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Author[s]: Sara Gorman

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Imitatio and Re-vision?

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in Seventeenth-Century Cambrai

by Sara Gorman

In evaluating the reception of medieval writing among recusant communities, it has too often been assumed that ‘reading’ can be equated with ‘retrieval’. The transmission of the medieval mystical writers’ works to exiled communities of post-Reformation nuns and monks on the Continent has often been taken as a means to re-enactment, rendering the exiled Catholic a vessel through which the textual ghosts of the insular Catholic past may be revived. For example, Placid Spearitt has commented that English recusants in exile simply ‘preserved unbroken’ the ‘continuity’ of the ‘classics of mediaeval English spirituality’.¹ David Rogers posits that while the exiled recusants remained immersed in insular Counter-Reformation activities, they also formed a ‘natural bridge backwards, across the break caused by the Reformation, to the habits of thought and the pieties of the Middle Ages’.² This notion of a direct ‘bridge’ back to the insular medieval past can scarcely contain the complexities of reading medieval books across the spatial and temporal gap between the composition of these works and their consumption by English recusants on the Continent. In a recent article on the recusant, Mary Ward (1585–1645), David Wallace warns against such easy equations. Attending to poignant similarities between Mary Ward and the English mystic, Margery Kempe (c.1373–1438), Wallace reminds us that Ward remains a ‘creature of her time’, which is ‘Elizabethan, Jacobean, and post-Tridentine’.³

Similarly, the use of insular medieval spiritual texts among seventeenth-century Continental nuns should not immediately be assumed to denote exclusively desire for the past. Although Continental convents of Englishwomen were amply supplied with medieval English mystical and spiritual works, often smuggled to the Continent from England, this does not mean that these post-Reformation women, separated from their medieval forebears by two hundred or more years, read texts by, for, and about medieval women from the same perspective and with the same reading practices as their insular medieval predecessors. Such notions of recusant women reading medieval insular Catholic texts assume that those women, lacking the ability to read with interpretive nuance, would automatically have received the records of past women's spirituality as exemplars to be slavishly imitated. Jennifer Summit and Nancy Bradley Warren have made strides in complicating the picture of the relationship of English Protestants to the Catholic past between the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.⁴ Yet much work still remains to be done to comprehend what it meant for a seventeenth-century exiled nun to read the works of a fifteenth-century insular holy woman.⁵ Only when we consider the precise uses of medieval insular texts by exiled post-Reformation Englishwomen on the Continent will we understand the complexities of the ways in which these women engaged with the medieval past. These kinds of considerations, only very recently being explored in English post-Reformation studies, will help recover a more accurate notion of post-Reformation English literature and of women's literary participation more specifically. The case study to be considered in this paper will show that, at least in the instance of one seventeenth-century nun, Margaret Gascoigne of Our Lady of Consolation in Cambrai, uncertainty and sometimes even ambivalence may be the key elements of reading other women's texts of the past.

Margaret Gascoigne was most likely to have read the devotional works of fifteenth-century anchoress Julian of Norwich in the form of a medieval exemplar which has now been lost. The text she used may be the source for Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Anglais 40, the Paris manuscript of Julian's *A Revelation of Divine Love*, thought to have been copied by the nuns at Cambrai in around 1650.

Augustine Baker, a Benedictine monk who fled to the Continent in the seventeenth century and became the spiritual director for the nuns at Our Lady of Consolation in Cambrai, provided the convent with a collection of mystical works, including a large number of medieval works, many manuscripts of which he obtained from his acquaintance Sir Robert Cotton, a seventeenth-century antiquary, whose collection is now the property of the British Library. Upon Margaret's death in 1637, Baker claims to have found some of her 'loose papers' containing certain 'devotions'. A nun's loose papers were often copied upon her death if the abbess deemed them appropriate for the other nuns' use.⁶ Margaret's papers now survive as St Mary's Abbey Colwich MS Baker 18, copied at Cambrai by Brigit More, and also in full in Downside Abbey MS 68870.⁷ Originally, they were introduced by what survives as Downside Abbey MS 42, Augustine Baker's *Life and Death of Dame Margaret Gascoigne*. Gascoigne never names Julian of Norwich or her text as such; it is only Baker, in his *Life of Gascoigne*, who notes that Margaret asked specifically for a certain passage from a text written by the 'Holie Virgin Julian the ankresse of Norwich, as appeareth by the old manuscript Booke of her Revelations' to be affixed to a crucifix in front of her deathbed.⁸ Nevertheless, Margaret quotes directly from Julian's *A Revelation of Divine Love*, and although her writings allude to biblical passages and, as Watson and Jenkins point out, the medieval mystical writings of Thomas à Kempis and Gertrude of Helfta, her reiteration of particular clauses from Revelations One and Thirteen indicate her uniquely close engagement with Julian's text.⁹

Recent criticism on Margaret Gascoigne has assumed that she read herself *into* Julian's text. Watson and Jenkins interpret Margaret's deathbed scene, in which she gazes at a fragment of Julian's text affixed to a crucifix, as a form of *imitatio Julianae*, which 'shows Gascoigne subsuming her own death in the visionary death described in *A Revelation*'.¹⁰ Nancy Warren suggests that the exiled English nuns 'engage in "oneing"' with Julian by reading and copying her text, and that Margaret aligns herself with Julian, having a relationship with Jesus which is a 'reincarnation' of Julian's relationship with Jesus.¹¹ However, in using Julian's text, Margaret shows herself an ambivalent and uncertain reader, not in fact engaged primarily in re-enacting it.

