus’ self-binding law was made “in the feeld.” This means that Hoccleve’s Codrus, unlike Gower’s, makes his choice in the moment of crisis, when he is exposed, and the substitution is immediate and fatal.

In his image of Codrus, Hoccleve thus avoids creating an image of a king who sees his

[50] See John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*: *Book 7,* ed. Russell Peck, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, Robbins Digital Library Project (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Press, 2004), http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cav3b7fr.htm.

responsibility to his people as circumscribed by his royal identity or superior position. Even as he rewrites the law, Codrus does so in response to the immediate, mortal needs of his people, and he writes his own mortal responsibility into it. In idealizing the image of Codrus and other self-sacrificing kings, patrons of their people who stand as responsible mediators between those in jeopardy and some higher power that threatens them, Hoccleve challenges Henry to a form of lordly patronage that binds the prince in a role of mutual subjection to his subjects and mediation on their behalf, as the bearer of justice in his person, both knowing and acting upon the precept that each one is responsible for all of the others.

In support of his argument that the prince must substitute himself for his subjects, taking responsibility for them personally rather than working through the mediation of others, Hoccleve offers the exemplum of Caesar and his loyal knight, as the knight stands accused "Before a juge eek in poynt to be deed" (3270). The knight cries out directly to his lord, asking that he "helpe" and "reewe on his estat" (3275). Caesar replies appropriately in terms of the knight's "estat": "And Cesar sent him a good advocat" (3276). This seems like the act of a prudent and responsive king. The knight, however, voices outrage before all the people, so that everyone may hear him. The problem is that an "advocat" is not a substitute. The voice speaking-for cannot accomplish what the body standing-in-for can do. Caesar's knight reminds his lord of a time when he, Caesar, once stood at the edge of death, in the "werres of Asie": "Maffeith, your lyf stood there in jupartie" (3283) the knight reminds him,

> "And advocat ne sente I noon to yow,
> But myself putte in prees and for yow faght;
> My wowndes beren good witnesse ynow
> That I sooth seye, and lest ye leeve it naght,
> I shal yow shewe what harme have I caght,
> The doute out of your herte for to dryve."
> He nakid hym and shewid him as blyve.

> Of which Cesar ful sore was ashamed,
> And in his herte sorwe made and mone;
> He heeld himselven worthy to be blamed.
> "My freend," he seide, "let me now allone;
> Advocat wole I be in my persone
> For thee; I am wel holden to do so."
> And thus this knyght his deeth he saved fro.
> (3281-97)

In the example of Caesar, like the example of Coadrus, Hoccleve's irrational voice invades the *Regiment of Princes*, calling upon the prince as a radically loving mediating patron mediator, begging him to take action, to intervene personally, to rupture the totality of law and social order, though by means of an ancient prerogative. Caesar's registering an affective response to the knight's demand for substitution is an essential ethical moment. Levinas writes, "Remorse is the trope of the literal sense of sensibility. In its passivity is erased the distinction between being accused and accusing oneself."[51] In his remorse, Caesar registers consciousnes of the ethical command. He does hold himself "worthy to be blamed," but also feels pain, and it is this "sense of sensibility" that marks the power of the other over him. He is "holden" to replace the advocate, to do what the advocate does but to exceed the advocate's capabilities by standing in for the accused, in his "persone."

Returning from the exemplary narratives within the *Regiment* to the frame that instructs the prince on how to read them, in order to read (and ultimately, write) politics with their proper lessons in mind, we can see that this an image of the patron who steps in with his body, surpassing the insufficient, impersonal office of the mere emissary-advocate, is a response to the patronless insecurity that plagues those who mediate on behalf of the king, undermining their humanity as they strive to serve rightly. Caesar's giving his "persone," advocating with his body, recalls Hoccleve's negative example from the Prologue, in which he sadly recounts the failure of

[51] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 125.

powerful patrons to take action on behalf of the clerks in the Privy Seal office:

> "So many a man as they this many a yeer
> Han written fore, fynde can they noon
> So gentil or of hir estat so cheer
> That ones list for hem to ryde or goon,
> Ne for hem speke a word, but doumb as stoon
> They standen where hir speeche hem mighte availle,
> For swich folk is unlusty to travaille."
> (Prol. 1492-98)

