“I RECEIVED AN INWARD SHOWING OF TRUTH”

by

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ABSTRACT

SALLY JO MESIBOV. "I RECEIVED AN INWARD SHOWING OF TRUTH". (Under the direction of DR. William Sherman)

This paper analyzes the changes in language between two texts, written by Julian of Norwich, that reportedly describe the same religious vision occurring in the fourteenth century. My analysis demonstrates that the changes in language between the two texts, especially corporeal language, reveal a shift in Julian of Norwich's represented perceptions and self-presentation through her expanded focus on themes of suffering, mercy, inwardness, and enclosure.

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Introduction

Julian of Norwich was a woman living in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who wrote two texts in which she presents to her readers as descriptions of what she saw, heard, felt, smelled, and understood both by reason and by spiritual insight during a vision that occurred in the midst of an agonizing bodily illness. These two texts were written approximately twenty years apart and contain differences in language that document an expansion of Julian's understanding of her vision, and thus of her self-presentation. In this thesis I use a critical literary reading to analyze Julian of Norwich's texts, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* (the short text—ST) and *A Revelation of Divine Love* (the long text—LT)[1] to reveal how the shifts in language—especially corporeal language and the rhetoric of suffering—from the ST to the LT demonstrate a shift in Julian's represented perceptions and self-presentation. I argue that the shift occurred due to her enclosure in an anchorhold and due to her growing awareness of the suffering of others, which she witnessed in her role as an anchoress during the twenty years between the two texts. Julian wrote about how the suffering body was not something from which we need salvation, but it was instead a necessary part of the human experience and part of the mercy of the Divine. Furthermore, for Julian, the body or "sensory being" was necessary for her to go deeper to reach her "essential being," and ultimately receive an "inward showing of truth." Julian wrote, "[I]t was because my understanding was led within God; that is to say, I received an inward showing of truth."[2] Although Julian was the individual who claimed to have had the experience that led to her visions, she wrote about her visions in a way that presented a

[1] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998). I will be using Elizabeth Spearing's translation of Julian's text from Middle English into everyday modern English when referring to and citing Julian's texts. Spearing's translation strove for accuracy to the original language rather than cliché language of her own modern time period, and Spearing aimed to keep the sound of a woman's speaking voice.
[2] Ibid, 61 (LT), not present in ST.

lessening of herself, and drew attention to the roles of relationship, social purpose, and interdependence.

Julian's corporeal and visionary language is marked by complex dichotomies of interiors/exteriors, private/social (public), and individual/cosmological, and this simultaneously embodied and transcendent language changed from the ST to the LT. In this thesis, I focus on the language Julian used to explain her vision of what was occurring to her own body as well as her visions of Christ's body, and how she wrote about her conceptions and feelings about what was happening, identifying where there was a shift in Julian's corporeal language, perceptual language, and suffering language. Julian has offered scholars a rare opportunity to study a text that was written once and then rewritten twenty years later. Through careful study of her texts, I draw into relief changes and elaboration from the ST to the LT, as well as how Julian's represented perceptions and self-presentation transformed. A close analysis of the two texts written about the same event, by the same author over a span of years, offers us a chance to examine the development in thinking of an important individual over a period of time. Examining Julian's changes in her corporeal, perceptual, and suffering language from the ST to the LT teaches us that her language reflected her circumstances. In other words, Julian's language was embedded in her social world.

Throughout Julian's texts she described scenes both externally and internally via her physical senses, what she felt emotionally, what she perceived, and what was shown to her through spiritual sight. Julian wrote, "All this blessed teaching of our Lord God was shown to me in three parts: that is, by bodily sight, and by words formed in my understanding, and by spiritual sight."[3] Because Julian did not write much on her personal life other than what she encountered

[3] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 11 (ST), 161 (LT).

during a severe near-death illness, it is important to pay attention to seemingly subtle shifts as well as language changes she made from her ST to her LT in recounting her vision during the illness to gain a clearer understanding of how Julian's interpretation of her vision and self-presentation shifted. Although by the nature of being a longer text the LT will have a higher frequency in use of certain terms, Julian could have expanded her text in any number of ways, so each expansion represented an important choice and demonstrated Julian's method of meaning making and self-presentation expanded between the ST and the LT. For example, her pronouns changed from "I" and "my" to "our" or a complete dropping of any pronoun, implying an expansion from an individual viewpoint to one encompassing a sense of unity. There is also a substantial increase between the ST and the LT in her focus on the themes of enclosure/enclosed, soul, inward, mercy, grace, and suffering. In fact, within the Spearing translation, the word enclosed/enclosure was not present at all in the ST. As I argue, this suggests that her years devoted to spiritual exercise in the anchorhold contributed to a shift in presentation of her pivotal visionary experience. Moreover, in the Spearing translation, Julian's use of the word "inward" went from being written twice in the ST to thirty times in the LT, and its meaning shifted from being used to indicate a personal feeling or a teaching by the Holy Ghost to being used as a way of communicating and uniting with the Divine. Furthermore, in the LT, Julian distinguished in her writing the outward, mortal flesh, from the inward, mysterious, high and blessed state of being, and how the inward part longed to be united with the Divine.[4] Julian wrote, "And here I saw truly that the inward part is master and ruler of the outward one, and does not consider or heed the desire of the flesh, but all the intention and desire of the spirit is set for ever upon being

[4] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 69-70 (LT), not present in ST.

united with our Lord Jesus."[5] Cate Gunn writes, "So turning inwards becomes not an affirmation of individuality but a discovery of commonality and unity with God,"[6] According to Julian's text, unity through inwardness is not only unity with God, but unity with humankind. She wrote, "[T]he love of God unites us to such an extent that . . . no man can separate himself from another,"[7] which implies an expansion of her cosmological viewpoint and the connectedness of all.

Historical Context and The Anchorhold

Julian of Norwich was born in 1342, and in her thirtieth year of life, according to her texts, suffered a grave illness, during which she received a vision of Christ's Passion as well as other profound insights from the Divine. In her writing, Julian claimed to have requested both the bodily sickness and the vision of Christ's Passion as graces in her earlier years while meditating.[8] Following her illness, Julian wrote her first text, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*, and over the subsequent two decades wrote her second text, *A Revelation of Divine Love*, which expanded on her earlier text. "Julian of Norwich is the first writer in English who can be identified with certainty as a woman,"[9] and due to the content of her writing has been regarded as a mystic for centuries by theologians and scholars. Julian's original audience has been theorized yet not explicitly defined in previous scholarly work.[10] We know very little about Julian's life other than what she wrote in these texts as well as some spiritual guidance she

[5] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 70 (LT), not present in ST.
[6] Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, eds. *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 49, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.CH/pwt5fh.
[7] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 150(LT), not present in ST.
[8] Ibid, 3 (ST), 42 (LT).
[9] Ibid, vii.
[10] Nicholas Watson & Jacqueline Jenkins, eds, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich; A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Divine Love* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 12-13. "[E]vidence of actual readers remains sparse well into the seventeenth century."

provided to Margery Kempe while serving as an anchoress at Saint Julian's Church. Margery Kempe, referring to Julian of Norwich, wrote,

> The anchoress, hearing the marvelous goodness of our Lord, devotedly thanked God with all her heart for His visitation, advising this creature to be obedient to the will of our Lord God, and to fulfill with all her power whatever He might put into her soul, if it were not contrary to the honour of God and the betterment of her fellow Christians; for if it were so contrary, then it could not be the prompting of a good spirit but rather of an evil spirit.[11]

From this short excerpt by Kempe and from a careful reading of Julian's writing, we learn that she was a woman who longed for relationship with the Divine. Furthermore, we know from Julian's writing that she practiced religious meditation from an early age and understood herself as having served God in some capacity from an early age, because Julian wrote that she was thanked by the Divine for her suffering and service in her youth.[12]

In critically analyzing a historical text, it is important to understand the cultural and socio-economic background of the author as a frame of reference to see where the text is mirroring societal norms, and where it is generating social truths. Norwich in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a growing commercial society that experienced devastation by means of the Black Plague, witnessed the strife and misery of the Peasants Revolt and encountered conflict between the monarchy and church. While Julian was expanding her ST into her LT within the anchorhold, orders to strengthen the feudal hierarchy were building, and the laborers were in an uproar. The Black Plague caused so many deaths that those who survived were able to demand higher wages until the Statute of Labourers passed and outlawed the demand for higher wages.[13] The laborers did not want their wages to be fixed, and they were resistant to higher taxation. This

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[11] Eric Colledge*, The Medieval Mystics of England* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 285.
[12]Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 13 (ST), 62 (LT).
[13] Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 155.

was a period of incredible disruption, and within this period Julian's environment went from one of affluency to one of enclosure in the anchorhold of Saint Julian's church. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins have suggested that Julian was educated and grew up in or near Norwich in affluent circumstances.[14] During the medieval period of Julian's life, there was an emergent yearning by those of affluency to engage in the contemplative life in some way.[15] At the very least, we can note that Julian's access to be chosen to enter the anchorhold indicates a connection between her affluence and longing to contemplate God.

