The Sacred Image and the Healing Touch: The Veronica in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*

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Julian of Norwich aspired to be a visionary, to join the tradition of those late medieval women whose unmediated encounters with Christ were manifested in physical abjection and spiritual ecstasy. Her *Revelation of Love* begins with an account of these early ambitions, which she expresses in the form of three desires:

> This reuelation was made to a symple creature vnlettyrde leving in deadly flesh, the yer of our lord a thousannde and three hundered and lxxiij, the xiij daie of May, which creature desyred before thre gyftes by the grace of god. The first was mynd of the passion. The secund was bodilie sicknes. The thurde was to haue of godes gyfte thre woundys.[1]

As she elaborates, the first desire was a wish to witness the Crucifixion: "Me thought I woulde haue ben that tyme with Magdaleyne and with other that were Christus louers, that I might haue seen bodilie the passion that our lord suffered for me" (2; 285). The second, Julian explains, was a desire to experience an illness so grave that she would suffer enormous physical pain, despair of living, and endure diabolic temptations. Her suffering would be spiritually purgative, and upon her recovery she hoped to "liue more to the worshippe of god" and eventually to receive some reward in heaven for her pains (2; 287). The third desire for "three wounds" was actually three more desires, for "the wound of verie contricion, the wound of kynd compassion, and the wound of willfull longing to god" (2; 288). The *Revelation* attests to the fulfillment of her ambition: in the midst of a painful illness, at the moment she believed herself to be dying, Julian received the first of sixteen "showings," presented to her "without anie meane" (4; 294).

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Julian's visions and illness situate her in the tradition of "women's spirituality" documented by Caroline Walker Bynum.[2] Like many late medieval Continental women, some of whom seemed to consider visionary ecstasy as normative, Julian derived theological authority from her paramystical experience.[3] The fulfillment of Julian's desires for vision and illness located her beyond the purview of strict clerical supervision and enabled her to write a vernacular theology which frequently surpassed accepted teachings.[4] Julian's achievement is all the more remarkable given the relative paucity of insular models of female visionaries. While compassion and contrition, *affectus* and *effectus*, were commonly urged in English devotional texts, visions and severe self-mortification were specifically discouraged.[5] The major texts of the English anchoritic tradition treat with skepticism the idea that the anchoress might have an unmediated visionary encounter with God, and draw attention to the dangers of vision by conflating woman's sight with the deceptive, even diabolical, vision of a woman's body.[6] Indeed, Ann Warren has suggested that English anchoritism itself may have served as a means of exerting the kind of ecclesiastical and clerical control necessary to preclude the development of the innovative spiritual movements that shaped late medieval religious culture on the Continent.[7] The increasing popularity of English anchoritism in the late Middle Ages represents not the translation of new religious movements into a traditionally English idiom, but a conservative insular reaction to Continental innovations.[8]

As an English anchoress, visionary, and theologian, then, Julian was something of a hybrid. The complexity of her position may have influenced one of the *Revelation*'s most interesting features: Julian's disavowal of her youthful desires for divine visions and penitential suffering. This disavowal, however, is more fruitfully understood as an integral component of the *Revelation*'s vernacular theology. Julian's theology is incompatible with the logic of personal transcendence and corporeal abjection that underwrites much late medieval female piety. She therefore distances herself from these aspects of the mystical tradition by presenting her desires for vision and illness as part of an earlier period of spiritual development. Julian's emendation of the Short Text's "I desyrede thre graces be the gyfte of god" (1; 201) to the Long Text's more precise "which creature desyred before thre gyftes by the grace of god" (2; 285) specifies that she made these requests well before the time of the visions, and even conveys a sense of estrangement from her former self. She gently suggests that a youthful sense of self-importance may have motivated her desires for a vision, "that I might haue seen bodilie the passion that

our lord suffered for me" (2; 285), and for an illness, which "might haue ben to my reward when I shuld haue died" (2; 287). Julian's presentation of herself here as a privileged recipient of Christ's sacrifice and her hope for personal favor in heaven (expressed through her uncharacteristic use of the singular *me* and *my*) are inconsistent with the *Revelation*'s later discussions of God's universal presence and the collective nature of salvation.[9]

Throughout her *Revelation* Julian uses the visions she received during her painful illness to illustrate the pervasiveness of the sacred and the value of healing. These are not merely paradoxical assertions. Julian attempts to universalize her seemingly unique experience of divine vision by syncretizing the mystical and the material, the unmediated vision and the devotional object. This syncretism is illuminated by her use of the Holy Vernicle, the image of Christ's face which miraculously appeared on Veronica's cloth. The image of the Holy Vernicle informs and illuminates Julian's conception of vision, interpretation, and mediation. Like Julian, Veronica received an image of Christ during a time of great suffering. But the legend of Veronica, like Julian's *Revelation*, suggests that the Passion should not be a model for human suffering, but a sign of healing.

"I desyred a bodely sight"

By specifying that she made her requests for vision and illness conditional on the will of God, Julian suggests that these experiences have been endowed with divine approbation. That they seem to require such authorization reflects the unconventional, even illicit, nature of Julian's visions in her regional context. Julian reinforces this impression in the Short Text, when she asserts that her desire to witness the Passion did not imply any lack of faith in official representations of the event:

> Me thought I wolde haue bene that tyme with Mary Mawdeleyne and with othere that were Crystes loverse, that I myght have sene bodylye the passionn of oure lorde that he sufferede for me, that I myght have sufferede with hym as othere dyd that lovyd hym, not withstandynge that I leevyd sadlye alle the peynes of Cryste as halye kyrke schewys and techys, and also the payntyngys of crucyfexes that er made be the grace of god aftere the techynge of haly kyrke to the lyknes of Crystes passyonn, als farfurthe as man ys witte maye reche. (1; 201–2)

Julian's concern that her desire for a "bodily sight" could be construed as a sign of discontent with devotional images reflects both the relative anomolousness of visionary experiences in the religious culture of late medieval England and contemporary sensitivity regarding the value of religious images.[10] In England during the latter decades of the fourteenth century criticizing or rejecting devotional images could have implied a much deeper and more pervasive criticism of the Church itself.

The veneration of images had been a defining characteristic of Christianity since its earliest centuries, and in late medieval England willingness to venerate images was a particularly important means of distinguishing the orthodox from the dissident.[11] In his *Treatise on the Decalogue*, Wycliff argues that Christ's human body authorized images, which serve as "commemorative signs." While Wycliff reiterates the traditional, threefold defense of images as reminders of the past, stimuli to devotion, and books for the uneducated, he also objects to the worship of images and to inappropriate representations of God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity.[12] Because most Lollards maintained a critical stance toward the cult of images, ranging from mild iconomachy to full-scale iconoclasm, willingness to venerate images became a standard test of religious orthodoxy in late medieval England.[13] Julian's desire for a bodily vision does not suggest she was a Lollard, but it does signal her desire for a more dynamic and immediate religious experience than was generally sanctioned.[14]

Julian's visions authorize her vernacular theology, which diverges in important respects from the orthodoxy of her time. In particular, Julian's soteriology of universal salvation marks the *Revelation*'s most powerful and striking challenge to eschatological doctrines. Universal salvation is the *Revelation*'s open secret, the probable result of the mysterious act that will make "all things well" on the last day. It is also supported by the imagery that pervades the *Revelation*, images of the social body that refuse the ideology of abjection, representing instead a borderless body in a continuous process of becoming. As a woman who is implicitly but powerfully challenging the clerical orthodoxies of her time, in the very act of writing a vernacular theology as well as through the content of her theology, Julian maintains a complicated and potentially contradictory relationship to the issue of religious authority.[15] For while her visions serve as the crucial authorizing basis of her writing, she is also writing a radically democratic theology.