Here Hoccleve is pointing to the injustice of patrons who will not act, "ryde or goon," nor "speke"; they refuse the human role of substitution and sacrifice. But in this refusal they are to blame because their responsibility is absolute. Rather than a prerogative of the patron, it is a function of proximity between one and others. Like Troilus in the parliament in Chaucer's Troy poem, "They standen where hir speeche hem mighte availle," unwilling to risk personal struggle and loss in order to defend the one in jeopardy. With regard to Prince Henry, however, Hoccleve confidently asserts that he expects better, as his advice to the prince in *Regiment* and his later representations of him as king suggest.

Hoccleve calls for a prince who sees souls beyond social determinants like legal status and wealth and who thus responds to his subjects' need with willing self-subjection, controverting expectations for the most powerful role in the realm. In this he invokes the wisdom gained through the experience of ethical insomnia, a state in which he suggests the prince should read this book and absorb its teachings. He means for Henry to read his book "in chambre at eeve" (2140), when he is awake, because these stories "been good for to dryve foorth the nyght" (2140). In this context, representing the prince holding back from sleep as he puzzles over the lessons of politics, Hoccleve assures him that such lessons "shal nat harme if they be herd aright" (2141).

The Old Man has recommended that Hoccleve present the prince with a diversion, "a

goodly tale or two, / On which he may desporten him by nyght" (1902-03). And by invoking chess metaphors from his source, *Libellus de moribus hominumet officiis nobilium ac popularium super ludo schachorum* (c. 1275-1300), Hoccleve seems to gesture toward this intention, but in fact the central lessons he gives are serious. To emphasize the importance of staying awake to think, with the image of the unsleeping prince reading his book, Hoccleve pairs another depiction of himself as one who cannot sleep because he holds its ideas in his mind:

> To your hynesse thynke it nat to longe,
> Thogh in that draght I sumwhat wade deepe,
> The thewes vertuous that to it longe
> Wacchen my goost and letten him to sleepe.
> Now God in vertu yow maynteene and keepe,
> And I byseeche your magnificence
> Geve unto me benigne audience.
> (2143-49)

A "kinges draght" (2120) in chess is a king's move, and here Hoccleve echoes language of chess but shifts to talk about his own work at the same time. This reference to the "draght" in which he wades as a writer pulls together several images that ironically compare the serious thought required for a king's move with the idea that chess is a mere game. At the same time, they authorize Hoccleve's claim on the prince's attention and tell the prince how to make use of his advice, hearing it "aright" and giving it "benigne audience."

First, Hoccleve employs a *double entendre* in reference to political management of "th'eschequeer" (2116), meaning both the game of chess and also the accounting Office of the Exchequer, and asserting that he has studied the game long enough to "lerne to be wys and waar" (2117) about "a kynges draght" (2120).[52] This pun calls attention to Hoccleve's literal experience

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[52] For discussion of Hoccleve's chess references, see Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment, 41, and see also 85-102 on Hoccleve's sources and translation; and Sarah Tolmie, "The *Priue Scilence* of Thomas Hoccleve," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000), esp. 298-99. Hoccleve's suggestion that the Exchequer needs strong and clever managing politely excuses the monarch from blame for his own delayed pay, and it also refers to the historical fact that the Exchequer could and sometimes did withhold disbursement of royal

observing the king's administrative offices, in his professional capacity. And at the same time, again in accord with conventions of princely advice writing, he emphasizes that the prince is a reader and a thinker, as he politely supposes that Henry has already read the popular mirror for princes he is translating (2129), and the whole chess passage immediately follows his memorial to his "deere maistir…/ And fadir, Chaucer" (2177-78), which is thick with references to two of Chaucer's poems best known for their Boethian "philosophie" (2187), *The Book of the Duchess* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.[53] Recalling these two Chaucerian texts in particular frames Hoccleve's references to insomnia so as to evoke the Boethian struggles between urgent desire and worldly instability that both poems represent. Even as he conflates images of the dead Troilus, the dead Chaucer, the grieving Duke, and himself in his brokenhearted lament, ("Wolde that I slayn were!" [2090], "Deeth was to hastyf" (2092), "Deeth hath but smal consideracioun / Unto the vertuous" [2094-95]), Hoccleve also indicates that his text will offer the perspective of the enlightened, those who have suffered, and even died, to gain wisdom. Yet he coyly acknowledges that the Boethian lessons Chaucer would teach (or might have been understood by the Prince to have taught) are not identical to his own; he admits that he "lerned lyt or naught" (2076-79) from Chaucer's teaching. As Bryan has pointed out, the Old Man's advice that Hoccleve seek a solution from the prince as his patron, "Compleyne unto his excellent noblesse / As I have herd the unto me compleyne" (1849-50), "reveal[s] a very un-Boethian optimism

