

## Reassessing Gender in the Course of Julian's Short Text

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IN THEIR IMPORTANT STUDIES of Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, both Frances Beer and Marleen Cré point out that the Short Text (ST) is often treated as an "immature first draft," with discussions of Julian's work judging the Long Text (LT) of greater value.<sup>1</sup> Responding to such comparative assessments, Cré suggests that the ST deserves to be studied independently, "without continuous reference to the longer version," and while a few scholars support this idea,<sup>2</sup> the vast majority of criticism juxtaposes the two, with those comparisons indeed marked by a lack of enthusiasm for the ST in contrast to its longer form. A small number of critics express admiration for the ST, but those opinions are most often framed in negative or defensive terms, claiming, for example, that the ST is *not* immature or unpolished or lacking in confidence, thus betraying the broader impression that it *is* in fact all of those things.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, even those few who offer limited praise for the ST go on to laud the LT for its textual, theological, and authorial advancements. The precise language of critical reception for both the Long and Short Texts will receive more detailed treatment later in this discussion, but considered even in general terms, the reiterated preference for the LT is a bit surprising, particularly in fields which have long given prominence to originary texts and more recently stressed individual redactions when examining the forces at play in textual production. Why, then, do Julian scholars assert not merely the LT's differences from the ST, but its superiority? What is at stake in the promotion of Julian's LT? The following essay will argue that the issue of gender is central both to the LT's revisions and to preference for the LT in reception of the *Showings*.

The most noted revisions related to gender in the LT are, of course, the addition of the maternal Jesus trope as well as the removal of Julian's

sexual identity and references to several women mentioned in the course of her visions. Though the maternal Jesus figure is certainly not unique to Julian, hers has received a great deal of attention from scholars who see the LT's articulation of that figure as redemptive of women and femininity. On the other hand, revisions deleting female references—revisions that one might expect to cause some discomfort in regard to an author thought of as a profeminist—have been received with two contrasting approaches: first, the omitted references to women are minimized in claims that the changed details are irrelevant; second, the revisions are rationalized as intentional and integral to Julian's expanded theology, thus rendering the removal of references to women further proof of the LT's superiority.<sup>4</sup> In either case, individual discussions of these revisions tend to be limited to one or two of the changes; in contrast, this study will aim for a much broader interrogation of Julian's revisions as related to gender, placing the removal of female figures from the text in dialogue with the added maternal Jesus figure, but addressing the connotations and implications of other gendered figures in both versions as well. Ultimately, investigation of the cumulative effect of Julian's revisions will challenge the reiterated notion that the LT moves from the "personal" to the "universal" to transcend gender difference as is argued by most critics; rather, this discussion will suggest that universality is central to both versions of the *Showings*, with the LT moving away from a universality that includes female/feminine experience and contextuality to privilege a universality that is predominantly male/masculine, or at the very least one that relies upon and reinforces gender binaries.<sup>5</sup> Such an assertion will then prompt a reevaluation of scholarship's wide preference for the LT as one that evolves in revision, suggesting instead that our reception of Julian and her work has been shaped by our own "desire for the past," a desire which insists that the "first woman of English letters" must not only strive for but also succeed in the articulation and embodiment of equality and transcendence for herself, for women, indeed, for all of humanity.<sup>6</sup> The desire to promote Julian as a woman ahead of her time and our discomfort with Julian's treatment of gender, I will argue, motivate much of our scholarly defense of her LT and its particular articulation of universal salvation. Unfortunately, that desire also threatens to perpetuate the very gender hierarchy and

biases that likely compelled Julian's revision and that we wish for her texts to challenge.

## Revisions Related to Gender

### *Julian's Identity*

As is well known, a number of references to women disappear from the revised version of Julian's *Showings*. In order of appearance, these include references to Julian by name as a female recluse, to Saint Cecilia, to Julian as a "daughter," to Julian's gender and status as a teacher, to Julian's mother, and to Julian's female friend.<sup>7</sup> These omissions are troubling to many readers if we judge by the number of critics who have attempted an explanation. Of the omissions, the decision to omit in revision the three separate references to Julian's own gendered identity—by name, as a woman, and as a "daughter"—have received the most comment, with the most popular interpretation of these changes being that Julian was insecure about her status as a female author when she composed the ST, that she describes herself as "a woman, lewed, febille and freylle" by way of an apology, but that by the time she revised her text she had grown in confidence as both author and woman, no longer feeling it necessary to justify her authority or even mention the irrelevant details of her identity (1.6.36-37).<sup>8</sup> In contrast, a few critics see the suppression of gender as a potential "[surrender] to patriarchal pressure," believing that "far from lacking in confidence" in the ST, Julian was "extremely well informed about the theological arguments supporting female teaching, or even preaching."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, Julian's early statements can be seen as a challenge to the Pauline injunction against women teaching while the LT fails to take such a stand, and such a failure might be read as a setback to women's efforts to overcome patriarchal hegemony. Importantly, however, those who find the ST's statements confident rather than anxious concur that Julian's revisions (removing reference to her own sexual identity) are ultimately positive in that they contribute to her larger project to universalize the visions, moving the LT away from her specific experience toward that of "mine evyncristende" (1.6.20).<sup>10</sup> Thus, whether mention of Julian's gender in the ST and deletion of

those details in the LT are read as individually positive or negative, the net result is favorable.

### *Saint Cecilia*

This characterization of revisions to the ST as positive despite any potential loss of empowerment for women surfaces in response to Julian's inclusion and subsequent deletion of Saint Cecilia as well. Cecilia appears early in the ST when Julian explains that hearing a "man telle of halye kyrke of the storye of Sainte Cecille" inspired her to desire the "woundes" of contrition, compassion, and willful longing for God (I.1.36-40).

As stages in mystical union with the divine, these three wounds are central to Julian's visions, making Cecilia's example causally important, while in the LT Julian's desire for three wounds is motivated only by "the grace of God and teching of holy church" (II.2.33). As with deletions of Julian's identity, the removal of Saint Cecilia from the LT is seen as evidence of Julian's growing confidence as an author. According to one critic, Cecilia "provides Julian with historical affirmation of woman's value as a voice for Christian wisdom in the face of skeptics and nay-sayers;" however, the "apprehension that turns to the martyred saint for mystic inspiration and rhetorical affirmation in the short version of her showings no longer plagues Julian by the writing of the longer text."<sup>11</sup> Again, Cecilia is thought to make the ST too personal, too specific to Julian's experience while her removal is believed to reflect the revised text's confidence and general application. In contrast to this familiar claim, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's examination of fourteenth-century revelatory theology and its suppression offers an alternative explanation for Julian's decision to remove Cecilia from her LT. Citing the deployment of Cecilia for issues of papal reform, particularly in reference to the 1385 imprisonment of Cardinal Easton of Norwich under Urban VI, Kerby-Fulton argues that Julian may very well have backed away from including Cecilia in her LT to avoid association with current political tensions.<sup>12</sup> Acknowledging that Cecilia's disappearance may have been politically motivated—rather than the result of Julian's progress beyond the need for self-justification as a female author—ought to prompt a reconsideration of the idea that Cecilia's disappearance is a boon for the LT. In fact, lost with Cecilia are points of female causality for Julian's visions.

As articulated in the ST, it is Julian's "hearing" and "understanding" of Cecilia's heroic story that "stir" her desire and prayer to be granted three wounds. In contrast, her desire in the LT is born of less individually active, certainly less female forces. Julian is not actively involved in her own desire, nor are specific individuals—male or female; instead, her desire to "receive" three wounds is immaculately conceived by grace and general church teaching.

### *Julian's Mother and Female Friend*

The loss of active, human, female involvement in Julian's visions extends to the disappearance of her mother in the LT as well as to the neutering of her friend. Julian's mother appears in the ST after Julian experiences visions of Jesus bleeding and suffering on the cross. Julian's vision leaves her pondering the meaning of suffering, and at this point, her mother, believing her daughter to be dead, lifts her own hand to close Julian's eyes. This painful gesture of love "encrested mekille" Julian's sorrow, and is immediately followed by a vision of Mary's compassion for her son, whereby Julian learns that the greatest pain is the despair one can only feel for those one loves, for "so mekille as sho [Mary] loved hym mare than alle othere, her paine passed alle othere" (I.10.28-41). This understanding is ultimately related to Christ's limitless suffering and thus limitless love for all humanity. In contrast, the LT makes no mention of Julian's mother, and the vision of Mary's compassion follows upon meditation on Julian's own pain and love of Jesus rather than the more logically relevant suffering in connection with her mother.

Likewise, the logical relevance of Julian's concern for her friend in the ST is neutered when the person described as a "hire" becomes an "it" in the LT (I.16.13 and II.35.2). Julian wonders about her friend's fate after learning of sin's role in bringing humans closer to God, but she is immediately answered in her reason that "it is mare wyrshippe to God to knawe alle thinge in generalle than to like in anythinge in specielle" (I.16.18-19). Julian's vision of sin is meant for all, not for her or for her friend specifically. Considered from a logical and rhetorical perspective, Julian's point about her vision's generality is made *more* convincing when contrasted with the ST's more specific reference to a friend, yet the reference to the friend's femaleness is omitted in the LT.

Critical responses to both of these gender-related revisions follow the same patterns noted earlier. Some see the inclusion of Julian's mother and friend as evidence of the author's "woman consciousness," a recognition that Julian's visions are grounded in female experience, particularly as articulated in the ST.<sup>13</sup> Others see details of gender in relation to Julian's mother and friend as unimportant and too personal, even creating an obstacle for the visions by diverting our attention from Jesus to Julian and her circle of women.<sup>14</sup> Whether thought of as positive or negative, however, removal of Julian's mother and suppression of her friend's identity are thought to render the visionary experience less personal. Just what is meant, though, by describing these female references as "personal" is not very clear. For instance, if by "personal" we mean "individual," as in Julian's insistence that her vision is not meant for herself "singulerlye" but for "alle mine evencristende" (I.6.19-20), then her choice to omit references to herself as a woman in the LT can be seen as a move away from the personal only in that not all members of the Christian community are females. Following this logic, however, it is difficult to see how mentioning the presence of one's mother or the existence of a female friend qualifies as personal or singular, since the condition of having friends, even female friends is common, and of course the condition of having a mother is universal. Furthermore, examples of members of the Christian community finding inspiration in the lives of saints both male and female are also common, making the argument that St. Cecilia was removed for purposes of universalizing the text less than convincing. The problem with each of these references seems to be less one of singularity than one of femaleness.