Margaret shows three major types of interaction with Julian's text in her papers: quoting Julian as 'represented speech' set off from the flow of Margaret's own language; subsuming individual words or short phrases from Julian's text directly into her own sentences without setting them off as originating in an external source; and exhibiting a stylistic likeness to Julian's text. These three types of interaction with Julian's text represent Margaret's differing ideas of how much to hold her source text at a distance, as an impenetrable object, and how much to fuse with her source text and write over it in a process of imitation that obscures or effaces the source and makes the boundaries between Margaret's text and Julian's text ambiguous.¹² Margaret never seems to favour one type of interaction and therefore remains indecisive about how much and how to engage her source. Our knowledge of Gascoigne's text is filtered through Baker, and thus it is possible that in reading it, we are getting Baker-as-Margaret rather than Margaret *per se*. However, in the absence of compelling evidence that Baker rewrote Margaret's text, it seems fruitless to assume so. I will assume that the *Devotions* represent Margaret's writing. As I will show later, Baker's view of reading Julian in fact diverges from Margaret's.

Several of Margaret's encounters with Julian's text involve a view of the latter as an impenetrable foreigner. Margaret's first recapitulations of Julian's words 'thou art inough to me' indicate a sense of Julian's text as 'unassimilable' into her own:

Surelie, I will nevere admitte anie such conceipt into my minde, but will alwaies answere those thoughts with this one worde, and with this I will alwaies conclude, that 'thou my God art inough to me'.¹³

Instead of writing, 'I will alwaies conclude that thou my God art inough to me', Margaret sets off Julian's words as represented speech. Margaret employs the same periphrasis and dialogic structure in response to the question 'shall I doubt?': 'O no; lett that never enter into my hart, but in that and all other occasions and cases, lett me ever conclude and satisfie myselfe with this, that "Thou art inough to me".'¹⁴ As Margaret's language waxes periphrastic, she points to the

presence of a quotation. Not subsumed into the fabric of Margaret's own writing, Julian's text in these examples must remain represented speech, culled from a source and thus held at a distance.

Soon, Margaret commences testing whether she can translate Julian's words directly into her own text without representing them as quotations, indicating the second type of engagement with Julian's text, in which it is neither wholly impenetrable nor wholly appropriable. For example, in response to her question 'Can I saie that anie thing is wanting to me concerning either corporall necessities or spirituall giftes or graces, whilst in those wants thy most gracious will is founde?', she finds comfort in a self-generated response, 'O no; for "thou art inough to me," and thy will more desired by me, then all these things beside.'¹⁵ Here, the periphrasis surrounding the quotation from Julian's text has disappeared and 'thou art inough to me' stands as an integral part of the sentence which finishes with Margaret's original words 'and thy will more desired by me, then all these things beside.' Similarly, Margaret employs the words 'intende' and 'attende' throughout, words which she gleans from Julian's text, as in section 11: 'it being (I say) most pleasing to him, & being perhaps the principall or only meanes, by w^{ch} he desirthe & intende[th] in thee to delight himselfe';¹⁶ in section 24: 'It seemeth to me now (most sweet Lord), that thou intendedst me for thy owne in a particular manner euen from my first being';¹⁷ and in section 53: 'Thou knowest I desire, seeke, or intend nothing but the accomplishing of thy most Bl: will',¹⁸ to cite only a few instances of the recurrence of this word. Margaret treats the word 'courtesie', which John Clark notes is also an embedded reference to Julian, in a similar manner.¹⁹ Rather than pronouncing the word a quotation from a source, she lifts it from the exemplar and re-situates it in her own text. For example, Margaret writes that 'I will choose rather to hazard my soule [...] by standing to thy courtesie & mercy, then by satisfying my-selfe to offend thee', and that 'I would [...] chose rather to be in thine hands & power, & leaue it to thy courtesie'.²⁰ Both words, 'intende' and 'courtesie', recur in Margaret's *Devotions* and represent a type of interaction with Julian's text that neither holds it at a distance nor writes over it. While in reality the use of these words involves

culling from a source, it is not represented this way in Margaret's text, and thus it seems that Julian's language may momentarily fit seamlessly into Margaret's writing.

Margaret's 'testing' of the third type of engagement with Julian's text, in which she appropriates Julian's style and thereby attempts to efface her source, proves more complicated. As Margaret appropriates Julian's style, she also points to her difference from Julian, hence suggesting a reluctance to efface her exemplar or an inability to make it wholly native. In section 31, after lamenting her 'exile' from Christ, Margaret employs a Julian-like turn of phrase: she switches from first person singular to first person plural mid-sentence, one of few instances of using the first person plural in her papers, which remain self-focused. There are only four other instances in her roughly thirty pages of devotional papers in which Margaret uses the first person plural, and none of these usages is as extensive as in section 31.²¹ Given the number of references to 'I' in these papers, five instances of the first person plural is proportionately low and may indicate an important stylistic move. The sentence begins 'O my poor soule, seeing it is the will of thy beloved to permitte me thus to remaine in exile and banishment', centering on 'I', or Margaret. As the sentence turns on the word 'yet', 'I' becomes 'we': '[...] yet lett *us* keepe our fidelitie to him'. Margaret continues the use of the first-person plural later in the passage:

Lett *us* not admit of anie other love but his, nor have affective correspondence or conversation with anie other. Lett nothing ells be pleasing or gratefull to *us*; lett *us* desire nothing ellse; admitte of nothing ells [...] whilst *we* remaine constantlie faithfull to him²²

Margaret then introduces a community, intoning Julian's words: 'but saie; "Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit." Thow alone, O Lorde, "art inough to me".'²³ Now, common exile may be discussed:

yet sometimes bemoaning our misereries, as that through our negligences and defallts we are thus farre seperated from him; for such his distance or absence from us, is through our fallt, and not his.²⁴

This shift from ‘I’ to ‘we’ is characteristic of Julian but uncharacteristic of Margaret. In section 28, Margaret engenders a rift between herself and ‘others’, presumably her fellow Christians: ‘Lett *others* seeke for what *other* things they please besides this, but for *my* parte *I* neither have or enjoie nor desire to have anie thing but onlie this’.²⁵ While Julian often insists that her text is more useful to the reader than to herself, claiming that ‘in as much as 3e [her fellow Christians and readers] loue god the better, it [her ‘shewyng’] is more to 3ow than to me’,²⁶ Margaret’s writing for the most part excludes her fellow Christians.²⁷ Much of her lament of her sinful nature is based on a question of whether or not she will be treated with less compassion than other Christians. In section 17, Margaret wonders why the ‘gates of mercie’ should be ‘shutt against me onlie’ when they have been open ‘to receive so manie’ besides her.²⁸ In section 15, Margaret contemplates whether God will ‘deny’ forgiveness to her, which ‘thou didst neuer deny to any sinner’.²⁹ Margaret’s sense of ‘self’ and ‘others’ is opposed to Julian’s sense of a community of her fellow Christians. Thus Margaret’s shift to ‘we’ here, especially as it leads to an affirmation of ‘thou art inough to me’, suggests stylistic appropriation of Julian’s text.

Shifting to the first person plural mid-sentence is itself reminiscent of Julian’s writing pattern, as she necessarily shifts from those things which are revealed to her alone, the ‘I’, to the implied audience ‘we’, all Christian readers. For example, Julian reveals that ‘*I* saw oure lorde scornynghys malys and nowghtyng hys vnmyght, and he wille that *we* do so’.³⁰ What she sees remains hers (the ‘I’ function) but what God wills by such revelation relates to ‘we’. Similarly, Julian relates that ‘Here saw *I* a grett onyng betwene Crist and *vs*, to *my* vnderstondyng: for when he was in payne *we* ware in payne, and alle creatures that myght suffer payne sufferyd *with* him’.³¹ As Elisabeth Dutton notes, Julian’s use of the first person plural in passages heavily weighted towards ‘I’ suggests that the reader should appropriate Julian’s (the ‘I’ character) thoughts and writing.³² For example, when Julian faces the difficulty of reconciling the damnation of unbelievers with Christ’s insistence that ‘alle maner a thyng shalle be wele’, the passage is heavily ‘I’-oriented.³³ However, the figure of ‘evyn christian’³⁴ appears when Julian writes ‘*our* feyth’ in the same passage. This inclusion of the

first person plural urges the reader to appropriate Julian's thought process.³⁵ Initially separated from Julian's contemplation as a result of the insistence on 'I', the reader must *apply* Julian's words rather than simply share in them while reading her text. Thus Margaret's shift to 'we' mid-sentence in the context of quoting from Julian's thirteenth revelation represents appropriation of the voice and texture of Julian's text, rather than simply its words. A far cry from Julian's text as distant, represented speech, here Julian's text fuses with Margaret's in a way that makes locating the boundary between them difficult. Here, Julian's text is native and assimilated.

Yet, this moment, in which Julian's textual presence is nearly effaced, may also be the most succinct demonstration of Margaret's ambivalence as a reader, as she merges her text with Julian's and, in the same gesture, diverges from it and points to this rupture. The section begins with Margaret's exilic lament: 'O my poore soule, seeing it is the will of thy beloved to permitte me thus to remaine in exile and banishment'.³⁶ This beginning creates dissonance with Margaret's becoming a sophisticated translator and appropriator of Julian's text because Margaret's expression of 'exile' and 'banishment' make her text divergent from Julian's. For the most part, the words 'exile' and 'banishment' are not in Julian's lexicon. 'Exile' and 'banishment' both mean 'enforced removal from one's native land' or 'penal expatriation', while 'separation', the word Julian is more likely to use, is simply 'the action of keeping apart'.³⁷ While the former two words insinuate the presence of an authoritative penal agent, the latter indicates any kind of distance. Julian usually expresses the idea that God is closer to us than our own bodies:

For as þe body is cladd in the cloth, and the flessch in the skynne, and the bonys in þe flessch, and the harte in the bowke, so ar we, soule and body, cladde and enclosydde in the goodnes of god. Yee, and more homely, for all they varyssche and wast away; the goodnesse of god is ever hole and more nere to vs, *withou3te* any comparison.³⁸

While the flesh may 'varyssche and wast away', the goodness of God and his 'enclosing' of our souls remains the permanent substance of

our beings. Julian notes that sin does distance the soul from God but says, 'Prayer onyth the soule to god, for though the soule be evyr lyke to god in kynde and in substannce restoryd by grace.'³⁹ Even 'whyle' we are 'in oure synne', God 'kepyth vs so tenderly', suggesting that even sinning does not bespeak absolute banishment from God's presence. And when we return to God, He might say, 'I haue evyr ben *with* the, and now seest thou me louyng, and we be onyd in blysse', indicating that even in sin God was with us, and that we were prevented only from being 'onyd in blysse'. For Julian, the soul becomes 'vnlike' God momentarily because of the 'condescion' of the 'synne of mannes perty'. Words so extreme as 'exile' and 'banishment' do not seem to have a place in Julian's text.