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funds even against the king's orders (as had happened frequently under Richard II); see Brown, *Governance*, 51.

[53] As part of his self-authorizing strategy in the Prologue, Hoccleve grounds his writing in the tradition of Boethius in many ways, including first of all by echoing his "apologetic mode of literary self-narration," as Eleanor Johnson describes it (Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory*, 175), and this quite conspicuously via Chaucer, in the dialogue of characters and narrator in *Book of the Duchess* and *Troilus and Criseyde.* In his analysis of the relationship between the *Regiment* and the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Knapp observes that Hoccleve adopts elements of Boethius "in such a way as to expose their social and epistemological limitations" (*Bureacratic Muse*, 95).

about the potential for meaningful action in this world."[54] And Hoccleve famously repeats the exhortation nearly verbatim at his epilogue to the *Regiment*-proper, under the rubric *Verba compilatoris ad librum*, [Words of the compilator to his book], telling his book to importune the prince on his behalf: "Byseeche him of his gracious noblesse" (5456) following with an echo in familiar terms of intercessory prayer, "Byseeche him of mercy and indulgence" (5460). This is another passage pointedly recalling-but-revising (putatively) Chaucerian Boethianism, particular as Troilus manifests it. The direct echo of the closing passages of *Troilus and Criseyde* is obvious ("O litil book…" [5440]), but the final words of prayer in Hoccleve cry—on the contrary—for mercy upon one who is motivated by "loves fervence" (5462), sanctioning this desiring attitude an invocation of God "He Whom nothyng is hid fro" (5163) but who loves, from his position of enlightenment, where Troilus scorns and despises. Like Hoccleve in his insomnnia, pitying his "poore soule" the God of this book will have compassion and affirm the humanity of those caught up in bad social roles and circumstances.

The *Regiment's* epilogue follows a somewhat lengthy closing commentary on the *Regiment*-proper that serves as a kind of palinode, like Chaucer's in *Troilus and Criseyde*, urging the "worthy Princes two" (5363) of England and France to make peace, according to the prophetic advice of St. Bridget of Sweden (5384), and direct their "vigour" (5432) against the "foos of Cryst, [their] redemptour" (5431), rather than against each other. Conjuring the images of Jesus as a self-sacrificing savior ("For love of Him that dyde upon the tre" [5400]) and Mary as an intermediary object of devotion whom Jesus himself loves ("And of Marie, His blisful modir deere" [5401]), Hoccleve offers an un-Boethian optimism indeed, in the voice of Bridget:

> "By matrymoyne pees and unitee
> Been had—Crystes plesaunce is swich. Thus he
> That right heir is may the reme rejoice,

[54] Bryan, "Hoccleve, the Virgin, and the Politics of Complaint," 1173.

Cessying al stryf, debat, or werre, or noyse.'"
(5394-5397)

As Andrew Lynch has pointed out, this cheerful suggestion is not as innocuous as it might seem: "In advocating marriage with the French king's daughter" at the particular historical moment in which Hoccleve wrote the *Regiment,* "Hoccleve did not simply 'cast…in his lot with Prince Henry' and his ambitions, as has been suggested, because he so plainly came out against the war which the prince seems to have been bent on pursuing, and marriage to Catherine was not necessarily the current policy."[55] With this in mind, the clash between Hoccleve's Boethian sources and his own pragmatic optimisim helps to underscore the point that there are serious political sacrifices implied by the cheerful—even naïve—suggestion that loving marriage will solve the problem of England and France's long strife. Neither Troilus nor the Man in Black finds lasting joy in love or marriage, and Hoccleve is not really suggesting that Henry would be simply happy with the solution, either. Rather, Hoccleve's hopeful exhortation for a social solution to the problem of enmity and war between the two nations is an image of political self-offering, in which a prince must bind himself, *in propria persona*, in a contract of obligation to another, on behalf of the English people. This is not a temporary self-offering, to be "given again and again," in Bryan's words, as it empties of meaning. Rather (theoretically, at least) marriage would constitute a permanent bond and even a bodily sacrifice to which the prince would submit for the sake of his people, mediating as their patron between them and their enemies.