Julian negotiates the issue of visionary authority through the hybrid conception of power found in the phrase "as to my sight."[16] While "as to my sight" ("according to my vision") refers the reader back to the authoritative

vision as the foundation of Julian's vernacular theology, "as to my sight" ("in my view") also suggests the perspectival nature of her insights. "As to my sight" alludes to Julian's vision as the authoritative basis of her theology, but Julian's text does not profess or aspire to linguistic "full presence"; it does not aspire to pure, unmediated signification. The experience she describes in her *Revelation* bears little similarity to the confident totalities Continental mystics often record.[17] In fact, as she represents them, Julian's visions themselves are far from complete, bordering at times on the incoherent. Julian frequently describes her incomprehension and her struggle to understand the showings, which are fragmented, often inscrutable, sometimes demanding decades of interpretive labor; as she writes, "euery shewyng is full of pryvytes" (51; 519).[18] The revelation as a whole is not simply an unmediated encounter with the sacred, but a synthesis of the individual showings, the whole series, and her twenty-year process of interpretation (51; 519–20). Just as Julian's process of interpretation is intrinsic to the revelation, so too is the interpretation of the reader a necessary part of the revelation as it has been made to all people. She therefore allows the reader to experience first-hand the showings' linguistic complexities. The *Revelation*'s surprising metaphors, elusive antinomies, partially revealed secrets, and unresolved dilemmas require the active participation of the reader in the creation of meaning.

Yet, although Julian can transmit the language of the showings to the reader through the text of the *Revelation*, she recognizes that this does not constitute their entirety. When she reflects on her special enjoyment of God's "curtesy and homelynesse," Julian notes that visions are granted to few people: "this marvelous homelynesse may no man know in this lyfe, but yf he haue it by specialle schewyng of oure lorde." Of course, she continues, "gret plenty of grace" can also provide the foundation for a showing (7; 315). Grace strengthens faith, and faith in turn preserves the showing. Hence, Julian concludes:

> The schewyng is made to whom that god wylle, pleynely techyth the same openyd and declaryd, with many prevy poyntes be longyng to our feyth and beleue which be wurshipfull to be knowen. And whan the shewyng which is yeven for a tyme is passyde and hydde, than fayth kepyth it by grace of the holy goste in to our lyuys ende. And thus by the shewyng it is none other than the feyth, ne lesse ne more, as it may be seene by oure lordes menyng in the same matter, by than it come to the last ende. (7; 316)

Even as Julian recognizes that the showing "is yeven for a tyme," her use of the present tense indicates that it continues; even as she recognizes that her experience of the sacred is due to a "specialle shewyng of our lorde," she also asserts that anyone with "fayth and beleue and charyte" can also experience Christ's "curtesy and homelynesse."[19] The showing was not revealed to her alone, but "to whom god wylle": "In alle this I was much steryde in chertye to myne evyn christen, that they myght alle see and know the same that I sawe, for I wolde that it were comfort to them, for alle this syght was shewde in generalle" (8; 319).

Yet, how can Julian's visions be generalized, extended to a wider audience? Even the most perfect representation is still only a representation of the original experience, which derives its unique power from the fact that it is an unmediated encounter with the sacred. Julian's modern status as a "mystic," and her authority as a medieval visionary, are based on the putative immediacy of her contact with the divine. Julian's initial description of the first showing asserts its unmediated, and therefore miraculous, nature:

> And in this sodenly I saw the reed bloud rynnyng downe from vnder the garlande, hote and freyshely, plentuously and liuely, right as it was in the tyme that the garland of thornes was pressed on his blessed head. Right so, both god and man, the same that sufferd for me, I conceived truly and mightly that it was him selfe that shewed it me without anie meane. (4; 294)

Rather than deny the immediacy of her vision of Christ's bleeding head, Julian calls the very idea of mediation into question. In place of the Short Text's distinction between Julian's desire to witness the Passion in a vision and the more normative experience of viewing the Passion through the medium of a sacred image, the Long Text includes an extended consideration of mediation itself.[20]

In the midst of her discussion of her first revelation, Julian reflects on the superiority of the unmediated encounter with God:

> This shewing was geuen to my vnderstanding to lerne our soule wisely to cleue to the goodnes of god; and in that same tyme the custome of our praier was brought to my mind, how that we vse for vnknowing of loue to make menie meanes. Then I saw verily that it is more worshipp to god and more verie delite that we feaithfully praie to him selfe of his goodnes, and cleue ther to by his grace, with true vunderstanding and stedfast beleue, then if we

made all the meanes that hart maie thinke. For if we make all these meanes, it is to litle and not ful worshippe to god; but in his goodnes is all the hole, and ther fayleth right nought. (6; 304)

Meanes here may have at least three meanings: a person who serves as a mediator, a mediating object, and/or intercessory prayers of request.[21] Julian seems to be objecting to forms of instrumentality and noting the superiority of the encounter with God that is unmediated by official rituals or sacred objects.[22] In suggesting that intercessory objects are unnecessary, even a distraction from the direct experience of God, Julian reiterates the traditional belief in a hierarchy of devotional practices, proceeding from the contemplation of an image to imageless devotion.

Yet Julian has another simultaneous, seemingly contradictory, thought, in which she considers the actual value of intercessors and intercessory objects. These range from the intellectual (the flesh and blood of Christ), to the material (the cross), to the human (the saints):

For thus as I shall say cam to my mynd in the same tyme. We praie to god for his holie flesh and for his precious bloud, his holie passion, his dere worthy death and worshipfull woundes, for all the blessed kyndnes, and the endlesse life that we haue of all this, it is of the goodnes of god. And we praie for his sweete mothers loue that bare him, and all the helpe that we haue of her, it is of his goodnes. And we praie him for his holie crosse that he died on, and all the helpe and all the vertu that we haue of that crosse, it is of his goodnes. And on the same wyse, all the helpe that we haue of speciall sainctes and of all the blessed companie of heauen, the dere worthie loue and the holie endles frinshipe that we haue of them, it is of his goodnes. (6; 304–5)

Finally, Julian realizes, "the meanes that the goodnes of god hath ordeineth to helpe vs be full faire and many. Of which the chiefe and principall meane is the blessed kynde that he toke of the maiden, with all the meanes that went before and come after, which be langyng to our redemption and to our endles saluation" (6; 305). The humanity of Christ, Julian concludes, can be encountered by means of the humanity all people share with him. That humanity is quintessentially expressed in the body, and Julian's conception of the body as a means to God is resolutely nonhierarchical. She describes God's presence in the body as follows:

> A man goyth vppe ryght, and the soule of his body is sparyde as a purse fulle feyer. And whan it is tyme of his nescessery, it is openyde and sparyde ayen fulle honestly. And that it is he that doyth this, it is schewed ther wher he seyth he comyth downe to vs to the lowest parte of oure nede. For he hath no dispite of that he made, ne he hath no disdeyne to serue vs at the sympylest office that to oure body longyth in kynde, for loue of the soule that he made to his awne lycknesse. (6; 306–7)

Julian uses the obsolete *soule*, derived from the Old English *sufol* "(cooked, digested) food," to refer to the digested contents of the stomach that are passed out of the body ("the lowest parte of oure need") through the goodness of God ("the highest praier").[23] The *soule* that is the digested food and excrement is compared to the *soule* that dwells in God, conflating the lowest corporeal function with the highest spiritual part of the soul. Julian's conclusion, therefore, does not invert the hierarchy of unmediated and mediated devotion but rather recognizes their imbrication:

> Wher for it pleaseth him that we seke him and worshippe him by meanes, vnderstanding and knowing that he is the goodnes of all. For to the goodnes of god is the highest praier, and it cometh downe to vs to the lowest party of our need. It quickened our sowle and maketh it leue, and make it to waxe in grace and in vertu. It is nerest in kynde and redyest in grace, for it is the same grace that the soule sekyth and ever schalle, tylle we knowe oure god verely, that hath vs all in hym selfe beclosyde. (6; 305–6)

Julian conceives of the incarnated Christ as having both sanctified humanity and humanized the sacred.

