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'... a purse fulle feyer': Feminising the Body in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*

Liz Herbert McAvoy

One short and startling passage from Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* (hitherto referred to as the Long Text) is rendered all the more remarkable because of its being attested to in only two witnesses, namely MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds anglais, 40 (P),¹ one of the three extant versions of the complete Long Text, and in MS London, Westminster Cathedral Treasury, 4 (W),² a version which consists of edited highlights of the Long Text. The passage in question, describing as it does the act of human defecation, has largely been ignored or overlooked by commentators in spite of its delicate treatment of a problematic subject and its absence from the two other extant manuscripts of the complete Long Text:

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 (pp. 306-07).

Whilst there is no doubt about the authorial status of this passage,³ its omission from the two other Long Text manuscripts would suggest that various copiers of the text felt it necessary to edit out this passage, possibly either for purposes of decorum, or because they failed to recognise the centrality of its thematic and pictorial relevance to the whole work. In the opinion of one recent editor of the Long Text, Marion Glasscoe,⁴ many of the passages which appear in P but not in S1 'do not make significant additions to the meaning', implying therefore that they were deliberately edited out (p. ix). Glasscoe also asserts that compressed and awkward sections of S1 are successfully expanded and clarified in P (p. x).

However, neither of these explanations adequately explains the omission in S1 and S2 of this remarkably vivid and evocative passage. Similarly, Glasscoe later speculates that other omissions in S1 and S2 could be attributed to scribal error (p. ix), which although highly likely in the examples which she quotes to substantiate her claim, does not serve to explain why the singular passage under discussion should not be included in the Sloane manuscripts, or indeed the earlier more autobiographical, less analytical Short Text.⁵ Surprisingly, although she notes in her edition (based on S1) the textual location of the omission and proceeds to quote it in full as an endnote (p. 9), she fails to comment on its content or the fact of omission itself. Two more recent editors, Edmund College and James Walsh, whose edition of the Long Text is based on P, have been slightly more helpful but, although glossing some of the passage's terminology as we shall see, nevertheless fail to comment on its lack of inclusion in other manuscripts (pp. 306-07). Such an oversight has been common to most of the other influential editors of the manuscripts since the beginning of the twentieth century,⁶ except for Hugh Kempster, a recent editor of the Westminster manuscript, who considers the commonality of the passage to both W and P as evidence of a likely 'close relationship between P and W' (p. 182). The failure of other commentators to comment on the appearance or absence of this passage or its import in the manuscripts is therefore something which I hope this article will go some way to rectify.

As I have suggested, I consider this passage to be of considerable thematic and imagistic importance within the body of Julian's writing and would assert, moreover, that it connects closely with its central theme of the Motherhood of God, providing further illustration of Julian's use of female-associated imagery in order to construct an effective hermeneutic for the understanding and explication of her divine insights.⁷ I will argue that, in her use of the image of the 'fine purse', Julian is subtly re-inscribing the female upon what is ostensibly an image of the universal male body, and asserting the equal value of the female as an expression of, and a means of accessing, the divine.

To my knowledge, the absence of this passage from the only extant copy of Julian's Short Text too has also never been commented on in spite of the fact that the main differences between the Short and the Long texts have received considerable attention.⁸ The immediate and personal nature of the Short Text, with its autobiographical references and tentative exploratory imagery, contrasts with and yet informs the authoritative and theologically confident Long Text.⁹ I have argued elsewhere in some detail that Julian's developed and integral use of

the motherhood matrix in her Long Text can be traced back to her experimentation with and interweaving of female-associated language and imagery as exemplified everywhere in the Short Text. Similarly, I have also shown the extent to which the Long Text's parable of the Lord and Servant, also absent from the Short Text because of Julian's original failure to understand its implications, is dependent on female imagery and attributes for its impact, which results in the feminising of the figure of the Lord and again connects it with Julian's famous perception of the Motherhood of God.¹⁰ The clarifying lens of a further revelation in 1388, fifteen years after her initial visionary experiences, whose final teaching would be 'loue is oure lordes menyng' (p. 733), facilitates Julian's detailed and insightful exegesis of this parable, illuminating for her the concept of God's eternal presence everywhere, even in sinful humanity:

We have in vs oure lorde Jhesu Cryst vp resyn, and we haue in vs the wrechydenesse and the myschef of Adams fallyng. Dyeng by Cryst we be lastynly kept, and by hys gracyous touchyng we be reysed in to very trust of saluacyon . . . and this is his owne werkynge in vs . . . (p. 547).