Hoccleve's Political Poetry

In his poetry written just a few years after the *Regiment*, during the monarchy of Henry V, Hoccleve continues to espouse the king's mediation for the common good, and he continues

[55] Lynch, "'Manly Cowardyse,'" 315.

to advise that the king make war against "Crystes foos." His poem commemorating the transfer of the remains of Richard II to the royal burial site at Westminster (1413) presents a view of Henry V as an ideal mediator on a cosmic scale, in a depiction of the king as defender against the devil in the form of "heresie" (10): "Our lige lord, the kyng, is Champioun / For holy chirche—Cristes knyght is he!" (15-16).[56] The image immediately recalls St. George, patron of the Order of the Garter and patron saint of England by the late medieval period; but the image further evokes the patronage of Mary, since St. George was known as "oure lady's knight" even more universally than as the patron of England.[57] Strohm is right that the poem is "a display of constancy and tradition" that affirms the legitimacy of Lancastrian rule, even as it represents the potentially disruptive acknowledgment of the deposed king, in a potentially disruptive act of moving bones from one grave to another and treating them as holy relics transferred to a shrine for veneration; but the poem's celebration of Henry's act does more than "close the unsettled space" surrounding the memory of Richard II.[58] It also represents the king as one who confronts death and restores dignity on behalf of another, for the sake of God—notably, one who is past all help, including Richard, the stubborn heretics, and any other embarrassing members of the collective English community for whom Hoccleve speaks. Like Mary descending from heaven to take a sinner firmly in hand and bring him to heaven, Henry's act of conferring kingly "honour" (38) and solemnity on Richard posthumously re-legitimizes Richard's kingly status, an idea Hoccleve further emphasizes by describing Richard lying "with his queene at Westmynstre in th'abbeye" (39). This triumphant image, which I propose to be quasi-Marian, is on the surface

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[56] All selections are from Thomas Hoccleve, "Richard II Interred at Winchester (1413), in *Historical Poems of the XIV and XV Centuries,* ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 106-8.

[57] Jonathan Good, *The Cult of Saint George in Medieval England*[full citation needed] 47, 110-16.

[58] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 123.

very different from the Blessed Virgin Hoccleve ventriloquizes in his "Complaint of the Virgin"—and yet not so different. Bryan correlates Hoccleve's voice in the persona of Mary with his own voice in his self-exposing poetry, suggesting that his aim throughout is akin to Mary's: in Hoccleve's Marian complaint, the Virgin's revealing and closing of shameful wounds has a salutary effect, and Hoccleve's own complaining voice has a similar effect on society, offering a standard mode of confession and recovery that is emptied of its true personal quality by its public accessibility and its openness to being inhabited by others.[59] Similarly, the Henry of Hoccleve's poem opens the grave of Richard to close it again, opening up a shameful sight and covering it with mercy as well as sanctity. Hoccleve conflates images of Mary the powerful defender and Mary the merciful *mediatrix* in this depiction of a Henry who has the healing saintly *potentia* to return to the English people their "soules helthe" (24), even though it is "an heep of us" (6), i.e., the English people, who have (shamefully) turned away from God.