Julian went from being a member of an affluent household to a recluse enclosed in a church in "a major centre of international commerce with a flourishing mixed economy . . . [that witnessed an] influx into the city of poor labourers from the surrounding countryside, desperate for work,"[16] In her role as an anchoress, Julian would have become aware of the uproar and turmoil in her community. Not only would she have been aware, but it is likely she would have been offering guidance to townspeople in the midst of this tumult, just as she did to Margery Kempe. I am not claiming that Julian was responding to specific historical events in her anchoress role, but, rather, Julian's time in the anchorhold focused her attention on the suffering of the world. In her specific moment, that world would have included significant death from the Black Plague, the Peasants' Revolt, and the conflict between the church and monarchy. As Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy write, "[W]hile being set apart, the anchorite also occupied a pivotal role at the heart of the local community: as a role-model, confidante, intercessor and spiritual healer. In physical terms, too, the anchorite's existence was utterly dependent upon the

[14] Nicholas Watson & Jacqueline Jenkins, eds, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich; A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Divine Love* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 4.
[15] Thomas H. Bestul, "*Meditatio*/Meditation" in *Christian Mysticism*, Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, eds. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 165.
[16] Carole Rawcliffe, *Medieval Norwich* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005), xxxiv.

community's response to those roles."[17] Julian's shift in physical environment, as well as all of the turmoil and hardship abounding in her community, likely contributed to the increasingly social nature of her language from the ST to the LT.

Because Julian was living as an anchoress during the time period that she expanded her ST into her LT, and she did not write about her personal experience in that role other than several citations in the LT mentioning enclosure, we are left to lean on general information regarding the life as an anchoress in medieval England. First, the opportunity to enter an anchorhold is one given to the privileged due in part to the requirement of the diocese bishop's approval as well as the consent by "the incumbent and patron of the church to which the person was to be attached."[18] This approval came after a thorough investigation into the reasoning and desire of the person requesting enclosure, as well as their soundness of mind. The bishop instructed and warned any anchorite candidate to examine his or her conscience and consider the motives for wanting to enter an anchorhold, whether it be to draw closer to God or to receive the praise of others. A separate church official investigated the candidate's estate and character.[19] The anchorite candidate would have had to show that he or she would be supported monetarily by means outside of the church. "The bishop was careful not to license anyone unless he was satisfied that sustentation was secure and permanent; indeed if the solitary were in want, the burden of maintenance fell upon the bishop."[20]

Following approval, the anchorite participated in an involved ceremony of enclosure mirroring that of a funeral, which symbolized the anchorite's death to her past life, material

[17] Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy, "Introduction: 'No Such Thing as Society? Solitude in Community" in *Medieval Anchorites in their Communities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 5-6.
[18] Rotha Mary Clay*, The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1914), 91.
[19] Ibid, 91.
[20] Ibid, 103.

concerns, and the world, as detailed in the *Manuale ad Usum Sarum*.[21] The soon-to-be enclosed anchoress would go from being surrounded by people during the ceremony to being completely alone with a symbolic closing, and often sealing, of the door of her cell/tomb. Once one entered an anchorhold, he or she usually remained there until his or her physical/bodily death. There was a Bavarian Rule which directed the cell would measure twelve feet square and be made of stone. Commonly, these cells contained three windows, one window would have looked into the church where the anchorite would have been able to momentarily see the showing of the eucharist on the altar, a second window would have been used by her servants for delivering food and drink and removing waste, and a third window would have looked to the outside world. Communication was held through this third window, which was small, narrow, and covered with a black cloth bearing a white cross.[22]

Julian was enclosed into a cell attached to Saint Julian's Church in Norwich. Upon entering the anchorhold, Julian likely had access to guides that were written for anchorites, which informed them of their duties and instructed them on how to behave, meditate and practice contemplation. One such guide was *Ancrene Wisse*, which was written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century to give religious instruction to three sisters who chose to live in a cell as recluses.[23] Although Julian did not mention reading anchoritic guides of instruction in her texts, the language she used in the LT points to the probability that some of her writing was inspired by *Ancrene Wisse*. As Elizabeth Robertson notes, "The writing of Julian of Norwich 'closely

[21] This ceremony is detailed in Rotha Mary Clay*, The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1914), 193-195.
[22] Ibid, 79.
[23] Wolfgang Riehle, *The Secret Within; Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 40.

followed the anchoritic life expounded in the *Ancrene Wisse*.'"[24] Consider the *Ancrene Wisse* on the soul and body, "And this is one of the greatest wonders on earth, that the highest thing under God—that is, man's soul—as St. Augustine testifies, has to be so firmly linked to the flesh, which is nothing but mud and foul earth."[25] Similarly, Julian wrote,

> And at this time I saw a body lying on the earth, a body which looked dismal and ugly, without shape or form as if it were a swollen and heaving mass of stinking mire. And suddenly out of this body sprang a very beautiful creature . . . And the swelling of the body represents the great sinfulness of our mortal flesh and the smallness of the child represents the chaste purity of the soul.[26]

The similarity in language used by the author of *Ancrene Wisse* and by Julian regarding the flesh as offensive ("foul" and "stinking") and the soul as pleasing ("greatest wonders" and "very beautiful") indicates that Julian was familiar with the guidance provided in *Ancrene Wisse*.

Although Julian would have lived alone in her cell, she would not have been living a life of solitude.

> The requirements of the anchoritic life – withdrawal, renunciation, asceticism, contemplation and penitence – did not necessarily require solitude, in the sense of being completely and always alone; nevertheless, the anchoritic life did require the rejection of the demands of the willful self, and the cell within which the anchorite was enclosed recreated the desert as a place of both renunciation and withdrawal. This suggests that what is required is not only (or as much) a movement *away* as a movement *within*. The anchorite must reject her own outer, worldly self as well as the world of others.[27]

Julian's movement into the anchorhold was her means to die to herself and the ways of the world. Julian's requested desire for the wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God drew her into the anchorhold, where, through regular spiritual practice and suffering, she was

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[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*, eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 143.
[25] *Ancrene Wisse; Guide for Anchoresses*, trans. Hugh White (England: Penguin Books, 1993), 69.
[26] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 148-49 (LT), not present in ST.
[27] Cate Gunn, "The Anchoress of Colne Priory: A Solitary Community" in *Medieval Anchorites in Their Communities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 48.

able to go deeper inward. An example of such spiritual practice as directed by *Ancrene Wisse* was to think intensely about the torments of Jesus during the Passion including the spitting, blindfolding, crowning with thorns, and abundant blood flow.[28] Another example was direction to nightly fall on your knees and think about what you did during the day that angered God, and to cry out for mercy and forgiveness.[29] Julian wrote, "[O]ur perceptions are so shattered in various ways, by sins and by different sufferings, that we are so darkened and blinded that we can hardly find any comfort. But inwardly, we wait for God and trust faithfully that we shall receive mercy and grace."[30]

As noted, Julian likely was born into affluency, and although being an anchoress was a privileged position—one which provided shelter and food—it was also a place of sacrifice. Mary Rotha Clay writes, "Voluntarily they [anchorites] stripped themselves of the natural joys of the life. Patiently they persevered in hardness of living and unremitting moral efforts."[31] After Julian's enclosure, her own suffering and regular contemplation of Christ's Passion as well as the awareness of the suffering of those in her community lent to her expanded use of the rhetoric of suffering from the ST to the LT. How Julian wrote about suffering shifted considerably between the ST and the LT. In the ST, the majority of her writing on suffering regarded Christ's physical suffering, her own physical suffering due to her illness, fellow or compassionate suffering with Christ, and a discussion of sin and suffering. In the LT, however, Julian expanded on her use of suffering to include the notion that outward/bodily suffering implied blindness to God and a means to turn towards God and, ultimately, to know our own souls. In other words, suffering

[28] *Ancrene Wisse; Guide for Anchoresses*, trans. Hugh White (England: Penguin Books, 1993), 90.
[29] Ibid, 25.
[30] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 125 (LT), not present in ST.
[31] Mary Rotha Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1914), 127.

moved beyond "pain" and became both "absence" and "spiritual invitation." Julian wrote about losing sight of God, "[W]e are immediately thrown back into ourselves, where we find no right feelings, nothing but our own contrariness . . . and in this we are tossed and troubled with all the many different feelings of sin and suffering, both of the body and soul, which are known to us in this life."[32] Julian's words implied a newfound understanding of suffering attained during her time in the anchorhold. According to Elizabeth Petroff, "We think of the Middle Ages as the age of faith, and so it was, but it was also an age of crisis. In such a context, mysticism was not a retreat from the negative aspects of reality but a creative marshaling of energy in order to transform reality and the perception of it."[33] Julian's entrance into the anchorhold was not a means of escape, rather it was a way to deny herself and draw closer to God. Through the language changes from the ST to the LT surrounding suffering, we see that Julian's perception was transformed.