Earlier, the maternal behaviour of the parable's lord towards his servant has illuminated for Julian God's essential androgyny: '(God) is our fader, and god enjoyeth that he is our moder, and god enjoyeth that he is our very spouse, and our soule his lovyd wyfe' (p. 546) and that he is immanent in everything, even in moments of seeming abandonment and wretchedness. Like the fallen child/servant/Adam/Christ of the parable, humankind is never separated from him. Such a radical perception of God's immanence serves to accentuate for Julian the beauty of all God-given human activity, even that arising from 'the lowest parte of oure nede'. The seeming degradation of the servant as he wallows and flounders in the filthy 'slade' into which he has fallen, and Julian's salvific interpretation of this fall, are thus reminiscent of the image of the excreting human under discussion here.

Julian's explicit use of this basic human urge and necessity as an exegetical *exemplum* in the Long Text is something which she also seems to have carefully avoided in the Short Text, as I have intimated. At the point in the Short Text where we would expect to find the inclusion of this passage,¹¹ Julian instead presents us with the more familiar and sanitised image of the embodied Christ as the 'clethyng' of humanity: 'for love wappes vs and wyndes vs . . . (and) hynges

aboute vs for tendyr loove . . . ' (p. 43). In an image which is evocative of the office of the mother swaddling her new-born child, Christ is represented as the ultimate fleshly mother who wraps us in himself and holds us tightly within. It is therefore likely that in this initial version of her experiences, Julian is choosing not to confront the image of defecating humanity which she recalls in the later text, but instead is interpreting the 'lowest parte of oure nede', in terms of the vulnerable new-born child who is wholly dependent on the mother for survival. This claim is further substantiated by the fact that Julian incorporates the same image of the embodied and embodying Christ immediately after the 'fine purse' passage in the Long Text, telling us:

For as þe body is cladd in the cloth, and the flessch in the skynne, and the bonys in þe flessch, and the harte in the bowke, so ar we, soule and body, cladde and enclosydde in the goodnes of god . . . (p. 307).

Similarly, Julian's exegesis of the parable in the Long Text makes much of the synonymy between the flesh of humanity and that of the living Christ and is similarly dependent upon imagery of clothing:

And oure foule dedely flessch, that goddys son toke vpon hym, whych was Adams olde kyrtyll, streyte, bare and shorte, then by oure savyoure was made feyer, new whyt and bryght and of endlesse clenness . . . (p. 534).

Thus, it is likely that both the Parable of the Lord and Servant and the passage in question are additions made by a more confident and enlightened Julian writing her Long Text following her secondary visionary experience of 1388.

Both of these passages are also wholly typical of a deviation on the part of Julian from the traditional discourses of *contemptus mundi* found in the works of many other writers of the Middle Ages such as Innocent III in his meditation on the corrupt body, *De Miseria Condicionis Humane*, Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing* or even the author's diatribe in the *Ancrene Wisse* about the frailness of the (female) flesh.¹² Indeed, in its correlation with the parable of the Lord and Servant, it is possible to read the extract under discussion as forming part of Julian's important celebration of the salvific potential of the female as exemplified more explicitly in her fully

developed depiction of God as Mother in the Long Text, and also as providing a subtle response to traditional discourses which have relegated human, and particularly female, flesh to the realm of the sinful.¹³