Having attained this insight, Julian reconsiders her first showing, the image of Christ's bleeding head. She describes the vision a second time, now with almost microscopic attention to the size, shape, and color of the drops of blood:

> The grett droppes of blode felle downe fro vnder the garlonde lyke pelottes, semyng as it had comynn ouȝte of the veynes. And in the comyng ouȝte they were browne rede, for the blode was full thycke; and in the spredyng abrode they were bryght rede. . . .
>
> The plentuoushede is lyke to the droppes of water that falle of the evesyng of an howse after a grete shower of reyne, that

> falle so thycke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wyt. And for the roundnesse they were lyke to the scale of heryng in the spredyng of the forhede. (7; 311–12)

The drops of blood remind Julian of pellets, raindrops, and herring scales, quotidian objects Julian imbues with a sense of sanctity by virtue of their resemblance to Christ's blood. These metaphors do not much help the reader envision the sight Julian is describing, nor do they render the image more mimetically real. (How much do they really help us imagine the concepts of plenitude and roundness?) Julian seems to be less concerned with making the sacred familiar than with making the familiar sacred. Raindrops falling from a roof and scales of a fish are individually distinct, while they also partake in larger patterns. The mutuality inherent in the image, which serves as both a vehicle for the divine to inhabit and as a means of conceptualizing the divine, is suggested by the nature of these imbricated objects.

While the first revelation's image of Christ's bleeding head suggests the sanctity of the material world, with its rich metaphoric possibilities, Julian's second revelation is obscure, dark, and ugly:

> And after this I saw with bodely sight in the face of the crucifixe that hyng before me, in þe which I beheld contynually a parte of his passion: dyspyte, spyttyng, solewyng and buffetyng, and manie languryng paynes, mo than I can tell, and offten chaungyng of colour. And one tyme I saw how halfe the face, begynnyng at the ere, over ȝede with drye bloud, tyll it closyd in to the myd face, and aftyr that the other halfe beclosyd on the same wyse; and there whiles it vanyssched in this party, evyn as it cam. (10; 324–25)

Although this image is dark and fearful, Julian is refused the additional light she requests to see more clearly.[24] Her confusion is compounded by her uncertainty over whether this face is a showing at all (10; 325, 327). Despite its obscurity and ugliness, however, this image of Christ's face, changing color and covered by a mobile layer of dried blood, is continuously present throughout the showings.

Julian comes to an understanding of the second showing by accepting her initial confusion and finding meaning in incomprehension. While the continuity of the vision reflects God's pervasiveness in the universe, extending, Julian notes, even to the bottom of the sea, the obscurity of the

vision signifies human blindness to God. Yet this obscurity is actually a good thing, she argues, because it catalyzes an endless process of seeking a more clear, legible vision of God:

> if a man or woman wer there vnther the brode water, and he myght haue syght of god, so as god is with a man contynually, he shoulde be safe in sowle and body, and take no harme. . . . For he will that we beleue that we see hym contynually, thow that vs thynke that it be but litle; and in the beleue he maketh vs evyr more to gett grace, for he will be seen, and he will be sought, and he will be abyden, and he will be trustyd. (10; 326–27)

Julian concludes, "And thus I saw him and sought him, and I had hym and wantyd hym; and this is and should be our comyn workyng in this lyfe, as to my syght" (10; 326). The contemplation and seeking of God is the essence of human life, common in that it is shared by all, common in that it is a daily experience, and common in its essential humility.

Despite the differences between the first and second images of Christ's face, Julian's second revelation extends and deepens the first revelation's assertion of divine omnipresence. The repulsive appearance of the face demands interpretation, the process of seeking which is fundamental to Julian's understanding of the spiritual life. And just as Christ's flowing blood in the first revelation reminded Julian of pellets, herring scales, and raindrops, the sight of Christ's face in the second revelation also reminds Julian of a familiar object: "It made me to thynke of the holie vernacle of Rome, which he portrude with this one blessed face, when he was in his hard passion, wilfully goyng to his death, and often chaungyng of coloure, of the brownhead and the blackhead, rewlyhead and leenhead" (10; 328). Julian thinks of the Holy Vernicle, the cloth on which Christ's image was imprinted when Veronica wiped his face during the Passion. The Holy Vernicle or veronica (*vera icon*) was the first indulgenced image, and the *sudarium,* the cloth on which the image was imprinted, was one of Rome's most popular relics.[25] The seeking and beholding of Julian's second revelation is literalized in the pilgrimages undertaken by those who would see the *sudarium,* thereby receiving considerable remission from temporal punishment for sins.[26]

While "beholding" the image on the *sudarium* is the pilgrim's reward for the arduous "seeking" of the pilgrimage journey, the reproduction of the Holy Vernicle in Julian's vision signifies the internalization of pilgrimage into

a continuous personal journey of seeking and beholding Christ. Of course, many medieval texts represent life as a pilgrimage, an arduous journey through an alien land to a final destination in heaven: "It is true that all people in this world are in exile and live in wilderness outside their true country; everyone is a pilgrim or traveler in a foreign country where he may in no way live, but must every hour and minute of the day be passing on his way, as the Bible says: 'For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come' (Hebrews 13:14)."[27] Julian's discussion of the paradox of simultaneous seeking and beholding, however, marks a departure from this understanding of life as an experience of endlessly deferred desire, and the beatific vision as an endlessly receding goal for the living. For Julian, God's presence in the material world obviates the need to renounce it, while the partial nature of human comprehension forestalls complacency.

Julian conveys her belief in the omnipresence of the sacred, the material world's potential to express the nature of God, through her allusion to the veronica, one of the most frequently reproduced sacred images in the late Middle Ages. In Rome, licensed painters (*pictores Veronicarum*) and merchants (*mercanti di Veronichi*) enjoyed monopolies on producing the images and selling them to pilgrims who often (like Chaucer's Pardoner) wore the small reproductions on their hats.[28] But images of the veronica were not always mimetic replicas of the *sudarium*; often they bore little resemblance to the original.[29] Despite their lack of verisimilitude, these vernicles shared the *sudarium*'s sacred power. When in 1249 Jacques Pantaléon sent his sister, the abbess of Montreuil-les-Dames, an image of a dark-skinned Christ instead of the *sudarium* she had requested, he urged her and her nuns to accept the substitute image as the veronica itself: "for reverence of that which it represents . . . receive it as the Holy Veronica, or the true likeness of it."[30] The image is sacred, he suggests, not as a result of its mimetic resemblance to the "original," but because it too is a "true likeness." Although the *sudarium* might have provided an accurate representation of Christ's physical appearance that could function as an authoritative template for further representations, more commonly as a sacred image it endowed images themselves with sacred power.[31]

As an *acheiropoitos*, an image not made by human hands, the veronica was an unmediated image of God bestowed upon a woman.[32] In this it resembled the visions of many late medieval religious women.[33] But while the visionary's was an essentially unreproducible experience, the veronica generated a multitude of images. Julian's comparison of her second revelation to the Holy Vernicle, therefore, invokes a logic of representation with

the capacity to generalize her visionary experience.[34] It was this very capacity, in fact, which made the appearance of the veronica a watershed in the history of the religious image in the West.[35] Popularized by Innocent III one year after the Fourth Lateran Council propounded the doctrine of transubstantiation, the veronica provided a visual corollary to the invisible presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Through the veronica, the laity could see the body they were asked to believe the Host had become. The veronica appealed to the visual imagination of the laity in a way that the Eucharist might not. Hans Belting has argued that due to the veronica "the world, above all the world of faith, allowed itself to be experienced by each individual beholder, by way of the material image and its convincing visual likeness of reality. This applies especially to lay viewers, who expected to participate more in the life of the Church, and by nonliterary means."[36] The availability of devotional images was crucial to the development of a lay piety that exceeded the control of ecclesiastical authority, and the marketing of images carved and painted by professional craftsmen, often in response to the specifications of lay patrons, was a source of anxiety to a clergy attempting to control access to the sacred.[37]

