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## **Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Divine Love*: The concept of LIGHT and the development of the mystic's spirituality**

### *Objawienia miłości Bożej Juliany z Norwich.* **Pojęcie ŚWIATŁO a rozwój duchowy mistyczki**

#### **Abstract**

The fourteenth century is the golden age of English mysticism. One of the prominent figures of the day is Julian of Norwich, the author of *The Revelations of Divine Love*. The paper places the development of the mystic's spirituality, reflected in her writings, against the backdrop of the late medieval culture. The paper adopts a Cognitive Linguistic perspective on the issue, focusing on the mystic's use of conceptual metaphors related to the concept of LIGHT. The analysis shows that the metaphorical network derives, at least in part, from Julian's situatedness in her sociocultural environment. The paper concludes that the mystic uses the notion of LIGHT in a way that allows her to discard the orthodox idea of a wrathful God, popular in the Middle Ages. Instead, she offers an image of God, full of love and mercy for humankind. While this indicates the progress of Julian's spiritual understanding of the revelations she received in 1373, it also helps shed light on the mystic's spiritual worldview.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Linguistics, conceptual metaphor, Julian of Norwich, religious discourse, sociocultural situatedness

#### **Streszczenie**

Czternaste stulecie to złoty okres mistyki angielskiej. Jedną z czołowych postaci tej epoki jest Juliana z Norwich, autorka *Objawień miłości Bożej*. Artykuł sytuje rozwój jej duchowości na tle kultury późnego średniowiecza. Analiza wykorzystuje teorię metafory pojęciowej oraz jej najnowsze opracowanie, powstałe w ramach językoznawstwa kognitywnego. Analiza koncentruje się na badaniu metafor pojęciowych występujących w dziele Juliany, w których domeną źródłową jest pojęcie ŚWIATŁO. Analiza pokazuje, że usytuowanie społeczno-kulturowe autorki jest jedną z możliwych motywacji sposobu, w jaki mistyczka wykorzystuje wspomniane pojęcie. Wyniki analizy wskazują, że obrazowanie relacji między Bogiem a człowiekiem w jej utworze, w którym podkreśla matczyną miłość Boga do człowieka, odbiega znacznie od nauczania Kościoła na temat grzechu i Bożego gniewu w tym okresie. Implikuje to rozwój duchowy mistyczki, przejawiający się w pełniejszym rozumieniu przez nią treści objawień otrzymanych w 1373 roku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyskurs religijny, językoznawstwo kognitywne, Juliana z Norwich, metafora pojęciowa, usytuowanie społeczno-kulturowe

## Introduction

Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* is one of the most intriguing mystical writings of the Middle English period. Julian is "the first writer in English who can be identified with certainty as a woman"<sup>1</sup>. Julian wrote for "a broader public of devout laypeople – a public that was on the increase in her lifetime"<sup>2</sup>. *The Revelations of Divine Live* bear out the claim that Julian "shows not just an understanding of theology, the province of learned male clerics, but a capacity for powerful new theological thought"<sup>3</sup>. In the Anglophone culture of today, Julian of Norwich is probably the best known medieval mystic, admired for her original theological ideas and inspirational insights one might gain from her work.

Written after the mystic's visionary experience in May 1373, Julian's work comprises two versions. Each recounts her mystical experience differently. The first account is the Short Text/Version, consisting of 25 chapters. The second account is the Long Text/Version, consisting of 86 chapters (in this paper, the Long Version is also referred to as *A Revelation of Love* or *Revelation*<sup>4</sup>). Julian composed the Short Text in the aftermath of the visionary experience. However, she kept probing the mysterious showings because some of their aspects remained impermeable to her. After many years, she went on to write the Long Version, which delineates how her spiritual understanding of God's message increased over the years. As a result, not only do the two versions vary in length, but they also differ in the depth of insight they provide. The Short Text is a relatively simple account of what she could remember of the event. Also, it provides some information on Julian's life and the circumstances of the experience itself. In contrast, the Long Version is a sophisticated exploration of the implications following from the divine message she received.