And in his "Remonstrance Against Oldcastle" (1415), Hoccleve takes the mediating position of spiritual defender himself, warning Oldcastle to "flee" the fiend and pleading before God on the knight's behalf (265-72), counseling him to "Crystes mercy, axe and have!" (368), and in the climactic conclusion exhorting him, "vn-to our cristen kyng / The hie as faste / as þat thow canst dyuyse" (510-11). The "Remonstrance," a lengthy catalogue of orthodox defenses of doctrinal and devotional practices, offers a sweeping view of the Christian cosmos as a network of potential mediating agents between the soul and God, all of which were questioned by dissenting Christians. The images range, for example, from the priests (81-96, 291), bishops (298), and pope (315), to holy images (395, 409-416) and saints at pilgrimage sites (393-408). As Charity Scott Stokes argues, though poem seems to overdo its argument about orthodoxy to

[59] See Bryan, "Hoccleve, the Virgin, and the Politics of Complaint," 1184-85.

the point of satire, there are strong historical and biographical reasons to believe that Hoccleve's anxiety for Oldcastle was personally felt, and his exhortation to throw himself upon the mercy of the king was "sincere."[60] In his address to Oldcastle, Hoccleve makes an oddly subversive-seeming turn to point out that the king is subject to the pope (315), even as he advertises Henry's merciful proclivities as a king. This again places Henry in the position of a mediator, between Oldcastle (and all heretics) and a higher power. Henry is to the pope as the moon is to the sun (305-14), another traditional image of Mary, in relation to Jesus. It also characterizes Henry yet again as a source of almost unbelievable mercy. Although it is true that Sir John Oldcastle ultimately came to a sad end, Henry's protracted and public attempt to grant him asylum is well documented.[61] Perhaps Hoccleve's advice may have made an impression on the young king. In any case, it seems that Hoccleve's advice in the *Regiment* sensitively prefigures Henry's ideal image for himself as a ruler who is willing to set aside self-interest and stand surety for one whose life was in jeopardy, even when his own life had been threatened. Thus we see that Hoccleve idealizes a king who is a powerful patron mediating between his subjects and each other, as well as between his subjects and higher powers (including the law that put Oldcastle to death). Meanwhile, he evokes possibilities that social positions may reverse radically when a powerful patrons intervenes on his behalf. An outcast like Richard may become once again a king, a recreant like Oldcastle may return to knightly service, if the lasting hold of social roles

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[60] Charity Scott Stokes, "Sir John Oldcastle, the Office of the Privy Seal, and Thomas Hoccleve's *Remonstrance Against Oldcastle* of 1415, *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* 18.4 (2000): 568 [556-70]; along with explicating the poem in context to uncover its "ironical vein," Stokes presents compelling documentary evidence that personal pressures would have made it likely that Hoccleve would support Oldcastle, including sympathetic and "close connections with Oldcastle on the part of the Privy Seal fellowship," and also points to ambivalence in the broader social scene, in which "the combination of loyalty to the crown and support or sympathy for the Lollards" is well known among influential figures at court throughout Hoccleve's adult life (569, 561, 561).

[61] "Oldcastle was caught and executed in 1417" (Thompson, "A Poet's Contacts," 89).

and positions is resisted, in recognition of the claims of justice. Hoccleve's self-presentation as a mediator seeking mediation does indeed offer an example and a mirror, not only to shape an image for himself in public discourse, but to make a powerful and timely argument to promote the common good through his writing. To this end in these public poems he promotes images of lord and subject as mediators, confirming the strength of a traditional ethical ideal while urging a newly radical openness to changing social identities and positions for individuals.[62]

In this model, the ideal kingly patron is a social operator who is most importantly amid, and not simply above, his realm. He works between one subject and another to maintain justice, and also between his subjects and higher powers, including the Church, the law, and even God. Yet in the same poems in which he articulates longings for a patron's mediation, Hoccleve reflects the reality of his own political sphere, in which subjects struggle in the attempt to find security because they need, and cannot get, mediation in their interactions with each other. As a writer of a *speculum principis,* Hoccleve offers himself as a representative subject, in whom the king may see a reflection of his own kingship. At the same time, offering himself as a mediator in need of mediation, Hoccleve hopes to make himself visible to the king as to his other potential patrons, to be recognized as a loving and a "chericed" subject—one who offers himself in service to the Other, the patron, and hopes that another will offer himself in turn. Beyond this, Hoccleve claims special authority to advise the king because of the nature of his professional "craft" (Prol.

