

# The "Revelations of Divine Love" of Julian of Norwich : symbolism, structure and the medieval mystical vision

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THE "REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE" OF JULIAN OF NORWICH  
Symbolism, Structure and the Medieval Mystical Vision.

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Text and Documentation to accompany twenty-one paintings  
submitted to the City Art Institute in fulfillment of  
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## INTRODUCTION

I first encountered Lady Julian of Norwich about ten years ago in T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding", the last of his "Four Quartets". Eliot had used Julian's phrase - "All manner of thing shall be well" as a refrain in the final section of his poem.<sup>1</sup> I kept coming upon references to her. At last in a church porch bookstall I found a small publication<sup>2</sup> based on her book the "Revelations of Divine Love". I was struck by a sentence - "I saw that our faith is our light in our night: which light is God our endless day".<sup>3</sup> Julian's was a comforting religion of light.<sup>4</sup>

I decided to learn more about this obscure medieval anchoress. This was difficult as in a sense she is not part of history; virtually nothing is known of her life. Even her real name is unknown; she is known by the name of the church in Norwich where she was enclosed; like the great prophets of Judaism we know her through her writings.

I wondered if Julian's experiences had been stimulated by devotional images she had seen and if there was any correspondence between her writings and art. After all, the art of Julian's time fulfilled a purpose defined by St. Bonaventure (d.1274) who declared that images had been introduced so that mankind would be roused to devotion to Christ's life and message, - "inspired when they see the same things in figures and pictures present, as it were, to their bodily eyes".<sup>5</sup>

More importantly, I wondered if it were possible to paint Julian's visions; as far as I knew no one had attempted to do so.

Julian of Norwich had wished to share her showings; early in her book she states - "would that all my even-christians had seen as I saw".<sup>6</sup>

The twenty-one paintings after the "Revelations of Divine Love" are an attempt to fulfil this wish. And this accompanying text is intended to answer the first two questions.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1338 Beginning of Hundred Years War between England and France.
- 1342 Birth of Julian in Norwich (?).
- 1346 Battle of Crecy.
- 1349 Black Death appears in England; one third of the population dies.  
Death of Richard Rolle, mystic, author of "Fire of Love".
- c.1350 Perpendicular style, last phase of English Gothic, developed (-1540).
- c.1360 Julian petitions three graces from God.
- 1361 Black Death reappears in England.
- 1362 English becomes official language of the realm.  
Langland writes "Piers Plowman".  
Spire of Norwich Cathedral collapses.
- 1373 8-9 May, Julian receives her Showings.<sup>1</sup>  
Death of St. Bridget of Sweden, mystic, (b.1303).
- c.1375 Julian enters into the Cell at St. Julian's Church, Norwich.  
Composition of the "Revelations of Divine Love" (Short Text).
- 1377 End of the "Babylonish Captivity" at Avignon: Pope returns to Rome.
- 1378 Beginning of the Great Schism of the Papacy, (-1417).
- 1380 Death of St. Catherine of Siena, mystic, (b.1347).
- 1381 The Peasants' Revolt.  
Despencer Retable painted.
- 1384 Death of John Wycliffe, English reformer.
- c.1387 Chaucer writes "Canterbury Tales".
- 1393 Composition of the "Revelations of Divine Love" (Long Text).
- c.1395 Wilton Diptych painted.
- 1396 Death of Walter Hilton, mystic, author of "The Scale of Perfection".
- 1400 Death of Chaucer.  
Murder of Richard II.
- 1413 Julian is visited by Margery Kempe, mystic.
- 1415 Battle of Agincourt.
- 1416 Last recorded mention of Julian.
- c.1420 Death of Julian of Norwich.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND

The century into which Julian was born was a time of trial. Its promising beginning was soon clouded by crop failures and food shortages; over-population was a problem. From 1315-1317 the Great Famine raged across Europe and there was further famine between 1345 and 1348. In 1338 England embarked on its disastrous Hundred Years War with France. In 1349 the Black Death was visited upon England; whole villages were decimated by plague. It is estimated that in Norwich, the second city of the realm, one third of the population perished.<sup>1</sup> In 1361 the plague reappeared in England and returned at regular intervals every decade thereafter.

The second half of the century was afflicted with economic ills. The largely agricultural economy stagnated; labour was short, wages spiralled, prices soared, and taxation was high. 1381 saw the brutal suppression of the Peasants' Revolt.

The Papacy was in exile at Avignon, puppet of the kings of France. The Pope's return to Rome in 1377 signalled the beginning of the Great Schism. For the next thirty years Christianity would face the degrading spectacle of two, and even three, claimants to the Chair of Peter regularly excommunicating each other and making rival appointments of higher clergy.<sup>2</sup> It was a time of moral and spiritual decline.<sup>3</sup> The often corrupt and ignorant English clergy were trenchantly criticised by John Wycliffe and the Lollards. The Orders of Friars, so influential the previous century, were condemned for their wealth and worldliness.<sup>4</sup>

Due to its troubled background the fourteenth century is usually viewed as a period of disruption and dissolution;<sup>5</sup> one writer has described it as a period of anguish when there was no sense of an assured future.<sup>6</sup>

Yet this is not the whole of the picture. The fourteenth century was also the age of Chaucer and Langland, the first great period of English literature. Amongst its thinkers was William of Ockham (died c.1350) and amongst its administrators William of Wykeham (died c.1404), bishop and Chancellor, who founded Winchester College and New College, Oxford. There was development in the arts, particularly in architecture. The first half of the century saw the mature Decorated Gothic style brought to a triumphant conclusion in the magnificent central Octagon of Ely Cathedral.<sup>7</sup> Perpendicular Gothic, that uniquely English style, had evolved by about 1350 finding its first expression in the rebuilt Choir of Gloucester Abbey (now Cathedral) completed in 1367. Twelve years later Henry Yevele began the beautiful nave of Canterbury Cathedral in the new style. Work on the equally fine nave of Winchester Cathedral commenced in 1394 under the direction of William Wynford. There was progress in the associated crafts as well, woodworkers, for example, becoming aware of the possibilities of their materials. The first of the great carved roofs which were to become a feature of English interiors for the next two centuries were constructed around 1370.<sup>8</sup> The splendid canopied and pinnacled choir stalls at Lincoln Cathedral were carved at the same time and the even more magnificent set at Chester Cathedral some ten years later. In Nottingham alabaster workers were producing devotional carvings of the highest quality and the illuminators of East Anglia their finest work, although the standard declined before the end of the century.

The fourteenth century was also the golden age of English spiritual writing, an era which produced Richard Rolle, the anonymous author of "The Cloud of Unknowing", Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ANKRES ATTE NORWYCHE

The facts of the life of Julian of Norwich are few and those that can be established have been gleaned from her book the "Revelations of Divine Love". Nothing of Julian's early life is known - neither her place of birth nor her station in life, nor even her baptismal name.

Julian tells us that on the 8th day of May 1373 she received a series of mystical showings or visions. The showings, which she numbers at sixteen, continued to the early hours of the following day. She was bedridden, having been struck down with an unspecified illness a week earlier; she had received the Last Rites of the Church and appears to have been given up for dead. Some authorities argue that she was suffering from the plague; she was thirty and a half years old.

Soon afterwards she became an anchoress at St. Julian's Church, Conisford, Norwich adopting the name of its patron saint.<sup>1</sup> The Cell at St. Julian's was in the gift of the Benedictine Nuns at Carrow. Here she wrote the first version of the "Revelations of Divine Love" followed some eighteen years later by the more famous second version. Julian was the first woman to write in English.

An anchoress ('anachoreo', Gk. - I withdraw)<sup>2</sup> was an urban hermit, living in a cell attached to a church, often with a servant. The life of the anchoress was circumscribed by prayer and silence following the pattern laid down in the "Ancren Riwle" written around

1200. A recluse was not to leave the grounds of the church, their "anchorhold".

Hermits and contemplatives<sup>3</sup> had been elevated to an almost heroic status during the Middle Ages. Their frequent survival of the plague (probably due to isolation) was popularly seen as a victory of the penitential spirit. The macabre Triumph of Death in Pisa's Camposanto is a plastic expression of this sentiment; it dates from the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The utterances of recluses were taken most seriously and at the highest level - King Henry V is recorded as consulting a recluse attached to Westminster Abbey.<sup>5</sup> Norwich had at least forty hermitages during the medieval period and the occupants were much sought after as spiritual counsellors. Julian's Cell had a window onto the street for this purpose.