### *Mary Magdalene and the Virgin*

The matter of female influence in Julian's visions is crucial to any discussion of gender in the *Showings*. As described above, the women who appear in Julian's ST are not insignificant, but rather have direct impact on Julian's desire for her visions as well as the progression of those visions and Julian's subsequent understanding and elaboration of them. But the women disappear. In fact, the only female figures to appear in the ST and persist in the LT are Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary. Strikingly, Mary Magdalene, who is popular in mystical

texts as a representative of the contemplative life and thus potentially more important in this context for her vocational applicability than for her femaleness, barely makes an appearance in both texts when she is mentioned as one of “Crystes loverse” and as one of a group of repentant sinners (I.1.6-7/II.2.7-8 and I.17.17/II.38.12). In contrast, the Virgin Mary appears repeatedly throughout both versions of the *Showings*, almost always in direct relation to her role as Jesus’s mother, more clearly a female/feminine connotation. One might expect that an author concerned with emphasizing a text’s generality and decreasing its female/feminine specificity would have underlined Mary Magdalene’s association with contemplation and downplayed the Virgin.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Mary Magdalene’s role in the LT remains unchanged (though she does move to the front of the line of sinners). Meanwhile, the Virgin’s role is reduced sufficiently for one author to note that the LT’s Jesus “could be understood as having incarnated himself.”<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, many find the Virgin’s diminished role in the LT a positive change for women, arguing that mariology defends androcentrism rather than raising the status of women, and that women are ultimately rendered more godlike when Julian’s vision raises Mary to the godhead via incorporation with Jesus as a mother.<sup>17</sup> The question of how helpful the Jesus as mother figure is for women will be addressed later, the point at issue here being that women as agents, including the Virgin Mary, fade in the LT.

A good example of Mary’s altered agency can be seen in the disparity between the short and long versions of Julian’s vision of the Virgin. After seeing the wound in Jesus’s side and learning of the extent of his love for humanity, Julian is asked by Jesus if she would like to see his mother. Julian answers yes, stating that she had often prayed to see Mary in “bodely likenes” (I.13.10). Subsequently, Julian sees a three-fold vision of Jesus’s mother in conception, in sorrow at the cross, and in the glory of heaven. In the ST, this vision is immediately followed by a vision of Jesus, one in which he is “mare glorified” than she had seen him before, from which Julian learns that “ilke saule contemplatife to whilke es giffenn to luke and seke God shalle se hire and passe unto God by contemplation” (I.13.22-24). In other words, Julian’s vision of Mary leads to an enhanced vision of Jesus, leading Julian to conclude that contemplation of Christ is best accomplished by way of Mary—seeing “her”

and passing unto God. This is not the case in the LT where the vision of Mary is expanded, but only in expounding upon the proper reasons for seeking a vision of the Virgin: next to Jesus she is the “highest joy that I might shewe the” (11.25.5), and upon the proper expectations for a vision of Mary: “But hereof am I not lerned to long to see her bodely presens while I am here, but the vertuse of her blissyd soule” (11.25.15-16). Consequently, the LT’s emphasis is on carefully delimiting the desire for a vision of Mary. Moreover, while the LT mirrors the ST in following the vision of Mary with a more glorified vision of Jesus, that vision appears in a separate chapter (11.26) and is explained in a different context. Rather than learning that a vision of Mary prepares the contemplative for a fuller comprehension of Christ, Julian now learns that “oure soule shalle never have reste tille it come into him” (11.26.2-3). No connection is made between the visions of Christ and Mary, and Mary loses her function as catalyst in the contemplative process.

### *Increase of Male/Masculine Figures*

While the women of Julian’s ST either disappear or lose force in the LT, only one of the ST’s male/masculine figures does not appear in the revision. Not surprisingly, that one erasure is the “man” of “halye kyrke” from whom Julian learns of Saint Cecilia. Other male/masculine figures who appear in the ST remain. These include figures central to Julian’s visions—members of the godhead and the fiend who troubles her by night (each of whom is consistently identified with masculine pronouns and/or descriptors like “father”)—as well as more peripheral figures including Adam, David, Peter, Paul, Thomas of India, Gabriel, and a generic king. Additionally, two men known personally to Julian (besides the “man” of holy church) appear in the ST: the curate who brings the cross which functions as a meditative focal point for Julian’s visions, as well as the “religiouse person” who laughs but then sobers, making Julian feel ashamed when she describes her visions as ravings (1.21.6-11). These men also appear in the LT. Extending this male/masculine presence are the LT’s additions: “clarkes” (Watson and Jenkins, 11.80.18), the lord and servant of Julian’s parable, as well as Pilate, Saint Denis of France, and Saint John of Beverley as additional sinners. No



women are added to the LT. Thus, while the presence of women shrinks in the LT, the presence of male/masculine figures grows.

While the most important expansions of male/masculine figures in the LT are, of course, Jesus as mother and the parable of the lord and servant (both arguably androgynous, an issue to be addressed shortly), except for these figures and John of Beverley, surprisingly little has been written about the men of Julian's texts. Liz Herbert McAvoy makes the important observation that the *Showings* blame Adam rather than Eve for the fall of humanity, seeing this choice as "wholly in keeping with Julian's positive, indeed celebratory, treatment of the female."<sup>18</sup> This claim is certainly convincing in relation to Julian's ST if we read it as the work of a woman actively interested in and influenced by the lives of women, but Julian's choice is less meaningful in the context of a LT which seeks to articulate a universalized, genderless Christianity.

### *Saint John of Beverley*

As observed with the disappearance of references to women, the LT's "universality" surfaces as the explanation for including Saint John of Beverley in the revisions, and even though his inclusion is related to sin, with Julian explaining that John stumbled spiritually but was raised even higher afterward through contrition and grace, his presence is usually noted in relation to Cecilia's absence.<sup>19</sup> This connection underscores the recognition among scholars that Julian's LT does not simply erase references to women, it fills the gaps with men. According to critics, however, that masculine substitution indicates Julian's move beyond the personal toward a more self-assured, generalized authorship. But as Paul Reichardt points out, Julian shared a number of personal details with John of Beverley, including his feast day's coincidence with her final vision, his own struggle with shame and doubt, and the fact that three of his five miracles cured serious illnesses, two of which were similar to Julian's.<sup>20</sup> These points of comparison—as well as the persistence of men known personally by Julian—contradict the argument that Julian included additional male figures in her revision in order to universalize and depersonalize her text, and once again we are faced with a semantic and hermeneutic question: what does the term "universal" mean? If used to mean the opposite of "singular" or individual, it is unclear how St.

John of Beverley is less singular than St. Cecilia, how a male curate is less individual than a female friend, or how Adam is less singular than Eve. As applied to the figures discussed thus far, then, the term “universal” appears to have less to do with generality than with masculinity. Claims that the removed references to women are insignificant ignore the active role of women in the text and do not explain their removal, but assertions that they were removed to universalize the text are equally unconvincing considering the very different treatment afforded the textual references to singular and even personally familiar men.

### *Parable of the Lord and Servant*

A claim that Julian’s revisions preserve or bolster a male/masculine presence while effacing a female/feminine presence must contend with the LT’s most famous figures, however, for while the parable’s lord and servant and the maternal Jesus are described as male, they are held to be feminine, with their androgyny contributing to the universality of the LT. As mentioned, the Jesus as mother passages and the parable of the lord and servant dominate not only the revised text itself but criticism of those revisions as well. The prevailing attitude toward the figures of Julian’s parable claims that the lord and servant allegorically reiterate her articulation of Jesus as mother. According to this view, Julian feminizes the lord and servant in order to demonstrate the kinder, gentler side of God as a motherly ruler who lets his servant fall only to learn of his/her mercy. Likewise, the servant is held to be feminine in his willingness to wait upon the lord in humility and meekness, desiring only to do the lord’s will.<sup>21</sup> One author sees the parable not only as an explication of Jesus as mother but also as an expansion or replacement of Julian’s own mother’s role in the ST.<sup>22</sup> Again, the criticism recognizes that the male figures of the LT in some sense have taken the place of the ST’s women, but those male figures are deemed feminine and thus suitable representatives of Julian’s universal theology. Admittedly, Julian makes the explicit point in her parable that the servant represents all of humanity: “The servant that stode before him, I understode that he was shewed for Adam: that is to sey one man was shewed that time and his falling to make thereby to be understonde how God beholdeth alle manne and his falling” (II.51.86-88). The servant’s femininity, though, is

harder to find, for Julian explicitly describes the servant as a masculine laborer, performing the work assigned to Adam/men after the fall, to “delve and dike and swinke and swete and turne the erth up and down” (11.51.164–65).<sup>23</sup> In fact, if one examines the list of pains suffered by the servant—bruising, clumsiness, weakness, blindness, inability to rise, isolation, and lying in a narrow place—all but bruising can be related to Julian’s own suffering (of which less detail is given in the LT), making the servant a masculine substitute for the author’s own physical experience as a woman, continuing the trend of replacing the text’s female/feminine experience with male/masculine.

### *Jesus as Mother*

While the servant’s implied gender is certainly debatable, Julian does suggest that the parable’s lord is meant to embody feminine traits. Focusing on the lord’s mercy and abiding love for his servant, the parable contrasts this loving lord with a more familiar angry, fatherly God. Moreover, immediately following her explication of the parable, the fifty-second chapter begins, “And thus I saw that God enjoyeth that he is our fader, and God enjoyeth that he is our moder” (11.52.1–2). Julian proceeds to elaborate her understanding of Jesus as mother as the text progresses, building from the idea that we are enclosed in God—an idea that she mentions briefly in the ST—to an explicit delineation of God’s maternity in chapter sixty. Overwhelmingly, critical response to Julian’s Jesus as mother passages finds that the feminized Jesus increases the value of female experience by raising that experience to the divine realm. Accordingly, a maternal Jesus is thought to displace binary sexual differences in an androgynous, deified mother-father-man-woman. Furthermore, this feminine God is held to challenge medieval denigration of female sexuality, for as one author claims, Julian’s Jesus is representative of “a gender-neutral sensuality, but more specifically of woman’s sensuality; moreover the redemption she explores here, while a redemption of all mankind, is especially redemptive of women.”<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Julian’s LT, which erases women and replaces them with male/androgynous figures in the name of universality, is in actuality primarily concerned with women.