[62] Regarding my use of the phrase "public poems": these poems may have had limited readership, but they are self-professedly aimed at broad groups in English society via Hoccleve's frequent apostrophe, and they both deplore problems in the nation and overtly promote the common good for English people; further, Stokes cites Hoccleve's editor M.C. Seymour on the suggestion that the *Remonstrance* was "written with official prompting" (Stokes, "Sir John Oldcastle," 562), suggesting that Hoccleve's writing it was considered to be in the public interest. Note that Thompson expresses measured skepticism about this idea, however; see Thompson, "A Poet's Contacts," 89n31.

1028) as a writer.[63] Although he equivocally claims authority via a connection with Chaucer, as David Wallace has noted Hoccleve deferentially himself more as a "reportour" rather than an "auctour" of his text, in artful humility.[64] Meanwhile, focusing on his writing as work (and on the grueling physical labor his writing entails),[65] in the princely advice text elevates Hoccleve's profession as administrative official to a higher status. Hoccleve's playful use of chess metaphors from his source, the *Libellus de moribus*, combined with observations about the office of the Exchequer, helps generate an image of the poet as ideally trained and experienced in both capacities to inform and edify the future king and as one whose work the king should consider a serious—and self-sacrificing—contribution to the governance of the realm. And beyond this, in the prologue to the *Regiment,* Hoccleve establishes another kind of authority based on his experience, that of his own productive suffering, both in his work and in his social life, as a form of self-offering that allows him to contribute to good government not only as an instrument of the king but as a responsible mediator on the prince's behalf. Rather than jockeying for sympathy, Hoccleve claims special knowledge of society gained from his suffering, supporting his argument about the way the king should establish justice within it. According to his self-

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[63] For discussion of metaphors of the craftsman as a mirror of the king (and vice versa) and metaphors of work as well as play in the *Libellus* see Lisa H. Cooper, *Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pages; Cooper has shown that this metaphor was a commonplace in late medieval mirrors for princes circulating in late medieval England.

[64] As David Wallace has described it, an author's struggle "to employ his particular skills and hence to claim his specific, social function" is a salient Chaucerian problem manifest in the *Canterbury Tales* (in notable contradistinction to *Troilus and Criseyde*); in his search for a social position as writer, Hoccleve mirrors the concerns of the later Chaucer as Wallace describes him, despite the later poet's deferential self-labeling as a mere "reportour" rather than an "auctour," a move that Wallace notes specifically (*Chaucerian Polity,* 80-82; 71-72).

[65] Hoccleve claims that writing is much harder and more serious than the work of other "artificers" (1009), who "Talken and synge and make game and play, / And forth hir labour passith with gladnesse" (1011-12) while writer have to be quiet and focused; more, he claims that his work as a writer is a form of near-total physical self-sacrifice, as it destroys the writer's "[s]tommak" (1019), writers' "bakkes" (1020), and (most famously among Hoccleve's critics) "yen" (1021), to the degree that Hoccleve's own body is nearly "spilt" (1029).

representation, his writings must serve as his mediating representatives, even as he continually points to the insufficiency of this kind of mediation and begs for a better kind. Calling upon his knowledge gained through ethical insomnia, Hoccleve demands that the prince rupture the *status quo* in personal mediation as a patron who takes his subjects' risks upon himself. Based on the *Regiment*, the prince should idealize the image of a king sacrificing himself and prepare to take responsibility for his subjects, in his own person and even his own body, for the sake of love.

Conclusion
Reading Mediation and Ethics in Late Medieval Literature

This study began with a history of a devotional motif that pervades the literature of late medieval England, the motif of the saintly intercessor offering help from heaven, and it has concluded with an alternate version of that same motif in the figure of the political patron, couched in many of the same devotional images of the Virgin Mary and her *potentia* and *praesentia*—the power to ward off evil (in the form social conflict) and the near presence that assures a faithful devotee's secure enjoyment of that power (in the idealized image of a king who attends personally to his subjects' needs). Despite the heavy emphasis on the Virgin Mary at many points throughout the dissertation, it has not been my intention to focus on the Virgin Mary or Marian qualities of relationships *per se*, as is clear from the way in which I depart from discussing Mary or saints for most of Chapters 2, 3, and 4. My intention has been to look through and then beyond this religious image to the ethical values and assumptions underlying it, in order to probe their variant forms in some texts that foreground mediation as an ethical problem-and-solution. That is, these texts present mediation as a crucial consideration in the question of how people ought to relate to each other, in a variety of social situations.