Suffering was certainly present for those living in anchorholds. According to McAvoy, quoting Rotha Mary Clay, "The anchoresses needed to 'learn to suffer, and to suffer well.' In so doing she sought spiritual reward, but stayed within the parameters of socially sanctioned ways to lead a feminine life."[34] Suffering that Julian would have undergone would be both physical and mental. According to *Ancrene Wisse*, anchoresses were directed to practice daily physical requirements such as kneeling up and down several times throughout the day while reciting designated prayers, kissing the ground several times a day, scraping up the earth of their grave daily, and contemplating the suffering of Jesus during his Passion as well as contemplating their

[32] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 110 (LT), not present in ST.
[33] Elizabeth Petroff*, Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994) 5-6.
[34] Liz Herbert McAvoy, *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge, England: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 30.

own actions and how they may have angered God that day.[35] The anchoritic suffering of the enclosed was endured to gain closeness with the Divine. McAvoy continues, "Enclosure as a concept and a physical reality, therefore, is developed to express a perception of the immanence of God within all things and humanity's immanence within God."[36] I argue that this immanence of God in humanity and humanity in God is present in the language in Julian's LT but not in her ST. Julian wrote, "[U]ntil we truly know him [God] who has enclosed us in himself … for as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the chest, so are we, soul and body, clad in the goodness of God and enclosed in it."[37] According to Julian's writing in the LT, God is enclosed in us, and we are enclosed in God. She wrote, "We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Ghost; and the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Ghost is enclosed in us."[38] There is no language used in the ST surrounding enclosure at all. While Julian was expanding her ST into her LT, the experience of enclosure changed how she understood her relationship with the Divine. More demonstrably, her personal enclosure as an anchoress, regular contemplation of Christ's Passion as well as her new-found awareness of the suffering of her society in tumultuous times affected Julian's style of writing and shifted her represented perceptions and self-presentation from the ST to the LT.

Previous Scholarship

Grace Jantzen, Liz Herbert McAvoy, Caroline Walker Bynum, Elizabeth Petroff, Elizabeth Robertson, Amy Laura Hall, Wolfgang Riehle, Nicholas Watson and others have

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[35] *Ancrene Wisse; Guide for Anchoresses*, trans. Hugh White (England: Penguin Books, 1993), 18, 24-5, 58.
[36] Liz Herbert McAvoy, "'And Thou, to whom This Booke Shalle Come': Julian of Norwich and Her Audience, Past, Present and Future" in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Patricia Z. Roger Ellis eds., (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 110.
[37] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 49 (LT), not present in ST.
[38] Ibid, 130 (LT), not present in ST.

written extensively about Julian of Norwich. Generally, these scholars approached Julian's texts through means of literary historical study, gender and mysticism, feminist approaches to the body, and theology of her visions and how she wrote about them.

To enrich our understanding of Julian, we must look beyond "Julian studies" and draw inspiration from a comparative reading of corporeality in the medieval period. To do that properly, it is important to consider previous scholarship regarding medieval texts and medieval bodies in texts, including body and authority, and the relationship between the subject and the Divine. Furthermore, examining the scholarly work of Robert Sharf, Russell McCutcheon, Craig Martin, Gavin Flood, and Elizabeth Petroff regarding religious experience in texts and visionary language in medieval texts is valuable in analyzing Julian's texts. Other specific scholarly conversations that informed this analysis include that of Gabrielle Spiegel in her work on reading historical texts, as well as Caroline Walker Bynum, Shazad Bashir, and Amy Hollywood in their works discussing medieval bodies, specifically what they have to say about interiority and exteriority of medieval bodies as well as the relationship between the body and the Divine.

Gabrielle Spiegel casts aside the idea that historical studies only mirror the world, and instead urges those who study history through texts to link up with literary critics in investigating "the social dimensions of textual productions in past times."[39] In other words, while studying historical texts it is appropriate to notice and take into account the social norms at the time the text was written, what was necessary for the author to be able to create the text, and how the text generates social truths in addition to reflecting them. Spiegel writes,

> All texts occupy determinate social spaces, both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations. In that sense, texts both mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by and constitute the social and discursive

[39] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no.1 (January 1990): 77, https://www.jstor.org/stable2864472.

> formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform, depending on the case at hand.[40]

It is imperative to pay attention to what the text is doing, not only what it is saying: its "social logic." Is Julian's text conforming to the power structures of her time, or is it transforming pre-existing ideologies and making new meaning? Julian's texts are *both* conforming and transforming through the language choices she made as well as the mode of illness and vision she wrote about to be able to share her words with others.

Julian's gender is a factor that scholars recognize and acknowledge when studying her texts. Julian used disparaging words to refer to herself such as "poor, worldly, sinful creature"[41] and "I am a woman, ignorant, weak, and frail."[42] Julian chose those words in the ST not because she was insecure and thought she had nothing to offer through her writing, but because the societal norms dictated that she had to write like that in order for what she was writing to be less threatening to males and other women, and particularly to male clerics who may have read her work. It wasn't Julian's gender as such that excluded her from positions of power, but women certainly faced more exclusions. In the LT much of her self-abasing language is dropped, not because she considered herself adept, but instead to make herself small and less individualistic and to emphasize God due to her newly attained inwardness after being enclosed. Within the anchorhold, Julian had died to self, and her lack of self-abasing language in the LT indicated that death to self and the eminence to God. Here Julian was mirroring and generating social conditions by speaking about herself in a way that would have been expected from a woman

[40] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no.1 (January 1990): 77, https://www.jstor.org/stable2864472.
[41] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 9 (ST), not present in LT.
[42] Ibid, 10-11 (ST), not present in LT.

living in the middle ages, and also making new meaning by diminishing herself to stress God, and use the words spoken to her through God as tools to create new social relationships.

We must see how Julian's use of visionary rhetoric in her text served to mirror her social reality and generate social truths. Julian's vision included language about following the ways of Holy Church, which conformed to her traditional pattern. Simultaneously, Julian's visionary rhetoric was transforming due to the authority she gained from having the vision in order to write about suffering in a dynamic way and to express the femininity of Christ and the unity of God with humanity. Gavin Flood and Grace Jantzen offer tools for analyzing accounts of visionary experiences. Jantzen writes, "The perspective from which we look makes it possible to see things which we might be unable to see from anywhere else, and also places limitations on what we can see. . . Julian of Norwich could have a vison of Jesus dying on the cross, but could not have had a vision of Shiva dancing."[43] Furthermore, according to Gavin Flood, "The political as well as personal nature of these texts [vision texts] is striking. The private vision is not really private, although it occurs in the interiority of the mind, but is more of a collective subjectivity in which the visionary's inwardness conforms to a traditional pattern while using that pattern as a vehicle for a moral vision that is a corrective to a received practice."[44] This is relevant to Julian's text since the importance of Holy Church and spirituality were prevalent in the Middle Ages. That knowledge taken into account with Julian writing about meditating from an early age implies why Julian's vision would have included such detail of Christ's Passion.