Not all critics are convinced that the Jesus as mother figure serves

women well in the end, however. A number of studies point out that the medieval maternal Jesus was not transgressive, but rather an orthodox concept, that the feminized godhead was typically deployed during moments of renewed emphasis on gender roles and limitations.<sup>25</sup> Several authors note that Julian consistently refers to the maternal Jesus with masculine pronouns, countering any understanding of God as female, and Andrew Sprung points out that Julian's theology of divine motherhood is constructed through contrast between earthly and heavenly mothers, reflecting "Julian's intense awareness of the limitations of earthly nurturance."<sup>26</sup> In her study of matriarchal traditions both Christian and non-Christian, Cynthia Eller notes that female figures of divinity in general are most often "distinguished from human women, and the differences between the two repeatedly emphasized . . . [accentuating] what womanhood is *not*' as often as they reflect a culture's notion of what women are."<sup>27</sup> To recognize just what earthly mothers are *not* in contrast to Jesus' maternity, one has only to turn to a series of short passages in chapter sixty which describe the disparity between Jesus as mother and the mortal variety:

The moders service is nerest, rediest and sekerest: nerest for it is most of kind; rediest for it is most of love; and sekerest for it is most of trewth. This office ne might nor coude never none done to the full but he alone. We wit that alle oure moders bere us to paine and to dying. A, what is that? But oure very moder Jhesu, he alone bereth us to joye and to endlesse leving. . . . The moder may geve her childe sucke her milke, but oure precious moder Jhesu, he may fede us with himselfe, and doth full curtesly and full tenderly with the blessed sacrament that is precious fode of very life. . . . The moder may ley her childe tenderly to her brest. But oure tender mother Jhesu, he may homely lede us into his blessed brest by his swet, open side, and shewe us therein perty of the godhed and the joyes of heven. . . . This fair lovely worde, "moder," it is so swete and so kinde in itselfe that it may not verely be saide of none, ne to none, but of him and to him that is very mother of life and of alle (II.60.12-41).

The message here is clear. The office of mother, as redefined by Julian, is unavailable to all but Jesus. Female mothers, who bear their children to death and suffering and can only feed them with their bodies, are an inferior subcategory that is, as described by Watson and Jenkins, “only a shadow of” true or “very” motherhood which is moved beyond the reach of women, including even the mother of God herself.<sup>28</sup> That the distinction here is not simply between mortal and divine is also made clear in the closing paragraphs of chapter sixty-one as well as in the following two chapters. In these portions of the *Showings*, immediately following the redefinition of true maternity to exclude women, that definition is expanded to include “oure moder holy church, that is Crist Jhesu” (II.61.52), and the function of true motherhood is specified as Jesus and/as Holy Church working in concert to raise all of humanity “up to oure faders blisse” (II.63.38). In reference to this portion of the text, Arlette Zinck argues that Julian’s desire for orthodoxy leads her to “reduce God-as-mother to an intermediate and preparatory role. Jesus only functions as mother until he can elevate his children to the point where they are capable of reaching God the Father. . . . Ultimately, there is no inherent value in the mothering role beyond this preparation for the masculine goal.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the feminine is still in a subordinate position to the masculine, and women are arguably worse off than they started, serving as a negative template for Jesus’s maternity.

### “*Swilge Stinking Mire*”

This contrast between mortal mothers and the masculine maternal divine is rendered even more unflattering for women in another of the gendered images added to the LT—that of the “swilge stinking mire” (II.64.25), translated by Colledge and Walsh as a “pit stinking of mud” (623). Following the passages which relate mother Jesus’s role in raising humanity to the father, Julian describes “a body lyeng on the erth, which body shewde hevye and feerfulle” (II.64.24-25). Out of this body springs a “fulle fair creature, a litille child” (II.64.26). Julian explains that the “swilge of the body” represents “oure dedely flesh” while the child is meant to reflect “the puerneesse of oure soule” (II.64.28-30). Colledge and Walsh relate Julian’s description to medieval representations of death, offering the example of a twelfth-century illustration in which a

naked child emerges from the mouth of a young woman to join welcoming angels. Importantly, such illustrations underscore the LT's equation of "dedely flesh" with the female body, a female body that appears as a "heavy," prostrate "pit" giving birth to a "litille childd."<sup>30</sup> In fact, two of the LT manuscripts prefer the term "bolnehede" (swelling) to "swilge,"<sup>31</sup> with both terms recalling earlier references to Jesus and Adam being born from "the slade [valley] of this wreched worlde. . . . the slade of the maidens wombe, which was the fairest doughter of Adam" (II.51.188-90). Likewise, Julian's astonishment that the soul can be connected to the "pit stinking of mud" echoes her amazement at Jesus's willingness to fall "full lowe in the maidens wombe" (II.51.206). Consistently, "earthly" motherhood—even that of the virgin mother—equates to degradation, a bodiliness that is less sanctified by than repeatedly displaced by the maternal Jesus.

### *Jesus as Nurse*

Julian underscores her point that Jesus is *not* like mortal mothers when she relates that the "swet, gracious handes of oure moder be redy and diligent a bout us. For he, in alle this werking useth the very office of a kinde nurse, that hath not elles to done but to entende about the salvation of her childe" (II.61.55-57). Now we may cheer for the woman with sufficient resources to hire a professional caretaker for her child, freeing herself from the biological and social functions of motherhood to pursue other interests, but here the implied contrasting earthly mother is found lacking—or rather surfeiting—in the demands on her time. This mother is guilty of having too much to do, of not caring enough, while Jesus as mother can fully devote himself to his children. Jesus as nurse is a professional mother, a mother by choice and intent rather than mere accident of biology. Again, we might find this prospect encouraging in that it aligns motherhood with specific attitudes and actions rather than female biology, but we must remember that Jesus's maternity is explicitly denied to all but him while the alternative—mortal motherhood—is explicitly attributed to women and the vain labor of their bodies. Once again, the contrast between Jesus as mother/nurse and the physical, mortal, female mother proves the inherent inadequacy of women through their maternal lack, absence, and failure.

Femaleness is figured as lack throughout the LT of Julian's *Showings*. From the loss of Julian's female identity and that of her mother, her friend, and her inspiration St. Cecilia, to the reduced importance of Mary's role, to the lack made apparent in the contrast between earthly mothers and Jesus as mother, women make their presence in the revised text as a palimpsestic absence—a stinking pit. One final addition to the LT that carries feminine connotations—Julian's reference to the Veronica or Vernacle—will suggest the signifying process by which the LT arrives at female absence and lack by appropriating female agency and subjectivity for the patriarchy.

### *The Vernacle, Signifying Female Absence*

Early in the LT, Julian refers to “the holy vernacle of Rome” in her second revelation when she describes the changing appearance of Christ's face from foul to fair and back again (11.10.30-31). “Vernacle” is the name for the image of Christ's face appearing on the sudarium, a handkerchief believed to have been touched to Jesus's face as he carried the cross to his crucifixion. The Vernacle gets its name from Veronica, the woman purported to have wiped Christ's face in a gesture of compassion and thus partially responsible via her act for the existence of the holy relic. Veronica's story is apocryphal; however, her name is also identified with a woman from the Gospels known as the “hemhorissa,” a woman whose twelve-year bloody issue was cured when she touched Jesus's robe with faith sufficient to be healed. The hemhorissa is first called Berenice in manuscripts of the fourth century, “Berenice” being the Macedonian equivalent of the Greek “pherenike,” meaning “bearer of victory,” later latinized to the Roman “Veronica.” Legends of the Vernacle or Veronica conflated the two women and attributed the name of Berenice—Veronica—to the image on the sudarium. By Julian of Norwich's time, though, a process of reverse etymology had already begun, a process which claimed that rather than taking its name from the legendary woman whose acts of faith and compassion helped to create it, the Vernacle actually derived its name from the Latin “vera icon” or true image. Explained in this way, the apocryphal woman Veronica was believed to have been named for her association with the relic rather than the other way around.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the woman Veronica is transformed from subject to

object, from “bearer of victory” to “vera icon,” and as object her relation to the relic that bears her name is reduced from necessary to incidental.

This transformation from subjectivity to objectivity is the same process that we see occurring throughout the LT of Julian’s *Showings* in its depiction of women, particularly mothers. The mothers who appear in Julian’s ST are physical and female. Julian’s mother appears at her bedside, closing her daughter’s eyes when she thinks she has died, the mother’s grief serving as the catalyst for Julian’s understanding of Mary’s grief and the role of suffering in her revelations. Mary, too, appears as a very human mother in the ST, with Julian specifically seeking a bodily vision of the mother of God as she conceived and grieved for her son. In the LT, Julian’s mother has vanished, Julian has learned that she is not to seek a bodily vision of the Virgin Mother, and, as Brad Peters writes, Mary’s feminine body disappears, replaced by her maternal son.<sup>33</sup> Like the name Veronica, the name “Mother” is reassigned, re-signed, or resigned to the patriarchy, divorcing the name from its physical, female origins with a snip of the semiotic umbilical cord. In his rarified, masculinized manifestation, mother Jesus is the lily white spirit that bears no resemblance to its stinking fleshy incubator. Nancy Warren refers to such an appropriation of maternity by and for ecclesiastical figures as a “fantastic reprocessing of motherhood” which allows the celibate male to reproduce and renders women unnecessary. Warren argues that when maternity is made spiritual, the role of women is not improved but reduced as the paternal and textual replace the maternal and physical.<sup>34</sup>

One might argue that replacing the maternal and physical with the paternal and textual is exactly what Julian intended to accomplish with her revision. Such an explanation would account for the disappearance of women and the addition of men, as well as the inclusion of the lord, servant, and maternal God whose metaphorical mercy and suffering take the place of physical mothers and physical suffering. Even the LT’s prefatory outline and chapter headings, as well as details like its preference for feminine pronouns for “soul” (the ST’s pronouns are neutral) but masculine pronouns for Jesus as mother, point to concern for Latin-trained clerical textuality. These revisions support a preoccupation with the paternal and the textual, meaning that they are preoccupied with gender, yet the attitude that goes almost entirely unchallenged among



criticism finds that Julian's LT transcends sexual difference, dissolving and resolving gender and sexual binaries in a universalized vision of humanity.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, Julian improves her text by moving from her own specific, personal, female experience toward a more general, androgynous understanding of the visions.