If Julian's allusion to the veronica suggests the sanctity of a whole range of images, natural and devotional, it also draws our attention to the imagistic qualities of the showings themselves. They begin when Julian sees a carving of Christ's face begin to bleed. Although she emphasizes the enormous quantity of blood, the potential verisimilitude of this meticulously rendered image is limited by the invisible frame that surrounds the bleeding head:

> The grett droppes of blode felle downe fro vnder the garlonde lyke pelottes, semyng as it had comynn ouȝte of the veynes. And in the comyng ouȝte they were browne rede, for the blode was fulle thycke; and in the spredynge abrode they were bryght rede. And whan it camme at the browes, ther they vannysschyd; and not wythstonding the bledyng contynued tylle many thynges were sene and vnderstondyd. (7; 311–12)

Julian's third vision of the Passion is also characterized by an enormous quantity of blood; she writes that had it been real, the blood would have soaked her bed and flooded the room: "And this was so plentuous to my syght that me thought if it had ben so in kynde and in substance, for that tyme it shulde haue made the bedde all on bloude, and haue passyde over all

about" (12; 342–43). However, the blood pouring from Christ's body does not touch her, because it too disappears at an invisible border: "The hote blode ranne out so plentuously that ther was neyther seen skynne ne wounde, but as it were all blode. And when it cam wher it shuld haue falle downe, ther it vanysschyd" (12; 342). The abundance of the blood which she sees but does not touch emphasizes the visual nature of the showing, and allows Julian to perceive the invisible borders of the vision.

The quantity of flowing blood in these two showings signifies the pervasiveness of the sacred and the power of divine forgiveness:

> Beholde and see the vertu of this precious plenty of hys dere worthy blode. It descendyd downe in to helle and brak her bondes, and delyuerd them all that were there which belongh to the courte of hevyn. The precious plenty of his dere worthy blode ovyrflowyth all erth, and is redy to wash all creatures of synne which be of good wyll, haue ben and shall be. The precious plenty of his dereworthy blode ascendyth vp into hevyn in the blessed body of our lorde Jesu Crist, and ther is in hym, bledyng, preyeng for vs to the father, and is and shal be as long as vs nedyth. And ovyr more it flowyth in all heauen, enjoying the saluacion of all mankynd that be ther and shall be, fulfylling the number that faylyth. (12; 344–45)

Its "precious plenty" represents Christ's salvific power, which broke the bonds of hell, covers the earth, continues to bleed in Christ's body, and "ovyr more it flowyth in all heauen" (12; 345).[38] Julian has not seen this blood enact these events; her understanding of the image's meaning is based on her ability to interpret its characteristics, and the image remains present until she can do so: "Not with standyng the bledyng contynued a whyle, tyll it myght be seen with avysement" (12; 342). The length of time during which a showing is present is not calibrated according to a mimetic standard of historical accuracy, but according to the length of time required for it to be understood.

Despite their lack of verisimilitude, Julian experiences great compassion for Christ through her visions: "The shewyng of Cristes paynes fylled me fulle of peynes, for I wyste welle he suffyryde but onys, but as he wolde shewe it me and fylle me with mynde, as I had before desyerde" (17; 364). Although she realizes that she is not witnessing the historical Crucifixion, she gains the compassion she had earlier requested. This compassion becomes nearly unbearable during her last vision of the Passion, when she

sees that the skin above the crown of thorns is threatening to tear from Christ's skull. His flesh resembles a torn and sagging cloth: "Wher thorow it was broken on pecys as a cloth, and saggyng downwarde, semyng as it wolde hastely haue fallen for heuynes and for lowsenes. And that was grete sorow and drede to me, for me thought that I wolde nott for my life haue seen it fall" (17; 362). But at this moment of nearly intolerable horror, when Julian is anticipating Christ's death, the image begins to change:

> And than I saw it was, for it beganne to dry and stynt a parte of the weyght that was rownd about the garland, and so it was enuyroned all about, as it were garland vpon garland. The garlonde of thornes was deyde with the blode; and that other garlond and the hede, all was one colowre, as cloteryd blode when it was dryed. The skynne and the flesshe that semyd of the face and of the body was smalle rympylde with a tawny coloure, lyke a drye bord when it is agyd, and the face more browne than the body. (17; 363)

At the moment of his greatest agony, Christ seems to metamorphose before her eyes into an image painted with blood on a board. The dynamism of the living vision has enacted its own transformation into the vernicle image of the Holy Face. Instead of Christ's death, Julian witnesses the reification of his image. Julian's visions of the Passion began with the vivification of the crucifix image of Christ's face, and they conclude with the image's recession into stasis. The intervening showings have been characterized by Julian's own dynamic engagement with their meaning and significance, an engagement, she suggests, available to all viewers of the sacred image.

"I desyred to haue all maner of paynes"

It seems that Julian's desires for vision and illness are fulfilled: she receives a vision of the Passion while suffering a severe and seemingly fatal illness. But the manner of their fulfillment forces Julian to rethink the significance of these desires. She has not seen the historical Crucifixion but a representation of it, which has nonetheless made her "filled of mind." And although this vision is shown to her during her illness, while she sees the visions she feels no physical pain. Her only pain comes from the anguish of seeing Christ suffer: "Here felt I stedfastly that I louyd Crist so much aboue my selfe that ther was no peyne that myght be sufferyd lyke to that sorow that I had to see hym in payne" (17; 365). This psychic pain is not generated by Julian's per-

sonal identification with Christ's suffering body; it is a pain of separation, of distance.[39] "For ever the hygher, the myghtyer, the swetter that the loue is, the more sorow it is to the lover to se that body in payne that he lovyd" (18; 366). Because Julian's suffering is commensurate with the degree of her love for Christ, rather than with her (feminine) bodily identification with Christ, it is available to all viewers of the Crucifixion.

The eighth showing reveals humanity's universal participation in Christ's suffering and death: "Here saw I a grett onyng betwene Crist and vs, to my vnderstondyng; for when he was in payne we ware in payne, and alle creatures that myght suffer payne sufferyd with hym" (18; 367). When Christ died, creation shared a common sorrow, "for it longyth kyndly to ther properte to know hym for ther lorde, in whom alle ther vertuse stondyth" (18; 367). This suffering did not derive from knowledge of Christ, or personal virtue, because it was founded in the nature (*kynde*) or essence (*properte*) of created beings. Julian specifies that it was shared by even those who were Christ's enemies, such as Pilate, and those who did not know of Christ, such as Dionysius of France (18; 367–69).[40] Their identification with Christ was based in their humanity; it was not a mark of unusual personal sanctity.[41]

Having experienced the pain of seeing Christ suffer, Julian regrets having desired to share in his physical pain: "And in alle thys tyme of Cristes presens, I felte no peyne, but for Cristes paynes; than thought me I knew fulle lytylle what payne it was that I askyd, and as a wrech I repentyd me, thyngkyng if I had wyste what it had be, loth me had been to haue preyde it. For me thought my paynes passyd ony bodely deth" (17; 364). Julian realizes that the vision has a power of its own, one neither limited to a unique historical moment nor specific to certain individuals. In addition to eschewing the traditional identification of Christ's suffering body with female flesh, Julian also develops a critique of what David Aers has called "the self-punishing bodily imitations constructed around that model."[42] Julian's ideas regarding sin and suffering are, like her conception of vision and interpretation, informed by the images and narratives of Veronica and the Holy Vernicle.