Many who have previously written on Julian of Norwich have judged that what she wrote about in her texts was a religious experience, a personal encounter with the Divine that she

[43] Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 337.
[44] Gavin Flood, *The Truth Within: A History of Inwardness in Christianity, Hinduism, and Budd*hism (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63.

wanted to share with others. Scholars have noted that religious people and those who write about religious experiences claim their experiences are ineffable, so the subject who has the experience is instead reflecting on and interpreting the experience, sometimes attempting to describe the experience through writing. Jantzen writes, "[E]ven the experience of the presence of God is always already mediated by social construction many layers thick."[45] McCutcheon, Scharf, and Martin argue persuasively that the interpretation and reflection of the subject will be based on the world/community the subject lives in. As McCutcheon writes: "[N]o unmediated core—no raw experience—is possible since every experience is created by and through the medium of culture. [Culture] is not a secondary force acting upon an experience, but instead is the very agent and material from which experiences are formed."[46] In other words, Julian's represented encounter and vision was hers, but not solely for herself. It was one that was specific to her milieu and could be used to "function as social critique and give voice to concerns that might otherwise have been difficult to raise about institutional moral failings."[47] In Julian's text she critiqued materialism and hoarding of material wealth, where she wrote, "This is why those who choose to occupy themselves with earthly business and are always pursuing worldly success have nothing here of God in their hearts and souls: because they love and seek their rest in this little thing where there is no rest, and know nothing of God."[48] Furthermore, Julian critiqued the relationships between lords and servants by suggesting familiarity, respect and appreciation be

[45] Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich* (Great Britain: Ashford Colour Press, 2000), xvi.
[46] Craig Martin and Russel T. McCutcheon, *Religious Experience: A Reader* (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing 2012), 131.
[47] Gavin Flood, *The Truth Within: A History of Inwardness in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63.
[48] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 8 (ST). In the LT (47), the text reads, "We need to know the littleness of all created beings and to set at noting everything that is made in order to love and possess God who is unmade. This is the reason why we do not feel complete ease in our hearts and souls: we look here for satisfaction in things which are so trivial, where there is no rest to be found, and do not know our God."

given to servants from lords. She wrote, "[A] majestic king or a great lord can show most respect for a poor servant if he treats him in a familiar way, especially if he does so personally, with real sincerity and a cheerful expression, both in private and in public."[49] This notion was reiterated a few pages later in Julian's text where she wrote, "[I]t is a great honour to a king's servants if he thanks them; and if he makes it known to the whole realm, then the honour is greatly increased."[50] This language in Julian's LT mirrored and generated social reality by connecting her vision to what was going on in her community between the peasants and lords, and offering a new way by having God pronounce, through her, the importance of public gratitude given to the servants/peasants by those in power.

Body and Experience

Experience is socially constructed and so are the bodies doing the experiencing. "Bodily experience is physiological and cultural; the body can—and arguably must—be taught and the various cultural lessons learned by the body shape one's experience."[51] In both of Julian's texts, she wrote a detailed and vivid description of a bodily sickness that she suffered in her thirtieth year of life. In the Middle Ages, illness or sickness, particularly for women, was closely associated with religiosity and spirituality. Caroline Walker Bynum, who writes extensively on medieval religious women and the interplay of flesh, suffering, and redemption in medieval texts, states, "Some visionary women prayed for disease as a gift from God. . . . whatever the cause of disease or the saint's initial reaction to it, many medieval women . . . made physical and mental anguish an opportunity for their own salvation and that of others."[52] Bynum further

[49] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 51 (LT), not present in ST.
[50] Ibid, 62-3, not present in ST.
[51] Amy Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 241.
[52] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 188.

writes, "Another kind of bodily experience—illness or recurrent pain—was also more apt to be given religious significance in women's lives than in men's."[53] Julian's texts are a compelling example of illness correlating with spirituality, but there are language differences between the ST and the LT relating to her illness/bodily experience that are revealed from the very beginning of the texts.

In the following excerpts from Julian's ST and LT, she described her reasoning for desiring a bodily sickness, and its consequent suffering. The changing wording implies a shift in Julian's self-presentation and meaning making.

> ST: I longed to have in this sickness every kind of suffering both of body and soul that I would experience if I died, with all the terror and turmoil of the fiends, and all other kinds of torment, except for actually giving up the ghost, because I hoped that it might be to my benefit when I died, for I longed to be soon with my God.[54]

> LT: I longed to have in this sickness every kind of suffering both of body and soul that I would experience if I died, with all the terror and turmoil of the fiends, except for actually giving up the ghost. And I thought of this because I wished to be purged by the mercy of God and afterwards to live more to God's glory because of that sickness; and that I should die more quickly for I longed to be soon with my God.[55]

In both texts, Julian longed to experience deep suffering, both within her body and her soul, but not die due to her illness. However, in the ST Julian's writing implied that there would be some reward when she died for having undergone so much suffering ("I hoped that it would be to my benefit when I died"), while in the LT Julian implied that the reward came from being purged through the suffering in order to live a better life until her death ("I wished to be purged by the mercy of God and afterwards to live more to God's glory because of the sickness.) Petroff notes that there are two different kinds of suffering that medieval women could have experienced:

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[53] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 188.
[54] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 4 (ST).
[55] Ibid, 43 (LT).

"[P]assive suffering leading onward to active creative suffering, to suffering undergone to cure the pain of the human condition."[56] In other words, in the ST, where Julian hoped that the illness and suffering would be to her benefit when she died showed passive suffering, while the LT showed active suffering through her desire to be purged by God's mercy to live more to God's glory. The illness would be a benefit to her while still alive through a purging or making pure, which demonstrates more active suffering. These language changes between the ST and the LT indicate a shift from reward to purification.

In the midst of Julian's bodily sickness, during which she received rites of Holy Church, felt as though she were dying, and looked intently at a crucifix placed before her face by a parish priest, it suddenly occurred to her to ask for the first gift of God's grace (although she refers to it in the text as the "second wound"), to experience the suffering that Christ suffered during his Passion. Following her request, Julian saw "the red blood trickling down from under the crown of thorns,"[57] and continued to have a detailed vision of Christ's Passion. As Amy Hollywood writes, "The external practice of prostration before images and meditation on them leads to their internal appropriation and transformation of the self."[58] Although Julian was not prostrating herself before the crucifix held before her face, in her illness, with her "eyes fixed," it is perceivable that she was taking part in a form of meditation, which began the vision. Meditation was something with which Julian was familiar. According to her ST, Julian meditated on and desired to internalize and feel Christ's suffering during the Passion from a young age. She wrote, "I thought of the first (vivid perception of Christ's Passion) as I was meditating,"[59] and this

[56] Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 12.
[57] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 6 (ST), 45 (LT).
[58] Amy Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 197.
[59] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 3 (ST).

thought took place long before her illness which she suffered in her thirtieth year of life. Julian dropped the text about meditating in her LT, where she wrote, "As for the first, it seemed to me that I could feel. . . ."[60] Could this be because in the writing of her LT, she was living her life as an anchoress where meditation and contemplation of Christ's Passion would have been part of her regular daily life, and not something she took part in occasionally or on certain days? Following Julian's description of the blood dripping from Christ's head, I noticed a change in her language implying a transformation of Julian's perception.

> ST: With this sight of the blessed Passion, along with the Godhead that I saw in my mind, I saw that I, yes, and every living creature living that would be saved, could have strength to resist all of the fiends of hell and all spiritual enemies.[61]

> LT: With this sight of the blessed Passion, along with the Godhead that I saw in my mind, I knew that I, yes, and every living creature, could have strength to resist all of the fiends of hell and all spiritual temptation.[62]

From the ST to the LT there is an expansion of whom would have the strength to resist as well as what would need resisting. In the ST, only those who were saved could have the strength to resist, while in the LT everyone could have the strength to resist. Furthermore, the spiritual attackers Julian wrote about in the ST alluded to something outside of one's self that needed to be resisted, while the LT alluded to something inside of one's self that needed to be resisted.

Following Julian's vision, she once again felt the pain and suffering of her bodily sickness, but the way she described her return to her body differed between the ST and the LT, again showing a shift in her perception.

> ST: And after this I soon returned to myself and to my bodily sickness, understanding that I would live, and like a wretch I tossed and moaned with the feeling of bodily pain, and I thought it a great weariness that I should live longer;

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[60] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 42-3 (LT).
[61] Ibid, 7 (ST).
[62] Ibid, 46 (LT).

