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A comparative study of the articulation of liminality in the vernacular theology of Julian of Norwich's revelations of divine love and marguerite Porete's the Mirror of simple souls

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Title: A comparative study of the articulation of liminality in the vernacular theology of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*.
Primary Texts: Because the focus of the study is on the employment of language and specifically the vernacular, the Middle English work of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and the medieval French version of Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls,* supported by readings of current English translations, as well as consideration of the Middle Age's Latin version, are the focus texts of this study.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements of Doctor of Philosophy.
Johannesburg 2019.

I declare that this essay is my own independent work. Where I have consulted secondary sources, I have acknowledged them appropriately.

- In particular I have acknowledged all arguments that I have summarised or paraphrased from other sources
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores commonalities between Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls* by looking at how the language of the two texts is employed in their descriptions of apprehending divinity. The exploration investigates the verbal textures of the texts to see where and how Julian's and Marguerite's ideas complement each other and thus might be similar communications regarding; apprehending divinity, how liminality seems to play a role in progress towards apprehending divinity and the idea that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* might be part of a wider dialogue that transcends time, space, culture and geography.

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My husband, Mohamed Hassim: I am deeply grateful for your help, patience and encouragement. My children, Adam, Nadia, and Isa: you were equally encouraging and accommodating throughout the period of my study, suffering some minor maternal neglect during the process.

I am deeply greatful to my late mother, Jean Davids, for instilling in me the value of education and for not allowing me to give up on studying when it all started to feel insurmountable. To my late father, Eugene Davids, who always encouraged all of my endeavours, and supported me in any way he possibly could; thank you daddy, your efforts were not lost on me. I thank my sister, Genevieve Davids, for all her prayers and for her accommodating the fact that I could not always be available to her, which cannot have been easy for her; my brother Neville Obermeyer, who was a pillar of strength when it came to helping me manage domestic issues when my mother passed away. Agnes, my domestic helper, went beyond the call of duty doing the child-minding for me, saw to it that I was able to work uninterrupted for hours on end, and managed my domestic environment when I was engrossed in my studies.

I am also thankful for my girlfriend Janine Connor, who taught me that, ‘to eat an elephant one must take one bite at a time’.

ABBREVIATIONS

Julian of Norwich:

BW Middle English short and long versions of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* in the Barry Windeatt edition

NC Middle English long version of *Revelations of Divine Love* in the Norton Critical edition titled *The Showings of Julian of Norwich* edited by Denise N. Baker

CW Modern English short and long translated versions of Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* in the Colledge and Walsh *Showings* text

Marguerite Porete:

MD Middle English '*Þe mirrour of simple soules*' edited by Marilyn Doiron in the Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pieta

RG The French version 'Le mirouer des simples ames' edited by Romana Guanieri in the Corpvs Christianorvm Continuato Medievialis LXIX

PV The Latin transaltion 'Specvlvm simplicivm animarvm' edited by Paul Verdyn in the Corpvs Christianorvm Continuato Medievialis LXIX

CMG Modern English '*The Mirror of Simple Souls*' translated by Colledge, Marler Grant

EB Modern English '*The Mirror of Simple Souls'* translated by Ellen Babinsky

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PREFACE

During my Master's study in the field of medieval women's literature, I was drawn to medieval mystical texts. Julian of Norwich's (8 November 1342–1416) *Revelations of Divine Love*, Marguerite Porete's (1250–1 June 1310) *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, Margery Kempe's *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the anonymous authors of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Pearl*, all seemed to be reporting similar ideas regarding mystical phenomena. It seems to me that there are 'links' in what they record about the divine, and that those links at some points complement, and at others revise, informally, inherited formulations about divinity and mystical union. The problem, as I see it, is that the academy acknowledges links amongst mystical texts as 'unrealised dialogues',[1] but there does not seem to be sufficient investigation into establishing and formalising such links especially in so far as the mystical texts' discussions on *unio mystica* is concerned. Furthermore, there seems to be a similar lack of investigation into showing that the links are part of a wider dialogue regarding *unio mystica* and that mystical dialogues seem to articulate liminality as a precondition to *unio mystica*. This study hopes to contribute to the acknowledgment of links amongst mystical texts and the idea that the texts are in dialogue with each other – lending from, contributing to, revising and pre-empting each other – by showing how Julian's *Revelations* and Marguerite's *Mirror* are in converastion not only with each other but are also part of a wider dialogue concerning *unio mystica*. Mystics, it seems, arrive at an experiential understanding (in Julian's case) and/or a theoretical understanding (in Marguerite's case) of what might be the character or nature of divinity and mystical union, as opposed to theological deduction thereof. Therefore, this study will be a literary analysis of the recorded mystical experience of Julian of Norwich in *Revelations of Divine Love* and the mystical reflections in Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, to see where and how their articulations regarding apprehending divinity are similar.

In particular the texts seem to share the quality of liminality, and I am interested in how liminality finds expression in what has been called vernacular theology. In short, liminality seems to condition Julian's experiences and theories and Marguerite's background and theory, and is reflected in the expressions regarding divinity and mystical union that the women use. I am particularly interested in the links between Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, how Julian and Marguerite employ the vernacular in their articulations of mystical union, what their employment of language tells us about liminality in a mystical context, and where and

[1] B. McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 343.

how, in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, the vernacular descriptions of divinity inform and shape how we understand liminality as a perspective on apprehending God.

This study mostly treats Julian's *Revelations* first and then Marguerite's *Mirror*. At other points in the study *The Mirror* receives first treatment because when there are links made between the texts, an expression might be more lucid in one text than it is in the other and so it makes sense to start with the clearer expression first and then move on to analysing the more cryptic one. However, it is noted that Marguerite's *Mirror* actually precedes Julian's *Revelations* chronologically, and that given *The Mirror's* underground transmission, the possibility exists that Julian might even have been familiar with Marguerite's text. It is very important to note that this study does not see *The Mirror* as secondary to *Revelations* or vice versa.

It is noteworthy that Julian's *Revelations* seems to be positioned within mainstream religious/spiritual discourse whereas Marguerite and her *Mirror* seem to be positioned as 'heretical' or as outside of that mainstream discourse, given Marguerite's trial and condemnation by the Inquisition and then her demise at the stake in Paris in 1310.[2] However, this study treats both Julian's *Revelations* and Marguerite's *Mirror* as mystical texts as opposed to the former conforming to orthodoxy and the latter being supposedly 'heretical'. The reason for this is that I find similarities between the texts, or rather, that links can be made made between the two in their articulations of apprehending divinity (which this study hopes to show). These links lead me to consider that *The Mirror* is not a 'heretical' or a 'left-field' religious/spiritual discourse. Rather, it is a formulation of *unio mystica* not unlike Julian's *Revelation*s. It is my contention that it was Marguerite's refusal to revise her text, more so than the tenets of *The Mirror* – despite 'the fifteen "articles" from the Mirror [that were censured]' and the three used against her at her trial[3] – that led to her demise at the stake given that 'the Catholic Church was attempting to regulate women's revelatory discourses and the outbreaks of spiritual movements on the continent'.[4]

I am hoping that this study contributes to current interest in feminist readings of mystical texts. However, whilst the interest is in Julian and Marguerite and their work because they are women, the study is not a feminist one *per se*. The real interest is in what can be deduced about apprehending

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[2] K. Wilson, *Medieval Women Writers* (Athens: University of Geogia Press, 1984), p.vx.

[3] Emery, K. Jnr, 'Foreword', *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, by M. Porete, trans. E. College, J. C. Marler and J. Grant (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. ix.

[4] Ibid. p. viii. It should be noted that the Catholic Churtch during the Middle Ages was considered 'the first esate', the nobility beneath it and the rest of society beneath that. In its capacity as a universal institution on the continent and in Brittian the church wielded a considerable ammount of authority and influence.

divinity through Julian's and Marguerite's medieval female lenses, via a study of the commonalities in their texts.

A literary analysis, I believe, is an appropriate approach to the interpretation of these records because the texts are attempts at expressing the ineffable. That is, the authors try to communicate, in writing, an experience and phenomenon the essence of which seems to evade capture in oral and written form.[5] The fact that these two women are able to formulate a record at all, of what seems to be ineffable, imbues their descriptions of capturing divinity with some value. It is only through analysing what exactly is written and what that writing attempts to communicate, that it becomes possible to make some deductions regarding Julian's and Marguerite's presentations of *unio mystica*.

The communications referred to here are Julian's and Marguerite's creative, and in some ways original, alternatives to traditional understandings of *unio mystica*. Links between ideas in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* will be investigated to see whether the same issues are described, in variant literary form and expression. When discussing possible links in phenomena between the two texts, the issue of language comes into question.[6] Both texts are written in the vernacular as opposed to what was the language of theology, that is, Latin: Julian was an English anchorite who wrote in Middle English. Marguerite wrote in Picard French and is associated with the beguines. I think it safe to say, then, that Julian and Marguerite were not considered to be theologians or scholars. My readings of their texts and related materials lead me to believe that they are still not treated as theologians or academics but as mystics. This leads to the point that outside of an institutional structure – Julian's possible ceremonial and formal entry into the enclosure aside and her church-associated isolation duly considered, and Marguerite's possible link to the semi-formal and quasi-autonomous beguine movement allowed for – both women had to re-imagine or create their own structure for their narratives, given their supposed lack of intellectual frame. So, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed that both women were amateur spiritual theologians – in the sense that both seem to have sought a more meaningful and inter-personal relationship with divinity, and furthermore, ascribe to the nature of their relationship with divinity, a more intense and self-obliterating involvement than that which standard Christian worship seemed to offer them: Julian was the subject of an experience with divinity and wrote about it, and Marguerite composed her

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[5] An experience in Julian's case and phenomena in Marguerite's case, because we do not know if Marguerite actually had a mystical experience, we only know that *The Mirror* is regarded as a mystical text.

[6] Concerns regarding the Middle English translation of Marguerite's French text used in this study are discussed under **Choice of Texts**.

reflections about divinity. Both sought to interpret supernatural apprehensions. Further to this, Julian and Marguerite were working outside of what was considered normative. Hence, the texts in question are reflections of Julian's and Marguerite's spirituality, in the sense given above, which in turn reflects their notions about divinity, and thus the texts have the potential to reveal fresh perspectives regarding divinity, not so much un-orthodox but as extra- or supra-orthodox.

The aim is to explore commonalities between the two texts that specifically describe accessing, apprehending and experiencing divinity. I want to examine how the language of the two women's mystical works expresses descriptions of divinity and where and how those descriptions theorise what seems to be a liminal character of the mystical experience. The originality and freshness of Julian's and Marguerite's doctrines are now well established and accepted. My wish is to contribute to the academy an elaboration of medieval women's insights into the nature of mystical experience and mystical insights as inscriptions of divine truth as they saw it. This dissertation ought to then, add to the interdisciplinary exploration of mystical writings from literary (or rhetorical), feminist and theological perspectives.

To the aforementioned effect this study is then a comparative, exegetic and hermeneutic one. It considers medieval structural forces that placed Julian and Marguerite in liminal spaces that became the site of their encounters (Julian) and expositions (Marguerite) and from which a vernacular-theological language emerged. The study also entails sensitivity to feminist concerns albeit that the study is not a feminist one, and focuses on the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, since that was the period during which Julian and Marguerite lived and worked. Furthermore, this study will explore commonalities in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls* to discover what the texts might reveal about liminality and its relation to divinity. But what does liminality mean in this context? Before answering this important question, however, it is imperative first to provide clarity regarding the texts and their contexts, as well as to clarify the foundational concepts that this study relies on.

Chapter One

Introduction

Preamble

This introductory chapter discusses the choice of texts and the texts in their context. This is followed by a literature review. The literature review outlines the salient issues in medieval women's writing and who some of the leading authorities on the subject are. This is followed by a discussion on vernacular theology as a category recently identified because both texts are written in the 'mother tongue'.

Choice of Texts

A number of points must be made regarding the focus texts. This study concerns itself with Julian's short and long texts: Julian's first mystical recording seems to display an immediate and spontaneous response to her experience. To my mind, this makes the first recording a truer reflection of Julian's mystical encounter: the short text is a raw, more organic record of her mystical experience, and thus seems to be the more natural, instinctive, reflective, and untainted truth of her encounter. Hence, the short text appears to be a more reliable source of what can be considered to be descriptions regarding apprehending divinity than the revised long text. The long version of the text, undertaken twenty years after her experience, was subject to more revision and editing than the first. However, the long text is equally worthy and authentic because it is currently understood that the short text was written as embryonic to the long text. Thus, the long text elucidates points made in the short text. Moreover, the short text does not include accounts of Julian's subsequent mystical experiences. Nevertheless, because it is a recording closest in time to Julian's initial experience, the short text is an integral part of this study. Since this study will focus on how language captures the mystical experience, the long text promises to provide more useful data. Hence, I will work with the short and long versions because I am of the opinion that they complement each other and that together, they will provide a richer understanding of Julian's ideas.

For Julian's work the study relies on the Middle English short and long versions in the Barry Windeatt edition titled *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love* (BW). To supplement my understanding of the Middle English version, I consult the modern English short and long versions translated in the Colledge and Walsh 'The Classics of Western Spirituality' *Showings*, edition (CW). This latter text is 'a text made from all available sources, manuscripts and others, presented in their

original language' and is thus an edition 'made from all copies known to survive'.[7] Therefore, it holds the promise of enhancing my understanding of the material. To a lesser extent, but in order to comprehend the scope of Julian's ideas, I also consult Denise Baker's translation of the long text in the Norton Critical edition's *The Showings of Julian of Norwich* (NC) and *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision shown to a devout woman AND a Revelation of Love*, by Nicholas Watson and Jaqueline Jenkins. This last text provides further critical comprehension of the Middle English text and is a much needed fresh edition of Julian's Middle English text and furthermore, is one that makes severe reading and studying Julian's thinking possible, not only for Middle English learners and academics, but also for those with little or no prior linguistic knowledge.

As regards Marguerite's *Mirror*, the Middle English version *Þe Mirrour of Simple Soules*, translated from the French by 'M. N.' into Middle English, and later edited by Sister Marilyn Doiron (MD),[8] is consulted alongside a reading of a 2005 modern English translation, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, also by Colledge and two associates, J. C. Marler and Judith Grant and which supplements the Middle English reading (CMG). This translation, like that of Colledge's and Walsh's translation of Julian's *Revelations*, is a study of a number of the original manuscripts. Of the documents that Colledge, Marler and Grant translate from, four are extant medieval manuscripts; a fifth is a relatively recent discovery made by Romana Guanieri of a French copy, *Le Mirouer des Simples Ames*, and a sixth is the Middle English copy *Þe Mirrour of Simple Soules*. Furthermore, the translation by Colledge, Marler and Grant considers at length the annotations made to *The Mirror* in the Middle English version by the medieval scribe known only as M.N. More importantly, Romana Guanieri's French version that appears alongside Paul Verdyn's Latin version, namely, *Specvlvm Simplicivm Animarvm*, as held in the *Corpus Christianorum: Continuato Mediaevalis 69* are both consulted so as to enhance the findings of this study (RG/PV). Interestingly, a version of *The Mirror* is extant in the Amherst manuscript alongside Julian's *Revelations*.[9] What can be made of the juxtaposition of the anchorite's and the beguine's work that was seperated by time and space yet appears alogside each other in the Amherst manuscript has been articulated as follows:

Some Continental woman who took a postive view of corporeality belonged to the beguine movement, nourished in part by Cistercian theological thinking and meditative practice. Julian has

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[7] Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S. J., 'Foreword' and 'Introduction', *Julian of Norwich Showings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 15, 17.

[8] Published in the journal *Archivio italiano per la della pieta*, volume 5, 1968.

[9] 'The Julian of Norwich, British Library Amherst Manuscript', available at: http://www.umilta.net/amherst.html (accessed 21/12/2018).

enough in common with these women for us to speak of a spiritual affinity. And it has become evident that there are certain correspondences between her and the beguine Marguerite Porete. The two women have a distinctly optimistic stance, extolling the supreme intensity of divine love that enables them to contemplate the problem of sin with breathtaking nonchalance. There were no beguines proper in England, it is true, yet why does a manuscript exist with English translations of Continetal beguine biographies? … It is intersing to note that evidence has been found that in Norwich, from 1427, there existed a group of women leading a communal life modelled on a *béguinage*; a second group is documented as existing circa 1443. These women must have felt themselves to be specially chosen, and they cultivated close contacts with the Continental beguine communities, which may well have led to familiarity with major beguine texts as well … Julian did not live long beyond 1416, but such contacts would have existed prior to the date of the surviving documents.[10]

Given the above, it is therefore unsurprising that links can be made between the works of the two women.

[10] Wolfgang Riehle, The *Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 260.

Julian of Norwich: *Showings*

Manuscripts

1.British Library Additional MS. 37790, (**A**) 15 th century

2. Westminister Cathedral Library, (**W**) late 15th or early 16trh century

3. Bibl. Nation., Paris, Fonds Anglais, NO. 40. (**P**) 16th century

4. Brit. Library, Sloane MS. 2499, (**S1**) mid 17th century

5. Brit. Library, Sloane MS. 3705, (**S2**) late 17th or early 18th century

6. Norwhich Castle Manuscript (**N**)158.926/4g.5

7. Upholland Fragment manuscript, (**U**) scribe, Barbara constable, Cambrai/Upholland

8. Margeret Gascione Manuscript (**MG**) scribe, Bridget More, St Mary's Abbey, Colwich, H18 Cambrai/Paris/Colwich

Critical Editions/Translations

1.**Middle English.** *Julian of Norwich; Revelations of Divine Love*, Ed. Barry Windeatt (**A, S1/2**)

2. **Middle English.** *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, Version, Norton Critical Edition, Ed. D. Baker (**P**)

3. Middle English. *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, Eds. *Nicholas Watson and Jaqueline Jenkins*

4.**Modern English.** *Julian of Norwich Showings*, transl. Colledge *et al* (**A, W, P, SI/2**).
5.**Modern English.** *Revelations of Divine Love*, Penguin edition, transl. C. Wolters (**S1**)

6. Modern English. *Showing of Love*, transl. J. Holloway, (**A,W, P, S1, U, MG**)

Marguerite Porete: *The Mirror*

Manuscripts

1. Old French: three exist but only one is availble. It dates from the late 15th century, is owned by a nunnery in Orlean, is held in the Musee Conde as Chantilly MS F XIV 26 and known as the **C**-manuscript.

2. Latin: three exist, translated from old French, held in the vatican as VAT Latino 4355, Rossiano 4 and Chigiano C. iv. 85. A fragment in Latin is also in the Bodleian Library Oxford as Laud. Lat. 46

3. Italian: four 14th century copies translated from Latin are in Florence, Vienna Naples and Budapest

4. Middle English: there are three 15th century copies translated from French. One in London's British Museum as MS. Add. 37790. Another in the Bodleian Library as MS 505. The third at Pembroke College AS MS 221

Critical Editions/Translations

1. **Middle English** translated from French by "M. N." edited by M. Doiron in the Archivio Italiano per la Storia Della Pieta 5 (**D**)

2. **French** edited by R.Guanieri, and **Latin** edited by P. Verdyn, in the Corpus Christianorum: Contnuato Mediaevalis 69

3. **Modern English.** Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, translated by Colledge et al. (**C**)

4. **Modern English.***The Mirror of Simple Souls*, transalted by E Babinsky (**C**)

Figure 1

Figure 1 is a schematic presentation that illustrates the surviving manuscripts and the translated critical edition counterparts for Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*/*Showings* and Marguerite's *Mirror*. Only the critical editions relative to this study, for both works, are shown.[11]

Regarding the issue of translation and possible differences in nuances of meaning that accompany translations I rely on the following stand that was taken in reference to Julian's work, but which is equally applicable to Marguerite's text:

It is not my concern to enter into the technical problems concerning the various manuscripts and their interdependence. Examination [by noteworthy scholars before me] has satisfied me that the many small differences of reading do not affect Julian's doctrine on prayer and contemplation.[12]

It remains only to note what might be the implications of comparative readings – that is, readings of the vernacular texts and then that of the relevant translations. It seems to me that such an approach enhances comprehension of Julian's and Marguerite's doctrines, in that the original text and the translated version(s) re-inform each other, because each exports nuanced meaning to the other during translation. For example, 'traveyle' (NC 35) in the Middle English version of *Revelations*, translates to 'labour' (CW 217) in the modern English version. The Middle English meaning of *travelye* is 'hard physical labour, toil … effort exertion … suffering, affliction, a painful condition … a journey, a trip, motion, movement'[13] all of which accords with the modern English translation, which in its turn reinforces the childbirth imagery that is at work in Revelation 9's[14] description of Christ on the Cross. There it describes the bleeding head (reminiscent of the crowning of a baby's head during childbirth), the discolouring of the face (reminiscent of the change in skin colour from blue to pink as the baby takes its first gasps of air), the copious bleeding and the 'paynes of the passion' (NC 35), both of which relate to the physicality of childbirth. Thus, 'traveyle' as it is used

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[11] Information given in the diagram for the manuscripts regarding Julian come from P. Mollinari, *The Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 3, and Julia Bolton Holloway, *Julian of Norwich: Showing of Love* (MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 2. For Marguerite the information comes from *The International Marguerite Porete Society*. Available from: http://margueriteporete.net/?p=87 (accessed 2015/01/15).

[12] P. Molinari, 'Preface', *Julian of Norwich: the Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), p. v.

[13] Middle English dictionary online search for *traveyle*, available at: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=travail&rgxp=constrained (accessed 21/12/2018).

[14] To avoid confusion, I refer to chapters and showings in *Revelations* and chapters in *The Mirror*, in figures. For example, *Revelations* Chapter 1 and/or Revelation 1, *The Mirror*'s Chapter 6, to avoid confusion with referencing the chapters or sections of this study which will be referred to, for example, as **Chapter One** or **Chapter Three**.

in this particular section of the text, literally means work, at one level of understanding. That is, the work involved when birthing a child. At a second level of understanding it illustrates, figuratively, that Christ had to die in order to birth humanity. In this way, in translation, the word 'labour' succinctly captures the childbirth metaphor in the given passage and thus re-informs the original word 'traveyle'. Furthermore, the Middle English 'traveyle', is similar in spelling and phonetics to the French word for work, which is 'travail'. This French word, *travail*, points towards Marguerite's French text *The Mirror*, in which we find 'oeuvre' (RG 150), another French word for work, which is used within *The Mirror*'s various image contexts to illustrate the death of the human soul and the (re)birth of the divine soul. *Ouvre* translates into Latin as *opus* ('operis' PV 151) and this word captures, phonetically, the aforementioned transmutation, that is, how the human soul and divine soul 'operate'. Thus the birth and death associations around the words 'travyle', 'labour' and 'oeuvre' and 'operis' in translation, have nuanced each other's meaning and this nuanced meaning creates links between *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. It seems then that translations from original/vernacular to Latin/modern in each text, not only re-informs meaning but the meaning can also extend from the pages of one text (*Revelations*) into the pages of another (*The Mirror*), and vice versa. Thus all translations function as re-information.

The Texts in Context

Here the following is borne in mind: the dating of the various manuscripts are as given in **Figure 1**, that it is understood in the academy that there is debate regarding Julian's status as nun, widow or lay person,[15] as well as the fact that Marguerite Porete was burned at the stake as a relapsed heretic in 1310. Within the socio-political and historical context of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries – the effects of which reverberated well into the fifteenth century – the Church attempted to regulate women's revelatory discourse and the outbreaks of spiritual movements on the continent[16] – and probably the appearance of the same on the British Isles, given that Julian's contemporaries include Walter Hilton, who wrote the mystical treatise *The Scale of Perfection* around 1386, Richard Rolle, who wrote the spiritual guide *Form of Living* circa 1348, and the small but significant number of religious hermits, recluses and anchorites present on the English 'humanscape'.[17] In fact, in Brittian 'a piece of ecclesiastical legislation known as Arundel's Constititions … [was part] of a broader

[15] Liz Herbert MacAvoy, 'Introduction', *A companion to Julian of Norwich* (D.S. Brewer: Cambridge, 2008), p. 4.

[16] As referenced in the **PREFACE**.

[17] D. N. Baker, 'Julian of Norwich and Anchoritic Literature', *Mystics Quarterly* 19 (1993): 148–160 (p. 148).

attempt to limit religious discussion and writing in the vernacular.'[18] The church tried to centralise its authority over the laity when, in 1215, the fourth Lateran Council made annual confession and communion obligatory, and produced manuals to enable priests to hear confession and assign penance.[19] This meant that ministering to the laity, was the domain of ordained and appointed clergy. Hence, it seems that a personal relationship with God and the right and responsibility for private engagement with divinity was somewhat circumscribed. Possibly one of the most restrictive forces was hierarchical dogma from the Roman Church. Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctum* Bull in 1302 pronounced the Pope supreme head of the Church and placed him above secular authority.[20] Further compounding the restrictive forces was the narrowly defined Biblical determination that prohibited women from dynamic participation in intellectual, theological and civic life: 'I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent' (1Tim 2:12) was a normative social code. Only priests were allowed to preach and teach the Gospel.

On the continent, Philip the Fair responded to the *Unum Sanctam* Bull by appointing himself judge and authority over the Pope.[21] Both, it seemed, desired a claim to supremacy over the laity. This meant that people like Marguerite were unfortunately caught in the middle of a power struggle. It is not a stretch to imagine that Julian might have been subject to a similar rift in England: Edward lll of England was embroiled in a dynastic power struggle over the French throne. France, it was thought, held control over the Pope. In England, resentment rose against the Pope and his advisers because it was perceived that the papacy enabled France. Edward lll was instrumental in attempting to reduce papal authority and increase monarchical authority over English subjects.[22] So, like Marguerite, Julian's personal right and responsibility to choice was circumscribed, given that monarchical and ecclesiastical concerns overrode those of the laity, and that theodicy and misogyny characterised the era.[23] Laypersons, and especially women, also had to contend with censorship, as

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[18] Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822–864 (p. 824).

[19] C. Dinshaw and E. Wallace (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. xii–xiii.

[20] J.P. Kirsch, 'Unam Sanctam', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, available at: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15126a.htm (accessed 26/07/2013).

[21] 'Philip IV', available at: http://newadvent.org/cathen/12004ahtm (accessed 04/01/2015).

[22] M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century: 1307–1399* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 280–281.

[23] Theodicy is taken to mean ascribing social inequity to the vindication of divine providence and misogyny, meaning that women were subject to overall strictures.

evidenced by the Bishop of Cambrai's banishment of Marguerite's *Mirror* and the fact that her text has glosses which suggest that *The Mirror* underwent some kind of editing.

What is more, there were few avenues of employment for the disproportionate number of women in society, in particular those who came from landed aristocracy and the urban patriciate, and who were privileged to have had some form of education.[24] Julian's and Marguerite's texts indicate that they may have enjoyed some form of educational formation because of their familiarity with literary conventions of the time, something that one expects only church-associated persons (nuns for example), the wealthy, landed gentry, or those related to the aristocracy, might have enjoyed. Evidence for an educational background can be found in Marguerite's adaptation of the courtly love tradition in *The Mirror* and Julian's adeptness at transcribing sensory images as well as her knowledge of traditional theology. The significance of this is that it suggests that women of Julian's and Marguerite's stature occupied a 'surplus-citizen' status in society. Society, we can speculate, seemed ill-equipped to accommodate women as positive and dynamic role-players.[25] Broadly speaking then, women, in particular bourgeois women were denied civic participation. Finally, the emerging universities during 1215 in Paris, Oxford and Bologna added to entrenching the intellectual suppression of women, since women were denied access to the academic institutions.[26] Given the aforementioned restrictive structural forces at work in the lives of Julian and Marguerite, it is easy to see that they already, by default, occupied liminal spaces in society in that they were part of a marginalised yet substantial class in society, first because they were women, and second, because they practised alternative lifestyles as anchorite and beguine respectively. However, bearing in mind Gillespie's and Ghosh's *After Arundel*,[27] and the contributions to that body of work by various scholars, some of whom imply, as does the title of that text, that not just because of or despite Archbishop Arundel (and the repressive legislation associated with him), new models and taxonomies are needed in order to move beyond Arundel as a firmament of repressed (especially literary) scholarship of the period. It is exactly this issue of a new or fresh approach to the next phase

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[24] R. Lerner, 'The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the later Middle Ages', available at: www.dhushara.com/book/consum/gnos/lerner.html (accessed 30/07/2013).

[25] From my readings, I gather that this was more entrenched in bourgeois sectors than was the case with the general populace where economic circumstances dictated that women were an inexpensive, disposable and yet sometimes self-directed labour force.

[26] Dinshaw and Wallace, The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing, pp. x–xiii.

[27] Vincent Gillespie, Kantik Ghosh, *After Arundel, Religious Writing in Fifteenth century England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

of scholarly exploration of this still often 'grey area' of religious attitudes and writing that this study attempts to engage with.

Literature Review

A number of texts inform my working understanding of the salient issues and debates in the field of medieval women's literature and the mystical elements portrayed in this literature.

To begin with, there are the texts that explain mysticism and mystical works and illustrate their links to liminality. In this regard, Evelyn Underhill's *The Essentials of Mysticism and Other Essays* (1920) and David Knowles's *What is Mysticism*? (1967) were helpful in that both texts allowed me better to grasp the spiritual aspects of Julian's *Showings* and Marguerite's *Mirror*. Through Bernard Standring's translation of Wolfgang Riehle's *The Middle English Mystics* (1981) and Andrew Louth's *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (2008) I was able to trace the possible spiritual, theological and philosophical influences on the minds of Julian and Marguerite. Both these texts provide further insight into what constitutes mysticism and how liminality becomes a condition of mystical experience and mystical discourse. The philosophies that Standring and Louth explain, namely Augustinian, Platonist and Dionysian, posit that impartiality to givens (meaning generally agreed upon mores in any one or more cultural settings) is a condition of moving closer to divinity. Impartiality to definitives is a characteristic of liminality.[28] In this sense the philosophers paved the way for theories regarding liminality. It was Arnold Van Gennep's work *Rites of Passage* that brought the concept of liminality into mainstream dialogue in the academy but it was Victor Turner, in his study *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, who clarified the concept of limianlity. Both these texts inform this study's use of liminality. Furthermore, I was able to find links in the philosophies that Standring and Louth explain that made me consider that the dialogue regarding divinity and accessing divinity transcends barriers.

The idea that the dialogue transcends geography, time and culture (thus creating opportunity for the idea of liminality) is explained further in *Gnosticism, New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (2002) by Stephan A. Hoeller. This text helped me in arriving at an understanding of the origin of the notion that God is innate in mankind. That is, God's presence is an intrinsic feature of being human. This is a conjecture that many medieval writers and mystics make, notably Julian of Norwich, Marguerite Porete and the anonymous writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. This adds value to my theory which claims that commonalities exist amongst the texts despite separation by time, geography, language and culture, and that those commonalities proffer glimpses of divinity. Furthermore, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901–1902) shows how that

[28] This is discussed in the exposition for liminality in **Chapter Two**.

despite subjects' separation, there is value to be found in their record because the mental space of each subject, although unique, still results in an authentic experience and/or record. Through the variety of examples that James uses, I was able to see possible links between experiences and records. Those experiences and records, as cited by James, reveal a mind-set that seems to imply a threshold in which definitives are absent and only limitless possibilities are present. This is in itself an aspect of liminality. James's text also provides insight into debates around the authenticity of mystical experiences and mystical texts. Hence, all authentic religious experience yields insights that can be compared and analysed together, despite separation in time and space. However, the debate regarding the authenticity of the mystical experience has moved on since James's initial theories. In *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* edited by Steven Katz[29], a number of scholars investigate the mystical experience in Christianity, Judaism and Eastern Religions sympathetically and objectively. A reading of these writings allows for comprehension of the current debate regarding mystical and religious experience and its value. Katz himself is emphatic when he claims that 'There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences"[30] – a proclamation he reiterates referring to it in later essays as a working hypothesis. Katz is seemingly of the opinion that all human beings – mystics included – necessarily experience reality through a conceptual framework, one that simply cannot be bypassed. It is exactly this conceptual framework that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* challenge in their discussion on 'naughting' (Julian) and annihilating the soul (Marguerite) and which this study entertains in **Chapter Six** in the discussion on **Perception**. Nonetheless, Katz's text is helpful indeed in understanding the current debate regarding mystical literature and experience, and its value, in the academy.[31]

Another issue in the field of msytical works by medieval women is that the women not be categorised by gender. In *Promised Bodies,* Patricia Dailey suggests that doing so 'has led to consistent essentializing of women even by scholars most interested in retrieving their voices'.[32] Dailey's use of Hadewijch as a case study shows that there is sufficient evidence in the theological and mystical genres to study medieval women's voices as 'deesentialized',[33] that is, as a body of work in its own right and not necessarily a body of work that is female oriented or has a female

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[29] Steven Katz, ed. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (London: Sheldon Press, 1978).

[30] Ibid. p. 26.

[31] This study engages with this debate in its discussion on reality in **Chapter Six**.

[32] Jessica Boon, 'Book Review: Prised Bodies: Time Language and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts', Available from: http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/t-and-c) (accessed 06/08/2019).

[33] Ibid.

orientation. This work contributes to this study's conjecture that dialogues regarding divinity tend to dissolve gender issues and polarities as well as space and time and are part of a much wider network of conversations amongst those who contemplate divinity, irrespective of gender.

Seminal mystical works such as *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense* (1981) and Jan Van Ruysbroek's *The Spiritual Espousals* suggest that language fails to fully capture the experience of apprehending divinity. Both works employ an unconventional treatment of apprehending divinity. Their treatment of divine experience implies a borderline space and place, that is, a liminal area. This liminal area can be traced in Julian's and Marguerite's texts. It is important to note here that Eckhart was not a 'known' on the English continent during Julian's lifetime. Nonetheless, the seminal nature of Psuedo-Dionysius's work means that his influence might have been present in whatever literature Julian may have been exposed to. Since Eckhart was influenced by Dionysius, it is unsurprising to find links between Eckhart's and Julian's work, even if only in their themes, despite the fact that Eckhart may not have been a direct influence on Julian. Eckhart and Van Ruysbroek inform the discussion on **The Human Condition and the Divine Spirit**, and **Reality and Perception**, showing how each of these concepts is separate yet the same, according to Julian and Marguerite, and is at once an aspect of liminality.

The seminal work by Dionysius in *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: The Complete Works*, also contributes to this study in that the text enables comprehension of how mystics come to know God in a way that is contrary to traditional theology. Pseudo-Dionysius' theories on apophatic theology find expression in Julian's and Marguerite's theories which relate to liminality, in that each woman dissolves traditional conventions of understanding God. Since definitives are non-existent in liminal spaces, Julian and Marguerite, like Pseudo-Dionysius, posit that to know God, one has to undo what one thinks one knows about God. Judging from the three texts, apophasis then comes to mean travelling from human to divine to almost metaphysical perspective and involves progressing from the known (given religion) to the unknown (spiritual individuation). In a sense this motion seems regressive (in that it calls for implosion and inwardness) rather than progressive, which is a word that implies explosion and outwardness. Yet, by my understanding of Dionysius's theory, progress and regress come to mean the same thing in that both indicate movement towards divinity. Thus, opposites can be used synonymously to indicate cohesion despite their literal difference in meaning. This condition is a feature of liminality which is in itself a feature of apophasis and is

portrayed in *The Cloud of Unknowing*[34] and *Pearl*.[35] These texts' rich and imaginative illustrations of the apophatic way contributed towards my understanding of Julian's and Marguerite's theories on humanity and divinity as each woman contemplates the duality.

Enhancing my comprehension of apophasis and liminality and my comprehension of Julian's and Marguerite's distinction between humanity and divinity, John Scottus Eriugena's *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*[36] is a text that elucidates apophasis and liminality because, as the title suggests, the discourse is about division of nature; 'nature' implying that God and humankind are both organic, the former in the sentient sense and the latter in a physical sense.

Michael Anthony Sells' *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*[37] aids comprehension of the language of apophatic theology, especially as it applies in both Julian's and Marguerite's texts. Because apophatic theology concerns itself with undoing given theological constructs and shifting religious perspectives, meaning is constantly revised. This revision of meaning saturates *The Mirror* and occurs in many places in *Revelations*. Revision of meaning speaks to both texts' theories of liminality. This is where Sells' text was helpful in explaining how Julian and Marguerite deconstruct[38] standard understandings of divinity and allow for malleability of meaning.

To better grasp the forces at work in the lives of Julian and Marguerite, one of the texts that was helpful for my understanding of the historical period was *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (2003), edited by Caroline Dinshaw and David Wallace. This text places the writing of medieval women against the socio-economic and religious backdrop. So too does *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity,* edited by John Arnold (2014). Both texts provide insight into the constructs of medieval Christianity. Both these texts are helpful in understanding the structural components of the period and how it is that Julian and Marguerite arrive at being liminal persons and where, how and why, in their texts, they theorise liminality. By default, it seems, anchorites and Beguines were already, structurally speaking, liminal persons, in that they straddled what was conventional and what was unconventional by virtue of their lifestyles. *The Cambridge Companion* and *The Oxford Handbook* show how medieval women and other mystical writers of

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[34] Anon., *The Cloud of Unknowing*, trans. Ira Progoff (London: Rider and Company, 1959).

[35] Anon., *The Pearl*, trans. Mary Hillman (NJ: College of Saint Elizabeth Press, 1961).

[36] Eriugena, John Scotus, *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*, trans. Myra L. Uhlfelder (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976).

[37] Michael, Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[38] Deconstruct here means to unravel and undo.

the period negotiated alternatives to what seems to have been limited opportunities for socio-religious expression. One sees how women such as Julian and Marguerite simultaneously challenge and support convention, thus revealing their liminal perspectives. Further to understanding Julian's and Marguerite's positioning, Walter Simmons's discussion of medieval religious life in *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities of the Low Countries 1200 – 1565*[39] complements Dinshaw's text by elaborating on medieval Beguines and how Beguines occupied a middle space between society and marginality. So, it has become clear to me that like anchorites, Beguines were informed by their middle space positions in society. This middle space is where their writing is located. Given the similarities in their socio-religious middle spaces, I find it unsurprising that there are links and similar viewpoints between anchorites and Beguines because it is from that middle space that anchorites like Julian and supposed beguines like Marguerite re-organise standard theology and arrive at liminal precepts about divinity.

Francis Beer's *Women and the Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages*[40] is another text that facilitates my understanding of what might have informed Julian's and Marguerite's notion of God and thus where, how and why, there are links in their theories. Like the Cambridge and Oxford texts, this text illustrates the constraints medieval women worked with and how the women circumnavigated convention.

Dianne Watt's *Medieval Women's Writing, works by and for Medieval Women in England, 1100-1500*[41] was helpful in arriving at an appreciation of the concept of medieval authorship, women-oriented writing, and the orientation of women's writing. These matters are particularly pertinent to *Revelations* and *The Mirror* because the matters relate to the external factors that it seems *Revelations* and *The Mirror* responded to (bearing in mind that the texts can also be considered as evidence of the women's agency despite of or because of Bishop Arundel's restrictive laws). Furthermore, Watt's text assists in understanding where Julian and Marguerite can be positioned in terms of authorial identity, collaboration in production, distribution and circulation of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* respectively, as well as audience and the tradition of female reading

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[39] Walter Simmons, Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200–1565 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[40] Francis Beer, *Women and the Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1992).

[41] Diane Watt, Medieval Women's Writing: Works by and for Medieval Women in England, 1100-1500 (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

and writing during the Middle Ages. Watt's text also reveals that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* cannot be understood in isolation from their audience or the external factors relating to manuscripts' creation, production, and dissemination. Complementing the information gathered from Watt's text was Eileen Power's *Medieval Women*.[42] Power discusses at length the medieval woman as she appears to us in the social stratification of the era. This book was enlightening because it reveals how medieval women related to each other and to literature, where education was available, how it was accessed, what the content of that education entailed, and how that education informed the women of their milieu and their identity – and thus activated their agency.

Another area of texts that informs my study is that of academic contributions to debates in the field of medieval women's literature in relation to Marguerite's and Julian's work. To begin with, D. Dyas' and Valerie Edden's *Approaching Medieval Anchoritic and Mystical Texts; Christianity and Culture; Issues in Teaching and Research*[43] was useful in providing an appreciation of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*'s spiritual tenets in relation to their literary value. Barbara Newman's *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*[44] explores the strategies medieval women authors employed to circumnavigate a literary tradition that constructed them as absent. In the journal *Sociological Analysis* Amanda Porterfield's 'Feminist Theology as a Revitalisation Movement'[45] engages similar issues. Due to societal norms which considered women incapable of transcribing thought and experience to writing, Newman surmises that the medieval woman entered the literary tradition via a religious, spiritual and mystical viewpoint and in so doing established herself in relation to ancient authors. Newman's book enables comprehension of the proto-feminist theories that Julian and Marguerite posit and how it is that Julian and Marguerite as liminal persons, become inaccessible to mainstream society and its constructs. Furthermore, Porter's discourse shows how theories like Julian's and Marguerite's impart feminine qualities to divinity.

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[42] Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[43] Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden and Roger Ellis, (eds.), Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts; Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching and Research (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005).

[44] Barbara Newman, From Virile Woman to Woman Christ; Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[45] Amanda Porterfield, 'Feminist Theology as a Revitalisation Movement', *Sociological Analysis* 48.3 (1987): 234–244.

Recent critical essays by notable scholars reveal current interest in medieval women's literature about *Revelations* and *The Mirror's* literary, theological and feministic value. For example, Barry Windeatt discusses Julian's literary revisions of *Revelations* in 'Julian of Norwich and her Audience'.[46] In 'Shifting Perspectives; Sin and Salvation in Julian's *A Revelation of Love'*, Abram Van Engen discusses Julian's doctrine and its deviation from church teaching.[47] Carol Lee Flanders's *Enduring Grace; Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics*[48] reveals a sensitivity to women's contributions to religion, thus making that text a feminist type of reader response to Julian's work. As regards Marguerite Porete's *Mirror* and its literary value, in a 1982 essay Peter Dronke takes the reader through Marguerite's lyrical writing style.[49] Theological perspectives have scholars, such as Father Edmund Colledge in the 'Interpretative Introductory Essay' of *The Mirror of Simple Souls* and notable Margueritan scholar Robert Lerner, agreeing that it has not been conclusively proven that Marguerite was a Beguine.[50] In 'She Swims and Floats in Joy', Kathleen Garay reveals a woman-oriented interpretation of how Marguerite adapts the courtly romance tradition to provide a theological critique of society.[51] Gwendolyn Bryant, on the other hand, is of the opinion that *The Mirror* is a spiritual treatise and not a diatribe against clergy.[52] The similarities and differences in the scholars' findings ought to contribute to this study's concern, which contends that Julian's *Revelations* and Marguerite's *Mirror* share literary commonalities that describe divinity and simultaneously theorise liminal and apophatic perspectives of divinity.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Gillespie's and Ghosh's work *After Arundel* here. This body of work seems to point towards the idea that a new taxonomy or model is required when approaching and analysing medieval women's work. This is so because of an almost automatic inclination by analysists to 'box' the women and their work into a category that treats both (the women and their work) as arising from repressive legislation and the work being 'knee-jerk'

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[46] B. Windeatt, 'Julian of Norwich and Her Audience', *The Review of English Studies* 28 (Feb. 1997):1–17.

[47] A. Van Engen, 'Shifting Perspectives; Sin and Salvation in Julian's *A Revelation of Love', Literature and Theology* 23 (March 2009) 1–17.

[48] C. L. Flanders, Enduring Grace; Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1993).

[49] P. Dronke, "Lyrical Poetry in the Works of Marguerite Porete", 'Literary and Historical Perspectives in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 1981 SEMA Meeting', p. 1.

[50] R. Lerner, 'New Light on The Mirror of Simple Souls', *Speculum* 85 (2010): 91–116 (p. 91).

[51] K. Garay, 'She Swims and Floats in Joy: Marguerite Porete an Heretical Mystic of the Later Middle Ages', *Canadian Women Studies/Le Cashiers de la Femme* 17 (1997): 18–21.

[52] G. Bryant, 'The French Heretic: Marguerite Porete', *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 16 – 21.

responses to structural restrictive forces. The thirty-one essays in *After Arudel* 'survey the religious landscape of fifteenth century England, suggesting that the late medieval church was oriented toward reform, and was already well aware, as Protestant Reformers would later put it that, "ecclesia semper reformanda est" ("the church is always to be reformed")'.[53] Hence, it could be said that *Revelations* and even *The Mirror* are evidence of reformationist thinking and that Julian and Marguerite were, despite society's strictures, exercising female agency. Many of the essays in *After Arudel* focus on Latin works but others examine vernacular writing making this body of work relevant to this study's unorthodox approach of transposing topology (a mathematical concept) to literary analysis attempting to argue for a new model and approach to medieval women's writing.

Vernacular Theology

The most pertinent area of recent criticism for my purposes is that which defines the notion of vernacular theology. For an introduction to this topic I rely on Eliana Corbari's dexterous explanation:

Ian Doyle coined this term in the 1950's with reference to the late medieval English Church, and it is now applicable to a pan-European theological tradition … The literary genres of vernacular theology include sermons, poetry, laude , reportationes, letters, hagiographies, medieval plays … and brief treatises often derived from preaching … The tradition of vernacular theology is more difficult to define than monastic or scholastic theologies because it is less technically precise and identifiable. For instance, scholastic and monastic theologies are identifiable with their physical origins, so that the source of scholasticism can be traced to the medieval cathedral schools, which developed into universities; and monasteries and convents gave rise to monasticism. Moreover, vernacular theology does not simply refer to theology written in the vernacular languages. Some texts written in Latin, such as the Liber Lelle by Angela da Foligno (c. 1248-1309), or the hagiography of Villana de'Botti (1332-1361) are forms of vernacular theology … Late medieval vernacular theology differed from other types of theology, partly due to its gendered elements. Women sometimes had leading roles in monastic theology, but when the universities became the new centres of learning, women were widely excluded from the scholastic theology practiced therein. Yet, neither scholastic nor monastic theologies could remain the sole preserve of men who frequented the medieval universities, nor of monks and nuns who studied and lived in monasteries. A new form was required to enable Christian learning and living to take place in the city dwellings

[53] Shanon Gayk, 'Review: After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth Century England by Gillespie and Ghosh', *Reniassance Quartely* 66.3 (2013): 1020–122 (p. 1021).

and public squares. Preaching and other forms of vernacular theology thus responded to a need to communicate, to learn and to study with and among people who were not familiar with the languages of scholasticism and monasticism. Vernacular theology was a response to a need to translate, and thus to repeat with a difference, in order to re-elaborate an incarnate theology. Incarnate theology is understood as taking place in the realm of human experience, existing in body and soul, at a particular time and place. A need which was heard and nourished through collaboration between women and men. In particular, it was practiced and desired primarily by women, who were excluded from some formal types of theological studies upon their exclusion from medieval universities ... Vernacular theology is dialogical, because it arises from encounters; it is translation because this encounter is with an other. Vernacular theology arises from encounters between the secular and the sacred, between men and women, the temporal and the eternal, the spatial and the infinite. Vernacular theology abounded among late medieval women and men; it sprang from a desire to give shape to the relational spaces between theory and practice; between laywomen, laymen and the clergy.[54]

Furthermore, vernacular theology has been described as, '[a] dialogic form that structures many late medieval vernacular writings, arising from encounters between clergy and laity, men and women, teachers and disciples, patrons and writers and most generally … from encounters between written and spoken language.[55] The currency of the term was greatly enhanced by Nicholas Watson in an influential article published in 1995.[56]

Much has been made of the idea that writing in the vernacular was a means of making a social statement against patriarchal and ecclesiastical dogma. But it is also possible that the vernacular was a means of enhancing Latin religious discourses. It could be said that the women were reaching out from the experiential into the established; in a sense then, from their known to scholars' known, and thus revising and enhancing theology. Expressing impressions of divinity seems to become, to my mind, more realised in the vernacular, in part because the 'mother tongue' makes the material and subject matter more accessible, as well as imparting a sense of relatability because the discourse is in the mother tongue. Furthermore, expressing themselves in the vernacular allows Julian and

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[54] Eliana Corbari, 'Lost and Found in Translation: The Heart of Vernacular Theology in Late Medieval Italy', *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 263–279.

[55] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (eds), 'INTRODUCTION', *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2.

[56] Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', p. 824.

Marguerite to play on multiple dimensions of meaning in that the concepts and terms in Latin and in the vernacular, when translated, meld into one another whilst simultaneously re-informing one another, given the various gradations of meaning inherent in translations. This claim was already explored earlier, but for interest's sake another example is provided here.

From Marguerite's *Mirror*, Chapter 7's opening lines use the French word, '*Ame*'. The Latin version is '*anima*' (PV 25). Both words are feminine nouns and mean soul. However, in Latin, the soul has two names: a masculine and a feminine. *Anima*, the feminine version, has as its root meaning breath, air and life-force, as opposed to the male version *animus*, which has its root meaning mind or intellect. French has no masculine form for the noun, soul. Interestingly, *animus*, the masculine, it seems, is hardly ever used to indicate the soul, from which it could be inferred that, by default, Latin attributes feminine qualities to the soul. Nonetheless, the Latin translation from the French uses the feminine version, probably because the text is by a woman and seems woman-oriented. However, given that masculinity still dominated and inhabited the written word, and given the patriarchy of the period, it is noteworthy that the feminine noun takes precedence when dealing with the immaterial part of a human being. This is not only significant because *The Mirror* is a text by a woman that makes arguments for womanhood, but also because the qualities that Marguerite believes are the ones that assist in mystical union are feminine, and stand in opposition to the character Reason, who is possessed of the masculine qualities of the Latin word *animus*. Thus, in translation, *ame* (French) and *anima* (Latin) re-inform each other.