In adopting Levinas's ethical philosophy as a framework for studying motifs of mediation as "ethical," I have stepped away from Christianity, but not from "religion," at least not in the sense in which Levinas uses concepts of God and religion, as terms for the ineffable phenomenon that makes us human to each other and ourselves, that lays upon us the charge to recognize and preserve each other as fully human, and that must be acknowledged in any just social order. Clarifying the connection between his ideas of God and ethics, Levinas writes,

> The notion of God—God knows, I'm not opposed to it! But
> when I have to say something about God, it is always

> beginning from human relations. The inadmissible abstraction is God; it is in terms of the relation with the Other (*Autrui*) that I speak of God. I do not refuse religious terms, but I adopt them in order to designate the situation where the subject exists in the impossibility of hiding itself. I do not start from the existence of a very great and all-powerful being. Everything I wish to say comes from this situation of responsibility which is religious insofar as the I cannot elude it. If you like it is like a Jonah who cannot escape. You find yourself before a Jonah who cannot escape.[1]

Here, Levinas articulates the way God figures in his ethics. And even as he is very clear that the "very great and all-powerful being" of the Judeo-Christian tradition is not the basis of his ideas of either the human or the religious, he (playfully and yet earnestly) ends up in biblical imagery, in a story about bearing the absolute imposition of responsibility…i.e., responsibility to speak of God. In a comparable way I have spoken of God because it is necessary to do so in order to articulate the situation of the ethical subject, and yet at the same time in my readings I do not reject the idea that religious experiences and religious terms are the best terms for describing what matters most in the ethical views reflected and expressed in the texts I am studying, particularly in light of their Christian cultural situation.

With respect to my use of Levinas, one of the innovations in my study has the potential to cause confusion. Thus I would like to clarify: Levinas does not identify the concept of the third party with the ethical subject. He represents the third in two general ways. First, and most fundamentally, the third is a phenomenon or entity that is "beyond being," an abstract concept of infinite alterity that is somehow manifest in the absolute uniqueness of another person's human face because it is the source of that uniqueness and humanity (not unique but shared with all)

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[1] Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Michael Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 29.

both at once.[2] Second, in terms much more amenable to discussing mimetic representations of ethics, the third is another person present, apart from oneself and the Other: "The third party is other than the neighbor, but also a neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow."[3] These two ways of describing the third may cause confusion in themselves, but they are connected in that the presence of another person would allow the ethical subject to make a comparison between the two and identify what it is they have in common, what makes them human and "a neighbor." Paradoxically, what they have in common is that each is utterly unique and has a total otherness beyond this abstract similarity. This is why the third is a "neighbor" but not just the "fellow" of the Other. But Levinas also bases his ideas about social order, law, and justice on this idea that when a third party is present, and comparisons can be made, the ethical subject can see that equality must be the basis of social rules—since all are equally unique and infinite, "both comparable and incomparable." By making a comparison the ethical subject thus begins to conceive of rational governing principles for social life, including the idea that if I am infinitely responsible for the Other, and the Other is infinitely responsible for the third, then that must mean that the third is infinitely responsible for someone, and so on. This means that somewhere down the line of responsibility, someone is responsible for me: "'Thanks be to God' I am another for the others."

I apply this idea to the role of the intercessor or mediator, speaking of the mediator as a third party, because the third party's effect on the ethical subject is to offer hope or a sense of security. The third does not take action in Levinas, but the presence of the third does imply that

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[2] Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," in *Basic Philosophical Writings,* ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 61.

[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 157.

someone is responsible for the subject.[4] Thus the third signifies to the ethical subject a dawning sense that the subject belongs to the social collective; with this comes a sense of hope for security that is reliant upon the expectation that some other is infinitely responsible for me; and at the same time, the ethical subject conceives of rational social laws, more generally, that are grounded in the perception of the (equal) infinite alterity of each person, and also the infinite responsibility that each one bears for another.