> and I was as barren and dry, through the return of my pain and my loss of spiritual feeling, as if I had received little comfort.[63]

> LT: But first I must tell you about my feebleness, wretchedness, and blindness. … And I soon felt that I would live and continue to suffer, and at once my sickness returned; first in my head, with a noise and a din, and suddenly my whole body was full of sickness as it had been before, and I was as barren and dry as if I had received little comfort.[64]

In the ST, Julian returned to herself and her sickness, understanding she would live, contrasting with the LT where the understanding of living and suffering came before the sickness returned. Other contrasting details include her weariness of living longer and loss of spiritual feeling in ST, which is not present in the LT. Furthermore, the first line in the LT is not present in the ST implying that in the twenty years since writing the first text, she had gained an understanding that being concerned with bodily suffering/matters of the flesh and personal discomfort was being blind to God. Physical discomfort should not have discredited or overcome the spiritual feeling and comfort she experienced in her vision. As Petroff writes, "The goal of the visionary—and the purpose of devotional literature written by her—was a continually deepening relationship with the Divine, and the corollary of that was ever-deepening self knowledge."[65] The corporeal discomfort Julian expressed as her vision came to an end revealed a shift in Julian's perception between the ST and the LT by demonstrating that bodily suffering was from blindness, not knowing unity with God, which could only be attained by going beyond the surface of the flesh to a deeper inwardness and self-knowledge, or as Julian referred to it, knowledge of our soul.[66]

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[63] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 32 (ST).
[64] Ibid, 151 (LT).
[65] Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 19.
[66] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 133 (LT). Not present in ST. "And thus I saw quite certainly that it is easier for us to attain knowledge of God than to

This ever-deepening self-knowledge is not to be confused with individualism, but instead with what Flood calls inwardness.[67] As Flood writes,

> Inwardness is thus both formed through cultural practices and discovered by them. Of particular importance here are spiritual practices or methods designed to discover the truth within that intensify a sense of inwardness. The repeated actions of liturgy, reading, and meditation channel the practitioner to a prescribed route and goal. The spiritual exercises of religions are both the formation of the self and the discovery of the self.[68]

In the midst of her illness, Julian received the rites of Holy Church, a tradition within her religious practice. Prior to her illness, she mentioned meditating and asking for three gifts of God's grace, which implies her commitment to the Christian tradition, as well as the participation in a regular spiritual practice. She wrote words like penance, confession, contrition and prayer throughout her texts furthering the implication that she was invested in the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, while writing of her illness, she informed the reader that her body was dead from the waist down before her upper body lost sensation. I suggest that the lower body is representative of the lower nature and the desires of the flesh that she longed to purge herself of in order to reach a purer nature, deeper inward, and thus be able to approach God. When she believed she had died, all suffering left her, and she described herself as being well, "especially in the upper part of her body,"[69] which was representative of the higher nature/the spirit, implying that she reached a certain level of inwardness. Julian wrote in the ST, "For just as there is an animal will in our lower nature which can have no good impulses, there is

know our own soul; for our soul is so deeply grounded in God, and so eternally treasured, that we cannot attain knowledge of it until we first know God."

[67] Gavin Flood writes on p. 42 of *The Truth Within*, "It would not be correct to describe such cultivation of inwardness as individualism, for although we have an emphasis on the individual human person, the form of inwardness is specific to the tradition and the internalization of the goal of redemption. Indeed, in many ways the cultivation of an intense inwardness through spiritual practices, such as we find in the Christianity of the High Middle Ages, is anti-individualist."

[68] Ibid, 208.

[69] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 6 (ST), 45 (LT).

a godly will in our higher nature which, no less than the persons of the Holy Trinity, can will no evil, but only good."[70] Contrast this with the LT where she wrote, "[J]ust as there is an animal will in our lower nature which can have no good impulses, there is a godly will in our higher nature which is so good that it can never will evil but only good."[71] Here, it is noticeable that Julian removed "persons of the Holy Trinity" implying a shift in her understanding of who or what can will good. Julian wrote more in depth about the higher and lower nature in the LT including the following excerpt implying an expansion of Julian's understanding of suffering and where the Divine is located in that suffering. Julian wrote, "[F]or on the lower level there are pains and passions, sorrows and pities, mercies and forgiveness, and many similar benefits; but on the higher level there are none of these, but all one great love and wonderful joy, and in the wonderful joy there is great compensation for all suffering."[72] The lower nature, according to Julian's text, consisted of flesh, pain, suffering and nothing good while the higher nature included spirit, love, joy, and inwardness. Julian's illness progression, as represented in her text, demonstrated the necessity to die to her individual fleshly desires and go inward towards God in order to know her own soul.

When Julian wrote about her vision, she described bodies that were sensing and feeling and bleeding, but these were not only physical corporeal bodies she was seeing, and her mode of "seeing" did not only include the physical sense of sight. Historian of Islam, Shahzad Bashir's work on medieval Sufi bodies serves as a model for looking at the body in medieval texts. He writes, "[B]odies are objects like any other, subject to generation and corruption and enmeshed in relationships with other material forms of the apparent realm. But bodies are also the

[70] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 26 (ST).
[71] Ibid, 93 (LT).
[72] Ibid, 127 (LT), not present in ST.

instruments that enable human beings to attempt the critical work of excavating through materiality (exterior) to the interior."[73] Julian referred to what she was not seeing physically as either words formed in her understanding or spiritual sight. As previously cited, she wrote, "All this blessed teaching of our Lord God was shown in three ways; that is to say, by bodily sight, by words formed in my understanding and by spiritual sight."[74] Furthermore, Julian referred to blindness as not being able to see God, and asserted that this spiritual blindness was the cause of suffering.[75] This suffering, in turn, was a catalyst to draw the sufferer inwards towards God. Bashir, in writing about medieval Sufi bodies, refers to the connection between the exterior to the interior as a doorway, and even a map. My assertion is that the bodily experience of Julian of Norwich, a medieval Christian woman, was analogous to a swimming pool with surface and depth, journeying from the exterior to the interior. For Julian, her bodily sickness and visions allowed her to go deeper inward where she received a showing of truth, as well as supplying the means and agency to share what she saw through her writing. Furthermore, Julian's expansion of themes of enclosure, inwardness, suffering, and mercy from the ST to the LT implied how her enclosure in the anchorhold contributed to her inward showing of truth.

Body and the Divine

Of the three graces (also referred to as wounds) requested of God by Julian, the only one she requested with no reservation were the wounds of contrition, compassion and an earnest longing for God,[76] which in the LT, were referred to as medicines to heal from suffering.[77] For

[73] Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 28.
[74] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 36 (ST), 161 (LT). Note in ST, the words "as I have said before" are present before the words "that is to say," and these words are not present in the LT.
[75] Ibid, 109 (LT).
[76] Ibid, 4 (ST), 43 (LT).
[77] Ibid, 96 (LT), 26 (ST). In the short text, the medicines were contrition, confession, and penance, used to heal the sinful soul.

Julian, longing came after contrition and compassion, and was the most important desire of all requested by her. Julian was made of flesh, but her longings were not inclusive of normative desires of the flesh according to her texts. Not only did she desire to be wounded with contrition, compassion and longing for God, she also longed to perceive Christ's Passion, and suffer a bodily illness. To the modern reader this doesn't make sense, but for the medieval writer, this bodily suffering was the way to God, particularly for women who were associated with the flesh, while men were associated with Spirit. Bynum writes, "Compared to other periods of Christian history and other world religions, medieval spirituality—especially female spirituality—was peculiarly bodily; this was so not only because medieval assumptions associated female with flesh but also because theology and natural philosophy saw persons as . . . body as well as soul."[78] In other words, Julian's corporeal language use, specifically her language surrounding wounded and suffering bodies, was deployed as spiritual expression, and implied a means to a deeper understanding and relationship with the Divine. "In fact and in image, suffering (both self-inflicted and involuntary) . . . were women's most characteristic ways of attaining God."[79] Longing for God/the Divine is intertwined with the longing for a suffering bodily illness for Julian of Norwich, and in the Middle Ages, the Divine experienced in the body gave her the religious authority to share the experience.

Although Julian's writing implied that the body was necessary to grow closer to the Divine, she wrote grotesquely about the flesh, specifically the flesh of Jesus, more so in the LT than the ST. For example: "It was the form and likeness of the foul, dead covering which our

[78] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 183.
[79] Ibid, 172.

fair, bright, blessed Lord bore when he took on human flesh for our sins;"[80] "[I]t was the image and likeness of our vile, black, mortal covering which hid our fair, bright, blessed Lord;"[81] and "[T]he dear body was dark and black, quite transformed from his own fair living colour into parched mortification."[82] Could this expansion of language in the LT regarding the flesh of Jesus be due to Julian's regular contemplation of Christ's Passion in the anchorhold as prescribed by the author of *Ancrene Wisse*? Further, could the descriptive language she chose to the refer to the flesh (black, foul, and vile) be based on her knowledge of such flesh from the Black Plague? Later in the LT, Julian compared the flesh to mound of stinking mire that held the bright light of the soul.