By writing in the vernacular, which in translation of Latin re-informs and nuances meaning, Julian and Marguerite compound the notion that God is ineffable, but still manage to provide descriptions of divinity that enrich an understanding of God. One could even say that Julian and Marguerite use formal theology retrospectively to interpret mystical experience. This auxiliary level on which enhanced meaning can be construed is where *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s language, that is, where their vernacular theology, is situated. It is what has been called a 'third dimension'[57] in which language can function, in that it is separate from the language used in the monastic and the scholastic tradition. On this third level, Julian's and Marguerite's vernacular theology has a number of functions. It allows particular concepts to dissolve and to take on different meaning, as can be seen in the short text when Julian ponders sin, and concludes with the Augustinian idea that sin is an absence of good rather than a force opposing good and Marguerite realises the same when she says that 'Synne is nouȝt' (MD 201).

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[57] B. McGinn, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 6.

The employment of the vernacular also allows a reduction of the distance between mankind and God: vernacular religious discourse creates confidence that 'God speaks my language'. As such, divinity becomes more relateable and accessible than when Latin is used for religious dialogue. The 'language barrier' created by using Latin exclusively for religious contemplation and dialogue, forces a separation, of sorts, between laity and divinity. It is a separation that requires the work of intermediaries between laity and God. This division between God and the ordinary person is one that both Julian and Marguerite see as artificial. Julian realises where she is situated in relation to God and others via the metaphor of what seems to Julian to be a hazelnut, and Marguerite's notion of the 'fernyȝ' (MD 58), that is the 'Farnear' (CMG 79), and the 'Loingpres'/'propinquum' (RG/PV 178, 179). Both women, it seems, position themselves as close to, yet far from, divinity, but also as an integral part of a larger whole that constitutes divinity. It seems then that Julian's and Marguerite's mysticism, facilitated by their vernacular theology, entails some features of deconstruction in that the texts' teachings dissolve given meanings, as does the aforementioned theory.

Another feature that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* share with the deconstruction theory is that because the texts are open to interpretation, they are unstable, and because they are unstable meaning constantly shifts. This is also a quality of liminality.[58] Two other significant aspects that the vernacular discourse facilitates, and that the texts seem to share with deconstruction, is the metaphysical aspect, in that the vernacular discussion allows for another dimension in which religious discourse can occur, a notion of the presence of absence, as the two examples from *Revelations* and *The Mirror* above briefly show. However, whilst some of the text's features are akin to deconstruction, this study is not a deconstructive reading of the texts. It is to be noted that some of Derrida's theories lend themselves well to illustrating how the language/vernacular theology of the texts expresses Julian's and Marguerite's notions regarding divinity.

From 'Ruusbroec's ten vernacular treatises' we derive the idea of 'Superessential Mysticism', which as a 'counterposition to the false forms of mysticism' explicates the 'proper way of attaining union [with] God'[59] and despite Ruusbroec's criticism of the beguines and especially of Marguerite, there is something to be said of the similarities in their 'espousals'. This 'proper way of attaining union with God' is 'founded in the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit' and 'is achieved by following the necessary stages in the itinerary to union with God'. The first of these is recognition of 'Christ and

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[58] As explained in the exposition for liminality in **Chapter Two**.

[59] Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2012), p. 5.

the Holy spirit'[60] which both Julian and Marguerite make much reference to in their texts, especially when they write about the Trinity. The second is 'Mystical Itineraries' which involves the active, interior and contemplative life which is also something Julian and Marguerite emphasise in their texts. It is however, the ten vernacular treatises' 'Key Mystical Themes' of Love and Knowledge, Sensing God's Action and Deifying Union that resonate strongly in the vernacular works of Julian and Margurite.[61] Love receives particular attention in **Chapter 5** of this study under **Reality and Perception**. Sensing God's Action and Deifying Union, like Knowledge, are discussed recurrently in this study as well.

Summary

This introductory chapter has outlined the choice of texts for this study explaining that Windeatt's Middle English version of *Revelations* and the Middle English translation of Marguerite's *Mirror* are the focus texts of this study. It was explained that for the sake of enhanced comprehension of the texts' tenets supplementary readings of critical editions of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are used. The extant manuscripts and their dates and their locations are given in a table as are the critical editions that this study consults. The historical background to the texts is outlined thus explaining the socio-political environment in which the texts were created and a literature review explains some of the texts that contributed towards this study. I then reviewed the extant critical literature on my two authors, leading to a discussion of the recently-defined category of vernacular theology. Vernacular theology was explained by relying on a definition by Eliana Corbari and how that Julian's and Marguerite's work conform to that definition.

[60] Ibid. p. 34.

[61] Ibid. pp. 47–61.

Chapter Two

Expositions and Commonalities

Preamble

This chapter starts with a discussion on common core mysticism. It then provides an exposition of liminality as a common feature of both the texts under discussion. This leads to an outline of the *khora*, taking us even further into common but ineffable mystical experience. The question then arises of the articulation of this experience, and the linguistic issues involved. Hence my discussion of apophasis and self-imploding referentiality (which is closely linked to apophasis), because all these issues are essential components in *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s 'spiritual espousals' (to borrow the title from one of Ruusbroec's treatises). Lastly, the ostensibly 'new field' of transposing the mathematical concept of topology to provide a 'wider angled lens' with which to view literature, especially *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s links to other mystical, religious and philosophical texts, is also explained hereunder.

Common Core Theory Mysticism

Julian's and Marguerite's insights unravel traditional theology's knowns.[62] However, their theories do not replace the unravelled knowns with definitive descriptions of divinity and/or *unio mystica*. Instead, Julian's and Marguerite's descriptions of divinity and divine experience allow for the existence of many possibilities. A text about religious phenomena that allows for an indefinite number of possibilities holds within it an air of mystery and imparts an enigmatic and gnomic dimension to its themes. This is part of the reason why *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are considered to be mystical discourses. But what is mysticism and how does it link to liminality and *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s theories?

This study relies on what is known as the common core theory of mysticism. This theory of mysticism has its roots in the work of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* which was furthered by the 'phenomenological work of Walter Stace'.[63] The common core theory of mysticism recognises, as does this study, that there is abundant literature regarding mystical union and that all have their merits. Furthermore, common core mysticism theorises that 'within and without the great faith traditions'[64] the experience of mystical union is almost identical and that such a seemingly uniform experience transcends boundaries of time, space, language, culture and geography, a notion which, already stated early on, has brought me to this study. Essential to this theory and definition of mysticism for the purpose of this study is the following:

(a) the idea that unmediated mystical union is possible – as is argued in Marguerite's *Mirror* and evidenced by Julian's biographical information gleaned from *Revelations* and in *Revelations*' ideas and notions.

(b) that an experience of mystical union dissolves all boundaries as Julian illustrates with the hazelnut imagery[65] and captured in Marguerites' oxymoron the 'Farnear' (CWG 113).[66]

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[62] As will be illustrated as this discourse unfolds.

[63] R. W. Hood Jnr., *The Common Core Thesis in the Study of Mysticism*, available at: www.religion.oxfordre.com (accessed 12, 13 /04/2017).

[64] Ibid.

[65] The hazel nut imagery is discussed hereunder as an example of how *Revelations* conforms to the idea of common core mysticism.

[66] In French and Latin, 'Loing prés' (RG 250), 'longr propinqui' (PV 251).

(c) that God is a primeval self-aware and self-reflective consciousness – something that both Julian and Marguerite expound on when they use the concept of undiscerning love as synonymous with God.[67]

(d) that mystical union is ineffable and requires an unravelling – a deconstruction, as it were – of concepts.[68]

Furthermore, the common core theory of mysticism that this study adopts views the diversity of the experience and its accompanying literature as dialogues that are in conversation with each other, or as Bernard McGinn puts it, the texts are of themselves, 'unrealised conversations'.[69] Central to this study, is the common core mystical theory that, 'the experience cuts across language differences'.[70] These assertions are what this study hopes to illustrate. It is borne in mind however, that an opposite postion to James's and Staces's mysticism exists. This latter position is grounded in constructivist theory and is expounded upon in the work of Steven Katz who claims that, 'it is not possible to provide verification of mystical experience' and furthermore that mystical experience 'is not and logically cannot be the grounds for any final assertions about the nature or truth of any religious or philosophical position, nor, more particularly, for any specific dogmatic or theological belief'.[71] However, since the problem of this study is to show that mystical texts share ideas that are strangely similar despite time, space and language barriers and that the shared ideas are evidence of an ongoing dialogue regarding divinity – not that their ideas are evidence of any kind of 'truth' – it is Staces's and James's work that this study leans on. But what does common core theory mysticism have to do with *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and liminality?

It is exactly because Julian's *Revelations* and Marguerite's *Mirror* are enigmatic and gnomic in their style and in the ideas that they attempt to communicate that they are considered mystical texts. But what constitutes Julian's and Marguerite's mysticism is their Delphic style which is evidence of re-organisation in that neither text accepts absolute dogma. Mystical texts, it seems, are preoccupied with re-formation. Due to the texts' obscure style, multiple interpretations are possible. Because multiple interpretations are possible this means the texts are written from liminal perspectives and illuminate liminality. In the first instance, as the book moves in time from period to period and from culture to culture it exports itself as a whole to any number of categories such as for example

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[67] This is illustrated as the study unfolds.

[68] Ibid.

[69] B. McGinn, The Foundations of Mysticism, p. 343.

[70] Hood, *The Common Core Thesis in the Study of Mysticism*.

[71] Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), p. 22.

religion, spirituality, rhetoric, church doctrine and literature. In the second instance both texts surmise liminal standpoints such as the idea that there is no such thing as sin and sinner.[72] In the third instance, the theory of common core mysticism claims that the mystical experience seeks to express itself in various faith traditions but does not assume 'that any common theology, philosophy, or practice necessarily follows from mystical experience'.[73] This element especially, of common core theory mysticism, resonates with the idea of interstructurality, that is, the notion of liminality in which there is no determinism. Furthermore, this tenet of common core theory mysticism actually applies to *Revelations* and *The Mirror* in that whilst Julian's reputation is orthodox and Marguerite's is supposedly heterodox neither text necessarily dictates conformity to any one or more theological or philosophical practice but instead leans on many, as will be shown in this study.

In 1960 Walter Stace also recognised two states of mystical unity[74] in his articulation of common core mysticism. Both states can be found in *Revelations* and the *Mirror*. The first is the 'introvert state' which 'plunges into the depth of ego, where the very structure of sense, thought, time and place dissolve'[75] leaving only what Stace calls, 'the naked One devoid of plurality'.[76] One example of this from *The Mirror* has Reason ask, 'What shall I do about the people whom I have to rule, who will no longer see any order in this Soul's outward customs and action?' (CMG 58).[77] In other words, Reason (common sense, the intellect) itself asks what is to be made of the idea that 'the very structure of sense' – the souls outward customs and actions – dissolves. Further to this first state, in Chapter 12 of *The Mirror* it is written that 'Illumined Knowledge … knows there is one state which among all the states of being is the most noble' (CGM 28). This could be Stace's 'naked One devoid of all plurality'. In another extract from Chapter 15 of *The Mirror*, Marguerite writes

And we see him through the power of faith, giving lie to what our senses tell us, which only see bread there, and which do not perceive or taste or smell anything else. But our faith contradicts them

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[72] Thus William James, describing 'The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness', notes that '[t]he heretics who went before the reformation are lavishly accused by the church writers of antinomian practices' (Lecture IV, *ad initium*).

[73] Ibid.

[74] Zhuo Chen, Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Wen Qi and P. J. Watson, 'Common Core Thesis and Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of Mysticism in Chinese Buddist Monks and Nuns', *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50.4 (December 2011): 654–670 (p. 655).

[75] Ibid.

[76] Walter Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: J.P. Lippincott, 1962), p. 62.

[77] In French, 'que feray je du people que j'ay a gouverner, qui ne verra plus en ceste Ame nulle ordonannce en ces usages et affaires de dehors?' (RG 124).

all, for faith believes firmly, without doubting, that here is no whiteness or smell or taste, but the precious body of Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man (CWG 33).

We can infer from this that The Soul of Faith, the character who utters these words, is referring to the idea that reason is not a faculty with which to comprehend God. Instead, faith itself reveals the presence of God in all things (unity) especially through Jesus despite the inability to see the whiteness (of the bread – a sacramental allusion) and the inability to smell or taste it. So these two examples from *The Mirror* accord with the 'introvert state' of common core mysticism in which all manner of sense is oblitered and all that remains is the unity that is found in God.

For Julian the 'introvert state' is experienced as, 'The Eucharist of the mind – God must be loved with all of the mind.'[78] She writes in the first chapter of the short version that the first of her three desires '[came] to [her] mynde with devocyon' (BW 4). We can infer from this that Julian was already deeply contemplative – that she had already 'given her mind over' to deep consideration of God. In fact, it is through Julian's contemplation of the Passion on her deathbed that her mind opens to receive the showings, which 'plunges' her soul into the depths of mystical union. Julian struggles to make sense of what is revealed to her and admits early on that the human mind and sense is limited when it comes to understanding God, so she writes about the Passion and its paintings 'so far as human understanding can attain' (CW 126) it.[79] Further along in her considerations of the showings she asks questions and is answered or at times is told that the question is irrelevant. So Julian struggles to rationalise the showings in which it seems nothing makes sense, and furthermore attempts to decipher the showings according to her mind's understanding, her intellect. For example, she often refers to her intellectual grasp of the showings when she writes, 'in my undyrstandynge' (BW 5), 'be worde formed in myne understandynge' (BW 7), and elsewhere in the text. So for Julian as for Marguerite, there is an obliteration of reason, or rather, a loss of the senses and that which makes sense. This then leads to Julian's encounter with God, first through Jesus, and especially the unity that God imparts to all of creation. Julian expresses God's unity in various modes. For example, there is the unity of creation in Trinitarian terms in the first chapter of the long text where she writes, 'and therewith was comprehended and specified the Trinite, with the incarnation, and unite betwixt God and man soule' (BW 28). In Revelation 1 Chapter 4 of the long text, shortly after an explication of the irreducibility of the Trinity Julian refers to unity in terms of redemption when

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[78] Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New York City Press, 2013), p. 97.

[79] In Middle English, 'als farfurthe as many witte maye reche' (BW 4).

she writes, 'for all living creatures who were to be saved' (BW 182).[80] In Revelation 1 Chapter 6, God's unity with humanity is expressed in anthromorphic terms:

A man walks upright, and the food in his body is shut in as if in a well-made purse. When the time of his necessity comes, the purse is opened and then shut again…And it is God who does this… For he does not despise what he has made, nor does he disdain to serve us in the simplest natural functions of our body, for the love of the soul which he created in his own likeness. For as the body is clad in cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the trunk, so are we, soul and body, clad and enclosed in the goodness of God (CW 186).

In the bove extract Julian is actually using the analogy of a bowel movement to illustrate that the unity between man and God is in accordance with nature.

This 'Eucharist of the mind' prepares [Julian] for the nuptial encounter of the sacrament.'[81] Julian encounters God first through Jesus because this is where her intellect is concentrated: that is, on the 'payntyngs of crucyfexes' (BW 4). Christ's Passion is the site of Julian's transcendence which she explains as pain leaving her body by 'God's secret doing and not natural' (CW 128).[82] It is through her mystical encounters with Jesus that mystical union becomes clearer because the nuptial encounter of the sacrament 'enlightens the mind'.[83] It is mostly through Jesus and the Trinity, that Julian comes to see God's unity, which Julian expresses in various modes. Thus *Revelations* also accords with the 'introvert state' of common core mysticism.

The second state of common core mysticism is called the 'extrovert state'. This state 'looks outward through senses where the multiplicity of objects is mystically transfigured'[84] so that 'the One or the Unity shines through them.[85] In *Revelations* this mystical criterion is realised when Julian considers what looks like a hazelnut in the palm of her hand in Revelation 1, and comes to realise that the singular and seemingly small object is representative of the large and vastness of creation in which Julian is herself a small participant but part of a larger whole:

Also in this he shewed a littil thing, the quantitye of a hesil nutt, lying in the palme of my hand as me semede; and it was round as a balle. I lokid thereupon with my eye of understondynge and thowte, 'What may this be?'And it was generally answered thus, 'It is all that is made.' I mervellid

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[80] In Middle English, 'and to all cretures leving that should be saved' (BW 33).

[81] Olivier Clément, The Roots of Christian Mysticism, p. 97.

[82] In Middle English, 'a priyve wyrkynge of God, and not of kinde' (BW 4).

[83] Ibid.

[84] Chen, Hood, Qi, Watson, 'Common Core Thesis', p. 655.

[85] Walter Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 61.

how it might lesten, for methowte, it might suddenly have fallen to nowte for littil…In this littil thing I saw iii properties: The first is that God made it, the second is that God loveth it, the iiid, that God kepith it. But what is that to me? Sothly the maker, the keper, and the lover. For, till I am substantially onyd to him I may never have full rest ne very blisse (BW 35).

Four chapters later Julian understands the hazelnut-like image to mean that, 'If [she] pays special attention to [herself], [she] is nothing at all; but [in] general [she] is… in the unity of love… For it is in the unity that the life of all men consist who will be saved' (CW 191). In another example, in Revelation 2 Julian is 'let down into the bottom of the see' and there she sees 'green hills and valleys, with the appearance of moss strewn with seaweed and gravel' (CW 193).[86] She interprets this showing to mean that if anybody could see God 'as God is' that is, as she perceives him in his work in the underwater visuals, they would understand their unity with God and would know that 'they would be safe in soul and body' (CW 193). These two examples from *Revelations* reveal the second state of common core mysticism, 'the extrovert state' in that the vastness and plurality of creation that Julian sees is interpreted as the unity of all things in God.

In *The Mirror*, the 'extrovert state' of common core mysticism, which holds that through the senses variety and range is reduced to unity, reveals itself in Chapter 9. There Marguerite writes, or rather Love says:

let us take one Soul to represent them all…This Soul neither longs for nor despises poverty or tribulation, Mass or sermon, fasting or prayer; and gives to Nature all that it requires, with no qualm of conscience; but Nature is so well ordered through having been transformed in the union with Love, to whom this soul is joined (CMG 20).[87]

That the 'one Soul' is used, 'to represent them all' can be an indicator of unity. Poverty, tribulation, Mass, sermon, fasting and prayer, all work to show the variance and range that the soul experiences through its senses. The ordered range is the sinew that holds the diverse experience in union.

Another example of the 'extrovert state' of common core mysticism in which the senses percieve variety and then that variety is reduced to a single unity can be found in *The Mirror*'s Chapter 23. The analogy of wine works to show that the senses and common sense comprehends variety but that

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[86] In Middle English, 'One tyme mine understondynge was led downe into the see-grounde, and there I saw hill and dalis grene, semand as it were mosse begrown with wreck and with gravel' (BW 45).

[87] In French, 'prenons une Ame pour touts, dit Amour laquelle Ame ne desire ne ne deprise pouvreté té ne tribulation, ne messe ne sermon, ne jeune ne oraison et donne a Nature tout ce qu'il lu fault, sans remors de conscience; mais telle nature est si bien ordonne par transformacion de unite d'Amour, a laquelle la voulenté de ceste Ame est conjoincte…' (RG 32).

mulitiplicity still becomes reduced to a singularity, to a unity. The 'several spigots in one cask' (CMG 43) not only illustrates multiplicity (several spigots) but also singularity in that the spigots are all 'in one cask' (CMG 43).[88] Furthermore, Marguerite also explains God's unity in Trinitarian terms in the analogy of the wine: 'In this cask of the divine drunk, there are certainly several spigots. This is known to the humanity, which is joined to the person of the Son of God who, after the Trinity, drinks from the finest spigot' (CMG 43). Here the Trinity, as in *Revelations,* also works to reveal irreducibility, especially that mankind and God are inseparable despite humanity's variation and variational experience.

Common core mysticism has, however, developed more since Stace's intitial articulation of it. Hood's Mystical Scale[89] recognises a third state of common core mysticism.[90] This third state is called 'the inner subjectivity' and incorporates 'facets of *positive affect*, blessedness and peace; *noetic quality*, sense of objectivity or reality; *sacredness*, feeling of the holy; and *ineffability*, the experience alleged by mystics to be ineffable'.[91] This third state can also be found in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* as follows:

[88] In French, 'il y a pluseurs broches en ung tonneau' (RG 86).

[89] Ralph, W. Hood, Jr., 'The construction and preliminary validation of a measure of reported mystical experience', *Journal for the Scientific Studyof Religion* 14 (1975): 29–41 (p. 30).

[90] Chen, Hood, Qi, Watson, 'Common Core Thesis', p. 655.

[91] Ibid.

Qualities of Inner subjectivity	Revelations	The Mirror
positive affect: blessedness and peace	In Chapter 13 of the short text, Julian writes 'But all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well' (CW 149). In Chapter 6 of the short text Julian writes, 'And he who thus generally loves all his fellow Christians loves all, and he who loves thus is safe. And thus I will love, and thus do I love and thus I am safe … and the more that I love in this way … the more I am like the joy that I shall have in heaven without end' (CW 134). This is Julian *positive affect* her sense of feeling blessed and being at peace.	In Chapter 44 Love tells Reason that the Soul who has advanced to Love 'has made an end of it with the world, and the world has made an end of it with her and said farewell; and so she lives in God, and sin and vice cannot find her there. She is so hidden and laid away in God that the world and the flesh and the devils cannot harm her…and so such a soul lives in the repose of peace…And because such a soul has such peace, she lives in the world with no reproach (CMG) 64. This is Marguerite expressing *positive affect*'s blessedness and peace in that the soul lives in God and the world of flesh and devils cannot harm her so she is in peaceful repose.
noetic quality: sense of reality	Julians' sense of objectivity or reality can be found in Chapter 2 of the short text when she realises that she might actually be dying, and it is expressed through her present tense interpretations and rapport to her 'audience'	Marguerite acknowledges her social reality and the significance of the 'heretical' claims that she makes in *The Mirror* in her direct address to the hearers and readers of the text and her direct address to 'Men of theology and

	of what she is witnessing. For example, in Chapter 8 of the short text Julian writes, 'Also I saw our Lord scorning [the devil's] malice and despising him as nothing, and he wants us to do the same. Because of this sight I laughed greatly, and that made those around me to laugh as well; and their laughter was pleasing to me' (CW 138). Julian has an awareness of the tangible reality that she is in whilst on her deathbed.	scholars' in the *Explicit*. Marguerite mentions that 'Beguines say I err/priests, clerics and Preachers,/Augustinians, Carmelites,/and the Friars Minor' (EB 200). These are aspects of Marguerite's social reality that she recognizes and it implies an invitation to those mentioned, to participate in *The Mirror*'s rhetoric.
sacredness: feeling of the holy	Julian's pain is taken away and she writes, 'it was by God's secret doing and not natural' (CW 128). In Chapter 3 of the short text Julian writes, 'I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was himself who showed this to me, without any intermediary; and then I said: Blessed be the Lord! This I said with reverent intention and in a loud voice' (CW 129). Julian is aware of a sacred presence whilst she is on her deathbed.	God appears once as an itinerant in *The Mirror*. (EB 125). 'God the Father' also makes a single appearance in Chapter 50 (CW 70).[92] Alongside Love who is used synonymously for God, these constructions impart a sense of 'the holy at work' in the text. Chapter 66 is titled, 'How the Soul rejoices that she has taken leave of Reason and of the other Virtues', from which it can be inferred that the soul is in union with God. Love states in that

[92] Babinski has the itinerant as '[The Person of God the Father] as in the French version, 'Personne de Dieu le Père' (RG 148) and the Latin has 'Persona Patris' (PV 151).

		chapter that 'this lesson is not written down by man's hand, but by the Holy Spirit', from which we can infer that the precepts of *The Mirror* are God's words, or rather, divinely inspired.
Ineffability: the experience alleged by mystics to be ineffable	In Chapter 9 of the short text Julian writes that 'no tongue may tell' of the experience of Christ's Passion and 'no heart can fully think' of it. (CW 144). In other words, the experience defies language and comprehension.	In Chapter 119 Love sates that the book was 'caused to be written by human knowledge' from which we can infer that what Marguerite theorises regarding mystical union evades absolute capture so limited human knowledge will have to suffice. In the *Explicit* Marguerite points out the difficulty in grasping the communication in *The Mirror* of mystical union. She writes there, 'it is very hard to understand' and that theologians and academics themselves will battle to make sense of the communication of mystical union in *The Mirror*.

The tenets of common core mysticism as discussed above are what inform this study's argument, grouping *Revelations* and *The Mirror* under the umbrella of common core mysticism and then seeking to find the affinities between the texts especially in so far as the idea of liminality becomes coded[93] in the texts' expressions of mystical union.

[93] This is discussed in **Chapter Four**.

Liminality

Arnold Van Gennep first introduced the concept of liminality in *The Rites of Passage* in 1909.[94] This anthropological study defined the term liminal as the middle of the three-stage sequence that initiates underwent during ritual ceremonies.[95] During the passage and/or rites of passage there are pauses and stops, or dimensions of intermediateness, during which assessment, reassessment and re-organisation occur. This intermediate feature of reassessment is called a liminal space or liminality. Van Gennep's definition would have us consider that liminality is a psychological and structural process and/or journey, within the context of ceremonial rites of passage. However, the theory has evolved since Van Gennep's initial definition. Remaining in the field of anthropology, it was Victor Turner, in his study *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, who clarified Van Gennep's initial definition of liminal. First, Turner defines what he calls a 'liminal period', which he says is 'an inter-structural phase in social dynamics'. In other words, a liminal period is a phase during which re-organisation and reconstruction occur in the process of a person's personal development. Second, Turner identifies a 'liminal persona' as one who is a 'transitional being'. In other words, a liminal person is, one could say, an itinerant, who is re-organising his/her perceptions. Third, Turner defines liminality as 'not [dealing] with a set of structural conditions but with the essentially unstructured'.[96] That is to say, liminality indicates a neither here-nor-there position.

Further to Van Gennep's and Turner's definitions, the Oxford English Dictionary defines liminal as 'being on a boundary or threshold, [especially] by being transitional or intermediate between two states [or] situations'.[97] The Merriam-Webster online dictionary adds to the Oxford's definition by defining liminal and liminality as 'of or relating to a sensory threshold', and as, 'barely perceptible' and also as, 'of or relating to being in an intermediate state or phase or condition'.[98] From Van Gennep's initial anthropological definition of liminal to Turner's expansion of the same, to these dictionary definitions of liminal(ity), we can deduce the following: liminal(ity) is a space/place

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[94] 'Arnold van Gennep French Anthropoligist', available at: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arnold-van-Gennep (accessed, 19/05/2017).

[95] A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage: Anthropology and Ethnography*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 11, 21.

[96] V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93, 95, 98.

[97] *OED. The Oxford English Dictionary*, available at: http://0-www.oed.com.innopac.wits.ac.za/view/Entry/108471?redirectedFrom=liminal#eid (accessed 07/11/2018).

[98] Definition of 'liminal', available at: www.merriam-webster.com (accessed 16/06/2016).

and/or a state/condition of intermediate suspension during which inter-structurality occurs and becomes intelligible without the need to import rationality. Further to this, in his general introduction to the intellectual culture of medieval and renaissance literature C. S. Lewis articulates a similar thought. He says that,

above *ratio* or reason there is a higher faculty, *intelligentia* or understanding...And Reason cannot conceive the future being known except as it would have to be known … as determinate. But it is just possible to climb up to the intelligential level and get a glimpse of knowledge which does not involve determinism.[99]

In other words, it is possible to comprehend that a faculty exists which is beyond reason, what Lewis calls an intelligence. One form of that intelligence might be a kind of ultimate knowledge which is indeterminate or interstructural. I would like to add to these ideas regarding the liminal space and liminality, that 'knowledge' or *intelligentia* could possibly be the understanding that meaning is created by the interpersonal 'play' between concepts or constructs, especially in so far as the concepts or constructs stand in opposition to one another, thus creating a 'force field' which creates the interstructural space that is, for the pruposes of this study, the liminal space/liminality.

Caroline Walker Bynum in her critique of Turner's theories of liminality notes that medieval women, when narrating their own stories as opposed to men doing the narration on the women's behalf, did not necessarily perceive themselves to be itinerants in a 'social drama' that involved 'conversion, reintegration and triumph'. Instead, claims Bynum, when medieval women narrate, the stories and symbols involved in their narration imply a state of constant liminality, rather than a 'processual' narrative.[100] That is to say, medieval women are continually liminal in their capacities as wife, mother, sister, child, aunt, active or contemplative and even guardian or midwife or any other role society assigns to them; and so do not fit Turner's theory of a linear passage towards re-organisation, re-emergence and reintegration. However, it is Turner's model of passage, as illustrated in **Figure 2** hereunder, that best illustrates where *Revelations* and *The Mirror,* the texts in other words, can be situated as regards liminality. To my mind Bynum's observations do not overturn Turner's theory. Instead, Bynum's observation reorients Van Gennep's and Turner's ideas of liminality.

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[99] C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image; An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 88–89.

[100] C.W. Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption; Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1992), pp. 31, 32.

Bynum's observations actually make Van Gennep's and Turner's notions of passage and structure, especially for women, a more fluid one: because womanhood already has a liminal character (by Bynum's observations) medieval women can occupy any stage at any point in Van Gennep's and Turner's structural passage. Because the women are already liminal, their liminality, in that it is a state of re-organisation, refines, rewrites and re-organises whatever stage of Van Genneps' and Turner's structural process the women occupy. Thus Van Gennep's, Turner's and Bynum's theories can be reconciled in that structural passage and role-continuity co-exist within the passage. Thus the concept of liminality embodies more fluidity since there is movement (Bynum's role-continuity within any given female occupation), within each stage of passage (Van Gennep's and Turner's structural rites).

It remains now to reconcile the four 'voices' that inform this exposition of liminality. According to Van Gennep the concept involves a journey (rites of passage) that can be structured movement. Structured movement brings about shifting and rearranging of ideas (Turner's inter-structural phase). However, the movement can also be amorphous within each structural stage and is in and of itself a re-organisational experience (Bynum's idea of fluid womanhood). From Lewis we understand that reason might be able to move beyond itself, and in so doing might be capable of grasping an intelligence free of determinism. Women could, therefore, transcend their socially determined positions, due in part to their role-continuity within each structural phase. If we combine these four voices, liminality, for the purposes of this study, indicates that 'things'are indeterminate: liminality accommodates and reconciles opposing ideas because meaning is created in a 'force field' by the interpersonal 'play' between concepts or constructs, especially in so far as the concepts or constructs stand in opposition to each other and thus absolute principles become malleable, and meaning can only be construed in so far as one opposing force calls the other into being. For example, for Julian, sin is appropriate ('behovely'), 'not itself but in its soteriological function' and 'because the love of the Trinity has created the kind of universe within which even misperceptions … are part of love's purpose'[101] to 'make all things well' (CW151). Hence, 'divine love is at work even in the midst of evil'[102]. Lastly, liminality involves and accommodates flux, because there is constant shift and movement structurally, and in terms of woman's morphology since women occupy roles as wife, mother, sister, child, aunt, guardian, midwife, at any point on the structural-process diagram in **Figure 2** below. But what does liminality have to do with Julian, Marguerite and their texts?

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[101] Bernard McGinn, The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, p. 455.

[102] Ibid.

Julian, Marguerite and Liminality

To answer the question I will use a diagram that illustrates Van Gennep's passage or journey and the liminal space that Turner describes as characterised by re-organisation, bearing in mind that medieval women could occupy any point on the diagram at any time due to their being constantly liminal persons experiencing and undergoing reoganisational interiority due to their socially assigned roles.



Figure 2

Assuming that all cultures have some form of religious practice, for the purposes of this study, point 1 in the diagram, that is, Religious/Cultural practice, is the known, and is a public act. Point 1, being an integral part of socio-cultural activity, informs point 2, which is spirituality or, as mentioned earlier, the private pursuit of a meaningful engagement with God. Point 2 is an extension of point 1 because it is individualised personal pursuit of God, that is, a desire to engage in a profound and fulfilling way with the divine. This individual pursuit may, of course, be prompted by a communal experience in the liturgical life of the church. Thus religion/cultural practice informs spirituality. In its turn, spiritual individuation in its pursuit of meaningful engagement with the divine may lead to

mysticism, point 3 in the diagram. Mysticism is thought to be an unconventional experience and/or theory of divinity, and is often also a re-organisational phase. Point 3, the mystical re-ordering period, sometimes leads to a written and/or oral record of point 3's experience and/or theories. The record (text/manuscript) of the mystical experience/theories is point 4 in the diagram. Point 4, the record, then augments point 1, the religious-cultural worship starting point. Thus, the diagram illustrates the flow (passage) from known (religious cultural practice) to unknown (spiritual individuation) to re-organisational (mystical experience) to record (text) and back to the starting point, religious cultural practice. Furthermore, the diagram also reveals the interrelatedness between all the components, in that the completion of the circle, whether clockwise or counter-clockwise, shows how each component interprets, informs, and perfects the other.[103] All meet in contemplation and each is actually part of a unified whole. But where and how do Julian and Marguerite and their texts fit into the diagram?

Before answering the question, the following need to be borne in mind: given that the definition for liminality for this study includes Bynum's consideration that medieval womanhood had a liminal character, Julian and Marguerite could be situated at any point on the diagram and at any time. For now, though, because the aim is to show where the texts *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are situated – because it is the texts and their theories that come under scrutiny in this study, not so much the medieval woman herself, albeit that the two cannot be entirely separated – only Turner's structural passage as illustrated in **Figure 2**, and its clockwise sequence, is emphasised. A brief description of Julian's and Marguerite's backgrounds will illustrate Bynum's observation that womanhood is essentially characterised by liminality.

As an anchorite Julian occupied a middle space between society and the church. This middle (liminal) space is the site of Julian's communication of her experience of divinity in the form of the long version of her work *Revelations of Divine Love.* Similarly, Marguerite occupied a middle space that gives form to her *Mirror*. It is currently widely accepted that Marguerite was a beguine. Beguines lived and worked on the margins of society as contemplatives and mendicants. Thus, in their religious practice and choice of domicile (some lived in Beguinages and others chose to be wanderers) they occupied a middle ground between orthodox Catholicism and lay society. In these liminal spaces, Julian and Marguerite re-organise religious constructs and communicate their

[103] One could just as easily start at point 4 in the diagram and work in reverse. Contemplation could be of, say, Julian's *Showings*, Marguerite's *Mirror*, or the Bible, which could then lead to mysticism (point 3), out of which one becomes more spiritual (point 2), which then informs a nuanced appreciation of religious/cultural worship (point 1). But in the interest of simplicity and brevity, for now we shall consider only the clockwise passage.

religious theories. Thus, we comprehend how Julian and Marguerite are liminal persons, and fit Bynum's theory – in that even in their capacities as anchoress and beguine respectively, they occupied threshold spaces in-between and overlapping – ideas of womanhood, sisterhood, motherhood, spouse of God/Christ and child of God/Christ – and the theories that they propose in their texts, by default almost, are expressions of liminality.

In answer to the question of where Julian and *Revelations,* and Marguerite and her *Mirror,* fit: Point1 (religion) is where the institutional Church is situated. Point 2 (spiritual individuation) is where Julian and Marguerite travel to in their desire for deep engagement with the divine. Point 3 (mystical experience/re-organisation phase/liminal stage) is where Julian's experience and theories, and Marguerite's theories are situated. Point 4 (communication of the experience/record) is where the texts *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are situated. Given *Revelations*'s and *The Mirror*'s potentially heterodox theories, the tenets of the books are situated in point 3, the liminal and re-organisational point on the diagram.

In Julian's case she actually invokes her liminal experience. She says in Chapter 1of the short text that she prayed for three things from God. First, she asks to be an intimate witness to Christ's Passion which, she says, she is granted in contemplation. Her second request is to be so at one with Christ that she desires to experience all the pain and suffering that Christ did. She also says that when she was young she desired such an illness. I infer from this that the younger Julian was already devout and probably already contemplative, which implies that Julian seems to have enjoyed the privilege of leisure time. That Julian was probably already devout and contemplative is confirmed in Julian's third request, which is for contrition, humility and compassion. It is also understood that Julian was privileged to enjoy an intimate secular domestic setting. Chapter 10 of the short text reveals such details as a parish priest being sent for to deliver the last rites and how Julian's mother closes Julian's eyes, thinking Julian to be dead. There is debate about whether or not Julian was a nun, a widow or a lay person and whether or not she might have been educated at a nearby convent. It is also plausible that Julian may have been an unmarried daughter or even a widow.[104] Whatever the case, it is enough to know that Julian actively sought to separate herself from the known in order to experience the unknown.[105] She moves from point 1 (theology/public act) to point 2 (spirituality/private act) in the diagram. Medieval disease and the plague duly considered, it is not a stretch to consider that Julian's illness – which led to her mystical experience of the sixteen showings – was self-induced, given the

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[104] Barry Windeatt, (ed.), 'Introdcution', *Julian of Norwich; Revelations of Divine Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. xiii–xix.

[105] The terms known and unknown here refer to the explanations in **Figure 2**.

evidence in the short text that Julian prayed for this as a young girl, that she seems to recover almost miraculously, and that there is no textual evidence to suggest that Julian was suffering any form of medieval illness. Knowing the high mortality rates of the era, recovery from plague or other medieval disease was possible, but it can just as safely be assumed, was also rare. Yet, Julian seems to have recovered from a near-death experience. She was, at the time of her mystical near-death experience, already thirty years old which, for the period, is noteworthy in itself. It is plausible that at the age of thirty, whether unmarried maiden, nun, widow or even mother, Julian desired an alternative to the limited choices society had to offer. Her sixteen deathbed visions (point 3 in the diagram, the mystical experience and an inter-structural phase) lead to her text (point 4, documentary evidence in the form of *Revelations* which, like *The Mirror,* is an inter-structural document that provides few, if any, conclusive definitives that later lead to Julian's enclosure). In enclosure, Julian is at liberty to re-imagine her world unhindered by the dictates of society. The outside world is, metaphorically, dead to her and she to it – yet Julian seems to have been a widely known and highly regarded anchoress. At the point of entry into the hold, the Church no longer has authority over the anchorite. The Church (religion/cultural worship) has informed Julian's sense of God, but once inside the hold Julian is at liberty to re-organise her(self). Thus it is that Julian became a liminal person in a liminal space, expressing a mystical text that seems to theorise that liminal aspects are embedded in the journey towards mystical union.

Placing Marguerite, structurally speaking, as liminal, is more complex. Little is known about Marguerite. Generally the academy treats Marguerite as a beguine, which allows us to place her in that liminal space. Perhaps it is more prudent to rely on whatever evidence the text provides, when attempting to understand Marguerite's mysticism, the space/place that birthed it and the liminal tenets inherent in it. This must be so because, as Michelle Trebilcock elucidates liminality and its role in theology and divine love,

> the initiation of cultural change introduces, at the very least the possibility, of a disjuncture between a belief system and the real-world experience. Questions arise in place of statements: What do we do with beliefs and values that don't explain our experience? Why do the old answers no longer work? Is the world different from what I thought I knew? Am I different? In what way is God beyond my limited understanding? New understandings of old categories (old doctrines) will emerge from the disturbances of culture, but not without cost and struggle. It requires an uncomfortable decoding of new questions and previously held answers, an unfettered creativity and innovation, and hope for a future moment where everything might make sense again. The loss of

dogmatic certainty in the context of cultural change opens a liminal space in theological discourse for which there is no obvious, externally mediated close.[106]

The Mirror's tenets seem to be what Tribelcock is describing: even a perfunctory reading of *The Mirror* leads to the realisation that Marguerite's text grapples with the questions posed by Tribelcock. In so doing, *The Mirror* does indeed propose 'New understandings of old categories (old doctrines)' such as sin lacking substance and the dismantling of 'dogmatic [certainties]'. Marguerite's text does indeed '[disturb] culture', that of established and traditional religious thought and practice. So it is to the text that we must turn in order to understand Marguerite's mysticism liminality.

The Mirror has what seems to be a deliberately cultivated gnomic style. The text's ambiguous character displays Marguerite's high regard of her own ability, imagination, intellect, and importance as an individual. Through a complex logic which juxtaposes, usurps and manipulates typical medieval literary images (such as the mirror) and ideas (such as the courtly love tradition) it serves to invite the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of the soul and its relation to God and others. This extended textual conceit facilitates Marguerite's commentary and reflection upon the ideology, theology and practices of the world she lived in. In attempts to make sense of this world she theorises alternative precepts which function as a 'voice-over' for commenting on the norms of the epoch. That is, Marguerite exports her own 'voice'[107] to the itinerants in *The Mirror*, in that she inhabits their speech and thus can occupy the role of Reason (logic/Church) and Love (God/spirituality). Thus Marguerite and *The Mirror* occupy a neither here-nor-there position. In other words, both are liminal, given that the text is cryptic and that it cannot be conclusively said that Marguerite is the speaker in *The Mirror*. Marguerite accomplishes this feat as follows: she frames her mystical dialogue within a fable. The fable is a metaphor that is written in the courtly love tradition. In this tradition one individual worships another, unattainable, individual – humanity's desire for God. In *The Mirror* this plays out as the desire of the princess for the king. The princess is representative of a larger desire: mankind's desire for uniting with God. Because such a desire is generally relateable it becomes recognisable as public worship. In that it is relatable it also can be understood as any act or means which achieves, as its outcome, unification with God. Thus it is the princess's desire, transposed to stand as the known (point 1/theology/cultural practice/public act) in **Figure 2**. When the princess in the fable decides to seek the faraway king,

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[106] Michelle Trebilcock, *Towards a Theological Hermeneutic for Contexts of Change; Love in Liminality*, Available from: https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/9316144/80340 (accessed on 06/08/2019).

[107] This is discussed in Chapter Three under the sub-heading Feminine echoes in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*.

this introduces the separation phase (point 2/spirituality/pursuit of God/ private act), that is, the move from the known – in this instance the courtly love metaphor that functions as an illustration of known public worship/humanity's search for union with God – to the unknown (individuation). When the princess commissions an image of the king to be painted that is close to her imagined likeness of him, the third point in **Figure 2** is introduced, that is, the mystical experience. By extension, the painting (of the king/divinity), in that it is only an imagined likeness of the king/divinity, enables *The Mirror*'s ambiguous and gnomic spiritual discourse because the painting is representative of the king/God. Furthermore, because the painting is not a definitive or an accurate depiction, but an imagined one, this makes its extended dialogue – the text and its discourse regarding mystical union – an interstructural document. The text itself stands as point 4 in the diagram, that is, the written record/documentary evidence which then feeds back into point 1, representing standard theology and the known. Lastly, because Marguerite has exported her voice to the itinerants she can be identified as the speaker in the interstructural dialogue. Thus Marguerite becomes a liminal person in a liminal space. The former is due to the fact that she exports her voice to the characters in the dialogue and speaks for all of them, and in the latter case consideration is given to the possibility of her being a beguine.

The Khora

If liminality characterizes the mystical state between conscious theological understanding and the incomprehensible divine, there seems also to be a further intermediary state beyond it, namely the *khora*. To explain how this study understands and applies the concept of the *khora* it is necessary to refer again to **Figure 2** and specifically to the language centre from which the four issues radiate and/or intersect, and which for the purposes of this study is considered to be the *khora*.[108] It is Plato who first discusses the *khora*[109] as an empty 'placeless place from which everything that is derives'.[110] This empty place is paired with the good, its polar opposite. *Khora* differs from the Good 'in that it is not a fullness of presence and light but a dark bottomless 'abyss',[111] but together

[108] M. Litchman, 'Negative Theology in Marguerite Porete and Jacques Derrida', *Christianity and Literature* 47 (1998): 213–227 (p. 4).

[109] John Manoussakis, 'Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 58.1 (January–March, 2002): 93–100 (p. 94).

[110] R. Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 193.

[111] Ibid. 199.

they underlie a procreative gap,[112] meaning that beings, or even constructs, are only actualised in relational terms. That is, without dark there is no light and vice versa. Each calls the other into being. In fact, the extract suggests that darkness is a pre-condition for light. It is interesting how in this definition of the *khora* good and bad are paired, that is, good and bad are simultaneously present but neither carries any meaning on its own except in relation to each other. In other words, it seems that in the *khora* there is a symbiotic relationship between contrasting subjects and that it is only in relation to each other that the potential for (re)creation exists. That is, the space and place where no language, in the sense of oral and written communication, yet exists. It is the pre-birth space of the language that is yet to be, in attempts to express the ineffable. This pre-birth space is what Jaques Derrida describes as a space/place of

origin that is thought to be simple, intact, normal, or, standard, self-identical … of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. … conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the accidental, the imitated before the imitation.[113]

In other words, the essence of Derrida's *khora* seems to be that it is a preternatural space/place, and as such it could be considered as a divine state in that the *khora* is incorrupt inception. It is the origin of origination. Relying on Derrida's definition of the *khora* as the originating space, it seems the *khora* is the place to which Julian and Marguerite are drawn towards in their search for meaningful engagement with God.

Plato describes the *khora* as 'the receptacle and … the nurse of all becoming and change … [Because *khora*] is to receive in itself every kind of character [it] must be devoid of all character . . . Therefore we must not call [*khora*] the mother and receptacle of visible and sensible things either earth or air or fire or water… but we shall not be wrong if we describe it as invisible and formless, all-embracing, possessed in a most puzzling way of intelligibility, yet very hard to grasp'.[114] From this additional description of the *khora* it can be seen that the *khora* is thought to be without character, is the origin of everything, is boundless, does not distinguish between characters and is invisible and formless.

Julia Kristeva defines the khora psychoanalytically as the space of early psychological movement toward differentiation and self-identity, yet it is still a space in which elements are without identity

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[112] J. Hite, *Reflections on Khora*, 15 February 2012, available at: https://jeanhite.wordpress.com/2012/02/15/reflections-on-khora/ (accessed 27/11/ 2018).

[113] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 93.

[114] Plato, *The Timaeus of Plato*, ed. R. D. Archer-Hind (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1888), pp. 49–51.

and without reason. This breaking away from the maternal in the space of *khora* is a paradoxical movement, with and against the *khora* – a sense of simultaneous dependency and pushing away.[115] The result is that '*khora* is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where … unity succumbs before the process of charges and stages that produce him'.[116] For the purposes of this study these defintions of the *khora* will apply. That is, the *khora* is a space/place that is simple, intact, self-identical (Derrida), is a space/place of derivation where contradictions are paired with positive always preceding negative (Plato and Derrida), so that the *khora* is the place of all creation whether visible or invisible (Plato and Derrida), is itself characterless because it births all character and receives all character and in doing so unity succumbs before the process of emanations (Plato, Derrida and Kristeva) and lastly where creation/emanation is negated in relation to the divine love that births it thus giving rise to the *exitus* and *reditus* process. However, it is noteworthy that the post-modern thinkers mentioned above and their ideas of the *khora*, problematizes God. Next to Plato's God who as a demiurge arranges the primordial matter into a cosmos and Aristotle's God who is the living self-reflective soul of the universe,[117] we now have 'another *image* of God, or rather of His *sites*: in the far extremities of *via negative*, there lies this monstrous "thing" that yields to God nothing. It strips God naked of all the predications that metaphysics and theology were in pain to place. As the archaic predecessor of cosmic black holes it receives evrything but gives nothing back'.[118] This is an important point to note becaue this study attempts to treat the *khora* according to John Manoussakis's assertion that, 'the khora could provide us with a paradigm of a hermeneutics of hyphenation that [is] able to overcome the meta-physical binary system of ontotheology and logocentricism'.[119] In other words the *Khora* holds the potential to assist in our understanding of the relationality between being and language.

Language

Given that both female mystics, Marguerite and Julian, experience the divine in liminal and khoral states, it is clear that language poses a central problem. The gnomic and enigmatic character of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, as well as the idea that the texts are open to multiple interpretations, suggests that wording and meaning, and consequently the texts, are unstable. We are invited to explore Julian's and Marguerite's employment of language; the issue of language is therefore at the

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[115] R. Kearney, Strangers, Gods and Monsters, p. 195.

[116] Ibid. p. 196.

[117] John Manoussakis, 'Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation', p. 93.

[118] Ibid. p.94.

[119] Ibid.

centre of the diagram in **Figure 2**. The centre of the diagram in **Figure 2** is the point where the four topics that inform this discourse intersect, because the language that is used to express mysticism is often obscure. This obscurity demands that the language of the texts be interrogated by re-examining words, phrases and ideas as presented in the text. Revisiting the expressions employed in the texts becomes a semiotic undertaking which has as its outcome a new sense of how terminology and concepts may be used, which in turn suggests paradigm shifts in relation to Julian's and Marguerite's use of terminology and ideas. The language centre from which the four issues radiate and/or intersect, can also be considered as the *khora*.[120] That is, the space and place where no language, in the sense of oral and written communication, yet exists. It is the pre-birth space of the language that is yet to be, in attempts to express the ineffable. It is the origin of origination.

As the originating space or originator, it is the space/place to which Julian and Marguerite are drawn in their search for meaningful engagement with God. This is reminiscent of apophasis in that each woman makes an argument for, and a reversion to, union with divinity via implosion. This is apophatic in that it requires inwardness as a means to mystical union. Assuming a clockwise progress from points one through to three, in **Figure 2** it is from their liminal vantage point that Julian and Marguerite bring into being their written impressions of mystical experience in the form of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. It is the impressions inherent in the language of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* that this study interrogates.