*“Personal” vs. “Universal”*

The Short Text-as-personal, Long Text-as-universal argument for explaining Julian's gendered revisions and for preferring the LT is problematic for several reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, it is not clear from Julian scholarship what is meant by the terms “personal” and “universal.” Very often in the criticism, “personal” appears to signify female/feminine while “universal” signifies male/masculine. Second, if we adopt Julian's own terms “singular” and “general” as synonyms for “personal” and “universal,” it is still not clear how some of the LT's expansions and omissions relate to singularity or generality; e.g., how is a Virgin mother of restricted access and influence more general than one of fewer restrictions and more influence? Third, and most importantly, identifying the ST as “personal” and the LT as “universal” mistakenly sets these two terms and texts against each other as if they represent concepts that are binary opposites. This is not the case. Repeatedly, throughout *both* texts, Julian reminds her readers that her vision and the learning she gleans from it are meant “generalye . . . in comforthe of us alle” (1.6.6-7). In fact, the entirety of chapter six in the ST addresses the issue of singularity and generality. In this chapter Julian underscores that her visions are meant for her “evencristene,” that her experience will mean nothing unless it leads her and each person who sees and hears it to “love God the better,” precisely because in loving God one learns of God's love for all and thus becomes united “in anehede of charite with alle mine evencristende” (1.6.1,11,20). “Anehede” is an important concept for Julian, and in this passage she further defines it by saying that “if anye man or woman departe his love fra any of his evencristen, he loves right nought, for he loves nought alle” (1.6.23-24). The “oneness” of Christian charity appears to be an all or nothing, but importantly not an all or one, proposition. In fact, a person's ability to unite with others

depends upon that person first learning to love one—one's self, with love of self, like love of others, only possible by first learning of God's love.

While chapter six outlines Julian's notion of "oneness" as the individual uniting with all humankind through a knowledge of God's love for all individuals, the entire Short Text demonstrates or performs that concept through the interplay of singular and general, individual and community, self and others. As discussed earlier, Julian's visions are not simply self-generated, nor are they imposed on her by divine forces. Instead, her desire to commune with God is born from her interaction with others, beginning when she learns from a man of Holy Church of a woman named Cecilia. As illustrated in the following descriptions, the entire series of visions outlined in the ST follows this pattern of contact with others followed by movement inward to contemplate and ultimately commune with the divine, leading in turn outward, to an improved understanding of the "oneness" of humanity: Julian's curate sets a cross before her for comfort during her physical suffering, and meditation upon that cross leads Julian to an increased understanding of Christ's suffering "for me" and for "alle creatures" (1.3.14,23); the individuals at Julian's bedside laugh in response to her own laughter which makes Julian consider the fiend's powerlessness in the face of God's love and wish that her "evencristene hadde sene as I saw" (1.8.45); Julian's mother, believing her daughter to be dead, closes her eyes, leading Julian to a vision of Mary's compassion for her son and the "aninge betwyx Criste and us" (1.10.44); Julian learns of God's compassion for herself as a sinner which leads her to think of her friend but then, as related earlier, to be "answerde in my reson, als it ware be a frendfulle meen: 'Take it generally, and behalde the curtuysy of thy lorde God as he shewes it to the. For it is mare worshippe to God to behalde him in alle than in any specielle thinge'" (1.16.15-17). This pattern continues with the priest whose response to Julian's disbelief leads directly to her temptation by the devil and subsequent lessons about trusting herself and God. There is no discord here between the individual and the collective, the singular and the general. On the contrary, understanding God's love on the individual level leads to understanding that same love on a cosmic scale. More than transcending the personal, Julian's visions explicate the importance of being able to see the many in one and the one in many:

“What may make me mare to luff mine evencristen than to see in God that he loves all . . . as it ware alle a saulle?” (I.17.6-7). In fact, we have some indication that Julian achieves the transcendent ability to see others in herself and herself in others during her encounters with the devil. In Julian’s initial struggle, she finds comfort from those who stand by and wet her temples. When the fiend returns, she trusts in God’s message that she “schalle nought be overcomen” and comforts herself: “I triste besely in God and comforthede my saule with bodely speche, as I schulde hafe done to anothere person than myselfe that hadde so bene travailede” (I.22.23-24 and 23.7-9). The examples of her companions’ and of God’s love for Julian have led her to treat herself as she would treat another, turning the golden rule’s straight line into a circle.

The tension between the singular and the general in Julian’s *Showings* is not one in which two opposing forces pull against each other; rather, it is a tension of interdependence, of learning to see the two concepts as one—a “onehood” of many. The final sentence of the ST underlines this symbiosis of self and others through God’s love: “For God wille ever that we be sekere in luffe, and pesabile and ristefulle as he is to us. And right so of the same condition as he is to us, so wille he that we be to oure-selfe and to oure evencristen” (I.25.32-34). The self is not the enemy to be overcome or surrendered through unity with the larger community. The self is the vehicle for learning of God’s love and thus of charity for all. Nor does the LT negate this relationship. Julian’s insistence that her visions and text are meant for all, as well as her lessons of “onehood” through charity persist. In fact, the ST’s seemingly incongruous statement that one should “forgettande, if he might, alle creatures” in order to focus on God’s love (I.20.36) transforms in revision to reflect the *Showings*’ emphasis on the unity of all individuals through that love. The LT’s change reads, “the charite of God maketh in us such a unitye that when it is truly seen, no man can parte themselfe from other” (II.65.15-16). Rather than forgetting others, we should become one with them.

While both texts present the synthesis of “one” and “onehood,” the LT’s depiction of this dialectical process is, however, markedly different from that of the ST. In her earlier version, Julian’s interactions with individuals both present and remembered structure her explication. Priests, teachers, friends, caretakers, parents—men, women, even a

child appear, providing the warp for the tapestry of Julian's vision. In the longer version some of these individuals, most noticeably the women, fade. Strikingly, the ST's universality or generality, a Christian community of very real individuals unified in their diversity, gives way in the LT to a universality less centered on human relationships, emphasizing instead the interaction between God and human as expressed through the abstracted metaphors of lord and servant and maternal Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Both texts underscore the universality of Julian's visions, but while the LT relies on figurations that arguably perpetuate gender hierarchy, the ST overtly resists social hierarchies, extending the scope of Christian "oneness" to all individuals, even challenging the equation of universality with masculinity when Julian refutes the Pauline injunction against women with her assertion "Botte for I am a woman shulde I therefore leve that I shulde nought telle yowe the goodenes of God?" (1.6.40-41).

## Forces Affecting Julian's Revisions

### *Political Climate*

With classifications of the LT as "universal" and the ST as "personal" not wholly satisfying, how then do we explain Julian's choice to revise her text in favor of abstraction, retaining gender hierarchy and dramatically reducing the presence of female subjectivity in her text in the process? One answer concerns the political context of Julian's compositions, specifically, the less than hospitable attitude toward female authorship at the time Julian composed her texts. As Nicholas Watson argues, the political climate of the late fourteenth century, most notably restrictions imposed by the constitutions of Archbishop Thomas Arundel, may have affected Julian's compositional process, prompting her to distance herself from any claim to authority in the ST and to completely remove references to herself as a woman in the LT.<sup>37</sup> Watson dates the LT's completion to 1410 or later to reflect the influence of Arundel's legislations.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, Kerby-Fulton sees less impact from Arundel's constitutions for Julian's texts and the bulk of vernacular theology, arguing that those laws mostly affected production of bibles. Kerby-Fulton suggests that a greater threat for authors like Julian resulted from an association with vernacular revelatory writings, with that threat perhaps prompting Julian to delete

references to her sexual identity in order to alleviate suspicions associated with the “overtly female visionary mode” of her *ST*.<sup>39</sup> Thus, whether she composed her *LT* in 1393, twenty years after her initial vision as indicated in the text, or later as argued by Watson, Julian may have revised her text in response to perceived political pressure in order to protect her theological vision, as Kerby-Fulton writes, willing to compromise her gender as “the least of the sacrifices before her.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Julian's Personal Status*

In addition to an inhospitable political climate, Julian's personal status—both at the time of her initial vision and when composing the two versions of her text—certainly would have shaped her authorial choices. Lacking external evidence, guesses abound as to whether Julian was a lay or cloistered woman when she fell ill. Some scholars insist that Julian was already an anchorite, perhaps even mature in years in that her vision and writings seem to follow a pattern similar among other female recluses.<sup>41</sup> Citing her reference to God's gratitude for those who serve in their youth, some believe that Julian must have entered a convent early in life, receiving training in Latin and orthodox church doctrine.<sup>42</sup> Others point to the presence of Julian's mother, the curate, and a child, as well as the lack of an identified clerical mentor as evidence that Julian was not yet enclosed at the time of her vision; instead, she may have been a laywoman, possibly a mother who lost a child or a wife who lost a husband, with her visionary experience spurring her decision to become a recluse.<sup>43</sup> Much of the speculation regarding Julian's personal status relates to the question of her education since the *Showings* demonstrate familiarity with biblical and devotional works but also with mystical texts and, as Colledge and Walsh suggest, perhaps even theological works by such figures as Augustine. How a laywoman would have access to this kind of education is uncertain. Perhaps, as suggested by one author, Julian was a gentlewoman with access to an education very similar to that of nuns, or as another points out, Julian may have been self-taught, her statements of illiteracy meant to be taken literally rather than simply rhetorically and her writing evidence that Julian was intelligent enough to acquire her theological training from listening to or speaking with clerics.<sup>44</sup>

While statements about Julian's status at the time of her visions are

highly conjectural, the possibilities must be considered for their potential impact on Julian's composition, particularly her revisions. If, for example, Julian was already mature at the time of her vision, she may have been sufficiently advanced in years when she composed the LT to be in need of substantial assistance. How much control can we assume that she had over her text? Scholars have commented on the structural disruptions caused by inserting the lord and servant parable and the long Jesus as mother sections into the more cohesive ST.<sup>45</sup> The Jesus as mother passage fills up twelve chapters, ten percent of the entire text. Beer even separates this portion of the LT, treating it as an independent composition in her edition titled *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love and The Motherhood of God*. Altogether, the parable of the lord and servant and the Jesus as mother portions make up twenty chapters of the LT, twenty chapters that, unlike the balance of the LT, contain no lines or passages from the ST and thus appear more like independent works than revisions of the shorter version. It is certainly conceivable that in response to the "teching inwardly" that she experienced in the "twenty yere after the time of the shewing" (II.51.73-73) Julian separately wrote down her understanding of those teachings to supplant her initial composition. We have lost early copies of the ST. If Julian produced other explications of her subsequent revelations, those could be lost as well. It is worth considering that the LT in its most comprehensive form represents a compilation of sorts of Julian's life work, with the parable and maternal Jesus passages interpolated within a revised and expanded ST. Moreover, if created late in her life with the help of an amanuensis, LT revisions related to gender might have less to do with Julian's own theology than with someone else's editorial choices. Barry Windcatt raises the possibility that the LT was written by someone other than Julian, possibly a male cleric.<sup>46</sup> Moreover variations in the extant LT manuscripts indicate editorial intervention throughout the history of Julian's *Showings*, interventions that could have begun during Julian's lifetime and that do not preclude her authorship.