Julian appears to have enjoyed a widespread reputation for holiness and as a spiritual teacher. For these reasons she was visited by Margery Kempe, a strange visionary from Lynn in about 1413 - a visit which was to provide the fullest surviving contemporary reference to Julian of Norwich; - "Then she was commanded by our Lord to go to an anchoress in the same city, who was called Dame Julian. And so she did, and told her about the grace that God put into her soul... and also many wonderful revelations, which she described to the anchoress to find out if there was any deception in them, for the anchoress was expert in such things and could give good advice." Julian listened to the ravings of her guest and wisely remarked - "the soul of a righteous man is the seat of God, and so I trust sister, that you are. I pray God grant you perseverance - Patience is necessary for you, for in that you shall keep your soul".<sup>6</sup>



From this account and from her book we gain some insights into Julian's character. As a counsellor Julian was skilful and practical although at times she was prey to doubt, wondering if she had been deceived in believing her visions.<sup>7</sup> Her affection for her mother is apparent and some interpret her writings on "our tender Mother Jesus"<sup>8</sup> as a reflection of this. We see her despairing, - "this place is a prison, this life is a penance".<sup>9</sup> In the Short Version there is a rare display of anger and frustration - "But because I am a woman, ought I therefore to believe that I should not tell you of the goodness of God".<sup>10</sup> Throughout the book one is aware of her humility and honesty. Perhaps her most outstanding characteristics are her patience and optimism. She had waited over ten years for her petitions to be answered; she waited twenty years for the meaning of the complex fourteenth showing to be revealed. As to her optimism, it has been observed elsewhere that her theology starts "from the sun, not the clouds";<sup>11</sup> in some mysterious way, at the end, "All shall be Well".<sup>12</sup>

The most puzzling aspect of Julian is her references to herself as uneducated, unlettered, "a woman ignorant".<sup>13</sup> This has been interpreted variously as meaning she could not read at the time of her visions but learnt later or that she lacked literary skills. It has been thought to mean that she could not read Latin but then her book points to a profound knowledge and flexible use of the Latin Vulgate text of the Bible.<sup>14</sup> It cannot be taken that she was illiterate. Margery Kempe's portrait of her is that of a shrewd and learned person. Julian's reference to instruction which she can keep as though "it were the beginning of an ABC"<sup>15</sup> is hardly a metaphor which would occur to an illiterate person. Colledge and Walsh are

probably right in assuming that Julian is employing a rhetorical convention appealing for the benevolence of the reader.<sup>16</sup>

Julian is named as beneficiary in three wills, the last of which is dated 1416. She is thought to have died around 1420; her resting place is unknown.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE "REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE"

Julian wrote two versions of her book. The first, of 25 chapters, is known as the Short Text. The Short Text is thought to have been written soon after Julian received her showings although from her remarks in Chapter 4 it would seem she was already a recluse when she wrote it. A probable date for its composition is 1375. In this version Julian's attachment to her mother is strongly drawn and the book in general has a clearer indication of the writer's character. Julian records her visions with great vividness and urgency although she does not give their number.

Julian's fame however rests on the longer second version of the "Revelations of Divine Love". This was written some twenty years after Julian had received her showings. It is this version of 86 chapters which is commonly studied. In the Long Text the important and lengthy fourteenth revelation is described for the first time - central to an understanding of the "Revelations of Divine Love" is Julian's unravelling of this vision. For Julian this parable of a lord and his servant seems to have been an evolving mystery, the meaning of which had originally eluded her.<sup>1</sup> Julian's teachings on "God Our Mother"<sup>2</sup> do not appear in the Short Text and it is in the longer version that her most remembered statement - "All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well"<sup>3</sup> is recorded for the first time.

Julian numbers her showings at sixteen<sup>4</sup> and, although her recounting of them is chronological, she emphasises the development

of themes, the meaning of some revelations being further clarified as the book continues. An example is her anticipation of the fourteenth revelation as early as the third chapter; she refers to it again in the seventh and twelfth chapters and finally in Chapter 45, adding "as I shall tell you later". The showing is fully described in Chapter 51. In Chapter 31 Julian attempts a synthesis, discussing the nature of Christ she states - "All this was plentifully seen in every revelation". Later, in Chapter 33, she directs the reader's attention to the recurrent "sight of Christ's Passion in various revelations, in the first, in the second, in the fourth, in the eighth, as is already related". Julian understands that the viewings of the Crucifixion is a response to her earlier petition "that I might have seen with my own eyes the Passion which our Lord suffered for me".<sup>5</sup> The image provides a framework around which the other visions are structured and adds a rhythm and drive to the book. Julian's revelations are to be seen as a totality; in a postscript Julian's scribe warns the reader "Take it whole, all together".

The tone of the Long Text is one of assured tranquility and promise. The book is concerned with grace and election. Grace comes through the Crucifixion, the great example of the light of God's love which is life itself. Through the vicissitudes of our existence this light remains with us as faith. Eventually we are transfigured and resurrected by God's love. We come to see God face to face and gaze on him forever.<sup>6</sup> All of this is brought about for love. Although the "Revelations of Divine Love" commences with the sufferings of Christ on the cross, almost immediately, "a little thing, the size of a hazelnut" is given into Julian's hand - "it is all that is made", the whole of creation. She sees that God sustains and keeps it through love.<sup>7</sup> The Deity loves and yearns for mankind:- "He would

have us understand that the noblest thing he ever made is mankind".<sup>8</sup> We are perfectable because of our nature, not in spite of it. Our shortcomings are more acceptable to God than they are to us; "the Lord looks on his servant with pity not with blame".<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in God there can be no anger.<sup>10</sup> God is "our everlasting friend".<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say that Julian has no awareness of sin; all men sin and suffer appallingly.<sup>12</sup> But Julian writes "I did not see sin, for I believe that it has no kind of substance, no share in being nor can it be recognized except by the pain caused by it".<sup>13</sup> But sin is inevitable, "Sin is necessary but all will be well".<sup>14</sup> Sin is absence of true humanity.<sup>15</sup> There is a kind of divine spark in man with which God deals, "in every soul which will be saved there is a godly will which never assents to sin".<sup>16</sup> But what of the wicked and unregenerate and all those who "will be eternally condemned to hell as Holy Church teaches"?<sup>17</sup> Julian is answered by God, "what is impossible for you is not impossible for me".<sup>18</sup> At some time, unsuspected by mankind, "the great deed will be done and he will make well all which is not well".<sup>19</sup> What the deed is we do not know; the question of punishment remains unclear.

Julian's ideas on the divine spark echo those of the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart (d.1327) and, to some degree, Walter Hilton.<sup>20</sup> Her contentious views on the election of the saved are probably a memory of St. Paul's letter to the Romans.<sup>21</sup> Her knowledge of the New Testament, particularly the writings of St. Paul, is extensive. The apostle is mentioned twice in the text, notably in Chapter 15 - "And in time of joy I could have said with St. Paul: Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ". At least one of Julian's more obscure images comes from the apostle; her "my understanding was lifted up into heaven, and there I saw three heavens" is to be

compared with St. Paul's "I know a Christian man who - was caught up as far as the third heaven".<sup>22</sup> Certain of Julian's images such as Christ's blood washing clean and ascending to heaven and the garment "white and bright and forever clean" which replaces Adam's old tunic paraphrase the Revelations of St. John the Divine.<sup>23</sup> Much of Julian's writing is influenced by St. John and the paen to light and love which concludes the "Revelations of Divine Love" is Johannine theology. The mysterious fourteenth revelation reflects the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Workers in the Vineyard, and the Treasure Hidden in the Field. Altogether the revelation seems to be inspired by the Suffering Servant of Isaiah in the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup>

Amongst mystical writers Julian is the great optimist; go on your way rejoicing, she tells us, "live gladly and gaily because of His love".<sup>25</sup> Although known during her lifetime, Julian's writings were largely forgotten for over 500 years. This century has seen a great resurgence of interest in Julian's book; her calm confidence seems to have a special relevance for today, as if her wisdom has been saved up for our generation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ART AND MYSTICISM

#### 1. Art and the "Revelations of Divine Love"

The question must be asked if the "Revelations of Divine Love" had been influenced by the art of the period, and to what degree. Norwich, the city in which Julian was probably born and where she wrote her book, was a centre of devotional painting and sculpture. And, after all, Julian's showings were introduced by an artifact - a crucifix brought to her sickbed begins to bleed.

Other mystics had been stimulated by works of art. Julian's great contemporary St. Catherine of Siena (d.1380) was very receptive to religious images, describing the subjects of some of her visions as "just as she had seen them painted in the churches".<sup>1</sup> Her own stigmatization was shaped in her religious imagination by paintings of St. Francis receiving the stigmata and not factual records of the event, which differ.<sup>2</sup> Earlier, St. Bridget of Sweden (d.1373) had proved herself to be easily influenced by religious atmosphere. The records of her visions, although they were to be a useful source for later artists, are like catalogues detailing objects she had viewed, not paranormal events. She was canonised for her virtue not her revelations.<sup>3</sup> The illiteracy of both women probably increased their susceptibility to religious imagery.<sup>4</sup>

For Julian art seems to have been inadequate; at the beginning of the Short Text - she speaks of the unsatisfactory

nature of images - "Notwithstanding... the paintings of crucifixes made by the grace of God, in conformity with the teachings of Holy Church, to the likeness of Christ's Passion as far as the skill of man may reach... I desired a bodily sight".

Originally she had not even wanted this,<sup>5</sup> rather she desired religious rapture. Importantly, she did not receive all her showings as pictures or in bodily form.