The investigation into the verbal texture of Julian's *Showings* and Marguerite's *Mirror* focuses on: specific content of speech assigned to certain speakers; at which points in dialogues and discourses within each text particular philosophies intersect; the address of audience (reading/listening); the narrative trajectory (if there is one); the construction of the identities of characters; power relations between characters; power relations between narrative voice and audience; voice; treatment and portrayal of authority structures and laity, what the texts reinforce and what they subvert and; who is – according to the texts – most likely to benefit from its discourse. This kind of detailed investigation (examples of which, in the interest of time and space here, are provided in the course of the study) is necessary because the objective is to uncover the texts' implied and sometimes ambiguous meanings. Once possible meaning is ascertained, overlapping ideologies between the texts may be identified. Once overlying ideas are recognised, a character might reveal itself and can be noted. Links between the two texts are measured against various scholastic contributions to determine whether a potential characteristic is uncovered. Weighing and measuring links against

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[120] M. Litchman, 'Negative Theology in Marguerite Porete and Jacques Derrida', *Christianity and Literature* 47 (1998): 213–227 (p. 4).

external contributions regarding *Revelations* and *The Mirror* ought to provide a better understanding of the experience and the phenomenon that is being described. A better understanding of the experience and phenomena ought to enable me to discern if I am uncovering a commonality, what that commonality is, and what it suggests. In other words, I will attempt a scholarly approach and rely on secondary scholarly investigations to authenticate the meaning of terms and passages that are of crucial importance to this study's interpretation and developing argument.

Consideration is given to inter- and intra-textual phenomena. The former addresses the notion that Julian and Marguerite may have relied on ancient philosophies stemming from Boethius, Neo-Platonism, Pseudo-Dionysius, the Bible, Meister Eckhart and Ruusbroec, because there are traces of the themes of these philosophers' works in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. The intra-textual ideas that are discussed show how *Revelations* and *The Mirror* re-apply and rewrite ancient philosophies and traditional ideas to create deeper and richer meaning. These inter- and intra-textual elements are important considerations because if we are to accept that mystics attempted to record indescribable experiences, then we ought to allow for the possibility that the mystics might have been inter-textually reliant in order to communicate their *khoral* experiences and that ancient texts may have provided them with with a frame of reference, such as, for example, the Trinitarian vision of God. In this sense, ancient texts might have provided not only a philosophical reference point that the mystics could have used as a starting point for their discourse, but the 'old' texts might also have been a means to nuancing the meanings of expressions in Julian's and Marguerite's records, thus allowing them clearer communication of the phenomena they describe. For example, Julian's longer version of *Revelations* reveals not only a doctrinal style of revision to her shorter version, which suggests that Julian may have had 'external theological influences', but current scholars contend that there are elements of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Anselm, Gregory, Hilton and Eckhart in Julian's work. Furthermore, Julian's thoughts have been described as Augustinian, Carmelite, Franciscan, Benedictine and Dominican.[121] For an example of external theological influences on Julian we can consider her discourse on Trinitarian doctrine and her notion in the short text that 'nothing is done by chance' (CW 137), which has some affinities with Augustinian theology since Augustine posited the existence of pre-destiny. Marguerite also works with traditional Trinitarian thinking or speculation and her nomenclatures for God in *The Mirror* reflect Pseudo-Dionysian influence, in that this philosopher provided many descriptions of God in his work *The Divine Names*. Having said this, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that Julian and/or Marguerite borrowed

[121] M. A. Palliser, Christ Our Mother of Mercy: Divine Mercy and Compassion in the Theology of the Shewings of Julian of Norwich (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), p. 16.

directly from any one or more works. So, we must allow only for the links to exist and provide for the possibility that both women drew from their own spirituality against a background rich in theological philosophy and Catholic, as well as counter-cultural, religious traditions.

Apophasis

It will be evident from the foregoing that both Marguerite and Julian can be loosely placed within the apophatic tradition. The notion of apophasis can be traced to Pseudo-Dionysius, Meister Eckhart and Jan Van Ruusbroec. Briefly, apophasis postulates that to know God is to undo all that we think we know about God. But what does this have to do with *Revelations* and *The Mirror*? For the sake of brevity, the answer to the question uses an example from Marguerite's *Mirror*. Furthermore, the answer also conflates personal theory (Marguerite's *Mirror*) with intellectual history (Psuedo-Dionysius's notion of apophasis) for a number of reasons. Firstly, the conflation – that is, this discussion links Psuedo-Dionysius' notion of apophasis with theories in *The Mirror* (and vice versa) because it seems that the two are already engaging in unrealised dialogue concerning familiar notions, with one another – illustrates the possibility that Marguerite's *Mirror* is informed by earlier works, thus making *The Mirror* inter-texual.[122] Secondly, the blending aids clarification of ideas in the sense that the texts inform and re-inform each other, in the same sense as was illustrated in the example of the words 'travyle', 'labour' and 'oeuvre' and 'opus'. Thirdly, this merging is at once a stylistic element of Julian's and Marguerite's texts, in that both works meld traditional religious practice and theory with personal experience, in order to enable transmission of their ideas. So it seems that to entertain conflation for the purpose of illustrating the very ideas *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are transmitting, compounds and clarifies the texts' messages.[123]

Jeffrey Fischer's exposition of negative theology, and a synopsis of Dionysian apophasis, (an illustration of which relies on Marguerite's theory of annihilation of the soul), serves firstly to aid understanding of apophasis, secondly to assist in establishing the link between Marguerite and Psuedo-Dionysius, and lastly to aid understanding of what has happened to Marguerite's character, 'the Soul', in transcendence.

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[122] Inter-textuality is clarified under the sub-heading **Language** of this chapter.

[123] Conflation, it seems to me, is a cognitive operation that underpins insights gained from both conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending theories. Based on and in these theories it could be argued that conflation can be found at all levels of experience and meaning.

> Negative theology succumbs to (affirmative) theology precisely when it allows itself to take affirmative theology's place. A positive negativity, in other words, a negativity that never succumbs to its own negativity, ultimately yields to the positive. A positive negativity is not a negativity; it is the positive under the guise of the negative. In order for the negative to be negative it must disappear into itself on the one hand, negation demands a return to affirmation in order to indefinitely defer an affirmative victory. Only in losing does the negative win because it is in . . . its own vulnerability, its own risk of affirmation.[124]

The soul as a positive negative can be explained as follows: the human soul is an emanation of divine love. However, the soul is negative in its human state and especially because it is removed from divine love (the positive element), since it participates in the material world. Thus the soul is positive (possessed of divine love due to its divine birth) but is negative due to its involvement in the material world. The soul's positive negativity can be explained as the soul being 'a part' of God but also being 'apart' from God. Hence, the soul is not a negative, but is a positive disguised as a negative. In order to negate its negativity the soul must disappear into itself, that is, reflect inwardly in order to reunite with God, the positive. Another way to put it could be that the soul has to lose itself in order to find itself.

This construction is expressed by Love in *The Mirror* as, 'I am God seiþ loue, for loue is God and God is loue, and þis soule is God bi condicion of loue, and I am God bi nature diuine. And þis is heres bi riȝtwisnesse of loue' (MD 274).[125] By way of further explanation, Marguerite has Love explain this succinctly when Love says 'What it be of nature, loue makiþ in hir of riȝtwisnesse' (MD 276) meaning that 'Love of its own right causes this transformation into itself' (MD 43). The French and Latin versions seem to capture the nuance better than does the Middle English: 'Amour fait par droiture en luy ceste muance' and 'Amor de iure facit in ea hanc mutationem' (RG/PV 86, 87). Again, in Chapter 39[126] Love points out how, in the process of annihilation, Love reclaims the soul and in so doing the soul succumbs to its original state of being, that is, love. It says there, '…for loue werkiþ in hir þat haþ meued hir in him, so þat sche

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[124] J. Fischer, 'The Theology of Dis/similarity: Negation in Pseudo-Dionysius', *The Journal of Religion* 81.4 (October 2001): 529–548 (p. 539).

[125] The French and Latin versions read, 'Je suis Dieu, dit Amor, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est Amour, et ceste Ame est Dieu par condicion d'amour et je suis Dieu par nature divine, et ceste Ame l'est par droicture d'amour' and, 'Ego sum Deus, ait Amor, quia amor est Deus et Deus est amor et ista anima est Deus ex conditione amoris. Et ego sum Deus per naturam diuinam et ista est Deus de iure amoris' (RG/PV 82, 83).

[126] The Middle English chapter numbers are incongruent with the French, Latin and modern English versions.

hirsilf is loue, and loue hap in him no discretion' which translates as 'Love who has changed her into itself, dwells in her. So that this Soul is herself Love' (CMG 59).[127] This Psuedo-Dionysian notion of apophasis seems to inform or, rather, underpin, both *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s fundamental construction of mystical union.

Self-imploding Referentiality

Closely linked to apophasis is the idea of self-referential imploding. Mystical experiences and their sometimes consequent texts seem to deal with the union between humanity and God: they portray *cognitio Dei experimentalis*, that is, the experiental knowledge of God.Whether it is the mystical experience or the mystical text, both seem to express themselves via 'apophatic negations'.[128] In order to begin to grasp apophasis or what is thought of as negative theology it is helpful to think in terms of the prefix 'meta'. The *OED* gives the prefix to mean, 'denoting change, transformation, permutation or substitution' and qualifies the use of 'meta' to show that a noun prefixed with 'meta' works '[to] beyond, above, [and] at a higher level [of]' the noun that it prefixes', initial meaning: 'Prefixed to the name of a subject or discipline [meta] denot[es] another which deals with ulterior issues in the same field, or which raises questions about the nature of the original discipline and its methods, procedures, and assumptions.'[129] Since the overriding themes common to both texts are deeply considered introspection and the cultivation of an interlife – distinct from 'innerlife' which refers to contemplation; interlife refers to a life between self and God and thus possibly another term denoting a liminal sphere of existence – as a means to apprehending God, Julian's 'nought[ing]' (NC 10) and Marguerite's annihilation, 'simple annihilated souls' (EB 65)/'Simple Souls brought to nothing' (CMG 1)/'SIMPLES AMES ANIENTIES' (RG xv) can be understood as meta-operational. That is, the words 'noughting' and 'annihilation' work to beyond and above their basic meanings (which lay meanings propose to be eradication) and work at a higher level to 'denot[e] [the] change, [and] transformation' in the mystic due to her self-obliterating inward contemplation. Furthermore, still due to the mystic's interlife, the words noughting and annihilation come to indicate the 'permutation or substitution' of the divine for the human.[130] This, I contend, resonates

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[127] French and Latin: '…car Amour demoure en elle, qui l' muee en luy. Si que ceste Ame mesmes est Anmour' and '…et amor non habet in se aliquam discretionem, licet in omnibus sit necessaria discretion praeterquatum in amore' (RG/PV 124,125).

[128]A. M. Haas, *Reading Mystical Texts*, pp. 145, 146, available at: https://www.thewayorg.uk/back/s102Haas.pdf (accessed 20/11/2018).

[129] Definition for 'meta', *OED*, (accessed 7/02/2019).

[130] Qualification of this claim and examples thereof are provided throughout this study.

with what Plotinus explains as the One necessarily emanating the next hypostasis, an Intelligence, which is a composite of receiver and what is received, and the One through Intelligence necessarily emanates Soul.[131] If we follow Julian's and Marguerite's logic, the mystic comprehends God as a self reflective awareness. The result is self-referential implosion which reveals itself in the language and concepts of both texts – indeed in each text as a whole. Thus apophasis, in terms of being an inward path to enlightenment, can be understood as the *OED*'s 'ulterior issue' in the field of *unio mystica* in that the pathway to God is through eternal inflation. That is, continual deep spiritual introspection of God such that it results in the deflation of the human self and in that, it simultaneously contributes towards expansion of *agape* (Christian love, in this sense) and/or expansion of the divine 'Self'.

Topology Transposed to Understand links between Texts

Because this study sees links in the tenets of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and because those links seem to be similar in argument, terms or concepts, despite those being expressed in variant form, the implication is that the mystics are describing the same kind of 'phenomena' regarding mystical union. The mystical phenomena that are described seem to share similarities despite variance in expression, language and style, and despite the separation of the mystics and their texts by time, culture and geography.

In order to communicate mystical phenomena Julian and Marguerite both transpose 'into the fallen language of men'[132] the mystical 'information'. For example, Julian's use of 'as yf he haddde sayde' (BW12, 67), 'as if Jesus had shown it to you' (CW 134),[133] 'as if it were a kingdom' (CW 163),[134] 'as if it were an endless citadel' (CW 312),[135] transposes and preserves into the language of men the 'freshness and immediacy of her understanding of [her showings]'[136] and the abstract encounters she has. In *The Mirror*'s 'Explicit', Marguerite warns readers that they are about to encounter

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[131] *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969), II.9.1–3, 132–135; III.2.2, 161–162; III.6.7, 208–209; V.1.6, 373–375; V.2.1, 380–381.

[132] Vincent Gillespie, '"[S]he do the police in different voices": Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', *Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), p. 402.

[133] In Middle English, 'this techynge that is of Jhesu Cryste' (BW 7).

[134] In Middle English, 'as it ware a kyngdome' (BW 20).

[135] In Middle English, 'as it were an endles world' (BW 138).

[136] V. Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 404.

concepts that are 'very hard to understand' (CW 9)[137] and then proceeds to transpose the abstract mystical experience into a fable at the start of the narrative.

The point about transposition is that both women rely on it to communicate their ideas regarding *unio mystica* because language seems inadequate to capture the experience. However, it is not so much about capturing the experience as it is about communicating the experience and ensuring that the readers and hearers of the texts are able 'to be attentive to the complexity and sophistication … of Julian's [and Marguerites] ideas but also of the strategies that [they] use to explore and communicate [the ideas]'.[138] The audiences of both texts are required to 'Humble [their] wisdom/Which is based on Reason' (EB 79) and to recognise 'truth' (CW 267).[139] Indeed, both texts require that their audiences suspend their hermeneutic preconceptions and demands of their audiences, participation in the experience and the text. '[R]eaders at times become aware that they are no longer the agent of reading but are themselves textual constructs which are being read and challenged'.[140] For the reader to participate in the mystical encounter in their capacity as textual constructs, it becomes necessary to participate in the wider dialogue regarding mystical union that takes place at a 'meta' level. Since Julian and Marguerite use transposition in order to communicate the abstractions they encounter, this study will also use the device of transposing concepts (seemingly unrelated to mysticism and literature but which are useful in rendering Julian's and Marguerite's ideas comprehensible) in order to reveal the wider dialogue that the mystical texts participate in; in order to access the unrealised conversations, in order to participate in the meta-dialogue and, so as to comprehend the scope of the ideas regarding mystical union. Topology, a concept common to mathematics and which helps to show that the space between geometrical properties remains unaffected despite changes in the shapes or sizes of the geometric configurations,[141] lends itself not only to revealing links between the unrealised conversations amongst mystical texts but also lends itself to comprehending the conversations' nuanced and thus expanded meaning(s) as well as lending itself to grasping what the space between the texts (the 'energy field'/liminal space) that remains unaltered, is about.

Transposing topology's mathematical bent to a literary analysis, it is hoped, will help to clarify a number of thoughts that underpin this study's argument. The transposition works as follows: the

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[137] In French, 'il lest fort a comprendre' (RG 8).

[138] V. Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 400.

[139] In Middle English, 'soth' and 'sothnes' (BW 105).

[140] V. Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 400.

[141] The *OED* definition to this generic definition follows shortly.

space (liminal space) between geometrical properties (mystical texts, *Revelations* and *The Mirror*) remains unaffected despite the geometric properties' change in shape or size (adaptation, revision, reconceptualization, new ideas found in mystical texts). That being said, the transposed concept of topology promises to illustrate the following: first it ought to show *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s relationality and 'intertextuality'.[142] Here, 'the notion of intertexuality replaces the notion of "intersubjectivity" when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes" imparted to the writer and reader by other texts'.[143] This latter notion of 'codes' that are imparted to the writer and then to the reader by other texts and as such transfer meaning, comes under discussion in the paragraph titled **Encoding Liminality**. Second, the space between geometrical properties (texts) is the space in which geometrical shapes (texts) 'network' and in this space meaning is constantly evolving and is deferred because the 'conversation' between geometrical shapes (texts) is unending in that the geometrical shapes (texts) are continually informing and re-informing each other. Third, topology holds promise in showing how that the space (liminality) within which mystical texts function and 'network' does not become distorted and thus the transposed concept promises to assist in enhancing our understanding of the liminal space. Fourth, this tentative transposed topological viewpoint also seems to be able to lend itself as a means to 'mapping' liminality.

Liminality, I contend, is subliminally expressed in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* – that is, neither text overtly calls for a middle way. Instead, the notion is encrypted in the style of the texts. Hence, this tentative transposed topological vantage point hopes to assist in mapping the features of the texts that make arguments for liminality. This tentative exposition for transposed topology as a vantage point to reveal the network of dialogues and text, is necessary not only because it promises to reveal links between texts but also because it foregrounds the idea of a common referential field (the idea that texts use and revise concepts and ideas inherited and borrowed from each other), which is the topic of the next chapter of this study. Furthermore, the approach also enables an evidentiary and conceptual foundation for understanding the idea of a common referential field.

So, it is all of the above that invokes this mathematical term's inclusion in this study because it (topology) shows promise in pulling together the argument of this study which contends that there are similarities in mystical texts, that these similarities are expressions of the same phenomena and that despite variance in expression there is uniformity in the mystical texts' descriptions of mystical

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[142] Kristeva, Julia, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 69.

[143] Ibid.

union. However, this exposition would not be complete, without a concrete definition of topology and an example of its application. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives topology to mean:

A term meaning 'science of place' … which has been tentatively proposed or used in various senses … [such as]…the localities where plants are found … The art of assisting the memory by associating the thing to be remembered with some [of]… the parts which are well known … A family of open subsets of an abstract space such that the union of any of the subsets and the intersection of any two of them are members of the family, together with the space itself and the null set …The way in which constituent parts are interrelated or arranged.[144]

From these definitions comes the idea that mystical texts can be viewed (not necessarily read) from a topological vantage point and complement the conventional historical, allegorical, moral, anagogical and even troplogical approaches to reading. First, mystical texts can be read so as to be able to situate them (locality/science of place) in terms of what their ruminations are about. Since *Revelations'* and *The Mirror*'s ruminations deal with *unio mystica* this situates them within the fields of religious, theogical and philosophical documents. Second, mystical texts can be read as relative to each other and relative to other religious, theological and philosophical documents in order to remember and recall ideas that are already known in the religious, theological and philosophical fields (assisting the memory by associating the thing to be remembered with some of the parts which are well known,). For example, assisting the memory (keeping God in mind) by associating the thing to be remembered (God) with some of the parts which are well known (Jesus/Passion/prayer/Holy Church/contemplation). Third, mystical texts can be read as subdivisions of texts (subsets) that speak of places (space itself) especially spaces of perfection like Sir Thomas More's island of Utopia. For example, these are places such as Julian's 'hevyn' (BW 38) and Marguerite's 'state of peace' (CGM 12)[145] that is, 'abstract spaces', according to the definition. In these abstract spaces, according to the *OED* definition, there is union and intersection of subsets (mystical/religious/philosophical thought) due to similarities in ideas as shown in the excerpts from *Revelations* and *The Mirror* above, in that heaven is generally thought of as state of peace and is what is commonly thought of as utopia. Furthermore these intersections unify (*OED*, family) the subsets (mystical, religious and theological texts) and the space itself, the 'null set' (liminality). The fourth definition of topology means the way in which constituent parts (mystical, religious and philosophical documents, as well as their ruminations) are interrelated or arranged. This last definition is what underscores the idea behind a common referential field because it allows

[144] *OED* (accessed 21/11/2018).

[145] In French, 'l'estre de paix' (RG 14).

for the ideas in mystical texts, religious books and philosophical documents to be linked. A tentative graphic illustration of topology's usefulness in literature looks something like this:

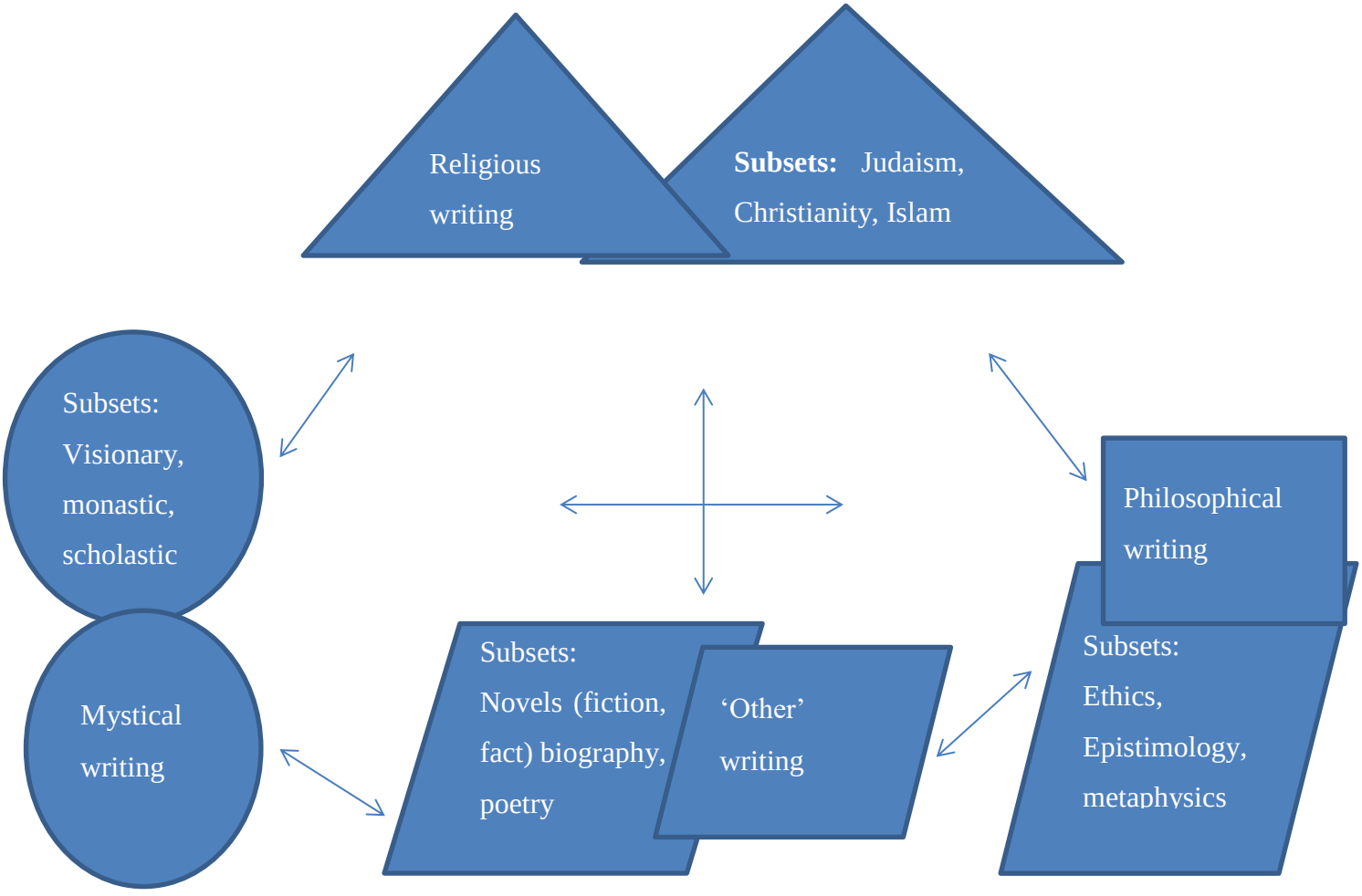


Figure 3

Figure 3 is an attempt to show from a topological vantage point the conversations that take place amongst texts. The conversations are realised in so far as the texts themselves are documents and the conversations between and amongst texts are unrealised in so far as links and similarities in concepts between texts are unrecognised. The arrows show how the texts are in dialogue with each other, cross-referencing and refreshing each other's notions and ideas. Furthermore, the dialogues are timeless because the discourses regarding religion, philosophy and mysticism continue. The diagram shows the 'white noise', that is, all the blank space surrounding the texts which is actually

the silent and unobtrusive conversations taking place amongst texts at a meta-textual level. The white noise is also the energy field in which there is 'oscillation in awareness between apparent oppositions'.[146] In that this space of white noise does not become distorted despite the oscillations between polarities, this space is also the liminal space because the texts' ideas and conversations are held in balance. Furthermore, this white noise, liminal space also is where the common referential field is situated. Thus a topological vantage point can assist in mapping the dialogues amongst texts, the common referential field and Liminality. [147]

What is more is that this topological vantage point has the ability to reveal the idea of the three-dimensional quality or the multi-level or the meta-level discussion regarding mystical union that is going on amongst texts and between *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. This vantage point offers the potential to

stabilize the objects of our thought … Semantics plays an important role here [and] [p]erhaps we err in thinking that the words in ordinary language and the numbers employed in scientific measurement are equivalent to an approximate dregree, as if the word 'three' were radically identical to the number '3' and convenience alone gives rise to a strictly mathematical language. These may seem odd and unnecessary questions about language in the broadest sense, but they relate deeply to our human subjectivity.[148]

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[146] Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 2003), p. 35.

[147] Topology and how it can be applied to literature seems to be a new field and embryonic since I have been unable to find further studies regarding this beside the online article on it written by the director of the laboratory for cultural analytics at McGill University, Andrew Piper dated 2013. Andrew Piper is associate Professor in the Department of Language, Literatures and Cultures and associate member in the department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. He has presented a paper called 'Adventures in Topological reading' in February 2013, at Western Arts and Humanities and has a book titled *Book was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (Chicago 2012), which is an attempt to map out the possible futures of reading through an understanding of the historical entanglement of books, bodies and screens. I use his online article in **Chapter Three** of this study to further clarify topology's application to literature. Topology and its transposition and application to literature receive further attention under **Liminality and the Common Referential Field**; **Numbers**. The reason for leaning on further clarification there is that the explication given in that Chapter seems to me to be a dexterous articulation of a case for a common referential field whilst it simultaneously explains the common referential field's relation to liminality.

[148] Angus Fletcher, *The Topological Imagination* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2016), available at: https://www.google.com/search?q=the+topological+imagination&oq=the+topological+imagination&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i59l3j69i60l2.5263j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 (accessed 26/01/2019).

It is exactly this topological vantage point that furthermore realises the notion that 'My interests [texts] may seem unlike yours [texts], but we share biotic intentions that move across the material boundaries that separate us. Together, despite our knowing the global magnitudes of size, numbers, directions, and distances, we are still learning to fit our mental landscape to shifting perspectives'; upon which this exposition rests and which realises that 'when we use figures such as analogy, simile, metaphor … we are in fact gluing together disparate aspects of our consciuos awareness'.[149] This last aspect, in that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* use various literary devices, as do the texts that they bring into conversation, is how ideas between and amongst texts can be linked. It is how the 'disparate aspects' of individuation comes to be 'glued' to form a totality, according to Julian's and Marguerite's logic, as will be shown in the discussion following.

Summary

The concepts as clarified here, foreground this study's argument and its working understanding of the principal issues and debates in the field of medieval mystical literature and its portrayal of the divine. Common-core mysticism introduces the idea of the common experience of the two mystics. Liminality introduces the idea of the first common experince towards *unio mystica*. The *khora* introduces the second, more profound common experience. The discussion on language discusses the difficulties of articulating that experience: how the various texts in their translations and in their vernacular expressions (re)inform each other. Apophasis and self-imploding referentiality further the discussion on language and how it breaks down as one approaches divine union. The topological approach to reading texts and liminality – especially – assist in the ability to better grasp not only the tenets of the primary texts but also the argument of this study which is that conversations about God are interlinked and transcend time space, language and that liminality seems to be a pre-condition to *unio mystica*. The terms as clarified here lend themselves to tracing the spiritual, theological and philosophical influences on the minds of medieval scribes, mystics, their related literature and how that the conversation regarding divinity is part of a wider dialogue.

[149] Ibid.

Chapter Three

The Common Referential Field:

Inherited Traditions in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*

Preamble

This chapter provides a working definition of what it deems to be the common referential field. In essence the common referential field is a version of 'sources and influences' that this study wishes to show are common ideas that inhabit the conceptual space into which all, or at least a related group of, mystics enter. It will be shown that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are inter-textual documents: mystical texts are documents that are in dialogue (network) with each other and that their conversation is what has been called unrealised dialogue.[150] The chapter moves closer to the verbal texture of the texts and investigates conceits inherent in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* by looking at the texts' intra-textuality. Intra-textuality refers to the idea that some mystical ideas or terms seem to arise spontaneously, in which case there is a kind of idiosynchratic referential field that the mystic creates for herself and this could be called the intuitive referential field. In this field, ideas inhertited from the mystical tradition become refined and reconceptualised adaptations. The chapter will proceed by looking at three inherited traditions. They are the Trinity, the feminisation of God and numbers, as they are presented to us in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. The examples that are used will show that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* not only exhibit parallel ideas, but that their ideas align with earlier religious, mystical and philosophical texts thus making a case for the idea of unrealised dialogues and by extension the idea of a common referential field.

The last stage of this chapter will deal specifically with what conclusions can be drawn regarding liminality.

The Common Referential Field, Inherited Traditions of the Trinity, Feminisation of Divinity and Numbers in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*

Bearing in mind the volume and variety of mystical texts and texts about mysticism, the case for a common referential field is actually deserving of a study of its own. Nonetheless it is necessary to show that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are part of a wider dialogue, that those dialogues are in conversation with each other and that those dialogues transcend time, culture and geography and that the language that is used to express mysticism often adapts according to time, culture,

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[150] B. McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 343.

geography and the personal experince of the mystic. It is noted that some mystical philosophy can be traced to earlier eastern thought, but because the two subjects of this study are an English anchoress and a French beguine this study limits itself to English and continental influences, and to those sources that were seminal and influential in Western Christian thought. That being said, *Revelations* and *The Mirror* attempt to communicate religious, theological and mystical thought that can be traced to earlier texts.

As a concept, the common referential field recognises that religious/ theological/mystical discourses exhibit likenesses in their themes. The concept also recognises that religious/theological/mystical discourses are expressed differently but that despite the variance in expression, themes seem to correspond. The variance in expression is to my mind only evidence of the fact that language is not static and that the use of language, it could be argued, especially given that Julian and Marguerite specifically use the vernacular as opposed to Latin is, subjective.

For an example of the idea of corresponding themes in variant expression, there is Julian's *sensuality* and *substance*, Marguerite's characters, Reason and Love, and Boethius and Lady Philosophy in *The Consolation of Philosophy*.[151] In the first two cases *sensuality* and *substance* and Reason and Love have come to signify humanity and divinity respectively. *The Consolation of Philosophy* has a similar construction. That is, Boethius is representative of humanity, who is in dialogue with Lady Philosophy, who represents divinity. So despite the difference in terminology, the theme of humanity in relation to divinity corresponds across all three documents irrespective of the fact that *Revelations* is a late 14th century English document, *The Mirror* is an early 14th century French one and the original *The Consolation of Philosophy* is a 6th century Latin document that hails from Italy.[152] Not only does this make a case, albeit yet tentative, for a common referential field, it is also proof of *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s inter-textuality given that *The Consolation of Philosophy* is one of the most seminal works for medieval and renaissance religious thought, and given Chaucer's translation of it into English and Jean de Meun's translation of it in the 13th century into French. The French version was a very influential document and was, during the Middle Ages in Europe, the most translated and copied secular work making *The Consolation of Philosophy* the equivalent of a centuries-long medieval 'bestseller'. *The Mirror*'s 'structure is that of Boethian dialogue' and

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[151] It is to be noted that this study refers to Chaucer's translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, as given in the bibliography.

[152] Whilst it is noted here that the chronological order is in reverse, it is due, as was mentioned in **Chapter One** to the fact that English versions are used as a departure point for the discussions since this study finds itself in the English literature field. Other texts, especially earlier texts, are not seen as secondary to the English texts in any way.

Marguerite may have acquired her 'Boethianism' from the *Roman de la Rose* (CMG liv, lxix). It is noted that *De consolatione philosophiae* is not regarded as a mystical work *per se,* but given its philosophical musings on religious themes, its influence on Medieval and early Renaissance Christianity and its seminal nature, it functions here as an illustration of the point that there could be such a thing as a common referential field.

More evidence in favour of a common referential field and the inter-textuality of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* is that Julian's longer version of *Revelations* reveals a doctrinal style of revision to her shorter version which suggests that Julian may have had external theological influences. Scholars contend that there are elements of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Anselm, Gregory, Hilton and Eckhart in Julian's work and furthermore, that Julian's thoughts have been described as Augustinian, Carmelite, Franciscan, Benedictine and Dominican.[153] For an example of external theological influences on Julian this study considers her notion in Revelation 3 in both the long and the short texts that there is 'no happe ne aventure' (BW 47)/'nothyn is done by happe ne by aventure' (NC 20)/'there is no chance' (CW 197). Marguerite's versions of this claim reads in Chapter 30 of *The Mirror* as, 'And therefore all things are opportune to her, for she does not find anything anywhere without finding God there' (CGM)[154] and in Chapter 17 of *The Mirror* as, '[The] soul gives to Nature whatever she asks of her' (CMG 36).[155] Julian's and Marguerite's excerpts seem to rest on the Augustinian idea of pre-destiny in that whatever an event may or may not be, in either case, the event was already divinely conceived and hence that an entire range of experience is pre-determined.

An interpretation of Marguerite's assertion, in the extract above, links to Julian's in that the French assertion (Marguerite) deems that judgement of an individual's conduct, or lack thereof, should be reserved because in either case it is neither good nor bad. Nature, as a concept, in the French version, gains higher status due to Marguerite's personification of the term and elsewhere in *The Mirror*. This construction implies that Nature is used by Marguerite as synonymous with God. This is reminiscent of the work of John Scotus Eriugena. For Eriugena 'the only true existence of humanity is an idea in God's mind. Eriugena duplicates the divine ideas in humanity, thereby positing

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[153] This was already mentioned and referenced in **Chapter Two** under the sub-heading **Language**.

[154] In French and Latin, 'Et pource luy sont toutes choses convenables, car elle ne trouve chose nulle part que elle n'y trouve Dieu' (RG 98)/'Propter quod Omnia sunt sibi conuenientia seu opportune, quia nichil sibi occurrit ubi Deum non inueniat' (PV 99).

[155] In French, 'Ceste Ame donne a Nature quanqu'elle luy demande' (RG 68).

humanity as a pivotal part of the cosmological scheme of *exitus* and *reditus* making humanity a co-creator of sorts'.[156] In the Irish Neo-platonist philosopher's words,

He alone is the primary cause of all things made from him and through Him; and consequently He is the End of all things which are from Him. Everything aspires to Him. He is therefore Beginning, Middle, and End; Beginning, because everything which participates in essence comes from him; Middle, because in Him and through Him they subsist and move; End, because they move toward Him in their search for rest from their motion.[157]

Therefore, to give to Nature whatever it asks means to yield to divine essence. Since divine essence is purity itself, it can do no wrong. It is only one's perception that arrives at the understanding that something is either good or bad. This echoes Boethius on the difference between *fatum* (destiny) and *praedestinatio* (predestiny). It is written in *The Consolation* that,[158]

Since all fortune whether pleasant or difficult
Is brought about for the sake of
At one time rewarding or disciplining the good
At another punishing or correcting the dishonest
Everything which consists of being
Either just or useful, is good[159]

The idea that something is good or bad is the perception of Marguerite's unenlightened/unannihilated souls, not the perception of divine essence. Hence, the implication is that Nature/God orders everything so well that that which seems desecrated is not so, because everything has already been divinely willed. So, like Julian, and also echoing St Augustine, Marguerite seems to think that a range of experience is predetermined and is actually in synergy with a higher good despite an outward appearance of incongruence. This rumination seems to hail from St. Augustine who has it that, 'All these things have already been done: "foreknew", "predestined", "called", "made just" – these things were already foreknown and predestined'.[160] It

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[156] J. M. Robinson, 'Marguerite's Mystical Annihilation', *A Companion to Marguerite Porete and The Mirror of Simple Souls*, ed. Stauffer, Robert and Terry (Boston: Brill, 2017), p. 46.

[157] Eriugena Joannes Scotus, *Perphysion: On the Division of Nature*, trans. Myra L. Uhlfelder (Oregon: WIPF and Stock, 2011), p. 14.

[158] For the sake of flow of argument the modern English version is given here

[159] 'The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius, Book 4', available at: http://www.san.beck.org/Boethius4.html (accessed 14/09/ 2018).

[160] St. Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, trans. Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 205.

seems then that what Julian, Marguerite and Augustine are positing is that everything is divinely willed. Nothing is coincidental and what might appear random and unethical (or the opposite thereof) is actually divinely predetermined.

Another example of inter-textuality, that is, the common referential field, is that of the nomenclatures for God in *The Mirror,* and which reflects Pseudo-Dionysian influence in that this philosopher provided many descriptions of God in his work *The Divine Names*. In that text Pseudo-Dionysius has it, amongst many other descriptions, that God is the One, the Superunknowable, the Transcendent, Goodness itself, the Triad unity possessing the same divinity and the same goodness, 'the nameless One', and 'the superabundant Wisdom'.[161] Marguerite's rendition of some of Pseudo-Dionysius' divine names reads in *The Mirror*'s Chapter 10 as,

> The Very Wonderful
> The Unknown
> The Most Innocent of the Daughters of Jerusalem:
> She upon whom all Holy Church is founded:
> The Enlightened by Knowledge:
> The Adorned by Love:
> The Quickened by Praise:
> The Brought to Nothing in All Things through Humility:
> The One at Peace in the Divine Being through the Divine Will:
> She who wishes for nothing except the Divine Will (CMG 21).

Julian's nomenclatures on the other hand, speak of 'God and maker' (NC 4), 'Godhede' (a term the 13th century German beguine, Mechthild of Magdeburg also uses and which appears in the thirteenth century guide book for anchoresses, the *Ancrene Riwle*[162]) 'oure Fader' (NC 14), 'Oure Lorde' (NC 42), and indirectly of God as substance and the master in the parable of the servant and 'oure very tru Spouse' (NC 90). Indirectly, Marguerite speaks of the king, 'roy'/'regis' (RG 10/PV 11) and more specifically of, 'roy Alexandre'/'Alexandri imperatos' (RV 10/PV 11) in the opening passages of *The Mirror,* both of which indicate God. The significance of this particular aspect of inter-textuality is that it implies that divinity defies being specifically named. To name something is at once to be able to classify and categorise it and divinity is, by the mystics'

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[161] Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, *The Complete Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 53, 54, 71.

[162] *The Ancrene Riwle***:** *(the Corpus Ms.: Ancrene Wisse),* trans. M. B Salu (London: Burn and Oates, 1990), p. 13.

account, indefinable. The many pseudonyms that are used to signify divinity are all motifs that function to emphasize the theme that divinity defies containment even in name. For now it suffices that the 'names' assigned to divinity by religious philosophers, whether directly or indirectly, are all part of a common referential field.

Another example that makes a case for a common referential field that hails from 'Ruusbroec's ten vernacular treatises'[163] is 'spiritual senses [that are] conceived of as powers of the inner person analogous to the exterior senses of the body'.[164] This spiritual sense that is analogous to the senses of the exterior body resonates with Julian's 'heyer part [which is] in peace with God [and] … 'the lower partie, which is sensualite [which is] of makynd' (BW 117). Thus Julian's terms, 'substance' and 'sensuality' (CW 289) link to ideas of the spiritual sense and exterior sense. Marguerite speaks of 'the subtle understanding within you' (CMG 10), 'the subtle imaginings about how we are drawn by divine love' (CMG 26) and 'affections of the spirit' (CMG 18) which relates to 'spiritual sense' and Julian's 'substance' (CW 289). Marguerite expresses 'exterior body' and 'sensuality' as 'no created thing can remain in her recollection' (CMG 23) which implies the human faculty of the mind retaining knowledge' which links to the exterior senses of the body and the sensuality of the body. The Soul of Faith in Chapter 15, via an analogy of the sacrament refers to the fives senses that cannot always be trusted but how that faith comprehends the bread as the body of Jesus. This example illustrates the analogous aspect of the inner sense (Ruusbroec)/substance (Julian)/subtle imaginings (Marguerite) with the exterior sense (Ruusbroec)/sensuality (Julian)/senses of the body (Marguerite).

Another feature that Ruusbroec, Julian and Marguerite share in their vernacular theologies is the use of oxymorons. 'Ruusbroec's fondness for the mystical oxymoron "hungry satiation" as a way of expressing the soul's endless desire for God'[165] is not unlike Marguerite's use of the oxymoron 'Farnear' (CMG 113) to express the distance between God and man. Julian on the other hand, writes about 'Mother Christ' (CW 294) and 'Mother Jesus' (CW 298) which is not so much an oxymoron than it is a construction that dissolves gender duality. However, it can function as an oxymoron in that Jesus is known to be male but is being ascribed a female title and qualities.

More examples of texts that are in conversation and which makes a case for a common referential field can be found in the treatment of divine love in which 'on some level union [between God and man] could go beyond loving conformity to a stage where there was no longer

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[163] Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2012), p. 5

[164] Ibid. p. 51.

[165] Ibid. p. 53.

any distinction or difference between the two… Such strong expressions of union … were found in women mystics like Hadewijch and Marguerite Porete and were brought to a high level of sophistication by Eckhart'.[166] Although a critic of Marguerite, 'Ruusbroec makes it clear that in union without difference the soul loses its ability to distinguish between itself and the single supreme enjoyment of divine essense, but, nevertheless, it never becomes God in an ontological sense', which is similar to ideas expressed by Suso and Tauler[167] and serves here to show that there is a common referential field from which ideas are drawn and reworked only to be reinformed themselves by different thinkers. To further illustrate the idea of the existence of a common referential field, is the fact that Ruusbroec's 'notion of union' is reminiscent of Meister Eckhart and of many of the German mystics of the fourteenth century'.[168] The last two examples attempted to show that there are thinkers besides Julian and Marguerite who participate in the common referential field. But perhaps two more exmples, for the sake of consolidating the idea of a common referential field, will link Julian and Marguerite to other participants in the coversations that lie in the common referential field.

The apophatic discourse of Dionysius the Areopagite in *Mystical Theology* IV and V, in which there is 'simultaneous negation of affirmation *and negation*',[169] links to Julian's noughting and Margeurite's annihilation rhetoric[170] in which the human self must obliterate all sense of knowing and understanding especially of itself as being, in order to reconnect with God. In a sense the human self must lose itself in order to find its Self. Furthermore, when Julian sees God in a point and Marguerite writes about God revealing himself as a lightening bolt, this calls to mind Diadochus of Photike's notion that God calls the 'heart and makes it exult; then he disappears; and then he reveals himself again'.[171] These examples are only a fraction of the many that could be invoked to make a case for a common referetial field, but this study will pause here. It is only to be noted that participation in the common referential field or links that can be found there also defy time and so 'ancient' texts are in dialogue with each other as well as with 'newer' texts.

The Trinity in Revelations and The Mirror

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[166] Ibid. p.54.

[167] Ibid. p. 55.

[168] Ibid. p. 57.

[169] O. Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press, 2013), p. 313.

[170] This is discussed in Chapter Six under the subheading Julian's 'Noughting' and Marguerite's 'annihilating'.

[171] Bernard McGinn, The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, p. 190.

Since *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are both filled with references to the Trinity, the case for the idea of a common referential field will try to establish thinking that resonates with *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s ideas of the Trinity, so as to embed the idea of a common referential field. St Augustine springs to mind because his work seems to have 'images of the Trinity everywhere'[172], as do *Revelations* and The *Mirror*. But first it is necessary to look at what Julian and Marguerite have to say about the Trinity.

In Julian's first vision in the short text, the Trinity is expressed as, 'the unyte of the blyssede Trinyte, thre persones in a trewthe…I undyrstande the anynge of alle mankynde that schalle be sayfe into the blysfulleTrinyte' (BW 15). This expression of the Trinity in the short text is expanded in the long text to, 'For the Trinite is God, and God is the Trinite; and the Trinite is our maker, the Trinite is our keeper, the Trinite is our everlasting lover, the Trinite is our endlesse joy and blisse, be our Lord Jesus Christ and in our Lord Jesu Christ' (BW 33). Julian's idea that the Trinity is the maker, keeper and everlasting lover has echoes of Augustine's ideas of past, present and future and of his ideas regarding *memoria*, *intellectus* and *voluntas*. 'Including some variations on the third term found in Book 15 of *De trinitate*… Augustine uses the triads *memoria*, *intellegentia*, *voluntas* and *memoria*, *intellectus*, *voluntas* around thirty-five times ion his corpus'.[173] The links to Julian's expression of the Trinity can be explained as follows:

1. Augustine's idea of the past is related to *memoria* in the sense that the memory is the repository of past knowledge. Knowledge in this sense is God, the beginning of the beginning (past). Thus this is Julian's 'maker' (knowledge that resides in past memory).
2. Augustine's idea of the present is reminiscent of *intellectus*. The intellect is reason and logic at one level of understanding, but at another level it is the deeper reason and logical comprehension as embodied in Jesus. This is Julian's 'keeper' (redemption through Christ).
3. Augustine's idea of the future is reminiscent of *voluntas*. Will, here, can be interpreted as divine will, which by extension is divine love (*agape*) which is all that there is, eternally. God's love is located outside of time (it is eternal, there is no beginning, middle or end to it, there is only its continuity. Marguerite speaks of 'neither beginning nor middle nor end, only a bottomless abyss' (EB 192) in describing the fifth stage of mystical union). This is suggestive of Julian's everlasting love (eternal *agape*).[174]

With regard to Marguerite and *The Mirror*, one of the expressions of the Trinity in the text reads as follows:

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[172] Ibid. p. 31.

[173] Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 2010), p. 308.

[174] All three Augustinian concepts that is, past, present and future as well as *memoria*, *intellectus* and *voluntas* deal with the Trinity as presented in human faculties.

God the Father performed the work of the Incarnation, and the Son also and the Holy Spirit also, so that God the Father joined human nature to the person of God the Son, and the person of God the Son joined it to his own person, and God the Holy Spirit joined it to the person of God the Son. So that the Father has in him one single nature, which is divine nature, and that the person of the Son has in him three natures, that is, the same divine nature as the Father has, and the nature of his own soul, and the nature of his body, and he is one person in the Trinity; and the Holy Spirit has in him this same divine nature as the Father and the Son have (CGM 32).[175]

To my understanding, both Julian's and Marguerite's expressions of the Trinity align with the Nicene creed in that the Son is begotten, not made; and the Holy spirit proceeds from God the Father and the Son, and in that God imparts of his essence (*agape*) to the Son, the Holy Spirit then proceeds through the Son. As such all three are in union and in harmony with each other: *consubstantialis,* as per the Nicene Creed. Furthermore, the Trinity functions to redeem humanity.

Julian's and Marguerite's expressions of the Trinity also seem to echo Augustine's view of the Trinity in that

these three [Father, Son, Holy Spirit] are equal and co-eternal, and absolutely of one nature: and that the creatures have been made, not some by the Father, and some by the Son, and some by the Holy Spirit, but that each and all that have been or are now being created subsist in the Trinity as their Creator; and that no one is saved by the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit, or by the Son without the Father and the Holy Spirit, or by the Holy Spirit without the Father and the Son, but by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the only one, true, and truly immortal (that is, absolutely unchangeable) God.[176]

In this Augustinian view, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are irreducible; which is exactly what Julian and Marguerite seem to be communicating in their expressions of the Trinity. For example, Marguerite states in Chapter 14 that,

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[175] In French, 'Dieu le Pere a fait l'oeuvre de l'incarnacion, et le Filz aussi, et le Saint Esperit aussi; ainsi que Dieu le Pere a joinct nature humaine a la personne de Dieu le Filz, et la personne de Dieu le Filz l'a joincte a la personne de luy mesmes, et De le Saint Esperit l'a joincte a la personne de Dieu le Filz. Si que le Pere a en luy une seule nature, c'est assavoir nature divine, et la personne du Filz a en luy trois natures, c'est assavoir celle mesme nature divine que le Pere a, et nature de ame et nature de corps, et est une pesonne en la Trinité; et la Saint Esperit a en luy celle mesme nature divine laquelle a le Pere et le Filz (RG 60, 62).

[176] Bishop Augustus to Bishop Evodius Letter 169 (415 A.D), available at: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102169.htm (accessed 20/11/2018).

God the Father performed the work of the Incarnation, and the Son also and the Holy Spirit also, so that God the Fther joined human nature to the person of God the Son and the person of God the Son joined it to his own person, and God the Holy Spirit joined it to the person of God the Son. So that the Father has in him one single nature, which is a divine nature, and that the person of the Son has in him three natures, that is, the same divine nature as the Father has, and the nature of his own soul, and the nature of his body, and he is one person in the Trinity; and the Holy Spirit has in him this same divine nature as the Father and the Son have … this is true contemplation: one power, one knowledge and one will, one single God in three persons, three persons in one single God' (CMG 32).[177]

In Revelation 13 Chapter 31, when Julian is told by God that all things will be well she interprets this in Trinitarian terms. She writes there that she understands 'I may', 'for the Fader, 'I can'… for the Son ... [and] 'I will'… for the Holy Gost' and that 'where he seith 'I shall', I understand for the unite of the blissid Trinite, iii persons and one trouthe' (BW 77).