On the other hand, Margaret's exilic lament posits a real distance from God. Margaret's later question, 'Quis me separabit a charitate Christi?' is more reminiscent of Julian's view of separation from Christ, mostly because of the use of the word 'separabit' rather than the more despairing 'banishment', and indicates her comprehension of a more Julian-like concept of distance from the divine.⁴⁰ In fact, section 31 is the only instance in which Margaret uses such extreme words as 'exile' and 'banishment' in discussing distance from God. Precisely where she seems most 'at one' with Julian's text, Margaret expresses separation from the divine using a lexicon which is decidedly *not* Julian's.

'Exile' and 'banishment' may also refer to Margaret's historical situation of Continental exile. Other women in Margaret's situation expressed feelings of homesickness. Several scholars have pointed out expressions of exilic lament in the poetry of fellow Cambrai resident Gertrude More. Warren notes that More's poetic comment that her 'hart' has been 'wounded' by a 'seraphick dart' in a poem addressed to her great-great-grandfather, Thomas More, symbolises her sharp severance from England.⁴¹ Richard Lawes suggests that More's image:

Those glimmerings that sometimes appeare
In this dark vayl, this gloomy night,
Are shadows tip't with glow worm light,

exhibits the “shadowy” position of a Catholic exile in a foreign land’.⁴² The decision to join a convent seems to have been made for More by her father, and she spent her first years at Cambrai in some distress.⁴³ In 1609 Abbess Mary Gough wrote:

we [...] forsooke our Country, Parents and freindes [...] yet we might at the least by Penance and Prayer conjoine our selves unto those which labour in Gods vineyard, namely in our afflicted Country of England.⁴⁴

David Wallace observes that Mary Ward’s departure from her homeland England occasions ‘sad, backward glances’ in her *Painted Life*.⁴⁵ Ward herself documented her feelings of exile in her autobiographical papers:

Setting forth then upon the so greatly desired journey, and not yet out of England, a great obscurity darkened my mind and doubts rose up within me as to where, and in what religious order, I should have to settle, and in this darkness and disquiet of soul I crossed the sea and arrived at Saint-Omer in Flanders.⁴⁶

Claire Walker has similarly noted how the Catholic Church’s strict cloistering of nuns ‘curtailed’ some of the threat that Catholic Englishwomen at home presented to Protestant England, creating a real sense of geographic isolation among the English nuns abroad.⁴⁷ Indeed, many of the English nuns on the Continent tried to participate in English affairs from their isolated position, fashioning themselves as ‘keepers of the monastic tradition for women’.⁴⁸ The inability to return to England was a condition specific to women, as women could not go on the Mission, a missionary project involving Catholic Englishmen on the Continent returning to England to convert their Protestant counterparts. As Wallace posits, these Catholic women exiles were ‘perennially aware of being *Englishwomen* in exile’.⁴⁹ This fact, combined with Margaret’s use of the suggestive terms ‘exile’ and ‘banishment’, makes it tenable that Margaret references her exile from England. If she does, it only widens the distance between herself and Julian, as she positions herself as a woman whose contemplations of the divine are bound up in a historical moment which is not and will

never be the same as Julian's. This notion of distance from God as equivalent with exile from her *patria* not only adds the sense of forced removal to what in Julian would be 'separation', but it also highlights the 200-year distance between Margaret and Julian. Thus in this section, Margaret is at once never more distant from and yet never more in touch with Julian's text, revealing herself at this moment as an uncertain reader, unsure how and perhaps whether to admit this exemplar into the fabric of her own text.

Yet even if Margaret has reached, or at least approached, the height of appropriation, she soon returns to a sense of Julian's text as a foreign object. Margaret notes that Jesus, to whom she speaks directly, spoke these words 'to a deere child of thine': 'Lette me alone, my deare worthy childe, intende (or attende) to me, I am inough to thee; rejoyce in thy Saviour and Salvation.'⁵⁰ Here, in contrast to her previous quotations of Julian, Margaret refers to the fact that she is citing a source outside of herself, although what it is and the fact that it is a textual source remain obscure. Margaret continues only to reiterate her separation from Julian's text: 'This o Lorde I reade and thinke on with great joie, and cannot but take it as spoke allso to me.'⁵¹ This phrase — 'spoke allso to me' — has led Warren to conclude that Margaret here undergoes textual and bodily fusion with her medieval predecessor.⁵² Yet, instead of writing 'it *was* spoken to me', Margaret employs interpretive language: 'cannot but *take* it as spoke *allso* to me'. The interpretive act of doubling is ever apparent here: Margaret does not claim to write over Julian's words but to *interpret* them as *applying also* to her. This seems much different from 'oneing' herself with Julian. That exegesis has the effect of distancing Margaret from Julian's text makes sense in terms of the paradigm of what Rita Copeland calls 'secondary translation'. Secondary translation involves 'full-fledged' appropriation and 'rhetorical invention' rather than exegesis on the exemplar. Where exegesis implies 'service to a foregoing text', rhetorical invention and appropriation require effacement of the source.⁵³ Margaret's use of Julian's text throughout as both foreign and appropriable does mimic the process of translation: first the text to be translated (in this case, Julian's) exists as a foreign exemplar, and then it becomes 'native' as it is rewritten in its new language. However, Margaret's 'translation'

of Julian's text is never complete: she suspends Julian's text between a position of distance and a position of appropriation. In the previous section on exile, Margaret does begin to efface her source and moves towards the completion of the translational process. Here, however, as Margaret plays exegete, she does service to Julian's text rather than appropriate it or efface it while subsuming it into the fabric of her own inventive text.