Seeing the LT as a compilation or summary of Julian's career as a visionary and teacher provides one set of explanations for its revisions related to Julian's personal status. Another compelling possibility surfaces if we consider that Julian may have been a laywoman at the time

of her initial vision. As noted, the presence of her mother, a curate, and a child, along with Julian's own statement of illiteracy, suggest that she had not yet entered the anchorhold or even the cloister. If this was the case, as Vincent Gillespie writes, it is possible that the *ST* was "produced in circumstances where *probatio* techniques were being employed, perhaps as part of the inquisition procedures prior to her enclosure in the cell at St. Julian's church."<sup>47</sup> Julian's status as a laywoman at the time of her vision would consequently offer the exciting and rare opportunity to witness in her writing the religious sensibility of a woman outside the formal training of the church. We have a good number of texts written by abbesses and nuns, women educated within the bounds of church doctrine and supervision, but how did laywomen perceive their relationships with Jesus, Mary, even Satan? How did laywomen understand the principle of election or the nature of sin? Convinced that Julian was formally trained in rhetoric and theology, Colledge and Walsh explain away some of the *ST*'s problematic passages as oversights, pointing out that she corrects herself in the *LT* or claiming that the Amherst manuscript is corrupt. These passages relate to Julian's wish for death, her misuse of theological terms, the nature of God's grace, qualification for election or "safety," the quality and consequences of sin, purgatory, and so on—all serious doctrinal issues about which Julian makes observations just skirting orthodoxy.<sup>48</sup> If we begin from the assumption that Julian was "lewed" as she claims, rather than making apologies for her doctrinal oversights, we might examine those statements to better understand how a layperson interpreted church doctrine in her own private application. Furthermore, revisions in the *LT* could then be attributed not only to Julian's personal growth as a woman author but also to the impact of the more formal training she would likely have received as an anchorite. A number of scholars argue that the theological complexity of the *LT* indicates that Julian underwent rigorous study between her initial vision and her final articulation of the *Showings*.<sup>49</sup> Many authors also argue that changes to the *LT* indicate a move toward orthodoxy on Julian's part, with references to controversial issues like painted images, election, and contemplation removed or radically altered.<sup>50</sup>

That the *Showings* move progressively toward orthodoxy is supported by Hugh Kempster's studies of the Westminster manuscript's excerpts.

Compiled in the fifteenth century, the Westminster manuscript appears early in the chronology of existing copies of the *Showings*. In terms of manuscript recension, however, the Westminster text actually contains a highly edited version of Julian's LT. It is believed that the Westminster author was working from a copy of the LT rather than the ST because the Westminster manuscript includes descriptions of Jesus as mother. In light of the discussion thus far, the Westminster author's editorial choices are compelling, for while he/she retains the Jesus as mother figure, the author removes all but one pronominal mention that the text's original author was a woman, omits all mention of sin (one of the most controversial aspects of Julian's text), transforms Mary's presence from semicorporeal mother to what Kempster calls a spiritual "aside," and removes all language of revelation and vision, which had become increasingly sensitive topics in the fifteenth century.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the Westminster manuscript completes the work that Julian begins in her LT revision: removing herself and other women, reducing Mary's role, and softening the rough edges of her radical vision with the rounded, allegorical contours of an orthodox mother Jesus.

Put into the trajectory of an increasingly orthodox text, revisions in the LT related to gender take on a very different character than that which is argued for in the criticism. If we see the LT as the result of many years of supervised contemplation and study, the loss of female agency, the preference for male/androgynous figures, and the consistent equation of the female body with a human physicality which must be overcome indicate concern less with transcending gender difference than with conforming to institutional norms. Even if the male/androgynous figures of the LT are admitted as "universal," that universality is one which assumes male/masculine and female/feminine as unmarked and marked categories respectively and thus fails to challenge notions of gender hierarchy. As Watson writes, Julian's LT "leaves all the cultural structures it confronts intact."<sup>52</sup> At the very least, as Sandra McEntire observes, in her revised version Julian appears compelled to "[veil] her more disconcerting insights under the aura of obedience and humility."<sup>53</sup> Enclosure and its concomitant supervision and instruction could explain Julian's apparent need to modify some of her original insights, including her characterization of women and gender.



### *Visionary Genre(s)*

Related to Julian's status is a third factor to consider when evaluating revisions involving gender in the *Showings*: genre. References to contemplation and the organization of her visions into a graduated process indicate that Julian had some familiarity with mystical texts at the time she composed her ST. As discussed above, many see changes in the LT as evidence that Julian's textual study expanded after writing the ST to include more complex theology. Perhaps as a consequence of her contact with a wider variety of devotional and theological works, when revising her text, Julian chose to reframe her visions in a different genre. Kempster describes the Westminster manuscript version of the *Showings* as a "male didactic" text. In doing so, he distinguishes between two kinds of visionary writing common to the fifteenth century: "The work would either give an edifying narrative account of a visionary experience (usually that of a woman) or it would be more strictly didactic (with a male author)."<sup>54</sup> According to Kempster's classification, Julian's ST takes the form of a female narrative while her LT and the Westminster extracts increasingly conform to the male didactic model.

If we accept these classifications, the ST does indeed borrow elements of the "female" narrative model. Like Hildegard of Bingen, Julian's illness serves as catalyst for her visions, and like Marguerite Porete (whose work *The Mirror of Simple Souls* appears in translation in the Amherst manuscript with the ST), Julian's visions seek union with God as one of his "lovers" by transcending the physical world. Julian's desire to transcend the world and her own body to achieve union with the divine sets her visions in motion, and those visions in which she understands Jesus in bodily, ghostly, as well as verbal manifestations are the focus of the ST. In contrast, the focus of the LT shifts somewhat, for while descriptions of Julian's physical suffering and mystical experience remain, more attention is given to explaining the meaning of Julian's visions than to describing the visions themselves. For example, while the LT adds details to a few of the revelations—likening the blood from Christ's head to the scales of a herring and raindrops coursing over the eaves of a house in revelation one, describing Christ's face in more detail as well as her vision of the seabed in revelation two, and fleshing out her description of Christ's parched body in revelation eight—the great majority of the LT's

additions expound upon the meaning of sin, goodness, prayer, mercy, temptation, gratitude, etc. Watson suggests that some details of the ST (asking for a bodily vision of Mary, inquiring about her friend, offering a glimpse of hell/purgatory) indicate that Julian was familiar with the visionary literature of women and attempted to shape her experience to that form.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, the LT moves away from what is held to be a feminine emphasis on the body toward a “mingling of both experience, the traditional realm of the female mystic, and instruction, usually belonging to male contemplatives,” and as a consequence the text and its author become “almost . . . masculine.”<sup>56</sup> Watson points out that Julian herself was surely cognizant of working within a misogynistic tradition that assigned greater value to male/masculine forms of devotion and writing than those held to be female/feminine.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, the fact that Julian initially chose to frame her visionary experience in the familiar outlines of “female” contemplative literature then later revised her text to conform to a more exegetic and orthodox model should indicate that Julian felt, in the very least, some pressure to favor one model over the other, likely the same kind of pressure that convinced Elisabeth of Schönau in the twelfth century to seek help from her brother Ekbert, a priest, in making her visions appropriate for publication.<sup>58</sup>

### *Reception of Julian and Her Texts*

The hypotheses outlined above relating to genre, Julian’s personal status at the time of her compositions, and the censure of female authors include a few points of commonality: they indicate that gender politics played a key role in motivating and shaping Julian’s revisions of the *Showings*, and they suggest the possibility that Julian a) did not have control over her revisions, b) bowed to patriarchal practices, and/or c) was more concerned with the theological content of her revisions (in terms of issues like sin, mercy, and suffering) than with the implications (in terms of gender) of her articulation of that content. Each of these possibilities conflicts with the image of Julian that has been constructed in criticism of her work; consequently, at stake in assessing the revisions to Julian’s original composition is nothing less than the political and literary reputation of the first woman known to have authored a text in English. In fact, Julian’s reputation as a female visionary and author has

been central to the reception of her texts since the printing of her LT in the seventeenth century, with her identity adopted and adapted by various groups and individuals according to their own ideological perspectives and objectives. For example, Benedictine monk Hugh Paulinus (Serenus) de Cressy, who served as the first editor of the LT in 1670 after converting from Anglican to Roman Catholic orders in 1646, dedicated his edition to Lady Mary Blount, commending the text as meant for “such readers as your self,” partly because the author was female. Perhaps he saw in Julian’s text the example of someone able to reconcile her own experience with orthodoxy, as some readers still find today.<sup>59</sup> In response to Cressy’s edition, however, Edward Stillingfleet, who was to become the Anglican Bishop of Worcester, attacked Julian’s text as an example of Catholic idolatry, claiming that her revelations “lead devout persons in such an unintelligible way, that the highest degree of their perfection is madness.”<sup>60</sup> In 1843, when the Anglican clergyman George Hargreave Parker republished Cressy’s edition, he too wondered about a connection between the revelations and a “fevered imagination,” but counted Julian among a generation able to resist the “worst corruptions of the Romish Church” and usher in the “revival of primitive Christianity at the time of the Reformation.”<sup>61</sup> In 1902, Cressy’s edition of the *Showings* was reprinted by another Anglican convert to Roman Catholicism, Jesuit priest George Tyrrell, who must have found in Julian a kindred thinker in terms of rejecting the concept of eternal suffering, for his own publication on the “Perverved Doctrine” led to his exile and excommunication. In contrast, Anna Maria Reynolds’s 1958 edition of the ST stressed Julian’s rhetoric. Julian’s reputation as a woman of letters continued with the edition by Colledge and Walsh, and finally, the second half of the twentieth century marked the proliferation of criticism claiming Julian as a feminist ahead of her time.