The idea of the Trinity and its functions are not unique to Julian and Marguerite. So in the interest of sustaining the argument that there is such a thing as a common referential filed, the exploration will look elsewhere for thoughts on the Trinity that can be linked to that of Julian's and Marguerite's. Gregory of Nazianzus – a 4th century theologian hailing from Constantinople – expounds, in his works, the Trinity's constitution and function. According to Gregory 'He took our flesh and our flesh became God, since it is united with God and forms a single entity with him. For the higher perfection dominated, resulting in my becoming God as fully as he became man'.[178] Gregory of Nazianzus is best known for his teaching on the Trinity. However, his Trinitarian thought focusses less on '[fitting] neatly into divisions of modern systematic theology; it consists less in devising technically accurate statements about how God is both one and three'. For Gregory, 'the cardinal principle of his theological system is his repeated insistence that the knowledge of God is inseparably related to the condition of the human knower … What later writers have …

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[177] In French, 'Dieu le pere a fait l'oeuvre de l'incarnacion, ET LE Filz aussi et le Saint Esperit aussi; ainsi que Dieu le Pere a joinct nature humaine a la personne de Dieu le Filz, et la personne de Dieu le Filz l'a joincte a la personne de luy mesmes, et Dieu le Saint Espirit l'a joincte a la personne de Dieu le Filz. Si que le Pere a en luy une seule nature, c'est assavoir nature divine, et la personne du Filz a en luy trois natures, c'est assavoir celle mesme nature divine que le Pere a, et nature de ame et nature de corps, et est une personne en la Trinité; et le Saint Espirit a en luy celle mesmes nature divine laquelle a le Pere et le Filz …ce penser est vraie contemplacion; c'est ung povoir, ung savoir, et une voulenté; ung seul Dieu en trois personnes; trois personnes et ung seul Dieu' (RG 62).

[178] Gregory of Nazianzus, "Third Theological Oration", pp. 19–20 *Patrologia Græca* 36: (537– 538).

distinguished as … Christology'.[179] Gregory's Trinitarian thinking concentrates on Christology, which resonates with Julian and Marguerite in their focus on Jesus as the saviour.

Given Julian's and Marguerite's attention to Jesus in their texts and in the given excerpts and that (based on their discourses regarding Jesus in their texts as whole), Jesus functions as *the* (my emphasis) saviour and redeemer within Julian's and Marguerite's versions of the Trinity, Gregory's notion of flesh uniting with God and the soteriological role that Jesus plays in the Trinity, it becomes possible to see links between Julian's and Marguerite's ideas about the Trinity and Gregory of Nazianzus' 'Christology'.

It might seem that Augustine and Gregory and their works are removed and distant from Julian and Marguerite in terms of geography, time and culture. However, it must be borne in mind that both women display a profound grasp of theological concepts in their texts. Add to this the fact that, for Julian at least, a full spectrum of doctrines might have been available and accessible.[180] The thriving and bustling city of Norwich had about one hundred churches, all the mendicant preaching orders had establishments there and through them, and the nearby Benedictine abbey as well as an Augustinian friary across the street from Julian's anchorhold, she might have had easy access to the most important theological ideas of her time[181] as housed in the libraries of the Augustinian, Carmelite and Dominican houses (BW xvii). 'Julian and Marguerite may have been allowed within the confines of Amherst (Julian in her anchoress's garb and Marguerite in drag) due to certain generic characteristics that are present in their texts'.[182]

For Marguerite the biographical information is scant, so speculation is based on the content of *The Mirror,* which suggests that she might have been of high birth given the almost biographical tone in the later part of the text which reads, 'This is the eldest daughter of the most exalted king, she who has in her no lack of gentle breeding' (CMG 103).[183] This assumption is compounded by Marguerite's knowledge of doctrine and of the conventions of writing such as the courtly love tradition. It is not then entirely unreasonable to suppose that Marguerite might have had access to a similarly rich spectrum of literature. Nonetheless, there are many other thinkers whose philosophy

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[179] C. A. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and Knowledge of God; In Your Light Shall We See Light (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 63.

[180] C. L. Flanders, Enduring Grace, Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics (San Francisco: Harpers, 1993), p. 82.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Marleen Cré, 'Women in the Charterhouse', *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiana Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2000), p. 53.

[183] In French, 'C'est l'ainsee fille du haultiesme Roy, qui n'a en elle default de nulle gentillese' (RG 223).

regarding the Trinity is similar to that portrayed in *Revelations* and *The Mirror,* but time and space permit only Augustine and Gregory as two examples here.

Having said all of the above, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that Julian and/or Marguerite borrowed directly from any one or more works. So it must be allowed for only the links to exist and to provide for the possibility that both women drew from their own spirituality against a background rich in theological philosophy and Catholic as well as counter-cultural religious traditions. Margery Kempe, who once met with Julian, provides a good example in her text for the possibility that even a lay woman could acquire pertinent theological knowledge. However, the implication is that because *Revelations* and *The Mirror* at times seem to lean on ideas that derive from other sources, we can assume that in themes, at least, commonalities exist amongst some mystical discourses and that the vocabulary of the thematic information is mimetic. That is, words/phrases/constructs as contained in the sometimes common themes were subject to cultural transfer – the culture being the rich backdrop of Catholic, religious and heterodox philosophy – of which Julian and Marguerite seemingly partook.

Feminine Echoes in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*

This section attempts to move closer to the verbal textures of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* by investigating a conceit that both texts display. That is, the role of women in relation to divinity and how that role is redefined via the Trinity, in order to illustrate each text's intra-textual refinement of concepts/themes. As already mentioned the texts exhibit not only an awareness and use of seminal and contemporary religious/theological thought, they also exhibit heightened adaptations of those thoughts. Those adaptations reveal Julian's and Marguerite's complex logic which juxtaposes, usurps and manipulates typical medieval literary images, such as the Passion and the mirror, which invites the reader into a sophisticated understanding of reconceptualised gender roles. Here, the chapter will rely on larger extracts from *Revelations* and *The Mirror* in order to illustrate the gender role theme and to show how the conceit reworks and re-informs the idea of a masculine divine.

The academy seems to agree that the medieval era was chracterised by patriarchy. As such, medieval literature, religious or otherwise, is mostly reflective of masculine dogma. God is constructed as male, scribes were mostly male clerics and even women's stories were often written by men, Margery Kempe being a prime example of this medieval convention. Julian and Marguerite are not unique in attempting to undo this convention, since many medieval woman grappled with the same. This is evident in the fact that in women's medieval writing the 'Virgin is [often] presented as a multivalent figure of supreme power: as "lady" with all its feudal overtones,

as mother and as "maystress"(L. *magistra* like "mistress" can specifically mean teacher, as well as, more generally, woman in a position of authority)'.[184] The implication is that in attempts to invalidate negative associations regarding women – as viewed by the medieval mind, since it was firmly believed that Eve was the cause of the fall from grace – Mary is sometimes referred to as *magistra* in the sense that she is the paragon of womanhood and femininity. For example, Julian implies in Revelation 11 that her visions of Mary are to show women ideal conduct, that is, conduct by imitation of Mary's virtuous behaviour, which makes Mary the ultimate teacher, in the same sense as Jesus was a teacher because he led by example. The style and attempts at undoing masculine voices in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are therefore worthy of exploration.

With regard to Julian – in Chapter 58 of the long text, which explains Revelation 14 and which is an exposition about prayer and how God is a grounding force – she reconfigures the gender of divinity via the Trinity. Interestingly the short version refers only briefly to Julian's own mother whereas the long version develops the concept of motherhood and specifically the motherhood of God, a configuration which is entirely absent from the short version. Julian says in the long text,

> I beheld the werkyng of alle blessyd Trynyte, in which beholldyng I saw and understood these thre propertes: the properte of the faderhed, and the properte of the mother hed, and the properte of the lordschyppe in one God. In oure Fader almyghyte we have oure kepyng and oure blesse and a nemptys oure kyndely substuance, which is to us by oure making fro without begynnyng. And in the Seconde Person in wytt and wisdom we have oure kypyng and anemptys oure sensuallyte, oure restoring and oure saving, for he is oure Moder, Broder and Savyoure (NC 90, 91).

What Julian seems to be attempting to do is to insert femininity into *Revelations* by associating Jesus, the second person of the Trinity with motherhood: because God is considered to be infallible, Julian cannot assign any fallibility to God the Father, in the Trinity.[185] What she does instead is associate fallibility with the humanity of God in the second person of the Trinity, namely, Jesus. As representative of humanity, Jesus is attributed the human faculty of sensuality. The faculty signifies the potential of default and by extension sin and by further extension, original sin; which by medieval standards is beheld in Eve the temptress, thus womanhood. However, the negative association of womanhood as the cause of the fall from grace is inverted

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[184] Barratt, Alexandra (ed.), *Women's Writing in Middle English* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 75.

[185] Sarah McNamer, 'The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love', *Mystics Quarterly* 12.1 (March 1989): 21–28.

when Julian is shown the gaping wound in Christ's side from which flows water and blood to reveal a space large enough to fit all of humanity. This is child-birth imagery and it is imagery that is specific to, but not exclusive to, woman. Christ's pierced wound connotes the piercing of an amniotic sac from which water and blood flows. Christ's wound that opens to reveal a space that can hold all of humanity is, symbolically, a womb, because a womb is actually a physical space that holds the potential for any number of births (reminiscent of the *khoral* space) and thus indicates the creation of humanity.[186] 'Wound' and 'womb' also share a similar phonetic.

Julian continues in the vein of the childbirth metaphor when she uses the word 'traveyle' (NC 35) that translates into 'labour' (CW 217) to describe Christ's suffering on the cross in Revelations 9 and 10. She also speaks of 'paynes' (NC 35) which could be labour pains. Immediately after assigning womanhood to the second person of the Trinity in Revelation 14, she extends the metaphor by speaking of a 'maydyn wombe' (NC 93) and of 'bodely forthbryngyng' and a 'gostly forth bryngyng' (NC 95) which translates as 'birth' (CW 299) in the physical and then the spiritual sense. Julian's reconceptualised idea of divinity, however, is neither male nor female. It is both. In this regard Julian has nuanced the concept of the Trinity in that she does not discard the earlier masculine association of divinity to replace it with a feminine one. Instead, she fuses new with old when she says, 'For the furst I saw and understode that the hygh myght of the Trynyte is oure Fader, and the depe wysdom of the Trynyte is oure Moder' and, 'And thus in oure making God almyghyte is oure kindly Fader, and God alle wisdom is oure kindly Moder' (NC 91).Thus *Revelations* adds depth and a deeper dimension to understanding divinity by portraying it as a balance between two forces within the Trinity. Masculine and feminine co-exist in Julian's re-conceptualisation of divinity.

Like Julian, Marguerite imparts feminine aspects to divinity in her attempts to explain the connection between divinity and humanity. She also relies on a number of literary devices to re-conceptualise understanding of the Trinity and the gender of divinity: Marguerite's triple imagery of a book (God/Bible), a painting (Jesus/king/God) and a mirror (the Holy Spirit) are all medieval tropes her audience would have easily recognised. They are also images that reinforce the idea of the Trinity's *consubstantialis*: individually, the book, the painting and the mirror are different products. However, they have similar functions. For example, in the first instance the book, *The Mirror*, is the start (the beginning of the beginning/God/Bible) of the narrative. In the second

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[186] Given that this study is a study concerning the language of mysticism, I feel compelled to mention the following observation: It is fascinating how 'wound' and 'womb' seem to reverberate in assonance. It is almost as if there is an even deeper and more obscure language at work in mysticism.

instance the book is about societal convention if we place it in its socio-historical, religio-cultural and literary context. In this way it becomes plausible that the book is mirroring social reality. A painting is a likeness of something/someone (Jesus in his capacity as representative of man, made in the image of God/king representative of God on earth as was understood by the medieval mind). A mirror, which has the ability to display images, represents the idea of a pervasive Holy Spirit. So all three objects differ in their attributes yet all have the same purpose, that is, the ability to reflect/display/show. In other words, they are different objects with the same function. According to Marguerite's expositions throughout the text, the same can be said of the Trinity in that the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit are separate but harmonious entities that all work together to unite divinity with humanity. The book, the painting and the mirror are also metaphors that illustrate and compound Marguerite's understanding of *consubstantialis* in the Trinity because, like Julian, who holds in Revelation 13 that ' the blesseyd Trinite, [is] thre persons, and oon truth' (NC 43'), Marguerite also maintains that the Trinity is, 'ung seul Dieu en trois personnes; trois personnes et ung seul Dieu' (RG 62) that is, 'one single God in three persons, three persons, in one single God' (CMG 32).

Marguerite's strategy to insert femininity into *The Mirror* starts with framing her mysticism within a fable. This allows Marguerite herself to act as first narrator and thus covert author in the text. In this way, Marguerite is able to enter and exit the dialogue of the text via the interlocutors. There is no claim that the voice of God is speaking through Marguerite. After speaking in the verse explicit at the start of the dialogue Marguerite, as initial narrator, disappears from the actual dialogue of the text and Love stands in as second narrator. The audience, whether reading or listening, can identify Marguerite's female voice in the dialogue because *The Mirror* reads as if it is Marguerite's 'disembodied' voice speaking through the interlocutors. Marguerite is, in other words, herself the omniscient narrator. One way to access Marguerite's all-knowing third person voice is to explore *The Mirror*'s meta-texuality. This requires brief attention to the meta-textuality of *The Mirror* because the discussion that follows deals with the multiple levels of *The Mirror*'s discourse, which reveals how Marguerite's feminine voice becomes disembodied.

What makes for a meta-textual work and how do we know that *The Mirror* has elements of meta-textuality that resonate Marguerite's female voice? The following working definition of meta-textuality provides us with a framework with which to understand the concept:

a quality of certain types of literature . . . that seem to have two levels of dialogue going on at once. The text … has a layer in which it generally proceeds as normal – it is a typical text. At the same time however, there is a second level of commentary in which the text knowingly comments on what it is doing. It calls your attention to the process of its own creation, or the text will knowingly

get in its own way, constantly interrupting what it is doing … the text draws attention to its status as an artefact … in order to be funny, to try to break free from old norms, or to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. These are works in which the process by which the story itself is created becomes a central focus.[187]

So where and how does Marguerite's text employ the aforementioned meta-textual devices that allow her to present her female voice and, in so doing, attribute feminine qualities to divinity? At one level *The Mirror* tells a story: the princess (female voice initiating the tale) in the fable tells of her love and desire for King Alexander. At another level, this is the dialogue of an individual's desire and love for God. Hence, as was pointed out in the above extract, it can be seen that *The Mirror* has two dialogues under way. Regarding the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction, and where and how the two converge in *The Mirror*, I consider the following: the painting mentioned in the prologue alludes loosely to the commission of paintings made of each other by potential medieval spouses (those with the financial means). Fact and fiction merge again in Marguerite's commentary on marriage in Chapter 84. It says there '(no-one of base birth is taken here in marriage, and so she is of most noble stock)' (CMG 108)/'(nul vilian n'y est prins par maiage, et pource ainsi est tres noble)' (RG 239). This can be interpreted as direct commentary on the medieval approach to contracting aristocratic marriages. Marguerite's use of parenthesis also compounds the idea that there are two dialogues underway in *The Mirror*: Love is speaking about a higher evolved soul whilst Marguerite's subverted voice simultaneously refers to the reality medieval women faced when it came to their social status and the bearing that that had on their lives. Furthermore, the use of parenthesis also proves that Marguerite's hidden voice enters the dialogue intermittently. This is an example of the interruption of the narrative or, as the definition for meta-textuality puts it, the text interrupts itself. When The Soul acts as Reason after Reason's death in Chapter 88 where the interlocutor is 'The Soul [who] Speaks in the person of Reason' (CGM 113),[188] not only is it an illustration of Marguerite's female voice alluding to how male interrogation of women and their experience might have played itself out in the middle ages – the short role-play by the Soul speaking in the person of Reason is made up of only four questions – it is also Marguerite parodying the experience. This discussion of meta-texuality is crucial because, I contend, despite there being many characters in the dialogue, the discourse acts as a ruse to hide Marguerite who is actually speaking in *propria persona* and the voices of the iternerants, apart from

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[187] 'Metafictional (or Metatextual)', available at: www.longwood.edu/staff/mcgeecw/notesonmetafictional/htm (accessed, 06/06/2014).

[188] In French, 'L'Ame parle en la personne de Raison' (RG 248).

Reason who seems imbued with masculinity, are particularly feminine and seem to invoke feminine conditions and states.

According to the given definition of meta-texuality, a meta-textual text focusses on the process of creating a story. This notion applies to *The Mirror* and its meta-textual components working to present Marguerite's voice as follows: it can be understood now that Marguerite's hidden voice enters and exits the text. It is distinctly Marguerite's voice that is audible when the characters directly address the audience. For example, in the verse explicit Marguerite herself appears to be addressing the audience, and in Chapter 12 Love speaks the audience and says, 'Now hear and understand well, you who listen to this book' (CGM 27). In Chapter 26 Love says, 'Now listen you sirs' (CGM 45) and in Chapter 56 The Soul again addresses the audience when she says, 'And so I say to all who will hear this book'(CMG 75). Marguerite deliberately blurs the boundary between the audience and the performers. Marguerite does not provide her audience with absolutes. She seems more interested in allowing her audience to arrive at their own interpretation and meaning. By blurring the boundary between audience and lectors, Marguerite's voice coaxes, invites and involves her audience in creating their own meaning as opposed to being content with received ideas. At times Marguerite beseeches her audience to listen to their innate selves and not to the dictates of male dogma. For example, Love's alter-ego, The Soul, pleads against complicity in the subjugation of women when, in Chapter 119, she says, 'Ah, you unknown ladies … you who are in being, and are so without separating yourselves from the unknown being, truly you are not known; but that is in the land where Reason is lord'.[189] Here Marguerite makes pointed reference to the social code that demands that medieval women abide by the constraint of invisibility and silence. One need not accept or obey it, The Soul points out, because it deviates from the innate self's right to be visible and heard. 'Now you have heard', says the completely disembodied voice in Chapter 124, again in direct address to the audience. This voice, it can be assumed, is Marguerite's, because by this time The Soul has been annihilated, and does not speak for the next seven chapters. In fact, in Chapters 123 to129, there is no character name, and no actual dialogue is taking place. What it is, is seven 'consideration[s]' (CMG 154, 155, 158, 159, 161, 162) each of which is expounded on in its own chapter, in prose. Again, it can be assumed that it is the voice of the annihilated Soul, but that might not make sense if it is to be understood that the annihilated soul is completely obliterated, now that it is in union with God, and that it resurfaces in its own voice in Chapter130. So whose voice is it then?

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[189] I rely on the English translation here in the interest of flow of argument. I have satisfied myself that the same extract in the French, Latin and Middle English versions imparts the same essence as the extract used here.

It is possibly Love's voice. Given that The Soul is now in union with God, it can be assumed that the second narrator is delivering didactic discourse on spirituality. If it is recognised that Love, the second narrator, is also Marguerite's alter ego, and that it is she who is speaking in these chapters, then it has to be accepted that Marguerite's hidden voice (the omniscient 'third' person) is speaking in these chapters. In the chapters referenced here and the examples given here, it is worth noting that it is through the mouths of divine characters that the female voice breaks through. That is, when The Exalted Damsel of Peace, Love, The Soul, and Faith, Hope and Charity – allegorical figures – address the audience, it gives Marguerite's hidden female voice a sense of authority, without having to resort to claiming that it is the voice of God speaking through her. That the female voice speaks through divine characters is reminiscent of Julian's idea that 'alle wisdom is oure kindly Moder' (NC 91).

The female voice breaks through again when *The Mirror* displays two more meta-textual traits. That is, *The Mirror*'s characters are self-aware, and the text reminds the audience that they are dealing with a book.[190] The evidence for this is plentiful. Reason's self-awareness is evident in the 'swansong' that is her speech whilst in the throes of death. The opening verse of the book clearly states Marguerite's claim to authorship and self-awareness when she says 'this book I have writ' (CMG 9). However, after so bold an introductory assertion, Marguerite quickly goes 'under-cover', so to speak. The Soul says, in the prologue to the fable, about itself: 'the Soul who had this book made' and in the same speech The Soul says, 'he gave me this book'. In other words, Marguerite reminds the audience regularly that they are dealing with self-aware characters and that they are dealing with a book, specifically Marguerite's creative endeavour. In both the aforementioned quotations, it is interesting to note that Marguerite does not disown her authorship. As the dialogue progresses, it comes to be understood that Love is the second narrator who is synonymous with, or is the alter ego of, Marguerite. Love, it becomes understood as the narrative unfolds, is also synonymous with God, and Love and The Soul are each other's alter egos. This strategy seems to have been an attempt to tackle questions of *discretio spirituum*: the doctrine of *discretio spirituum* was a means for visionaries, 'themselves to check their visions and only if visionaries conformed to the precepts of *discretio spirituum*' could they communicate their visions and execute what they believed to be their divine mission.[191] Unfortnately, this strategy failed Marguerite, since we know that she was burned at the stake. Nonetheless, the aforementioned still translates into Marguerite

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[190] 'Metafictional (or Metatextual)' (accessed 06/06/2014).

[191] Rosalynn Voaden, God's Words Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late Medieval Women Visionaries (York: York Medieval Press, 1999), p. 40.

claiming authorship, ownership and authority as follows: if, as Love puts it in Chapter 82, God is 'Of himself in himself', then by Marguerite's reckoning God is innate. Having said all of the above regarding the meta-texuality of *The Mirror*, it becomes possible to see how Marguerite's voice is 'disembodied', is the omniscient narrator, and permeates her text.

One is able to hear and sense Marguerite speaking through her interlocutors, even though the text does not identify her as one of the *dramatis personae*. She is unseen but heard, just like God: visually Marguerite is absent, so too is God. However, she is present in terms of the words written in her book. Similarly the Bible is thought of as the word of God and thus is God is present in the words of the Bible even when not named as a speaker since the Bible is supposedly a divinely inspired text. In terms of auditory perception Marguerite is present if and when the book was/is being read aloud to/for an audience because *The Mirror* makes provision for this kind of communication when it speaks of 'hearing this book' and 'hear it read' (CMG 38).[192] So, as the Bible has priests/clerks who sermonise/minister the word of God from the Bible in his 'absence' and on behalf of God, *The Mirror* had/has lectors/orators who do the same with *The Mirror*. This is one of the ways Marguerite imparts femininity to divinity, that is, through her disembodied, omniscient voice.

This disembodied voice makes for a textual authority which is, in essence, 'voices from other sources and contexts such as the Bible, the Church Fathers and the liturgy and each of these voices brings some of its original meaning and context into the contemplative text, contributing to its meaning and affecting how it is read'.[193] That is, Marguerite's intangible voice not only reveals the text's inter-texuality, it also exposes Marguerite's disdain for patriarchy which comes through when we read about the 'little ones' (CMG 12), the 'les petis les piussent/paruuli audient' (RG 14/PV 15) in the prologue and in Chapters 22 and 124. Marguerite is using dissimilation because medieval masculinity and convention dictated that medieval women suppress their opinions and feelings, in essence, their voice.

In the text, God is treated synonymously with Love, who it appears to be Marguerite's alter ego, and Marguerite is the individual, that is, The Soul. It follows, then, that the female voice that is heard throughout the text is specifically Marguerite's voice, and the 'he' (CMG 11) in the prologue, who gave The Soul the book, is Marguerite herself, the first cause, because God is innate. Thus, Marguerite's female voice via its meta-texuality claims authorship, ownership and authority of *The Mirror*. Add to this that the mention of 'precious pearl' in Chapter 52, the French version being

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[192] In French: 'de ce livre Oïr s'esmaient', 'oyoit lire, s'en esmerveilleroit' (RG 74).

[193] Rebecca Selman, 'Hearing Voices? Reading *Horologium Sapientiae* and *The Seven Pointes of Trewe Wisdom*', p. 254, available at: https://www.brepolsonline.net/doi/abs/10.1484/M.TMT-EB.4.00026 (accessed 16/08/ 2018).

'*precieuse marguerite'* (RG 152) and the fact that the name Marguerite actually means pearl; there is evidence of indirect self-reference[194] (which calls to mind the idea that according to the theses of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, God is self-reflective awareness). Hence, it seems that there is a deliberate pun by Marguerite, the significance of which, I think, is that it indicates that Marguerite, a 14th-century French medieval woman, being aware of her status as author, originator and creative director of a text, establishes her authority. All of this considered, then, it is easy to see how complex Marguerite's conceits are. But what informs Julian's and Marguerite's adaptations of divine femininity?

Feminisation of divinity and Trinitarian philosophy are not unique to Julian and Marguerite. What is exclusive to the two women is their adaptation of the concepts. The idea of a marriage between humanity and divinity dates as far back as the third century's Greek scholar and ascetic Origen. Origen's exegetic undertaking of *Song of Songs* adapts the Jewish idea of a covenant between God and Israel into a marriage between Christ and humanity.[195] This adaptation influenced volumes of mystical literature from various persons who went on to feminise divinity even further. Notable philosophers of the concept include Pope Gregory the Great (6th century), Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century), and Italian Dominican tertiary and scholar Catherine of Sienna (14th century). These philosophers adjusted Origen's initial thesis to what has become known as bridal mysticism, a philosophy that attempts to explain the relationship between divinity and humanity in terms of a marriage. 'Phrases such as 'bride of Christ' and passages which describe Christ as a 'Bridegroom,' a 'Spouse,' and a 'Lover' appear in a wide range of Christian texts composed in both Latin and vernacular languages. Mystics enacted marriage to Jesus in visions, while nuns' vows and profession ceremonies are described as a marriage to Christ, a chaste union to be consummated in heaven, traditionally modelled upon secular marriage ceremonies'.[196] It is beyond the scope of this study to delve more deeply into bridal mysticism. It suffices for this study that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* can be linked to at least two pre-existing themes, those being feminisation of divinity, and consubstantiation in the Trinity and its accompanying vocabulary, the illustrations of which serve to strengthen the argument for a common referential field.

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[194] Colledge comments, in a footnote, that 'This seems to allude to…Marguerite's name' (CMG 71).

[195] R. Gregory, *Marrying Jesus: Brides and the Bridegroom in Medieval Women's Religious Literature*, unpublished thesis, University of North Carolina, 2017, available at: https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:dbcaac3a-c91e-4eb3-bb18-852a84d09859 (accessed16/06/2017).

[196] Ibid.

Numbers in Revelations and The Mirror

An unavoidable motif in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* is that of numbers. According to Alessandra Cussimano,

Numbers during the medieval period held a great significance for all aspects of life. With the Bible being the most widely read work, it can only follow that numbers came to play an important role during this period, as numbers play an important role in the construction of the Bible. A cursory knowledge of the Bible and Christian teachings brings forth numerous numerical patterns and the importance of numbers in general, such as, the Trinity, the six days of creation, the presumed age of Christ at crucifixion as thirty-three (33), the twelve apostles, the ten commandments, the eight beatitudes, the seven deadly sins, and the number of the beast.[197]

It is unsurprising then to encounter numbers occurring in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. The numbers 1, 2 and 3 occcur so frequently and in various modes in both texts, that it would be remiss not to give them some attention. It seems obvious that these three numbers underpin the idea of the Trinity. That is, God is one, Jesus is two, (the second person of the Trinity), and the Holy Spirit is number three (in the sense that the Holy Spirit is ubiquitous divine love dispersing itself). However, I think that there might be more to the motif of numbers than this simplistic rumination. Numbers in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are meta-operational: as was mentioned earlier, meta- is a prefix that is added to a noun and that elevates the original meaning of the noun to a more abstract and higher level. In short, meta- provides for a sense of self-referentiality in that it refers to the word that it prefixes functioning at an involved level, specifically, a self-involved level and even a self-referential level since meta- indicates a before, after, beyond and among the meaning which centralises the noun/original word. So if the numbers in the texts are meta-operational and work at a self-referential level, how is this achieved and what does it mean? Furthermore, can numbers be included in the common referential field? If so, which ones? To answer these questions one has to consider the various instances where they appear in the texts. What follows is a lengthy but necessary outline of numbers as they appear first in *Revelations* and then in *The Mirror*. The reason for this is four-fold: first, it is to show the significant attention Julian and Marguerite give to numbers. Second, it is to show the variety of modes the numbers are presented in. Third, it is part of examining the verbal texture of the book, since this study concerns itself with how language is

[197] Alessandra Cussimano, 'Importance of Medieval Numerology and the Effects Upon Meaning in the Works of the Gawain Poet', *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*, Available from: https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1220/ (accessed 27/07/2019).

used to convey liminality. Fourth and last, for the sake of reliability and authenticity, a comprehensive study should attempt to include as much detail as is necessary.

In her desire to progress towards God, Julian petitions three things of him. She asks first for a vision of the passion; second for an illness so that she can empathise with Jesus' pain vicariously through those who witnessed the crucifixion because 'she seems to think experiencing Christ's own suffering would have been presumptuous';[198] and third she asks for three wounds which are a metaphor for the three stages of contemplative ascent and which Julian stipulates as 'contricion, … kynde compassion and … a longing to God' (NC 6), but which could also imply stigmata since it alludes loosely to the three attempts at beheading St Cecilia (NC 6 footnote) and as such connotes physical injury that holds the potential of being associated with sainthood. Julian writes that she was sick for three days and three nights (her first wish is granted) and is administered the last rites but thereafter suffers for two more days and two more nights and on the third night has what seems to be a near death experience in which she has visions (the second wish is granted, that being the vision of the passion). Julian's visions occur to her in three ways. They come to her via 'bodyly syght … by worde formmyde in [her] understondynge and by goostely syght' (NC 16). Furthermore, God shows Julian 'thre degrees of blyss' (NC 24) in heaven, 'thre wordes' namely, 'joy … blyss, and endlesse lyking' and also three heavens in Revelation 9. The 'rounde balle' that resembles a 'haselnott' has 'iii properties' (NC 9) and when Julian gazes upon Jesus bleeding on the cross in Revelation 1, 'thre thynges cam to [Julian's] mynde' (NC 13). In Revelation 2 she claims that humanity receives three things from God. In the 16th Revelation in Chapter 71, Julian claims that God has three 'demeanours' (CW 319), in Middle English, 'thre manner of cherys of oure Lorde' (NC 108) which she then goes on to describe. Revelation 16 in Chapter 80 says that 'by thre thynges man stondyth in this lyfe' (NC 119), meaning that man endures three things in life, and in Chapter 83 of the same revelation Julian's three senses, namely, touch, sight, and feeling, perceive three qualities of God, namely, life, love and light. In Chapter 4 of the short text Julian is shown 'three nothings' (CW 131). The first of these nothings is that the world of matter is irrelevant. The second and third are not given precisely but since that these three nothings occur in the same chapter as the hazelnut image and follow on shortly from that image, it is implied that the second and third nothings could be, and that humanity needs to comprehend and revel in the idea, that everything that is created is also 'uncreated' (CW 132) and that 'no sowle is in reste till it is noughted' (NC 10). The configuration of the image of Revelation 1's hazelnut metaphor which Julian explains in the long text's Chapter 5 as 'it might have fallen to nought for littlenes', and she says, 'Of this nedeth us to

[198] C. L. Flanders, *Enduring Grace*, p. 86.

have knowledge that us lykth nought all thing that is made for to love and have God that is unmade' (NC 9, 10); from all of which it can be deduced that the second and third noughts are that humanity needs to comprehend that creation can also be 'uncreated'(CW 132) or that 'decreation' is also 'uncreated' and that (re)unification with divinity requires an uncreation or decreation of the self. As already mentioned, the recurring motif of the number three and its various presentations reinforce the idea of the three persons of the Trinity and consubstantiation. However, three is not the only number in *Revelations*.

In Revelation 2 Julian understands two things from her sight of the Passion, which are that seeking God and contemplation are a means to access divinity, and that seeking union with God is a common and primary impulse. In Revelation 8 Julian speaks of a 'dowbylle thurst' (NC 27), one being physical and the other spiritual. Julian sees Jesus' body dying and in four ways/'iiii maner' (NC 28). God tells Julian in Chapter 32's explanation of Revelation 13 that 'Alle maner a thynge shalle be wele' (NC 44) and then, when this is aphorism is repeated on another occasion, Julian takes the reiterated expression to have two meanings. That is, one thing is said twice and the fact that it is repeated is said to have two meanings. Chapter 34's explanation of Revelation 13 tells us that God shows Julian two kinds of mysteries. 'One is thys grett prevyte with all the prevy points therto belongyng' (NC 47), meaning the great mystery that is God and all the smaller mysteries pertaining to God, and the second mystery is, 'the prevytes which hym selfe shewyd openly in thys revelation' (NC 47) meaning information as contained in Revelation 13. Meditating on the same revelation Julian says that everything God does is right and everything that God tolerates is honourable and thus, in these two meditation, 'good and evylle' (NC 49) are reconciled. In the following chapter Julian talks of two deeds: in Chapter 50 she speaks of 'two contrarynes of reason' (NC 69), in Chapter 51 she speaks of 'two persons in bodily lycknesse' that is, the master and the servant, and that the master views the servant with 'doubyll chere' (NC 71) and furthermore that the master's seated posture and the servant's respectful stance implied a 'doubyll understanding, one without, another within' (NC 74). In Chapter 63, we read of how God works in two ways, and in Chapter 73 how humankind has 'ii manner of sycknesse' (NC 110). Lastly, in Chapter 74 Julian points out that she 'understonde[s] iiii manner of dredys', that is, four kinds of fear; in Chapter 81 Julian claims that God 'shewde hym diverse tymes' (NC 121); and finally in Chapter 8 Julian has six understandings of her vision of the passion. Before explaining the significance of the number motif in Julian's text, it is necessary to see if Marguerite also has numerical constructions in *The Mirror*.

In the prologue Marguerite begins by saying that The Soul, being touched by God and being stripped bare (stripped bare is already reminiscent of Julian's soul being 'nought[ed]' NC 10), is in the first state of grace, having traversed through the previous six states of grace. The first state of grace, it is

assumed, is the highest. She says there, ‘premier estat de grace, est montee par divines graces ou septiesme estat grace’. The character Love speaks of ‘Ils sont sept estres de noble ester’ (RG 14), that is, seven states of noble being.

Just as Julian speaks of ‘no sowle is in reste till it is noughted’ (NC 10) Marguerite speaks of ‘a life brought to nothing’ (CMG 14).[199] In attempting to name divinity, Love posits that divinity can be called by twelve names, ‘nomez ceste Ame par son droit non, donnez’ (RG 34). In Chapter 20 Love claims that one and the same word has two meanings, ‘une mesmes parole a deux entendements’ (RG 78). Chapter 28 speaks of one common will, ‘Or est ung commun vouloir’ (RG 96). Chapter 31 describes God as being the sum of all things, ‘est somme de tous biens’ (RG 104). Furthermore, Chapter 106’s title also speaks of a sum and in Chapter 117 there is the statement ‘je suis la somme de tous maulx’ that is, I am the sum of all evil. The word sum/somme implies that, sub-textually, a numerical equation is at work and that possibly the equation underwrites the idea of *consubstantiatialis*. The arithmetic possibility is: 1 (first cause/God) +1 (Jesus) +1 (Holy Spirit) =3 (all of creation) and/or, 1 (first cause/God) +1 (humanity) = 2 (all of creation). Chapter 54 speaks of two deaths that humanity must experience and that a third death is seemingly necessary for progress towards divinity, but suggests that this third death is beyond human comprehension, ‘les deux mors ... mais de la tierce mort, don’t ceste Ame est morte, n’entend nul vivant’ (RG 158). Chapter 60’s title reiterates the idea that a soul must undergo three deaths in order to reconcile with divinity, ‘Comment il convient mourir de trois mors, ains que on viengne a vie franche aniente’ (RG 172) and Chapter 65 expounds on the idea of the three deaths by means of which one arrives at three lives, ‘aucune chose de ces trois mors, don’t l’en vien a ces trois vies’ (RG 186). Chapter 58 posits that souls who have been brought to nothing are in a fifth state of being with God, and that often in that state such a soul may be pulled into the sixth state, ‘Comment les Ames Adnientes sont ou cinquiesme estat avec leur amy’ and ‘souvent ou siziesme ravie’ (RG 168). Chapter 82 explains how a soul is freed on all four/‘.iiij.’ (RG 231) sides. Chapter 102 tells us that the spirit is created by God and as such has two natures, ‘et le corps est Dieu formez. Or sont ces deux natures’ (RG 280). Chapter 104 states that in the Bible it is written that an honest but errant person must be corrected seven times a day, ‘Escipture dit, que le juste chee en cause de correccion sept foiz le jour’ (RG 286). This construction is repeated in the next and immediate title, ‘…que le juste chet sept foiz le jour’ (RG 286), which is reminiscent of the declaration that is repeated by Julian, mentioned in the previous chapter. In Chapter 107 there are two requests that are expounded upon. Chapter 118 explains at length seven states of being and in the fifth state’s explanation mentions again two

[199] In French, ‘en vie adniente’ (RG 18).

natures that being, divine goodness and evil. Chapters 123 and 108 are about six considerations/'regars' (RG 348–368). Chapter 132 replies to three questions, '*Response aux trois questions devant dictes*'. Chapter 11 clarifies nine points, 'en declarant neuf poins' (RG 36), and, has already been pointed out, that Marguerite speaks of the Trinity as God in three persons and three persons in one God.

It is apparent that both *Revelations* and *The Mirror* exhibit an intensive attention to numbers. Before explaining the significance of the number motif, it needs to be decided if the number motif is unique to Julian's and Marguerite's mystical discourses, because of this chapter's assertion that there is such a thing as a common referential field.

It is generally understood that the Bible contains numerical constructions and studies concerning this abound. For example, the number three occurs in Daniel 6:10 and Psalm 55:17, both of which encourage prayer thrice a day. This is evocative of the contemplative way of life, in that anchoresses were supposed to prayer a certain number of times per day as well as the standard number of hours monks were expected to pray in a day. In Matthew 12:40, Jonah spends three days and three nights inside the stomach of a whale. The whale's stomach is evocative of the physical space of an anchoress' hold; the childbirth imagery (the whale's stomach is a womb that incubates Jonah) that seems to permeate mystical discourse; and the imploding soul (the whale's swallowinging of Jonah) as it progresses towards divinity, which both texts make much of. So the number three, suffice it to say, comes from scripture and it is safe to assume that Julian and Marguerite were both informed by scripture. It has already been mentioned that although seemingly far removed from Julian and Marguerite, some founding fathers of theological and church doctrine left an indelible mark on Western Christianity. It is their early ruminations – especially those of the church fathers whose contributions were influential at the fourth century Council of Nicene – that would have informed later religious texts. So it is not untoward to link their emerging philosophies with theological doctrines developed later. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus explains that the Old Testament revealed the Father clearly, but that the New Testament manifests the Son and the Holy Spirit. Another 4th century church father, Greek theologian Basil of Cæsarea, spoke of the Father being the origin, the Son being the realisation and the Holy Spirit being the fulfilment. These constructions reveal an emerging concept of the Trinity which later theologians such as, among many others, Maximus the Confessor, a 7th century Greek theologian and one of the church fathers, refine further. Maximus distinguishes between three degrees of embodiment of scripture. Jesus is the concentrated essence of divinity and thus a physical embodiment of scripture. Secondly, out of love for humanity God hides within us and thus is scripture embodied spiritually in the variety of humankind. Thirdly, the variety of tongues, and thus words and by extension scripture, that the Spirit embodies, consists

of only one essence.[200] These early constructions reveal the development and refinement of developing Trinitarian doctrine which configures the number three. 'In their expositions of the Trinity, St. Basil and St. Maximus emphasise that three is not a number. The divine persons are not added to one another, they exist in one another.'[201] Many more examples can be traced and cited of numerical constructs in religious, philosophical and mystical discourses, but the ones given here serve to show that numbers in spiritual discourse are not unique to *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, and that numbers can be considered to be a part of the common referential field.

The significance of the numbers is that they are meta-operational. Meta-, it has also been said, is a prefix which centralises the original word thus creating a sense of self-referentiality. So if the numbers are meta-operational it means that they are referring back to themselves in the way that *consubstantialis* works in the Trinity. Diagrammatically the Trinity, *consubstantialis* and the idea of self-referencing numbers would look like this:

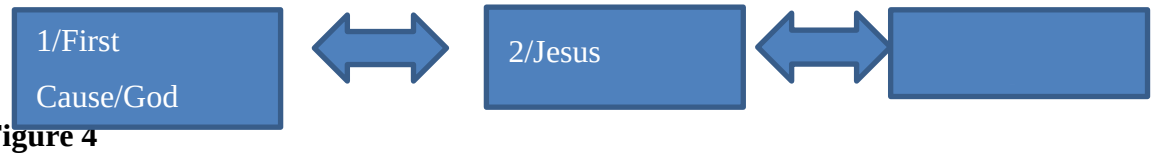


Figure 4

That the numbers refer back to themselves, as does the Trinity, implies inwardness, contemplation and implosion, all of which infers an unravelling. If the numbers are indicative of a sort of deconstruction, then they are functioning at a sub-textual level to reinforce both Julian's notion of nought and Marguerite's notion of annihilation. In other words, over and above the number motif underwriting themes such as Trinitarian consubstantiation (3) and duality (2) that is, divinity in relation to humanity, good in relation to bad, contemplative in relation to active, the numbers are reinforcing the idea of the dissolution.

Dissolution implies a return to the *khoral space*. In that words fail to convey the ineffability of the *khoral* space, numbers assist in communicating *unio mystica* and are thus not just indicative of their mathematical value: as Julian and Marguerite move towards point three in **Figure 1**, that is, the liminal space, and all constructs start dissolving, particularly self-preoccupation/the ego, the soul starts to expand in relation to the diminishing constructs. It seems that the only stable device available to Julian and Marguerite through which they can explain the reduction of humanity and the expansion of divinity in the soteriological process, is numbers, in that numbers and their attributed numerical value are fundamentals and are qualified. However, the numbers are also self-referential as illustrated in the *consubstantialis* diagram in **Figure 4**. Despite being self-referential,

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[200] Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigua" (*Patrologia Græca* 91: 1285–1288).

[201] O. Clément, The Roots of Christian Mysticism, p. 67.

however, the numbers do not disintegrate, due to their absolute numerical quality. That the numbers remain stable serves to illustrate how multiplicity and variation are held in balance by divinity, and how expansion can occur within contraction and vice versa. The stability of the numbers works to illustrate the ultimate divine force that contains everything. So it is that the numbers in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are useful to Julian and Marguerite because they 'enable[s] the illustration of transcendence from the illusion of individual separateness which is an illusion that prevents the realisation of our true divine origin'.[202] Numbers are, therefore, necessary and auxiliary to the words and concepts, and thus are a part of the common referential field and mystical discourse.

Liminality and the Common Referential Field

So, what does the analysis above have to do with liminality? In order to answer the question this conclusion relies on further clarification for topological reading.[203] The reason for seeking further clarification is that the given exposition seems, to me, to be a dexterous articulation of a case for a common referential field, whilst it simultaneously explains the relation of the common referential field to liminality.[204] To begin with, what seems evident from the discussion on the idea of a common referential field is that the similarities in language and expression in *Revelation*s and *The Mirror* can become detectable via a transposed approach to the texts (as was explained under the initial exposition for topology). Further to the *OED* definition of topology, the Merriam Webster definition gives it to mean, mathematically speaking, the study of geometrical properties and spatial relations which are unaffected by changes in the shape or size of the figures, or the way in which constituent parts are interrelated or arranged and can be stretched, thus undergoing continuous reformations without tearing.[205] Transposing this mathematical definition of topology to literature, leads to an understanding that the language of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* creatively rework earlier ideas whilst still retaining the essence of preliminary versions. For example, Julian's treatment of gender in the Trinity, as explained earlier, demonstrates this. This treatment is, of itself, a trait of

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[202] R. Abdul Hayy Darr, *The Numerological Language of Spiritual Insight and Guidance as Employed by Sufis*, A paper presented on July 8th 2008, by Temens Academy at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, available at: www.spyoftheheart.com>abjad_lecture (accessed 17/06/ 2017).

[203] A. Piper, *A Theory of Topological Reading*, available at: http://txtlab.org/2013/05/a-theory-of-topological-reading/ (accessed 14/06/2017).

[204] I use some of the exposition's terminology but interrupt it with examples – where I think it is necessary – that have already been discussed so as to illustrate the connection between the common referential field and liminality.

[205] Definition of 'topology', available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/topology (accessed 21/06/2017).

liminality in that the old is not discarded in favour of the new. Instead, the old is revised and updated without the distortion of original versions. In essence, both old and new versions are accommodated.[206] Through a transposed topological approach to *Revelations* and *The Mirror* it becomes possible to identify linguistic patterns and thus understand the spatial connectivity of the texts.[207] In this chapter's argument for a common referential field this has already been illustrated. Furthermore, it can be seen how, in the case of the Trinity for example, a topological view of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* lends itelf to showing the extent to which the language, and/or ideas inherent in the language, circulate within the religio-philosophical and mystical textual environment, and then structures that literary field. Lastly, topology, as it is being used here, reveals not only the idea of an inherited social text such as the Bible and the post-structural idea of inter and intra-textuality and literary relationality. The term topology is also being used in an attempt to conceptualise and visualise relationality as a function of a more diffuse lexical coordination. In this sense then, topology helps to demonstrate how, in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, groups of words recur over time according to complex patterns. For example, the abstractions of divinity and humanity as sensibility and sensuality/Reason and Love/Boethius and Lady Philosophy, the nomenclatures assigned to divinity, and the recurring motif of numbers. The fact that in each case there is succession from text to text and differentiation in each text, but still no conclusive definition, is further evidence that the language of both texts makes a case for liminality (in the topological sense, that the space between geometrical shapes do not change despite changes in the geometrical shapes). Furthermore, and still relying on the extended exposition for topological reading, recognising that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* can be viewed through a topological lens, enables the ability to track the different ways that ideas circulate through the writing of particular eras, in this case pre-14th century to the 14th century, and thus allows a view of the heterogeneous concentrations of literary discourse. Liminality, as has been shown in **ChapterTwo**, accommodates all senses of the word heterogeneity. For example, *Revelations* is thought by some to be a cataphatic discourse, yet there are traces of apophasis in it, especially when Julian says that a soul must be 'noughted' in order to reunite with divinity. *The Mirror* is considered an apophatic discourse, yet exhibits elements of cataphatic theology in its fairy tale sub-plot. In addition, recognising that the texts can be viewed topologically enables the consideration of

[206] This has already been shown in the discussion in each of the three stages so no example will be given here.

[207] Ibid.

the recurrence of words, the way language repeats itself at a distance (a different kind of thinking about the beyond). Instead of understanding language in significatory terms (what it says), topology allows us to think more about language in agential terms (what it does). It shows us how the patterns of lexical repetition within texts produce meanings that are not localized in, or inherent to, those patterns. Meaning is not a function of signification in a topology, but organization. In so doing, topology brings to light what we might call the latency of the lexically manifest, the meaning of the distributed recurrences of language that otherwise escape our critical consciousness. Topology enables a deep engagement with the redundancy of reading. … [topology] brings into view … an inter-textual presence that is not otherwise legible to the naked eye, a presence that is based upon decidedly different modes of reading than have historically been operative within the discipline of literary studies. …It implies … a reading technique … in which lexical recurrence … and dimensionality … supra-syntactically … are the two primary means through which new semantic configurations and new textual concentrations are brought to light.[208]

In other words, what constitutes each text's mystical language is its inter-relatedness with each other and with other mystical discourses that could be described as a 'network'. Interrelatedness finds expression not only amongst texts (inter-textual) but within texts (intra-textual). That is not to say that Julian and Marguerite were entirely informed by and/or reliant on secondary sources. What it means is that both Julian and Marguerite, in their visionary quests for enlightenment, move from using identifiable modes of language to using encoded modes of language in order to express the ineffable. The encoding may or may not be conscious but is certainly a by-product of a linguistic manipulation which attempts to contain that which defies containment. This linguistic manipulation results in a vocabulary that is often unique to mystical discourses. Furthermore, the theological, religious and mystical discourses lean on each other, thus building on, improving on, and re-informing one another, 'networking' so to speak. This common referential field reveals itself to have an interlife of its own, in that the vocabulary and concepts have multi-dimensional meanings that re-inform other concepts, but are also self-referential as shown in the *consubstantialis* diagram in **Figure 4**. Another way of illustrating the idea of an interlife of the language of the texts is to think in terms of nesting circles. As the soul, Julian/Marguerite, contemplates divinity it moves from an outer circle towards an inner circle in various stages. Traversing the nesting circles from the outside inwards, whether as an active or a contemplative, exemplifies an existential perplexity for which language has no mode of communication other than the mystic's reinvention of terminology.

[208]A. Piper, A Theory of Topological Reading.

This reinvented terminology becomes not only visible when viewed from a topological perspective, but a topological viewpoint also enables the understanding of gnomic texts, which are otherwise difficult to comprehend, in that the texts can be understood, interpreted and applied at many levels and in terms of relationality, and this quality allows the liminal feature (the space between geometric shapes and texts that remains unchangeable) to become clear, because a multi-level viewpoint can lead to the comprehension and interpretation of that which is inter-structural.