Margaret continues to deconstruct the passage for analysis, sometimes imagining and sometimes enacting her responses to Jesus's words to Julian. To Jesus's words 'lette me aloone', Margaret narrates herself answering: 'to which I can not but answere and readilie yealde and submite my selfe, saying: "O yes, my Lorde".'⁵⁴ To Jesus's injunction to 'intende to me', Margaret responds more directly: 'thou knowest, that, that is it which I aime at, and seeke to do at all times, both daie and night, and nothing ells, but that I maie continuallie attende to thee.'⁵⁵ Lest we begin to think that Margaret here moves towards fusion with Julian by commencing with a projection of her own response to Jesus's words and subsequently writing over Julian's responses, the next projected response makes any such process impossible. In response to the statement 'I am inough to thee', Margaret uses the subjunctive instead of the indicative: 'and to this I *would* willinglie answere'.⁵⁶ Somehow, direct response to the Christ of Julian's text has become difficult, with Margaret conjecturing rather than realising a response. Rather than 'being' Julian and answering the words Christ spoke to Julian directly, which would constitute embodiment of Julian, Margaret constructs an imaginative situation in which she relates what she *would* respond, not what she *does* respond. Margaret here views her exemplar once again as a separate textual entity on which she practices exegesis. Importantly, this type of engagement with Julian's text appears after Margaret has illustrated her engagement with the same text at an advanced stage of effacement and appropriation, in which she appropriates style. Thus Margaret wants both to engage with Julian's text as a foreigner and to blur its boundaries with those of her own text. It is possible that this ambivalence is related to a desire to imitate Julian's spirituality with a simultaneous awareness of the historical rupture

between herself and Julian, an awareness which becomes apparent in the passage in which Margaret contemplates exile.

After this exegetical section, Margaret once again appropriates Julian's style. She describes how Christ 'sweetlie' reprehends her for being 'frighted with vaine humane feares':

thou doest, as it seems to me, thus sweetlie reprehende me for it, and as it were sayeng to my soule in this or the like maner; 'What hast thou to do with that? Doth it not belong to me to have care of thee for these points? Why does thou medle with that which doth not belong to thee, but to me? Looke and attende to that which belongeth to thy owne parte [...] and (as before) lett me alone; attende thou to me; for I am inough to thee.'⁵⁷

Here Margaret seems to write her own experience over Julian's, as Christ speaks the words he once spoke to Julian directly to Margaret. Margaret's constructions 'as it seems to me' and 'as it were sayeng' and 'or the like maner' are reminiscent of Julian's auto-exegetical catchphrases 'that is to sey' and 'as yf he had seyde'.⁵⁸ Margaret's writing here absorbs Julian's style once again. At the same time, these tentative 'as though' and 'as if' constructions may have double meanings in this context which indicate, like the use of the subjunctive in the previous section, that Margaret likens her experience and her text to Julian's but does not embody it. Margaret quotes Jesus's words from Julian's text, appropriately re-enacted in Jesus's mouth. Yet she has already noted in a previous section that these words originate in a text outside her own and has furthermore asserted that these words only *seem* to be spoken 'allso' to her. In this context, the Julian-like 'as if' and 'as though' expressions function not merely as stylistic imitation of the exemplar but also as possible references to the fact that Jesus's words, transcribed here, do not originate with Margaret's text. Usurping them requires crossing a textual boundary which Margaret is reluctant to cross.

Thus Margaret Gascoigne displays varying notions of Julian of Norwich's text, sometimes treating it as a fixed exemplar and entity, sometimes as an appropriable text ready to be unbound and redistributed in her

own language. Baker, in contrast, does not seem to share Margaret's nuanced readings of Julian. In the process of editing Margaret's devotional papers, Baker reveals himself as a proper 'bibliographer', for whom the fragmentation of Julian's text would be a melancholy affair, signifying further loss of an insular Catholic textual past. While Margaret concerns herself with translation and appropriation, Baker's primary concern rests with preservation. Baker represents Margaret reading Julian and Julian's text itself in Margaret's deathbed scene in his *Life and Death of Dame Margaret Gascoigne*; thus this scene provides a useful venue for considering Baker's notion both of the text itself and of Margaret as reader of it. Warren posits that in this scene, Julian and Margaret share an autobiographical text and become one in book and body.⁵⁹ Yet there is at least one essential difference between Margaret's contemplation of the crucifix and Julian's: Margaret's experience of fixing her eyes on the cross is mediated by a fragment of Julian's text inscribed below the crucifix. While Margaret's 'vision' is of a textual fragment nailed to the cross, Julian sees Christ's body and streaming blood. Margaret's vision cannot be a re-vision of Julian's, nor can Margaret's deathbed experience be precisely Julian's. The two women cannot fuse at this moment.