Closer examination of the passage substantiates this claim further. In their edition of this text Colledge and Walsh footnote 'soule' as deriving from the OE 'sufol' meaning 'cooked, digested food' (p. 306). Both the NED and the MED show that the use of this word was rare and Colledge and Walsh suggest that by Julian's time it had probably become 'doubtless obsolescent' (*sic*). Indeed, the editors of this edition also show that earlier translators of this manuscript have almost all erroneously translated the word 'soule' as 'soul', rendering the passage confusing at the very least. The question therefore arises why Julian in this context should choose to make use of a word which had all but fallen from use, particularly in view of the fact that she uses its homophone elsewhere on many occasions to refer to the human soul.¹⁴ It seems unlikely that the alteration is attributable to the scribe, in spite of a predilection for attempting to give the manuscript an appearance of antiquity (p. 8), and particularly in view of the fact that its inclusion actually confuses rather than clarifies meaning. Colledge and Walsh suggest that the word possibly dropped out of use because of this confusion with its homophone (p. 306), a confusion of which surely someone with Julian's literary ability would have been aware. That leaves us to conclude that her use of this word, in spite of the obvious risk of misunderstanding, is wholly deliberate, and if so we must also conclude that she wished to associate in the mind of her reader the normally repugnant image of excreta with that most beautiful and quasi-divine human attribute – the human soul.

Julian's use here of the image of the body's waste, however, contrasts radically with its counterpart in the *Ancrene Wisse*, with which, as an anchoress, Julian would probably have been familiar:

I þe licome is fulðe & unstrengðe. Ne kimeð of þæt vetles swuch þing as þer in? Of flesches fetles kimeð þer smeal of aromaz oðer of swote basme? Deale drue sprit len beoreð win berien. Breres rose blostmen þi flesch hwet frut bereð hit in alle his openunges. Amid te menske of þi neb þæt is þe fehereste deal bitweonen muðes smech & neases smeal ne berest tu as twa priue þurles? Nart tu icumen of ful slim? Nart tu fulðe fette ne bist tu wurme fode? (pp. 142-43)

Whether Julian knew this passage or not, here the anonymous author renders quite explicit a conventionally dualistic attitude to the body and repugnance at its natural functions, something entirely absent in Julian's version. However, we can also detect in the *Ancrene Wisse* an implicit feminisation of the polluted body by means of the rhetorical questions specifically directed at its female audience. Such feminising of the imagery is also detectable in Julian's account but for a very different purpose, as I will illustrate, and both extracts invoke reminiscence of the famous pronouncement on woman by the influential Odo of Cluny in the tenth century who considered her to be *saccus stercoris* – a bag of filth or excrement:

All beauty consisteth but in phlegm and blood and humours and gall. If a man consider that which is hidden within the nose, the throat, and the belly, he will find filth everywhere; and, if we cannot bring ourselves, even with the tips of our fingers, to touch such phlegm or dung, wherefore do we desire to embrace this bag of filth itself.¹⁵

Such an emotive image would certainly seem to be informing the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* and it is this conventional image of the female which Julian successfully manages to destabilise in her account through her unique manipulation of its implications.

Traditional attitudes towards human defecation and its association with the 'filth' of the female body are undermined from the onset by Julian's strategic use of the words 'feyer' and 'honestly', which assert her non-dualistic insight that all parts of the human body, be it digested food or the immortal soul, are equally as valued in the sight of God, who not only gives us the ability to excrete what is physically detrimental to us but also allows us to purge ourselves of what is spiritually damaging. The adjective 'feyer' was a common epithet, often used in connection with angels or the Virgin, but according to the MED was also more commonly deployed in the context of women rather than men. Indeed, Margery Kempe's use of the word is almost always in a feminine context:¹⁶ she uses it in connection with the Virgin on at least three occasions in her narrative (p. 20, p. 209, p. 252) once in the context of her marriage to the Godhead (p. 87), and on several occasions to refer to a 'feminine' building such as a church or religious house (e.g. p. 59, p. 27). The application of 'feyer' to the defecating body in Julian's text may then have the effect of rendering it feminine in this context.