The mystics' words, their language, is potent, because it questions and challenges convention whilst still residing on the border of convention: for example, Julian's construct of a male and female Trinity. This feature allows the language, as used in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, to communicate the idea of liminality. For example, Julian's and Marguerite's notion, that nothing is coincidence and everything is predetermined, forces cognitive suspension, especially of reason and logic. Cognitive suspension is indicative of an inter-structural state, which is a feature of liminality. The language Julian and Marguerite use – relying on examples from this chapter's discussion because other textual examples follow in subsequent chapters – insists on cognitive shifts in the mind and dislodges inherited beliefs. For instance, divinity as masculine is dislodged through Julian's idea of a mothergod, and Marguerite dislodges the same with her disembodied omniscient female voice which permeates her dialogue. The language uses alternative modes to describe new models, and thus augments how the world is seen. Since there is no one unifying name for divinity, for example, the audience is invited to join in the journey from an inherited known, like 'God', to a state in which naming and meaning are both deferred. Deferred meaning is another trait of liminality. For example, Julian's three nothings and Marguerite's annihilation of the soul upset the fixed belief that views reality as an external and concrete concept, as opposed to that which collapses in on itself and therefore holds the potential of vast (re)creation. Marguerite's construction, that is, 'Justice in justice' (CMG 125)/'Droit par droit' (RG 278), is an example of how concepts are created to illustrate self-referentiality, implosion of the soul, and expansion of the divine. However, after the words have disintegrated, it is the potential for new creation that comes to be understood, in terms of what has not yet been created, that the language of *Revelations* and The *Mirror* try to highlight and this is what allows for the idea of liminality in the theses of the texts.

Summary

This chapter has shown that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* draw on an inherited lexicon such as the Trinity, feminisation of divinity, and numbers, to articulate soteriology. For example, it was revealed

that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* draw on Trinitarian doctrine which can be traced to Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Nicene Creed, to mention only three sources that exist in the 'network' of space from which intertexuality derives. It was exhibited that in *Revelations* gender duality dissolves in Julian's description of the Trinity, and that the masculine was not replaced by the feminine, but that the two co-exist. Marguerite's melting of gender duality was shown to be present in *The Mirror*'s formulation of the Passion, in which childbirth imagery imparts to divinity a feminine quality. It was also displayed how Marguerite's omniscient voice enters and exits *The Mirror*'s dialogue, through an exploration of the meta-textual features of *The Mirror*. This chapter also demonstrated that numbers are part of the common referential field, in that their value is fixed so that they are simultaneously able to illustrate duality and non-duality as relational. Put differently, 'The …*mathematica* acts as a bridge between the world of the senses and the intelligible universe'.[209] As such, numbers form part of the common referential field. Transposing the mathematical understanding of the term topology to apply to a topological view of literature, this chapter arrived at the theory that terms and words in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are part of a wider network of conversations between texts, and that, despite the texts not only informing but also reinforming each other in unrealised dialogue (thus contracting and expanding as each idea is absorbed and reformulated), the space within which this process takes place, that is, the liminal space, remains intact. The topologival view of literature as networking texts in unrealised conversation allowed the argument to provide evidentiary and conceptual foundations for understanding the idea of a common referential field.

Thus it was determined that the verbal texture of both texts tends towards dissolution of categories and deferred meaning, both of which make a case for liminality.

[209] Edouard Jeauneau, *Rethinking the School of Chartres*, trans. Claude Paul Desmarais (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 72.

Chapter Four

Encoding Liminality

Preamble

A study of medieval literature ought to give some consideration to the categories of literature from that era. This is necessary because each category of medieval literature has unique features. There is literature categorised as belonging to the monastic tradition, the scholastic tradition, visionary literature, anchoritic literature and vernacular theology, for example. The features of each category reveal the orientation of the writer's perspective, the roots of that perspective, what informs the style and structure of the writing as well as what possible socio-cultural prescriptions the writer had to manage. According to the common core theory of mysticism that this study adopts,[210] all these categories could be grouped under the literature of mysticism. This means that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* have an enigmatic and gnomic character. In other words, at points in the texts the messages are cryptic. Liminality, a middle ground, a neither-here-nor-there perspective as it pertains to the journey towards to apprehending divinity, is encoded in the language of these two cryptic texts. As explained by Kristeva regarding intertextuality it is notable that 'the notion of intertexuality replaces the notion of "intersubjectivity" when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes" imparted to the writer and reader by other texts'.[211] It is these codes that are inherent in the common referential field's dialogues that the topological vantage point allows us to see as networking communication that must be unravelled so as to reveal the liminal tenets of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*.

First, in order to make it easier to unravel the language of the texts so as to reveal how Julian and Marguerite encode the liminal features seemingly inherent in a journey towards the divine, it is necessary to decide which of the aforementioned categories *Revelations* and *The Mirror* can be assigned to because doing so will bring an understanding of what informs each text's style, structure and orientation which in turn will help to show how liminality has been encoded and which parts of the network of dialogues the texts lean on.

This chapter will start by clarifying what it means by encoding and how that encoding occurs in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. Next, this chapter will place *Revelations* and *The Mirror* in the visionary literature category explaining why this study treats the texts as such, and lastly it will

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[210] This was explained in the Chapter Two under Common Core Theory Mysticism.

[211] R. Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 196.

discuss specific extracts from each text to show how liminality preconditions apprehension of divinity.

Encoding in the dialogues of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*

The *OED* defines encoding as a transitive verb which means to 'translate or cipher into code'. The Merriam Webster dictionary extends the *OED* definition and defines encoding to indicate the converting, symbolically, a body of information from one system of communication into another.[212] In the digital world encoding means placing a sequence of characters such as letters, numbers, punctuation, and certain other symbols into a specialised format, so as to transmit, and store, information efficiently.[213] How this is transferred into literature and, specifically, into the work of Julian and Marguerite is as follows: the 'information' that Julian and Marguerite need to communicate is an encounter with (Julian), and theory of (Julian and Marguerite), divinity. However, because *unio mystica* itself defies expression in words, and because language, and specifically the vernacular, seems to have been the most accessible means of communication available to Julian and Marguerite, each woman is compelled to convert the mystical experience into a specific language format. In Julian's and Marguerite's case this specialised language format comes in the guise of 'realised' dialogue. In the dialogues the experience of, and the communication of, *unio mystica* is transposed from that which is unutterable into what seems to amount to ideas. That is, extended rhetorical devices that are based in imagery, ambiguity, metaphors and allegories all function as a means to communicate *unio mystica*.

So how does this work? Before moving on to examples from the texts, the following extract explains the importance of dialogue, foregrounds the idea that in Julian's and Marguerite's case the specialised language format comes in the guise of dialogues as well as why and how there is eternal communion with God:

If objects give us an inkling of God, then drawing near to God we can receive the full revelation of their *logoi*, their spiritual naturesa, their infinite meanings. The Logos is the divine subject of all *logoi* of all the subsistent 'words' that support the world. The *logikos* man, personal image of the Logos, is called to become their human subject. The meeting is fully brought about in the God-Man who enables us to fathom the spiritual essences of objects, not in order to possess it but in order to offer them to the Logos after having 'given them their names' marked them with our own creative

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[212] Definition of 'encode', available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encode (accessed 05/08/2017).

[213] Definition of 'decode', available at: http://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/definition/encoding-and-decoding (accessed 05/08/2017).

spirit. The world then becomes a *momentous dialogue* (my emphasis) between the Logos and the logikos man. (It is also necessarily a dialogue of human beings among themselves, since they exist as persons only according to their relationship with one another.[214]

This extract is helpful in understanding the communication between the divine and man and it reveals *Revelations* and *The Mirror* to be dialogues in divine communication (the *logoi* of the *logikos* man in offer to the Logos), dialogues of divine communication (*logoi*, the texts that are of themselves dialogues of divine inspiration) and lastly *logoi* that are in communication with other each other and other religious, mystical and philosophical texts in the liminal space (the topological space between geometric shapes that remains unaltered irrespective of changes in the shapes of geometry). Furthermore, the understanding as explained here is also reminiscent of the understanding of Richard of St Victor 'who more than any other exemplifies the Victorine awareness of the sacramental presence of God in nature, community, the human person, and the cosmos',[215] indeed in 'things'. Given this understanding, it becomes easier to see why and how the specialised language format in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* comes in the guise of dialogue.

In *Revelations* it seems that Julian is actually in dialogue with God; that she is speaking with God. Julian asks questions and receives answers. For example, in Revelation 9 Chapter 22 of the long text the dialogue between Julian and God reads

Than seide our good Lord Jesus Christe, asking, 'Art thou wele payd that I suffrid for thee?' I sayd, 'Ya good Lord, gramercy. Ya good Lord, blissid mot thou be!' Than seyd Jesus, our kind Lorde, 'If thou art payde, I am payde. It is a joy, a blis, an endless lekyng to me that ever suffrid I passion for the; and if I myht suffer more, I wold suffre more' (BW 64)

At other times Julian ponders an issue 'with eye of [her] understondyng and thowte' (BW 35) and is answered via 'the bodyily sight…and the gostly sight' (BW 41). Furthermore, it seems that there were witnesses, an audience, as it were, to Julian's conversation with God. The short and long versions of Revelation 8 record, 'Than sayde I to the folke that were with me, 'Itt es todaye domesday with me' (BW 42). In Revelation 5 Chapter 13 of the long text there is more indication that there were witnesses to Julian's dialogue with God. It is written there, 'For this sigte I lauhyd migtily, and that made hem to lauhyn that were about me, and ther lauhyng was a likeing to me' (BW 51). This observation is significant because what Julian says and how she says it in these

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[214] Clément Olivier, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New York City Press, 2013), p. 224.

[215] Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), p. 32.

examples, creates the sense that the audience, whether it is the one reading *Revelations* or those in Julian's physical presence, is privy to the communication that occurs between Julian and God. It also creates the sense that the communication between Julian and God is transmitted to the audience(s) via Julian in what seems to be, in modern terms, 'real time'. That is to say, as the conversation is happening. *Revelations* then, it could be said, for both versions, is a document that is reporting a dialogue that is under way. Perhaps even a distinction between then and now is required which means that there are in fact six different presences: God, Julian, the speaker, Julian's audience, Julian the writer and Julian's readership. The liminal experience is thus dispersed among six participants. Furthermore, it could be said that the document seems to invite its audience to share in the experience of the narrator (Julian). In addition, *Revelations* is a document reporting speech between Julian and God, in the sense that Julian is communicating what she is told and is experiencing, to the audience who is present in her company and to the reader/hearer of the text. The effect of this is that the audience seems to get drawn into the conversation, into the 'meta' level at which the mystical dialogue takes place. The result is a dialogue that has many features. First it suggests that the dialogue has a multi-dimensional character. Second, the dialogue is one that presents itself in what feels like an intensely intimate setting, which reinforces the idea of an indwelling God.[216] Third, the dialogue seems to be accessible to a select audience. Fourth, there is the sense that there is a rapport between Julian and God and, by extension, the audience. So, can a similar construction be found in Marguerite's *Mirror*? In other words, does *The Mirror* indeed rely on a specialised language format that comes in the guise of dialogue so as to transmit incommunicable information about God? If so, what is the significance about both texts being dialogues?

In Marguerite's case *The Mirror* is actually written in dialogue format. Although the emphasis is on a listening audience, allowance is made for a reading audience. The verse explicit starts with, 'you who would read the book'[217] and later in the text The Soul speaks of, 'if the hearers who will read this book do not demur' (CMG 57).[218] Furthermore, it has already been pointed out how Marguerite's disembodied omniscient voice inhabits the speech of around 30 itinerants, entering and exiting the dialogue, and how Love is Marguerite's alter-ego and symbolic of God's voice, and that The Soul is symbolic of every(wo)man, all of whom are in conversation with each other. Further to this is the fact that at times *The Mirror* directly addresses its audience when it refers the audience

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[216] This is explained in **Figure 4**.

[217] In French, 'Vous qui ence livre liront' (RG 8).

[218] In French, 'se es auditeurs ne demoure, qui ce livre liront' (RG 120).

to the glosses of the book for those who seek a better understanding of the text and does so again when Love, in Chapter 98, addresses 'You, ladies…'. Yet, in that chapter, Love is actually in conversation with only one character, namely, Reason. In addition, there is the constant interrogation by Reason of Love that uncannily mimics what can be imagined was like the interrogation of those undergoing trials at the Inquisition. What all this amounts to is that there is much talking going on in *The Mirror,* as is the case in *Revelations*. Like *Revelations*, *The Mirror,* it could be said, is a document reporting speech, the effect of which is to draw the audience into the conversation. *The Mirror*'s dialogues are also multi-dimensional, present themselves in an intensely intimate setting that reinforces the idea of an indwelling God, that seem to be accessible to a select audience and that creates the sense that there is a rapport between Marguerite and God, and by extension the audience.

In the first instance it is significant that there is so much conversation because this is evidence of unrealised conversation.[219] The unrealised conversations are those between mystical texts, medieval women themselves, theologians and all manner of orthodox and heterodox religions and they are in addition to the dialogues realised or present in the texts. The aforementioned dialogues, it could be said, occur in an ethereal space/place that Jungian psychologists might call the collective conscious, or what the transposed topological approach deems is 'the space' between texts. This space between the texts, Jung's collective conscious, is the 'network' space, the space in which the common referential field exists. Further to this, the conversations are significant because they are evidence of meta-dialogue, and the existence of a meta-level makes the texts somewhat self-referential. This means that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are documents that are reporting speeches and that those speeches are interviews by Julian and Marguerite of God who re-interviews Julian and Marguerite and the (re)interviews repeat themselves. As such, the dialogues collapse into each other in a seemingly endless cycle of self-reference. The effect is not only that of mirroring but also works to code the dialogue. In other words, the multiple levels of dialogue form a code and it could be argued that the coded dialogue invites constant rehearsal because it will not yield its meaning. Thus the unrealised dialogues and seemingly self-referential discussions are the means by which liminality is encoded in the language of the two texts. But why use dialogue as a means to encode the language? What is more, the encoding seems to force the consideration of the unanswerable question of whether or not it was done consciously or unconsciously.

It is safe to say that medieval women were active participants in the oral transmission of information, whether in a lay or clerical capacity, and might often have been at risk of accusation of misconduct

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[219] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 343.

given the dogmatic theological and patriarchal society they lived in. Margery Kempe is known to have suffered 'rebuke from churchmen throughout her life'.[220] It could even be argued that the female spirituality and religious hysteria that characterised the 13th to 14th centuries might be a spontaneous nervous reaction to a 'persecutor society'.[221] In reporting on their perspectives of God Julian and Marguerite risked accusations of heresy and certain execution, which is exactly why and how Marguerite's life ended. In order to bypass this risk some medieval scribes and especially women had to communicate *unio mystica* via literary subterfuge. As such the 'only language, in this position, is one of subversion, which opens up the indefinable space of the mystérique. Linguistic aspects of this theory include paradox and wordplay, the ludic dismantling of certainty that has its echoes in the theological concept of apophasis'.[222] Apophasis implies the consideration of God in terms of negation and seems to stand in opposition to cataphatic theology, which is the consideration of God in positive terms.[223] By default then, it seems that what Julian and Marguerite postulate in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* dismantles certainties; bordered on heresy and because the communication of *unio mystica* defies language, encoding became a necessary condition of some written medieval mystical literature. Furthermore, it seems that medieval women had a sense that their spiritual, emotional and personal needs were not being met by their society's misogynistically inclined literary offerings. *Revelations* and *The Mirror* is evidence that medieval women 'were writing the literature they knew was needed by them and by large numbers of the faithful'.[224]
Overcoming such obstacles as lack of materials, funding, availability and a place to write – all of which stood in the way of producing a medieval text – suggests that Julian and Marguerite knew that their voices were important and that they needed a platform. Still, the risk to well-being was high and so Julian and Marguerite had to be creative in their use of language. The fact that there is so much talking taking place in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* is not only evidence that the texts were composed at a point in history when 'oral composition' and transmission of information began to be replaced by 'written literature',[225] it is also evidence of an awareness that literary subterfuge was

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[220] Stephen Harper, 'So Euyl to Rewlyn: Madness and Authority in "The Book of Margery Kempe"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 98 (1997): 53–61 (p. 53).

[221] Patrick Wright, 'Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* and the subject of annihilation', *Mystics Quarterly* 35 (2009): 63–98 (p. 63).

[222] Sarah Law, 'In a Hazelnut: Julian of Norwich in Contemporary Women's Poetry', *Literature and Theology* 25.1 (March 2011): 92–108 (p. 94).

[223] Apophasis is clarified in and **Chapter Two**.

[224] E. A. Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 3.

[225] Ibid. p. 21.

necessary for communicating risky ideas. By cloaking their ideas with so many voices Julian and Marguerite could potentially hide behind the voices in the texts, away from interrogation, and hope to participate unobtrusively in socio-political and religious dialogues yet still be heard. The literary convention of dialogue enables the transposition of oral tradition into medieval women's literature. Furthermore, because Julian and Marguerite at various points in their texts speak ambiguously, they provide for a neither-here-nor-there perspective: liminality, in other words. Liminality further enabled an unobtrusive yet audible voice participating in socio-political and religious dialogue, but without the risk to personal well-being. At this point liminality becomes the medium of encoding rather than the matter of encoding. Like Margery Kempe's *sensus spiritualis* reading of the Biblical passages of Genesis 1:28 and Luke 11:27–28 functioned as, and was an attempt to, 'spiritualize her own complex situation as a wife with a divine mission, through the construction of allegories of female authority which [remained] well within the parameters of orthodoxy as defined in her day';[226] the ambiguous, hence, liminal tenets inherent in Julian's and Marguerite's texts work to guard against potential hostility and accusations of heresy. The question of whether or not Julian and Marguerite consciously encoded their texts can be answered as follows: the extant ambiguity in the texts is evidence that both women had an awareness of the risk to their person should their ideas be interrogated or worse; that they were actually wrong and deceived by the devil. It was thought that, 'The abandonment of reason [left] the aspiring mystic open to satanic suggestion'.[227] Hence such an anxiety was real and yet it was commonplace for reason to be put aside before contemplation could take place. Nonetheless, engaging in ambiguity would have made it possible to refute allegations of heresy, even though, alas, this tactic failed Marguerite. So it seems that at this level of understanding the encoding might have been conscious. However, the presence of ambiguity in the texts is also proof of Julian's and Marguerite's efforts at containing information which defies containment. That is, discussing God given that God is indescribable. So at this level of understanding the encoding is unconscious because the medium of communication, that is, language, specifically dialogue, seems to be an inadequate means to convey the amorphous quality of *unio mystica*. However, because language is the most accessible means to Julian and Marguerite, they had to adapt it in order to convey with as much accuracy as they could, that which is divine. In adaptation, the language became unconsciously encoded.

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[226]Alastair Minnis, Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009), p.112.

[227] Stephen Harper, 'Madness and Authority', p. 55.

The encoding occurs within the texts' enriched dialogues. The dialogues use figurative language in attempts to capture the amorphous quality of mystical union. Julian and Marguerite are not alone in using figurative language to capture the amorphous quality of *unio mystica*. The German-Swiss mystic Henry Suso (14th century) also seemed to feel compelled to contemplate mystical union via a concentration on 'verbal and artistic imagery',[228] and, 'images and text constantly [provided him] with an indispensable material pathway towards God'.[229] Thus, he absorbed the figurative modes of language into his writings, which aroused criticism, mainly due to his Eckhartian bent. So, like Suso, Julian and Marguerite also drew on the contemplation of contemporary imagery such as the Passion which simultaneously conformed to orthodoxy even though their adaptations of the Passion threatened to destabilise contemporary and mainstream interpretations and understanding. Verbal imagery and figurative modes of language via dialogue, it seems, became a means to communicate *mystica unio*. Ambiguity is embedded in the figurative mode and it is this quality that forces the consideration that the texts have a liminal quality. Examples that illustrate this exegesis on encoding in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* will follow after a brief discussion on visionary literature, because visionary literature also shaped the dialogues and therefore has a role to play in the encoding. Having said all of the above, it is to be understood that the content of the *unio mystica*, the experience of travelling spiritually towards mystical union, is tied up in and expressed in the liminal tenets of the texts and that deciphering the liminal tenets of the text, in essence deciphering the liminal features of the language and concepts in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, reveals some of the paticulars of *unio mystica*.

Visionary Literature

This study treats *Revelations* and *The Mirror* as belonging to the category of visionary literature. This seems at first a matter of convenience that lacks substance. However, I contend that Julian's and Marguerite's ideas regarding divinity are indeed penetrating insights, visions, as it were,

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[228] Jeffery, F. Hamburger, 'The use of Images in the Pastoral Care of Nuns: The Case of Henrich Suso and the Domincans', *The Art Bulletin* 71.1 (March 1989): 20–46.

[229] Steven Rozenski, Jr., **'**The Visual, the Textual, and the Auditory in Henry Suso's Vita or Life of the Servant', *Mystics Quarterly* 34 (2008): 1–34 (p. 36).

concerning divinity. There are many elements present in both texts that are typical of the criteria that classify visionary literature. These elements link *Revelations* and *The Mirror* as will be shown hereunder. More importantly, these elements not only link *Revelations* and *The* Mirror, but also link these two texts to other texts by medieval women across a cultural divide. We may take for example, the 13th century Flemish Cistercian nun Beatrijs of Nazareth's *Seven Manners of Loving* – interestingly Suso's Latin text was translated into Middle English as 'Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom' in analogy to the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit – which in title let alone content, calls to mind and seems to resonate with Marguerite's seven states of being (RG 316) and Julian's eschatological use of numbers, all of which illustrate progress towards divinity. There is also the German Benedictine, Saint Gertrude, whose description of union with divinity speaks of 'a ray of light like an arrow coming forth…and it continued to…advance and retire'.[230] This calls to mind Julian's view of divinity that happens in a point and Marguerite's view of divinity that occurs as an opening and closing lightning bolt, which is a highly sensuous verbal image used to talk about the ineffable. Only two examples are given here but there are many more. Collectively, these links, I contend, compound the idea that Julian's and Marguerite's discourses are indeed penetrating insights and views, hence, visions, regarding divinity. First I will look at the features of visionary literature and how *Revelations* and *The Mirror* both contain those features, then I will consider the significance of visionary literature as it pertains to encoding and liminality.

Revelations is a book about Julian's 'xvi sheweings' (BW 27) and there is general consensus that this text belongs in the category of visionary medieval literature given that Julian's text rests upon her claim of actually having had visions. It is thought that there are seven distinct stages to visionary literature, each of which is 'dominated by a specific content and attitude' that being 'purgative, psychic, doctrinal, devotional, participatory, unitive or erotic and cosmic ordering'.[231] *Revelations* exhibits all of these seven stages. This is reminiscent of Bonaveture's ascent to God in which he deems there are six steps towards reunification with the divine.[232] Stage one, the purgative stage, is seen in Julian's desire for contrition. That is, her request of 'iii gifts by the grace of God' (BW 29) in the first chapters of the short and long texts, which is followed by a 'bodily sekenesse' (BW 29)

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[230] St. Gertrude, *The Life and Revelations of Saint Gertrude*, trans. sisters of her monastery (Westminister, MD: The Newman Press, 1949), pp. 85–86.

[231] E. A. Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, pp. 6–19.

[232] Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *The Journey of the Mind into God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classic Ethreal Library, 2016), p.5, available at: http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Bonaventure%20Journey%20of%20the%20Mind%20Into%20God.pdf (accessed 10/08/2018).

which occurs in Chapter 3 of the long text and Chapter 2 of the short text. Stage two, the psychic activity, occurs in Chapter 3 of the long text when Julian, gazing upon the cross, is administered the last rites and then sees Christ's image. The third stage, the doctrinal stage, is Julian's many expositions on the Trinity throughout *Revelations*. The fourth stage, the devotional stage, arises out of meditations on the life of Christ and the Virgin. This stage reveals itself in Julian's 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th revelations in Chapters16, 22, 24, 25 and 26 of the long text but is also discussed intermittently throughout the text. The 5th stage, the participatory stage, is evident in Revelation 8 Chapter 20 and Revelation 9 Chapters 21, 22 and 23, in which Julian expounds on the intensity of Christ's 'peynys' (BW 21), and is explored through female grief by showing 'Lady Seynt Mary' (BW 69) at the foot of the cross. Stage six, the unitive/erotic stage occurs in Revelation14, Chapter 52 when Julian 'saw God in a poynte' (BW 112) and thereafter speaks of divinity in terms of being a 'trew spouse, and we his lovid wif and his fair maiden' (BW 123). The 7th and final stage is that of cosmic order and in *Revelations* occurs as early as Revelation 1 when Julian is shown 'a littil thing, the quantitye of a hesil nutt' (BW 35) which is a metaphor for all of creation and the place of all matters within creation.

The Mirror is less autobiographical than *Revelations*. It is therefore harder to plot the stages of visionary literature. However, *The Mirror* does seem to have a visionary literature pattern to it. Stage one, the purgative stage reveals itself in the verse explicit that opens the narrative and in which it is said, 'Always she must herself to them (that is, to Love and Faith) abase/So you too must abase your learning now' (CMG 9).[233] These two statements, like Julian's request for contrition in the opening passages of *Revelations,* call for humility. The verse explicit is itself a request for self-deprecation and humbleness so as to allow divinity to reveal its truths. Furthermore, the request for contrition and humility is clarified in Chapter 107 where it says,

Here begin the requests of the Soul

The First Request. The first thing she asks is that she may always see herself – if it is so that she sees anything – where she was when God made all things from nothing, and so be certain that she is nothing else than that, so far as concerns her, nor never will be for evermore, even if she had never acted against the divine goodness (CMG 130).[234]

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[233] In French, 'Par quoy il fault qu'elle similie/Humiliez dont voz sciences' (RG 8).

[234] In French, Icy comment les demandes de l'Ame

<La premiere demande.> - La premiere chose qu'elle demande, est que elle se voie tousjours (se ainsi est qu'elle voie nulle chose) ou elle estoit Dieu fist de nient tout, et si soit certaine que elle

Stage two, the psychic stage, occurs in the prologue where it states that 'The Soul, touched by God and stripped bare of sin, in the first state of grace has ascended through divine grace to the seventh state of grace in which state the Soul has the fullness of her perfection through her enjoyment of God in the land of life' (CMG 10).[235] This construction is the equivalent of Julian's first vision in that both women or rather, their perspectives, are at these points situated in what may be called a divine or ethereal domain and it is from there that their narratives, *Revelations* and *The Mirror* proceed. Stage three, the doctrinal stage, is presented to us in the discourse on the Trinity which occurs intermittently throughout the text, as is the case in Julian's *Revelations*. *The Mirror*'s Chapter 14 reveals its ecclesiastical bent in its consideration of the Trinity and Chapter 15, the title of which says, 'This speaks of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar' (CMG 32),[236] continues along this doctrinal vein. Stage four, the devotional stage in which there is contemplation of Jesus' humanity and crucifixion reveals itself in Chapters 34 and 39 where we read, 'by dying all naked on the cross for me' (CMG 54)[237] and, what the humanity of Jesus Christ suffered' (CMG 59),[238] and continues along a similar vein in Chapters 62, 63, 68 and 75, to mention just those. Stage five, the participatory stage, in which the visionary identifies with the pain and suffering of Christ[239] and realises this through the grief of the women who surrounded Christ, is portrayed in Chapter124's 'regart est de la Magdelen', in which there is discussion about an inconsolable Mary. Stage five, the participatory stage, is also realised in Chapter 126's discourse of the virgin's presence at the death of her child. Stage six, the unitive/erotic stage reveals itself in Chapter 74 where Marguerite talks about the bride who has Love's gift of union. It says there, 'espouse de paix'…le don divine amour d'unité' (RG 206). In addition there is discussion about The Soul's 'rapturous exaltation which overwhelms [her] and joins [her] to the heart's heart of Divine Love, into which [she] is melted' (CMG 104) and about how divinity reveals itself like a bolt of lightning, that is, a rapid opening and closing in Chapter 58, which calls to mind how Julian 'saw God in a poynte' (BW 112). Stage seven, the stage that details

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n'est aulttre chose que ce – quant est d'elle – ne ne sera sans fin, pouse qu'elle n'eust oncques meffait a la bonté divine (RG 290).

[235] In French, 'Ame de Dieu touchee, et denuee de peché ou premier estat de grace, est montee par divines graces ou septiesme estat de grace, ouquel estat l'Ame a le plain de sa perfection par divine fruiction ou païs de vie' (RG 10).

[236] In French, 'Icy parle du Saint Sacrement de l'Auitel' (RG 62).

[237] In French, 'en mourant tout nu en la croix por mois…souffert en vostre doulce humanité' (RG 112).

[238] In French, 'ce que l'umanité de Jhesucrist souffrit' (RG 124).

[239] The examples for this are given in Chapters 34 and 39 of *The Mirror*.

cosmic order, is expounded in Marguerite's consideration of the seven states of being and in her ordering of the angelic world.

It is noteworthy that the stages of visionary literature, as identified here, do not necessarily play out in chronological order in *Revelations* or *The Mirror* and do not necessarily do so in other mystical vernacular texts. The stages are only features, or rather criteria, that help to classify visionary literature. The fact that there is no chronological order to the stages as they unfold in the texts, speaks not only to the notion of liminality in which procession is not necessarily linear, but also to the subjectivity of the mystical experience which finds diverse expression yet seems to be a communication of homogeneity. So, why is it significant that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* be categorised and identified as visionary literature and what does this have to do with liminality and encoding?

It seems to me that liminality is already present by default, in the background and in the mind of the visionary, and as such informs the content and language of the literature. It works as follows: the visionary is herself traversing two worlds. First, there is her contemplative life and then there is her participation (albeit it in some cases marginal) in mainstream life. Second, the visionary's austere lifestyle and religious rituals transports her mindset from the ordinary (daily life) to the extraordinary (spiritual world). Third, in this state of mind, Julian as an anchoress and Marguerite as a beguine are both able to perceive the corporeal world but their solitariness and rituals catalyse a heightened perception of the non-corporeal world. Fourth, that the solitary is able to perceive the corporeal and the non-corporeal world, introduces the idea of duality, that is, the body and soul dynamic. The solitary is presented with pre-existing juxtapositions and in order to make sense of her world she must reconcile these structural and mental juxtapositions. The only means to reconcile the two worlds, it seems, is with divine help. This help comes in the form of dialogue between the visionary and the divine. The divine and the assistance it provides, that is, the information inherent in the communication between the visionary and the divine is itself indescribable and demands that the visionary invent new ways of using language. Thus the seemingly unconscious desire to reconcile the two worlds that the visionary traverses and the need to translate the obscure information coming from the divine into the secular and into a coherent language, conditions the narratives. Thus the narratives become necessarily dialectical.

The reconciliation of the juxtapositions becomes expressed in liminal terms. For example, Julian says about sin in Revelation 3 Chapter 11 of the long version, 'What is synne? ... and I was sekir that he doith no synne. And here I saw sothly that synne is no dede, for in al this was not synne shewid' (BW 47). Marguerite says, '*Et peché est nient*' (RG 38)/'And sin is nothing' (CMG 23). Despite these alarming statements both women go to great lengths in their texts to explain that sin

is actually the absence of good – an Augustinian bent – and not a moral misdeed. Thus, the women are speaking ambiguously. The dialectic narrative is characterised by ambiguity and it is in the ambiguity that the encoding happens, and in which the idea that liminality is a feature of the mystical approach to the divine. The ambiguity then is what must be investigated to see how liminality shrouds the mystical experience.

Ambiguity and Liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*

Chapter 94 of *The Mirror* is called '*Du langage de divine vie'* (RG 262)/'Of the language of the divine life' (CMG 118). First, I will start unravelling the language of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* by looking at this chapter from *The Mirror*, because this chapter is an exposition, not so much about the language, as it is about the detail that is communicated regarding *unio mystica*; all the while bearing in mind that it is the incommunicability of the detail that demands the creative use of language in order to transmit the divine messages.

The word 'language' works here beyond its dictionary meaning. Here it refers to the rhetoric of *The Mirror*; it is an indicator not only of the verbal texture of the discourse, but also of divine communication, and within the context of this passage and that of the book, is signalling, in my mind, ideas regarding bilingualism and multi-lingualism. Bilingualism here means: a marriage between the vernacular and Latin. For example, mystical texts have ideas that can be traced to Latin religious texts.[240] Furthermore, bilingualism, as used here, also refers to the oral and written transmission that both the texts seem to have enjoyed. In addition, bilingualism, as used here, means a marriage between Catholic doctrine and unorthodox mystical discourse. For example, the adaptations in the texts of old and familiar knowns. There is the adaptation of Catholicism's doctrine of the Trinity into *Revelations*' 'mothergod' and into *The Mirror*'s 'Farnear' construction to illustrate *consubstantialis* in the Trinity.

Multi-lingualism, as used here, refers to *Revelations*' and *The Mirror's* participation in the network of unrealised dialogues, their similarities in notions with other mystical texts; in short, *Revelations*'

[240] The former (tongue), has already been discussed in the **PREFACE** and the latter (theory) in the introductory chapter before **The Texts in Context**.

and *The Mirror*'s inter-textuality.[241] The observation of the texts' bilingualism and multi-lingualism is important because both enhance the texts' encoding.[242]

Another reason why it is necessary to unravel the language of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, by first looking at *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94 exposition, is that Chapter 94's verbal texture and rhetoric ('language') and its detail ('of the divine life') is just as applicable to that of *Revelations*. Whilst *The Mirror* has this chapter that can stand as an exposition, a similar chapter-construction exposition regarding 'the language of the life of the divine', as Marguerite puts it, is absent from *Revelations*. However, Julian arrives at similar notions as the ones held in Marguerite's Chapter 94, throughout *Revelations*, as will be shown. Marguerite says in *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94,

The language of such a life of the divine life is the sealed silence of divine love…There is no further life, except to always will the divine will…You should not delay in abandoning yourselves, for no-one can find rest there where rest is to be had, in the highest resting place, until first he is exhausted…Let the Virtues have what is theirs in you of your overweening will…May God grant you swiftly to achieve your natural perfection…It is right that you should have this, for it is the path to that divine life...And this state of being of which we speak, whose form Love in its goodness gives to us, restores the soul to its primal state (CMG 118–119).

First, the phrase, 'love in its goodness gives to us', when read within the context of the chapter and the text, could mean that love, treated as synonymous with divinity, 'births' the human soul. The human soul is a creation by and of divinity, in other words. Being a creation of and by divinity, the soul is therefore an extension of divinity. As such, the human soul is in extant harmony with divinity.[243] Second, because the soul is an extension of divinity, there is pre-existing harmony between divinity and the soul. This means that the soul's natural state, its primal state, as Marguerite says above, is divinity itself. Third, because divinity is thought of as autonomous, the soul, by extension, is autonomous, and can therefore be considered as uncorrupted. Julian illustrates this notion in her contemplation on sin. She says in the short version, 'Iff alle oure Lorde schewyde me that I schulde synne', which reads in the long version, 'God browte to my mind that I shuld synne' (BW 86). In the twenty-year contemplation and revision of Revelation 13, Julian's consideration of sin moves the concept of sin from potentiality to necessity. The short version implies that God might allow Julian to sin and the long version states that God demands that Julian sin. The latter half of

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[241] Metatextuality in realtion to *Revelations* and *The Mirror* is discussed in this chapter under **Encoding**.

[242] Examples for this can be found in the sections referenced in the clarifications of the terms for bilingualism and multilingualism.

[243] This in-dwelling nature of divinity is illustrated in **Figure 4**.

the phrase remains the same in both versions, that is, 'that I schulde synne'. Together, to my mind, these phrases compound the idea that the human soul, due to its being in harmony with the divine soul, is actually uncorrupted and is behaving in accordance with divinity. There is the sense that 'the human self is less real than the divine self'.[244] As such, whatever the soul wills is actually that which the divine wills. Marguerite's seemingly resigned statement, 'Let the Virtues have what is theirs in you of your overweening will', suggests, especially in the phrase 'overweening will', that the soul is presumptuous in thinking that only virtuous behaviour is divine conduct. In the extract Marguerite urges abandoning this perspective because it is a perspective of duality. That is, this perspective sees humanity as separate from divinity and because it does so, conceives polarity instead of mediality. Mediality refers to the relationship between two apparently irreconcilable forces/constructs, inter-dependent, held in balance, but ineffable. This mediality, a middle way, mediation, as it were, is conceived of in interstructural terms. Julian articulates this state of being as 'I it am…, I it am…' (BW 71) in Revelation 12 Chapter 26, a phrase Julian repeats eight more times, followed by varying qualifiers. This seemingly divine state of being recognises flux and variation and subsumes both. The 'it' followed by the various qualifiers, it could be said, is divine will acting out and through the soul. Julian says, 'God shewid in al the revelations oftentymes that man werkyth evermore his will' (BW 98). This divine perspective does not recognise opposition. It only recognises reconciliatory possibilities, which in itself makes a case for a liminal perspective. But what further proof is there that divinity holds, or rather, the divine experience seems to embody the idea of liminality?

Marguerite says in the first line of the extract that 'The language of such a life of the divine life is the sealed silence of divine love'. 'Sealed silence of divine life' implies that divinity is neither remonstrative nor praising. Hence, it is accommodating and this, we can assume, makes a case for liminality. Julian encapsulates this notion in Revelation 13 Chapter 39 when she says about sinners, 'in whome [God] assigneth no blame' (BW 90) and in Revelation 14 Chapter 44, 'And evermore [the soul] doith that it was made for…wherof God enjoyith in the creature' (BW 44). Julian's and Marguerite's consideration of sin is probably the best of all of the available examples from both texts that illustrate exactly how the women speak ambiguously: like Julian, Marguerite also arrives at the conclusion that sin is absence. Marguerite says in Chapter 11 of *The Mirror*'s dialogue 'Et peché est nient' (RG 38)/'And sin is nothing' (CMG 23). In the short and long versions of *Revelations* Julian says, 'Botte I sawe noght synne, fore I lefe it has na manere of substaunce, na partye of beynge' (BW 73). This statement holds, verbatim, in the short and long versions of

[244] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Clay and Company, 1901), p. 68.

Revelations despite the twenty-year contemplation and review of sin in Revelation 13. Yet, despite theorising that sin has no substance or, 'is a nothingness' both Julian and Marguerite dwell on the concept. Julian's review of Revelation 13 regarding the concept of sin results in thirteen subsequent contemplative chapters on the concept before she moves on to her review of Revelation 14. In these thirteen chapters, Julian reconciles the idea that sin is an evil with the idea that sin is divinely ordained, which is at once ambiguous and is therefore a liminal feature of the text's language, its rhetoric; because the opposing definitions cancel each other and what remains is the reconciling notion of a middle way; liminality, in other words.

The review of Revelation 13 starts out in Chapter 27 by claiming that, 'synn was not lettid'; that is, 'the beginning of sin was not prevented' (CW 224), then moves on to the claim that sin lacks substance and closes with thoughts that, 'These words were seyd full tenderly, shewyng no manner of blame to me to non that shall be safe' (BW 73). The next chapter reveals that Christ's passion has forgiven humanity its sin despite 'Adams synne [being] the most harme that ever was don' (BW 75). Still contemplating Revelation 13 and the issue of sin, Julian says in Chapter 34 'I saw no synne' (BW 82) and in Chapter 35, 'I sey not that ony evil is worshipful, but I sey the sufferance of our Lod God is worshipfull' (BW 83) and lastly in Chapter 36 that, 'Our Lord God shewid that a dede shall be done and himself shal don it…And I shal do nothing but synne, and my synne shal not lettyn his goodness werkyng' (BW 85), and that whilst every sin holds a 'corresponding pain' (CW,242)/'as to every synne is answeryng a peyne' (BW 88), 'God shewid that synne shal be no shame' (BW 88). These thirteen chapters regarding Revelation 13 seem to me to be a communication of the undesirability of unethical conduct, but at the same time Julian condones that which seems unethical. Whilst Julian may not have a single-chapter construction about 'the language of the divine life' as Marguerite does, the thirteen chapters that expound Revelation 13 constitute the gist of the *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94 in that the thirteen chapters are communicating, via language, indeed rhetoric, the idea of liminality as a means towards comprehending divinity. Marguerite also dwells on sin and arrives at the same conclusion as Julian.

Chapter 11 of *The Mirror* first introduces the idea that sin lacks substance. The statement that sin is nothing, 'Et peché est nient' (RG 36) is immediately followed by, 'and this soul is completely overwhelmed and terrified by her horrible faults' (CMG 23),[245] which is a sentiment that reveals a repulsed awareness by the soul of the soul's sinful human nature. The dialectical expression holds the idea of sin in balance and as such invokes the idea of liminality. Like Julian, Marguerite also theorises that divine will is disguised as human will and as such, that which humanity does, be it

[245] In French, 'et ceste Ame est toute affouldree et espoventee des horribles deffaultes d'elle' (RG 38).

ethical or not, is actually in accordance with divinity. Love says in Chapter 11, 'she can do nothing but the will of God, nor can she will anything else' (CMG 24).[246] Love says of the soul in that same chapter that, 'this Soul has no will at all' (CMG 27) and in Chapter 16, 'this Soul is not her own' (CMG 35),[247] meaning that the soul's will is actually divine will. However, Love also says, in Chapter 16, that where sin occurs it is as displeasing to the soul as it is to God, 'Mais de ce que nul chet en peché, ne que peché fut oncques fait…que ce deplaist a sa voulenté aussi fait il a Dieu' (RG 68). Yet, even in an unethical occurrence it is still the divine will that is the enabler of the occurrence. Reason says in Chapter 35, 'Love guides you and you do not guide Love…since Love dwells in you, performing her will in you without you' (CMG 55).[248] Interestingly Marguerite voices this sentiment through the character Reason, which implies that the sentiment makes logical sense and is plausible. In Chapter 45, Marguerite expresses the same sentiment through the voice of divinity itself, thus certifying the sentiment as authentic and legitimate. It is written there, 'God: She shall do nothing say God; but I shall do my work in her without her' (CMG 66).[249] Lastly, in Chapter 89 the Soul says, 'She has no means of sinning, for without will no-one can sin. So she has no concern about sinning' (CMG 114). This statement implies that the soul's will is in fact the will of the divine and that sin is divinely condoned. Thus, Marguerite also portrays divinity in interstructural terms as does Julian.

In Chapter 21 of *The Mirror* Love says, 'I am God…for Love is God, and God is Love, and this Soul is God through its condition of Love, and I am God through my divine nature, and this Soul is God by Love's just law' (CMG 41). In other words, divinity is described in terms of a number of qualifiers as is the case in *Revelations*. And, as is the case in *Revelations*, it is the variance in qualifiers that communicates the recognition of flux and variance as well as the subsumation of both. So like Julian, Marguerite also focuses on the issue of sin and seems to reconcile that which is unethical with being in accordance with divine will and thus, like Julian, communicates the undesirability of unethical conduct but at the same time condoning that which seems unethical, which is a communication of ambiguity. So it seems that Julian and Marguerite both use ambiguity as a literary device. That is, they state what they believe to be their truths which at times runs

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[246] In French, 'que ceste ne peut rien faire si non le vouloir de Dieu, et aissi ne peu ele aultre chose vouloir' (RG 40).

[247] In French, 'que ceste Ame n'est pas a elle' (RG 68).

[248] In French, 'Amour vous mene et que vous ne menez pas Amour… piusque Amour demoure en vous, qui fait sa voulenté de vous sans vous' (RG 116).

[249] In French, 'Dieu: Elle ne fera nient, dit Dieu; mai je feray mon ouuvre en elle sans elle' (RG 140).

contrary to convention, yet still manage to 'square' their notions with convention. This strategy occurs elsewhere in both texts and does not only occur in the texts' consideration of sin.

As a literary device ambiguity occurs intermittently throughout both texts in the form of paradoxical statements. That is, Julian and Marguerite present ideas that at first seem incongruous but closer inspection reveals that the notions might be harmonious. What is significant in the use of this literary technique is that the words/ideas/concepts that are juxtaposed cancel each other by virtue of being non-reconciliatory and what is left is an emptiness into which reconciliation is forced. This forced reconciliatory space becomes the liminal space, in that it resolves the opposing forces (like the mathematical space in topology which remains unchanged despite changes in the geometric shapes) For example, in Revelation 3 Julian says that 'For a man beholdith some dedes wele done and some dedes evil, but our Lord beholdeth hem not so' (BW 47). The antonyms bad and good cancel each other by the very nature of their meaning, but Julian's statement implies that bad can be good and good can be bad, according to divinity. In other words, the void that is left due to the cancelation of the antonyms is filled by the arbitrator that is divinity in that divinity is ever present in all things. This divine ubiquity forces reconciliation between the concepts. This forced reconciliation of opposites is what makes the case for liminality. This strategy of ambiguity that invokes liminality can be found elsewhere in *Revelations*.

In Revelation 7 Julian discusses the benefits of 'wele and wo' (BW 28). We read that 'it es nedefulle to ylke man…sumtyme to be in comforthe, and sumtyme to fayle' (BW 54). In other words, souls benefit from suffering and failure. Here, profit and loss are held in tension and it is suggested that good can be found in both. Revelation 10 speaks about Christ's heart being split in two for the sake of love. The image at work in this Revelation is the pierced and bleeding wound in Christ's side, which instantly evokes the idea of physical pain and torture, the sense of which is overturned into joy when the gaping wound is shown to have the ability to encompass all of mankind. Here death and birth are reconciled. The suggestion is that death is good because it calls birth into being and vice versa. Revelation 10 (birth and death), it seems, reinforces Revelation 7 (well and woe). Revelation 13 dicusses the constitution of mankind and according to Julian there are, 'twa partyes' (BW 30) an overt one, which is mankind's salvation, and a covert one, which also redeems mankind. In the same Revelation it is written that there are 'two manner of privityes' (BW 82), that is two mysteries, of which one, according to Revelation 13, is that sin is absence, and the other mystery is an unrecognisable one, mostly due to mankind's ignorance and because the Lord wishes it to remain a mystery.

In these examples from Revelation 13 Julian seems to be suggesting what appears to be a harmonious co-existence between transparency and concealment. She does so again in Chapter 36

when she speaks of 'this dede and the tother aforseid': that is, there are two deeds, one in Chapter 32 and another in Chapter 35, both of which are referred to in vague terms, and both of which are hidden from humanity yet are seemingly available to humanity as well. In Chapter 35 of the same Revelation Julian reconciles bad with good as she does in Revelation 3 when she says, 'Al that our Lord doeth is rythful, and alle that he suffrith is worshipful; and in these ii is comprehended good and ille' (BW 83). Revelation 14 discusses two seemingly contradictory aspects regarding prayer. Julian says there that prayer is built on request and trust, yet it is impossible to grasp that that which has been requested has been granted. Here Julian is saying that everything humankind requests via prayer has already been granted, but humankind is incapable of grasping that which has already been granted due to ignorance. Here Julian reconciles availability and inaccessibility. Still in Revelation 14, Julian writes about humanity's tribulations as a 'contrariouste which is now in us' (BW 49), which would dissolve upon humanity's recognition of its inner divinity. Furthermore, the 'ii contraries' (BW 50) that Julian recognises between herself and the angels dissolves when she realises that divinity does not distinguish between human and divine beings. The ambiguity here is that whilst there are differences between divine beings and humans they are also of the same kind, alike, indeed, homogeneous. Thus Julian reconciles morality (divinity) and corruption (humanity) due to their seeming interconnectedness.

This interconnectedness is compounded in the parable of the servant and the master. Julian spells out that – she actually writes, 'I have techyng with me, as it were the begynnyng of an ABC' (BW 110), from which we can deduce that she is attempting to imprint on the audience, the interconnectedness between divinity and humanity through the parable of the servant and master – 'His [the servant's] stertyng was the Godhede, and the rennyg was the manhede' (BW 110). That is, Julian reconciles divinity and humanity by embodying both in the servant. The servant's actions distinguish master from servant but it is more that both master and servant are embodied in the servant; in which the case for interrelatedness lies. There are more examples that could be cited but in the interest of space it would be best to move on to see if examples of ambiguity, and ambiguity evoking liminality, can be found in Marguerite's *Mirror* before deciding what the implications of the juxtapositions are.

Early on in *The Mirror* it becomes obvious that there is ambiguity at work. Reason says in Chapter 13 that, 'there are several words … of two meanings' (CMG 29).[250] Furthermore, Love says in Chapter 20 that, 'one and the same word has two meanings' (CMG 40).[251] Reason, symbol of

[250] In French, 'car plusieurs doubles mots y a' (RG 54).

[251] In French, 'une mesmes parole a deux entendemens' (RG 78).

humanity and logic, bemoans the 'contradictory statements' (CMG 40)[252] as does Reason's Understanding when she says in Chapter 12 that *The Mirror* is a 'contradictory book' (CMG 28).[253] If the itinerants in *The Mirror* themselves recognise ambiguity in the dialogue, it would be safe to assume that Marguerite also uses it as a literary technique. The question is where exactly and how? I will use an example that, to my mind, corresponds with one given in the above discussion regarding Julian's ambiguity and which concerns the reconciliation of birth and death.

In Chapter 69 Marguerite writes, 'Rachel must die at Benjamin's birth, and till Rachel is dead Benjamin cannot be born' (CMG 90–91).[254] Similarly to the way that Julian uses the Passion to illustrate how Jesus' death gives birth to humanity, Marguerite uses the story about Rachel and Benjamin, from Genesis 35:116–18, to reconcile life and death. This construction seems to be commonplace. Nonetheless, for Richard of St Victor the contradiction lies not so much in birth and death since this is an allegory, but between reason and contemplation. 'The birth of Benjamin, represents the birth of contemplation and the inception of the consciousness of divine presence. But the birth comes at a price: the death of Rachel who represents 'reason'… Benjamin represents two kinds of contemplation, both of which are defined in the context of the death of Rachel, the death of reason'.[255] Reason must die yet the whole discourse is still subject to reason as long as it is in words. Furthermore, the parable of the servant and master in *Revelations* corresponds with the narrative in *The Mirror* when Marguerite refers to Mary and Martha. The two sisters, like the servant and the master, embody different qualities. Martha, like the servant, rushes off busying herself with preparations for the Lord's visit. Mary, like the master, sits quietly. What is significant here is that Marguerite reveals the interrelatedness between divinity and humanity in that the two women are sisters. They are different people but they are related to each other by blood. Thus, Marguerite uses the same technique Julian does to reconcile divine being (morality) with humanity (corruption). Interestingly, it should be noted that both stories also work to communicate the idea that truth is not always revealed in moments of calm reflection, which compounds the idea of ambiguity. Instead, 'the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* mutually nourish one another.'[256] The two are

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[252] In French, 'deux paroles contraires' (RG 78).