In this brief history of the *Showings*, Julian takes on several different identities: the pious, orthodox yet independent visionary; the heterodox religious reformer; the serious theologian; the skilled literary author; and the feminist. Some of these personas overlap, but all can still be found in criticism generated today. In fact, underlying much of the scholarship devoted to Julian’s texts is an interest in claiming the author’s identity for a particular ideology. For example, David Foss discusses the adoption

of Julian and her work by groups of women seeking ordination to the priesthood.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, studies finding Julian a “foremother of feminist theology” or a “woman ahead of her age,” able to “unshackle herself from the exclusively patriarchal tradition” abound.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, papers given at some of the most recent International Congresses for Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan, have focused on Julian the author and intellectual, discussing Julian’s theology of the trinity, her mnemonic inventiveness, and her conception of the self. Whether Julian is claimed to be feminist, theologian, or secular humanist author, however, because she is the first identifiable female author in English, her sex is central to each of those claims to her identity. Julian’s position of primacy as a woman in the English canon makes it important not only to find her work of historical, religious, and literary significance, but also to find her the model of an exemplary female theologian, an exemplary female reformer, an exemplary female follower of the faith, an exemplary female author. Importantly, the desire to prove Julian’s life and work that of a female paragon requires that the LT be found superior to the ST. To admit otherwise would threaten Julian’s reputation as a model female reformer/author/feminist/theologian. Thus, if Julian is held to embody early feminism, her LT must advance whatever challenges she makes to the patriarchy in the ST; likewise, if Julian is thought to hold her own with theologians of her day, her LT must indicate more complexity and sophistication than the ST, and so forth.

Comparative statements judging the LT superior to the ST proliferate in Julian criticism, and important to the present discussion, the particular language of those comparative statements demonstrates a pattern of gendering the ST feminine and the LT masculine. Some illustrative samples follow (terms are given in pairs of which the first term describes the ST and the second describes the LT): “narrow,” “theologically and rhetorically expanded”; private “diary,” written for “thinkers and writers”; “feminize[d] . . . by heightening the incipient emotionalism,” “adopt[s] a ‘male’ voice”; “informal, experiential, and written in the first person,” “spiritual intellectual appreciation of who God is”; written by a “devout young woman,” written by a “mature thinker”; “autobiographical,” “discursive analysis”; “raw and unvarnished,” “highly ramified ‘finished’ product”; “more immediate and personal,” “more impersonal. . . . a more

'knowing' work"; "provisional," "more sophisticated and adventurous"; marked by "immediacy and physicality" and the "search for conjoint and cognate signifiers"; "defensive," "confident"; the ST is a "pale shadow of the literary accomplishments" of the LT; "squirming," "growing confidence"; "testimony of a singular experience," "book designed for serious thought"; "personal," "authoritative"; the work of a "seer," the work of a "writer"; female "visionary narrative," male "didactic" text and "bold and pioneering work"; "female visionary mode," moves "toward intellectual vision and away from female authorship"; "immediate and personal . . . autobiographical . . . tentative," "authoritative and theologically confident"; "embarrassed," "liberated"; "reporting," "intentional teaching tool"; "private . . . personal psycho-history," "public . . . book"; "a woman's private, fluid, exploratory, struggling, uncompletable mental experience," "fixed, made public, given shape by the masculine editorial voice speaking from its position of clerical authority"; "gaps threaten the coherence," "intricate theological argumentation"; "fragmentary" and "disjointed," treats events like a "film editor"; "story," "history"; marked by "tentativeness and anxiety," "matured"; "participating in the most significant female literary tradition of the Middle Ages," "omit[s] Eve's role entirely and giv[es] Julian's project not merely a general but a cosmic reach"; the "first writing in the English vernacular of which we can be sure that its author was female," "one of the great works of medieval theology in any language by an author of either gender."<sup>64</sup> Judging from these descriptions, one would think that Julian's Short and Long Texts bear little resemblance, despite the fact that the great majority of the ST is reproduced verbatim in the LT.<sup>65</sup>

Most disconcerting about the above list of comparative statements is the fact that the superiority of the LT is attributed to its "masculinity," its "male" voice giving it textual authority as a bona fide book. In contrast, the ST's inferiority is related to its "femininity," with Julian's composition likened to the giddy jottings in a young girl's diary. As noted earlier, gendered categories are assigned to the genres of the short and long versions of the *Showings* as well in that the visionary narrative model associated with the ST is thought to be female or feminine while the more intellectual, didactic model linked with the LT is held to be male or masculine. Admittedly, part of this gendered designation

results from the contention that female visionaries tended to compose their experiences in a more narrative form than did males. Of course this contention does not hold up across the genre of mystical and visionary writing. One need only examine the contents of the Amherst manuscript to see that the texts of its male and female authors and visionaries fail to align into neatly gendered categories. Nor do the categories male/masculine and female/feminine convey a clear sense of how these texts were received by medieval audiences. For example, an assessment of the annotations made to the various texts of the Amherst manuscript reveals that Marguerite Porete's complex and challenging *Mirror of Simple Souls* bears the most annotations by the greatest number of readers, while the fewest annotations appear on the manuscript's shorter works, mostly the work of men. Julian's text has slightly fewer annotations than the other four longer works, but an average number of the annotators comment on her work—and not one of the annotations in the entire manuscript makes note of the sexual identity of any of the texts' authors.<sup>66</sup> In defense of the feminine/masculine genre categories, one could argue that the contents of the entire Amherst manuscript follow the female/feminine model of mystical texts, for as Gillespie writes, the Carthusians, believed responsible for producing the Amherst manuscript, emphasized contemplation within their order and preferred texts that were “as unvarnished and as unmediated as possible.”<sup>67</sup> However, as Maud McInerney notes, such gendered genre identifications are patronizing, “coincid[ing] with efforts to distance [Julian and the LT] from the tradition of female mysticism, characterized as affective, emotive, and irrational.”<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the Carthusians' preference for such “feminine” texts counters the notion that the “masculine” form of mystical writing was held in higher value by medieval readers—even monastic readers. Ultimately, the Amherst manuscript and the question of gendered mystical genres highlight the perennial problem of gendered categories in general: gender is inevitably attached to sex and arranged in hierarchical order. We see this not only in the subordination of feminine mystical narratives to masculine models, but also in Julian's contrasting of mortal female mothers with the maternal Jesus, as well as in the judgment of the “personal” ST with its active female subjects as inferior to the “universal” LT without them.

This essay's discussion of Julian's revisions and reception points to

the conclusion that concern with gender has driven the entire Julian enterprise. We find such a concern in the transformation of the Long Text from a universality of diversity to one of male androgyny that includes women only as essentialized traits adopted by the patriarchy and dependent upon feminine inferiority, in the forces of fourteenth-century gender politics that likely motivated much of Julian's revisions, and in the gender politics that have shaped reception of Julian and her text from her early characterization as "hysterical" to current insistence upon her status as a protofeminist.<sup>69</sup> A great irony of Julian scholarship is that in our attempts to honor our first female English author, we reinforce the very gender categories and hierarchy that we credit her with transcending. Perhaps if we turn our attention from aggrandizing Julian's reputation via elevation of the Long Text (has my own use of these convenient appellations minimized the "short" text?), we may find that there is much to praise in the earlier version and that Julian was, most compellingly, human.

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## END NOTES

1. See Frances Beer, trans., Julian, of Norwich: *Revelations of Divine Love*, translated from *British Library Additional MS 37790*; *The Motherhood of God, an Excerpt*, translated from *British Library MS Sloane 2477*, with introduction and interpretive essay (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 20, and Marleen Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse: A Study of London, British Library, MS Additional 37790* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 102. No consensus exists as to what title should be given to Julian's work. Taking their cue from the opening lines of each version, Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins refer to the Short Text as *A Vision Shown to a Devout Woman* and to the Long Text as *A Revelation of Love, The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins, *Medieval Women* 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). Even though my findings will support Watson and Jenkins's attention to the two texts as separate works, for ease in discussion, I will follow the precedent of Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of

Mediaeval Studies, 1978), by referring to the two versions collectively as the *Showings* and to each version individually as the Short and Long Texts (ST and LT). The dating of the Short and Long Texts will be discussed later, but I will accept the general consensus that the Short Text was written first with the Long Text representing a revision/expansion of that earlier writing. Unfortunately, as the work of Marion Glasscoe and Hugh Kempster has demonstrated, the term “Long Text” ignores the considerable variations among the manuscript and printed manifestations of Julian’s expanded text, giving the impression that we have access to Julian’s revisions in a stable and accessible form. See especially, Marion Glasscoe, “Visions and Revisions: A Further Look at the Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich,” *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 103–20. Again, for ease in discussion, I will use the term “Short Text” to refer to the version of Julian’s vision as it appears in BL Add. 37790, the Amherst manuscript, and the term “Long Text” to refer to those manuscripts that are thought to be copied from Julian’s revised version of the Short Text. Several editions are available of both the Short and Long Texts, most notably Frances Beer’s edition of the Short Text, *Julian of Norwich’s Revelations of Divine Love: The Shorter Version ed. From B.L. Add. MS 37790* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), Marion Glasscoe’s edition of the Long Text, *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), as well as the editions of both by Colledge and Walsh and more recently Watson and Jenkins. While I agree with Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London: Longman, 1993), 220 and “Visions and Revisions,” 119, that the Paris manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Anglais No. 40 (the base text for the Colledge and Walsh edition) shows evidence of orthodox-minded editing and changes to the text’s original dialect, I am also persuaded by Watson and Jenkins’s argument, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, for finding the Paris manuscript more concerned with “accuracy” as well as “rhetorical and logical balance” (39) and thus the choice of base text for their “hybrid” edition (40). I have therefore chosen to take my quotations from the Watson and Jenkins edition which is currently widely available in a format that facilitates cross-referencing. I will, however, reference other editions where applicable.

2. Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism*, 102. See Alexandra Barratt, “How Many Children Had Julian of Norwich? Editions, Translations, and Versions of Her Revelations,” in *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honor of Professor Valerie M. Lagorio*, ed. Anne Clark Bartlett et al. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer), 37; Beer, *The Motherhood of God*, 23; Watson and Jenkins, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 35.



3. See Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), xii; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 302; Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 637-83, 674.

4. Scholars who view the removal of references to women as part of the LT's universal theology will be discussed later. Those who consider the revised details irrelevant include Julia Dietrich, "Women and Authority in the Rhetorical Economy of the Late Middle Ages," in *Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representations*, ed. Hildy Miller and Lillian Bridwell-Bowles (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 29; Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 832; Kate Greenspan, "Autohagiography and Medieval Women's Spiritual Autobiography," in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 216-36, 232.

