

# JULIAN OF NORWICH'S *A REVELATION OF LOVE*: A GROUNDED COGNITION APPROACH TO A LATE MEDIEVAL TEXT

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## **Abstract**

Julian of Norwich was a late medieval anchoress and writer, whose work, *The Showings*, is known for its vivid imagery and bodily resonance it prompts in the reader. The paper identifies a gap in research on the embodied aspects of Julian's imagery. The article discusses the connection between perception, action and the grounded nature of cognition, exploring its role in structuring Julian's text. It uses the conceptions of situated conceptualisation and sociocultural situatedness to embed the work in the visual/material culture of the Middle Ages. It reveals how the mystic construes emotionally intense images, which underpin the abstract language of the text's final chapters. To conclude, the recent conceptions from cognitive science may expand the analytical toolkit of cognitive-diachronic research in particular, helping illuminate the interplay of language, culture, and cognition.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Linguistics, grounded cognition, Julian of Norwich, situated conceptualisation, sociocultural situatedness

## **1. Introduction**

This paper takes a Cognitive Linguistic perspective on Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, one of the most remarkable texts of the Middle English period. The author was an anchoress and the first known English female writer, whose work was founded in part on the tradition of affective spirituality (Baker, 1994). To be more exact, Julian's *Showings* comprises two texts, the Short Text/Version (25 chapters), sometimes referred to as *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*, and the Long Text/Version (86 chapters), or *A Revelation of Love* (cf. Jenkins and Watson, 2007), which draws on and expands the original account. The uniqueness of the anchoress's thought derives from her unorthodox understanding of God's relation to humans, which may seem to diverge in some respects from the medieval Church's teachings. Most importantly, whereas the Church laid emphasis on God's wrath at human sinfulness (cf. Collette and Garrett-Goodyear, 2011), Julian stresses His love for humanity, care and friendliness towards every human being (cf. e.g. Turner, 2011). Glasscoe (2005) indicates a number of research strains pertinent to the mystic's work. One of the strands encompasses studies of the

theological aspects of Julian's texts, while others centre around feminist issues, questions of religious discourse (apophatic vs. cataphatic), and the genre type her work belongs to. For Hagen (2004), the scholarship also includes research on how the visual and material culture of the time shaped Julian's spirituality and her work (cf. also e.g., Baker, 1994; Gunn, 2008). Indeed, it is often emphasised that Julian, who intended to propagate her ideas among her fellow Christians, used methods of presentation which relied on conventional iconography of affective piety and domestic images with which the members of her community were familiar.

Some non-linguistic studies of Julian's work focus explicitly on the bodily aspects of the showings and the embodied basis of the two textual accounts of Julian's revelations. For example, Saunders (2016, p. 419) recognises that "Julian demonstrates an intense engagement with the embodied nature of experience and with the connections between senses, affect and cognition." Embodiment is also in the foreground in Salih's (2021) paper. The author discusses how Julian conjures up in the reader's mind an "embodied cinema," rather than a series of static images. Salih points out that "[s]cholarship on Julian has long connected her texts' intense visuality to the flourishing artistic culture of late medieval East Anglia" (Salih, 2021, p. 150). She expands on this point, arguing that "[d]evotional art aligns so well with revelation because it was, characteristically, kinetic; that is, movement of either the viewer or the object was built into the situations in which people looked at these artworks" (Salih, 2021, p. 149). In this way, Salih correlates the embodied aspects of Julian's work with the visual and material culture of the anchoress's time. Also, some scholars have commented on the nature of images used by Julian (cf. e.g. Gillespie and Ross, 1992), arguing that, although she uses some of the well-known Passion icons (cf. Baker, 1994), the anchoress does not remain uncritical of the practices of affective spirituality. When rewriting the Short Version, Julian transforms the emotionally intense images of the first account into the imagery of the Long Text, to which she imparts an apophatic dimension, characteristic of the *via negativa* tradition, which posits the unknowability of God (Turner, 1995).