The present paper examines the Long Version. The text has an intricate structure. It opens with a narrative account of how she came to receive the revelations. However, the continuity of the narrative is not preserved as Julian becomes

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<sup>1</sup> E. Spearing, *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love*, translated by Elizabeth Spearing, London 1998. This version is an e-book, in which no page numbers are provided.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> The titles are based on *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, eds. N. Jenkins, J. Watson, Philadelphia 2007.

engrossed in reflecting on the visions and their meaning. In the words of Barry Windeatt (2005), Julian's text "resists and confuses a modern reader's expectation of an integrated work written from a single point of view"<sup>5</sup>. He further observes that "Julian's achievement as a writing mystic lies [...] in the way in which she seeks to convey through the resources of language how an inspiration received and initially represented in picture-like form is developed into a broader contemplative understanding"<sup>6</sup>. Importantly, for Windeatt, the principle of organisation underlying Julian's work is "interpretation rather than simple chronology"<sup>7</sup>.

In the present paper, I argue that it is necessary to consider the nature of the process of interpretation. One perspective from which the problem may be examined is that of Cognitive Linguistics. The current study draws on the of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and its recent elaboration, Zoltán Kövecses's Extended Conceptual Metaphor approach. Their main tenet is that metaphor is a matter of human thought, not just a figure of speech. If so, conceptual metaphors may manifest themselves in language use and in other areas of human life. In view of this, it is possible to delineate the pathway along which Julian's spiritual understanding evolved by analysing how she uses metaphors based on the LIGHT concept in her work. In this way, the investigation of the metaphorical network may also give an insight into the mystic's worldview, grounded in her situatedness in the sociocultural context of the time.

## **1. Conceptual metaphors: From the Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Zoltán Kövecses's Extended Conceptual Metaphor approach**

One of the most prominent theories of the Cognitive Linguistic enterprise is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT), pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson in the 1980s. CMT holds that metaphor is not just a matter of language, but it stems from the embodied nature of human cognition, and is supported by mappings between conceptual domains, the source and the target, which typically allow us to reason about a more abstract phenomenon (e.g. the target concept of TIME) in terms of another, usually more concrete (e.g. the source concept of SPACE,

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<sup>5</sup> B. Windeatt, *The Art of Mystical Loving: Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. D. Baker, New York 2005, p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 201.

hence the metaphor TIME IS SPACE, which may provide motivation for linguistic expressions such *at this point in time*, etc.). Thus, metaphors in language are manifestations of underlying metaphorical conceptualisations. However, metaphors may also manifest, among others, in visual and material culture<sup>8</sup>. If so, they may motivate how people think and act in their environments.

Advances in Cognitive Linguistics have borne out the necessity to contextualise linguistic data not only in relation to human embodiment, an idea advocated by the standard CMT, but also in relation to the physical and sociocultural environment in which language use occurs. Thus, some scholars have advocated the idea of sociocultural situatedness, which implies “the way(s) in which individual minds and cognitive processes are shaped by their being together with other embodied minds, i.e., their interaction with social and cultural structures, such as other agents, artifacts, conventions, etc. and (...) with language itself”<sup>9</sup>. What it implies is the primacy of context and its significance for human cognition and language use.

This approach provides a link between the human capacity for metaphorical thought and the sociocultural foundations of conceptual metaphors. Indeed, it seems that the conception of sociocultural situatedness dovetails with Zoltán Kövecses’s version of CMT, Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Central to the scholar’s approach is the significance of context for research into conceptual metaphors. What Kövecses posits is that “[b]odily experience may be overridden by both culture and cognitive processes”<sup>10</sup>.

On the scholar’s account, there are a number of parameters to be used when addressing how context interacts with metaphorical conceptualisation. From the perspective of the present paper, particularly important is the fact the “use of metaphorical language functions as joint action, and joint action requires common ground between speaker and hearer”<sup>11</sup>. The speaker/writer (and at once conceptualiser) must

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<sup>8</sup> See also K. Stec and E. Sweetser, *Borobudur and Chartres: Religious spaces as performative real-space blends*, [in:] *Sensuous Cognition: Explorations into Human Sentience: Imagination, (E)motion and Perception*, eds. R. Caballero, J. Díaz Vera, Berlin 2013, p. 265-292.