5. In using the terms "female" and "feminine," I will, whenever possible, use the term "female" to mean a biologically gendered woman, and the term "feminine" to refer to characteristics associated with socially constructed gender (likewise in the case of "male" and "masculine"). Because the two terms often overlap in meaning, particularly in Julian's references to mothers, I will often juxtapose the terms as "female/feminine" to indicate that both meanings are possible. For a helpful overview of Julian scholarship from a feminist perspective, see Nancy Bradley Warren, "Feminist Approaches to Middle English Religious Writing: The Cases of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 5 (2007): 1378-96, doi: 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2007.00487.x.

6. In his essay "Desire for the Past," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 59-97, Nicholas Watson addresses the land mine of competing desires at play in medieval studies, particularly in reference to feminist studies. The issues he addresses will become important to this essay.

7. I. incipit; I.1.36; I.2.22; I.6.35-43; I.10.26; and I.16.13. References to the Short and Long Texts refer to text (I=Short, II=Long), section/chapter, and line in the Watson and Jenkins edition. Watson and Jenkins references hereafter cited in text.

8. For the view that Julian's elision of female gender indicates confidence, see Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999),

76; Dietrich, "Women and Authority," 36; Lynn Staley Johnson, "The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe," *Speculum* 66 (1991): 820-38, 832; Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitution of 1409," *Speculum* 70, no. 4 (1995): 822-64, 852. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt address the complicated issue of female authorship in their introduction to *The History of British Women's Writing*, vol. 1: 700-1500 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); see particularly pages 1 and 8.

9. Diane F. Krantz, *The Life and Text of Julian of Norwich: The Poetics of Enclosure* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 127; Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 302.

10. See, for example, Sandi J. Hubnik, "(Re)constructing the Medieval Recluse: Performative Acts of Virginity and the Writings of Julian of Norwich," *Historian* 67, no. 1 (2005): 43-61, 54; Nicholas Watson, "'Yf women be double naturelly': Remaking 'Woman' in Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love," *Exemplaria* 8, no. 1 (1996): 1-34, 23; and Arlette Zinck, "A Vindication of the Feminine in the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich," in *Sovereign Lady: Essays on Women in Middle English Literature*, ed. Muriel Whitaker (New York: Garland, 1995), 171-87, 183.

11. Susan K. Hagen, "St. Cecilia and St. John of Beverly: Julian of Norwich's Early Model and Late Affirmation," in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1998), 108. For further examples of this view, see Johnson, "Trope of the Scribe," 832; Barry Windeatt, "Julian of Norwich and Her Audience," *Review of English Studies* 28 (1977): 1-17, 13; Zinck, "A Vindication of the Feminine," 172. In an interesting variation of the argument that Cecilia makes the ST too personal, Liz Herbert McAvoy suggests that Cecilia is not female/feminine but rather a part of the "paternal language" of hagiography and thus her removal renders the LT *more* feminine but less personal; "For we be double of God's making': Writing, Gender and the Body," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 166-80, 171.

12. Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 312-15.

13. Jennifer P. Heimmell, "*God is Our Mother*": *Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity* (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1982), 71. For further references to Julian's experience rising out of a female community, see Marie R. Lichtmann, "'God fulfilled my bodye': Body, Self, and God in Julian of Norwich," in Chance, ed., *Gender and Text*

in the *Later Middle Ages*, 263-78, 265; Liz Herbert McAvoy, "The Moders Service': Motherhood as Matrix in Julian of Norwich," *Mystics Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1998): 181-97, 185; Felicity Riddy, "Women talking about the things of God': A Late Medieval Sub-Culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 104-27, 115-16; Lynn Staley, "Julian of Norwich and the Late Fourteenth-Century Crisis of Authority," in *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, ed. David Aers and Lynn Staley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 77-104, 114.

14. See Abbott, *Julian of Norwich*, 66; Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 54; Dietrich, "Women and Authority," 29; Krantz, *Life and Text*, 1; Brad Peters, "A Genre Approach to Julian of Norwich's Epistemology," in McEntire, ed., *Julian of Norwich*, 115-52, 144. McAvoy notes the logic of comparing the suffering of Julian's mother to that of the mother of Jesus but finds Julian's mother "superfluous and she is therefore eradicated" to lift maternity from the level of "narrative" to that of "exegesis," "Julian of Norwich," in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition*, c. 1100-c. 1500, ed. Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden, *Brepols Essays in European Culture* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 195-215, 205.

15. It should be noted, however, that Mary Magdalene was closely associated with the Virgin in East Anglian devotional texts and imagery as a highly gendered figure of sanctity, thus making both women problematic in a text that otherwise excludes women. See Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), esp. 18.

16. Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "Religious Feminism in the Middle Ages: Birgitta of Sweden," in *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars*, ed. Louise D'Arcens and Juanita Feros Ruys, *Making the Middle Ages* 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 299. For similar views of Mary's "disappearance" in the LT, see Paula S. Datsko Barker, "The Motherhood of God in Julian of Norwich's Theology," *The Downside Review* 100.341 (1982): 290-304, 292; Liz Herbert McAvoy, "Julian of Norwich and a Trinity of the Feminine," *Mystics Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2002): 68-77, 72; Edward Peter Nolan, *Cry Out and Write: A Feminine Poetics of Revelation* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 151-55; Peters, "A Genre Approach," 142-46.

17. See especially Børresen, "Religious Feminism," 311 and Watson, "Remaking 'Woman'," 26.

18. Liz Herbert McAvoy, “. . . a purse fulle feyer’: Feminising the Body in Julian of Norwich’s *A Revelation of Love*,” *Leeds Studies in English* 33 (2002): 99–113, 108.

19. See, for example, Windeatt, “Her Audience,” 13 and Hagen, “St. Cecilia and St. John,” 92.

20. Paul F. Reichardt, “Speciall Sainctes’: Julian of Norwich, John of Beverley, and the Chronology of the *Shewings*,” *English Studies* 82, no. 5 (2001): 385–92, 386–90.

21. For discussions of the lord and servant in relation to femininity, see Lichtman, “Body, Self, and God,” 272; Riddy, “Women Talking,” 117; Andrew Sprung, “The Inverted Metaphor: Earthly Mothering as Figura of Divine Love in Julian of Norwich’s *Book of Showings*,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996), 183–99, 195; Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” 25.

22. Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 90–91.

23. Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” 25 and Sandra J. McEntire, “The Likeness of God and the Restoration of Humanity in Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*,” in McEntire, ed., *Julian of Norwich*, 3–33, 17, argue that the servant is described as a woman giving birth when he falls before his lord “walowing and writhing, groning and moning” (II.51.250–51), but the passage clearly states that the servant’s behavior is meant to indicate that Christ “might never rise all mightly fro that time that he was fallen into the maidens wombe, till his body was slaine and dede, he yelding the soule into the faders hand, with alle mankine for whome he was sent” (II.51.251–53). The servant’s writhing represents Christ’s “fall” into the Virgin’s womb, and by extension the fallen, bodily state of humanity. If the servant indicates maternity, it is a maternity to be escaped, with only death bringing an end to the suffering endured in the womb of humanity—by way of Christ’s autodelivery.

24. Elizabeth Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*,” in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 142–67, 157. A sampling of criticism that lauds the gender-transgressive-redemptive maternal Jesus include Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 166; Barker, “The Motherhood of God,” 301–2; Børresen, “Religious Feminism,” 299; Krantz, *Life and Text*, 132; Nolan, *Cry Out and Write*, 193; Riddy, “Women Talking,” 116; Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” 26.

25. For historical background on maternal divinity, including monastic motives for employing such a figuration, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); David B. Foss, "From God as Mother to Priest as Mother: Julian of Norwich and the Movement for the Ordination of Women," *The Downside Review* 104.356 (1986): 214-26, esp. 220-21; and Heimmell, *Christian Feminine Divinity*. For studies that express concern about the effectiveness and/or limitations of the maternal figure for combating patriarchal oppression of women, see David Aers, "The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in Aers and Staley, eds., *Powers of the Holy*, 94; Cherie Bova, "The Writings of Julian of Norwich as Accommodation and Subversion," *Canadian Woman Studies* 17, no. 1 (1997): 22-25; Hubnik, "(Re)constructing the Medieval Recluse," 60; Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), xiv; Hugh Kempster, "Julian of Norwich: The Westminster Text of *A Revelation of Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1997): 177-245, 201; Barry Windeatt, "Julian of Norwich," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 67-81, 78; Zinck, "A Vindication of the Feminine," 182.

26. Sprung, "The Inverted Metaphor," 190-91.

27. Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 104. See also Cynthia Ann Humes "Glorifying the Great Goddess or Great Woman?," in *Women and Goddess Traditions: In Antiquity and Today*, ed. Karen L. King (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 51-52.

28. Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 312. In Glasscoe's edition, which follows the Sloane manuscripts, this passage does include Christ's mother: "This fair lovely word 'moder,' it is so swete and so kind of the self that it may ne verily be seid of none but of him, and to hir that is very moder of him and of all" (98). A comparison of the parallelism in the Paris manuscript ("of none, ne to none, but of him and to him") with that above ("of none but of him, and to hir") demonstrates the rhetorical superiority of the Paris, very likely indicating the "accuracy" of Paris (see note 1 above) and the likelihood that the Sloane's scribe(s) altered the passage to address the diminished presence of the Virgin in the Long Text.

29. Zinck, "A Vindication of the Feminine," 182.

30. See Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 623n33. One could argue that the stinking pit is not necessarily gendered, but if the maternal Jesus and

the writhing servant are thought to be feminine, certainly a maternal body giving birth to a “littile child” is feminine as well.

31. *Ibid.*, 623n36.

32. For historical background of the Vernacle, see Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a “True” Image* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Flora Lewis, “The Veronica: Image, Legend, and Viewer,” in *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1985), 100–106. Carroll Hilles discusses the Vernacle in relation to Julian’s texts in “The Sacred Image and the Healing Touch: The Veronica in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of Love*,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no. 3 (1998): 553–81.

33. Peters, “A Genre Approach,” 146–47. Taking a familiar stance, Peters argues that Mary’s body is not lost entirely but returns through discourse of the maternal Jesus.