[253] In French, 'en desdisant ce livre' (RG 50).

[254] In French, 'et il convient mourir Rachel en la naissance Benjamin, ne jusques ad ce que, Rachel soit morte ne peut Benjamin naister' (RG 1296).

[255] Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), p. 90.

[256] Christopher Malcolm Knauf, 'Being at Home in Two Worlds: Meister Eckhart on Mary and Martha and the Integration of the Active and Contemplative Life', available at: https://lifeisthismoment.com/2016/05/21/being-at-

complementary and work to consolidate the text's liminal tenets. A last example of ambiguity from *The Mirror* reads in Chapter 130 as, 'and if I could comprehend my wickedness, I should comprehend your goodness; one is the measure of the other' (CMG 165).[257] Thus, as is the case with Julian in Chapter 35 of Revelation 13 and in Revelation 3, Marguerite maintains the tension between bad and good. But what is the significance of the ambiguity and what does it have to do with liminality?

The ambiguity at once dissolves contradictions and invokes equilibrium. This space in which opposing forces seem to exist in harmony makes for an inter-structural place. This liminal space in which polarities occur without disrupting each other, seems then to be a particular aspect of the progress towards divinity. Additionally, this aspect of the progress towards divinity, liminality, has a binary character and can therefore be described as a domain of 'divine dichotomy'.[258] In other words, in a liminal space all determination dissolves and what remains is a seemingly pregnant yet empty space that, having swallowed distinctions, is characterised by the possibility of all that could exist, a pre-birth state, the *khora*. In order to communicate this idea it becomes necessary for Julian and Marguerite to rely on juxtaposing terms and ideas because in doing so the juxtaposing terms cancel each other, and thus what Julian and Marguerite arrive at in their descriptions of the divine experience is the pregnant yet empty *khoral* space, which seems to have affinities with divinity. By Julian's and Marguerite's reasoning, if we are to rely on the given examples, this liminal domain is a strategic place because it is where good and evil consummate, and exposure to knowledge of this consummation triggers neuro-psychological activity[259] which forces enlightenment. The enlightenment, which is actually computational – calculating the transition from known information to new information – is transformative because in the liminal space one sees oneself in relation to everything else. This is succinctly captured in Julian's hazelnut contemplation and Marguerite's use of the triple imagery of mirror, book and painting to show self-reflecting images. This liminal space is a value-neutral space. That is, it is a place of dispassionate laws where all former knowns become decoded; that is, knowns become deciphered. For those like Julian and Marguerite who seem to have accessed this spiritual space, the experience, or knowledge of the space and its functions and

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home-in-two-worlds-meister-eckhart-on-mary-and-martha-and-the-integration-of-the-active-and-contemplative- (accessed 19/08/2018).

[257] In French, 'et se je povoie comprendre ma mauvaistié, je comprendroie vostre bonté: ce en est la mesure' (RG 376).

[258] N. D. Walsch, *Conversations With God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), pp. 89–91.

[259] Neuro-psychological activity here specifically means revisions of mindsets and not the medical and scientific meaning it carries.

qualities, seems to be apocalyptic: *apocalypse* derives from Greek and means to lift a veil or to uncover. Judging from statements in *Revelations* Chapters 48 and 56 such as 'wrath…comes from a lack of wisdom' (CW 262) and 'we cannot profit by our reason alone' (CW 291) and in *The Mirror* statements such as, 'Men of theology and scholars such as they/Will never understand this writing properly' (CGM 9) and 'Nor can man's intelligence comprehend it' (CGM 17), Julian's and Marguerite's theories force a consideration that a veil has been lifted from their eyes revealing a reality, one which is alternative to what is conventionally deemed reality.

It seems as if the conventional meaning of reality is overturned and is, by *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s theories, actually a virtual one – meaning that [what is deemed reality] is such in … potentiality, or effect, but is not so in form or actuality rather it is supposed and/or imagined (*OED*) – not the real one. To re-iterate William James's observation, there is the sense that 'the human self is less real than the divine self'.[260] Once having traversed the liminal space where *unio mystico* is decoded via the deliberate juxtapositions of words/ideas/concepts that are forced into reconciliation via ubiquitous divine arbitration, one reunites with the divine self that, it seems, has affinities with the *khoral* space. That is, the space that follows on from the liminal space. When tensions are balanced between juxtaposing forces in the liminal space the concepts collapse and what is left is a void pregnant with potentiality, the *khoral* space which seems to have affinities with divinity.

Summary

This chapter attempted to show that the spiritual precepts of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are encoded via ambiguity. It is in deciphering the ambiguity that the liminal aspects of the journey towards *unio mystica* mystical are revealed. It was explained that the encoding is embedded in the language of the texts. This language attempts to accomplish at least two things. First, it aims to provide some form of cover for the person (Julian and Marguerite) against the strict rules regarding the laity's and especially women's authority regarding religious discourse. This, in itself, necessitates encoding and so the women's voices are hidden in the texts' dialogues. Second, the language attempts to communicate ineffable mystical union and so it is forced into adaptation in order to accomplish this and so encoding occurrs spontaneously: the attempts to reconcile the two worlds that the anchoress and the beguine traverse, that is the contemplative life of an anchoress and that of a beguine, and the details inherent in the world of mystical union, condition the narratives which become at once dialectical. The dialectical narrative relies on ambiguity, paradoxical statements and juxtapositioning in order to transmit its potentially heterodox ideas, and encoding occurs in the

[260] W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 68.

ambiguity, paradoxical statements and juxtapositioning. To illustrate the idea of encoding, this chapter of the study used (amongst others) an extract from *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94 to show that, indirectly, Marguerite posits that God and man are one and as such God is autonomous and therefore man is autonomous and incorrupt. Julian's implied incorruptibility of man was shown to be encoded in her discourse on sin. Various examples from both texts were used to illustrate that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* use symbols and images from religious literature and convert them into a specialised format (the text's dialectic style) so as to efficiently communicate *unio mystica*. Finally, in that both texts create a value neutral space (liminal space) in their use of juxtapositions, paradoxical statements and ambiguity, because the contradictions automatically cancel each other, it was shown via a number of examples that the language of the texts exhibits features of liminality that make a case for liminality as a precondition of apprehending divinity.

Chapter Five

The Human Condition and the Divine Spirit

Preamble

This chapter attempts to establish a working framework for understanding the articulation of liminality as it appears in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, by exploring representations of the dynamics between divinity and humanity. Regarding the relationship between divinity and humanity there seems to be a cycle: divinity, it is suggested, has affinities with the primordial *khora*.[261] This is also noted by John Manoussakis that post-modern thinkers 'reveal to us another another *image* of God… or of his *sites*' and that 'in the far extremities of *via negativa* there lies [this] monstrous 'thing' that yields to God nothing.[262] My consideration of the *khora* is that it may be possible that divinity creates into the *khora* (releases love into the khora) and from which emanates the human soul. This is the soul's *exitus*. As the mystic (soul) approaches God she enters the liminal space where many categories begin to break down, and she is attracted to the *khora*. This is the *reditus*, the soul's return to its primordial organic (*khora*) state and its potential, then eventual and consequent, divine state. The mystic's articulation of the experience becomes a hybrid tongue: a blend of the simply human language, the liminal dialectic and the pre-verbal *khoral*. In order to understand the *exitus/reditus*[263] process, its articulation in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and the role that liminality plays in the process, ideas based in Plotinus (3rd century), Pseudo-Dionysius (6th century) and the concept of the *khora* as explained in **Chapter Two** by Kristeva (20th century) and Derrida (21st century)[264] and John Manoussakis are useful, and so will be used retrospectively as a means to illustrate the *exitus*/*reditus* process, or what has been described as, 'the itinerary to union with God'.[265] The departure point that is the leaning on the aforementioned theories is to be understood as the working framework for this chapter's argument.

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[261] This is discussed in this chapter under Divinity and the *Khora*; Derrida, Plato, and Kristeva.

[262] John Manoussakis, 'Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 58.1 (January–March, 2002): 93-100 (p. 94).

[263] Plotinus, *The Enneads,* trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969), V.4.1, 400–401; VI.9.6–7, 619–621.

[264] The particular aspect of each philosophical theory named here has been discussed in **Chapter Two** as was the reasons for the given choices.

[265] Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism* (New York: Herder and Herder: 2012), p. 34.

It is to be noted that the choice of the various traditions is not arbitrary. The reasons are four-fold. First, because Julian and Marguerite speak paradoxically, gnomically and ambiguously, the two women bring many philosophical, scholastic and religious discourses into conversation. Hence this chapter will follow the lead of the subject matter, that is, *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, and bring into dialogue thoughts that are separated by time and geography but which simultaneously, it is noted, seem to cross-ventilate[266] the common core theory of mysticism mentioned in **Chapter Two**.

Second, Julian herself makes period leaps in her discourse: as was mentioned in **ChapterTwo**, there appear to be external theological influences such as Augustine (4th–5th century), Pseudo-Dionysius (6th century), Gregory the Great (6th century), Anselm (11th–12th century), Eckhart (13th century) and Hilton (14th century) in Julian's work. With the exception of ideas that appeared after Marguerite's death, a similar argument could be put forth for *The Mirror* as,

[Marguerite's] work indicates the existence of a discourse that was neither reliant on somatic themes nor alarmed by notions that gave the soul pre-eminence in the human/divine relationship. [Furthermore], it seems unlikely that [Marguerite's] discourse could have emerged without a community that was happy to receive such notions and was conversant, at least to some degree, with the interior themes she expressed.[267]

Hence it could be argued that *The Mirror* has echoes of the same influences as *Revelations*. As regards the theological thoughts that came after Marguerite, it could be argued that *The Mirror* anticipates the theories of the later philosophers in *The Mirror's* discourse on annihilation and the indwelling God. So whilst it seems that this chapter runs the risk of conflating different philosophies – bearing in mind that the considerations that will be relied upon here predate and anticipate each other, that is, 3rd century Plotinus predates 6th century Pseudo-Dionysian thought which anticipates Heidegger and Kristeva in the 20th century and which in turn anticipates Derrida in the early 21st century[268] – the argument in this chapter not only follows the lead of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* regarding the leaps in time frame, but also follows the texts' fusion of early thought and anticipation

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[266] Cross ventilate here means the idea that notions/theories regarding mystical union and/or the relationship between divinity and humanity seem to inform/re-inform and thus rewrite/update/upgrade each other in what seems to be a constantly forward moving process all the while seemingly refining original notions/ideas/concepts. This chapter itself hopes to illustrate this via its working framework that is the departure point that leans on the given philosophies.

[267] Francesca Caroline Bussey, 'The World at the End of a Reed: Marguerite Porete and the annihilation of an identity in medieval and modern representations – a reassessment', available at: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/41232208.pdf (accessed 10/11/2018).

[268] It is hoped that in using the given theories to illustrate the *exitus*/*reditus* process it will simultaneously be shown how the philosophies anticipate each other.

of current thought. Hence this chapter further follows the texts' lead by bringing into conversation some of the unrealised dialogues, that McGinn speaks of – the 'networking texts' that the transposed topological viewpoint reveals.

Third, the philosophies pertinent to this chapter's argument provide convincing explanations of the notion of inner-being and spiritual inner-depth which lies at the heart of Julian's and Marguerite's discourse on self-improvement and (re)unification with divinity. The impetus of the philosophies regarding the aforementioned, relating to Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius follow shortly hereafter, but for want of examples; Heidegger, for instance – his Nazi party involvement aside – was especially criticized for 'his mysticism and quietism'.[269] This observation resonates with Julian's and Marguerite's mysticism and both women's 'silence' in terms of being medieval women not afforded a platform for their voices, and it hints at the idea of inner-being and spiritual inner-depth. It is also a further example of how texts and ideas are in conversation with each other in the topological 'unchanging space' (which I consider to be a liminal space) in which the texts 'network'. Kristeva's thought regarding how the 'preverbal experience enters into language and activates creative transformative and revolutionary modes of cultural production'[270] and her thinking on the *khora* is significant for its potential to assist in understanding the e*xitus*/*reditus* process and how that inner being/spiritual inner-depth informs humanity. Derrida, for his notions regarding deconstruction in which everything reverts and comes undone in a seemingly unending cycle is helpful in understanding the *exitus*/*reditus* process in so far as the birth of humanity, its reversion to divinity and then its rebirth is concerned; and thus speaks to the interpersonal relationship between divinity and humanity. Together, Kristeva and Derrida, briefly and retrospectively, come into the conversation in this chapter because their ideas regarding the *khora* offer valuable insight into the nature of the relationship between divinity and humanity and therefore insight into the articulation of liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*.

Consequently, this chapter's argument is framed first within Plotinus' definitions of divinity and humanity, and definitions of the *khora* by Julia Kristeva and Derrida in order to arrive at a syncretic understanding of divinity and humanity and their relationship with each other, and what is to made of the articulation of liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*.

In order to accomplish the above, this chapter will rely on portrayals of divinity and humanity as given in *Revelations* and in *The Mirror*. Furthermore, it is hoped that the working framework for

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[269] Vincent B. Leitch, George Lynn Cross, Paul and Carol Daube (eds), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Literary Criticism* (New York: Norton and Company, 2010), pp. 983–984.

[270] Ibid. p. 2067.

understanding the articulation of liminality in the texts will simultaneously show how divinity and humanity are distinctly different yet seemingly intertwined, and where each is positioned with regards to liminality.

Plotinus' Conception of the Divine Reflected in *The Mirror*

Plotinus, himself a Neoplatonist, comes into discussion for a number of reasons. First, like Julian and Marguerite, Plotinus is also thought of as a mystic.[271] Second, his idea of God as the One and the One that is ineffable resonates in *Revelation's* and *The Mirror*'s treatment of God. Third, his influential impact on the later three Abrahamic religions places his work in the common core mysticism field and in this study's common referential field. Fourth, Plotinus' understanding of the world as fundamentally unitive can also be traced in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. Fifth, Plotinus' treatment of language and how that language fails to communicate divinity is traceable in Julian's and Margurite's texts. Sixth, Plotinus' treatment of language and how negative language (apophasis) holds possibilities in order to comprehend the One can also be traced in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. However, it is Plotinus' idea of the causality of the first priniciple – which is a fundamental aspect of Julian's and Marguerite's notions of the divine – that forces a consideration of Plotinus' thoughts in this chapter's argument regarding divinity and humanity.

A synopsis of Plotinus' idea of God is that the One (God) is absolutely simple and is the ultimate explainer.[272] Plotinus concludes that where positive properties are concerned the One is ineffable. It cannot even be said that the One is a being.[273] Moreover, knowledge implies a distinction between cognitive subject and cognitive object. But, the One is not a knower and hence not a willer,[274] rather, the One necessarily emanates the next hypostasis, Intelligence, which is a composite of receiver and what is received, and the One through Intelligence necessarily emanates Soul.[275] Furthermore, the One through Intelligence and Soul necessarily emanates – in the transitive sense – the material world. Matter at the bottom is non-being, where the Great Chain of Being runs out.[276] Plotinus maintains that the ultimate explainer stands in no need of explanation, but explains the existence of

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[271] John, M. Rist, 'On Plotinus Psychology', *Revista di Storia* 61 (2006): 721–727 (p. 721).

[272] M. Adams, 'What's Wrong with the Ontotheological Error?', *Journal of Analytical Theology* (2014), available at: http://journalofanalytictheology.com/jat/index.php/jat/article/view/jat.2014-1.120013000318a/222 (accessed 10/11/2018).

[273] *The Enneads,* trans. MacKenna, V.4.1, 400–401; VI.9.6–7, 619–621.

[274] Ibid.V.3.15, 396-398; V.4.1–2, 400–402.

[275] Ibid. II.9.1–3, 13 –135; III.2.2, 161–162; III.6.7, 208–209; V.1.6, 373–375; V.2.1, 380–381.

[276] Ibid.

anything and everything else as productive cause. The One also explains the existence of everything else in its role as Final Cause: everything other than the One has a built-in tendency to return to the One, so that the whole cosmos executes a kind of *exitus/redditus* dynamic.[277]

Bearing in mind the networking texts (the unrealised conversations between texts) that the transposed topological vantage point reveals, it becomes possible to trace Plotinus' ideas in *The Mirror*. Plotinus' notion of divinity is echoed in the Prologue. Too lengthy to iterate here and for want of flow of argument the Prologue can be paraphrased as follows: first, the opening line starts with what could be described as a 'disclaimer'. To see how the disclaimer works we have to look at the Prologue. It says there,

The Soul [who is] touched by God and [who is] stripped bare of sin, [and who is] in the first state of grace [and who] has ascended though divine grace to the seventh state of grace, in which state the Soul has the fullness of her perfection through her enjoyment of God in the land of life (CMG 10).[278]

From this it can be inferred that the soul is in (re)union with God since the soul is; touched by God, stripped bare of sin, has ascended into heaven and is in the first state of grace. This implies that the soul under discussion is one that has reached a stage of perfection (first state) and is so closely united with God that she speaks with divine authority. As such it is not really the soul who is speaking in the third person omniscient voice, but God. Hence, the first line functions as a disclaimer in the sense that no matter what claims are made during the course of the narrative that is *The Mirror*, potential counter-arguments all revert to the first line. As such, counter-arguments dissolve because the text and its narrative come from God and nothing and no-one is able to argue with, challenge or discredit God because the soul in the Prologue is speaking in the third person omniscient narrative voice of God.

What it seems Marguerite does at the beginning of her discourse is to position the narrative that is *The Mirror*, and consequently the narrative and the text, in a divine realm, in 'the land of life', to use Marguerite's words. More specifically, the birth of the narrative and the text is situated in the divine realm. There too is situated The Soul who is 'touched by God and [is] stripped bare of sin' and who is 'in the first state of grace'. So, at the very start of *The Mirror*, the narrative in other words, the text and the soul, it seems, are all already positioned as being in a primordial and organic

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[277] Ibid.V.2.1, 380–381.

[278] In French: Ame de Dieu touchee, et denuee, de peché ou premier estat de grace, est montee par divines graces ou septiesme estat de grace, ouquel estat l'Ame a le plain de sa perfection par dvine fruiction ou païde vie (RG/PV 10).

khoral state. This state is Plotinus' positive 'ineffable' One and it is, especially, a state, not a being, because according to Plotinus' idea of divinity, the One is not a being. So narrative, text and the soul are situated in the *khoral* space, that is, in 'the land of life'. This is significant because Marguerite positions the narrative, the text and the soul in the space/place where according to Plotinus' definition of the One, first creation occurs. As such, all three items, that is, narrative, text and the soul are first and immediate creations in that they are at the very beginning of the text. This aligns the three items that is, the narrative, the text and the soul – incidentally reminiscent of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – as Plotinus' 'necessary emanations of hypostatic Intelligence' and hence all three are what Plotinus calls composites of receiver and what is received. In other words, each item is in and of itself a composite because each is made up of say, an element (love, really, which is that which is bestowed by divinity and that which is received by the emanation) of the divine. The divine element arranges itself so that each item can appear and function differently (narrative/text/soul). However, the element can also rearrange itself and in so doing can create larger, smaller or newer compositions in the way that, for example, different photographs can be digitally manipulated to create a mosaic. Another way to think of this is to imagine the narrative, the text and the soul (emanations), as holographic fragments of the original source. In other words, what composition implies here, is that the constituent parts of emanations are inter-related.

Marguerite iterates this notion of divine elemental composition and re-composition throughout *The Mirror* in response to Reason's various interrogations regarding the state of humanity and that of divinity. In Chapter 23 Love says about the annihilation of the soul that, 'Love of its own right causes this transformation into itself' (CMG 43). This quotation suggests two things. Firstly, it suggests that the/a soul – we could read here humanity – is a composite (a being made up of the element (love) of the divine) of divinity and secondly, as a composite of divinity the/a soul has an inherent desire to be retransformed (rearrange itself) to its original state (divinity/love). This sentiment is repeated in Chapter 25 where Love describes a soul reunified with divinity and divinity as follows:

A man who is on fire feels no cold, a man who is drowning knows no thirst. Now this Soul … is so burned in Love's fiery furnace that she has become very fire, so that she feels no fire, for in herself is fire, through the power of Love which has changed her into the fire of Love. This fire burns of and through itself, everywhere, incessantly, without consuming any matter or being able to wish to consume it, except only from itself (CMG 46).

In this extract, the fire that burns of itself (divinity/Intelligence), through itself, is everywhere, is incessant and does not consume any matter except only from itself, is a description of Plotinus' positive ineffable divinity which necessarily births hypostatic Intelligence. Furthermore, the

Intelligence that is birthed has an innate desire to return to its origin and so this fire that is love/divinity transmutes the soul/humanity to its original state, which in the extract is the man who is drowning and therefore knows no thirst and the man who is on fire and feels no cold. Many examples of this kind of eternal inflation[279] can be found throughout *The Mirror*. It can be inferred that annihilation could be the equivalent of Plotinus' *reditus* in that the Soul upon re-entry with the divine via the *khora,* is so consumed by the intensity of love that the soul as a separate entity is subsumed.

The Prologue's first speaker is Love. Love is treated synonymously with the concept of divinity/God by both Julian and Marguerite. It is therefore significant that Love is the first speaker in *The Mirror*. This accords with Plotinus' definition of the ultimate explainer who, 'itself stands in no need of explanation, but explains the existence of anything and everything else as productive cause'[280] which is exactly what Love does in the Prologue and opening paragraph of *The Mirror*. That is, Love calls actives and contemplatives and 'those who will be annihilated' (CMG 10) to listen to an explanation of the power of love, the workings of the Holy Spirit and to tell them a story about worldly love that is actually 'de la divine amor' (RG/PV 10) that is, about divine love. The latter is in fact Love, the character in *The Mirror*, actioning explanation of Plotinus' 'productive cause' to an audience via the story of worldly love that applies to divine love. Love not only becomes the explainer by telling a story but is also the actioner/creator of the story.

The story, in the prologue, sets up what Plotinus might call the 'One explaining the existence of everything else in its role as Final Cause' and that 'everything other than the One has a built-in tendency to return to the One', so that the whole cosmos executes a kind of *exitus/redditus* dynamic. In other words, the story in the prologue tells of a damsel (emanation from the One) who heard tell of a gracious and noble king (divinity) and 'at once she wanted to love him' (CMG 10) – this resonates with Plotinus' idea of emanations having a built in tendency to return to the One, which seems to be a self-generating sequence. The damsel who 'of her own will' sets her heart on the king, accords with Plotinus's One who has no will or knowing. Will, it seems, is deferred to emanations: the emanations, in that they are secondary to divine nature, have the ability to exercise a will that is alternate to love (the make-up/element of divinity). In other words, the One has no will but through its emanation (the damsel), can experience will via the damsel's desire for the king. Thus the damsel

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[279] Continual deep spiritual introspection and contemplation of God such that it results in the deflation of the self and in that, it simultaneously contributes towards expansion of divine love.

[280] *The Enneads*, trans. MacKenna, II.9.1–3, 132–135; III.2.2, 161–162; III.6.7, 208–209; V.1.6, 373–375; V.2.1, 380–381.

experiences will on behalf of the One. So, 'God created creation for himself, and he created it to be a temple – a place in which he could pursue relationships with the creature he created.'[281]

The painting in the imagined likeness of the king that the damsel commissions, implies Plotinus' One who 'through Intelligence and Soul *necessarily*[282] emanates the material world.' This construction is compounded when the soul, who speaks immediately after the exposition in the story, has a book made – which I think is deliberately named *The Mirror*, a popular medieval trope but significant in this case for its relevance to showing that emanations are reflections of Divinity – which accords with Plotinus' given definition of divinity in that it is through Intelligence and Soul that the material world emanates.

Lastly, The Writer, in the Prologue, articulates a significant statement which seems to accord with Plotinus's definition of divinity and with what, at times, it seems Julian and Marguerite deem is a recognisable aspect of divinity. That is that 'the Lord is in no way freed by Love, but Love is freed by him for our sakes … for Love can do all things, and not do wrong to anyone' (CMG 12). In combination with the sentiment in the extract from Chapter 25, the two posit that divinity is a preternatural form of love. That is, divinity is an uncommon, anomalous and pre-existing organic form of love. This preternatural form of love fuels itself. Because this preternatural self-fuelling love is the make-up of divinity, its only experience is love. Therefore, divinity *necessarily* (my emphasis) births emanations so that it may experience that which is 'other' to love. Yet, even in birthing/creating emanations, divinity only has the ability to impart love to its emanations and even then, love is imparted for the sake of the emanations' imminent return to divinity. Because the One is so simple and so immaculate it necessarily emanates the next hypostatic Intelligence because it is only via the hypostatic Intelligence that the One comes to experience itself as something other than an organic self-fuelling love via its emanations' trajectory and their built-in desire to return to the One. The necessity of hypostatic intelligence is embedded in the notion that God is life itself and since life is not static, it evolves, (birth, reunion and rebirth) eternally. This suggests a constant forward moving dynamic of the *exitus*/*reditus* process. A better articulated argument for the aforemented effect reads,

An orthodox Christian believes:

(1) Benevolence and justice are part of God's perfection.

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[281] Edward R. Brown, *Our Father's World: Mobilizing the Church to care for Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008) p. 48.

[282] My emphasis, which is explained in the paragraph that follows.

(2) God is self-sufficient (i.e. He has no need for the existence of any being other than Himself) in respect of all His perfections.

To appreciate why the above two statements are not consistent, one should bear in mind Aristotle's claim that a poor person cannot be charitable. True, if the person was rich, he would then be charitable; but not being rich he is in no position to exercise acts of charity; and is, therfore, not charitable. Similarly, without the existence of other beings, God cannot exercise acts of benevolence and justice. Thus, in order to perfect Himself and acquire these virtues, God, irrespective as to whether He is a consequentialist or not, had to create the world. The proper position for a Christian to take is: yes, the world needs God in order to exist; but God needs the world in order to express His full perfection.[283]

Revelations also has similar constructions that link Julian's descriptions of divinity to Plotinus' descriptions of divinity.

Plotinus' Conception of the Divine Reflected in *Revelations*

Julian also positions her experiences of divinity in a divine realm. First, the fact that her showings seem to come to her from what seems to be another dimension and not the earthly plane suggests that she has accessed a divine realm. Consequently, and as is the case with *The Mirror*, whatever claims are made during the course of *Revelations* become difficult to counter because it would be the equivalent of challenging God, and not Julian, because the text is divinely inspired. For example, the opening line of the short text reads,

Here is a vision schewed be the goodenes of God to a devoute woman, and her name is Julyan that is a recluse att Norwyche and yitt ys on lfye, A.D. 1413; in the whilke vision er fulle many comfortabylle words and gretly styrrande to all thaye that desyres to be Crystes looverse (BW 3).

This states clearly that the text is based on what God revealed to Julian and that the visions are comforting to those who desire Christ; which suggests that the narrative, or rather the text, is not Julian's own but is, instead, instigated by the divine. In the long text the opening line reads, 'Revelations to one who could not read a letter' (BW 27). The convention of using scribes, as well as the medieval consideration that God was the original author, and the unlikelihood that Julian was illiterate duly considered – the opening line of the long text, besides reflecting the medieval convention of self-affacement, implies that the text is not of Julian's making. The assumption is that, because Julian was 'unlettered' (CW 177), that she was 'a simple creature that cowed no letter' (BW 29), like Margery Kempe, the text itself was of God's making and like Margery Kempe, Julian

[283] Leon Pearl, 'God had to Create the World', *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 331–333 (p. 333).

seemed compelled to put her visions into writing. Furthermore, it was considered to be the particular responsibility of an anchoress to show tokens of love to her fellow Christians.[284] Being an anchoress, the only token of love that Julian could share with her fellow Christians was the love that was shown to her in the revelations, which she wrote down. Hence *Revelations*, it can be assumed, is a divinely inspired text. Furthermore, in Chapter 8 of the long text Julian says,

And therefore I pray you al for God's sake, and counsel you for your owne profit, that ye levyn the beholding of a wretch that it was shewid to, and mightily, wisely, and mekely behold God, that of his curtes love and endless godenes wolde shewyn it generally in comfort for us al. Fot it is Gods will that ye take it with as gret joy and liking as Jesus had shewid it on to you all (BW 42).

Julian's self-effacement, as shown above, is further evidence for the idea that the text derives from the divine space. *Revelations*, the text, can therefore be said to be an emanation from a divine space in the same sense that – as was explained above – *The Mirror*, as a text, is. Julian's showings are not to be confused with emanations. Only the text, in that it is a book, is considered here to be an emanation.

The fact that Julian 'desyred… thre gyftes by the grace of God' (NC 5') is evidence of Plotinus's definition of divinity in that divinity's emanations have an inherent desire to return to the One, assuming that Julian in her capacity as a human (thus soul), is an emanation from divinity. Julian's three gifts, that is, her desire to feel true sorrow for her sins, her desire to sympathise and empathise with Christ's and her fellow human beings' suffering, and her desire to be at one with God, seem to be Julian's notion of what necessitates *reditus*.

Third and interestingly, as early as Revelation 1 – remembering that Marguerite also undertook positioning in the early passages of *The Mirror* – Julian describes God in Trinitarian terms.[285] Julian says,

For the Trinitie is God, God is the Trinitie. The Trinitie is our maker. The Trinitie is our keper. The Trinitie is our everlasting lover. The Trinitie is our endless joy and bleisse by our Lord Jesu Christ and in our Lord Jesu Christ. And this was shewed in the first syghte and in all, for wher Jhesu appireth the blessed Trinitie is understand to my sight. (NC 8)

What can be inferred from this extract is that Julian avoids registering her encounter with God as an encounter with a single being, but with the Trinity, that is, the dynamic, constantly generative loving triune mystery, so that the soul is drawn into the *exitus-reditus* flow. Furthermore, the following

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[284] Vincent Gillespie, '"[S]he do the police in different voices": Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', *Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), p. 420.

[285] It is to be understood that the argument here approximates and adapts Trinitarian doctrine to a Plotinus model.

observations could also be made: first, the use of the Trinity reveals the difficulty of expressing the positive ineffable – one of Plotinus's definitions of divinity – because understanding the *consubstantialis* that is inherent in Trinitarian doctrine is not something, it could be assumed, that a lay medieval person, or even a lay modern person, might fully comprehend in theological terms. However, Julian relies on the construction because it can be assumed that it is an easily recognisable image and trope to medieval audiences especially, and thus it signals divine presence; something that any lay person could easily recognise. Second, the three persons in one God which the Trinity is based upon, is evidence of the One emanating the next hypostatic Intelligence – in that Jesus is the son of God. Thus Jesus, in his capacity as a human (soul), and therefore symbolic of humanity, is an emanation of divinity. Third, the Holy Spirit is evidence of Plotinus' notion that God is not a being but is instead an ethereal and Elysian omnipotence. For an example of this, one could look at what Julian says in Revelation 1, where she expresses the Aristotelian thought that 'God … is unmade' (NC 10). Fourth, the Holy Spirit is evidence that the One imparts of itself into its emanations because the Holy Spirit is understood to be pervasive, ubiquitous and thus omnipotent. Fifth, the Trinity also works as a motif to reinforce the idea of a composite (holographic fragments) that illustrates how the constituent parts or bands of emanations from the divine are interrelated. Sixth, and perhaps most importantly, Trinitarian doctrine posits that through *consubstantialis* the nature of divinity is one; which again accords with Plotinus's definition of divinity as the One. Seventh, the Trinity, besides explaining how emanations from the One occur (*consubstantialis*), also explains why there are emanations in the first place: John 3:16 is a verse inextricable from Trinitarian doctrine and explains that the reason behind Christ's suffering and crucifixion is because divinity loves the world so much that Jesus had to suffer and die. Julian iterates this notion in Revelation 10 where it is written,

Behold and see that I lovyd thee so much or that I dyed for thee that I would dye for the. And now I have dyed for the and suffered wyllingfully that I may. And now is all my bitter payne and alle my harde traveyle turnyd to everlasting joy and blysse to me and to the (NC 37).

This idea can be reconciled with Plotinus's definition of divinity not needing to explain itself, but when it does, it does so in terms of illustrating the productive cause. In the passage the lack of a need for divinity to explain itself is expressed via the repetition of Christ's love, suffering and surrender to death, so that the message that is emitted is self-explanatory and is one that signals 'explanation fatigue'. In other words, here and in a number of other places in the text, the repetition shows exhausted resignation, to indicate the lack of desire to comply with explanation. Julian also mentions that the Trinity is the 'everlasting lover … the endlesse joy and…bleisse' which resonates with the notion explained earlier that divinity calls itself into being, due to its own lack of sentience

except for preternatural organic love, and thus *necessarily* emanates hypostatic Intelligence in order to experience itself as something Other. Lastly, the emanations, like Julian, have an inborn desire to return to the origin and thus, as is the case with Marguerite, it can be said that the whole cosmos executes an *exitus/redditus* dynamic, because Julian and Marguerite, in that they are human emanations of and from divinity, both yearn for a reconciliation with divinity.

Divinity and the *Khora*

Since the *khora* is an otherworldly pre-birth, primordial state that seems to defy conclusive definition, it seems to be the best place to situate divinity because definitions of the *khora* seem to mimic comprehension of divinity in the sense that the *khora* is primordial and is incorrupt inception, amongst the other descriptors given in **Chapter Two**. If it is understood that the *khora* is a state of potentiality and it is assumed that the *khora* has an affinity with the essence of divinity, that is, love, then that which characterises the *khora* could also apply to divinity. It is not to be understood that the *khora* acts as or is a container for divinity or vice versa, because essentially the *khora*, like divinity, seems to be amorphous. But if one can pin the *khora* down to descriptors, then what is known about the *khora* could be ascribed to divinity so as to grasp the dynamic is between humanity and divinity.

What the *khora* seems to me to be is a gaping vortex, is an amorphous space that houses no named thing or things, and is a state and space pregnant with potentiality to which meaning can be assigned but has not yet been assigned. This calls to mind the image of the wound Christ shows to Julian who, upon drawing nearer, sees instead of punctured and bleeding flesh, the potential for endless (re)creation. So, in dying Christ potentially births generations of mankind. Similarly, the *khora* holds the capacity for endless creation and (re)creation, emanations, in other words. It is a state and space from which all that is, is birthed.

It is this maternal aspect that is ascribed to the *khora* that forces this study's consideration of the *khora* possibly being what Marguerite calls 'the land of life' in the opening line of the Prologue because the *khora* is pregnant and alive with possibilities. Marguerite even dedicates a chapter to this land. Chapter 67 is called 'This tells of the land where this soul lives, and of the Trinity' (CGM 88). In that chapter Reason asks to be told more of 'the land where the Soul lives' and Love says that

he who is where this Soul is, is of himself in himself through hiself, receiving nothing from anyone. And so this Soul … is in himself of himself for himself, receiving nothing from anyone except from him' (CGM 88).

This consolidates the contention this chapter makes that there is an affinity between the *khora* and divinity because the descriptions of the land where the Soul resides echoes various descriptions of divinity, in that divinity, like the land where the Soul resides, is of itself, in itself, through itself and receives nothing from anyone except from itself. More especially the description of this land echoes Julian's and Marguerite's descriptions of divinity. Julian says of divinity, or rather divinity says of itself in *Revelations*,

I it am, I it am, I it am that is hyghest. I it am that thou lovyst. I it am that thou lykyst. I it am that though servyst. I it am that though longest. I it am that thou desyryst, I it am that thou menyste. I it am that is alle. I it am that holy church prechyth the and techeyth thee. I it am that shewde me before to the. (NC 39)

In Chapter 22 of *The Mirror* Love (also used synonymously to mean divinity in *The Mirror*) says,

I am God…for Love is God, and God is Love, and this Soul is God through its condition of Love, and I am God through my divine nature, and this soul is God by Love's just law. So that this my precious beloved is taught and guided by me, without herself, for she has been changed into me. And this is the outcome, says Love, of being nourished by me. (CGM 41)

What is significant here is first, that the two extracts are strikingly similar. Second, both are in the first person divine voice. Third, divinity is defining itself (reminiscent of the idea that God is a self-reflective awareness) which means that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* treat divinity as extraordinary being and not a non-being. A Derrida-derived interpretation could also apply to these extracts in that divinity is speaking about itself in a text birthed in a divine space. Hence, divinity is collapsing in on itself. That divinity is defining itself underwrites the idea that the texts are birthed in divine spaces and are divine by-products of contemplation, given what is known of the anchorite and the beguine lifestyles, and therefore, the definitions given by divinity in these extracts decommission all other given definitions. That is to say, divinity is the authority on divinity and so all other given definitions fall away. Fourth, the message in both extracts is the same. That is, divinity is the ultimate 'being' or rather 'state' under whom humanity serves and to whom humanity longs to return and that love is what constitutes divinity. Implied in Julian's '*I it am that thou menyste. I it am that is alle*' and Marguerite's 'precious beloved is taught and guided by me, without herself, for she has been changed into me', is that agency is divine not human. This observation also resonates with the notion that it is divinity that births everything and in so doing causes differentiation in everything it births. It could even be argued that based on the descriptors, or rather, the definition, given for the *khora* in **Chapter Two**, divinity, having agency in the creation process, appears masculine and the *Khora* being the gestational space for creation, appears feminine. John Manoussakis refers to the

khora as 'she' throughout his article. [286] Here too is the idea that contrasts are resolved in that masculine and feminine are in balance. That divinity can be seen as a masculine and the *khora* as feminine both concepts are in abyenace, and that definitions for divinity and the *khora* are absolutely indefinable and debatable, hence interstructural, makes a case for liminality.

The *Khora* and Liminality

Bearing in mind that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* require their audiences to dispose of a 'linear analytical approach' to understanding their texts and that the texts 'demand a different way of listening' in order for 'key concepts and ideas … [to begin to] resonate together', this study uses various trasnspositions and analogies in order to reveal 'the nuances and verbal play of Julian's [and Marguerite's] text[s]'.[287] So, further to the definition of liminality as given in **Chapter Two** it could be said that liminality, or liminal spaces, act as a sort of decompression chamber[288] – to use a term from the world of deep sea diving. If a decompression chamber is a place in which pressure is reduced gradually to that of the outside air (normal air) and is used to allow deep-sea divers to adjust gradually to normal air pressure, then what happens to mystics (deep sea divers in that mystics indulge in deep inner reflection) once they have accessed a liminal space/place (decompression chamber) is that in the liminal space the mystics are adjusting gradually – in that all preconceived notions are reduced (decompressed) – so as to enable movement towards re-entry/reunification with the real/divine self ('normal air pressure') that seemingly, I contend, has an affinity with the *khora*.[289] In the liminal space embedded beliefs are reduced (decompressed) and a revisionary mindset is born. This revisionary mindset sees only universality and unification and brings the mystic closer to re-entry with divinity. But why situate divinity alongside the *khora* and not in the liminal space? There are two answers to this.

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[286] John Manoussakis, 'Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation', pp. 93–100.

[287] Vincent Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 399.

[288] It is borne in mind that whilst a diver goes deep and returns to the temporal and physical space/place he/she was before, the mystic goes deep and returns to a different place, in fact comes out the other side. Nonetheless, it could be argued that a diver having dived deep whilst still returning to the same place, has become all the more richer for whatever knowledge that may have been acquired during the dive as well as for the experience and whatever the experience may have taught the diver. So too is the mystic richer in knowledge and experience for having had the mystical experience. The diver enters a wholly different world when deep see diving as does the mystic during *unio mystica* and both emerge perceptually richer.

[289] The *khora* was described in the **Chapter Two** and in reference to **Figure 2**.

First, liminality can be expressed and described, albeit in duelling terms. Divinity, however, seems to defy conclusive definition, as does the *khora* and its functions. Descriptors for the *khora* exist, but its complete meaning and function(s) are not entirely conclusive. Second, descriptions of the *khora* seem to mimic what divinity, it seems, is widely understood to be. First it must be noted that the *khora* was discussed in **Chapter Two**, but for clarification to the point being made here about an affinity between the *khora* and divinity, some information from **Chapter Two** is repeated.

Relying on the *khora* as a reference point for, but not equating the *khora* with divinity, it could be said that unlike liminality, which is a contested space in that information exported from liminality is debated between those who have accessed liminality and attempt to transmit its information, and the recipients of the information who have not yet accessed liminality – *The Mirror*'s characters Reason (recipient of information) and the soul (liminal person) come to mind here – the *khora* would seem to be an uncontested space. In other words, various descriptions of the *khora*, more especially the ones given in **Chapter Two**, seem to agree on its character hence making it an uncontested space/place. In application the given definitions might differ, but for the purposes of using the *khora* as a reference point with which to recognise and identify the space and place of the mystical experience, the various descriptions/definitions seem to be in agreement. It is to be noted that whilst Derrida's, and Kristeva's metaphysical space lends itself well to an understanding of *khora* as it is used here, my interpretation is not dependent on any particular literary theory although it draws on ideas from several. Rather, it is my contention based on various readings of texts relating to this dissertation's subject matter. So what do the descriptions of the *khora* and its function(s) reveal about divinity?

Based on the given descriptions of the *khora* and reiterating that the *khora* is used as a reference point with which to recognise and identify divinity, it could be said that divinity, it seems, has the capacity to call aspects of itself into being for want of expansion and growth, (Plotinus' necessary hypostasis)[290] hence, the emanations. The latter, we assume, is because life itself is not static but constantly evolving and if generally speaking we equate divinity with life – as Marguerite seems to do in the opening lines of The Prologue – then it must be understood that divinity itself is under constant expansion. This recognition of divinity, based on the information given for the *khora*, then means that divinity is recognisable as intelligence, is the carrier of life in all senses of the word, and because life is not static divinity is therefore in constant motion reconciling contrasts and using contrasts symbiotically (re)createing that which is new. For example, Marguerite's 'Farnear' and

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[290] *The Enneads*, trans. MacKenna, II.9.1–3, 132–135; III.2.2, 161–162; III.6.7, 208–209; V.1.6, 373–375; V.2.1, 380–381.

Julian's 'Mothergod' are both proof that as the liminal person's perspective changes, their language shifts and the language shift forces changes in the mind of the audience, thus creating new ideas and expansion. The 'new words' come to describe new models for living and they influence the way the world is perceived. Divinity's and all its emanations' expansion is accomplished via implosion and inward disintegration, which paradoxically gives rise to explosion of that which is new, and this process is in a state of constant forward motion – it is a process of eternal inflation. Julian and Marguerite via their dialectical discourse describe divinity in terms of liminality cancelling distinctions and forcing reconciliation which enables movement towards the *khora* in which new possibilities reside.

The Liminal Language of the *Khora*

Both texts dwell on a polarity or an oscillation between unity and annihilation, Julian's use of 'onyng' (NC 30, 32, 57, 62, 62) and 'naught[ing]' (NC 9, 10, 16, 23, 26) which may be seen as a source of a new language, the language of the *khora*. In my understanding this is a perfect example from *Revelations* about what has been described here, regarding liminality dissolving boundaries which results in a void into which reconciliation is forced with a view to progress towards divinity. In my understanding and at the risk of conflation, Julian is expressing divinity in what could be called binary terms. The binary number system, based on the numerals 0 and 1, is understood to mean something that is made of two things or parts. In terms of language and thought two theoretical opposites are defined and set off against one another. Having said this, in terms of language and the verbal texture of the text alone, Julian's oneing and naughting seem to be deliberately set off against each other, consequently nullifying each other due to each one's strictly defined meaning, and in so doing creates a space into which a reconciliatory language is forced that brings the one and zero into harmony. The 1 and 0, although still irreconcilable given each one's mathematical qualification , are both still able to communicate in relation to each other thus forming a new language, in this case a binary language that signals divinity in abstract terms. What this binary language depicts within the context of *Revelations* is Julian's description of the fullness and emptiness of divinity, which to my mind sounds like a description of the *khoral* space in that the *khora* is a vast and vacuous, yet pregnant-with-possibility, space. But what is especially significant of the binary language here is that it forces cognition of abstracts and is what can be called hyper-communication because it works to support the transmission of the inexpressible. That is, where words fail to provide an explanation

numbers become the means with which to formulate ideas and what the numbers are doing in this case is forcing recognition of divinity as a cognitive abstraction.[291]

Marguerite speaks of annihilating the soul. To my mind this resonates with Julian's naughting. Both terms are meant to illustrate the complete emptying of one's ego, 'a kenotic process'.[292] This idea of emptying the self within the context of *The Mirror* as a whole is juxtaposed by Marguerite's discourse on creating and (re)creation. As in Julian's case, binary forces nullify each other and allow for a description of a new understanding of divinity without actually having spelled out a new word or language because annihilation-speak and (re)creation-speak work symbiotically to create the sense of an abstract awareness of intelligence, that is, divinity. This understanding and concept/construct of divinity is created in, exists in, and is able to be understood in, the mind of the reader/audience. Thus it can be assumed its meaning is generated from the ethereal space in which it was created, the *khora*. So, one is able to grasp descriptions of divinity from the linguistic constructs that are used by Julian and Marguerite.

In Revelation 14 Chapter 59 of the long text Julian constructs God through God's own words as, 'I am he, the power and the goodness of fatherhood, I am he, the wisdom and the lovingness of motherhood'. In the original it reads, 'I it am, the myte and the goodnes of the faderhed. I it am, the wisdam of the Moderhede' (BW 125). The pronouns 'I' and 'he' in the translation oppose each other in that 'I' signals a singularity, and whilst the 'he' also signals a singularity, it signals one that is external to the 'I', hence, a different identity. Yet the distinctions dissolve through the unifying 'am' that brings the concepts together and forces a reconciliation which results in the idea of a single yet abstract entity as opposed to the notion that there are two distinct and structured personas. In other words, the 'I' and the 'he' become a collective, they become an 'us' or rather, a 'we'. In the original the singular 'I' also stands in opposition to the external, unidentified and genderless 'it'. As in the case of the translation the singular concept dissolves through the unifying 'am' and the dissolution is even more forced in the original because the pronoun 'it' seems indicative of an unidentifiable collective and neutralises division and distinctions between masculine and feminine. Furthermore, Julian juxtaposes male and female in that the 'I' like the 'it' is male and female. The 'I' becomes the unifier of the masculine and the feminine as the 'am' was in Marguerite's case, hence the distinction between male and female disintegrates. By extension the 'he' contrasts with 'motherhood', but the reader/audience is already positioned to see a collective as early on as the first statement of 'I am he'/'I it am' so that by the third reiteration of the phrase – the qualifier of

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[291] Numbers and the role that they play were discussed in **Chapter Three**.

[292] Vincent Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 400.

which is motherhood – contrasts have already collapsed and this collapse is amplified by the repetition of 'I am he'/'I it am' no less than seven more times with varying qualifiers. Hence, there is movement from the liminal space (where differentiations disintegrate via new language constructs) to the *khoral* space (where all meaning has collapsed and all that remains is a vortex filled with the potential of the creation of an entirely new language). Furthermore, the word 'motherhood' signals arrival in the *khoral* space by virtue of the fact that the feminine is generally associated with potentially new conception, creation and birthing, as is the *khora* – which accords with Plato's sense of the *khora*.

Humanity recalled by Apophasis: Pseudo-Dionysius

The aim here is to show how the human being, as emanation, is a lesser state but can be integrated with the divine, by a process of un-becoming (apophasis of a particular kind). This cyclical process has an alchemical character. Again, further to the definition of liminality given in **Chapter Two** and as illustrated in **Figure 2**, liminality, it seems, has an alchemical function. That is, it assists in (re)turning base souls (humanity in general) into the divine Soul (gold), or at least, into harmony with the divine soul, in that liminality's accessed 'information' forces re-alignment of the base soul's perspective with that of the divine Soul. So what makes humanity a base soul and are all humans base? Does every person have to become a mystic or a liminal person in order to re-align with the divine Soul? In order to answer these questions the assumption will be that all humans are lesser forms of divine emanations. That the texts use this approach too is evident in Chapter 67 of *The Mirror* when Love says, 'God the Father has his divine power from himself, without receiving it from anyone; for he possess from the outflowing of his divine power, and gives it to his son' (CMG 88). Julian in Revelation 3 says in divinity's voice 'See I am in alle thing. See I do all thynge. See, I never lefte my hands of my works, ne never shall without ende. See I lede all thing to the end that I ordyene it to fo without begynnyng by the same mygt, wysdom, and love that I made it with' (NC 21). Furthermore, this assumption rests on the philosophical focus that believes that divinity, the extraordinary being, 'reveals itself in beings [and] in so doing, conceals itself as *itself*'[293] and thus the philosophical descriptions that are used in **Chapter Two** to describe the *khora*, assist in establishing what is to be made of the being that is humanity. That is, with the help of the given definitions of the *khora* it becomes possible to recognise what divinity is and what humanity is. This is in **Chapter Two** under **Apophasis** and is reiterated here for the significance it has for the notion that all souls are divine emanations and are, in varying degrees, lesser forms of divinity.

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[293] M. J. Rubenstein, 'Unknow Thyself: Apophaticism, Deconstruction, and Theology after Ontotheology', *Modern Theology* 19.3 (July 2003): 386–417 (p. 389).