<sup>9</sup> R. Frank, *Introduction. Sociocultural situatedness*, [in:] *Body, Language and Mind. Volume 2: Sociocultural Situatedness*, eds. R. Frank, Roslyn, R. Dirven, T. Ziemke, E. Bernárdez, Berlin 2008, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*, Oxford 2005, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Z. Kövecses, *The Importance of Context in CMT*, [in:] *Cognitive Sociolinguistics Revisited*, eds. G. Kristiansen, K. Franco, S. De Pascale, L. Rosseel, W. Zhang, Berlin 2022, p. 109.

tailor the metaphors they use to specific contextual demands so that the listener/reader can comprehend and interpret them. The scholar distinguishes four types of contextual factors, including<sup>12</sup>:

- situational context (physical, social, cultural),
- discourse context (co-text, knowledge about the topic/the speaker/the hearer, previous discourses on the same topic),
- conceptual-cognitive (the metaphorical conceptual system itself, which encompasses conventionalised metaphorical meanings, ideology, awareness of past events, interests and concerns of the individuals involved),
- bodily context (the individual's bodily specificities).

The contextual parameters may help account for the use of metaphor at the individual level (particular language users immersed in specific contexts, where variation and creativity are likely to occur) from metaphor used in discourse at supra-individual (static, conventionalised mappings, decontextualised metaphorical patterns) and sub-individual (universal embodiment) levels<sup>13</sup>. Overall, Kövecses appears to argue that the exploration of metaphorical thought entails the need to account for sociocultural environments, in which language users are situated.

As Evans (2019) explains, for cognitive linguists, “[I]anguage offers a window into cognitive function, providing insights into the nature, structure and organisation of thoughts and ideas”<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the analysis of religious language may well lead to a better understanding of religious thought and practice<sup>15</sup>. Sharifian (2021) relates the interplay of language and religion to the broader framework of culture, in which the human mind is situated. The scholar observes that<sup>16</sup>

“[s]piritual systems such as religions embody particular worldviews or systems of conceptualizing life, death, morality, creation, the life hereafter, fate, and so on. Since these conceptualizations are more or less shared across any speech community that believes in the same faith, religions can be viewed as providing systems of cultural conceptualizations”.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, pp. 111-114.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Kövecses, *Extended Metaphor Theory*, Cambridge 2020, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> V. Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics. A Complete Guide*, Edinburgh 2019, p. 349.

<sup>15</sup> P. Richardson, M. Mueller, S. Pihlaja, *Cognitive Linguistics and Religious Language. An Introduction*, New York–London 2021, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> F. Sharifian, *Cultural Linguistics and Religion, [in:] Cultural-Linguistic Explorations into Spirituality, Emotionality, and Society*, eds. H-G. Wolf, D. Latić, A. Finzel, Amsterdam 2021, p. 9-22.

What this implies is that, when applied to religious discourse, conceptual metaphors may be useful tools enabling analyses of how people think about abstract concepts such as human relation to God, virtue, sin, truth, afterlife, etc.<sup>17</sup>

To recapitulate, the paper adopts the theoretical and methodological foundations of the recent elaboration of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Importantly, the present study relates Kövecses's approach to the idea of sociocultural situatedness. This means that, to the extent that one can retrieve as full a picture of Julian of Norwich's situatedness as possible, the analysis aims to clarify how it could shape the mystic's work. In particular, the study seeks to show how it might influence Julian's use of the conceptual metaphors for LIGHT.

## **2. Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* and its late medieval cultural context**

Julian of Norwich's work was composed during the golden period of English mysticism, when various forms of religious life, including affective piety, flourished in England<sup>18</sup>. Thus, it should be studied as part of the global cultural milieu, rather than considered as an isolated phenomenon. Still, it would seem that Julian's writing is one of the most intriguing mystical works of the Middle English period. It is related to the tradition of affective piety, which centred on Jesus' incarnation and emphasised the suffering humanity of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

In 1373, when she was thirty years old, Julian became gravely ill and when she thought she was on her deathbed she received a series of revelations, or showings, which she recorded once she recovered. As already said, Julian composed two versions recounting the visionary experience. In the Short Text Julian identifies herself as a woman, who, despite her feebleness, wishes to share God's message with her fellow Christians. Julian must have thought the caveat essential, given dominant

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<sup>17</sup> See also M. T. DesCamp, E. E. Sweetser, *Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans? The Application of Contemporary Cognitive Linguistics Research to the Debate on God and Metaphor*, „*Pastoral Psychology*” 2005, 53(3), p. 207-238; E. Sweetser, M. DesCamp, *Motivating Biblical Metaphors for God: Refining the Cognitive Model*, [in:] *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies*, eds. B. Howe, J. Green, Berlin 2014, p. 7-24.