A brief examination of the art of Julian's time may provide a revealing context. Medieval art in East Anglia appears to have been highly sophisticated. Much of it has been lost due to the depredations of time and the accelerated destruction of the Reformation period and, later, Cromwell's Commonwealth. What remains can only give us a very general idea of it. The great painted screens of the region such as those at Ranworth and Barton Turf<sup>6</sup> are charming picture galleries of suave archangels and decorative fancy-dress saints. The richly patterned manuscript illuminations of the East Anglican school with their weaving tendril borders anticipate the exquisite world soon to be crystallised in the work of the Limbourg brothers. Norwich's famous retables are crowded and colourful compositions, drawn in a spindly, elegant manner. Conventional in their iconography, sacred scenes are played out against elaborately tooled gold grounds on narrow shelf-like stages. The strange tilted perspectives of the retables create a sense of distancing, of otherworldliness, at least for the modern viewer. It would be wrong, however, to credit these early fumbings at perceived spacial relationships as an intentional creation of another kind of space, another plane. Occasionally there is a restrained sense of emotionalism in the elongated fragile nature of the



figures, a quality which tends to evaporate in the incorporation of witnesses dressed in the height of fourteenth century fashion as in the Despencher Retable.<sup>7</sup> However the same altarpiece, in its portrayal of Christ, places a subtle emphasis on Christ's humanity and vulnerability, an Everyman quality, which parallels aspects of the "Revelations of Divine Love". Julian in relating the fourteenth revelation makes the connection explicit - "God's son could not be dissociated from Adam. By Adam I always understood Everyman".<sup>8</sup> This interpretation of Christ as an Everyman figure, with a suggestion of pathos, probably has its source in the Mystery Plays of the period.<sup>9</sup>

The contribution of the fourteenth century to iconography was to emphasise Christ's humanity and his sufferings, particularly at his Passion. This was quite different to the more serene interpretation of preceding centuries but perhaps is not surprising given the tenor of the age - a suffering mankind, a suffering God. It was here that any clear correspondence between art and the "Revelations of Divine Love" would be found - in Julian's recurring vision of Christ on the cross, the showings of his wounded side and Sacred Heart and her descriptions of a cult object, the Vernicle.

The sequence of the revelations is introduced by a cross held before Julian's face; her sickroom grows dark but the crucifix is lit and suddenly blood pours from the Crown of Thorns.<sup>10</sup> The image brought to her is not described for it is what happens which is important rather than the image itself. It is an answer to one of Julian's earlier petitions that she "might have seen the Passion which our Lord suffered".<sup>11</sup> Some of Julian's most pungent writing is reserved for this theme which reaches a climax

in the eighth revelation. She emphasises Christ's physicality, his humanity as expressed by his sufferings at Calvary - Christ on the cross is discoloured and bruised, turning brown and black, his head is caked with blood and scraped and pierced; he is buffeted by "a strong, dry and piercingly cold wind". He hangs in the air "like a cloth hung out to dry", a simile which (as Walsh remarks) does not readily spring to mind when examining a medieval crucifix.<sup>12</sup> Christ's sufferings are fearful but at the end filled with hope, the countenance of Christ on the cross is finally transfigured by joy.<sup>13</sup> Julian's writing has a frightening sense of actuality. Her imagery is simple and strong - nowhere does one feel that she is literally describing an image or picture seen in church. And, interestingly enough, Julian's interpretation of Christ's death is more like the theology of a period earlier than her own.<sup>14</sup>

In the tenth revelation, the "bodily sight" of Christ's heart, Colledge and Walsh see a parallel between the text and representations of the Sacred Heart.<sup>15</sup> In this showing Christ exposes his riven side "and there he revealed a delectable place large enough for all mankind who will be saved",<sup>16</sup> a theme which can be compared with a hymn to the Holy Lance which says "by piercing the breast of the Saviour - you opened the gates of heaven for us".<sup>17</sup> Julian continues, "and in this sweet sight he showed his blessed heart split in two".<sup>18</sup>

Medieval man believed the wound in Christ's side was the most holy of his five wounds;<sup>19</sup> meditations on Christ's riven side led inevitably to veneration of his heart. But the origin of devotion to the Sacred Heart is quite different coming from mystical concepts of the loving union of the soul with Christ.<sup>20</sup>

This idea was promulgated by St. Mechthild of Magdeburg (d.1280); St. Gertrude (d.1302), abbess of the same convent, received visions of the Sacred Heart.<sup>21</sup> The cult of the Sacred Heart was spread in the fifteenth century by Nicholas of Cusa (d.1464)<sup>22</sup> and the first representations of the subject come from that time.<sup>23</sup> The linking of the original devotion to Christ's Passion was stimulated by the introduction of the Feast of the Lance in 1354. Artists of Julian's day rendered the wounds of Christ as an heraldic cipher in a coat of arms known as the Arma Christi. The Arma Christi usually comprised the cross, instruments of the Passion and (sometimes) representations of the five wounds as roses flowering on the cross.<sup>24</sup> Christ's heart is not indicated.

And thus it is difficult to see any connection between Julian's treatment of the subject and the highly symbolical depictions of it that she would have known. There may be an unconcious connection with illustrations of Christ as the Man of Sorrows but then Julian portrays Christ, although wounded, as a joyful and glorified figure. It would be hard to establish a link with depictions of the dead Christ and his mother, a subject known as the Pieta. The earliest extant sculpture of this subject is German and was made around 1320; the type is powerfully expressive and much is made of the wound in Christ's side.<sup>25</sup> The subject seems to have appealed to the Teutonic spirit. French sculptures of the Pieta are later and come from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the first French depictions are found in illuminated manuscripts dating from 1380.<sup>26</sup> We do not know when the subject became popular in England but it is likely that England followed the French pattern. Margery Kempe writes of breaking down before a Pieta in

a Norwich church but this is long after the composition of the "Revelations of Divine Love".<sup>27</sup>

Julian also makes much of Christ's wounded head and "the red blood running down from under the crown", as she first describes it.<sup>28</sup> Walsh, one of the few authorities to discuss parallels between Julian's visions and artistic imagery states "there is nothing in painting or pulpit literature to match her sketch of the bleeding of the Sacred Head - of the two garlands one upon the other - or of the changing colour in the face of the dying Christ".<sup>29</sup> Just as Christ's riven side will be the resting place of the saved so too will the Crown of Thorns be replaced by the Crown of the faithful.<sup>30</sup>

In the second revelation Julian is reminded of a sacred image she would have known - the allegedly miraculous Vernicle at Rome.<sup>31</sup> This mysterious object, the cloth of Veronica, had been displayed during the Jubilee Year of 1350 in Rome where it became a palladium against the plague. Its depiction appears to have been common across Europe; the image became the badge of pilgrims who had visited Rome. Chaucer's Pardoner wears a Vernicle in his hat. For Julian the Vernicle is simply a point of comparison because, like her vision, "it changes its colour and appearance".<sup>32</sup> One writer has suggested that Julian is making a theological point; the details of Veronica's veil are irrelevant to her, more important is the fact that we are journeying from darkness and disfigurement.<sup>33</sup>

From the investigations of these examples it did not seem that the images Julian would have known played a significant part in moulding her religious imagination. One further revelation

was worth investigating - Julian's visions of "our Lady St. Mary". It seemed probable that here, if anywhere, there would be a correspondence between the showings and religious images, as the Virgin had a firmly established iconography by Julian's time. But again the influence seems to be different; the visions recall the developing devotional practice of the Rosary.<sup>34</sup> In the "Revelations of Divine Love" Mary, who is given as an example of spiritual wisdom and God's love, is mentioned in Chapters 4, 6, 7 and on at least four other occasions.<sup>35</sup> It is in the eleventh revelation which Julian calls "A High and Spiritual Shewing of His Mother" that we receive a full description of the Virgin. Mary is shown three times - "The first occasion was when she was with child, the second sorrowing under the cross, and the third as she is now, glorious -".<sup>36</sup> Although the Annunciation is referred to in Chapter 4, Colledge and Walsh are probably correct in identifying the first of these showings with the more unusual subject of Mary at the time of her Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth.<sup>37</sup> The vision may well have been inspired by Elizabeth's words recorded in the Hail Mary, - "blessed are you amongst women and blessed is the fruit of your womb".<sup>38</sup> Mary then appears in her more usual aspects as Mater Dolorosa and reigning as Queen of Heaven. All of the images of Mary could have been influenced by iconography; more likely they mirror the chaplets of the Rosary which are divided into the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries. Julian in two other places refers to the Rosary and her comments on formal prayer in the Short Text would appear to allude to this devotion.<sup>39</sup>

Although the effect of art on the "Revelations of Divine Love" seems to have been small much of Julian's imagery has a

Biblical basis. Notable examples are "I saw God in a point" which probably has its origin in the Latin Vulgate text of I Corinthians 15:52<sup>40</sup> and "the most beautiful creature, a little child",<sup>41</sup> an interpretation of the soul of man influenced by Matthew 18:3. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3 she was much influenced by the New Testament particularly the writings of St. Paul and St. John. And much of Julian's metaphor is personal and domestic - a hazelnut, rain dripping from eaves, fish scales. One passage seems inspired by her observation of the landscape: she writes of the "the unadorned... solitary wilderness" in which the Lord sat and the "high world, long and broad, all full of endless heavenliness",<sup>42</sup> a description which evokes the Norfolk countryside - a long broad world, open and empty with high, omnipresent, pearly skies.