Baker's dwelling on the image of Julian's text in Margaret's deathbed scene makes it even more difficult to envision this scene as one of union between the two women. Baker's description of the fragment suggests anxiety about maintaining its relationship to its whole textual body, the manuscript of Julian's *Revelation* in the Cambrai library. Baker relates that towards Margaret's death:

she caused one that was most conuersant and familiar with her, to place, (written at and vnderneath the Crucifixe, that remained there before her, and w^{ch} she regarded with her eyes during her/sicknes and till her death), thes holie wordes, that had sometimes ben spoken by God to the holie virgin Julian the clustresse of Norwich, as appeareth by the old manuscript/booke of her Reuelations, and wth the w^{ch} wordes our Dame had euer formerlie ben delighted: 'Intende (or attende) to me; I am inough for thee; reioice in me thy Sauour, and in thy saluation.'/Those wordes (I saie) remained before her eyes beneath the Crucifixe, till her death.⁶⁰

Whereas Margaret often obscures her material textual source in usurping Julian's words, Baker makes certain to identify their origin. He mentions the 'old manuscript/booke of her Reuelations', emphasising the existence of a self-contained textual body for these words. Baker frames Julian's words in bibliographic protocol, adequately citing his source before embarking on the quotation. The complex notions of appropriation which Margaret considers have no place in Baker's representation either of the text itself or of Margaret's interaction with it. She remains at a distance from it, gazing at it as a fixed entity. Baker's anxiety about the source appears also in the body of Margaret's devotional papers, where he inserts in parentheses that the words which Margaret claims have often been spoken to 'a deere child of thine' are the words spoken to 'Julian the Ankress of Norwich, as appeareth by the booke of her revelations'.⁶¹ As Margaret fragments Julian's text, Baker enters the scene to proclaim the source and keep it intact as a whole textual body.

This notion of 'fixing the text' resonates with Baker's comments on texts of the past in his other writings. It is true that Baker edited medieval texts, and it is possible that he modernised them for better understanding.⁶² Nevertheless his discussions of the use of books reveal him as an antiquarian and bibliographer crestfallen about textual fragmentation. In his works of spiritual direction, compiled and entitled *Holy Wisdom* by Serenus Cressy, Baker advises the Cambrai nuns on the uses of reading, commenting that should the 'books partly manuscript and partly of old English print' in the 'good and choice library' at Cambrai be 'lost' or 'perish', there would be 'no hope nor means of coming again by the like'.⁶³ A letter to Sir Robert Cotton also indicates Baker's concern about the lack of English books and nostalgia for the 'olde time' when these books were available:

little or nothing is in thes daies printed in English that is proper for them [the Cambrai nuns]. There were manie good English bookes in olde time whereof they have some, yet they want manie.⁶⁴

It is possible that the copy of Julian's text which Margaret read, probably a medieval exemplar, was among the books which Baker requested from Cotton.⁶⁵

In his introduction to *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Baker supplies a provenance history of the copy in the Cambrai library, showing his concerns as bibliographer:

This copy of the book that we have in this house was written in the year 1582. [...] It is said that the whole volume, wherein this copy is inserted, belonged to the private library of Father Benet Fitch [...] and that upon his death it was found among other books in his library.⁶⁶

Baker also connects this manuscript copy back to its insular medieval roots:

It is said that the copy, from which our said copy was taken, was brought over into these parts out of England by the English Carthusians, when they forsook their country upon the schism of King Henry the Eighth.⁶⁷

The text, now to be read by the nuns at Cambrai, is a monument to the textual dispersal caused by the dissolution of the monasteries. Baker exhorts the nuns to be careful and 'correct' readers: 'Finally, somehow, through the providence of God, the book is come to this house; God enable you to understand it and to make right use of it!'⁶⁸ This final exhortation cannot be separated from what precedes it. Baker waxes nostalgic about the use of this exiled text, and he urges the nuns, who have been graced with this fragile text by the 'providence of God', to preserve the book. Any consideration of how Baker represents Margaret Gascoigne reading Julian of Norwich must be informed by these wider concerns about past texts. Only with this information in mind can we be open to the possibility that Baker, more than his protégé Margaret, fashioned reading Julian as retrieval.

Although as spiritual director Baker was non-interventionist, allowing his nuns some forum for free contemplation, he was interventionist about the proper maintenance and reading of texts of the past, and

his view of ‘proper’ reading is perhaps just as important as his view of ‘proper’ prayer.⁶⁹ Considering Baker as spiritual director without reference to Baker as bibliographer can be misleading. In a similar manner, an understandable desire to reconstruct a less oppressive history of cloistered nuns on the Continent than that which the Council of Trent allows for may result in the simplistic view that nuns read medieval Catholic texts in order to reconstruct medieval English Catholicism.

Yet Margaret Gascoigne’s readings of Julian of Norwich indicate an ambivalent relationship to the past that renders Margaret not such a far cry from insular Protestant contemporaries, such as Margaret Cavendish, whose writings indicate a struggle to reconcile the relics of the Catholic past (such as the monastic house turned English country house) with the realities of the Protestant present. The case is particularly clear in Cavendish’s play *The Convent of Pleasure*, in which the protagonist Lady Happy decides to ‘incloyster’ herself with other women in order to avoid marriage. It may seem that the plot of this play indicates a desire among early modern Protestant women to return to a past in which they had an alternative to marriage. Cavendish herself expresses a desire to enclose herself ‘like an anchoret’ in her autobiographical work.⁷⁰ At the same time, ‘cloistering’ is infused with a negative air, as Cavendish describes her own mother’s grief after the death of her husband, relating that she ‘made her house a cloister, enclosing herself, as it were, therein; for she seldom went abroad, unless to church’.⁷¹ Similarly, Cavendish’s play cannot be a simple fantasy of the monastic past. Lady Happy eschews the harshness of the monastic lifestyle and proclaims her convent a ‘place of freedom’ rather than a ‘place of restraint’, designed for the delight of the senses.⁷² Enclosure as an ideal is constantly questioned, and the principles of the austere life of the monastery are never espoused.