<sup>18</sup> See also D. Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book*, New York 1994; *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, eds. W. Pollard, R. Boening, Cambridge 1997.

<sup>19</sup> N. D. Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book*, New York 1994.

attitudes to women in the Middle Ages. Interestingly, the Long Version is anonymised in that Julian does not identify herself as a woman and leaves no reference to such facts as the presence of her mother at her deathbed.

It is useful to mention some key aspects of Julian's life as an anchoress<sup>20</sup>. Anchoresses lived in cells adjacent to local churches. They withdrew from society to devote their life to God, prayer and contemplation. They remained enclosed until their death. Still, they were highly regarded in their communities and possibly beyond, as attested by the text of *The Book of Margery Kempe*.<sup>21</sup> Margery, Julian's contemporary, was a woman who wanted to lead a sanctified life. As she says in her book, God told her to visit Julian of Norwich, who at that time was well-known for her wise counsel. Indeed, Julian is said to have given Margery good spiritual advice. The idea of the inner and outer aspects of living in anchoritic seclusion also manifests itself in the fact that the cell of an anchoress typically had two squints: one through which she could participate in the celebration of the mass without the need to leave the cell and the other through which she could communicate with her fellow Christians, who might come to visit her and ask for spiritual guidance or prayer, as Margery Kempe did. Hence, it may be argued that this type of seclusion did not imply lack of embedding in the local sociocultural milieu. In fact, as Novotny (2019) says,

“[a]ny medieval person with eyes and ears lived in a sea of language. It cycled through the period in sermons, mystery plays and liturgical rituals. It circulated in prayer books, psalters and picture bibles. It was represented in crucifixes, statues of saints and stained glass. All of these forms of narrative, and the depictions of such narrative in art, influenced the language during the fourteenth century”<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Jones, *Anchorites and Hermits in Historical Context*, [in:] *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. D. Dyas, V. Edden and R. Ellis, Cambridge 2005, p. 3-18; E. Jones, *Anchoritic Aspects of Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. L. Herbert McAvoy, Cambridge 2008, p. 75-87.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix 2 Extract from the Book of Margery Kempe, Chapter 18 (Margery Kempe visits Julian of Norwich), [in:] *Julian of Norwich. Revelations of Divine Love. A new translation by Barry Windeatt*, ed. B. Windeatt, Oxford 2015, p. 168-169.

<sup>22</sup> T. Novotny, *Julian of Norwich: how did she know what she knew?*, „History of Education” 2019, 48:5, 557-574, p. 560.

Julian's writings are studied from a number of scholarly perspectives. One of the research lines encompasses studies of the theological aspects of Julian's texts, while other strands examine questions of religious discourse, and the genre type her work belongs to<sup>23</sup>. With respect to Julian's theological thought, one of the dominant research themes is Christ as Mother<sup>24</sup>, whose crucifixion is compared to childbirth. The scholarship also includes research on how the medieval visual and material culture influenced Julian's spirituality and her work<sup>25</sup>. The conventional iconography of affective piety, designed to encourage the individual's emotional engagement in devotional practices, underlies the mystic's attempt to spread her ideas among fellow Christians, to whom she addresses her work. Also, it is argued that Julian's imagery in the Long Text changes such that it helps convey her struggle to understand the visions. Thus, some authors indicate apophatic aspects<sup>26</sup> of the images she invokes. This means that the lack of light and the resulting darkness symbolise the unknowability of God<sup>27</sup>.