Julian did not receive all her revelations as pictures; some are mental understandings, others are spiritual perceptions, some were received as words. Those showings that were pictorial were sometimes vague; on one occasion Julian admits "All this I saw physically, yet obscurely and mysteriously".<sup>43</sup> A useful description of Julian's paranormal experiences is made by Knowles:- "the pictorial element is small, and... in a sense abstract rather than photographic",<sup>44</sup> a quality which has led some experts to view the visions as intellectual rather than sensory.<sup>45</sup> Generally whatever Julian saw exists in an amorphous sphere where detail, even colour, is rarely mentioned: clear values on an indefinite and unfocussed stage.

As Julian recorded them those showings which appeared to her physically have no equal in art. Julian's descriptions and interpretations are original and, in the fourteenth revelation,

highly unconventional. We could credit her with an imagination unequalled by any artistic expression of her period<sup>46</sup> but so much of the art she saw, paintings and sculptures, has been destroyed that we cannot be certain. What remains, however, does not relate, except in a general way, to Julian's showings. Certain preoccupations are shared but these are the concerns of medieval Christianity and are expressions of a highly integrated culture.

## 2. Influence of Mystics in Western Art

Visionary writing provides a small but important theme in Western art. Outstanding examples are the illuminations illustrating the visions of Hildegard of Bingen (d.1179) where much of the imagery is almost abstract - the manuscripts date from the end of the twelfth century.<sup>47</sup> Medieval illuminators created innumerable Apocalypses of St. John, a subject brought to its definitive form by Durer in 1493.<sup>48</sup> Mid-fifteenth century glass in York depicts the end of the world as described by Richard Rolle in his "Prykke of Conscience",<sup>49</sup> written in 1325. Bishop King's mystical dream was to inspire the rebuilding of Bath Abbey in 1499 - his vision of angels ascending and descending ladders to heaven appears in stone on the West Front. The exotic imagery of Heironymus Bosch (d.1516) descends from the writings of the Brabantine mystic, John Ruysbroeck (d.1381) and demonstrates how arcane some mystical symbolism had become.<sup>50</sup> Grunewald's Isenheim Altar, completed in 1515, is a passionate expression of the visions of St. Bridget (d.1373), a mystic who was to have a remarkable effect on the art of Northern Europe. There is even one known example of a mystic directing the execution of works of art - panels preserved at the shrine of St. Nicholas of Flue in Sachseln near Lucerne, were painted to

the specifications of a hermit ecstatic.<sup>51</sup> The visions of various saints were to stimulate many artists of the Counter - Reformation era.

Julian of Norwich, probably because of her desired obscurity, does not seem to have influenced East Anglian art. There is one possible exception to this: on the first page of a small book "Writings on the Passion" by Michael de Massa, locally produced in 1405, is a line drawing of the crucifixion. The drawing, described as "iconographically interesting for its emphasis on the wounds of Christ"<sup>52</sup> which are picked out in red ink, is very like Julian's terrifying descriptions of Christ's wounds and the "costly and copious flood" of his blood in the fourth of her revelations. Elsewhere she writes: "...the plentifulness of the blood was like to the drops of water that fall from the eaves of a house after a great shower of rain - when they fall so thick that no man, by his ordinary senses, can count them".<sup>53</sup> The weighty and ghastly scene is perfectly captured in this small illustration. It could be that the owner of the book was aware of Julian's visions and instructed the illustrator thus. The drawing is one of two in the book; the other, by a different hand, is a portrait of the scribe who wrote it.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SYMBOLISM AND STRUCTURE

As has been previously discussed in Chapter 4 the "Revelations of Divine Love" do not reflect established conventions of symbolism of the period, except in a very general way. Julian's symbolism tends to be of a very personal kind and at times, notably in Chapters 10, 51 and 64, she interprets this symbolism for the reader. Her most detailed writing does not seem to have been influenced by fourteenth century iconographic systems.

This is not to say that Julian's writing is not, at times, powerfully descriptive and exact. In the fifty-first Chapter we find her at her most pictorial, displaying an almost Flemish eye for detail in her account of the vesture of the servant - "His clothing was a white kirtle-single, old, and all bestained; dyed with the sweat of his body, close-fitting and short, about a hand's breadth below the knee, threadbare, as though it would soon be worn out, ready to be ragged and rent".<sup>1</sup> The same elaboration is evident in Julian's horrific descriptions of Christ's sufferings on Calvary which make up the eighth revelation. The former is an example of a highly personal iconographic language - for Julian the soiled garment represents mankind's sins. Like Julian's treatment of the Vernicle it serves as a point of comparison, in this case with the new vesture the servant will receive. It is part of an evolving allegory and to isolate it would render it like a frozen frame from a film, out of context and with little intrinsic meaning. In the second example the agonies of Christ are laid one upon the other and the vision keeps

changing; indeed the kinetic quality of the showings throughout is remarkable.

The "Revelations of Divine Love" is both chronological and thematic. The book commences with a succession of images; as it continues it becomes dense with interpretation and spiritual discourse. The writer develops themes as she recounts her showings. Julian understood that the images had been given so that they would remain clear in her memory - "within me, as though it were the beginning of an ABC".<sup>2</sup> Those showings which had appeared to her physically were intended to provide a focus and framework for her meditations. Julian's book has a cross-referential structure, some revelations being clarified later; occasionally a summary is given. The book is a unity. At the very beginning Julian states - "Here begins the first Chapter. This is a revelation of love - in which all the revelations which follow are founded and connected";<sup>3</sup> at the end the reader is warned "take it whole, altogether".<sup>4</sup>

The unity of the book and the lack of any relationship between symbolism and iconography and the "Revelations of Divine Love" were to cause difficulties in composing a series of paintings based on the text. Nor was the amorphous nature of many of the showings, their shifting quality, and Julian's explicit but personal interpretation of others helpful.

1. Elements from fourteenth century art in the series.

An investigation into fourteenth century art had revealed little in connection with the "Revelations of Divine Love". Julian's showings do not reflect devotional images the writer would have known. Nevertheless some elements in the series of paintings based on the book have been adapted from medieval art.

The most notable of these adaptations is the central vertical division in five of the larger works. This device is taken from the Gough manuscript<sup>5</sup> where half of the folio's twenty six illuminations follow this scheme; in five of these the division indicates a heavenly sphere or a divine appearance and an earthly plane within the same border. The Gough manuscript dates from the early fourteenth century and comes from the Fenland region;<sup>6</sup> the miniatures show the collaboration of two artists.<sup>7</sup>

In the paintings draperies create the central division; these are derived from the Latin root of the word revelation which is 'revelare' meaning to unveil. Draperies as barriers and as elements which allow disclosure are not uncommon in Medieval Art. Curtains and honour cloths are traditional in Christian art and some medieval cult images appear to have been decorated with curtains. The seal of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk shows the (now destroyed) cult statue of the Virgin and Child surrounded by curtains which appear agitated, as if by wind.<sup>8</sup>

Medieval colour symbolism has been used<sup>9</sup> red symbolising Christ's blood, blue (the colour Julian awards to the vesture of the Lord)<sup>10</sup> spiritual truth and white innocence. Julian's dress follows the conventions of colour symbolism (see below). The lilies, thorns and lily crucifix come from medieval examples as does the flat tile pattern, tilted floor plane and the shelf-like stage in some of the paintings. The compositions emphasise the diagonal - diagonals were much favoured by East Anglian artists to animate their designs.

Although the candlestick, desk and lecturns are based on medieval prototypes, the paintings are not exact recreations of fourteenth century interiors. Rather the series attempts to create a general atmosphere of history and distance.

## 2. The large paintings.

As stated elsewhere Julian favours the development of themes in her book. Although the paintings generally follow the chronology of the showings they are also thematic and incorporate images from different visions or chapters. The six large pictures directly inspired by episodes in her book move from Julian's illness (No. 3), her viewing of the Passion (No. 4) to her reception of the hazelnut (No. 5); No. 6 is the "spiritual showing" of the Virgin. The complex fourteenth revelation forms the subject of No. 7 - here God's servant Adam, a "type" for Christ, is resurrected presaging the General Resurrection. In No. 8 the soul of man ascends to heaven. A colouristic theme is developed to parallel the sequence, moving from reds to low tonalities to light.

The large paintings, with the exception of No. 3, are conceived as Julian's reflections on her visions sometime after the event.

1. Revelations of Divine Love is a synthesis of Julian's visions. The symbols are, from left to right:

- i. A shadow which indicates the unseen presence of God.<sup>11</sup>
- ii. A cocoon-like form of drapery bound to a cross. This image was developed from the idea of Christ's grave cloth as a symbol of his redemptive death and also the

medieval image of the cloth in which Abraham holds the souls of the elect safely in his bosom.<sup>12</sup> The cross is of the type which usually holds a banner figured with a red cross and which appears in medieval paintings of the Resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

iii. Julian's hazelnut<sup>14</sup> at the centre of a cosmology.

iv. Christ resurrected and glorified. On his brow are the two garlands of blood, the "crown upon crown". The wound in his side is exposed; the cross drawn upon his breast is an allusion to his heart (Plate 1).