Moreover, the association between food and the female body is one which Carolyn Bynum has examined exhaustively and, as she illustrates, it was a concept which was to be found at the very core of medieval socio-religious thinking.¹⁷ This being so, the digested food here which is expelled by the 'feyer' purse of the body is likely to have been devised to have more than a passing association with the feminine. Thus, the 'soule' held within a possibly feminised human body is represented by Julian as being as much a reflection of God's glory as is his maternal caring for the homophonic human soul. The author's aesthetic depiction of the act of defecation is thus wholly in keeping with her ability to transform the earthy and ugly into the beautiful and sublime, as she also does, for example, in her copious use elsewhere of the image of the feminised and salvific blood of Christ,¹⁸ and more specifically in her description of a decaying human body, 'a swylge stynkyng myrre,' which through grace is transformed into a 'fulle feyer creature,' who 'glydyd vppe in to hevyn' (p. 623).

From close examination of fourteenth-century applications of the word 'purse' as listed in the MED,¹⁹ it would appear that Julian's use of it here is also highly unusual. Interestingly, most contemporary figurative and colloquial deployment of this word was to denote specifically male genitalia.²⁰ For example, and as we might expect, it is used by Chaucer's Wife of Bath to allude to both the sexual and pecuniary assets of her various husbands:²¹

I have wedded fyve, of which I have pyked out the beste,
Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste
(p. 105, ll. 39-49b).

Similarly, in an earlier usage in Jean de Meun's *Le Roman de la Rose* the 'purse' is directly associated with the penis and testicles:

Ainz qu'il muirent puissent il perdre
E l'aumosniere e les estalles
Don il ont signe d'estre malles!
Perte leur viegne des pendanz
A quei l'aumosniere est pendanz! (ll. 19666-70)

[May they suffer before their death the loss of their purse and testicles, the signs that they are male! May they lose the pendants on which the purse hangs.]²²

One usage which comes close to Julian's, however, appears in a little-known manuscript, MS Wel. 564, in which is to be found an incomplete and anonymous late fourteenth-century translation of an anatomical text by Henri de Mandeville whom we are told was 'þe kyngis chef maister/surgian of ffraunce'.²³ Here, in an exposition of the excretory functions of the human body, we find the description: 'He haþ twoward his neþer ende foure lacertis þe whiche openeþ þe Ers and closiþ as a purs is opened & schittip wiþ hi þwongis' (fol. 39r, col. 1). As in Julian's account, this anatomical description of the act of defecation is explicated in terms of the opening and shutting of a purse, but in this latter account the author's use of the all-inclusive 'he' to describe the subject of this human activity has the effect of categorising the human body as masculine. Julian's description however, and its concomitant insight can be read in terms of a subtle incorporation of the feminine into what initially appears to be a traditionally masculinised depiction of the human body, resulting in the creation of a type of androgyny wholly in keeping with Julian's concept of her genderless 'evencristen' and her male-female God. She rejects the possibility that God could despise any part of humanity, even those parts which humanity despises about itself, which includes the female and her dangerous body.

Julian's non-dualist attitude as exemplified in this extract, would also suggest at least an acquaintance with the surprising tolerance to the human body shown by the influential Thomas Aquinas. Rejecting the extreme dualism of earlier theologians such as Augustine and the aforementioned Odo of Cluny, in his *Summa Theologiae*²⁴ Aquinas admits to the pleasures inherent in those two most insistent of human impulses, eating and sexual activity, which he recognises 'to oure body longyth in kynde' (p. 307). In this context, Aquinas asserts the need for temperance rather than abstinence, firstly 'because they (these actions) are so profoundly natural to us', (*sunt magis nobis naturales*, 141, 7, p. 30) and secondly because 'they are about things highly needful for human life' (*quia earum objecta magis sunt necessaria praesenti vitae*). Aware that overindulgence in these activities can lead to sin, Aquinas nevertheless concedes that excess of indulgence and pleasure is not always spiritually threatening and can, in fact, provide the most sublime expression of divine love.²⁵ Thus, the acts of consumption and of intercourse possess the potential to represent the life of virtue and beauty. For Aquinas, the aesthetic and the ethical are intrinsically linked and pleasure invoked by the beauty of food and human (hetero)sexual love are predicated upon the need for individual survival. In this context then, and in view of the more main-stream contemporary belief in the sexual insatiability of the female, it is also possible to

read Julian's 'fine purse' passage not only as comprising a subtly confident Thomist defence of the workings of the human body, but possibly as a vindication of the female body in particular because of its traditional association with the corrupt and unruly flesh.