> At this time I saw a body lying on the earth, a body which looked dismal and ugly, without shape or form as if it were a swollen and heaving mass of stinking mire. And suddenly out of this body there sprang a very beautiful creature, a little child perfectly shaped and formed, quick and bright, whiter than a lily, which glided swiftly up into heaven. And the swelling of the body represents the great sinfulness of our mortal flesh and the smallness of the child represents the chaste purity of the soul. And I thought, 'None of the beauty of this child remains with the body, nor does any of this body's filth cling to the child.'[83]

For Julian, the outside of the body was the surface (like the surface of a pool), hiding the bright treasure of the soul, which was inside of the body. Just like the surface of a pool is required in order to reach the depths, the body and soul were bound to one another. Julian wrote, "The outward part is our mortal flesh, which now suffers pain and grief, and shall while this life lasts; . . . The inward part is a high, blessed state of being, full of peace and love."[84] Julian's suffering body was a means for her vision and a vehicle for her textually represented journey inward. The

[80] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 56 (LT), not present in ST.
[81] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 56 (LT), not present in ST.
[82] Ibid, 64 (LT), not present in ST.
[83] Ibid, 148-49 (LT), not present in ST.
[84] Ibid, 69-70 (LT), not present in ST.

language Julian used to differentiate the exterior and the interior was not present in the ST, indicating that Julian's perception had shifted due to her entrance into the anchorhold.

Although Julian longed to experience a bodily illness, for her it was God who delivered the sickness. She wrote, "God sent the sickness,"[85] and suffering is God's will and glory,[86] and God is in everything and does everything.[87] In medieval England, God was the authority, and while analyzing Julian's text, it is important to recognize and take seriously the author's claims of divine authority and agency.[88] Not only does Julian represent that God sent the bodily sickness and is in everything and does everything, but also that her heart, a part of her body, was connecting her to God and was the location for feeling comfort or suffering. Julian wrote, "I fully accepted the will of God with all of the will of my heart,"[89] and "I wanted to be in a sitting position . . . so that my heart could be more freely at God's disposition."[90] Although Julian used the word heart similarly in both the ST and the LT, she expanded her perception of the heart in the LT to something that not only felt and willed, but thought as well.[91] Like the body, the heart, which was part of the body even though Julian sometimes wrote about it as an entity separate from the body, felt suffering, and was also a vehicle for Julian to journey deeper inward to God.

In the midst of her bodily sickness, when she thought she had died and all suffering had left her body, it suddenly occurred to Julian to "entreat our Lord graciously to give me the second wound, so that my whole body should be filled with remembrance and feeling of his

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[85] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 5 (ST), 44 (LT).
[86] Ibid, 30 (ST), 148 (LT).
[87] Ibid, 12 (ST), 58 (LT).
[88] Amy Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 124.
[89] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 5 (ST), 44 (LT).
[90] Ibid, 5 (ST), 44 (LT).
[91] Ibid, 113 (LT), 160 (LT)--"heart can think and tongue can tell."

blessed Passion."[92] As Bynum points out, "suddenly" in medieval texts is used to stress divine agency and spontaneity.[93] Here, Julian was directly requesting to perceive Christ's suffering, and according to her texts, her request successfully brought on the vision of Christ's Passion as well as other Divine inspired insights. Some of the insights were included in both the ST and the LT, such as a hazelnut representing the smallness and vastness of creation, and the heat and stench of the fiends, while other insights were present only in the LT, such as the work of suffering, and the unity of the sensory being with the essential being, newly conceptualized through her enclosure and sense of inwardness. To reiterate, Julian could have chosen any number of ways to reflect and expand on her ST, so each expansion she chose in the LT was an important choice, and the expansion of these Divine insights implies a shift in Julian's perception and meaning making.

Let's begin by looking at the work of suffering, and how the operation of mercy was much more prevalent in the LT than the ST. Consider:

> ST: But at this time I was very sorry and reluctant to die, not because there was anything on earth that I wanted to live for, nor because I feared anything, for I trusted in God, but because I wanted to live so as to love God better and for longer, so that through the grace of longer life I might know and love God better in the bliss of heaven.[94]

> LT: And I thought it was a great pity to die while still young; but this was not because there was anything on earth that I wanted to live for, nor because I feared any suffering, for I trusted God's mercy. I wanted to live so as to love God better and for longer, and therefore know and love him better in the bliss of heaven.[95]

In the LT, Julian wrote that it would be a pity to die young, and that she did not fear any suffering because she trusted God's mercy. These words differ from the ST where there was no

[92] Ibid, 45 (LT).
[93] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 23.
[94] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 5 (ST).
[95] Ibid, 44 (LT).

mention of dying young or suffering or mercy. The addition of the words "suffering" and "mercy" in the LT imply a transformation of Julian's perception and understanding of those words, and their use in growing closer to God. Later in the LT, Julian described the mercy of the Divine as an operation or a work that allowed human failing, falling, sorrow, fear, and dying.[96] Mercy is typically thought of as a remission of or refraining from anger, but for Julian mercy was an action. Julian wrote the following about mercy: "[M]ercy allows us to fail to some extent, and in so far as we fail, so far we fall, and so far as we fall, so far we die."[97] The words failing and falling here are describing a turning away from God and not being able to see or feel God.[98] "[A]nd in so far as it [our judgement] is harsh and painful, our good Lord Jesus corrects it by mercy and grace."[99] Here, the judgment Julian was referring to was judgement based on outward appearance of our sensory being. When one judges another contrarily, mercy and grace are deployed to correct the judgment. "[M]ercy works—protecting, tolerating, reviving, and healing all through the tenderness of love."[100] Julian was comparing the work of mercy to the tender love of motherhood in the previous quote. Mercy described in this manner is a far stretch from a remission of anger. "[I]n mercy he reforms and restores us;"[101] and finally "In his mercy, our Lord shows us our sin and weakness by his own sweet, gracious light."[102] According to Julian's writing, the imposition of suffering is one of the ways that God shows mercy. Suffering such as that from judgment, failing and falling, is a means for the human to turn toward God, hence suffering is the mercy of the Divine.

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[96] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 111 (LT).
[97] Ibid, 111 (LT).
[98] Ibid, 111 (LT).
[99] Ibid, 106 (LT).
[100] Ibid, 111 (LT).
[101] Ibid, 138 (LT).
[102] Ibid, 169 (LT).

Another example of Julian's understanding of suffering being the mercy of the Divine without using the specific words was when she wrote that the Lord rejoiced in our tribulations, and that the Lord laid something on each of us for which we are blamed, despised, scorned, and violently treated by the world, but not blamed by God.[103] She continued by quoting the Lord, "I shall shatter you for your vain passions and your vicious pride; and after that I shall gather you together and make you humble and meek, pure and holy, but uniting you with me."[104] For Julian, without suffering we would be damaged by vanity and pride, thinking more of ourselves than God, and through suffering we are humbled through contrition, made pure through compassion for Jesus' suffering, and made holy through true longing for God. In other words, according to Julian's writing, suffering and humility is the catalyst for someone to go deeper inward. Julian wrote,

> And I saw quite certainly that we must needs be in a state of longing and suffering until the time when we are led so deeply into God that we really and truly know our own soul. And indeed I saw that into these great depths our good Lord himself leads us, in the same love with which he made us, and the same love with which he bought us through mercy and grace by virtue of his blessed Passion.[105]

Moreover, according to Julian, knowledge of God was necessary in order to know her own soul. She wrote, "And thus I saw quite certainly that it is easier for us to attain knowledge of God than to know our own soul; for our soul is so deeply grounded in God, and so eternally treasured, that we cannot attain knowledge of it until we first know God."[106]

Without her body (her sensory being), particularly her suffering body, there would not be a way for her to reach the inner truth (her essential being) where the Divine resides. Bynum has

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[103] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 80 (LT).
[104] Ibid, 81 (LT).
[105] Ibid, 134 (LT).
[106] Ibid, 133 (LT).

found similar evidence in her work, writing that medieval religious women were using their flesh in its "full sensual and affective range to soar ever closer to God."[107] This distinction between the sensory being and essential being is only found in Julian's LT. Julian described this distinction where she wrote, "when our soul is breathed into our body, at the moment when we become sensory beings, mercy and grace immediately begin to work, taking care of us and protecting us with pity and love; and as they do so the Holy Ghost shapes in our faith the hope that we shall rise up again into our essential being."[108] In other words, our suffering, tribulations, and longing are necessary for our sensory being to reach our essential being. Julian elaborated further on the distinction between the sensory being and essential being, which indicated her understanding of the body/Divine connection. "And so in our essential being we are complete and in our sensory being we are lacking, but God will remedy this by making mercy and grace flow abundantly into us from his own natural goodness."[109] The distinction between sensory being and essential being is similar to that of flesh and soul and exterior and interior, and its location only in Julian's LT indicated that her enclosure into an anchorhold away from the outside world resulted in a shift in her meaning making and self-perception. Julian being inside her enclosure afforded her the opportunity to move deeper inward, which resulted in an expansion of her visionary language.