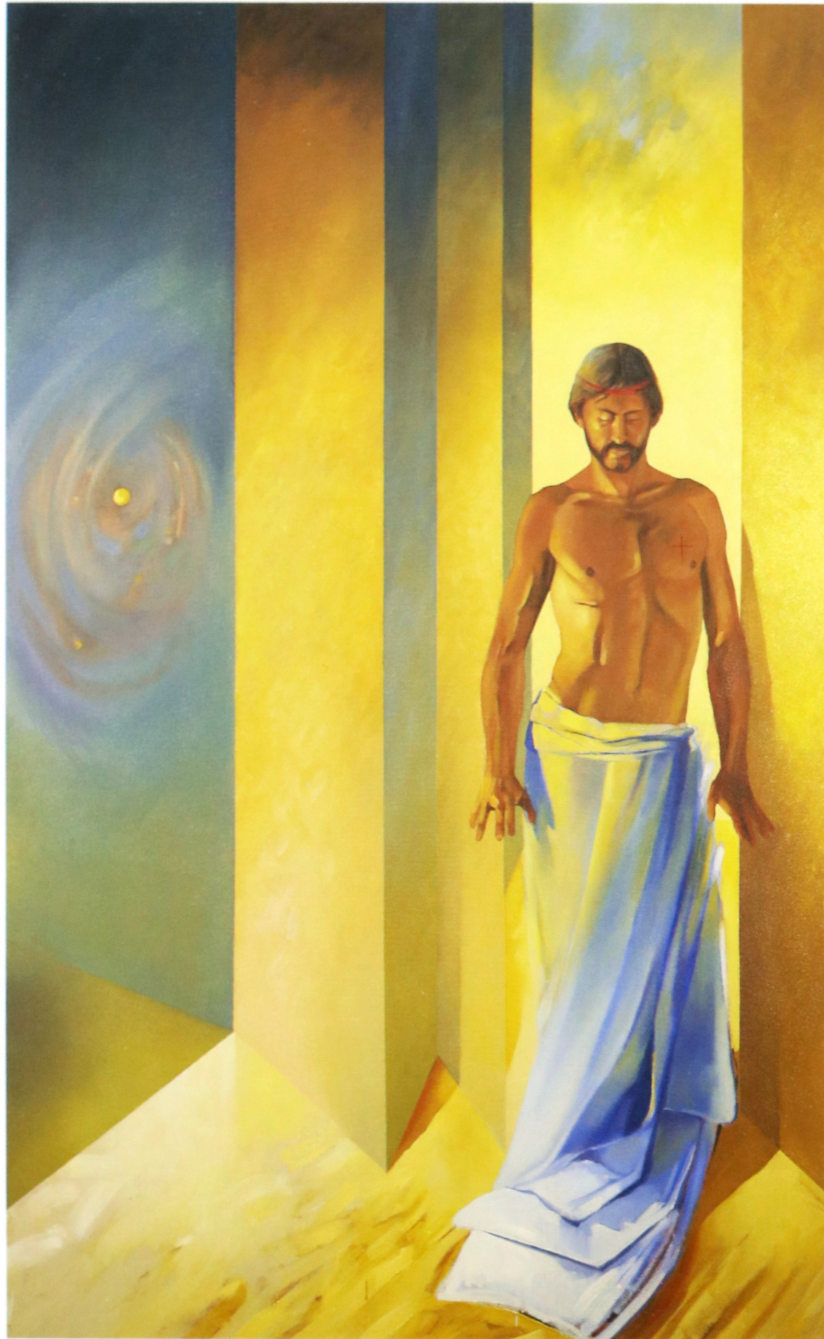
v. Calvary.

vi. The Crown of Thorns.<sup>15</sup>

vii. A floating candle symbolising faith.<sup>16</sup>

The sixteen folding panels refer to Julian's sixteen showings; the ninth and tenth panels separate to reveal Julian's "three heavens". At the extreme right is the saint<sup>17</sup> in her cell. On the wall is a picture of the Vernicle, a devotional image mentioned by Julian - the revelations begin with blood pouring from Christ's head. Julian is observing the showings in reverse order to the viewer - thus, through the Passion of Christ, Julian sees his glory; it is his love for Creation that will bring about the resurrection of a perfected mankind, joining us to God.

2. Study for the Revelations of Divine Love: a scale model which generally follows the pattern of the later large version (No. 1) although two of the images therein, the hazelnut and the Vernicle do not appear and the figure of Christ is different.



*1. Revelations of Divine Love. Detail, the Risen Christ.*

PLATE I

3. The Nightmare: the subject is Julian's illness and temptation. The face of the Fiend follows Julian's description but his torso does not for, according to her, "there was no proper shape to his body or hands".<sup>18</sup> The sinister countenance of the monk bearing the cross and the hot cast shadows refer to Julian's ravings in Chapter 3 "everything was ugly and terrifying to me as it were occupied by a great crowd of devils".<sup>19</sup>
4. The Passion of Christ: the crucifix begins to bleed and Julian in her imagination is transported to Calvary. The image of the crucifixion is recurrent in Julian's book, as has been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this text. The imagery in this work is based Julian's description of Christ hanging on the cross "like some cloth hung out to dry"; her billowing cape alludes to the "strong, dry and piercingly cold wind" buffeting Christ's body. The swirling draperies reinforce these descriptions, both of which come from the eighth revelation. The probable source of Christ's bound arms, meant to suggest his arms dyed red with blood, is a memory of a modern sculpture of Christ the Redeemer in Wells Cathedral.<sup>20</sup>
5. The Theophany (Plate 2): this painting is a synthesis of three showings, revelations one, two and twelve. Julian receives the hazelnut "all this is made". The portrayal of Christ and his blue vesture follow Julian's descriptions in Chapter 51. The painting paraphrases Annunciation imagery, Christ energetically appearing at the left. This is based on Chapter 10 of the text which states, in part - " we know





5. *The Theophany.*

PLATE II



that he will appear unexpectedly and with great joy to all who love him". Out the window dawn breaks over Norwich.

This painting was heavily reworked over a period of two years from 1985 to 1987.

6. A High and Spiritual Shewing of Christ's Mother: as this work was conceived as a "meditation picture" Julian does not look at the Virgin. This is a spiritual showing and thus the vision is in Julian's imagination. At the top left the Virgin is shown as "she is now, glorious". In the vase lilies and thorns intertwine symbolising the Virgin Annunciate and her purity and the Mater Dolorosa<sup>21</sup> (refer Chapter 4 of this text).

This is the only work in which there is any suggestion of Gothic architecture.

7. The Ascent of the Servant (Plate 3): the subject is the complex fourteenth revelation whose meaning eluded Julian for so long. The treatment of the subject comes from the end of the very lengthy Chapter 51 which concludes with Easter imagery. Here God's servant Adam, who is identified with Christ, ascends from his grave. This presages the General Resurrection, for as Julian states in Chapter 55 - "Christ in his body mightily bears us up into heaven". This idea is echoed by the bound cross, a form which as appears in paintings Nos. 1 and 2. The extinguished candle represents the presence of Christ, the true light.<sup>22</sup>

8. An Innocent Child: the title refers to the soul of man which Julian describes as "a most beautiful creature, a



*7. The Ascent of the Servant.*

PLATE III

little child, fully shaped and formed, swift and lively".<sup>23</sup>  
The Resurrection cross again appears; on a phylactery is inscribed Julian's famous "All Shall be Well" here rendered in Middle English. The use of a phylactery is a medieval device. A curtain (a mirror-image of Julian's bed-sheet in No. 3) rises to reveal the triangular symbol of the Trinity.

9. Julian and Her Scribe is not correctly an illustration of Julian's text but is a reconstruction of Julian dictating to a scribe. A scribe (or scribes) wrote the brief prologue to the Short Text and the long colophon at the end of the Long Text. The subject is medieval in concept, sometimes a scribe would include a self-portrait in the margins of a book or at its end. There is one known example in which the scribe has been awarded a halo.<sup>24</sup>

The tied and hanging strips of cloth symbolise Julian's revelations, an outpouring from above linking heaven and earth. The book closed with a clasp refers to the scribe's hope expressed in the postscript "that this book shall fall only into the hands of those who intend to be Christ's lovers". The convention used in paintings Nos. 4 to 8 where the vision appears at the left is here extended to Julian who stands in this position.

### 3. The small paintings.

The small paintings are a parallel series to the larger works. Generally they explore different and single images; they follow chronological order. The exception is The Window (No. 21) which does not literally illustrate the text but is conceived as a concluding summary to the series. Two are studies.

10. Lady Julian of Norwich: a formal portrait of Julian. She carries the attribute of a spiritual writer, a book.<sup>25</sup>
11. The Fiend: an interpretation not used in The Nightmare (No. 3). The flat checkerboard pattern comes from medieval examples.
12. Crucifixion I: a study for No. 4.
13. Christ Crowned with Thorns: based on the text - "suddenly I saw the red blood running down from under the crown hot and flowing copiously, a living stream, just as it was when the crown of thorns was pressed on his blessed head". With this sentence Julian's visions commence. Later Julian compares this vision with the Vernicle and it is placed thus in the series.
14. The Vernicle: The Crown of Thorns is treated as a cap and corresponds with the visions of a modern anchoress.<sup>26</sup>  
The image of the Veronica in No. 1 is not based on this work.
15. Head of Christ.
16. Crucifixion II - Suddenly He Changed to an Appearance of Joy: a quotation from the text.
17. Our Lady Saint Mary: a study for No. 6.
18. This Place is a Prison, this Life is a Penance: a quotation from the text.
19. The Suffering Servant: based on the text, - "the tossing about and writhing, the groaning and moaning ended".