### 3. The phenomenon of light in the Middle Ages: Key issues

As already implied, the mystic's use of the LIGHT concept may be motivated by her sociocultural situatedness. The Bible is one of the major sources of influence in this respect as it contains many metaphors of LIGHT<sup>28</sup>. In the Middle Ages, light was one of the most important phenomena to be studied because it was understood as "the means of God's work in the material world"<sup>29</sup>. Importantly, in medieval science,

<sup>23</sup> M. Glasscoe, *Contexts for Teaching Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. D. Dyas, V. Edden, R. Ellis, Cambridge 2005, p. 85-200.

<sup>24</sup> K. Dearborn, *The crucified Christ as the motherly God: The theology of Julian of Norwich*, „Scottish Journal of Theology” 2002, 55(3), p. 283-302; M. Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother of Mercy: Divine Mercy and Compassion in the Theology of The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, Berlin 1992.

<sup>25</sup> See S. K. Hagen, *The Visual Theology of Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *Medieval Memory: Image and Text*, ed. F. Willaert, Brepols 2004, p. 145-60; see also C. Gunn, 'A recluse atte Norwyche': *Images of Medieval Norwich and Julian's Revelations*, [in:] *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. L. Herbert McAvoy, Cambridge 2008, p. 32-41.

<sup>26</sup> V. Gillespie, M. Ross, *The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium 5*, ed. M. Glasscoe, Cambridge 1992, 53-77.

<sup>27</sup> See D. Turner, *Juliana of Norwich. Theologian*, New Haven 1995.

<sup>28</sup> See *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, eds. L. Ryken, J. C. Wilhoit, T. Longman III, pp. 509-512. Among the many metaphors the scholars discuss, it is worth mentioning Light as Symbol of Truth and God as Light.

<sup>29</sup> S. Falk, *The Light Ages. The Surprising Story of Medieval Science*, New York 2020 (e-book version with no page numbers provided).

the idea of light was related to sight, human cognition and understanding. Also, as Carolyn Colette (2001) elucidates, “[u]nderstanding of God and of God’s creation was the ultimate end of vision, both physical and spiritual”<sup>30</sup>. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the interplay of the various factors underlies Julian’s work as well<sup>31</sup>.

Importantly, light was the focus of medieval science in the Middle Ages. One of the influential conceptions of light was expounded in Robert Grosseteste’s *De Luce* (‘On light’)<sup>32</sup>. The scope of the paper does not allow to discuss his ideas in detail. Still, it is worth mentioning that in Grosseteste’s theory two types of light were distinguished: *lux* and *lumen*<sup>33</sup>. The former is “the immaterial divine light” and the latter is “the bodily light that made the inner spheres of heavens and Earth”<sup>34</sup>. For Grosseteste, light holds together the spiritual and physical reality<sup>35</sup>. It is important not to overestimate the significance of Grosseteste’s conception for Julian’s work. Julian may not have read his treatises. Nevertheless, it seems likely that she might have been familiar with such ideas due to her situatedness in the late medieval culture. Also, Grosseteste’s ideas circulated among philosophers of the Middle Ages, and exerted an influence on scholars such as Roger Bacon<sup>36</sup>. Importantly, Grosseteste’s theory seems particularly useful for the purposes of the current study. It offers a framework for understanding Julian’s use of the LIGHT concept, which interrelates the physical/concrete and more abstract properties of light.

<sup>30</sup> C. P. Colette, *Species, phantasms, and images. Vision and Medieval Psychology in The Canterbury Tales*, Michigan 2001, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, in Chapter 23, Julian says: “All the blessed teaching of our Lord God was shown to me in three ways [...] by bodily sight, by words formed in my understanding and by spiritual sight. I have described what I saw with bodily sight as truly as I can; and I have said the words exactly as our Lord revealed them to me; but so far as the spiritual sight is concerned, I have said something about it, but I could never recount it all, and so I am moved to say more if God will give me grace”.

<sup>32</sup> R. Grosseteste, *On Light*, translated by C. C. Riedl, Milwaukee, 1942; See also A. Sparavigna, *Robert Grosseteste’s Thought on Light and Form of the World*, „International Journal Of Sciences” 2014, Vol. 3(4), p. 54-62; V. Gillespie, *The Colours of Contemplation: Less Light on Julian of Norwich*, [in:] *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2011* [Exeter Symposium 8], ed. E. Jones, Cambridge 2013, 7-28.