The following extract – a synopsis of Dionysian apophasis and an illustration of which relies on Marguerite's *Mirror*'s theory of annihilation of the soul – serves, first, to aid understanding of apophasis, second, to assist in establishing the link between Marguerite's *Mirror* and Pseudo-Dionysius's theory of apophasis, and lastly, to aid understanding of what has happened to Marguerite's character, 'the Soul', in transcendence:

Negative theology succumbs to (affirmative) theology precisely when it allows itself to take affirmative theology's place. A positive negativity, in other words, a negativity that never succumbs to its own negativity, ultimately yields to the positive. A positive negativity is not a negativity; it is the positive under the guise of the negative. In order for the negative to be negative it must disappear into itself on the one hand, negation demands a return to affirmation in order to indefinitely defer an affirmative victory. Only in losing does the negative win because it is in . . . its own vulnerability, its own risk of affirmation.[294]

The human soul is negative in its state of human being. However, the soul is a positive negative because Marguerite maintains that the human soul and God are one. Love says, 'I am God seiÞ loue, for loue is God and God is loue, and Þis soule is God bi condicion of loue, and I am God bi nature diuine. And þis is heres bi riȝtwisnesse of loue' (MD 274).[295] So it follows that by Marguerite's reckoning, the soul is a positive negativity. As such, the soul is not a negative, but is a positive disguised as a negative. In order to negate its negativity the soul must disappear into itself, that is, reflect inwardly in order to reunite with divinity, the positive. Another way to put it could be that the soul has to lose itself in order to find itself.

The significance of this is that both Julian and Marguerite consider that divinity is present in humanity. Both women make a case for the notion of an indwelling God, but that, in order to access the inner divine self, one must discard all preconceived notions because they are products of cultural – here meaning all forms of introduction to society – conditioning, and as such inhibit reunification with divinity. For example, Marguerite says in Chapter 29, 'See an infant which is purely innocent: does it do anything, does it refrain from doing anything, for the sake of the great or the small, if it does not please?' (CGM 47). What can be deduced from this extract is that the infant, due to its

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[294] J. Fischer, 'The Theology of Dis/similarity: Negation in Pseudo-Dionysius', p. 539.

[295] In French and Latin, 'Je suis Dieu, dit Amor, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est Amour, et ceste Ame est Dieu par condicion d'amour et je suis Dieu par nature divine, et ceste Ame l'est par droicture d'amour' and, 'Ego sum Deus, ait Amor, quia amor est Deus et Deus est amor et ista anima est Deus ex conditione amoris. Et ego sum Deus per naturam diuinam et ista est Deus de iure amoris' (RG/PV 82, 83).

innocence, is still in alignment with divinity and divine activity, and has not yet been blunted by social conditioning. As such whatever pleases the infant is acted upon. Furthermore, what is being implied is that humanity has lost touch with its divine character because humanity seems overly concerned with propriety. Perhaps the most convincing argument both Julian and Marguerite make against humanity's tendency to focus on propriety is when both women consider sin. Much has already been made about both women arriving at the notion that sin is Augustine's absence of good, and that it is not a moral/ethical misdeed. What has not been said regarding the concept of sin is that because humanity is linked to divinity via the indwelling God as explained in **Figure 4**, should a sinful thought or action occur, there exists, by virtue of the divine link between humanity and divinity, an equivalent awareness of the sin's opposite, that is, its good. It is this equivalent awareness of good that nullifies sin, which is seemingly also a part of the human condition. Thus it is the indwelling God that forces divinity and humanity to function as co-operative components with the good always preceding the bad. Furthermore, it is suggested that part of the human condition is to see sin as a moral/ethical misdeed. Julian says in Revelation 3 'For man beholdeth some dedys wele done and some dedys evylle, and our Lorde beholdeth them not so' (NC 21). It follows then that to draw distinctions is, evidently, a human aspect. Julian's quotation forces the consideration that divinity has no sense of differentiation. To be human, it seems, means to be operating from outside of the *khora* because the *khora* holds no distinctions, only the possibility of (re)creation. Hence it is a radical moral vision that accompanies the union with God: differentiation dissolves or, perhaps, is comprehended.

Another aspect of the human condition is given to us in Revelation 7. Julian explains that in this showing her soul experiences 'the fulfyllde of the evyrlastynge suerness, myghtely fastnyd without any paunfulle drede' and this feeling was 'so glad and so goostely that [she] was all in peese, in eese, and in reste that ther was nothing in erth that… grevyd [her]' (NC 25). However, this unification is elusive and fleeting and Julian is left to her 'selfe in hevynes and werynes of [her] life and irekenes of [her] self unneth [she] could have paciece to lyve' (NC 25). These two states alternate, Julian says, 'about twenty times' (NC 26). The reason for this showing we are told, is that 'it is spedfull to some soules to feele on thys wysse, some tyme to be in comfort and some tyme for to fayle and to be lefte to them selfe' (NC 26). We are reassured that despite the 'wo and wele' (NC 26), humans are sometimes left to themselves for the 'profyghte of man's soule' (NC 26) From this it can be deduced that it is part of the human condition to experience highs and lows, though not because of any sin that might have been committed. More importantly, divinity specifically does not always intervene when there are lows because to do so would inhibit the soul's development.

So what is to be made of this showing as regards humanity and especially humanity in relation to divinity?

The extract forces a consideration that the constitution of the relationship between humanity and divinity is primary. Second, the relationship is characterised by movement. More specifically, humanity innately desires a return to its origin, that is, divinity. This relationship of movement is between a limited thinker (humanity) – what Marguerite calls '[seeing] with one eye only' (CMG 62), when she chastises Reason for being short-sighted and too linear in his thinking – and a complete knower (divinity), both of whom appear to be participating in a/the project called expansion. In this expansion project, knowing is carried out at two levels: first at the omniscient level (divinity) and then at the level of limited being (humanity). What this means is that thinking, certainly a human enterprise, and one that Marguerite in discussing the innocence of the child warns against, has moved humanity further away from divinity and as such away from comprehension; a notion that has some affinity with Aquinas' idea of the anomalous, that is, that which cannot be reconciled by or in human thinking. Furthermore, Julian's extract shows that human experience has a trajectory and that the reason and meaning underpinning the trajectory is for humanity to evolve constantly towards divinity.

Marguerite speaks of the Soul whose 'last name is forgetting' (CMG 22). In French, 'Son darnier non est: Obliance' (RG/PV 36). This statement implies that ignorance of its divine indwelling counterpart, and ignorance of its participation in the expansion project, is part of the human condition. Until such time that humanity re-unites with divinity, everything it knew before its incarnation as a divine emanation is, apparently deliberately, forgotten. It can be assumed that this might be, as Julian put it earlier, for the profit of the soul so that it may evolve towards divinity, for if the soul remembers its divine association and all that that encompasses, there would be no room for expansion and the soul might collapse back into its divine counterpart. However, to forget the divine association means that all that the soul experiences is experienced as an equivalent awareness by its divine counterpart and thus movement and evolution for both the soul (humanity) and divinity continues, as opposed to stagnating. It is Reason who seems to embody the aspect of humanity that Marguerite calls forgetting, in that Reason's comprehension is limited both literally, in that he/she cannot understand the dialogue, and also spiritually, in that he/she is removed from divinity. Reason has, as it were, to abdicate. Peter's response in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* IV.1, captures this aspect as follows: 'That you say doth wonderfully content me: yet he who believeth not that there

be any invisible things, out of question in mine opinion is an infidel: and he that is an infidel, in that thing whereof he doubteth seeketh not for faith, but for reason'.[296]

So what else can be said about the nature of humanity, according to the texts? Revelation 14 says,

Man is chaungeabyll in this life, and by sympylnesse and cunning fleeth in to synne. He is unmyghty and unwise of hym selfe, and also his wyll is ovyr leyde in thys tyme he is in tempest and in sorrow and in woe. And the cause is blynnes, for he seeth not God. For yf he saw God continually, he shulde have no myschevous felyng ne no manner steryng, no sorowyng that servyth to synne (NC 65).

The same Revelation continues into the next chapter:

wrath … is on mannes perty … For wrath is nott ells but a frowerdness and a contraryousnes to pees and to love. And eyther it comyth of feylyng of goodnesse, which feylyng is nott in God but it is in oure party. For we by synne and wrechydnesse have in us a wrath and a contynuant contraryousnes to pees and to love. And that shewed he full oft in his lovely chere of ruth and pytte (NC 66).

Marguerite says to Reason (symbolic of humanity)

you will always see with one eye only, you and all those who are nurtured by your doctrine. For the man is indeed one-eyed who sees the things which are before his eyes yet does not know what they are (CGM 62).

So what conclusions are Julian and Marguerite drawing concerning humanity? Based on the extracts it can be deduced that humanity is in fact an 'artificial intelligence' – in the sense that humanity is an emanation possessed of a consciousness limited by reason and language and thus, in a sense, artificial – whose limited program is thought. That is, 'Humanity thinks and does in imitation of the all-knowing example of divinity' and humanity's acts are limited undertakings. In short, what these extracts illustrate, is that humanity is still egocentric and believes that it is 'through gathering, the bringing to itself, that it can be magnified', whereas divinity comprehends that 'it is through distribution of itself, the giving away of itself that it can be magnified'.[297] Hence, in approaching God and entering the liminal space, 'gathering' is gradually relinquished.

Summary

In order to comprehend the articulation of liminality as it appears in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, this chapter attempted to provide a framework for understanding the expressions of the relationship

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[296] 'St Gregory's Dialogues; The Fourth Book', available at: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory_04_dialogues_book4.htm#C1 (accessed 04/10/2018).

[297] N.D. Walsh, *Conversations with God*, available from: https://spirituality.com/neale-donald-walsch/the-difference-between-humanity-and-divinity (accessed 29/03/2018).

between divinity and humanity because both texts have *unio mystica* as their impetus. Here, mystical union is assumed to be understood when there is comprehension of the concept of divinity and the concept of humanity and their association with each other. Hence, the departure point for descriptors of divinity and humanity rested on theories by Plotinus and on extracts from the texts. Furthermore, in order to grasp the language used to discuss the relationship between divinity and humanity it became necessary to delve into the meaning of the *khora* as described by Kristeva and Derrida (as given in **Chapter Two**) because these theories not only resonate with theories regarding divinity in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and the state of mystical union, but also because these descriptors of the *khora* seem to mimic descriptors of divinity as presented in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. It was found that divinity is not necessarily the container of the *khora* or vice versa, but that the *khora* mimics divinity in that it is a primordial space/place of birth and rebirth, towards which the mystic is attracted in the same way that emanations of the divine are magnetised towards reunification with the divine. Emanations, such as the damsel in *Revelations* and the Soul in *The Mirror*, due to their being composed of the divine element that is love, which disables divinity from willing anything other than love, are preset to reintegrate with divinity. It is through emanations that divinity experiences itself. Differently put, 'God …interplays with the rest of Nature influencing it with unsurpassed power and wisdom for the better' and 'the response of men to the address is not really like their responses to their fellows but is rather like the surge of Being 'sighing' in them'.[298] Thus divinity and humanity were found to be different from each other yet in an intimate relationship with each other with humanity having an inter-life dimension to it which unconsciously always seeks reunification with its divine counterpart despite it seeming not so. Examples that were used to explain this divine state of humanity and the need for divinity to create souls (humanity) so that it may experience itself as other through love, included Julian's *oneing* and *noughting* dialectic and Marguerite's 'Farnear' oxymoron, both of which reveal a state of liminality in that the opposites cancel each other and all that remains is a state of abeyance.

[298] Robert C. Neville, 'Can God create men and address them too?' *Harvard Theological Review* (1968): 603– 623 (pp. 604–605).

Chapter six

Reality and Perception

Preamble

This chapter aims to define reality first according to its lay and mainstream understanding. Second, the lay and mainstream definition of reality will be broadened to include what this study deems is ultimate reality, a working definition of which will be provided by looking at three extracts from *Revelations* and three extracts from *The Mirror*.[299] Third, this chapter seeks to investigate where and how, the concepts of reality and ultimate reality in relation to liminality find expression first in *Revelations* and then in *The Mirror* within the context of the chapters from which the extracts are taken and within the context of each text as a whole. The discourse will then turn its attention to perception. A similar approach to that regarding the discussion about reality will be used for the discussion about perception. That is, a lay and mainstream definition of perception will be provided. Both texts will then be explored to see where how perception finds expression in relation to liminality within *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. This chapter will conclude by summarising the findings of the exploration into *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s conjectures regarding reality/ultimate reality and perception and how that liminality is linked to reality and perception.

What is reality?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines reality as meaning, 'the quality or state of being real' and qualifies this definition as, 'what is real rather than imagined'. A second and third meaning is given as, 'The quality of …having an actual existence' and, 'a real fact or state of things'. A fourth definition states that reality is a 'Sincere devotion or loyalty (to a person); sincerity or honesty of character or purpose' and qualifies this definition as, 'A sincere expression of opinion or feeling'. Fifth, reality is defined as 'That which constitutes the actual thing, as distinguished from what is merely apparent or external'.[300] For the purposes of this study and this chapter, these definitions of reality will be applied because reality is generally understood to mean that which the *OED* definitions give. However, Julian and Marguerite seem to have different understandings of the term

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[299] In the interest of time and space, only three extracts from each text will be used to illustrate the argument for the idea of ultimate reality. However, it is noted that both *Revelations* and *The Mirror* have ample other passages within both texts' chapters and within the context of each text as a whole that can be used to qualify the argument regarding ultimate reality.

[300] *OED* (accessed 14/11/2018).

reality. Their rhetoric implies that reality, as defined above, is misleading. Both texts seem to argue that if and when reality is understood in corporeal terms and senses, then that reality is an imagined one. According to *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, reality seems to be about undertakings with *pneuma*: whatever the human self may or may not experience it is the divine self that confers and affects meaning on the experience or onto the lack of experience. In essence the divine self qualifies the human self. For example, Julian says in Revelation 14 'that our Lord is ground of our beseeking' (BW27). Chapter 44 of that revelation explains that, 'God shewid in al the revelations oftentimes that man werkyth evermore his will and his wership lestyngly withoute ony styntyng' (BW 99). That the Lord is the foundation of humanity's endeavours and that humanity exercises the Lord's will, is to my mind, a declaration by Julian that she views the divine self as real; not so much the human self. Furthermore, this declaration supports the idea that the divine self qualifies the human self. Marguerite iterates this notion with more clarity. In Chapter 39 of *The Mirror* Marguerite tells Reason, 'what the humanity of Jesus Christ suffered, his divinity did not feel' (CMG 39).[301] Both women appear to treat the divine self as more real than the human self.

From this comes the idea that, at least according to Julian and Marguerite, there is a deeper dimension to reality and this deeper dimension of reality is situated just beyond the given definitions of the term. Furthermore, it seems that this deeper dimension to the given meanings of reality is what could be called ultimate reality. So what is meant by a deeper dimension to reality and why call it ultimate reality? In order to answer this question it is necessary to refer briefly to previous chapters in this study and to refer to and update **Figure 2** from **ChapterTwo**.

Ultimate Reality

Chapter Two mentions that Julian and Marguerite treat the idea of divine love as synonymous with God.[302] Chapter Four, in its attempt to discuss the articulation of liminality in both texts via an exploration of the dynamics between divinity and humanity, discusses how both texts deem that love is the element that constitutes God and in so doing embeds the idea that love, as a divine concept, is a term synonymous with God. Here, the aim is to illustrate how love – as treated by Julian and Marguerite as being synonymous with God – is the ultimate reality. Love as a divine concept, seems, according to both texts, to be the ultimate reality. Whilst *Revelations* treats love as the agent that unifies all that is and the *The Mirror* treats love as a personification, both treatments suggest that although God is ultimate reality, that is, irreducible being, the mystic touches ultimate

[301] In French, 'ce que l'umanité de Jhesucrist souffrit, la deité ne s'en sentit' (RG 124).

[302] Examples are given in that chapter to support this claim.

reality in a realm where divine love unites the perceiving soul with God in such a way as to lift it to a new level of understanding. Working with assertions taken first from *Revelations* and then from *The Mirror*, this sub-section I will explore three extracts from each text in order to provide a working definition for ultimate reality.

A first attempt to illustrate that love is the ultimate reality is taken from *Revelations* and specifically from Revelation 10 (chapter 24). Incidentally this Revelation deals with the issue of love which Julian in Chapter 1 of the long text summarises specifically as, 'our Lord Jesus shewith in love his blissefull herte even cloven on two enjoyand' (BW 27) meaning that, 'our Lord Jesus displays his heart split in two for love' (CW 176). From this statement and from the content of Chapter 24 it is implied that love – the element that constitutes God – is imparted to humanity. Chapter 24 deals specifically with how love integrates God and humanity. The image that Julian works with here is the image of Jesus on the cross revealing the wound in his side. The wound (a material object) it could be said is a symbol for love (the abstract idea). The symbol functions as follows: the wound, being material, is a gaping hole which can stretch, Julian says, to accommodate all of humanity. Furthermore, the wound spills blood and water both of which are material and both of which are widely understood to be integral to life. In that it is a wound that contributes towards Jesus' death, the wound simultaneously seems to be giving rise to life given that it is spilling blood and water which as was mentioned before are both material elements integral to humanity and life in general. The wound's seemingly material ability to stretch to accommodate all of humanity and its ability to spill life-giving materials such as blood and water, all work to illustrate love first as an abstract then love as a personification: love, as an abstract, becomes associated with a source (the wound, thus matter) that has the ability to, in dying, give birth. Through its association with the wound, the abstract idea of love takes on material form and love becomes a personification that propels the idea of divine love to a higher and a deeper level of an understanding of the concept. More specifically love becomes associated with a material source that has the capacity for continued expansion and which works to illustrate that love is eternal and bottomless – Julian's 'heaven without end' (CW 134) in Revelation 1 Chapter 6 of the short version which is a revelation bout the 'teachings of endless wisdom and love' as revealed through the showing of Christ's crown of thorns and the Trinity. In *The Mirror* there is Marguerite's 'abyss of total poverty' that she writes about in Chapter 38 of *The Mirror* which is titled 'How the Soul recognizes the courtesy of Love in perfectly recognizing her poverty' and which attempts to explain divine love (EB 118). There is also 'the abyss of humility' in Chapter 40 that attempts to explain 'How Love calls [the] Soul supremely wise and why' (EB 120) and in chapter 118 the soul in the fifth stage of (re)unification with divinity finds

herself in 'the bottomless depths … And this depth makes [the Soul] see very clearly the true Sun of the Highest Goodness' (EB 192).

In *Revelations*, it is implied that the wound itself is made up of love. Julian writes that the wound is a place of 'pece and …love' and that the blood and the water that spill from the wound is 'al oute for love' (BW 68). Further suggesting the idea that the wound is made up of eternal and bottomless love Julian says, 'he shewid onto myn understanding…the endless love that was without begynnyng, and is, and shal be ever' (BW 68). From this comes the idea that the widening and gaping wound also illustrates that love is not only limitless (endless love) but is also a precondition (love that was without begynnyng, and is) for all that is created.

Within Revelation 10 Chapter 24 it is noteworthy that love is mentioned no fewer than seven times, and there are several variations of the expression 'Lo, how that I lovid the' (BW 68: see lines 15, 16, 21). Simplistic as it seems, this iteration and specifically its repetition suggest not only the love God has for humanity and for all of creation, it also suggests that the agency that is God, is infused with love. Love holds all divine faculties together, just as it holds all human virtues together. The excerpt and its repetitions function as exhaustive declarations that work to illustrate the quality of love: it illustrates heightened love (thus the idea of divine love), it illustrates that love is the most important divine faculty, it illustrates that love is ubiquitous and it illustrates that love is a precondition to all matter and life.

The second excerpt from *Revelations* comes from Revelation 13 Chapter 32. There Julian claims that God says to her, 'I may make al thynges wele…' which Julian finds to be a 'myty comforte of al the works of our Lord God' (BW 79). Here, God making all things well implies not only that God holds the power to reconcile and dissolve contrariness but that divine power is itself a super power constituted of a goodness so extreme that it subsumes discord. The discord, the antithetical, is itself an emanation from God in that – remembering Julian's and Marguerite's discourse on sin being an absence rather than an actual 'thing' – 'the True Ultimate God (*alethes theos*) in ineffable fullness extends itself into the lower regions of being'.[303] Julian seems to grasp this notion because Revelation 13 (ironically) has thirteen chapters dedicated to a consideration of the aforementioned idea. A summary of the thirteen chapters read, '[the] Lord [has] gret regard to all the deeds that he hath done in the gret nobleth of all things making'. This suggests that God delights in all creation and that God is the creator of everything that is, all things good and all things evil. Furthermore the summary treats 'of the excellency of mans makeyng, which is aboven all his works, and of the

[303] Stephan A. Hoeller, *Gnosticism, New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2002), pp. 76–77.

pretious asseth that he hath made for mans synne, turneing all our blame into endlesse worshippe' (BW 27). This suggests that Julian's consideration of Revelation 13 includes the contemplation of the balance between good (the works of Holy Church) and evil (sin) and how that God comforts Julian by communicating to her that it is the primary source, namely, love, that reconciles (makes all things well) the antithetical (creations that are distant from original source and thus ignorant).

Within the context of Revelation 13 Julian speaks of 'a mervelous hey privitye hid in God' (BW 73), 'an exalted and wonderful mystery' (CW 226), a 'grete dede' (BW 79) and 'a dede [that] shall be done' (BW 85). In fact she speaks of two mysterious deeds in Chapter 36. She says 'this dede be truly taken for the general man, yet it excludith not the special… But this dede and the tother afornseid, they arn not both on, but ii sundry' (BW 85). Julian does not say what the mysterious deed(s) is/are or when exactly it/they shall occur because those details are not revealed to her so she herself does not know. However, there are clues in Revelation 13's chapters that hint at what the mysterious deeds might be, who will execute it and when it might occur. The clues are as follows: Revelation 13 Chapter 28 claims that God says 'I shal togeder gader you and make you mylde and meke, clene and holy, by onying to me' (BW 74) and Chapter 35 says 'be the same blissid myte, wisdam, and love that he made al thing, to the same end our good Lord ledyth it continually, and therto himself shal bring it' (BW 83). In these instances it seems that Julian is referring to humanity's (re)union with God because both extracts seem to communicate the idea of humanity's cleansing and (re)enfoldment within God. In Chapter 30 Julian says that God gave her 'understondyng of ii parties…That one party is our savior and our salvation' but the 'other is hid'. The latter (other is hid), I contend, also refers to (re)unification with God because Julian says about this hidden mystery that 'we shall know in heaven' (CW 72)/'which privity he shall openly make knowen to us in hevyn' (BW 73) which suggests that in heaven one is in (re)unification with God and due to (re)unification the mystery clarifies itself. It is, I think, the how and when, that is, the details of the (re)union with God, that are hidden and that we are told 'we must avoid pondering what the deed will be' (CW 235)/'it us nedyth levyn the beholdyng what the dede shal be' (BW81).

As to the former deed that Julian speaks of (one party is our savior and our salvation) the deed could be mankind's redemption that is enabled via the passion of Christ because saviour and salvation allude to Jesus and the passion. Furthermore, in Chapter 29 Julian speaks of 'the glorious atonement' (CW 228)/'the glorious asyeth' (BW 74) which to me also seems to refer to humanity's redemption – redemption being humanity's 'asyeth' (asset, my phonetic interpretation of the old English

word[304]) – via Christ's suffering. More importantly Chapter 32 says directly that one of the deeds will be performed by the Trinity on the last day, 'Ther is a dede the which the blissful Trinite shal done in the last day' (BW 79) which alludes to the salvation of mankind via Christ's suffering via atonement. '[T]he last day' and what Julian calls 'domys day' (BW 77, 78)/'the day of judgement' (CW 230) could be interpreted in many ways. The seemingly 'popular' interpretation is the end-of-days/time interpretations as prophesied in Bible passages. There is 'the end of the world' in the King James Bible in Mathew 24:3, the ruining of the earth by humanity in Revelations 11:18, pestilence and disease in Luke 21:11, the general decay in humanity's ethics and morals in 2 Timoty 3:1–4 and prophecies such as large scale wars in Mathew 24:7 and Revelations 6: 4 all of which point to 'last days', 'doomsday' and 'days of judgement', in other words, the end of the world. Alternatively it could also refer to a person's death, and/or humanity's death at which time both transcend human limits and reason and enter into union with God and then experience reconciliation (the making of all things well) – given that love is all that is. Having said all of this, the deed(s), it seems to me, is/are the act(s) of reconciling discord and (re)uniting humanity with divinity. So reconciliation it seems is something that the created order is reaching toward. Because all emanations have an in-built tendency to return to the One,[305] reconciliation, it could be said, is an act of love and it could be said that, ulitimate reality is loved into being.

Based on the discussion in the previous paragraph it could be said that in the liminal space there is a foretaste or anticipation of the ultimate *concordia discors*, that is, the harmony of discordant elements. Julian ponders how this is possible and is answered thus, 'That is impossible to the is not impossible to me. I shall save my word in al things, and I shal make al thing wele' (BW 80). To save one's word means that the word is proved true. How this works in the extract is as follows: that God can save his 'word' in all things suggests that divine power is constituted of a proclivity towards all manner of restitution bearing in mind that emanations are constituted of love and that this study regarding the make-up of emanations, divinity imparts of itself to its emanations and what it imparts and can only impart, is its divine element, namely, love. That God's 'word' is 'save[d] … in al

[304] The Middle English Dictionary gives 'asseth' to mean 'fulfillment, satisfaction, reparation', available at: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/ (accessed 02/01/2019). The variant spelling 'asyeth' does not reflect in the online dictionary. However, 'asseth' and asyeth', to me, not only indicates humanity's salvation via Christ's atonement; the word and its variant spelling, I think, is a play on words, a pun, of sorts, which in my phonetic interpretation serves to emphasize, the redemption of humanity, in that Christ's atonement serves as humanity's greatest asset.

[305] As discussed in Chapter Five of this study under Plotinus' Conception of the Divine Reflected in

thinges' resonates with the idea that love is imparted to all emanations. This suggests that 'word' has affinities with love. '[W]ord' like love, is also an abstraction. Love works to bring truth into focus whereas 'word' works to show all that could be (potentially) said, spoken and written about God bearing in mind that words make up a language and as such prefixes a language. As a word prefixes a language so does God prefix all that is created and as such God remains an indefinable 'word'. The 'word' itself is incomprehensible, in a sense, so that all knowledge is incomplete, and the mystic can rise to higher and higher levels of understanding, where (for instance) sin is found to have no part in ultimate reality. In this instance, that 'all things are well', is an expression of Julian's truth that love embraces all that is and all that is still to be thus making everything harmonious and whole. God's redemptive plan it seems then, is not only 'intimately connected to his love for the human race but also to his love for the rest of creation'.[306] Hence, love binds all of reality together. Thus is God's 'word' proven to be true. So how else can it be shown that 'word' seems to have has affinities with the incomprehensibility of divine love and that in its turn has affinities with the incomprehensibility of God?

There is much that can be relied upon. Because Julian and Marguerite both have biblical bents to their theories one form of support for the aforementioned claim can be taken from the Bible. The opening lines of the Gospel of John read 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.[307] The 'title 'Word' implies a revelation – not so much a divine idea, but a divine communication. The words 'In the beginning' although they refer to pre-creation imply that there is going to be a creation, a beginning.[308] From this it can be deduced that in the opening verses of the Gospel of John we are in 'the sphere of creation', that is, in the *khoral* space since the latter is the space pregnant with possibility and potential and furthermore that 'the central figure of the Prologue is the Word'.[309] 'Word' is personified and equated with Jesus (the central figure). Since love is a constituent of God, in the *khoral* space of pre-creation God 'speaks the word' (Jesus is begotten) and since love is what binds all divine faculties, creation is a communication of love. Thus the word that is spoken by God is love (Jesus) and the word is a communication of love (Jesus). Thus all emanations are out of, through and from love. Thus creation is 'divine communication', or,

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[306] Edward R. Brown, *Our Father's World*, p. 54.

[307] 'John 1:1-18' (NIV)

[308] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1996), p. 24.

[309] Ibid. p. 19.

as it is said in John 1 14 the word became flesh.[310] The mystic enters the *khoral* space which is simultaneously a reversion to a pre-linguistic state and an advanced level of perception which transcends language.

With reference to the extract from Revelation 13 Chapter 22, the abstract, 'word', is not only a term for elements of speech and writing, that is, things that make up a language, it is also a reference to the language of God. The language of God is situated in the centre of Figure 2, the *khoral* space.[311] The 'word' that prefixes language then, is situated deeper or further inside the *khora*. Travelling deeper into the *khora*/the divine space is to not only deconstruct or rather, to undo words and language, it is also to move closer toward (re)unification with God and to return to an organic and primordial place/space in a relationship with God. This relationship with God occurs in an unspoken, unwritten, unarticulated language, but is nonetheless a communication that can be described as a divine dialogue between God and being and which Julian describes in Revelation 12 Chapter 44 as follows,

And evermore it doith that it was made for; it seith God, it beholdeth God, and it lovyth God; wherof God enjoyith in the creature, and the creature in God, endlessly mervelyng he seith his God, his Lord, his maker, so hey, so gret, and so good in reward of hym that is made, that onethys the creature semyth owte to the self. But the clertye and the clenes of treuth and wisdam makyth him to sen and to beknowen that he is made for love, in which God endlessly kepyth him (BW 99).

Differently put, God and humanity contemplate and revel in each other in and out of love in a divine dialogue that seems to dispose of oral language because as was explained, in the *khora* the unspoken 'word' is love and word is a precondition for language. However, because the 'word' is a communication of love and love is a precondition for all that is, love is the unarticulated language, a mute language that God and creation indulge in and communicate with. Furthermore in, Julian's analogy of the Trinity, she says at the beginning of Chapter 44 that the chapter is, '*Of the properties of the Trinite; and how mannys soule, a creature, hath the same properties, doying that that it was made for, seyng, beholdyng, and mervelying his God; so, by that, it semyth nowte to selfe*' (BW 99).

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[310] This biblical reference is also in relation to Jesus as son of God and is all the more relevant since Jesus is representative of humanity and is thus also an emanation.

[311] Referring to **Figure 2** language is situated in the centre of the diagram, the *khoral* space. A definition of the *khoral* space for the purposes of this study was given in **Chapter Two.** Here, the discussion of the *khoral* space not only relies on the conclusions regarding the *khora* that were drawn in the given chapters but also necessarily extends the discussion on the *khora*.

From this it can be deduced that humanity despite being a lesser emanation, has similar attributes as the Trinity. The construction affirms the idea that love does not distinguish and is instead enamoured of all of its creation and its creation in its turn is enamoured of God. Furthermore it is love that binds the creator and creation in a dance of '*seying, beholdying and mervelyng'*, more especially the creature of its creator, in accordance with the above extract, but also the two of each other based on the content of the Chapter 44. It seems then by this excerpt from *Revelations* and its accompanying explanation, that love brings ultimate reality into light or experience.

For a third example from *Revelations* regarding defining ultimate reality, there is Revelation 14 Chapter 49 which claims,

[O]ur Lord God, anempts himself, may not forgevyn, for he may not be wroth – it were impossible. For this was shewid: that our life is all groundid and rotid in love, and without love we may not levyn…and that we are endlessly onyd to hym in love… For… wher our Lord apperith, peas is taken and wreth hath no place for I saw no manner of wreth in God, neyther for short tyme ne for longe (BW 104).

What Julian seems to be articulating is that love is the constituent of God. God, according to this passage, is not capable of anger; 'it were impossible' she says, of the notion of a wrathful God. As such, it seems that God's experience of humanity is based only in love. As such God need not forgive humanity any supposed misdeed because the divine faculty of love allows only for peace to exist. This pre-existent peace in God, which is rooted in love, automatically cancels any need for forgiveness. Hence, God is seemingly incapable of experiencing offence due to His pre-existent peace which is rooted in love. Love, as the passage says, is the only root of humanity's being and since humanity is a creation of God it is only possible to be in communion with God through and in love. Let us see how *The Mirror* presents the relationship between love and ultimate reality.

Marguerite has an itinerant named Love who stands in opposition to Reason in the dialogue that is *The Mirror*. It is widely understood that Love, as a character in the text, is used as and stands in for God. This widely understood association suggests that God is made up of love because God and Love are treated synonymously. Another widely understood element of *The Mirror* is that Marguerite frames the dialogue that is *The Mirror* within the tradition of courtly love. This tradition casts the sought-after lover (God) as an elusive embodiment of fulfilment (love). Like the fact that there is a character named Love in the text of whom it is widely understood is the voice of God, the fact that Marguerite frames a mystical dialogue within the tradition of courtly love also suggests that love is the ultimate sought-after reality. *The Mirror* is less cryptic than *Revelations* in representing love as ultimate reality. Evidence of this is found as early in the text as Chapter 21. There Love says,

I am God says Love, for Love is God and God is Love, and this soul is God through its condition of Love, and I am God through my divine nature, and this soul is God by Love's just law. So that this my precious beloved is taught and guided by me, without herself, for she has been changed into me. And this is the outcome, Says Love, of being nourished by me (CMG 41).[312]

So, *The Mirror* implies that love constitutes God and argues that humanity is created in and out of love by God and therefore humanity is also constituted of love. Furthermore, humanity cannot be/exist unless it was for and by love. If we abide by *The Mirror*'s aforementioned claim, then it can be said that love is the ultimate reality and it can be said this extract uses a similar logic to Julian's in the passage from Revelation 14 Chapter 49 above.

The excerpt from *The Mirror* similarly posits that love is the precondition that constitutes God and that love and God are synonymous. As such all manner of creation is birthed from love because love is the nature of the divine (what Julian calls the root of the divine). Here, too, love is what makes possible the union between the creator and the created.

A second example from *The Mirror* that suggests that love is ultimate reality can be found in Chapter 94 of *The Mirror*. This chapter is titled 'Of the language of the divine life' or in French, 'Du langage de divine vie'. The Soul, in Chapter 94, opens by saying that 'The language of such a life of the divine self is the sealed silence of divine love' (CGM 118).[313] This statement harks back to what was explained earlier of the language between God and humanity being an unspoken, unwritten communication, in other words, a mute divine dialogue: in discussing Julian's Revelation 12 Chapter 44, it was explained how God and humanity contemplate each other and revel in each other as beings constituted of love. *The Mirror*'s chapter-title above, similarly attempts to explain how God and humanity contemplate each other and revel in each other as beings constituted of love. In fact, *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94, through the voice of The Soul, elaborates this idea in terms that resonate with Julian's. *The Mirror*'s Chapter 94 speaks of the 'natural perfection' (CGM 119)[314] which is the state of being when in communion with God and that 'this state of being…whose form

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[312] In French the meaning is as given for the English translation. It is written there,

Amour. – Je suis Dieu, dit Amour, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est amour, et ceste Ame est Dieu par condicion d'amour, et je suis Dieu par nature divine, et ceste Ame l'est par droicture d'amour. Si que ceste preciuese amye de moy est aprinse et menee de moy sans elle, car elle est muee en moy, et telle fin, dit Amour, prent ma norriture (RG 82).

[313] In French, 'Le langage de telle vie de divine vie est close silence de l'amour divine' (RG 262).

[314] In French, the 'parfection naturelle' (RG 264).

Love in its goodness gives to us, restores the soul to its primal sate' (CGM 119).[315] From this it can be deduced that love is not only the primal state but also preconditions everything that is created since it is said, 'Love in its goodness gives to us'. Love restores us to primal innocence. There we enjoy God as at the first. So love is both the source of restoration and the quality of the restored state.

Further compounding this notion is a third and last example from *The Mirror* regarding the way that love conditions ultimate reality. There is dialogue between Love and The Soul in Chapter 106 of *The Mirror* and a brief interjection by Reason who asks (what could be asked here) '…how can you know?' (CGM 129). In other words, what certainty is there that love is ultimate reality and/or how can one tell that love is the make-up of God and hence of all creation? The point in question is 'how' (CMG 129) or 'what' (EB 178) the soul knows about the goal of her petition. The answer is that she knows what she is asking for without knowing it – her petitions are beyond 'any country where the creature can have understanding' (EB 178). Love therefore confers a divine power of understanding that is somehow beyond words and thus brings us closer to ultimate reality. Here, again, love is the agent and the state into which the soul is drawn. *Amour*/Love, the character, replies by stating that the soul can know the answer to this question 'through the divine nature into which love draws her' (CGM 129).[316] From this it can be deduced that love is seen as the divine nature. If love is the divine nature it follows then that love constitutes God and God is love. The Soul also responds to Reason's question by further explaining that the divine nature is a 'Secret Love, who is beyond peace' (CGM 129) resonates with (echoes) Julian's observation that 'wher our Lord apperith, peas is taken and wreth hath no place' (BW 104, chapter 49). The word 'apperith' suggests that peace was hidden but has now come into the light. Love, the divine nature/element, is so potent that any and all derivatives of it/emanations especially those further from the supernal source become irrelevant. The 'Secret Love' could refer to the divine silent/mute communication between God and his creation as each contemplates and marvels in and with the other as creations made in and out of love. Hence *The Mirror* also has constructions that posit love as the condition of awareness of ultimate reality.

Ultimate reality then is accessed through the potency of divine love which subsumes all that is synonymous with it as well as all that is contrary to it. As *Revelations* and *The Mirror* have it, love is the only true and original source of creation. Love, the ultimate reality, is the root of creation. The ultimate reality is a love that births everything even that which seems sinful or unethical because

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[315] In French, In French, 'Et c'est ester, dont nous parlon, dont Amour nous donne de sa bonte forme, ramaine en l'ame le premier jour' (RG 264).

[316] In French, 'par la divine nature du traiement de son amour' (RG 288).

love is the primordial nature of divinity. Hence, love is the primal/primordial state. It follows therefore that love is the ultimate reality. This also explains why love and God are used synonymously by Julian and Marguerite. It remains now to see where and how ultimate reality reconciles with the given definitions of reality and what both have to do with liminality. In addressing this concern the study turns its attention to the given definitions of reality from the opening paragraph of this chapter and to **Figure 2**. **Figure 2** now necessarily needs an update because an update will allow a graphic illustration of the concern just mentioned.

Reality, Ultimate Reality and Liminality

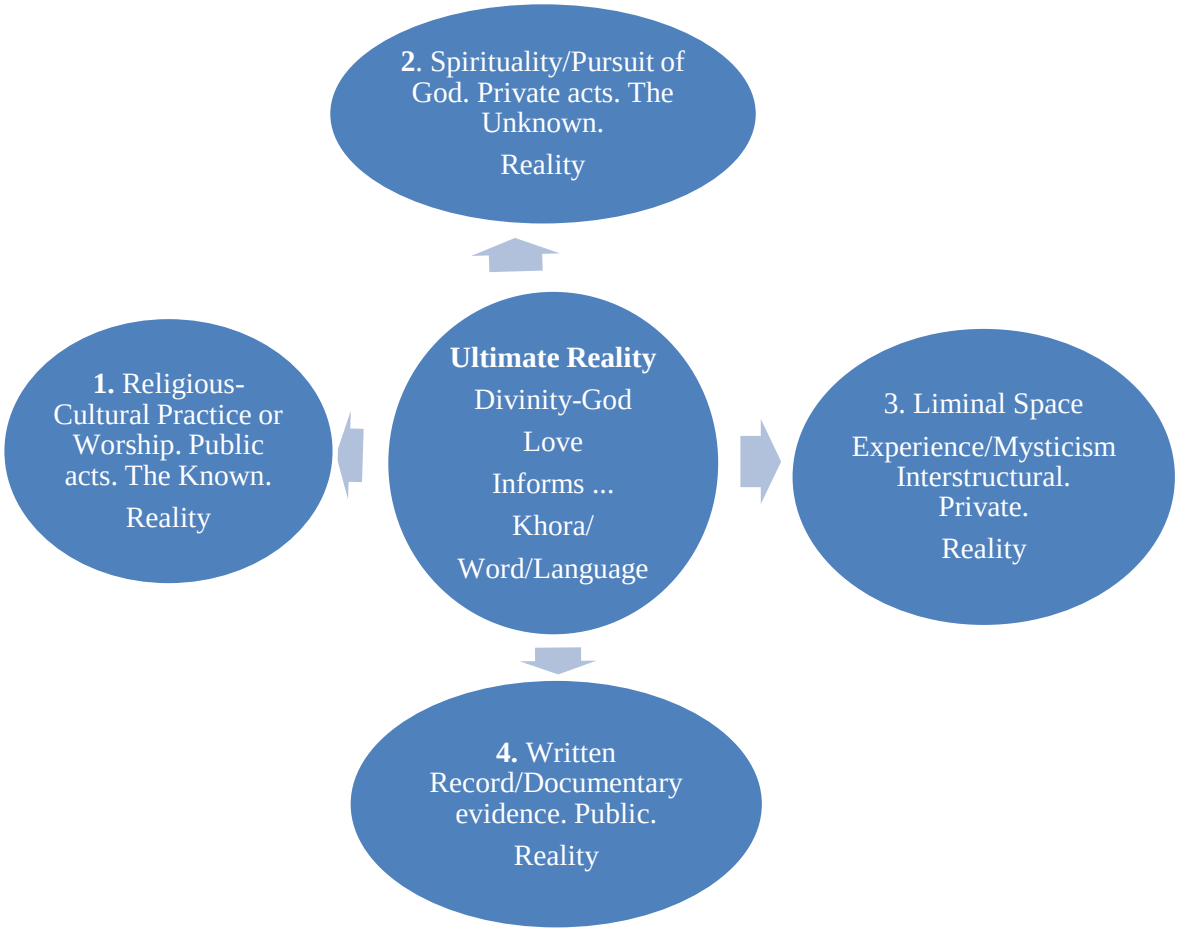


Figure 5

From the diagram it can be seen where and how reality and ultimate reality relate to and reconcile with each other but also what both terms have to do with liminality as inferred from the two texts under discussion. The question to be asked and answered is why place reality and ultimate reality where it has been placed on the diagram, that is ultimate reality in the centre and reality in the outward radiations. As regards ultimate reality the reasons are as follows: love, because it is a

precondition of everything that is/is to be, seems logically to fit in the centre of the diagram because love as a precondition to creation is birthed into the *khora* so seems naturally to share space with the *khora* during the creation process. Furthermore, not only is the *khora* an empty space that is pregnant with possibility, it is also possibly the incubation space of God's emanations of love. As was already mentioned in this study, the *khora* is a metaphysical abyss from which everything derives and in the *khoral* space everything is underpinned by a procreative gap between good and bad in symbiotic relation to each other. For example, in *The Mirror* the 'superexalted Spirit' – the soul who has transmuted and is in (re)unification with the divine says, 'Now you can understand how my evil is the cause of my receiving his goodness…for God sometimes permits some evil to be done, for the sake of the greater good which will afterwards be born of it' (CMG 140). Love, as the unifying agent, seems then to belong in the centre of the diagram above the *khora*. Furthermore, the *khora*'s descriptors, such as it being the receptacle of all things becoming and change, to my mind, read like refined definitions of love, the ultimate reality as was discussed above. By this logic, it follows then that the ultimate reality, namely, love, is placed in the centre of the diagram due to its descriptors resonating with that of the *khora*. Furthermore, since the descriptors for *khora* and love are near exact definitions of each other love and *khora* could be used synonymously depending on the aspect from which they are viewed. That is love could be viewed as a faculty and the khora as a space akin to the faculty since in the permeating essence of the *khora* good precedes bad. Because love informs everything, it is placed in the centre of the diagram in a hierarchical position with Divinity/God first, followed by love and then *khora,* word and language. Ultimate reality is placed on top of love only to show where ultimate reality is situated. Thus ultimate reality, namely, love, is at the centre of the diagram informing and re-informing everything that radiates from and to it.

So why place reality at Points 1 (Religious Cultural Practice; Public Space), 2 (Spiritual Pursuit; Private Space), 3 (Interstructural/Liminal space; Private Space) and 4 (Written Record; Public Space) in the diagram? Firstly, points 1 and 4, the public spaces, conform to what the commonly accepted definitions of reality are. That is, in those spaces material/physical objects exist as substance/matter in that the objects are tactile and tangible. For example, in public space 1, Religious-Cultural Worship, tactile and tangible objects are extant such as churches and temples and in some instances clearings in bush/bushveld. There are even vestments that accompany the worshipping processes as well as physical and visible enactments. These elements do not exist as mental obscurities and as such, according to the definitions given for reality, are real and therefore constitute a physical reality. Point 4's public space, the Written Record/Documentation, is also made

up of tangible and tactile elements such as sacred texts or holy books, and as such, is not a mental figment but is instead corporeal and therefore a physical reality.

The private spaces of points 2 and 3 constitute social reality. That is, point 2, Spiritual Pursuit and point 3, Interstructural/liminal space, are real in the sense that the individuals who undertake the acts/enactments are corporal. As such, at times their undertakings can be witnessed thus rendering the experience real, such as for example, nuns taking vows. At times when the undertakings are not witnessed as the individual experiences it, as in the case of Marguerite, it becomes necessary to fall back on William James's and Walter Stace's work as discussed in **ChapterTwo's** discussion on liminality, that postulates that the mystical experience, due to extant elements of seeming uniformity in experience across cultures and time, is no less real than that which is tangible. Hence, points 2 and 3 incorporate the term reality albeit an intangible reality and thus reality finds a place in the diagram in points 2 and 3 the private spaces despite those spaces seeming to be points that are figments of the mind. So how does liminality reconcile with reality and ultimate reality?

Both texts generate the idea that what is generally believed to be reality according to the given definitions is actually a limited reality and that the true reality is that which lies beyond human senses and which is conditioned by love. In this study, that which lies beyond human senses is situated not only in the liminal space (given its interstructural nature) but also in the *Khoral* space. So why not situate reality in the *khoral* space alongside ultimate reality? The answer to this question is twofold. This study draws a distinction between reality and ultimate reality. Reality is seen as different to ultimate reality as follows: reality is viewed according to the given definitions, that is, as something tangible and something that in given experience(s) can find common ground with each other despite differences in time and location thus rendering the experience(s) real and somewhat tangible. Ultimate reality on the other hand is an indescribable and primeval intangible precondition. Hence, for the purposes of this study reality and ultimate reality cannot be placed in the *khoral* space alongside each other because according to this study each term has a different character. However, reality according to the explanations given for its locations in **Figure 5** is a necessary component in a journey towards apprehending the divine: the liminal space due to its interstructural character, allows the mystic to access information/knowledge that renders an understanding of love as the precondition that constitutes the *khoral* space. In order to comprehend the character of the *khora* and access divine space and furthermore to experience love, the liminal space becomes a 'transit lounge' where first, all givens dissolve, all contrasts are reconciled and all constructs fall away. Only when this happens does ultimate reality/God/love/*khora* begin to become comprehensible. This renders reality, as defined according to its location on the diagram and particularly as it stands in the diagram alongside liminality, a requirement in the journey towards love. Differently put, it is

a reality that individuals enter liminal mind-spaces and it is a reality that all preconceived notions must necessarily fall away prior to apprehending the divine. This is a process and it is a process that is (real)ised in the liminal space. What is realised in the liminal space is that that which was once deemed to be actual, that is, the realities as they appear and function in the diagram in **Figure 5** at points 4 (Written Record), 1 (Religio-cultural worship), 2 (personalised spiritual pursuit), becomes immaterial. So do the texts support this claim? In other words do the texts suggest a reality in which a liminal view is a necessary intermediary stage towards apprehending the divine?

Reality and Liminality and their Expressions in *Revelations*

So if reality is by the given *OED* definitions the quality or state of being real rather than imagined and must have actual existence and be factual, does this mean that what Julian writes about is real/reality? In this instance the answer is no because Julian's texts are about visions that she claims she experienced. It could be argued that Julian's visions occurred in a mental and/or psychological space, specifically Julian's, and that there is no reliable way of proving or disproving Julian's claim. Furthermore, because the visions occur to Julian only and because they occur in her mental/psychological space it could be said that the visions are not the state of things as they actually exist but are instead idealistic or notional ideas that do not exist as fact but exist only in Julian's mind. So by these definitions of reality Julian's *Revelations* and its conjectures cannot be considered to be real or to be about reality. However, the *OED*'s extended definitions of reality state that reality is a sincere devotion or loyalty (to a person) and is sincerity or honesty of character or purpose. Furthermore the *OED* extends reality's definition to mean that which constitutes the actual thing, as distinguished from what is merely apparent. These extended definitions of reality make it harder to dispute *Revelations* and its theories because these definitions provide for sincerity of devotion and loyalty to a person – which in Julian's case applies to her life as an anchoress and contemplation on God who although not considered to be human is represented by Jesus' humanity the likes of which Julian contemplates on heavily as is evidenced in *Revelations*. Furthermore, what 'person', here, also means, is that the integrity of the mystic gaurantees an advance from the apparent to the real when entering the liminal space and approximating to the *khoral*. The extended definition of reality also provides for sincerity and honesty of character or purpose. Given that Julian dedicated her life to contemplating God and was a seemingly highly regarded anchoress who was even consulted by Margery Kempe, this definition of reality could apply to Julian as well. Lastly the *OED*'s extended definition includes that which constitutes the actual thing as distinguished from what is merely apparent. By this definition – and abiding by and reconciling this extended definition with, William James's and Walter Stace's theories that mystical experiences are no less real than experiences that

can be factually proven – and if we accept that Julian did in fact see visions and experience all the unpleasantness that accompanied the visions such as Christ's suffering on the cross and her temptation by the devil, then we would also have to accept that *Revelations* deals with reality. This is so because Julian's discourse is at pains to communicate 'that which constitutes (love) the actual thing (appearance)'. So where and how does *Revelations* express reality, ultimate reality and its relation to liminality? In attempting to define ultimate reality many examples from *Revelations* were given. Here, the study will look at some of *Revelation*'s ideas on reality and liminality and how that the two concepts occupy the same space in the diagram.