This suggestion is further substantiated by the equal applicability of the image of the purse to depict the womb of the female, which in turn permits the expulsion of the menses or of new human life, both prevalent images in Julian's writing.²⁶ Again, in MS Wel. 564 we find several examples of the word 'purse' being employed in a Middle English text as a euphemism for the female sexual organs, but most often this is within a masculine context. The first example reflects the Aristotelian and Galenic notion of the female organs as being an inverted reflection of the male:

Pe secunde doctrine . . . schal treten of Ossium, þat is to seie, þe cheste or þe purs of þe cod or ballokis. The balloc coddis ben official membris . . . and of wommen it is y-callid a purs for curtesie (fol. 45r, col. 1).

Similarly we find: 'þe self matrice is as þe Osse or bursa testiculorum, þat is to seie, þe balloke cod of a man' (fol. 41v, col. 1).²⁷ However, the most explicit connection between the female sexual organs and the opening purse is to be found in a more extended passage from the same manuscript which concerns itself with the anatomy of the vagina and the womb:

I þe same maner as ben þe rose leeuës or þa þe rose leuës be fully sprad or ripe and so þei beþ schett togideris & constreyned riȝt as a pursis mony, so þat no þing may passe out of it but þe urine aloone til þe tyme com of chilydnye (fol. 42r, col. 2).

In spite of the rarity of usage in an explicitly female context, the appearance of the purse simile in this manuscript could suggest that Julian was possibly familiar with such a usage and recognised within it a potential for subversion through a feminised deployment of what seems to have been primarily a masculine image.²⁸ In this last example the author describes the female organs in terms of a fragrant and aesthetically attractive flower more often associated with courtly love. Here, the purse, rather than being a disparaging colloquialism, becomes an image of tender care and protection, serving to help preserve the unborn child within the

mother. So too in Julian's account, the precious and God-given soule/soul is housed and protected within the womb-like 'purse' of the human body until its timely opening returns the soule/soul to God, its creator. In this context and in view of the fact that the 'fine purse' passage immediately precedes a depiction of Christ as the swaddling clothes of a new-born baby, as we have seen, it would seem that the image of the opening and shutting purse is integral to the theme of pregnancy and childbirth, again a central concept in Julian's writing, particularly in the Long Text. For example, in her famous exposition of Christ as our mother, Julian represents Christ as the perpetually pregnant mother: 'and oure sauoure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne . . .' (p. 580). The birth of humanity into eternal life will come about via the opening womb of Christ, its mother, and both his nurturance of us within his 'womb' and his birthing of us into eternity are ultimate expressions of his maternal love for us, and constitute the culmination of Julian's feminisation of the Trinity in her text. Elsewhere, too, Julian has depicted us as encased within the womb of Mary because of the synonymy of our flesh with that of Christ: 'Thus oure lady is oure moder, in whome we are all beclosyd and of hyr borne in Crist' (p. 580). The inclusion of Mary as our birthing mother serves to explicitly and unequivocally further feminise Christ because of the synonymy of her flesh with his, and in this context the image of the opening and shutting body in question can certainly be read as a feminised one. Similarly, by giving birth to Christ through divine ordinance, Mary has become an agent for the re-opening of the 'womb' of heaven, which according to tradition was initially closed to humanity by the disobedience of our first mother, Eve.²⁹ The opening and shutting womb, therefore, becomes a reification of the Mary/Eve antithesis and it is significant in this context that at no point in her text does Julian attribute blame to Eve, who is singularly absent from Julian's re-telling of the Eden story in the Parable and from the text in general. By ignoring her, Julian exonerates her from blame. Indeed, according to Julian's theodicy, the fall of mankind and the onset of sin is as much a part of the salvific process as is the birth of Christ from a human mother. This is, of course, wholly in keeping with Julian's positive, indeed celebratory, treatment of the female and in full accordance with her daring insight that 'Synne is behouely' (p. 405). For Julian, both transgression and transcendence are necessary in order to attain eternal salvation. Like the opening and shutting purse and the opening and shutting womb, there must be both a shutting and opening of understanding, a concept which she explicates both in terms of blindness: 'in the servant was shewde the blyndnesse and the myschefe of Adam's fallyng', and insight: 'and in