20. Adam: based on the text, - "the body lay in the grave until Easter morning and from that time it never lay again". Adam leaves his tomb.

21. The Window: based on a modern window in the Cell at St. Julian's Church, Norwich. The lily crucifix is a medieval motif which expresses the shared sufferings of mother and son; it probably also refers to Easter.<sup>27</sup>

This is the only painting in the series in which Christ is haloed.

#### 4. Depiction of Julian of Norwich.

No portrait of Lady Julian has been found and it is unlikely one ever existed. An anchoress desired anonymity, an aspect which Julian stresses - "then you will soon forget me - so that I am no hindrance to you".<sup>28</sup>

The image of Julian loosely follows that in the earlier Visions of Lady Julian of Norwich, 1373, now retitled and hanging in St. Julian's Church, Norwich. It was painted in 1982. In the present series Julian is usually portrayed as she would have appeared at the time she received her showings, although in the Revelations of Divine Love (No. 1) she is somewhat older. In The Ascent of the Servant (No. 7) Julian is imagined to be in her late fifties, some time after her final understanding of this vision twenty years after the event. Julian and Her Scribe (No. 9) shows her as a very old woman towards the end of her life. No model was used for her portrait.

Julian's dress is imaginary. It is unlikely that Julian was formally a member of a Religious Order,<sup>29</sup> although she had

probably been educated by one. Modern depictions often have her in the black habit of a Benedictine nun.

The clothing of an anchoress is uncertain and may well not have been standardised. In the series of paintings Julian wears modified Religious dress, a blue dress under a heavy, cowled, brown robe. The colours symbolise spiritual truth and renunciation of the world, respectively, and refer to Julian as both mystic and recluse. In A High and Spiritual Shewing of Christ's Mother (No. 6) Julian wears choir habit, its whiteness symbolising innocence. The elaborate, and lay, head-dress she wears in Julian and Her Scribe (No. 9) is based on an illumination now in the British Museum.<sup>30</sup>

Occasionally Julian appears with a book, the attribute of a spiritual writer; the book in this instance represents the "Revelations of Divine Love". The book is blue-covered throughout the series in conformity with medieval colour symbolism.

APPENDIX A. Textual references in the series.

1. Revelations of Divine Love.  
Chapters 4 and 5 (revelation 1), 10 (revelation 2), 11 (revelation 3), 16 (revelation 8), 22 (revelation 9), 23, 24 (revelation 10), 51 and 52 (revelation 14), 68 (revelation 16), 83.
2. Study for the Revelations of Divine Love.  
As in No. 1, excluding Chapter 5.
3. The Nightmare.  
Chapters 3, 8, 67, 69, 70.
4. The Passion of Christ.  
Chapters 2, 3, 4 (revelation 1), 16 and 17 (revelation 8).
5. The Theophany.  
Chapters 5 (revelation 1), 10 (revelation 2), 26 (revelation 12), 51 (revelation 14).
6. A High and Spiritual Shewing of Christ's Mother.  
Chapters 4 (revelation 1), 21 (revelation 11).
7. The Ascent of the Servant.  
Chapters 51 and 55 (revelation 14).
8. An Innocent Child.  
Chapters 27 (revelation 13), 64 (revelation 15).
9. Julian and Her Scribe.  
Prologue (Short Text), Chapter 86 (colophon).
10. Lady Julian of Norwich.
11. The Fiend.  
Chapter 67.
12. Crucifixion I.  
Chapter 17 (revelation 8).
13. Christ Crowned with Thorns.  
Chapters 4 and 7 (revelation 1).
14. The Vernicle.  
Chapter 10 (revelation 2).
15. Head of Christ.
16. Crucifixion II - Suddenly He Changed to an Appearance of Joy.  
Chapter 21 (revelation 9).
17. Our Lady Saint Mary.  
Chapter 25 (revelation 11).
18. This Place is a Prison, this Life is a Penance.  
Chapter 77.

19. The Suffering Servant.  
Chapter 51 (revelation 14).
20. Adam.  
Chapters 51 and 52 (revelation 14).
21. The Window.



APPENDIX B. References to other works of art in the series.

1. Revelations of Divine Love.  
Sudarium, Sienese, painting, late 14th Century.
2. Study for the Revelations of Divine Love.  
Andrea Mantegna: St. Luke Polyptych, painting, 1454.
3. The Nightmare.  
Weeper, from the tomb of the Duc de Berry, sculpture, c.1449.
4. The Passion of Christ.  
Claudio Bravo: Crucifixion, painting, 1982.  
E.J. Clack: Christ the Redeemer, sculpture, 1956.
5. The Theophany.  
Diego Velasquez: The Temptation of St. Thomas Aquinas, painting, 1631(?).  
D.G. Rossetti: Jane Morris, photograph, late 19th Century.  
Edwin Dickinson: The Fossil Hunters, painting, 1928.
6. A High and Spiritual Shewing of Christ's Mother.  
Diego Velasquez: Saint Ildefonso Receiving the Chasuble, painting, 1623.
7. The Ascent of the Servant.  
Giovanni Bellini: San Zaccharia Altarpiece, painting, 1505.  
Edwin Dickinson: Composition with Still Life, painting, 1937.
9. Julian and Her Scribe.  
Gepa, from Naumberg Cathedral, sculpture, c1245.  
Filippino Lippi: Vision of St. Bernard, painting, 1486.
17. Our Lady Saint Mary.  
as in No. 6.
18. This Place is a Prison, this Life is a Penance.  
Mourner, from the tomb of Philippe Pot, sculpture, 1480.
20. Adam.  
Germaine Pilon: gisant of the King, from the tomb of Henry II, sculpture, c.1563.
21. The Window.  
Lily Crucifix, from Long Melford church, English medieval glass.  
Dennis King: window in St. Julian's Church, Norwich, English modern glass.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

All quotations from the "Revelations of Divine Love" are taken from "Julian of Norwich - Showings" by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York, Paulist Press, 1978) unless indicated otherwise. Quotes from the Short Text of the "Revelations of Divine Love" are noted as such. Quotations are indicated as R.D.L.

## INTRODUCTION

1. C. Wolters: "Julian of Norwich - Revelations of Divine Love" (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982) R.D.L., Ch. 27. Eliot quotes in full - "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well" on three occasions in "Little Gidding". There are two further quotations and several paraphrases of Julian in the poem.
2. Members of the Julian Shrine: "Enfolded in Love" (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1980).
3. R.D.L., Ch. 83.
4. D.L. Edwards: "Christian England" (London, Fount, 1982) Vol. 1, p.220.
5. Quoted in J. Dillenberger: "A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities" (London, S.C.M. Press, 1987) p.43.
6. J. Walsh: "The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich" (Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke, 1980) R.D.L., Ch. 13.

## CHRONOLOGY

No date is given for "The Cloud of Unknowing". Its author is anonymous - the book was written between 1349 and 1395.

The biographical notes on Julian of Norwich are adapted from R. Llewelyn (ed.): "Julian Woman of Our Day" (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1985) p.141.

1. Julian received fifteen of her showings on the 8th May and the sixteenth before dawn on the following day. Some MSS. give the date as the 13th May rather than the 8th May.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND

1. There is disagreement about the extent of mortality due to the Black Death, or Great Plague. Some writers put the figure as high as one half of the population others much less; the death of one third of the population is the figure usually given.
2. W. Swaan: "Art and Architecture of the Late Middle Ages", (Ware, Omega, 1977) p.18.
3. ibid. p.10.
4. Edwards: op.cit., p.221.
5. D. Knowles: "The English Mystical Tradition" (New York, Harpur Torchbooks, 1961) pp.40, 41.
6. J. de Simondi quoted in B. Tuchman: "A Distant Mirror" (Harmondsworth Penguin, 1978) p.xvi.
7. Completed by 1346. Pevsner has described it "as perhaps the most beautiful and original design to be found in the whole of Gothic architecture".
8. A.R. Myers: "England in the Late Middle Ages", (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985) p.191.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ANKRES ATTE NORWYCHE

1. The full dedication of the church is St. Julian and St. Edward; it is usually referred to as St. Julian's Church. The St. Julian of the dedication is probably Julian the Hospitaller, patron of ferrymen - the church stands near a medieval ferry crossing of the River Wensum.

The church is one of the oldest foundations in the Norwich; its tower is Saxon. The church was severely damaged during World War II. The restored Cell of Julian of Norwich (now the Shrine) is built over the foundations of her anchorhold, which may originally have been two-storied.

2. Wolters: op.cit., p.21.
3. Hermits, followers of the eremitical Life, saw themselves in a tradition which traced itself back to the foundations of Christianity, and beyond. The prophet Elijah was said to have lived as a solitary at Mt. Carmel and St. John the Baptist had been a hermit, Christ had withdrawn into the desert for forty days. The first Christian monks were hermits, in Egypt.