Julian realizes that the ugliness of the vernicle image of Christ's face in her second revelation represents the human suffering and guilt which Christ accepted in order to redeem humanity: "he would for loue and for worshipe of man make hym selfe as lyke to man in this deadly lyfe in our fowlhede and in our wretchednes as man myght be without gylt; wherof it menyth, as is before sayd, it was the ymage and the lyknes of owr fowle

blacke dede where in our feyer bryght blessyd lorde hyd his godhede" (10; 330). Julian is careful to avoid the word *sin* here, stressing human actions and the pain they cause rather than the fallen will. Later, she reflects on the intensity of Christ's pain, an expression of the consequences of human sin:

> And with the beholdyng of thys, with alle the paynes that evyr were or evry shalle be, I vnderstode the passion of Criste for the most payne and ovyr passyng. . . . But I saw nott synne, for I beleue it had no maner of substannce, ne no part of beyng, ne it myght not be knowen but by the payne that is caused thereof. And thys payne is somthyng, as to my syȝte, for a tyme, for it purgyth and makyth vs to know oure selfe and aske mercy; for the passion of oure lorde is comfort to vs aȝenst alle thys, and so is his blessyd wylle. (27; 406–7)

The ugliness of the vision represents the pain and guilt which sin generates. While sin itself has no substance, pain "is somthyng" because it leads to self-understanding and greater intimacy with God. Like Christ's suffering, human suffering is redemptive:

> And the cause why that he sufferyth is for he wylle of hys goodnes make vs the eyers with hym in hys blysse. And for this lytylle payne that we suffer heer we shalle haue an hygh endlesse knowyng in god, whych we myght nevyr haue without that. And the harder oure paynes haue ben with hym in hys crosse, the more shalle our worschyppe be with hym in his kyngdom. (21; 381)

Because suffering is bound up with sin, it is impossible to value suffering intrinsically, and because sin is bound up with redemptive suffering, sin cannot lead to damnation, but, paradoxically, to salvation.

Like the *Revelation of Love*, the story of the Holy Vernicle considers human suffering and healing. Veronica's story traditionally begins well before the Passion, during Christ's public ministry, because she is identified in medieval sources as the Hemorrhissa:

> Now there was a woman suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, whom no one had been able to cure. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak; and the hemorrhage stopped at that instant. Jesus said, "Who touched me?" When

> they all denied that they had, Peter and his companions said, "Master, it is the crowds around you, pushing." But Jesus said, "Somebody touched me. I felt that power had gone out from me." Seeing herself discovered, the woman came forward trembling, and falling at his feet explained in front of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been cured at that very moment. "My daughter," he said, "your faith has restored you to health; go in peace." (Luke 8:43–48)[43]

Although *veronica* was not derived from *vera icon* as medieval commentators suggested, the linguistic echo may well have stimulated the association between the Hemorrhissa and the sacred image. Ewa Kuryluk explains the development of the Hemorrhissa story into the story of Veronica and her cloth with reference to the tendency of mythic narratives to form symmetrical patterns: a bleeding woman touches Christ's garment and is healed; later, the woman uses a cloth to soothe the bleeding face of Christ.[44] The Holy Vernicle is the material trace of Christ's sacrificial excess which also signifies the Hemorrhissa's bloody excess, transformed into the very medium of salvation.[45]

The story of the vernicle is one of suffering healed through faith and compassion. Christ's transgression of purity laws in allowing the bleeding woman to touch him and Veronica's emergence from the crowd of spectators to risk an act of kindness on the road to Golgotha are acts of consolation. In neither instance is suffering intrinsically valued; the cloth, with its representation of suffering, is also a reward for its relief. The image of the cloth arises in Julian's description of the flesh on Christ's head torn into pieces like a cloth. But just as Christ's robe and Veronica's cloth were means of healing and consolation, Julian's showing spares her the pain of witnessing Christ's final suffering. As the image of Christ's suffering becomes the vernicle image of the Holy Face, Julian recalls her earlier desires and regrets her request to share in Christ's pains. Observing that the showings have relieved her of physical pain, Julian realizes that her earlier desire for physical pain was born of ignorance (17; 364). Yet she does not blame herself, understanding that her desire to share in Christ's physical pain was a "grugyng and dawnger of the flessch without assent of the soule, in whych god assignyth no blame" (19; 372). She recognizes that the desire for suffering is contrary to "wylfulle choyse." While remorse is an "outward" response to the pain of sin, "wylfulle choyse" is an "inward" state of peace and love in which Christ can be "wysely and wyllfully" chosen. Self-abasement resulting from sin is not only unnecessary, Julian suggests, but destructive, with

the capacity to inhibit real spiritual growth. Upon this realization, Julian's visions of Christ's suffering disappear, and she sees Christ in glory, who asks, "Wher is now any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguysse?" (21; 379).[46]

The cloth image returns yet again in the *Revelation of Love*. When Julian realizes the degree of Christ's compassion, she extends her compassion for Christ's suffering to all "pepylle that shalle be savyd" (28; 408). Julian explains the nature of this salvation: "Holy chyrch shalle be shakyd in sorow and anguyssch and trybulacion in this worlde as men shakyth a cloth in the wynde; and to thys oure lorde answeryd, shewyng on this maner: A, a grett thyng shalle I make herof in hevyn of endlesse wurshyppe and of evyrlastyng joye" (28; 408). The suffering of the Church during the last days—represented here as a cloth shaken in the wind—will be transformed into a "grett thyng" through God's compassion. This act of compassion will ensure that all things will be well, because God will view humanity "as chyldren innocens and vnlothfulle" (28; 411).

The healing encounter between Veronica and Christ is a model for the encounter between text and reader, God and subject, which Julian develops in her *Revelation of Love*.[47] As she approaches the conclusion of her *Revelation*, Julian urges her readers to emulate Veronica. Like the Hemorrhissa, who trusts that touching Christ's garment will heal her ("If I can only touch his cloak I shall be well again" [Matt. 9:20–21]; "If I can touch even his clothes," she had told herself, "I shall be well again" [Mark 5:25–28]), humanity must seek out and touch God:

> Than is this þe remedy, þat we be a knowyn of oure wrechydnes and fle to oure lorde; for evyr the more nedyr þat we be, the more spedfulle it is to vs to touch hym. (77; 690)
>
> Flee we to oure lorde, and we shall be comfortyd. Touch we hym, and we shalle be made cleene. (77; 694)
>
> And whan we be fallen by freelte or blyndnes, than oure curtesse lord touchyng vs steryth vs and kepyth vs. And than wylle he that we se oure wrechydnesse and mekely be it aknowen; but he wylle nott that we abyde therwith, ne he wylle nott þat we besy vs gretly aboute oure accusyng, ne he wylle nott that we be to wrechydfulle on oure selfe. (79; 705–6)

These passages echo the story of the Hemorrhissa and suggest that the narrative was important to Julian's understanding of suffering and healing. The

vernicle, which was the material sign of the healing touch, is recreated in Julian's showings as a signifier of healing. Having realized that her earlier request for suffering was a reaction to sin rather than "wylfulle choyse," Julian emphasizes that her revelation is not the product of her feminine affinity with the suffering body of Christ, but is available to any person.