There is no historical confirmation of when Julian entered the anchorhold, but because she did not write the word enclosed or enclosure anywhere in the ST, but did use these words in the LT, and her use of the word "inward" was exponentially more present in the LT than the ST, as well as the rhetoric of sensory being and essential being, I assert that Julian entered the

[107] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast; The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 295.
[108] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 131 (LT), not present in ST.
[109] Ibid, 135 (LT), not present in ST.

anchorhold sometime after writing the ST and was in the anchorhold while writing the LT, where she had the privilege of reflecting further on her encounter. Further, it is my assertion that the expansion of her LT was due in part to her life as an enclosed anchoress, and the spiritual practices in which she most likely would have been participating, such as regular contemplation of Jesus's passion and other practices as outlined in guides written for anchoresses, such as *Ancrene Wisse*. Although Julian doesn't write about personally participating in spiritual practices, the language Julian used to describe the longing for the three graces, the experience of her illness, her understanding of her vision including the physical description of the suffering Jesus, and her use of enclosure, is in line with the spiritual practices described by Gavin Flood to be taken in order to journey deeper within her "self," which coincides with a move deeper into the cosmos and closer to the Divine. Flood writes,

> The inner man [or woman] was not the individual, but the self (seipsum) made in the image of God—the *imagio dei* that is identical in all human beings. There is no search for satisfaction or individual self-expression in this, but rather the religious life was seen as a journey towards God done in conformity to the church, to the spiritual master, and to the spiritual exercises of prayer, fasting and contemplation.[110]

Julian wrote that she wanted an illness that almost led to death because she wanted to use her body to experience God, and it was through this Divine experience that she was given the privilege to enter the anchorhold, as well as the authority to share what she "saw." Furthermore, the word enclosed/enclosure in the LT referred to being enclosed in God and God enclosed in us, a union of sorts. Enclosure, for Julian, was not a flight from society or her body (as a woman) but a way to move inward and draw closer to God, which ultimately led to greater understanding of the connection between God and all humanity. Julian wrote, "We are enclosed in the Father, and

[110] Gavin Flood, *The Truth Within: A History of Inwardness in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 39.

we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Ghost; and the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Ghost is enclosed in us: almighty, all wisdom, all goodness, one God, one Lord."[111] Furthermore, Gunn writes, "So turning inwards becomes not an affirmation of individuality but a discovery of commonality and unity with God."[112] The shift in Julian's visionary language, within the LT, to include themes of inwardness, suffering as mercy, and distinction between the sensory being and essential being, indicate that enclosure of Julian's physical body and regular contemplation of Christ's suffering transformed her self-perception.

Body and Agency

In Medieval England, female bodies typically did not have religious authority, and thus limited agency, but Julian was able to gain agency and use her voice to share her insights through her sickness and vision, both of which she wrote were given to her by God. According to Hollywood, "[W]omen's religious authority depended on extra-ordinary visionary, auditory, or somatic experiences of the divine presence. Without that legitimating experience and its approbation by clerical authorities increasingly trained to 'read' the female body and soul, women had no voice within religious medieval culture."[113] From the beginning of Julian's texts, there are language differences that point to a shift in Julian's self-presentation towards a claim to more authority. The ST begins, "I asked for three graces of God's gift. The first was vivid perception of Christ's Passion, the second was bodily sickness, and the third was for God to give

[111] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 130 (LT), not present in ST.
[112] Cate Gunn, "The Anchoress of Colne Priory: A Solitary Community" in *Medieval Anchorites in Their Communities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 49.
[113] Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy; Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12.

me three wounds."[114] Julian's LT begins with her writing descriptions of all of the chapters/revelations in the book, followed by a third person narrative stating, "These revelations were shown to a simple, uneducated creature in the year of our Lord 1373, on the eighth day of May; she had already asked God for three gifts: the first was vivid perception of his Passion, the second was bodily sickness in youth at thirty years of age, the third was for God to give her three wounds."[115] Julian continued her writing in the first person following the above cited sentence. Julian found it necessary to include in the LT a brief description of every chapter before actually beginning the writing of the text, pointing out, "This is a revelation of love that Jesus Christ, our unending joy, gave in sixteen showings or special revelation."[116] Starting the LT in this manner gave Julian authority in her writing by removing herself as the subject and making herself the object of the revelations of Jesus Christ. This approach continued in the LT when she wrote in the third person, referring to the person having the experience as simple and uneducated, and also dating the experience and stating the age of the object at the time of the experience. Hollywood writes, "Medieval mystics or visionaries such as Julian . . . claim, after the fact to experience a visitation or vision, which occurs in time, often on a specific date or a specific hour."[117] Julian's language changes from the ST to the LT here sought to convey a lessening of herself and a growth in her spirituality, which provided her agency.

As Julian's writing continued in describing her illness and vision, it mirrorred her social reality and created agency. The way Julian wrote about what was happening both to her body and that of Christ's body in her vision fit within the societal and cultural norms of her time. The

[114] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 3 (ST).
[115] Ibid, 42 (LT).
[116] Ibid, 41 (LT).
[117] Patricia Dailey, "Time and Memory" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman eds., (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 347-48.

parts of her body that ceased having sensation, and the way the sickness progressed through her body were not only similar to what was described in scriptural texts and was depicted in artwork of Christ's Passion at that time, but also related to the hierarchy of lower nature and higher nature described previously, and were representative of a gradual dying to the material world and the self that lived in it. In both the ST and the LT, Julian gave a similar accounting to her condition, writing that she thought she was dying, and her body was dead to sensation from the waist down, requesting to be in a sitting position to give God better access to her heart. When a cross was put before her face, she explained her eyes became fixed before her sight began to fail, and she felt as though the upper part of her body was beginning to die. Finally, she became short of breath, and the only light she could see was surrounding the cross.[118]

Although the progression of her illness was similarly described in both the ST and the LT, there were differences both in the description of the furnishings and the people who were around her in the midst of her illness as well as the language she used in requesting the three graces/gifts. For instance, when asking for the perception of Christ's Passion, in the ST she ascribed her desired suffering to the way the Holy Church taught her about the Passion and its depiction in paintings and crucifixes.[119] In the LT, there was no mention of Holy Church when she was describing her request for perception of Christ's Passion, nor was there any mention of the artwork or crucifixes she referred to in the ST. When asking for the third gift in the ST, which was the wounds of contrition, compassion, and longing for God, Julian again connected the request to Holy Church by relaying a story she heard a priest tell of Saint Cecilia and the three wounds she received in the neck. In the LT, Julian similarly connected the third gift to

[118] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 5-6 (ST), 44-5 (LT).
[119] Ibid, 3 (ST).

Holy Church, but left out the story of Saint Cecilia. The elimination of the story of Saint Cecilia combined with Julian's lack of self-debasing language in the LT was a means to grant Julian agency. The wounds she requested were hers alone, not due to a story she heard in church about Saint Cecilia. Other aspects of the ST that were left out in the LT included her leaning against bedding during her illness, people surrounding her and those people sending for the parson, a boy accompanying the parson, Julian being referred to as "daughter" by the parson, and her mother being present during her illness. I assert that Julian removed these worldly, material descriptions and personal relationships in the LT because in the writing of the LT she was already in the anchorhold and had died to the world. The removing of the furnishings and relationships was also a way of granting Julian more agency because she was no longer grounding her vision to worldly sources, instead she was grounding her vision to her inward experience with the Divine.