þe servant was shewde þe wysdom and the goodnesse of goddys son' (p. 549). By imposing none of the traditional blame upon Eve, Julian implicitly restores her and her 'open' womb to the hierarchy of salvation alongside that of the corporeally 'sealed' Mary. Thus, the startling image of the 'fine purse' of the body becomes a symbol of Eve, of Mary, of Christ, of Julian and of general humanity. In this way it is transformed into a multivalent symbol which attests to the centrality of both sin and redemption within the salvific process and, by means of her expansion and exploitation of the purse's more common colloquial association with the male sexual organs and the application of it in a way which is also suggestive of the womb, Julian creates another powerful image of feminised masculinity. In turn, this serves to reinforce her primary insight into God as our Mother for which she is best known, and the unconventional trope through which she chooses to relay this information is the subtly feminised and certainly wholly redeemed act of human defecation.

Thus, as I have shown, within this image of the delicate purse with its continual opening and shutting, Julian has recognised the potential for further vindication of the female as possible representative of the human, and for assertion of her equal value within the divine hierarchy. This passage therefore, far from being an irrelevancy to be overlooked within the text, should be read as an integral part of the female hermeneutic which the writer utilises in order to express her wholly unique insight into the love of a masculine-feminine God for an androgynous humankind.

NOTES

¹ This is the manuscript used for the edition by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (eds), *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978). All quotations to the Long Text will be taken from this edition and page numbers will appear in the text. The decision of these editors to use this manuscript has been a source of contention amongst other scholars who have commented on its apparently amateurish construction. For a brief overview of this debate see Ritamary Bradley, 'Julian of Norwich: Everyone's Mystic', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England* ed. by William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 139-40. The other extant manuscripts of the Long Text in its entirety are London, MS British Museum Sloane 2499 (S1) and London, MS British Museum Sloane 3705 (S2). In addition, excerpts from the Long Text appear in London, MS Westminster Cathedral Treasury 4 and in MS St. Joseph's College, Upholland. Of these two, the passage to be examined appears only in the Westminster manuscript, for a recent edition of which see Hugh Kempster, 'Julian of Norwich: The Westminster Text of *A Revelation of Love*', *Mystics Quarterly*, 23.4 (December 1997), 177-245. All references to this version will be from this edition and page numbers will appear in the text.

² Recent editors of both the Short and the Long Texts are at odds about from which manuscript branch this early sixteenth-century Westminster text derives. Frances Beer, editor of the only extant Short Text manuscript (London, MS British Museum Additional 37790), known as the Amherst manuscript, suggests that the Westminster version parallels the Paris version (*Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1978], p. 13), whereas Colledge and Walsh state '(The Westminster manuscript) derives from an ancestor which it shares with SS but not with P' (p. 27).

³ On this point I am grateful to Nicholas Watson, current editor of a forthcoming edition of the *Revelations*, for helping to clarify my thinking and for commenting on the evident authenticity of this section.

⁴ Marion Glasscoe (ed.), *A Revelation of Love* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993).

⁵ The so-called Short Text is generally considered to be Julian's initial response to her experiences and is extant in one manuscript only; see n. 2 above.

⁶ As well as those editors mentioned see, for example, Grace Warrack (ed.), *Revelations of Divine Love* (London: Methuen, 1901); Dundas Harford, *Comfortable Words for Christ's Lovers* (London: H.R. Allenson, 1911); Roger Huddleston, *Revelations of Divine Love Shewed to a Devout Ankres by Name Julian of Norwich* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1927); James Walsh, *The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich* (London: Harper,

1961).