An interesting sidelight is that six of the nine pre-Reformation Carthusian houses in England were established during the fourteenth century. The Order is strictly contemplative and designed for solitaries.

4. J. Hall: "History of Ideas and Images in Italian Art" (London, John Murray, 1983) pp.215, 216. The painter is Francesco Triani.
5. Edwards: op.cit., p.261.
6. B.A. Windeatt: "The Book of Margery Kempe" (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985) pp.77, 78.
7. R.D.L., Ch. 66.
8. R.D.L., Ch. 60.
9. R.D.L., Ch. 77.
10. R.D.L., Ch. 6 (Short Text).
11. M. McLean in R. Llewelyn (ed.): "Julian Woman of Our Day", op.cit., p.8.
12. R.D.L., Ch. 27.
13. R.D.L., Ch. 6 (Short Text).
14. Colledge, E. and Walsh, J. : "Julian of Norwich, Showings" (New York, Paulist Press, 1978) p.20.
15. R.D.L., Ch.51.
16. For these varying interpretations see Wolters, op.cit., p.17 and Colledge/Walsh, op.cit., pp.19, 177.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE "REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE"

1. In Chapter 51 Julian tells us that "twenty years after the time of revelaton except for three months" she received final understanding of this vision. In Chapter 86 she records that "fifteen years after and more" she understood the meaning of the revelations. This is usually interpreted as the length of time between the composition of the two texts.
2. R.D.L., Ch. 52. It is an idea found in St. Anselm (d.1109). Both Julian and Anselm develop the idea of Our Mother Jesus; Ibid. Chs. 59, 60.
3. R.D.L., Ch. 27 (Wolters).
4. The importance of number in Julian's book is considerable but to my knowledge has never been investigated. Sister Eileen Mary in her essay "The Place of Lady Julian of Norwich in English Religious Literature" in A.M. Allchin (intro.): "Julian of Norwich-Four Studies" (Fairacres, S.L.G. Press, 1973) p.7, refers to Julian's "arithmetical method of statement" which she sees as coming from the repetition of prayers recommended in the "Ancren Riwe".
5. R.D.L., Ch. 2.
6. This is a paraphrase of part of the Julian prayer used at the Julian Shrine which ends - "our wills may be so made one with

yours, that we may come to see you face to face and gaze on you forever".

7. R.D.L., Ch. 5.
8. R.D.L., Ch. 53.
9. R.D.L., Ch. 82.
10. R.D.L., Ch. 49 (Wolters).
11. R.D.L., Ch. 67.
12. R.D.L., Ch. 39.
13. R.D.L., Ch. 27.
14. R.D.L., Ch. 27.
15. McLean: op.cit., p.8.
16. R.D.L., Ch. 37.
17. R.D.L., Ch. 32.  
R. Llewelyn in "With Pity not with Blame" (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1982) wonders if this passage and others in which Julian states her conformity to the Church's teaching were inserted into the Longer Text in response to ecclesiastical pressure.
18. R.D.L., Ch. 32.
19. R.D.L., Ch. 32.
20. Wolters: op.cit., p.37.
21. Romans 8: 28-30. Some authorities relate Julian's view to St. Augustine's doctrine of Predestination.
22. R.D.L., Ch. 22 and II Corinthians 12: 1-3, respectively.
23. R.D.L., Chs. 12 and 51, respectively.
24. J. Gatta: "A Pastoral Art" (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1987) p.55.
25. R.D.L., Ch. 81 (Wolters).

#### CHAPTER FOUR: ART AND MYSTICISM

1. M. Meiss: "Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death" (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978) p.105.
2. ibid. p.117.
3. D. Farmer: "Oxford Dictionary of Saints" (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982) p.56. He notes "her original perception was human and fallible".

4. Hall: op.cit., p.214. Catherine learned to read and write in later life.
5. R.D.L., Chs. 1, 3 (Short Text).
6. The screens date from the first half of the fifteenth century. G.M. Trevelyan in "English Social History" (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967) p.71, remarks that the mood of Northern Europe was remarkably conservative. The pace of change in the visual arts was slow; painters and sculptors clarified and augmented the artistic pre-occupations of the preceding century.
7. In St. Luke's Chapel, Norwich Cathedral. The retable was painted in about 1381 and was given by Bishop Despencer and others in thanksgiving for the suppression of the Peasants' Revolt.
8. R.D.L., Ch. 51 (Wolters).
9. E. Male: "Religious Art in France - the Late Middle Ages", (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986). Chapter 2 - "Art and Religious Theatre" is an investigation of the influence of the Mystery Plays on iconography and themes in the visual arts.
10. R.D.L., Chs. 3, 4.
11. R.D.L., Ch. 2.
12. Walsh: op.cit., p.6.
13. R.D.L., Ch. 21.
14. Julian's emphasis is on Christ's love expressed by his dying for mankind; he is happy to do so again - "since I would for love of you die so often paying no heed to my cruel pains", R.D.L., Ch.22. This is closer to earlier religious thought as exemplified by St. Anselm (d.1109) in his "Meditations"; as is pointed out in Note 2 Chapter 3 there are other correspondences between Anselm and Julian.

The emphasis in late medieval religious thought was on Christ being wounded by our sins - it is what we have done to Christ that is stressed. Julian inverts this so that emphasis is laid on what Christ has done for us.

It should be remembered that the first attempts at naturalistic depiction of Christ's agonies come from the fourteenth century. Later examples have a suffering Christ being wounded by the darts of mankind's sins.

15. Colledge/Walsh: op.cit., pp.48, 49.

In this collaborative work Walsh appears to have modified at least to some degree, the position he took in the Foreword to his own translation of the "Revelations -".

16. R.D.L., Ch. 24.
17. Male: op.cit., pp.100, 101.
18. R.D.L., Ch. 24.

19. Male: op.cit., p.103.
20. G. Schiller: "Iconography of Christian Art" (London, Lund Humphreys, 1972) Vol. 2., p.194.
21. M. Cox: "Mysticism - the Direct Experience of God" (Wellingborough, The Aquarian Press, 1983) pp.83, 84, 91. Both were nuns at the Cistercian convent at Helfta in Thuringia. The visions of both women were vividly pictorial in character. St. Bonaventure also emphasised mystical union with the Sacred Heart.
22. Schiller: op.cit., p.194.
23. ibid. p.195 - "The true fifteenth century image of the Sacred Heart - not the wounded heart but the holy Child in the open heart of God".
24. Male: op.cit., p.120.
25. M. Aubert: "High Gothic Art" (London, Methuen, 1964) pp.80, 150, 151. The German type is known as the Vesperbild. The Pieta seems to have evolved in Siena in the early fourteenth century (Hall: op.cit., p.224) but does not seem to have been a popular subject, Italian examples remaining rare (Meiss: op.cit., p.127).
26. Male: op.cit., p.119.
27. E. Colledge: "The Medieval Mystics of England" (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961) p.291.
28. R.D.L., Ch. 4.
29. Walsh: op.cit., p.6.
30. R.D.L., Ch. 51.
31. The Vernicle, sometimes called the Sudarium, of St. Veronica (from 'vera icon' - true image): a cloth on which the image of Christ's face was printed on his way to Calvary. The relic was placed in one of the great central piers of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome during the pontificate of Urban VIII (d.1644).  
  
The legend, which has no Biblical foundation, was developed by Jacob of Voragine (d.1298), author of the "Golden Legend". The incident forms the Sixth Station of the Way of the Cross.
32. R.D.L., Ch. 10.
33. A. Cooper: "Julian of Norwich, Reflections on Selected Texts" (Homebush, St. Paul Publications, 1986) p.49.
34. Male: op.cit., pp.176, 177.  
The devotion of the Rosary developed slowly and may well have an Eastern origin. In the Middle Ages it had been customary for vassals to offer their lord a chaplet of roses as a sign of devotion. Rosaries borne by mourner figures on the tomb of Philip the Bold (dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century) differ from the modern version and are comprised of 5

sets of 6 beads separated by 5 larger beads and with a pendant cross. The Rosary received its final form under the Dominican Alain de la Roche in 1470.