As previously noted, in the medieval period women were linked to the lower nature and the flesh while men were associated with the higher nature and the soul. Bynum writes, "Medieval interpreters of the Bible regularly taught that 'spirit is to flesh as male is to female'—that is, that the dichotomy male/female can serve as a symbol for the dichotomies strong/weak, rational/irrational, soul/body."[120] Julian would have been aware of these dichotomies, and how she wrote about herself reflected her understanding. In several places within the ST Julian diminished herself, using words like ignorant, weak, and frail. She also regularly used the word woman in a diminishing capacity when writing about herself. For example: "[S]top paying

[120] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 206.

attention to the poor, worldly, sinful creature to whom this vision was shown;"[121] "But God forbid that you should say or assume that I am a teacher, for that is not what I mean, nor did I ever mean it; for I am a woman, ignorant, weak and frail;"[122] "Just because I am a woman, must I therefore believe that I must not tell you about the goodness of God;"[123] "Then you must quickly forget me, a paltry creature, you must not let me hinder you;"[124] and "I am not saying that I do not need any more teaching, for our Lord, in this revelation, has left me to Holy Church; and I am hungry and thirsty and needy and sinful and frail."[125] When Julian wrote about herself in such a disparaging manner in the ST, she was doing so in a deliberate manner because women in medieval times did not have authority to speak on religious matters. According to Bynum, "The description 'woman' or 'weak woman' attributed an inferiority that would—exactly because it was inferior—be made superior by God."[126] Furthermore, teachers in medieval times were formally trained magistrates, according to Watson and Jenkins, and were the only ones who could formally expound doctrine. By writing that she was not a teacher and downplaying herself, she was able to share what she encountered in her vision without being accused of heresy. In the LT, Julian dropped the disparaging language used in the excerpts above implying that as an anchoress, a privileged position, she no longer needed to minimize herself in order to dodge persecution.

At the same time, she was minimizing herself in the LT by dropping pronouns like "I" and "my," and also referring to herself as "weak and feeble." The minimization of herself in the

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[121] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 9 (ST), 53 (LT) – although language is different and not nearly as self-derogatory. Julian writes, "[S]top paying attention to the poor being to whom this vision was shown."
[122] Ibid, 10-11 (ST), not present in LT.
[123] Ibid, 11 (ST), not present in LT.
[124] Ibid, 11 (ST), not present in LT.
[125] Ibid, 21 (ST), not present in LT.
[126] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 218.

LT appears to be a means for Julian to emphasize God due to the inwardness she wrote about. Julian wrote, "But no man can know this marvelous intimacy during his life here on earth, unless he has a special showing from our Lord, or he is inwardly filled with the plentiful grace by the Holy Ghost."[127] According to Hollywood,

> "Almost every woman who produced religious writings in the Christian Middle Ages claimed to receive the authority for her teaching, and often the content of that teaching itself, directly from God. Submission of one's own will to that of the divine was the precondition for women's agency within the religious sphere, whether in the form of textual production or institutional development and reform."[128]

During the Middle Ages, authority belonged to the male, specifically male clerics and males in the monarchy. Women and men who were not in positions of authority used the means they had available to them to communicate their messages. For Julian, the means were a bodily sickness, and vision given to her by God. In other words, Julian of Norwich's agency was the result of her relationship with God. According to Hollywood,

> Throughout the history of the Christian tradition it was often believed that God chose to give women visions, to bestow prophecies on them, and render Godself one with them in a union of the spirit or a union without distinction; God then also permitted—indeed, even called on—women to speak and write of these things. As a result, women's experience of Christian truth became one of the primary means through which they were empowered to speak, teach, and write.[129]

Furthermore, visions affirmed authority for women because they gave women a voice due to their being chosen to receive the vision, and they compelled women to share their inner transformation gained from their visionary experience.[130] Julian's vision not only gave her the voice to share her transformation, but also allowed her to critique materialism and the hoarding

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[127] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 51-2 (LT), not present in ST.
[128] Amy Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 117.
[129] Ibid, 95.
[130] Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6.

of material wealth, to suggest familiarity, respect and appreciation be given to servants from Lords, to express how suffering is the mercy of the divine, to promote contrition, compassion for Christ's suffering, and longing for God, to connect body/lower nature and soul/higher nature and suggest its unity with God who does all for love, and much more that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

Julian's writing both mirrored what was occurring in the world around her and generated new ways to see and understand the world. That world would have included her life as an anchoress, enclosed in a cell of a church, where she would have died to the world and herself, regularly contemplated the suffering Christ, and been aware of the suffering of others within her community. Julian wrote about bodies and suffering and a vision of the Passion of Christ because in her lifetime those were the things that were part of her sensory experience via the Black Plague, her life in the anchorhold of Saint Julian's Church, the fighting for power and authority between church and monarchy, and the complete wealth imbalance. Julian's environment was set up such that the only way for her to share her writing was to describe a vision where God gave her the authority to share what God showed her. According to her texts, Julian desired to feel and perceive the suffering of Christ during his Passion, to experience a bodily illness, and to receive the wounds of contrition, compassion, and longing for God from a young age. In the twenty years between the ST and the LT, Julian made many language changes surrounding themes of enclosure, inward, mercy and suffering that implied a shift in her meaning making and an expansion of her self-presentation, demonstrating that her language was embedded in her social world. I argue this shift occurred due to her enclosure in the anchorhold where she would have regularly contemplated the suffering of Jesus during his Passion; where she would have endured

personal suffering in her solitary cell; and where she would have become more aware of the suffering of others due to her role as an anchoress. As Jantzen writes, "The physical enclosure was not intended to be a way of shutting out concern for others but a way of focusing it."[131] According to her text, particularly the LT, for Julian, suffering was a sign of God's love and "was the form which the mercy of God takes in this world."[132] According to Bynum, "Medieval women both rejected and embraced the world, both disciplined themselves to serve their neighbors and languished beyond all consciousness of others in inexpressible joy of union with God. Women understood the suffering that lay at the core of their lives to be both mystical ecstasy and active, innerworldly service of their fellow human beings."[133] Julian's writing reflects that suffering pushes us out of our sinful selves and toward God. She shared, through her writing, that in order to truly draw inward near to the Divine, it was necessary to fully experience the pain and the suffering, not fight against it, and instead trust that healing will come. When the suffering Julian wrote about was confronted with patience, compassion and contrition, relief and healing occurred. Julian wrote, "[F]or on the lower level there are pains and passions, sorrows and pities, mercies and forgiveness, and many similar benefits; but on the higher level there are none of these, but all are great love and wonderful joy, and in the wonderful joy there is great compensation for all the suffering."[134]After careful analysis of Julian's writing, I argue that Julian's theory of spirituality and meaning making were transformed through her enclosure in the anchorhold, the inwardness and knowing of God that occurred because of that enclosure, and

[131] Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich* (Great Britain, Ashford Colour Press, 2000), 46.
[132] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2002), 145. Here Simone Weil is writing about evil being the form which the mercy of God takes in the world. I consider her use of evil to be analogous to Julian's use of suffering because Weil also writes, "We have to transfer it [evil] from the impure part to the pure part of ourselves, thus changing it into pure suffering." (p. 73).
[133] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1992), 74.
[134] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Elizabeth Spearing (England: Penguin Books, 1998), 127 (LT), not present in ST.

through that inwardness, the understanding that suffering is a reminder to turn back towards God, and disregard the self in humility and compassion.

What does Julian's writing mean for today's readers, those readers that come to her text after seeing her quote, "All shall be well" on a refrigerator magnet? First, it means that as readers we need to understand that all texts, actually all experiences, are culturally dictated, and by reading Julian through the eyes of modernity, and not taking her historical context into consideration, we are doing her text a disservice. Furthermore, we need to understand that just as Julian's language was embedded in her social world, our language is embedded in ours. That being said, I argue her text does indeed give a message of comfort, but not through the modern eye of individual agency, self-sufficiency, and setting your mind on what is positive all the time. For the modern reader, "all shall be well" because it has been from the beginning of time cosmologically, and it will continue to be so. As Julian pointed out, suffering will be a part of life, and in the suffering—patience, compassion, and love have the opportunity to show up if one stops being so self-focused. Julian's work is also a great reminder for the modern reader of the necessity of the body, and how the body is located in the human imagination, has effects on one's experience. For Julian, the Divine was not solely in the heavenly realm, but was in everything and was everywhere, which would include presence within bodies. In the midst of her suffering illness she turned her gaze from looking upward toward God to looking straight ahead at the crucifix which represented the humanity of the Divine, and this is where she found the truth within.

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