<sup>33</sup> It must be elucidated that Grosseteste did not invent these concepts, but adopted them in their theory. See also S. Falk, *The Light Ages. The Surprising Story...*, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> S. Falk, *The Light Ages. The Surprising Story...*, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> M. Trepczyński, *Światło jako arché świata. Metafizyka światła Roberta Grosseteste*, „Ethos” 30 (2017), nr 3 (119), p. 93-115.

<sup>36</sup> S. Falk, *The Light Ages. The Surprising Story...*, op. cit.

#### 4. Conceptual metaphors of LIGHT in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation*

Julian's text opens with a narrative account of the event during which she received the revelations. The extract comes from Chapter 4. The mystic begins her story by saying:

"My parish priest was sent for to be present at my death, and by the time he came my eyes were fixed and I could not speak. He set the cross before my face and said, 'I have brought you the image of your Maker and Saviour. Look upon it and be comforted.' [...] After this my sight began to fail and the room was dark all around me as though it had been night, except for the image of the cross, in which I saw an ordinary, household light – I could not understand how. Everything except the cross was ugly to me, as if crowded with fiends"<sup>37</sup>.

The light that appears in this section could be related to the idea of *lumen* since it is described as ordinary/household. As Julian's narrative begins with the concrete image of an illuminated crucifix, it is possible to discern some traces of a metaphorical conceptualisation. To the extent that in Christian tradition light is associated with life, the darkness that surrounds the mystic invokes the metaphor DEATH IS LACK OF LIGHT<sup>38</sup>.

In Chapter 10, Julian conjures up the image of the crucifix again, but this time the focus changes as she attends to the details of the changing colours of Christ's face:

"And after this I saw with my bodily sight in the face of Christ on the crucifix which hung before me, which I was looking at continuously, a part of his Passion: contempt and spitting, dirt and blows, and many lingering pains, more than I can tell, and frequent changes of colour. And once I saw how half his face, beginning at the ear, was covered in dry blood until it reached the middle of his face, and after that the other half was covered in the same way, and meanwhile the first part was as before. I saw this bodily, in distress and darkness, and I wished for better bodily sight to see it more clearly. And I was answered in my reason, 'If God wants to show you more, he will be your light. You need no light but him'".

Julian's bodily sight is invoked once again. This might imply that she needs ordinary light (*lumen*) to behold the image. However, the mystic says: "I wished for better bodily sight to see it more clearly. And I was answered in my reason,

<sup>37</sup> The present-day English translations of the relevant passages are taken from Spearing (1998).

<sup>38</sup> S. Vereza, R. Puente, *Embodied cognition in 'black metaphors': the BAD IS DARK metaphor in biblical texts*, „Signo, Santa Cruz do Sul” 2017, v. 42, n. 75, p. 2-14.

‘If God wants to show you more, he will be your light. You need no light but him’”. It would seem that, whereas Julian asked for more physical light so that she could perceive the image better, the divine answer presupposes the need for *lux*. It is possible to identify the metaphors GOD IS LIGHT and UNDERSTANDING IS LIGHT. Importantly, given the context in which it appears, the latter implies attaining knowledge of God. Put differently, Julian should not concentrate on the Passion image, similar to those from the tradition of affective piety, but she ought to strive for a spiritual understanding. The idea of a quest for spiritual insight is present in other chapters of the Long Text. One notable occurrence appears in Chapter 59, in which Jesus says to Julian: “It is I: the light and the grace which is all blessed love”. Clearly, in the case of this metaphor (JESUS/GOD IS LIGHT) what is implied is not *lumen*, but *lux*. In Chapter 78, in which the mystic writes about “the light of his grace and mercy”, the metaphor GOD’S GRACE/MERCY IS LIGHT, based on the notion of *lux*, can also be identified.

In Chapter 83, one of the last chapters of the Long Text, Julian summarises her reflections on the visions, concluding that

“Our faith is a light, coming kindly and naturally from everlasting day, which is our father, God; and in this light our mother, Christ, and our good lord, the Holy Ghost, lead us in this transitory life. This light is allotted prudently, supporting us in the night according to our need. The light is the cause of our life, the night is the cause of our suffering and of all our woe, through which we deserve reward and thanks from God; for we, eagerly knowing and believing in our light through mercy and grace, walk in it surely and strongly. And when woe ends, our eyes shall suddenly be opened, and in the brightness of light our sight will be clear; and this light is God our Maker and the Holy Ghost in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Thus I saw and understood that our faith is our light in our night, light which is God, our everlasting day”.