35. R.D.L., Chs. 8, 33, 57, 60.
  36. R.D.L., Ch. 25 (Wolters).
  37. Colledge/Walsh: op.cit., p.31.
  38. Luke 1: 41-43.
  39. R.D.L., Ch. 19 (Short Text).
  40. Colledge/Walsh: op.cit., p.36.
  41. R.D.L., Ch. 64.
  42. R.D.L., Ch. 51 (Wolters). The beginning of this sentence "The place the Lord sat on was unadorned - the earth" - has symbolic importance; God sits on the earth ('humus') to show his empathy with the lowliness of his creatures ('humilitas'). It is possible that here Julian skillfully transposes the iconography of the Madonna of Humility, in which the Virgin sits cross-legged on the bare ground, to the Deity. The oldest example of this iconic type is a panel in Palermo painted in 1346. More likely it is simply an example of the seated posture upon which Julian places special emphasis; to her it signifies "endless dwelling" as she explains in Chapter 67.
- The iconography of the Madonna of Humility supplies both title and subject of Chapter 6 in Miess: op.cit., pp.132-156.
43. R.D.L., Ch. 10 (Wolters).
  44. Knowles: op.cit., p.124.
  45. Notably Molinari.
  46. Walsh: op.cit., p.6.
  47. A useful discussion of the visions and the illuminations is in C. Singer: "From Magic to Science" (New York, Dover Publications, 1958) Ch. 6.
  48. See F. van der Meer: "Apocalypse - Visions from the book of Revelations in Western Art" (London, Thames and Hudson, 1978).
  49. In All Saints Church.
  50. Examples are given in J. Coombe: "Bosch" (Paris, Editions Pierre Tisne, 1957).
  51. Colledge: op.cit., p.86.
  52. A. Martindale in P. Lasko and N.J. Morgan (Eds.): "Medieval Art in East Anglia, 1300 - 1520" (London, Thames and Hudson, 1974) p.33.

The MS is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.



53. R.D.L., Ch. 7 (Walsh).

#### CHAPTER FIVE: SYMBOLISM AND STRUCTURE

1. R.D.L., Ch. 51 (Walsh).
2. R.D.L., Ch. 51 Julian's statement that she was given "bodily" showings so that she would remember them like a child's alphabet may be compared to Bonaventure's statement in his "Sententiarum" - that images "were introduced on account of the transitory nature of memory, because those things which are only heard fall into oblivion more easily than those things which are seen", quoted by Dillenberger: op.cit., p.43.
3. R.D.L., Ch. 1.
4. R.D.L., Postscript (Wolters).
5. Ms. Gough liturg. 8, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford illustrated in L.F. Sandler: "The Peterborough Psalter -" (London, Harvey Miller, 1974). The manuscript appears to have been made for Hyde Abbey, Winchester.
6. The region around Peterborough.
7. Sandler: op.cit., p.47.
8. This has been interpreted as symbolising God's presence, a sign of the miraculous nature of the statue.
9. Two of the paintings are exceptions to this - Nos. 3 and 11. Both paintings feature the Fiend; the colour which symbolises evil is a sulphurous yellow. In both instances an orange-red has been used on draperies surrounding the Fiend, suggesting fire.
10. R.D.L., Ch. 51. "His clothes were full and flowing and seemly. Their colour was the colour of the sky."

A fragment of Medieval glass in the Erpingham window in the north choir aisle of Norwich Cathedral shows the Son of Man in a voluminous azure robe. A small window in West Rudham church shows the Man of Sorrows in a (deeper) blue robe, the window was made between 1420-40. Both are works by Norwich glass painters.

11. This image was used previously in the writer's Visions of Lady Julian of Norwich, 1373 now in St. Julian's Church, Norwich. The painting, dated 1982, has been retitled The Revelations of Divine Love and should not be confused with the present example.
12. A fine example of this subject appears on the tympanum of the central west portal of Bourges Cathedral, sculpted between 1270 - 1280.

An interesting version of the idea occurs in a tapestry woven for Louis I of Anjou in 1373. The tapestry is one of a series depicting the Apocalypse. In this particular example the elect are lifted to heaven in a cloth borne by angels. (Illustrated in F. van der Meer: op.cit., p.181.)

13. An example of the cross-tipped banner is seen in Norwich Cathedral's Despencher Retable. In an important German panel of the Resurrection, signed and dated 1437 by Hans Multscher, Christ holds a staff surmounted by a cross only (in the Berlin Museum).
  14. Julian's image of the hazelnut as "all that is made" can be compared with the late medieval symbol of a walnut representing Christ, quoted by Huizinga - "the walnut signifies Christ; the sweet kernel is his divine nature, the green and pulpy outer peel is His humanity, the wooden shell between is the cross". The person of Christ, in Christian thought, is the summation of all creation.
- J. Huizinga: "The Waning of the Middle Ages" (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982) p.198.
15. Based on a design taken from the Lenten frontal at Bristol Cathedral. It also appears in the 1982 version, as above.
  16. Also a quote from Julian "I saw that our faith was our light in our night" (R.D.L., Ch. 83); the image appears in the 1982 version.
  17. Julian has not been canonised. Her name was added to the Calendar of the Church of England in 1980, and other Anglican Prayer Books. Julian's anonymity has created a stumbling block for her canonization by the Roman Catholic Church.
  18. R.D.L., Ch. 66 (Wolters) This description appears in Chapter 67 of other translations.
  19. The "devils" here could be interpreted as the distractions caused by pain.
  20. A sculpture in yew by E.J. Clack.
  21. In art the Virgin is sometimes shown wearing a crown of thorns over her veil to symbolise her spiritual martyrdom at Calvary. Other saints sometimes depicted wearing crowns of thorns are Mary Magdalene, Veronica and Catherine of Siena.

G. Ferguson: "Signs and Symbols in Christian Art" (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981) pp.95, 166.

Mary's compassion for her son became a favourite theme in late Gothic mystical literature - the hymn Stabat Mater which traces Mary's pain at Calvary comes from the period. By the fifteenth century Mary's sufferings had achieved doctrinal significance, giving the Virgin a role in the redemption of mankind.

J. Snyder: "Northern Renaissance Art" (New York, Abrams, 1985) p.125.

The concept of the Virgin sharing in her son's Passion at Calvary is powerfully expressed in Rogier van der Weyden's Deposition (c.1438) where the fainting Virgin echoes the pose of the dead Christ's body (in the Prado, Madrid).

22. The motif of a snuffed-out candle probably derives from the writings of St. Bridget where the divine radiance of the Christ

child is said to have obliterated the lights of the world. A thirteenth century treatise by Durandus gives a symbolic interpretation of a candle thus: the wax represents Christ's human nature, the wick his soul and the flame his divinity.

A notable example of the use of the motif of the extinguished candle is in the central panel of Robert Campin's Merode Altarpiece (c.1425).

Snyder: op.cit., p.121.

23. Although this image probably has its source in Matthew 18:3 (as discussed in Chapter 4) Julian may have been stimulated by depictions of the Death of the Virgin where the soul of Mary is depicted as an infant, as well.
24. G. Zarnecki: "The Monastic Achievement" (London, Thames and Hudson, 1972) pp.127, 128. The scribe is also named - he is Robertus Beniamin, a monk.
25. Ferguson: op.cit., p.171.
26. "Pinions": "Wind on the Sand; The Hidden Life of an anchoress" (London, S.P.C.K., 1980).
27. The lack of appropriate formal symbols in the text is evidenced by the adoption of the lily-crucifix as the emblem for St. Julian's Church, a not entirely satisfactory solution.
28. R.D.L., Ch. 6 (Short Text).
29. Wolters: op.cit., p.15. For a differing view see Colledge/Walsh: op.cit.
30. M.S. Royal 15 D 1; illuminated by Jean du Reis of Bruges, 1470. A detail of this illumination illustrates the cover of the Penguin paperback edition of "The Book of Margery Kempe".

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## CATALOGUE

1. Revelations of Divine Love. 1987  
oil, acrylic, paintstick on canvas  
193cm x 478cm (76in x 188in)
2. Study for the Revelations of Divine Love. 1986  
oil on canvas  
41.5cm x 107cm (16 3/8in x 42 1/8in)
3. The Nightmare. 1985  
oil, acrylic on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
4. The Passion of Christ. 1985  
oil, acrylic on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
5. The Theophany. 1985-1987  
oil, acrylic on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
6. A High and Spiritual Shewing of Christ's Mother. 1986  
oil on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
7. The Ascent of the Servant. 1987  
oil on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
8. An Innocent Child. 1987  
oil on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
9. Julian and Her Scribe. 1987  
oil, paintstick on canvas  
137cm x 137cm (54in x 54in)
10. Lady Julian of Norwich. 1985  
oil on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 1/8in)
11. The Fiend. 1985  
oil, acrylic on paper on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 3/4in)
12. Crucifixion I. 1985  
oil, acrylic on paper on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 3/4in)
13. Christ Crowned with Thorns. 1986  
oil on canvas on board  
16.6cm x 9.6cm (6 1/2in x 3 3/4in)
14. The Vernicle. 1986  
oil on canvas on board  
17cm x 10cm (6 5/8in x 3 7/8in)

15. Head of Christ. 1985  
oil on canvas on board  
8.8cm x 5.6cm (3 1/2in x 2 1/4in)
16. Crucifixion II - Suddenly He Changed to an Appearance of Joy.  
1986  
oil, acrylic on paper on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 3/4in)
17. Our Lady Saint Mary. 1985  
oil on paper on canvas on board  
17.2cm x 9.9cm (6 3/4in x 3 7/8in)
18. This Place is a Prison, this Life is a Penance. 1986  
oil on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 3/4in)
19. The Suffering Servant. 1986  
oil on paper on canvas on board  
17.2cm x 9.9cm (6 3/4in x 3 7/8in)
20. Adam. 1986  
oil, acrylic on paper on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.2cm (7 7/8in x 4 3/4in)
21. The Window. 1987  
oil, acrylic on paper on canvas on board  
20.1cm x 12.4cm (7 7/8in x 4 7/8in)