In the closing paragraphs of the sub-heading **Reality, Ultimate Reality and Liminality** of this chapter, it was asserted that there exists a requisite reality, point 3 in the diagram above, in which all 'knowledge' must be discarded so as to journey towards the divine and that this requisite reality is a liminal mindset. *Revelations* expresses this requisite reality that is the liminal mind-set in a number of ways. Revelation 3 Chapter 11 attempts to impress the message that it is God/Love that is at the beginning of all that is created and as such there is no distinction between bad or good since both concepts are creations birthed in and out, from and of love. Julian writes, 'For a man beholdeth some dedes wele done and some dedes evil, but our Lord beholdeth hem not so; for as al that hath being in kinde is of Godds makyng, so is al thing that is done in propertie of God's doing' (BW 47). This means that humanity sees duality whereas God does not because the 'propertie' (quality/essence) of all creation is love and as such there is no good or bad; only that which is created. In short, the liminal mindset is at work here and it does not distinguish between good or evil. Instead the liminal view holds that both constructs (dedes wele done and dedes evil) are creations of love and as such distinction between them dissolves leaving a neither-nor state of abeyance. In Revelation 8 Chapter 19 it is written, 'Repenting and wiful choys be two contrarys, which I felte both in one at that tyme; and tho be two parties: that one outward, that other inward' (BW 60) which in modern English reads as, 'Reluctance and deliberate choice are in opposition to one another, and I experienced them both at the same time; and these two parts, one exterior the other interior' (CGM 212). What it seems Julian is attempting to show is that there is duality at work but that the duality, because it is construed of love, dissolves into itself. In other words 'dissolve' here means that the 'two contrarys' each in its own capacity dismantles or, deconstructs, in the sense that each breaks down. When each 'contrary' breaks down, the construct that is duality is emptied and results in a state which is void of opposing forces, hence an interstructural state which is characteristic of liminality. Furthermore, Julian explains this not as a dissolution of one 'contrary' into the other, but as a mastery of the inward party (God/ love) over the outward party (humanity), which has to submit.

Because it is the strongest sense of a liminal perspective in *Revelations*, it seems foolish not to mention the issue of sin here although much has already been made of the concept. Revelation 13 Chapter 27 mentions that 'sin is behoveable', that '[Julian] saw not synne' and that there is 'no manner of blame' (BW 73). Sin is 'needful' or 'fitting', it exists, but it exists only to purify the soul and so is subordinate to the greater good. Sin does not exist independently of and in opposition to the bliss of the soul and the operation of divine love. Sin takes place in a world birthed by love, and so although at one level it is destructive and antithetical to love, at another higher level it is reconverted to love. There are many more instances in *Revelations* in which concepts are juxtaposed only to be reconciled due to the constitutional governance that is love and in so doing reveals a liminal mindset at work. In Revelation 13 Chapter 35 Julian writes, 'I saw God in a point. Al that our Lord doeth is rythful, and alle that he sufferith is worshipful; and in these ii is comprehended good and ille; for al that is good our Lord doith, and that is evil our Lord sufferith' (BW 83). This claim reconstructs good and evil not only as opposites of each other but as necessary oppositions that call each other into being (in that the suffering is as praise worthy as the good that is done by God) and in so doing creates a state of in-betweenness.

Still in Revelation 13, Chapter 36 refers to two deeds that are not the same. Seemingly God accomplishes one of the deeds via humanity on earth and despite the two deeds being unlike reconciles them when the second deed 'shal be as we come to hevyn' (BW 85). In that one deed is actualised in humanity on earth and the other becomes actualised in heaven, so the two deeds in their realisations and meanings are held in suspension. The discussion under the sub-heading **Ultimate Reality** deals, at length with these deeds. There it is shown that the earthly deed, that is, according to the discussion in the sub-heading **Ultimate Reality**, is mankind's redemption via the trinity and that deed is in anticipation of the deed to come in heaven. Hence it can be said here that divine and human action are moving towards one point where they will become one. In the liminal space of mystic exaltation this unity is foreseen and tasted.

In Julian's master and servant analogy she claims that the master (symbolic of God/Love, which Julian herself qualifies in the self-same Chapter) sits in 'rest and peace' (BW 106) This, Julian qualifies as follows, 'The syttyng of the Fader betokenyth his Godhead: that is to say, for shewyng of rest and peas; for in the Godhede may be no travel' (BW 110). In other words in God/Love distinction, opposition or contrariness are not only extant but are held in suspension and in balance making for a betwixt and between position. Perhaps a good example of how Julian construes liminality is through her idea of a 'mother Jesus' (CGM 304), 'moder, Jesus' (BW 126, 131). Here Julian neutralises gender constructs and as such construes God/Love as transcending gender. It follows then that because gender consructs have been neutralised, divine love, indwelling in the

human person, allows that person, in a liminal state, to transcend gender limitations. Thus Julian liminalises God/Love and in so doing tries to impress on the audience that it is a part of her fundamental understanding of God/Love because she likens this understanding to be 'the begynnyng of an ABC'. Julian's simile of God/Love and the beginning of an alphabet reinforces the idea of a reversion of all states and matter to love, which, as was already mentioned, suspends and maintains a balance. With reference to **Figure 5**, love as experienced by the mystic, inhabits a liminal space between reality (in all four aspects) and ultimate reality. So, does *The Mirror* have similar ideas and how does *The Mirror* reflect reality/ultimate reality and liminality?

Reality and Liminality and their Expressions in *The Mirror*

If reality is the quality or state of being real rather than imagined, is the truth of appearances, has the quality of having an actual existence, is a real fact or state of things, is sincere devotion or loyalty (to a person), is sincerity or honesty of character or purpose is, a sincere expression of opinion or feeling and is defined as that which constitutes the actual thing, as distinguished from what is merely apparent; then by all these definitions *The Mirror* cannot be thought of as dealing with reality. *The Mirror*, it can be argued, could be considered in its entirety as a work of fiction given that the narrative is framed within a fable and within the courtly love tradition. Yet, Marguerite lost her life as a consequence of indulging in the formation of the text. The content of the text seems to have threatened the authorities and *The Mirror*'s conjectures were considered heretical. Furthermore, it was already argued that mystical experiences are no less real due to the seeming verifiability of uniformity of themes across time and space. So, like *Revelations*, *The Mirror* will be treated according to James's and Stace's observation that the content of mystical texts is no less real than texts which document verifiable observations.

Like *Revelations*, *The Mirror* also makes startling claims regarding sin. Because much has been said of sin in this study it will suffice here to say that *The Mirror* arrives at the same conclusions as does *Revelations* regarding sin. *The Mirror* in Chapter 11 holds that 'Et peché est nient' (RG 38) that is, 'sin is nothing' (CGM 23).[317] Marguerite is perhaps more explicit about what we are calling liminality than Julian is. Love states that 'one and the same word has two meanings' (CGM 40).[318]

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[317] An explanation regarding how the concept of sin being an absence of good and thus the idea of wrong and right dissolving has already been dealt with briefly in **Chapter Two**, discussed at some length in **Chapter Four** and received further discussion in this chapter regarding the examples given for *Revelations* so it ought to suffice here to say that *The Mirror* arrives at the same conclusions regarding the issue of sin as does *Revelations*.

[318] In French, 'une mesmes parole a deux entenemens' (RG 78).

Embedded in this claim is duality and reconciliation in that a word can carry multiple meanings but even as meaning expands, so too does it contract. Love explains this concept to Reason who cannot fathom how 'two contradictory statements' are reconcilable (CGM 40) in terms of the servant and master analogy (here too *The Mirror* resonates with *Revelations* since like *Revelations The Mirror* also uses the master and servant analogy). Love explains to Reason that at times a servant works obediently for a master but that it can occur that a servant learns fast and in so doing outlearns, or outgrows his employer and in so doing the servant can himself become a master. Not only does *The Mirror*'s analogy reinforce the points made regarding the master-servant analogy as explained for *Revelations*, *The Mirror* actually goes a step further in that it illustrates how the tensions between master and servant are suspended. The servant in this case is shown to be a learner and the master in this case is shown to be a teacher. The situation between master and servant is shown to be reversible because tensions are being kept in balance in a value neutral state – meaning that things are no longer judged by the categories used outside of liminality. Another analogy in Chapter 25 of *The Mirror* juxtaposes hot and cold, thirst and drowning and claims that love subsumes the contradictions. In Chapter 40 it is written that wise souls are those who know that they are not wrong but simultaneously know that they are not right. This analogy illustrates how opposites can be switched in meaning, can become reversible and therefore negative value judgements dissolve.

Juxtapositions that meld due to subsumation and can switch positions create a gap, a space, and this gap-space is the non-partisan gap-space where love is the constitutive governing factor. Such juxtapositions abound in *The Mirror*. There is reference to the actives and contemplatives and 'words of two meanings' (CGM 29) in Chapter 13, to creation and (re)creation in Chapter 30. Marguerite addresses an audience who hears the book read (CGM 57) and one that reads the book (CGM 57). She writes of ascending and descending in Chapter 128 and wickedness and goodness in Chapter 130 to name a few. What all the contrasts have in common is that they become reconciled due to love's nature and in reconciliation can switch meaning and function.

The Mirror's strongest liminal point, by my understanding, comes from the Far-Near construction in Chapter 61. This construction aims to show how close to and yet how distant humanity is from God. It is a state that can be described as liminal because the construction exemplifies a betwixt and between position. Like the Holy Spirit according to the Nicean Creed, proceeds from the Father and then the Son, humanity too is as close to God in that humanity is an emanation from God/Love and therefore like the Holy Spirit retains the essence of divinity. Furthermore, humanity also seeks reconciliation with divinity whether or not that reconciliation is active or contemplative. Yet, like the Holy Spirit, humanity is also apart from God, humanity due to its condition of the five senses limiting it to only grasping what it can grasp as real according to the given definitions for reality;

and the Holy Spirit in that it is a part of God the Father but its operational quality compels it to be at a distance from God. So if humanity is close to God and far from God this implies that humanity can find itself in a liminal state because Farnear implies an in-between position. What is to be made of this implication? In order to respond to this implication the study turns its attention to perception.

What is Perception?

The *OED* gives the word to mean: first, the process of becoming aware of a thing or things in general. Second, the word means the process of becoming aware of physical objects and phenomena through the senses. A third meaning is given as the state of being aware or consciousness in so far as spiritual understanding is concerned. A fourth definition gives the term to mean the mental product or result of perceiving something, hence, intuition, insight and perspicacity. [319]The first two definitions seem to refer specifically to what is commonly thought of as the five senses. That is, the ability to see, hear, smell, taste and touch. These are somewhat tangible senses in that they are part of the human condition. The third and fourth definitions seem to further the first two definitions in that it posits an extrasensory dimension to perception. That is, definitions four and five define perception as an ability to intuit. That is, to arrive innately and instinctively at comprehension. These given definitions is what will be applied in this study because perception is generally understood to mean that which the given definitions state.

It has been said that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* overturn that which seems real according to the given definitions and replace it with a perception (as defined above) rooted in an understanding of divinity that seems to imply that the divine self is more real than the human self. The implication is that reality and perception by *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s understanding could also possibly swop positions: this could mean that although orthodoxy would deny the notion that 'all reality is constructed' – that is, orthodoxy affirms that truth and reality are independent of perception and even argument, in the *khoral* space the gap between reality and perception is closed. In the closing lines of the definition for reality it was said that there seems to be a deeper dimension to reality and that this deeper dimension of reality is situated just beyond the given meanings and lay comprehension of reality. Furthermore, this deeper dimension to the given meanings of reality is what was defined as ultimate reality. It was also explained that both texts generate the idea that what is generally believed to be reality according to the given definitions is actually a pseudo-reality and that the true reality is that which lies beyond humanity's five senses and is love; the ultimate reality. As such the implication is that humanity is having a limited experience or that humanity's reality is

[319] Definition for 'perception', *OED,* (accessed 26/07/2019).

not real but is a virtual reality[320] due to a seeming inability to perceive, by the first three given definitions, ultimate reality, namely love. So how do reality and perception by their given meanings become reversed or swopped? To answer this question the focus has to shift to how perception, according to the given definitions, finds expression in the texts.

Perception and its Expressions in *Revelations*

The *OED* definitions of perception allows for the five senses, as well as for what seems to be a 'sixth sense'. Medieval teaching also accepted these associations: the medieval theory of the inner sense was made up of two strands. There was what was called 'Universal knowledge' which, for example, dealt in factual information such as 2 + 2 = 4, and abstract comprehensions of God. A second strand to the medieval theory of the inner senses is called 'particular knowledge' and is 'more closely tied to perception'.[321] This strand suggests that,

> a number of other cognitive processes … take place in bodily organs. These processes included the 'common sense', a term not to be understood here in its modern connotation, which was believed to combine input from different sense modalities (like touch and vision), imagination (which included the power of retaining and recalling sensory images), and memory.[322]

By my understanding of the *OED* definitions for perception, and the medieval idea of the common sense, this 'sixth sense', the modality that involves imagination, retaining and recalling sensory images and imagination, seems to rely on intuitive understanding, insight and interpretation. Therefore, Julian, it seems, is accessing a reality alternative to the tangibility of everyday life through four of her five senses since she can see, hear, smell and feel all that she witnesses through an 'other' sense. This other sense is what Julian relies on to decode her visions and is what Julian calls her 'gostly sight' (BW 410), her 'Spiritual vision' (CW 192) in Revelation 1 Chapter 9, and which Julian says, '[persists] in [her] understanding' (CW 190)/'the gostly sight dwelled in myne understondyng' (BW41). From this spiritual persistence in Julian's understanding it could be deduced that her perception is a pre-existing intuitive sense informing Julian's interpretations of the

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[320] According to the *OED* definition, meaning that [what is deemed reality] is such in potentiality, or effect, but is not so in form or actuality rather it is supposed and/or imagined.

[321] Simon Kemp and Garth J. O. Fletcher, 'The Medieval Theory of the Inner Senses', *The American Journal of Psychology* 106.4 (Winter 1993): 559–576 (pp. 559, 564).

[322] Ibid.

visions and that the presentiment is what stimulates '[her] understanding' (CW 198)/'to myne understondeng' (BW 47), for Julian frequently mentions her understanding and how '[things] came into [her] mind' (CW 200)/'And than cam to my minde' (BW 49) or were 'brought to [her] mind' (CW 219)/'And in this he browte to mend' (BW 67). This presentiment seems to be what imparts the notion that the spiritual self is more real than the human self. Julian emphasises this idea to the audience in Revelation 8 Chapter 19 where she claims that humanity is constituted of an 'inward' and an 'outward part', of which 'The outward party is our deadly fleschede' and 'The inward party is an high and blisfull life which is al in pece and in love' and, furthermore, that this inward part of her is 'more privily felte'. Julian also claims that the 'inward party is master and soverayn to the outeward' (BW 60/61) and that it '[pays] no heed to what the exterior part may will' (CW 212)/'to the outeward, and not charging ne takyng hede to the will of that' (BW 61). Chapter 20 of the short text even claims that fear and disease and suffering are all 'illusions which [souls] must endure' (CW 161)/'alle othere dredes sette tham emange passyons and bodelye sekenesse and ymagynacions' (BW 135), which the long text reiterates. These declarations reinforce not only the idea that the divine self is more real than the human self, but that the reality and perception can change positions, so that what is believed to be real, such as disease and suffering, are actually perceptions, in that they are 'emange passyons' or, 'illusions that the soul must endure'. Thus reality and perception become reversible.

Still relying on the definitions given for perception, what all of the aforementioned then suggests is that humanity is experiencing life, not only through perception, but through a limited perception, since Julian appears to access divine knowledge through, not only four of her five known senses, but also through a spiritual understanding which moves her to interpretation and comprehension. It seems that the spiritual understanding that she gains is super-sensory, a 'sixth sense', which extends Julian's perception. So, according to the definitions for perception and Julian's claims of the interior part overriding the exterior part, there is evidently a further dimension to humanity's five senses, which is a super-sensory perception. So what is this super-sensory perception?

In Revelation 14 Chapter 54, Julian speaks of 'substans' and a 'sensual soule' (BW 116). Substance seems to be the nature of God and is judged to be humanity's higher faculty. This higher faculty is regarded as an indwelling God which, when it births humanity, simultaneously imparts some of itself into the creation that is humanity. Humanity's natural substance is, therefore, God/Love. So in Julian's reckoning humanity has inherent substance (God's natural make-up, love) and a sense soul (the material and five senses that compose humanity). She explains it thus:

And what tyme that our soule is inspired into our body, in which we arn made sensual, also swithe mercy and grace begynyth to werkyng, haveing of us cure and keping with pite and love; in which

werkyng the Holy Gost formyth in our feith hope that we shal cum agen up aboven to our substance (BW 117) and, 'I saw no difference atwixt God and our substance, but as it were al God; and yet myn understondyng toke that our substance is in God: that is to sey, that God is God, and our substance is a creature in God' (BW 116) and, 'For I saw full sekerly that our substance is in God, and also I saw that in our sensualite God is; for the self poynte that our soule is mad sensual, in the self point is the cite of God' (BW 117). These two aspects are further qualified as 'ii partes…in Criste, the heyer and the lower, which is but one soule. The heyer part was on peace with God… the lower partie, which is sensualite suffrid for the salvation of mankynd' (BW 117).

So the super-sensory perception then is considered to be mankind's inherent substance (indwelling God). The relationship between creator and creature resonates with Aristotle's definition of the relationship between substance and accident: humanity is accidental, God is substantial. Julian's use of the word implies that the human connection with God is substantial, and all other human behaviours are ultimately accidental.When Julian says that 'our substance is a creature in God' it could be interpreted as the substance that is God/Love which is inherent in the accident that is humanity/creature, since, as was already mentioned, all emanations are birthed of the essence of God namely, love. It is this inherent substance in the humanity/creature (accident) that seems to guide and direct Julian's perception. Its function as a governing body controlling the narrative, *Revelations*, serves only to impress upon the audience that the substance (indwelling God) is more real than the sensuality (the human senses). In other words, the innate and super-sensory perception actualises the experience, making it not only a perception through heightened awareness, but also more real than that which the sensual soul experiences. So how does it happen that the super-sensory perception, the higher faculty, the substance, is accessed? Before answering this question *The Mirror* must first be examined to see if it has similar constructions regarding *Revelations*' sensuality and substance.

Perception and its Expressions in *The Mirror*

In *The Mirror*, as early as The Prologue, Marguerite speaks of understanding the text with 'the subtle understanding within you' (CGM 10)/ 'estudie du subtil entendement de dedans vous' (RG 10). This already hints at correlation with Julian's 'substance'. However, it is necessary to understand first, that Marguerite also builds a case for an indwelling God. There is reference to the soul that 'dwells always in the divine will' (CGM 15), and 'Love who dwells in her'[323] (CGM 19), 'they have one common will' (CGM 47), and 'Love who has changed her into herself, dwells in her.

[323] By now it has been established that both texts use love synonymously with God.

So that this Soul is herself Love' (CGM 59). There are many more examples from *The Mirror* but in the interest of time and space these examples ought to suffice. It stands to reason then, that if *The Mirror* holds that there is an indwelling God, then perception as it would apply here, would be similar to that found in *Revelations*. In other words, as *Revelations* construes a higher faculty or super-sensory perception in humanity which it calls substance, so too should a higher faculty or super-sensory perception be found and named in *The Mirror*. This brings us back to this paragraph's opening statement in which Marguerite speaks of a 'subtle understanding within'. She alludes to this subtle understanding within again in Chapter 15 of *The Mirror*, when The Graciousness of the Goodness of Love says that 'no-one can set his foundations deep or build his house high unless he does this by using the subtlety of his considerable natural intelligence and with the intense Light of Spiritual Understanding'.[324] Spiritual understanding as Marguerite uses it here calls to mind Julian's claim of understanding by spiritual means. Chapter 23 of *The Mirror* says that, 'through her subtlety her knowledge is very penetrating'. Furthermore, Chapter 110 is titled 'How art in the creature is a subtle instrument which is in the substance of the soul'. Love says in Chapter 110,

It is a subtle instrument of which perception is born, which gives knowledge in the Soul, to understand more perfectly what is said than even he who says it, however much the speaker may understand what he says; because the listener rests, and the speaker labours, and knowledge cannot endure labour without becoming less noble. The art is swift, and so it tends naturally to attain the whole of its undertaking. Its perception is nothing less than the will of God. This subtle instrument is the substance of the Soul; and this knowledge is the sum of the Soul, which knowledge is composed of the substance and of the understanding (CMG 133).

It could be concluded then that Marguerite's super-sensory perception is called a subtle instrument and substance. Through this subtle instrument is knowledge accessed and gained which is 'penetrating' as mentioned earlier. Judging from the extracts this super-sensory perception is innate due to the indwelling God, and is recognisable only when heeding intuition, because personal intuition is God's voice, so to speak. The French version calls this extra sensory perception '*subtil entendement*' (RG 10), '*Subtil de grant sens*' (RG 64) and '*de cognoissance par subtiilite'* (RG 88), all of which hints at a deeply recessed latent higher faculty. It can therefore be concluded that *The Mirror* also makes provision for super-sensory perception. Just as reality and perception, as was explained, could trade places in *Revelations*, so too can they trade positions in *The Mirror*: humanity can access divinity through its heightened perception making that a real experience and humanity can have a lived experience in the material world which is illusory yet tactile and therefore real. So,

[324] It is noted that the translation uses non-inclusive language here and elsehwhere.

how is substance accessed, or rather, how does one gain access to divinity in order to participate with divine nature or, how does one (re)connect with God?

In order to answer the question above it is useful to look at some of the ideas in the work of St. Richard of Victor regarding 'the path of love'[325] or 'the itinerary to union with God'.[326] These ideas are indicators of ways the mystic participates more fully with the divine and they can be traced in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. Like Richard of St. Victor's work, the texts '[utilise] imaginative allegory and intuitive reasoning' to arrive at a 'systematized… theory of mystical contemplative theology that [draws] on Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine, Boethius, Gregory the Great [and] Eriugena'. This 'liturgically sensitive, and theologically sophisticated spirituality' focusses on 'four elements' all of which are present in *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s discourseregarding spiritual insight. The first element is the insistence that contemplation and ascent to God must be based on self-knowledge and personal discretion'. *The Mirror*'s Chapter 11[327] is explicative of the 'due process' involved in contemplation and is titled, 'How at the request of Reason Love gives knowledge of this Soul to contemplatives by making nine points clear which have already been mentioned'. In the same chapter Love explains to Reason that the soul 'is a solitary phoenix, for this soul is alone in love and satisfies herself with herself'. From the title of the chapter, to its content and especially the extract, we can deduce that the first element of St Richard of Victor's ideas on spirituality regarding self-knowledge, at least, is present in *The Mirror*. Further to this *The Mirror* actually has a character called Discretion who functions as the cautionary voice of logic when in Chapter 32 we read, Discretion: 'For God's sake, think, says Discretion, how such souls can remain in their senses'. In *Revelations* Chapter 17 Julian reveals her knowledge of how sin functions and her discretion when she writes 'Although our Lord revealed to me that I should sin, I understood everything to apply only to me'.

The second element pertinent to spiritual faculty and accessing God is the 'pervasive Christological motif'. This element is found throught *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. Christ and the crown of thorns is the first of Julian's showings on her deathbed. In fact, according to Chapter One of the long text eight of the sixteen showings are listed as directly related to Christ or, are of Christ in various modes such as His skin changing colour whilst He is on the cross, or Mary at his feet, or Christ overcoming

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[325] Steven Chase, Contemplation and Compasssion, p. 33.

[326] Bernard McGinn, The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, p. 34.

[327] Only single examples are given for each extract but it is noted that both texts have an abundance of extracts that can be used as exmples.

the devil. *The Mirror* also contemplates 'the sufferings and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ' (CMG 30) and the precious body of Jesus Christ (CMG 33).

The Third of St. Richard's elements of spitituality that assist in mystical union is that 'reason must transcend or 'die' in order that the soul may enter the most intimate and divine mystery, the Trinity. In *The Mirror*, the character Reason actually dies in Chapter 87. Marguerite kilss off the character and all the logic and intellect it represents. In *Revelations* Chapter 8 of the short text Julian writes that '[she] was compelled to admit that everything which is done is well done done' and that [she] did not wish to go on feeling surprise at [sin being a no-thing]' (CW 137. So Julian too dispenses with reason.

The fourth and last element indicating the presecnce of a higher spiritual faculty at work 'is the oscillation in awareness between apparent oppositions'.[328] The presence of juxtapositioning and the issue of polarities that seem to cancel each other, in both texts, were discussed at length in **Chapter Four** under the sub-heading **Ambiguity and Liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror***. It needs only be said that this is another of Saint Richard's recognition of the faculty of spiritual insight that can be found in both texts.

Julian's 'Noughting' and Marguerite's 'Annihilating'

It was aleaready mentioned that *Revelations* has traces of apophatic theology and that apophatic theology is a way of describing God/Love in negative terms. For an example of this Julian says in Chapter 5 of Revelation 1 that a soul must be 'nowtid' (BW 36) in order to reunite with divinity, that, 'no sowle is in reste till it is noughted' (NC 10). So in order to (re)unite with divinity one seemingly has to empty oneself – a kenotic process. That is, there is a suggestion of an abandonment of all that one purports to know, which to my mind seems like an act of negation. Hence it can be said that there is apophatic theology at work *Revelations*. Similarly *The Mirror* employs an apophatic discourse. Marguerite speaks of, 'And if you cannot fully achieve this knowledge of nothingness which exists in truth, … still you must not forget your nothingness, which in truth is all that you are, when he first created you' (CGM 54).[329] So, *The Mirror* also seems to construct God/Love in terms of negation yet a positive negation as was explained in the sub-heading **Humanity and Apophasis: Psuedo-Dionysius.** It can be concluded then that in order for humanity

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[328] Steven Chase, Contemplation and Compasssion, p. 34.

[329] In French, 'Et se vous ne povez parfaictemant venir a cognoistre vostre neant qui est a la verité tant … Se Dieu vous a mueé en luy, pourtant ne devez vous pas oblier vostre neant. C'est a dire que vous ne devez mie oblier qui vous estiez, quant il vous crea premierement' (RG 111,112).

to move from its seeming liminal state towards God/Love – according to the examples given under **Reality and Liminality and its Expression in *Revelations*** and according to the examples given under **Reality and Liminality and its Expression in** T*he Mirror* – humanity has to void all knowledge of itself as a being and all knowledge it purports to hold. This act shifts humanity from a liminal state towards love, the ultimate state, the ultimate reality. This shift, or movement, is enabled by what Julian calls noughting and by what Marguerite calls annihilation because noughting and annihilation call for an emptying of the self. But what does this mean? Relying on the explanation given for apophasis in the **Chapter Two**, emptying of the self means to be inward looking, to recognise the human 'blue print' as deliberately faulty and also to recognise and acknowledge the preternatural God/Love 'blue print' that underpins humanity. Through recognition of the preternatural love it becomes possible to reunite with God/Love in that human nature then becomes unburdened with constructs and as such comes to see and experience only preternatural God/Love. So, where does *Revelations* and *The Mirror* make the suggestion that an evacuation of the self is what is needed in order to shift from a liminal state towards rapture – the condition of intense delight when in union with divinity?

Again, Chapter 5 of Revelation 1 seems to be the first introduction by Julian of the idea of an evacuation in the mind of knowledge of, knowledge in and of itself, person, ego, intellect, virtues, and all human constructs – in short an abandoning of the desire to want to comprehend and control events and situations. It is written there that, 'When she is wilfully noughted for loue, to have him that is all, then she is agreeable to receive ghostly reste' (NC 10).[330] Furthermore, the Short text of *Revelations* has it that,

And when I sawe that God hase made alle thynge, I sawe the nought; and when I sawe that God is in alle thynge, I sawe the nought. And when I oure Lorde Jhesu sitt in oure saule so wyrschipfully, and luff and lyke and rewle and yeme alle that he has made, I sawe nought the. And thus I am sekyr that thou erte nought; and alle tha that leffez the, and lykes the, and folowes the, and wilfully endes in the, I am sekyr thay schalle be brought to nought with the, and endleslye confownded (BW 147).

In essence it is sin that Julian cannot see, and that blindeness to sin, in the all encompassing image of God, is a form of annihilation or noughting. This extract from the short text deals with Revelation 16 which Julian tells us is about 'the blessed Trinity our Creator [who] dwells eternally in our soul in Christ Jesus our saviour, honourably ruling and commanding all things, powerfully and wisely saving and preserving us out of love; and that we shall not be overcome by our enemy' (CW 177). Chapter 72 of the long text clarifies the extract from the short text by explaining 'why these shewings

[330] The Windeatt text is the same except that it speaks of a 'he', p. 36.

were made' (BW 146). In that chapter Julian explains that trials and tribulations, because of humanity's 'blindhede and weyte of flesh' are temporal, and that difficulties are replaced by 'the most comfortable chere of God' (BW 146). This comfortable cheer, it can be assumed, is realised through discerning that experiences of matter and flesh are temporal and should be comprehended as such and that there ought to be no concern for such matters due to their temporality. Having no concern for earthly matters implies surrendering to an understanding that a higher consciousness is at work.

Thus, acquiring a composed and heightened comprehension that a higher consciousness is at work is at once to empty one's self of tribulation and to exhaust earthly experiences because there has been an abandonment of earthly constructs. It could be said that tribulations blur the vision. In other words vision is facilitated by a progressive shedding of all inhibitors. This abandonment of earthly constructs ignites re-entry into divinity which is itself 'nothing' save love. In other words, humanity re-experiences the nought that is the ultimate reality that is love after surrender to a refined understanding that a higher consciousness is at work. The short text explains this as follows in Revelation 1:[331]

In this blessed revelation God showed me three nothings, of which nothings this is the first that was shown to me. Every man and woman who wishes to live contemplatively needs to know this, so that it may be pleasing to them to despise as nothing everything created, so as to have the love of uncreated God. For this is the reason why those who deliberately occupy themselves with earthly business, constantly seeking worldly well-being, have not God's rest in their hearts and souls; for they love and seek their rest in this thing which is so little and in which there is no rest and do not know God who is almighty, all wise and all good, for he is true rest. God wishes to be known, and it pleases him that we should rest in him; for all things which are beneath him are not sufficient for us. And this is the reason why no soul has rest until it has despised as nothing all which is created. When the soul has become nothing for love, so as to have him who is all that is good, then is it able to receive spiritual rest (CW 132).

The last sentence implies that the soul has emptied itself and as such is now en route towards God/Love, in the first instance. In the second instance the implication is that now that the soul has served its purpose by having exhausted its human experience it has become nothing and as such automatically reverts to its original creation, that is, love. So by Julian's reckoning accessing substance/gaining access to divinity in order to participate with divine nature/reconnecting with God involves an undoing of all that one purports to know or be. What then of Marguerite? It has already

[331] In the interest of flow of argument only, the modern English version is used here.

been mentioned that *The Mirror* has an apophatic bent. The question is, where in the text is this apophatic discourse situated and does it make similar claims to that of Julian's?

The full title of Marguerite's text is 'The Mirror of simple Souls brought to nothing, and who live only in the will and desire for Love' (CMG 1).[332] It becomes obvious early on then that the text embodies apophatic discourse, in the sense that perception works by ridding itself of categories and conditions. Chapter 5 of *The Mirror* is titled 'Of that life which is called the peace of charity in a life brought to nothing' (CMG 14). In this chapter Marguerite lists the qualities of a soul that has been brought to nothing. Marguerite claims that such a person 'saves itself without works…does nothing for God…does not refrain from doing anything for God…one can teach nothing [to]… [is somebody] from whom one can take nothing away… one can give nothing [to] and [is somebody] who has no will at all' (CGM 14). This list of markers specifies what it means to empty the self of constructs. The implication is that the emptying goes beyond moral and emotional self-emptying to intellectual evacuation. Chapter 11 clarifies what a soul brought to nothing is and means. It says there that 'a Soul brought to nothing has such great inward knowledge through the virtue of Faith, and is so occupied in maintaining in what Faith gives to her of the might of the Father, of the wisdom of the Son, and of the goodness of the Holy Spirit, that no created thing can remain in her recollection' (CGM 23). Furthermore, in the same chapter it is written that a soul is brought to nothing by true and perfect humility. All of the aforementioned seems to me to resonate with what was written about Julian's noughting. Chapter 12 of *The Mirror* claims that 'the Soul brought to Nothing has no will at all, and cannot want to have any at all, and in this the divine will is perfectly accomplished' (CGM 27). This statement and chapter of *The Mirror* illustrates the level of surrender of the mind that is required in order to access 'divine Love', 'Understanding of Divine Love' or, 'Exalted Understanding of Love' (CMG 27, 28)[333] – Marguerite's versions for substance – in order to participate with divine nature and (re)unite with God/Love. Furthermore, in the same chapter of *The Mirror* is written 'Understanding of Divine Love, who dwells and is in the Soul brought to Nothing and set free, she understands this at once, for she is the very thing' (CGM 28) meaning that (at risk of repetition but because the explanation seems succinct and apt) as was the case with *Revelations*, through discerning, experiences of matter and flesh are understood to be temporal and are comprehended as such. Hence there is no consideration for such matters due to their temporality. Having no concern for earthly matters implies surrendering to an understanding that a higher

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[332] Again, only in the interest of flow of argument the Modern English version will suffice here.

[333] In French, 'divine parfaictement', 'Mais Entendement de Divine Amour' '*La Haultesse d'Entendement d'Amour'* (RG 50, 52).

consciousness is at work. Thus, acquiring a composed and heightened comprehension that a higher consciousness is at work is at once to empty one's self of tribulation because there has been an abandonment of earthly constructs. This abandonment of earthly constructs ignites re-entry into divinity which is itself 'nothing' save love. In other words, humanity re-experiences the nought that is the ultimate reality that is love after surrendering to a refined understanding that a higher consciousness is at work. So, as it was the case for *Revelations* so too is it for *The Mirror*: by Marguerite's reckoning accessing divine love/gaining access to divinity in order to participate with divine nature/reconnecting with God involves an undoing of all that one purports to know or be.

Summary

This chapter provided a definition for reality and extended the definition of reality to include what this study calls ultimate reality, namely love. It was found that *Revelations* fitted some aspects of the definition of reality but construed an ultimate reality as alternative to the lay meaning of reality. *The Mirror* did not seem to fit any of the lay definitions of reality and the argument there regarding reality rested on the assumption that mystical texts and the mystical experience were no less real in that they seem to share commonality in themes that cross time and space. However, it seems that ultimate reality as defined and as presented in *Revelations* is extant in *The Mirror*. **Figure 5** attempts to show how reality and ultimate reality, the latter being love, relate to each other and to liminality. It was found that ultimate reality/love, resonates with descriptions of the *khora* and so both were placed in the centre of the diagram with reality as its outwardly radiating imprints. Reality in its position on the diagram as outwardly radiating proceeds was explained in terms of physical realities and in terms of socio-religious reality. Liminality was found to be a necessary religious socio-reality because it enables the possibility of comprehending ultimate reality/God/Love. It was also found that opposites could possibly swop meaning and function in the liminal reality.

A lay definition for perception was provided and applied to both texts and it was found that humanity, due to its human condition of the five senses, is experiencing a limited version of reality because of an inability to activate and access its 'sixth sense'. This sixth sense was found to be what *Revelations* calls spiritual understanding and *The Mirror* calls subtlety of understanding. This 'sixth sense' enables the understanding that a complete emptying of the mind of all constructs is necessary so as to apprehend the divine. When such a state is achieved, it was found, being resonates with love since love is of itself such a potent element that it subsumes everything resulting in a void, a nothingness, a *khoral* abyss which holds the beginning of the beginning. In such a state of mind does reunification with divinity become comprehensible and possible. Lastly, it could be said that if liminality dissolves distinctions of morality and gender, it may be because it goes behind the

surface of life, ‘reality’ as known and verifiable; to a substratum of love from which everything else emanates, good or bad. The distinction remains valid at one level but disappears at the other.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror* set out to investigate the articulation of liminality in the vernacular theology of both texts. Based on William James's and Walter Stace's theories that there are similarities in what mystics report about union with God despite differences in time, space, geography and culture of the writers and their texts, the argument takes for granted that there is, what it calls, a common referential field, that mystics draw from and contribute towards in order to articulate understandings of mystical union. Despite provisionally accepting the notion, the argument attempted to show that there is such a thing as a common referential field in which similarities between the aforementioned texts and amongst other texts can be traced and furthermore also attempted to show how the common referential field operates, what its dimensions are and how that liminality is not only a feature of this field but is also a feature of mystical union. To that effect the study was compelled first, to illustrate a number of concepts and assumptions that the discourse rests on.

Along with the necessary expositions in **Chapter One** for choice of texts, the texts in context, vernacular theology and those in **Chapter Two** for common core mysticism, the pivotal expositions upon which this study rests are liminality, apophasis, self-imploding referentiality, the *khora* and the idea of topology tentatively transposed so as to view literature from a particular vantage point. The vantage point of topology transposed to literature reveals not only the field that is the common referential field, but also its dimensions as well as the conversations between *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and the links between these texts and others. Furthermore, that vantage point not only assists in mapping liminality but also assists in understanding liminality's role in mystical union as outlined in **Figure 3** and; tentatively transposed as a tool for literary investigation, has helped this study's understanding of the common referential field, liminality and the commonalities between *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s articulation of liminality.

Bearing in mind that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* 'challenge standard interpretative strategies'[334] and that both texts employ a variety of devices to transpose the mystical experience/theory into man's language, this study took its lead from Julian and Marguerite and made use of transposition, in places, so as to decipher the expressions of mystical union from the vernacular discourse and how

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[334] Vincent Gillespie '[S]he do the police in different voices: Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich.' *Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), p. 398.

that liminality is a stage in the process of 'awakening'. In fact, because both texts defy linear analysis, it became necessary to employ alternative devices to decipher the articualtions of liminalty and the expressions of mystical union as it presents in the unstable texts that are *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. As much as allegory, ambiguity, imagery, metaphor, allusion and personification, amongst other literary devices, are used in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, this study accordingly relied on definitions, analogy and transposition. This was done so as to reveal the links between the two texts, those links origins, what the links insinuate and what conclusions can be drawn regarding liminality as expressed in *Revelations* and *The Mirror* as regards mystical union.

Since numbers, or 'even mathematical equations', permeate religious writing it seems to me not untoward that a mathematical concept such as topology be at least tentatively transposed to apply to literature in order to reveal the dimensions and operation of the 'momentous dialogue'[335] between God and man. It is after all mathematics as discussed in **Chapter Three** under **Numbers** that seems to hold together the unstable mystical dialogue between God and man given the qualified way in which mathematics operates. It is also mathematical the way in which *Revelations*' has a 'three dimensional aesthetic'[336] to it, and the same can be said for *The Mirror*. It could even be said that this three dimensional quality of the texts is relevant and relational to the three dimensional world that man occupies. Creator, Creation and the created order are realised in both texts discourses on triune indwelling. This triune indwelling resonates with the idea that emanations are composites of divinity; that is, individuation, which in Julian's dominant imagery, is 'enfold[ed], embrac[ed] and enclos[ed]'[337] by totality; as discussed in **Chapter Five** under **Plotinus' conception of the Divine Refelcted in The Mirror**. Nonetheless, it is the momentous dialogue between God and Man, enabled and supported by the *logoi* (texts, in this context *Revelations* and *The Mirror* and by extension the rest of the created order) that is exposed when the dialogue is viewed from a topological vantage point and which, furthermore, reveals the function of liminality in mystical union.

From the topological vantage point (**Figure 3**) it becomes easy to see that *Revelations* and *The Mirror* are in dialogue with each other and with other texts. That is, the texts are what Kristeva calls inter-textual.[338] From the texts' intertextuality we are able locate the common referential field in

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[335] Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), p. 32.

[336] Vincent Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich', p. 398.

[337] Ibid. p. 399.

[338] See the exposition for topology in **Chapter Two** for this reference.

which terms and ideas circulate. These terms and ideas include, amongst others, the Trinity, the Feminisation of God, and Numbers. Deeper engagement with the verbal texture of each work revealed analogous patterns that in their turn revealed the individual spirituality of Julian and Marguerite.[339] Intra-textually, the idiosynchratic field within each text in which the inherited traditions of terms and concepts become refined, sees *Revelations* and *The Mirror* contributing nuanced understandings of the inherited traditions towards the common referential field, as was discussed under **Ambiguty and Liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*, Chapter Four**. More specifically, the dialogues that become visible from the topological vantage point, reinforce the idea of meta-dialogue taking place and that this meta-dialogue is the communication between God and man enabled by the *logoi* (texts). The texts themselves are written in dialogue style and closer analysis of *Revelations* and *The Mirror*'s vernacular theological dialogue revealed that the verbal texture of the texts tends towards dissolution of categories. The closer the analysis of the language the more indefinite the theology became which implies that both texts have the liminal quality of deferred meaning.

The mystic's recourse in attempting to capture deffered meaning or, the ineffable, is to rely on 'language, [which in] in this position, is one of subversion, which opens up the indefinable space of the *mystérique*. Linguistic aspects of this theory include paradox and wordplay, the ludic dismantling of certainty that has its echoes in the theological concept of apophasis'.[340] Thus *Revelations*' and *The Mirror*'s discourse about mystical union necessarily becomes encoded in their dialogues. Both dialogues rely on ambiguity and word play. Julian and Marguerite are in conversation with God, asking Him questions and receiving answers, and God in turn interviews Julian and Marguerite, who then report the conversations to their audiences, who in turn are drawn into the conversation. This multi-levelled conversation then becomes an unending and self-referential dialogue, a meta-dialogue as it were, and is discussed in **Chapter Four**, under **Encoding in *Revelations* and *The Mirror***. This multi-levelled dialogue occurs bilingually and multi-lingually. What makes the conversations and the texts bilingual is the negotiated semantics between the 'traditional language of God', namely Latin, and the vernacular. What makes the conversation multi-lingual is the variety of vernacular texts in the networking common referential field.

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[339] These analogous patterns were illustrated in **Chapter Three** under the discussion of the Trinity, Feminsation of Divinity and Numbers.

[340] Patrick Wright, 'Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls and the Subject of Annihilation', *Mystics Quarterly* 35 (2009): 63–98 (p. 63).

In this meta-dialogue issues such as sin become comprehensible in the divine understanding and the mystic, in the liminal space, can intuit this comprehension but not fully grasp it, which is why so much of what is written appears paradoxical, contradictory or confusing. Paradox and ambiguity inform the dialogic of *Revelations* and *The Mirror* because each contrasting concept becomes realised only in so far as the duelling terms function symbiotically. In other words, it is only by virtue of each other that each opposing concept comes into existence. One calls the other into being. This is discussed at length in **Chapter Four** under **Ambiguity and Liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror***. Since constructs are, in their capacity, creations by emanations that are themselves birthed from love, love underpins the duelling factor, thus nullifying each opposing concept's potency. What is left is the null space in which contrasts exist in reconciliation. This null space is the liminal space in which categories break down and there is only a flowing or ebbing energetic field that holds everything in balance.

In the liminal space the mystic is involved in an active and dynamic state of flow. That is, the liminal space is not static. Rather, it is an energy field in which there is oscillation between constructs, flux is constant and the mystic is required to be 'present', as being in a state of consciousness that does not recognise the linear world or conflict but is instead possessed of a comprehension (knowledge) that is divinely inspired.

The mystic comes to see herself as part of a greater whole and this gives rise to self-erasure. For example, Julian and Marguerite both deny their *auctoritas* yet paradoxically claim it. Julian claims to be unlettered yet her text is testimony to the idea that she was probably 'well schooled', whereas Marguerite openly claims authorship but subverts her voice in the text's *dramatis personae*. The self-erasure is not so much about deferring authority, although that is a dynamic that is in play if one consideres the socio-political background of the texts. Rather, the self-erasure is more an indicator of a state of being. This state of being is liminal because it recognises the dynamic between opposing construtcs but does not 'choose a side'. Instead, the state of being liminal recognises that it is love that underpins the conflicting ideas and which forces reconciliation of oppositions.

The mystic comes to recognise love and knowledge as fundamental to mystical union. Love as the 'transformative power available to the human soul, is not a power that is in any way intellectual'.[341] It disrupts human reason. This is why in *The Mirror*, Reason, the character, is killed off so that the soul can continue its trajectory towards God. Love is construed as the ultimate reality. However, in *The Mirror*, Reason reappears in the dialogue after her death in chapters 89, 98, 101 and 106. This reappearance of Reason is akin to Victorine spirituality in which 'the order of love and the order of

[341] Steven Chase, Contemplation and Compassion, p. 85.

knowledge' are 'mutually enhancing'. So reason is not killed off permanently but enhances the order of love. Love and knowledge are represented by the cherubim and the seraphim. 'The seraphim, or love, circle[s] nearest to God'.[342] Now that Reason has died she reappears in a higher state of being as if she is closer to God and is in an angelic cherubim-like state complementing Love, the character's, rhetoric. Reason's one-line interrogatives in chapters 89, 98, 101 and 106 after her death, are so toned down that they function more as points of clarification than they do as points of objection. Reason in the cherubim-like state is, 'in fullness of knowledge'.[343] The character Love states in Chapter 77 of *The Mirror* that '[she] sent the … Cherubim to illumine [and] the Seraphim to enkidle' (CMG). This is similar to the way that reason and love complement each other in the mystical trajectory. Knowledge/Reason comes to represent the human faculty of intellect prior to enlightenment and when awakened is in fulness of knowledge. That is, knowledge comprehends the divine at work. All the while the seraphim enfolds and embraces the process which is symbolic of totality. In Victorine spirituality the cherubim is akin to reason and the seraphim to love. Julian also acknowledges the connection between love and knowledge when she states that 'God wants us to begin here in knowledge of his love. For we cannot profit by our reason alone' (CW 290). This interplay between knowledge and love throughout Julian's and Marguerite's discourses, underwrites the idea of liminality in that knowledge/reason seem incongruous to indiscriminate love.

In this liminal space the mystic becomes aware of the inter-relatedness of everything. Totality comes to be seen as real and the world of matter as illusion. The mystic comes to see herself in relation to the rest of creation as was explained regarding Julian's hazelnut imgery and Marguerite's triple imagery of mirror, painting and book, all of which work to show individuation as reflections of totality.

Divinity and humanity come to be seen as irreducible as the Trinity. That is, because humanity is birthed of divine love, that which humanity enacts is divine will disguised as human will. Humanity can only re-enage with divinity if it looks inwardly and comes to see itself as a positive negative. 'Initiated by Augustine and Gregory the Great' this form of re-union with God requires 'introversion and ascension wherein one moves inward to the soul in order to ascend upward to God'.[344] This process has also been described as 'falling upward'.[345]

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[342] Steven Chase, Contemplation and Compassion, p. 73.

[343] Ibid. p. 91.

[344] Ibid. p. 85.

[345] Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*: *A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey–Bass, 2011).

This kind of mind-ful contemplation of an indwelling God brings into conversation transcendance and immanence. As the mystic transcends downward or inward towards God she comprehends totality. That is, the mystic sees the immanence of God in all created matter as Julian sees God at work in the underwater imagery in Revelation 2 and Marguerite uses the analogy of a wine cask and its several spigots to illustrate totality. As the mystic progresses in her spiritual journey she intuits God rising up to her and her falling down into God. There is movement in transcendence and there is movement in immanence. These movements are complementary and are what constitutes the articulation of liminality in *Revelations* and *The Mirror*. Neither text overtly claims that liminality is a state necessary for progress toward divinity. However, the duelling concepts and paradoxes force the consideration that perceiving the world through the filter of humanity's lens is to see only duality and that to consciously witness God at work in everything, and accept that immanence is to see reality.

The mystic, in that she comprehends the diversity of emanations' individuation as being born of love understands totality. Non-duality becomes expressed in duelling concepts that contradict and seem to oppose each other. Yet the duelling concepts dissolve and leave a null space, a liminal space, in which there is only balance and re-organisation because by the very nature of their qualification the duelling concepts dissolve, because balance and harmony demand dissolution and because the duelling concepts are constructs that are in symbiotic relation with each other. One calls the other into being. If there is no 'call' the other ceases to exist.[346] This is how reconciliation takes place.

Chapter Five's discourse can be summarised as: humanity is an emanation from divinity. Divinity is distinguished from humanity by its self-sufficiency. Humanity is led back to divinity via liminal and *khoral* states, marked by shifts in language and consciousness, most particularly the interchange between unity (one-ness) and annihilation (noughtness), and that its limitations of language and reason are a positive negativity transformed by the mystical experience that re-integrate into the divine. This, in short, describes the e*xitus* and *reditus* process that is, the constantly forward moving, self-fuelling and generative.

Since the texts construe love as the ultimate reality, it was found in **Chapter Six** that reality, as defined by the *OED*, is actually a virtual reality given that man is a 'limited thinker'. In order to access true reality: that is, love or divine love, the mystic has to attune to her 'inner sense', what Marguerite calls the subtle understanding within and what Julian calls substance. Contemplation of God in the apophatic way, one which results in a self-obliterating interiority, becomes the means to

[346] This is discussed in **Chapter Three**.

activating the ‘sixth sense’ or ‘extra-sensory perception’. Having emptied the mind and personality of all manner of constructs in which the liminal state played a role, the mystic gets drawn to the *khoral* abyss in which reality as known and verifiable is dissolved, and the mystic enters the *khoral* abyss. Here is found the potential for what Marguerite calls ‘creat[ion]’ and ‘re-creat[ion]’ (CMW 39, 48), which implies the e*xitus* and *reditus* process: constantly forward moving, self-fuelling and generative. Julian simply uses the term ‘creates’ (CW 131, 182, 190, 293). All of this implies that the *khora*, in that it resonates with traditionally inherted descriptions of divinity, also seems to be akin to divinity.

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