⁷ I have previously examined in some detail the use to which Julian puts the theme of motherhood in her texts in an article, ' "The moders service": Motherhood as Matrix in Julian of Norwich', *Mystics Quarterly*, 24.4 (December 1998), 181-97.

⁸ A helpful comparison is to be found in Nicholas Watson, 'The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Divine Love*', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 637-83, in which Watson examines both texts closely in order to reassess hitherto accepted dates of composition. Other comparisons are to be found in Beer, *Revelations*, pp. 22-25 and Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, pp. 59-67. See also Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) for a detailed analysis of Julian's development from visionary to theologian as evidenced in the differences between the two texts.

⁹ For a most useful essay on Julian's exploratory use of maternal imagery in the Short Text see Sarah McNamer, 'The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*', *Mystics Quarterly*, 15.1 (1989), 21-28.

¹⁰ Again, for an exposition of this, see McAvoy, "'The moders service'".

¹¹ The obviously place for the inclusion of this passage in the Short Text would be at the beginning of Chapter 4, p. 43.

¹² For the writings of Innocent III see, *Lotario dei Segni: De Miseria Conditionis Humane*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, The Chaucer Library (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978). For an example of Walter Hilton's treatment of this theme, see Leo Sherley-Price (ed.), *Walter Hilton: The Ladder of Perfection* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 177. An example of the anonymous *Cloud* author's attitude towards the flesh can be found in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson, EETS o.s. 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 113. For a particularly acerbic diatribe against the body, and the female body in particular, see *Ancrene Wisse*, EETS o.s. 294, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), Part Four (pp. 92-153), which considers the dangers of fleshly and spiritual temptations.

¹³ Again, I am grateful to Nicholas Watson for his comments to me on this issue.

¹⁴ For example, *A Book of Showings*, p. 307, l. 47 and p. 308, l. 50.

¹⁵ *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844-1864), vol. 133, col. 556, as cited in G.G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 1, 528.

¹⁶ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sandford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS o.s. 212 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of*

Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁸ For an examination of such imagery, again see McAvoy, "'The moders service . . .'".

¹⁹ See also Juhani Norris, *Names of Body Parts in English, 1400-1500* (Tuusula: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1988).

²⁰ I am grateful to Monica Green for pointing out to me that there is no reference in Norris, *Names of Body Parts*, of this word being used to denote either excretory functions or female genitalia.

²¹ *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 105, ll. 39-49b.

²² *Le Roman de la Rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun*, ed. by Ernest Langlois, Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris: 1927). The English translation is taken from Charles Dahlberg, *Romance of the Rose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

²³ MS Wel. 564 fol. 46r, col. 1. This manuscript was the subject of an article by a previous owner, Joseph Frank Payne (1840-1910), 'On an Unpublished English Anatomical Treatise of the Fourteenth Century', which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* (1896), 1, 200-03.

²⁴ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 43, *Temperance (2a 2ae)*, trans. by Thomas Gilby, O. P. (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1963).

²⁵ For a detailed analysis of Aquinas on temperance see Elizabeth B. Keiser, *Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia: The Legitimation of Sexual Pleasure in Cleanness and its Contexts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), especially pp. 17-42 and 93-107.

²⁶ On this, see McAvoy, "'The moders service'", especially pp. 188-91.

²⁷ Again, I am grateful to Monica Green for pointing me towards a sixteenth-century text known as '*The Boke Mad [by] a Woman Named Rota*', in which a prolapsed womb is described as 'hangeynge downe lyke a greatt purs' (Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 403 [V.3.1], an. 1544). Although this usage differs from Julian's in that it is an analogy of appearance rather than of function, it is likely that its opening and shutting function is informing the author's use of the simile.

²⁸ Alexandra Barratt comes to this conclusion about Julian's likely familiarity with gynaecological texts in her essay, "'In the Lowest Part of Our Need": Julian and Medieval Gynecological Writing', in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Sandra McEntire (New York and London: Garland, 1998), pp. 240-56.

²⁹ For a detailed and comprehensive account of the Eve/Mary antithesis in Catholic

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theology, see Maurice Hamington, *Hail Mary: The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), especially pp. 126-55.