The *Revelation*'s last chapter is less a conclusion than a series of reflections on beginning: "This boke is begonne by goddys gyfte and his grace, but it is nott yett performyd, as to my syght" (86; 731). The book has been begun by Julian and must be continued in the reader; its performance attends on processes of both individual and social transformation. Julian's original desires for a bodily vision and a grave illness have been both fulfilled and transformed. Just as the revelation was presented to her, so it has been presented to the reader, who must now undertake the work of interpretation. The performance of this interpretation will result in an experience of healing, both individual and collective, resulting, perhaps, in the creation of yet another real likeness of Christ. By recreating Julian's experience in the reader, the *Revelation* avoids fixing mysticism as a solitary act of transcendence, or a relic of some bygone spiritual authenticity. Julian conceives of revelation in a continuous present, operating through transformative relationships with the sacred.

Notes

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1 Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge O.S.A. and James Walsh S.J. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978), 2; 285. Subsequent references will be to Colledge and Walsh's edition of the Short and Long texts. References begin with chapter numbers, so as to facilitate cross-referencing other editions of the work, followed by page numbers. I have chosen Colledge and Walsh's edition of the Long Text, based on the Sloane manuscript, as the basis for my work because it includes an important passage (chap. 6, lines 35–39) that is omitted from the Paris manuscript; see note 24 below.

Few modern critics understand Julian's self-description as "vnlettyrde" to mean that she was "illiterate" in the modern sense, unable to read or write. Her statement may indicate an inability to read Latin, or it may simply be a formulaic expression of

modesty. Denise Nowakowski Baker provides a thorough summary of the issue in *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 8–11.

2 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body* (New York: Zone Books, 1992). David Aers has recently argued that Julian's analytic approach to the showings distinguishes her from the tradition of late medieval "women's spirituality" characterized by abjection and suffering: "Instead, the interrogations of image, exegesis, and reflections discourage any affective identifications with the crucified body, discourage any attempt to compose an 'imitatio Christi' as an imitation of a suffering, wounded, and bleeding body" ("The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996], 86–87). Although I will argue that Julian uses a variety of strategies to distance herself from the kind of self-abjecting mysticism Aers describes, this essay will make apparent my disagreement with Aers's assertion that "there is absolutely no indication that Julian presents herself as a bleeding body or has any wish to be viewed in this way" (87). I do not, however, understand Julian's use of the image of the bleeding body to be based in an essentialist medieval notion of the female body as wet, bleeding, and united with the suffering Christ, as Elizabeth Robertson has suggested in "Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 142–67.

3 Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion," in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 126.

4 For a thorough discussion of Julian's subtle manipulation of contemporary symbols of power and authority, see Lynn Staley, "Julian of Norwich and the Late Fourteenth-Century Crisis of Authority," in *Powers of the Holy*, 107–78.

5 Texts urging compassion and contrition include Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum*, the *Prickynge of Love*, and Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*. See Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book*, 20–33, for a discussion of these and other texts.

6 *The Ancrene Wisse* warns the anchoress of the devil's deceptions: "Regard any vision you may see, whether in dreams or waking, as mere delusion, for it is nothing but his guile. He has so often deceived wise men of holy and sublime life: like the one he came to in the wilderness in the form of a woman" (*Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson [New York: Paulist, 1991], 130). Rolle's *Form of Living* echoes the *Ancrene Wisse*'s admonition to beware of the devil's incursions in the form of an "angel of light," and discourages the anchoress from paying attention to sleeping or waking visions (*Richard Rolle: The*

English Writings, trans. and ed. Rosamund S. Allen [New York: Paulist, 1988], 158, 159). Although Rolle concedes that it is possible to encounter the Holy Spirit in a dream, he stresses that this is unlikely and suggests that interest in dreams may be a form of vanity (160–61). Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* builds on the earlier texts by interpolating the dangerous vision of woman into the anchoress's own mind, where it represents the sins of self-love that bar her from encountering Christ: "If you look at it plainly, this image is all wrapped up in black stinking clothes of sin, such as pride, envy, wrath, *accidie*, covetousness, gluttony and lechery," (*The Scale of Perfection*, trans. and ed. John P. H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward [New York: Paulist, 1991], 124). Hilton compares the anchoress's interior sinfulness to a garden corrupted from within by a polluted spring (126). These images of polluted rivers and contaminated gardens evoke a specifically feminine sinfulness by drawing on medical characterizations of female physiology as cold and wet, as well as the courtly and religious image of female sexuality as an enclosed garden.

7 English anchoritism became more popular, especially among women, during the period of lay devotional innovation on the Continent. According to Warren, 48 of 96 English anchorites in the twelfth century and 123 of 198 in the thirteenth century were women (*Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 22). Anchoritism seems to have been perceived as a feminine practice, perhaps because men had more religious options and therefore a greater variety of religious identities. See Patricia J. F. Roof, "The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 2, *Peaceweavers*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian T. Shank, Cistercian Studies Series 72 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 124. Originally intended to protect nuns from Viking marauders, over time female enclosure was reconceived as a way of protecting men from the ostensibly aggressive and threatening sexuality of women. See Jane Tibbets Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (500–1100)," in *Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 1, *Distant Echoes*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian T. Shank (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 63.

8 The religious climate of late medieval England has recently been described as "conservative," characterized by "caution" and "parochialism" (Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book*, 6; Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Speculum* 68 [1993]: 646). Religious options for women were particularly attenuated. Continental innovations such as beguines, Franciscan tertiaries, and even most heretical groups were never established in England (Warren, *Anchorites*, 21). Probably because of its close trading ties with the Continent, Norwich was the only city in England containing communities of women resembling Continental beguinages. See Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370–1532*, Studies and Texts 66 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1984), 64–66; and Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 22. Even English convents were in a state of decline, as Eileen Power demonstrates in *Medieval English*

Nunneries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922). Power's somewhat uncritical use of sources emphasizing the failings of nuns is countered, however, by Coburn Graves in "Stixwould in the Marketplace," in *Distant Echoes*, ed. Nichols and Shank, 213–36.

9 Colledge and Walsh note, "Usually Julian in making her longer version is careful to change such personal pronouns from singular to plural to emphasize the applicability of the showings to every man's spiritual condition" (*Showings*, 285 n. 11). Later, when Julian asks to know the fate of a woman she loved, she is gently admonished, "Take it generally, and beholde the curtesy of thy lorde god as he shewyd to the, for it is more worshype to god to beholde hym in alle than in any specyalle thyng" (35; 432).

10 See Watson, "Composition," 657–66.

11 In 787 the Council of Nicaea made the theology of the image intrinsic to the theology of the Incarnation. The belief that Christ was both fully human and fully divine, of two natures, was a precondition for the representation of Christ in his humanity; the image of Christ was, in turn, proof of his humanity, and a necessary antecedent to faith in the Incarnation. As the Nicaean Council declared, "What is wholly real must become an image; only by becoming an image does it bear testimony to its reality" (cited in Hans von Campenhausen, "The Theological Problem of Images in the Early Church," in *Tradition and Life in the Church: Essays and Lectures in Church History*, trans. A. V. Littledale [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968], 199). The willingness to venerate images was a litmus test of Christian orthodoxy, and after the end of the Church's early doctrinal debates, the veneration of sacred images was used to distinguish Christians from both Jews and Muslims, who were routinely characterized as idolaters (Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 181 and passim). In his interrogation of the Lollard William Thorpe, for example, Archbishop Thomas Arundel reiterates the Church's traditional defense of images, on the grounds that images bear testimony to the reality of the Incarnation: "'Lewid losel, in þe olde lawe, bifore þat Crist toke mankynde, was no liknesse of ony persone of þe Trinyte neiþer schewid to man ne knowen of dedli man, but now siþ Crist bi cam man it is leful to haue ymagis to schewe his manhood" ("The Testimony of William Thorpe," in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. Anne Hudson, EETS o.s. 302 [London: Oxford University Press, 1993], 57).

12 Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts I: Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 99.

