

in the Middle Ages” falls into the groups “Doctors, Healers, and Caregivers,” “Fairies, Magicians, and Witches,” “Literary Characters, Genres, Myths, and Themes,” and “Lovers and Beloveds.” There is a short “Select Bibliography” at the end of the second volume followed by a useful index and the list of contributors.

*Women in the Middle Ages* may not be as accessible as the editors wished to undergraduates and general readers. Though the entries I sampled are well written, and, in most cases, translations of titles and terminology have been provided, the general level of vocabulary and the background in cultural literacy needed to fully understand the information *Women in the Middle Ages* offers will be problematic for some. Even so, and in spite of the alphabetical arrangement dictated by the encyclopedia format, browsing *Women in the Middle Ages* leads to a cumulative picture of medieval women and their world(s) that is very different from our own but whose history is also ours and whose times shaped our present. *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia* should be in any academic library.

Chris Africa  
University of Iowa



Nicholas Watson and  
Jacqueline Jenkins, ed.  
*The Writings of Julian of  
Norwich: A Vision Showed  
to a Devout Woman and  
A Revelation of Love.*  
The Pennsylvania State  
University Press, 2006.  
pp. xii + 474.

This most recent edition of the writings of one of the most unique voices in medieval literature is certainly an ambitious undertaking, both for the editors and for its readers. Julian of Norwich’s story is familiar to most scholars of both medieval and women’s writings; a fourteenth-century ascetic, who has herself walled into an anchoritic cell attached to a church in Norwich, suffers from a painful, near-fatal illness during which she experiences ecstatic visions of Christ’s Passion. After meditating on the visions for twenty years, Julian set down her account and her interpretation of them in two texts, first a short account, then an expanded version. Very little is known about who Julian was; she exists almost exclusively within her texts.

Rather than merely translating Julian’s texts, particularly the longer, better known *A Revelation of Love* (entitled *Revelations of Divine Love* in previous publications), or even presenting an updated edition of the original Middle English, the Watson and Jenkins text presents the most complete edition of Julian’s

all too brief oeuvre to date. In doing so, they have brought Julian the scholarly attention she deserves, situating her texts within the larger genres of mystical literature, female autobiographic texts, Christian devotional literature, theological and Christological writings, and fourteenth-century devotional works. While it is true that the singularity of Julian's vision and writings has long been acknowledged by medievalists and devotionalists alike, this is still a scholarly edition of her texts that has long been overdue. This book easily supplants the four most commonly used (and taught) editions of Julian's writings: the Edmond Colledge and James Walsh 1978 edition for the Pontifical Institute's Studies and Texts series, the Georgia Ronan Crampton TEAMS Middle English Text Series edition of 1994, Colledge and Walsh's modern English translation for the Classics of Western Spirituality series in 1978, and the most recent Penguin translation of 1998 by Elizabeth Spearing and A. C. Spearing. While the Colledge and Walsh Pontifical Institute and the Crampton editions (including original language texts, glossaries, and scholarly apparatus) and the latter Colledge and Walsh and the Spearing editions have always been popular with readers and students alike for the ease of reading Julian in modern English, no previous edition of her writings has attempted to balance ease of reading with academic detail, as this new edition by Watson and Jenkins so ably does.

The book does contain a couple of minor typographical errors, but these

in no way detract from the pleasure and utility of this book.

The text is framed by two exceptionally comprehensive documents; it opens with an introduction, including a brief biography of Julian and a discussion of who has read Julian's writings and how, and it concludes with an extensive bibliography (by Amy Appleford) of Julian scholarship. Thankfully, the introduction also includes instructions on how to read this edition of Julian's texts, and these instructions are particularly necessary, as what lies between the introduction and bibliography is essentially a master class on Julian of Norwich. It might be best, however, to skim the instructions in the introduction, focus on the brief instructions in the Preface, and simply dive into the texts. The editors have a tendency to over-explain their methodology in the introduction; reading instructions on how to use this book cannot be replaced by the experience of, well, reading it.

The editors have chosen to present Julian's work in the original language, Middle English, but have modernized the punctuation (and mercifully for readability, included paragraph delineations). They have also stabilized the spelling. Any variants are acknowledged and explained in the more-than-copious notes that accompany both texts; the notes are in a facing page set-up to the main text. This allows the reader to concentrate on Julian's words themselves, on the elegant and

deceptive simplicity of her feminized Christology and vision, without being distracted by the editorial apparatus; yet the mechanics of editing and updating a fourteenth-century text are available when the reader desires them. The most innovative part of the editors' approach to Julian's texts, however, comes in their decision to present the shorter, earlier text, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* in its entirety first, followed by the longer, later text *A Revelation of Love* in its entirety, with an alternate version of the first text (*A Vision Showed. . .*) underneath, noting through font and symbols where additions and changes have been made to the original text. This presents the reader with a unique opportunity to study Julian's texts side by side, while still allowing for the texts to be read individually. It takes some practice to be comfortable reading the texts, particularly *A Revelation of Love*, which at times seems to be embedded in a sea of notes, alternate versions, and emendations of *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*. However, the editors have been remarkably consistent in their approach and overall the edition is highly readable.

The texts themselves are followed by a most welcome addition to previous versions of Julian's writings, a brief appendix of excerpts from other texts that refer to Julian (the ubiquitous Margery Kempe makes an appearance here, of course), as well as some brief records of Julian's writings and its responses. Having taught Julian's text in two very disparate settings (as a devotional text in a Catholic

spirituality class and in a graduate reading seminar), I can say from firsthand experience how welcome this edition and its supplemental material are.

The bibliography is one of the book's most useful and elegant sections. It is also, as with the rest of the edition, complicated but not unduly so. The first two sections are annotated; these include a list of extant manuscripts and publications containing all or part of Julian's two texts, and a list of related primary sources, mostly mystical in genre. The third and fourth sections, not annotated, contain a comprehensive list of secondary sources related to Julian (Section 3) and more generally to the subject and time period (Section 4). Section 5 is a brief list of textual criticism. Section 6 is perhaps the most surprising, and typical of the refreshing approach this book as a whole takes to Julian scholarship: it is a short list of "Devotional and Literary Responses to Julian."

Candace Gregory-Abbott  
California State University,  
Sacramento