In applying these ideas to the dynamics of intercession, I have deviated from Levinas's way of speaking by conferring subjectivity on all three parties—or I could alternatively say that I am conferring all three roles on the ethical subject: self, third, and other. Levinas does not suggest that these relationships are the relationships that people should seek to have with each other, or that these roles are roles that individuals should seek to inhabit and fulfill. But I argue that medieval narratives about responsible mediation do suggest this, and the correspondence helps to show that these ethical ideals and directives, while grounded in Christian social ideas, are at the same time parallel to ethical concepts that are "religious" in a Levinasian sense, i.e., metaphysical and ethical, prior to pragmatic and empirical ways of thinking. Thus by applying the Levinasian concept of the third party to narratives of responsible mediation, I find a way to explain relationships that are authentially ethical but free of Christian associations. Christian ethics can operate according to other models, as I have shown in my examination of Julian of Norwich's writing, and when it does, the difference is reflected in theological, devotional, textual, and social ideas associated with the new ethical model.

In working with Levinas, I have selected a theoretical vocabulary that allows for aspects of scholarship that Paul Strohm suggests must be present if the theory is to be a productive tool for literary analysis: "[t]he centrality of the text," "[p]rovisional neglect of the 'literary,'"

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[4] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

"textual/extratextual dialogue," "[t]he textual unconscious," and "[s]hared meaning."[5] Reading with Levinas more or less explicitly in mind throughout this study, I have "let the text set the agenda"; engaged with "nonliterary" devotional and political systems of meaning; considered "dialogue of text and world," in considering legal, political, and social history; aimed to illuminate what the text could say but does not; and attempted to account for meaning within the cultural context contemporaneous with each text's readers and writers.[6]

I have looked to late medieval English literature first with an interest in discerning what a certain religious image has to do with ethics, beginning in Chapter 1 with the image of the Virgin Mary as intercessor in "St. Theophilus.". I have found that Levinasian terms are remarkably well suited to explaining the specific relational motifs that make this image a foundation for hopes for ethical recuperation. Even more importantly, Levinasian terms have helped me to look beyond the image of the saintly intercessor, into associated but truly different images of ethical mediators in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century literature. Thus in Chapter 2, setting aside Christian iconography, I have looked at how the denial of the presence of a third party characterizes irresponsible mediation in *Troilus and Criseyde,* which I read as a story about responsibility and openness to judgment in intimate relationships and community life. In this story, Pandarus and Troilus's self-interested desires motivate them to deny their responsibilities as third parties and to close off the relationship with Criseyde from judgment by others, thus contributing to an atmosphere of injustice that prefigures destruction. In Chapter 3, I have returned to Christian iconography in *A Revelation of Love,* which presents an innovative treatment of texts and devotional practices that undermines their traditional mediating function.

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[5] Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xv-xvi.

[6] Strohm, *Theory,* xv, xvi.

Pursuing a unitive encounter with God through the image of Jesus's face rather than the mediation of community or tradition, Julian of Norwich overturns conventional religious imagery to promote desire and enjoyment of God unburdened by a sense of responsibility either for one's own sin or others' ultimate fates. Finally, in Chapter 4 I have examined the way Thomas Hoccleve calls for a return to ideal patronage as self-sacrificing ethical mediation, in his envoy poems, written in a context of skepticism mingled with nostalgia, as well as in the more optimistic *Regiment of Princes* and two political poems written around the same time as the *speculum principis*. Hoccleve invokes social and political ideals grounded in personal connections, claiming authority for himself as a mediator from an ethical middle ground in which he is intellectually detached from markers of social identity and thus uniquely open to perceiving just approaches to political issues.

Much work remains to be done in studying fine divisions among orthodoxies in late medieval English religion, as well as politics and social life. The motif of the responsible mediator is useful for studying these divisions. Whether embodied as rescuing saint, charitable intercessor, or self-subjecting sovereign, this figure anchors a relational dynamic that is in some texts idealized in accord with a certain set of beliefs about the cosmos and human society, and it is elsewhere rejected in accord with a different set of beliefs about the cosmos and human society. By studying where it is idealized and where it is rejected, along with the ethical hopes, fears, and expectations attached to it in each place, we can better understand how late medieval writers and their audiences articulated ethical convictions.

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