13 Ibid., 97.

14 Archbishop Arundel, with the help of clerks like Walter Hilton and Nicholas Love, attempted to defend traditional practices and ecclesiastical hegemony against the challenges posed by both Lollardy and Richard Rolle's legacy of religious sensuality, which had particular influence in the eremitical movement. See J. P. H. Clark, "Late Fourteenth-Century Cambridge Theology and the English Contemplative Tradition," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, Exeter Symposium 5, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), 4; also see Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Vision-*

aries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1988), 177–87, 208–45.

15 See Nicholas Watson, " Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 145–88.

16 Examples include the following: "for wher Jhesu appireth the blessed trinitie is vnderstand, as to my sight" (4; 295–96); "for aboue her is nothing that is made but the blessed manhood of Christ, as to my sight" (4; 298); "this is and should be our comyn workyng in this life, as to my syght" (10; 326); "thys is the hyghest profer that our lorde god myght make to mannes soule, as to my syght" (22; 386); "for they were in þe hyghest, as to my syght, for ther in is comprehendyd I can nott telle what" (26; 403); "it passyth the vnderstandyng of all creatures in this life, as to my syght" (42; 472); "For truly, as to my syght, yf god myght be wroth a whyle, we shulde neyther haue lyfe ne stede ne beyng" (49; 506). The phrase "as to my vnderstondyng" is also used extensively and apparently interchangeably with "as to my sight," reinforcing the sense of "sight" as both comprehension and vision. Julian also uses the phrase "I saw" interchangeably with "I vnderstode," to the same effect.

17 The literature of the Continental mystics is often the transcription of angelic monologues or conversations between the mystic and an angel, saint, or God, and is therefore presented as whole and unchangeable. Hildegard of Bingen, for example, warns, "Thence, let no man be so audacious as to add anything to this writing, or to take anything away from it, lest he be blotted out from the book of life, and from all happiness under the sun, for these things were brought forth by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit simply" (*The Book of the Divine Works of a Simple Man*, trans. Francesca Maria Steele in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], 157). Alternatively, mystics such as Angela of Foligno describe their experience as such a complete understanding of God as to be inexpressible, and can only denigrate lesser efforts to express divine goodness: "nothing is preached about the delectation of God. Those who preach cannot preach about this, and what they do preach they don't understand. This is what he who led me in this vision said to me" (*Liber de Vere Fidelium Experientis, The Book of the Experience of the Truly Faithful*, trans. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 258–59). In both cases, the mystic's vision is a totality in some tension with language, not because she herself is unsure of her vision's meaning, but because this comprehension can only be expressed with the greatest of care, if at all. Hildegard's effort to convey the perfect wholeness of her text and Angela's assertion that "nothing" can be said about God both exhibit the dilemma intrinsic to all efforts to represent in language the unmediated experience of the divine. See Sarah Beckwith, "The Transcendent and the Historical: Inventing the Discourse of Mysticism," in *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993).

18 When Julian does receive a last divine insight, fifteen years after the original revelation, it offers her a hermeneutic based on the vision's polysemousness, its multiple lay-

ers of meanings: "For twenty yere after the tyme of the shewyng saue thre monthys I had techyng inwardly as I shall sey: It longyth to the to take hede to alle þe propertes and the condescions that were shewed in the example, though þe thyngke that it be mysty and indefferent to thy syght" (51; 520–21).

19 Julian's desire to minimize her own role contrasts with Mary of Oignes and Christina Mirabilis, whose visions are expressed in deeply personal ways, and the *Visions* of Hadewijch of Brabant, which stress her own sanctity, her unique physical relationship with Christ, and her superiority to other souls (*Visions*, trans. Mother Columba Hart, in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 195–96, 197–98).

20 The substitution is characteristic: in the place of the Short Text's simple assertion of her orthodox intentions, Julian's Long Text analyzes the problem of images, drawing complex, and only superficially orthodox, conclusions.

21 Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross discuss the range of meanings conveyed by *mene*, and argue that it constitutes one of the semantically rich "word-knots" Julian uses throughout the *Revelation*. "The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England V*, 61–62.

22 Colledge and Walsh suggest that she "seems to be inveighing gently against the wrong use of intercessory prayer, easily tinged with superstition (as witnessed by the ludicrous claims for 'indulgenced' devotions so common in her age)" (*Showings*, 304).

23 Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 306 n. 35.

24 The subtlety of the modulation of the first image into the second actually may be a source of confusion here, for what Julian describes as the first and second showings may actually reflect not distinct images of Christ's face but simply a shift in her own attention from the blood flowing from the crown of thorns on Christ's head to the dried blood congealed on his face.

25 The vernicle emerged as a significant object of devotion in the West in the thirteenth century. In his *Chronica majora*, Matthew Paris records that in 1216 Innocent III declared that the image on the *sudarium* had disconcertingly turned itself upside down. The pope conciliated the image by composing a prayer in its honor and granting an indulgence to those who recited it. The following account from the *Chronica majora* was taken over into Paris's *Historia Anglorum*:

> On the veronica and its authentication [*autenticatione*]. As was customary, Pope Innocent . . . led the image [*effigiem*] in procession from St. Peter's to the hospital of Sto. Spirito. When the procession was over and people wanted to put the image back in its place, it turned round of its own accord [*se per se girabat*], so that it stood on its head with the forehead below and the beard at the top. The pope was shocked, taking it as a bad omen [*triste presagium*] and on the brothers' advice wanted to make amends to God. He therefore composed an elegant prayer in honor of the image, to which he added a psalm with a number of verses, and granted a ten days' indulgence to all who said the prayer.

Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, trans. in Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A*

History of the Image before the Era of Art, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 543.

26 The *sudarium* was one of Rome's most important relics and an object of special veneration in Nicholas IV's 1289 indulgences and during the Jubilee of 1300 (Karen Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons* [Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1978], 85). The 1370 *Stacions of Rome* indicates that indulgences were proportional to the distance one traveled to view the image: 3,000 years for Romans, 9,000 years for Italians, and 12,000 years for foreigners (Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 221).

27 *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen: A Prose Version of the "Speculum Vitae,"* ed. Venetia Nelson, Middle English Texts 14 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1981), 71.

28 Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 221. Belting notes "Hoards of such mass-produced pictures, 7.8 × 4.2 cm in size, have recently been found behind the medieval choir stalls in the German convent of Wienhausen."

29 Of the variations in appearance among late medieval images of the veronica, perhaps most remarkable are the differences in coloring and the popularity of dark-skinned images of the Holy Face. The changing color of the image Julian sees in her second revelation seems to reflect her awareness of the variations in appearance among the Holy Vernicles which circulated in her time. Julian attributes the darkness of the image to the Passion which blackened Christ's skin. See Flora Lewis, "The Veronica: Image, Legend, and Viewer," in *England in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1985), 104.

30 Cited by Lewis in "The Veronica," 104.

31 The *sudarium* not only sanctified those who gazed on it and copied it; it also sanctified those who created and contemplated images of all kinds. Lewis has argued that "the making of such images may also have been seen by the illuminators as a devotional act in itself. They portrayed Christ's face in their own visual language, and such images did not necessarily carry the implication that they were accurate copies of a particular relic" ("The Veronica," 103).

32 Women were associated with image devotion in Byzantium as well as in the West. Byzantine women were especially devoted to icons, which, Judith Herrin notes, "is surely a reflection of their homebound situation, their restricted access to churches and their frustrated religious passion" ("Women and Faith in Icons in Early Christianity," in *Culture, Ideology, and Politics*, ed. Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982], 68–69). This argument is contested by Leslie Brubaker in "Image, Audience, and Place: Interaction and Reproduction," in *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 204–20. Brubaker argues that anecdotes of women devoted to images represent the devotion of those who are powerless, or the laity in general. Julian's *Revelation* is illuminated by the work of both Herrin and Brubaker, because her use of the "feminine" is metaphoric and strategic rather than essentialist.