34. Nancy Bradley Warren, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 75, 90–91.

35. Expressions of this attitude are numerous. Some noteworthy examples include Aers, “The Humanity of Christ,” 84; Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 108; Heimmel, *Christian Feminine Divinity*, 81; Lichtmann, “Body, Self, and God,” 265; Nolan, *Cry Out and Write*, 193; Riddy, “Women Talking,” 117; Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views,” 159; Sprung, “The Inverted Metaphor,” 196; Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” and “Censorship and Cultural Change,” 851. One dissenting voice is that of Hubnik who finds that the Jesus as mother figure is not subversive, and while it does “not directly address gender differences, Julian’s text employs various gendered metaphors in orthodox ways,” “(Re)constructing the Medieval Recluse,” 60.

36. McAvoy heroically argues that the abject female body reappears in the LT as a feminized male symbolic; however, that symbolic is actually “an extra-Symbolic expression of fully embodied female practices” (“For we be double,” 178). This essay argues that such exertions to preserve female/feminine presence in the LT point to an underlying anxiety over absence driving much of Julian criticism.

37. Watson notes that a large number of texts produced after 1390 included passages justifying authorship like that found in the ST. This observation, coupled with church attitudes toward paintings, leads Watson to date the ST to 1382 at the earliest, removed from Julian’s initial vision

by a decade. See especially “Censorship and Cultural Change,” 849-52, and “Composition,” 664-66. Countering this claim, most scholars find the details of the ST immediate and realistic, indicating the composition’s close proximity to the visionary experience itself, e.g., Beer, *Shorter Version*, 7 and Windeatt, “Julian of Norwich,” 71. While either claim is possible, the nature of Julian’s revisions—removal of realistic details, expansion of explication, and shift toward abstraction and figurative language—along with her claim to have received further understanding in the twenty years following her initial vision make the 1373 and 1393 dates of composition more convincing to this author.

38. Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change,” 852. See also Dietrich, “Women and Authority,” 30.

39. Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 14-15 and 301-3.

40. *Ibid.*, 323.

41. See Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, “Prime of Their Lives: Women and Age, Wisdom and Religious Careers in Northern Europe,” in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Medieval Women 2* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 215-36, 219-20; and Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 34.

42. Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 1.8.54, 1.9.16-17 and 11.14.1-2, 11.14.31-32. Michael J. Wright, “Julian of Norwich’s Early Knowledge of Latin,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 94, no. 1 (1993): 37-45, 37-39; and Windeatt, “Julian of Norwich,” 68.

43. See Krantz, *The Life and Text*, 13; Maud Burnett McInerney, “In the Meydens Womb’: Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure,” in Parsons and Wheeler, eds., *Medieval Mothering*, 157-82, 158 and 164; Brant Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 1986), 31; Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” 16; Watson and Jenkins, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 5; and Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1993), 130 and 160.

44. Riddy, “Women Talking,” 111; Glasscoe, *Games of Faith*, 218. See also Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 18, who claims that Julian may have been too smart to become a nun, perhaps more interested in studying than in the often menial pursuits of cloistered women. The desire among critics to secure Julian’s identity as that of an extraordinarily intelligent and



independent yet obediently orthodox woman is central to the current discussion.

45. See Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 139 and Beer, *The Motherhood of God*, 20-23.

46. Windeatt, "Julian of Norwich," 78-79. Windeatt ultimately rejects the notion that someone other than Julian wrote the LT, claiming that the text is written in Julian's voice. As McAvoy and Watt note, however, acknowledging female authorship need not exclude the notion of collaboration; in fact, collaboration should be seen as an important form of female authorship in the Middle Ages, *History of British Women Writers*, 3-4.

47. Vincent Gillespie, "Dial M for Mystic: Mystical Texts in the Library of Syon Abbey and the Spirituality of the Syon Brethren," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition, England, Ireland and Wales: Exeter Symposium VI*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 241-68, 246.

48. See, for example, Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 1.1.37; 1.4.16, 25, 36, and 52; 1.6.26, and 33; 1.11.1; 1.15.12; 1.18.10; 1.19.55 and corresponding notes.

49. See, for example, Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience*, 10; Watson and Jenkins, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 10; Gillespie, "Dial M for Mystic," 246.

50. Julian refers to the church's stance on paintings in section one (1.1.9-12). For discussion of the problem of orthodoxy and paintings see Watson, "Composition," 664, and a rebuttal by Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 320-21. Julian removes reference to "chosene saules" from her revision (1.6.28-29, 1.8.37 and 11.9.7-9, 11.13.9); see also Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 221n33. For discussion of her concept of election, see Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 253-60. Julian makes numerous references to contemplation in the ST. For instance, Julian describes "thre noughtes" of which it is necessary for "ilke man and woman to hafe knowinge that desires to lyve contemplatifely" (1.4.36-38). Numerically outlining the stages of apophaticism is common to contemplative texts like those in the Amherst manuscript, but in the LT, Julian revises this passage to read, "Of this nedeth us to haue knowinge" (11.5.20). See also her changes to the thirteenth chapter mentioned earlier (1.13.22-24 and 11.26.1-4). For comment on changes to her interest in contemplation, see Glasscoe, *Games of Faith*, 218 and Beer, *Shorter Version*, 24. Other references to Julian's move toward orthodoxy include Dietrich, "Women and Authority," 30; McAvoy, "Julian of Norwich," in *Medieval Holy Women*, 201; and Kempster, "Julian of Norwich," 191.



51. Hugh Kempster, "A Question of Audience: The Westminster Text and Fifteenth-Century Reception of Julian of Norwich," in McEntire, ed., *Julian of Norwich*, 257-89, 273-76; see also Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 14 and 303.

52. Watson, "Remaking 'Woman,'" 33.

53. McEntire, "Likeness of God," 27. For other authors who comment on the veiled or masked nature of Julian's subversive ideas, see Krantz, *The Life and Text*, 127; Bova, "Accommodation and Subversion"; Laurie A. Finke, "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision," in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. Ulrike Wiethaus (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 28-44, 35; Heimmel, *Christian Feminine Divinity*, 101; Hubnik, "(Re)constructing the Medieval Recluse," 61; Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views," 159; Staley, *Dissenting Fictions*, 3 and 30.

54. Kempster, "Julian of Norwich," 187; Kempster, "A Question of Audience," 270.

55. Watson, "Composition," 649.

56. Marta Cobb, "Orthodox Editing: Medieval Versions of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Leeds Studies in English* 35 (2004): 57-79, 67. Other studies that discuss the *Showings* and other mystical texts in terms of feminine/masculine genres include Finke, "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision," 43-44; McNerny, "Poetics of Enclosure," 165; Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, 301; Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views," 154; and Wright, "Early Knowledge of Latin," 42.

57. Watson, "Remaking 'Woman,'" 6-7.

58. See Mulder-Bakker's "The Prime of Their Lives." According to Mulder-Bakker, Elisabeth was derided for her visions until her brother reworked them into a more scholarly, sermon-like form. As this author writes, the brother's concerns "seem to reflect an engagement in academic study, in contrast to the concerns of the earlier visions that seem to arise more directly from the liturgical life of the divine office and veneration of the saints" (227).

59. Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross, "'With meekness aske perseverantly': On Reading Julian of Norwich," *Mystics Quarterly* 30 (2004): 125-40, 134, find Julian both "intelligently forthright in her questioning and thoughtfully obedient (but by no means cowed) in her responses to ecclesiastical authority." For discussion of the editorial history and reception of the

*Showings* from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, see Barratt, “How Many Children”; Watson and Jenkins, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, especially 14-24 and 448-53; and the essays in *Julian of Norwich’s Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, ed. Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

60. Edward Stillingfleet, *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome and the Danger of Salvation in the Communion of It* (London: Robert White, 1671), 343.

61. George Hargreave Parker, ed., *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love* (London: S. Clarke, 1843), vii.

62. Foss, “Movement for the Ordination of Women,” 214-26.

63. Børresen, “Religious Feminism,” 300; Heimmel, *Christian Feminine Divinity*, 79; Lichtmann, “Body, Self, and God,” 263. For other assessments of Julian as a feminist, see Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 130 and 166; Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 76; Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views,” 159; Watson, “Remaking ‘Woman,’” 15.

64. Abbott, *Julian of Norwich*, 15; Staley, “Crisis of Authority,” 139 and 131; *ibid.*, 139 and 173; Clarissa Atkinson, “Female Sanctity in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. and trans. Lynn Staley (New York: Norton, 2001) 225-36, 234; Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 14; *ibid.*, 139; Gillespie, “Dial M for Mystic,” 246; *ibid.* 246; Vincent Gillespie, “Strange Images of Death; The Passion in Later Medieval English Devotional and Mystical Writing,” in *Zeit, Tod und Ewigkeit in der Renaissance Literatur*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 117, vol. 1 (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), 111-59, 131-32; *ibid.*, 133; Glasscoe, *Games of Faith*, 218; Heimmel, *Christian Feminine Divinity*, 101; Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, xii and xi.; Johnson, “Trope of the Scribe,” 830 and 831; Johnson, *ibid.*, 832; *ibid.*, 833; Kempster, “Julian of Norwich,” 187; Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, 301; McAvoy, “Feminising the Body,” 100; McEntire, “Likeness of God,” 10 and 3; Hagen, “St. Cecilia and St. John,” 107; Felicity Riddy, “Julian of Norwich and Self-Textualization,” in *Editing Women: Papers given at the Thirty First annual Conference on Editorial Problems*, ed. Ann M. Hutchison (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 101-24, 103; Riddy, “Self-Textualization,” 118-19; Nicholas Watson, “Julian of Norwich,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women’s Writing*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 210-21, 217 and 214-15; Windeatt, “Julian of Norwich,” 73; Barry Windeatt, “Julian’s Second Thoughts: The Long Text Tradition,” in

McAvoy, *Companion to Julian of Norwich*, 101-15, 102; McAvoy, *Companion to Julian of Norwich*, 2 and 3; Amy Appleford, "Julian of Norwich," in McAvoy and Watt, *History of British Women's Writing, 700-1500*, 226 and 227; Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), x.

65. Watson and Jenkins claim that less than ten percent of the original vision is omitted in the LT, less than five percent is rewritten, while more than eighty percent remains unchanged, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 35.

66. Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism*, 283-93 and its appendix, 321-42 provides a thorough description of the Amherst manuscript annotations.

67. "Dial M for Mystic," 247. Cré also discusses the Carthusian context of the Amherst manuscript, finding the manuscript was meant for a male audience and focuses on the solitary, contemplative life, but also emphasizing the manuscript's specialized nature, *ibid.*, 31-41 and 103.

68. McInerny, "Poetics of Enclosure," 165.

69. See Watson and Jenkins, *Writings of Julian of Norwich*, 453.