It would indeed be inaccurate to assume that post-Reformation insular writers did not have a complex relationship to the monastic medieval past. As the possibility of entering a convent or becoming an enclosed anchoress became less likely for women in seventeenth-century England, the household, rather than the convent, often became

a major centrepiece of women's literary output, as evident in 'country house' poems such as Aemelia Lanyer's 'The Description of Cookeham'. Yet it is instructive to remember that aristocratic houses were often simply converted convents and monasteries, and an awareness of the intimate space post-Reformation households sometimes shared with pre-Reformation monastic institutions appears in post-Reformation writing surprisingly often. This is particularly evident in one of Isabella Whitney's poems, which, although purportedly a secular woman's guide to the maintenance of a household, actually bears striking resemblances to the thirteenth-century guide for anchoresses *Ancrene Wisse* and almost reads as a monastic rule addressed to a group of professed religious women. Whitney even calls her audience 'sisters'. The poem is set out as six 'rules', the first and sixth of which are 'outer' rules, prescribing actual behaviours, while the second through fifth 'rules' prescribe inner virtues. Even this structure recalls *Ancrene Wisse's* explicit design, with the first and eighth sections describing what the author calls the 'outer rule' and the inner sections describing the 'inner rule', the former pertaining to actual devotional practice and the latter referring to internal pious behaviours. Indeed, Whitney's poem begins just as *Ancrene Wisse* does, urging the 'sisters' to 'comende' themselves to God 'in the mornings when you ryse', just as *Ancrene Wisse's* first section commences, 'When you first rise, bless yourself and say *In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritui Sancti, Amen.*'⁷³ It would seem that the spectre of the monastic medieval past is still present in this poem, which, although presenting itself as an icon of secular household life, is in fact reminiscent of a medieval rule written for enclosed, professed women.

How different are these examples of a complex amalgamation of desire for and eschewal of the medieval monastic past from Margaret's simultaneous desire to inhabit Julian's text, a relic of the past, while always noting her distance from it? Perhaps Margaret's reluctance to render Julian's text in her own voice bespeaks a desire for discontinuity. In strategically holding Julian's text at a distance, even as she embodies it through appropriation, perhaps Margaret creates a space for inventiveness in her translation. The case study considered in this paper has attempted to demonstrate the failure of

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any model of slavish historical continuity and the simplicity of a sense of *reading* the past as *reliving* it. At the same time, it has posited an equally potent sense of historical nostalgia and anxiety over textual martyrdom that reveals the coincidence, rather than the divergence, of desire for a reconstructed past and an equal desire for a similarly constructed distance from it.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Placid Spearitt, 'The Survival of Mediaeval Spirituality among the Exiled English Black Monks', in *That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker OSB 1575–1641*, ed. by Michael Woodward (Abergavenny: Three Peaks Press, 2001), pp. 19–41 (p. 34).
- ² David Rogers, 'The English Recusants: Some Mediaeval Literary Links', *Recusant History*, 23 (October 1997), 483–507 (p. 484).
- ³ David Wallace, 'Periodizing Women: Mary Ward (1585–1645) and the Premodern Canon', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 36 (2006), 397–453 (p. 406).
- ⁴ Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380–1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and Nancy Bradley Warren, *Women of God and Arms: Female Spirituality and Political Conflict, 1380–1600* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
- ⁵ See Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2.
- ⁶ Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, *Life and Letters*, ed. by Heather Wolfe (Cambridge: RTM Pub., 2001), p. 63.
- ⁷ *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), p. 439. Margaret Gascoigne, *Devotions*, ed. by John Clark, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 119:24 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2007). Quotations of Gascoigne are taken from the extracts from Watson and Jenkins's transcriptions of Colwich MS 18 as printed in Appendix D of 'Appendix: Records and Responses, 1394–1674' in *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, except where Watson and Jenkins's transcriptions are incomplete, in which case I use John Clark's edition of the Downside Abbey manuscript, as no complete transcription of the Colwich manuscript exists to date. The relationship between these two manuscripts remains to be explored; they are basically the same, but, as Clark notes, one is not a copy of the other.
- ⁸ Quoted in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 439.
- ⁹ *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 438.
- ¹⁰ *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 439.
- ¹¹ Nancy Bradley Warren, 'Incarnational (Auto)biography', in *Oxford Twenty-*

First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English, ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 369–385 (p. 376).

¹² The notion that appropriation requires effacement is derived in part from Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 185.

¹³ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 441.

¹⁴ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 441.

¹⁵ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 443.

¹⁶ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, p. 40.

¹⁷ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, p. 50.

¹⁸ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, p. 68.

¹⁹ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, p. 33.

²⁰ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, pp. 32 and 35.

²¹ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, pp. 55, 60, and 68.

²² Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 443, my emphasis.

²³ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 443.

²⁴ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 443.