In the excerpt, the lexical item *light* occurs 9 times. It appears in the context of abstract concepts conjured up by the words *God* and *faith*. The main metaphor of this excerpt is GOD IS LIGHT. Due to the association with God, it would seem that what Julian meant was the idea of *lux*. As Julian says, human faith derives from this light (*lux*). In the case of the metaphor FAITH IS LIGHT, it would seem that the concept invoked by Julian is that of *lumen* insofar as the light is “allotted prudently, supporting us in the night according to our need”, which implies reference to everyday life. This kind of light seems to be contrasted with *lux*. Indeed,

as Julian asserts, “when woe ends, our eyes shall suddenly be opened, and in the brightness of light our sight will be clear”. That is to say, people may know God fully in the afterlife.

Julian kept probing God’s message over many years after the visionary event. Chapter 83 offers a final insight into the mystic’s spiritual development:

“And from the time that this was shown, I often longed to know what our Lord meant. And fifteen years and more later my spiritual understanding received an answer, which was this: ‘Do you want to know what your Lord meant? Know well that love was what he meant. Who showed you this? Love. What did he show? Love. Why did he show it to you? For love. Hold fast to this and you will know and understand more of the same; but you will never understand or know from it anything else for all eternity.’ This is how I was taught that our Lord’s meaning was love. And I saw quite certainly in this and in everything that God loved us before he made us; and his love has never diminished and never shall”.

Julian’s work attests to the fact that the mystic achieved a deeper understanding of the divine message she received. In this sense, the ideas carried in the Long Text speak to the maturation of Julian’s thought. Interestingly, in the Short Text she is careful to present herself as a feeble woman, duly deferential to the Church authority<sup>39</sup>. However, the image of the mystic that emerges from the Long Text is that of an individual faithful to the Church, but whose probing mind prompted her to embark on a quest for God’s meaning.

## Conclusions

By way of conclusion, it may be said that Julian’s use of metaphors of LIGHT seems to be iconically motivated. On the one hand, it is possible to indicate the iconic principle of quantity (as in Chapter 83, where more light of the *lux* kind implies Julian’s deeper understanding of God). On the other hand, it is worth elucidating what is meant by that correlation on a more general level. As Tabakowska (1999) argues<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See A. Hutchinson, *Approaching Medieval Women Mystics in the Twenty-First Century*, [in:] *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. D. Dyas, V. Edden, R. Ellis, Cambridge 2005, pp. 175-184, p. 176.

<sup>40</sup> E. Tabakowska, *Linguistic Expression of Perceptual Relationships. Iconicity as a Principle of Text Organization (A Case Study)*, [in:] *Iconicity in Language and Literature 1*, eds. M. Nänny, O. Fischer, Amsterdam 1999, p. 411.

“[t]raditionally, it has been generally assumed that iconic relations are one way processes: from expression to concept. However, if we agree that the ability to recognize a given similarity results from the language user’s knowledge of a given culture and language, then we can also reasonably assume that the process may be reversed: via the (linguistic) convention, the user of language might associate (by recognizing relevant similarities) certain expressions with certain concepts, and in consequence arrive at a certain view, or interpretation, of reality [...]”.

Given her consistent use of the concept of LIGHT, which seems to differentiate between *lumen* and *lux*, Julian’s spirituality seems to shine through the worldview conveyed in the Long Text. That is, although in this world people cannot be granted the grace of *lux*, they are assured that God takes care of them by giving them *lumen*, which guides them in their daily life. Today the idea of God’s love and mercy for humankind seems widespread, but in the Middle Ages Julian’s way of beholding reality deviated from the medieval Church’s teachings about God’s righteous anger with sinful humankind. The readers of the Long Text are invited to immerse themselves in Julian’s vision of reality, in which the material and the spiritual dimensions of human life become intertwined in the loving embrace of God.

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