33 Kathleen Biddick discusses the veronica as a symbol of the relationship between late medieval holy women and the Host: "the host served as veil, and the exteriorized feminine of the body served as the imprint" ("Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum* 68 [1993]: 414).

34 The private images illustrating late medieval psalters and books of hours established a precedent for engaging in visionary experience through a text. The image of Christ's wound in the *Psalter and Hours of Bonne of Luxembourg* provides an instance of this. As Jeffrey Hamburger has argued, "Whereas the other arma function as symbols, standing pars pro toto for the torments of the Passion, the side-wound confronts us as if we could see it directly. The miniature aspires to the immediacy of a vision, the visual has become a simulacrum of the visionary" ("The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Devotions," *Viator* 20 [1989]: 176).

35 While the image can be infinitely reproduced, the relic cannot be. Brubaker argues that the Western commitment to relics over images reflects the fact that "access to the power of the holy was more strictly controlled in the West than in the East." It is only when the religious culture of the laity begins to develop some independence in the later Middle Ages that the image takes on importance in the West. See "Introduction: The Sacred Image," in *Sacred Image*, ed. Ousterhout and Brubaker, 11; M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. and trans. J. Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 219–30; and R. I. Moore, "Family, Community, and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* ser. 5, 30 (1980): 49–69.

36 Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, N.Y.: A. D. Caratzas, 1990), 220. Also see Jeffrey Hamburger, "A *Liber Precum* in Sélestat and the Development of the Illustrated Prayer Book in Germany," *Art Bulletin* 73 (1991): 209–32, for a discussion of the relationship between image devotion and lay piety.

37 Belting characterizes the sanctification of the image as a democratizing phenomenon that challenged the relic, on the one hand, and the sacred text, on the other, both agents and symbols of ecclesiastical power. Michael Camille argues that during the "image explosion" of the late Middle Ages the Church was unable to control the proliferation of religious images: "If tension did arise between 'popular' belief and theological orthodoxy, it took the form of the church's loss of hegemony over representation" (*Gothic Idol*, 211). In his study of the use of icons in a late medieval German convent, Jeffrey Hamburger argues that the clergy encouraged image-worship among enclosed nuns and discouraged the ownership of sacred images by beguines and other women in closer contact with the laity, who might adopt the authority of a priest by virtue of these objects. Icons were a way to control enclosed women. See "The *Liber miraculorum* of Unterlinden: An Icon in Its Convent Setting," in *Sacred Image*, ed. Ousterhout and Brubaker, 147–90.

38 See Aers, *Powers of the Holy*, 85–86; and Nicholas Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England V*, 85.

39 In this sense, Julian is carefully avoiding a conception of female vision that can be found in late medieval devotional writing as well as in more modern cultural artifacts. The *Ancrene Wisse*, Rolle's *Form of Living*, and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* all express anxiety over woman's closeness to the vision, the ambiguity generated by the danger she poses as both subject and object of the gaze. Mary Ann Doane has argued that this intimacy with the gaze, and resulting difficulty with the analysis of the visual object, characterizes the Hollywood cinema's representation of the female hysteric (*The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987], esp. 1–37). While suffering reflects Julian's state of estrangement from Christ's Passion, Julian also conceives of spiritual growth as "growth toward a recognition of oneness or likeness" (Staley, *Powers of the Holy*, 177).

40 By contrast, in the text that Colledge and Walsh identify as Julian's source, the *Dialogue of St. Anselm and of our Lady*, Mary exempts the Jews from this experience of compassion, "Se, Anselme, how the elementes shewd tokens of compassionn for the deth of my sonn, excepte only the Iewys þat were indurate" (cited in Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 367 n. 15). Julian minimizes the reaction of nonhuman elements of creation, perhaps in order to stress the nature of the shared experience of humanity.

41 Julian expresses this idea more forcefully later in the *Revelation*, when she writes, "And I sawe no dyfference betwen god and oure substance, but as it were all god; and yett my vnderstandyng toke that oure substance is in god, that is to sey that god is god and oure substance is a creature in god" (54; 562–63). Although Colledge and Walsh's note argues that Julian's qualification of her statement is an attempt at clarification, I read it as a strategic withdrawal from a potentially dangerous assertion—which she nonetheless leaves in the text (see Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 562 n. 17).

42 Aers, *Powers of the Holy*, 103–4.

43 See also Matthew 9:20–22 and Mark 5:25–34. The story of the Hemorrhissa was elaborated in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and was popular in early Christian art. See J. E. L. Oulton and H. J. Lawlor, ed. and trans., *The Ecclesiastical History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1980), 2:175–77. The narrative of Veronica and her cloth itself has no biblical basis but was popular from the fourth century in the East and after the twelfth century in the West. See Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a "True" Image* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 6. The identification of Veronica with the Hemorrhissa is first mentioned in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the medieval Latin version of the Greek *Acts of Pilate*. See J. K. Elliot, ed. and trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 164–228. The *Cura sanitatis Tiberii* and *Vindicta Salvatoris*, two widely copied additions to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, feature Veronica as the owner of a cloth bearing Christ's image, which serves as the instrument of the emperor Tiberius's healing. See *Apocryphal New Testament*, 214–16; and Zbigniew Izydorczyk, ed., *The Medieval*

Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe (Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), 57–60. The Veronica story is echoed in the Byzantine *Life of St. Symeon the Younger*: "a woman, impelled by her faith, set up an image of St. Symeon the Younger in the inner part of her house. This worked miracles, being shadowed over by the holy spirit that dwelled in the saint, so that demoniacs were cleansed there, and persons afflicted with various diseases were healed. Among them was a woman who for fifteen years had had a constant discharge of blood. She came to see the image with much faith, and forthwith her discharge ceased. For she had said to herself, 'If only I see his likeness, I shall be saved'" (*Life of St. Symeon the Younger*, ed. P. Van den Ven as *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le jeune*, 2 vols. [Brussels: Soc. des Bollandistes, 1962–70], 1:98; trans. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents in the History of Art* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972], 134). The story was also included in the *Acts* of the Council of Nicaea. Brubaker notes that the woman only has to see the icon to be cured—even veneration is not necessary (*The Sacred Image*, 7).

44 Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth*, 7. The Veronica story is fueled by the sexual energy between Veronica and Christ, who twice experience physical intimacy in the midst of a crowd. The Hemorrhissa touches Christ, whose power leaves his body and enters her, thus stopping her menstrual flow and generating, Kuryluk suggests, a symbolic pregnancy.

45 Kuryluk contrasts the Old Testament's prohibitions on blood and the New Testament's use of blood as an agent of salvation. See *Veronica and Her Cloth*, 146.

46 The physical suffering Christ endured on the cross, Julian emphasizes, took place in the past. Christ suffered and died only once, and the universal participation in Christ's physical suffering, which Julian describes in her eighth revelation, took place at the unique moment of Christ's death. The singularity of this moment is reinforced by its conspicuous absence from Julian's showings. At the moment she expects to see him die, Christ instead turns his face to her "in blessydfulle chere" (21; 379). For a fuller discussion of this moment of the text, see Aers, *Powers of the Holy*, 90.

47 The healing power of the sacred image itself was the subject of legends such as one included in the *Acts* of the Council of Nicaea: A woman who had covered the walls of her house with images of Saints Cosmas and Damian became ill, and "Perceiving herself to be in danger, she crawled out of bed and, upon reaching the place where these most wise saints were depicted on the wall, she stood up leaning on her faith as upon a stick and scraped off with her fingernails some of the image. This she put into water, and upon drinking the mixture was immediately cured of her pains by the visitation of the saints" (Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 139).

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