²⁵ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 442, my emphasis.

²⁶ Quoted in Elisabeth M. Dutton, ‘Compiling Julian: The *Revelation of Love* and Late-Medieval Devotional Compilation’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), p. 181.

²⁷ See also Annie Sutherland, “‘Oure Feyth is Groundyd in Goddes Worde’ – Julian of Norwich and the Bible’, in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. by E.A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 1–20 (p. 7). Sutherland argues that Julian’s ‘characterisation of herself as a figure of scriptural resonance’ may be part of a process which can ‘fictionalise the individual’, as he or she borrows words from ‘others’ articulation of themselves and their experiences’. It might be said that Julian models a method of appropriable reading for her own readers.

²⁸ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 441.

²⁹ Gascoigne, ed. by John Clark, p. 42.

³⁰ Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), p. 348, my emphasis. All further quotations from Julian will be taken from this edition.

- ³¹ *Showings*, p. 367, my emphasis.
- ³² Dutton, 'Compiling Julian', p. 183. See also Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), p. 140. Abbott calls Julian's text a 'shareable religious autobiography.'
- ³³ Dutton, 'Compiling Julian', p. 195.
- ³⁴ The phrase means 'fellow Christians'.
- ³⁵ Dutton, 'Compiling Julian', p. 183.
- ³⁶ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 443.
- ³⁷ *OED*. s.v. 'exile'; *OED*. s.v. 'banishment'; *OED*. s.v. 'separation'.
- ³⁸ *Showings*, p. 307.
- ³⁹ *Showings*, pp. 475, 454, 455, 475.
- ⁴⁰ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 445: the phrase translates, 'Who will separate me from Christ's charity?'
- ⁴¹ Warren, 'Incarnational (Auto)biography', p. 371.
- ⁴² Richard Lawes, 'Accounts of Intense Religious Experience in Autobiographical Texts by English Catholics, 1430–1645, and in the Writings of George Herbert' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2001), p. 234.
- ⁴³ See Augustine Baker, *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More*, ed. by Ben Wekking, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 119:19 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2002), p. 19.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Walker, p. 118.
- ⁴⁵ Wallace, p. 413.
- ⁴⁶ Mary Ward, *The Autobiographical Papers (1617–1626)*, in *Women Writers in Renaissance England*, ed. by Randall Martin (London: Longman, 1997), p. 234.
- ⁴⁷ Walker, pp. 56–57.
- ⁴⁸ Walker, p. 106.
- ⁴⁹ Wallace, p. 427.
- ⁵⁰ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444. There has been some conjecture about the origin of the parenthetical textual emendation 'or attende'. See Elisabeth Dutton, 'Augustine Baker and Two Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', *Notes and Queries*, 52 (2005), 329–337. See also Paul Mommaers, *The Riddle of Christian Mystical Experience: The Role of the Humanity of Jesus* (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters, 2003), pp. 26–27, for the distinction between 'intention' and 'attention'.
- ⁵¹ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444.
- ⁵² Warren, 'Incarnational (Auto)biography', p. 376.
- ⁵³ Copeland, p. 179. Copeland does complicate the picture by pointing out the

paradox that in secondary translation, exegesis may in fact be the ‘agent’ of rhetorical invention.

⁵⁴ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444.

⁵⁵ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444.

⁵⁶ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444, my emphasis.

⁵⁷ Gascoigne, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 445.

⁵⁸ Although scholars have not discussed these phrases as particular to Julian, they appear often enough in her text to be significant to her style. I owe mention of this to my colleague Victoria Van Hyning.

⁵⁹ Warren, ‘Incarnational (Auto)biography’, p. 377.

⁶⁰ Augustine Baker, *Five Treatises; The Life and Death of Dame Margaret Gascoigne; Treatise of Confession*, ed. by John Clark, Analecta Cartusiana, 119:23 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2006), pp. 49–50.

⁶¹ *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 444.

⁶² See Hywel Owen, ‘Another Augustine Baker Manuscript’, in *Dr L. Reypens-Album*, ed. by Albert Ampe (Antwerp: Ruusbroec-Genootschap, 1964), pp. 269–280. For how Baker mediated the texts he edited, see Dutton, ‘Augustine Baker and Two Manuscripts’, p. 336.

⁶³ Quoted in Marion Norman, I.B.V.M., ‘Dame Gertrude More and the English Mystical Tradition’, *Recusant History*, 13 (1975–6), 196–211 (p. 197).

⁶⁴ Quoted in Norman, p. 198.

⁶⁵ *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, p. 16.

⁶⁶ Augustine Baker, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Treatises by an English Mystic of the Fourteenth Century with a Commentary on the Cloud by Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B.*, ed. by Dom Justin McCann (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1924), p. 292.

⁶⁷ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, p. 292.

⁶⁸ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, p. 292.

⁶⁹ See David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burnes & Oates, 1961), p. 160. Knowles remains interested in assessing only whether Baker qualifies as a ‘true mystic’ and does not consider Baker as editor or bibliographer. See also John Cedric H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1976), p. 80.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Summit, p. 207.

⁷¹ Margaret Cavendish, *A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*, in

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Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader, ed. by Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 48.

⁷² Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. by Anne Shaver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 220.

⁷³ Isabella Whitney, 'A modest meane for Maides In order prescribed, by Is. W. to two of her younger Sisters servinge in London', in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*, ed. by Danielle Clarke (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 56 and *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses*, trans. by Hugh White (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 9.