The preponderance of non-linguistic scholarship on Julian might overshadow other types of research on the anchoress and her work. Therefore, it is important to note the recent emergence of cognitively-informed studies of Julian's *Showings* (cf. Dresvina and Blud, 2020). The visual aspects of the showings are discussed in terms of the embodied mind thesis, whereby it is assumed that there exists a bodily basis of human thought and emotional response (cf. Evans and Green, 2006). Studies such as Dresvina (2019) attest to the current academic interest in how the mystic's multimodal experience manifests in the *Showings*. Still, even though cognitive-scientific research is sometimes used to explore medieval

texts (cf. Anderson et al., 2019), it is rarely invoked to frame the discussion of the interplay between language, cognition, and culture in the Middle Ages. Clearly, there is a dearth of such studies examining Julian's texts. Some important issues in the scholarship on Julian, informed by cognitive science, have not been addressed either. The present paper aims to fill in the research gap.

This study adopts the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, which equates meaning with the dynamic process of conceptualisation and advocates the primacy of semantics (cf. Wen and Taylor, 2021), particularly the inherent meaningfulness of grammar (cf. e.g. Langacker, 2017). Following Langacker (2008), the paper seeks to demonstrate that the speaker's apprehension of the physical, social and cultural context is crucial for any conceptualisation to arise, which means it is necessary to consider the late medieval milieu in which anchoress lived. Hence, the traditional Cognitive-Linguistic emphasis on embodiment must be expanded to include the phenomenon of the author's sociocultural situatedness (cf. Frank et al., 2008). I seek to show that accounting for the situated aspects of the Long Text's imagery requires using suitable conceptions from cognitive science. One such idea is the notion of situated conceptualisation Barsalou (e.g. 2005, 2009, 2016). I aim to demonstrate that situated conceptualisation may be used as an analytical tool in Cognitive Linguistic research, not least in expanding its scope to include the examination of historical texts. When adopted in cognitive-diachronic research, the idea of situatedness may have important implications for the ways to refine methods currently used for such analyses.

## **2. Situating Julian of Norwich's *Showings* in late medieval culture**

In Cognitive Linguistics the need to expand the scope of research beyond the embodied mind thesis has been recognised by scholars endorsing the grounding of cognitive processes in the body and the modalities, as well as the physical and social-cultural contexts (cf. e.g. Barsalou, 2016, 2020). Some researchers working within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics have endorsed the idea of situatedness, connecting it particularly to the social and cultural dimensions of language use. The conception of sociocultural situatedness implies "the way(s) in which individual minds and cognitive processes are shaped by their being together with other embodied minds, i.e., their interaction with social and cultural structures, such as other agents, artifacts, conventions, etc. and (...) with language itself" (Frank, 2008, p. 1). In line with this understanding of cognition, Anderson et al. (2019, p. 17) observe that "[t]exts, artworks and other cultural artefacts are imbued with mind, the mind of their creator and their context, and that of the spectator, reader or interactor." In this light, it is important to discuss how sociocultural situatedness may underpin Julian's work.

Julian composed the two versions of *Showings* on the basis of what she could remember from the experience of lying on her deathbed. It was then that she received the revelations. Recollection plays a pivotal role in the composition of the texts. Importantly, what she recalled was derived from how she used her memory in the first place. Writing about the medieval craft of memory, Carruthers and Ziolkowski (2002) caution against falling into the trap of our contemporary conceptions of cognition, indicating that in the Middle Ages an intricate relationship between cognition, perception and action in the world was also recognised, but it was conceptualised differently from the way we understand it now. The scholars point out that

memory was most importantly associated in the Middle Ages with composition, not simply with retention. Medieval *memoria* [art of composing] took the inventive function of human memory for granted, and emphasized it. Indeed, those who practiced the crafts of memory used them—as all crafts are used—to make new things: prayers, meditations, sermons, pictures, hymns, stories, and poems. Students of art and literature have long remarked on the intensely pictorial and affective qualities of these arts in the Middle Ages. Commonly this has been attributed to a need to accommodate the “rustic” qualities of their audiences. But a better reason for these characteristics may lie in the methods used to compose such works of art—in which case their pictorial intensity must be understood not as a condescension to rude minds but as a creative device of meditation itself, the first task of an artist, whether of prayer or painting, planning his work. (Carruthers and Ziolkowski, 2002, p. 3)

It follows that, for people in the Middle Ages, memories, underpinned by a distinct affective component, were the stuff from which thoughts were creatively composed. Therefore, as Carruthers (2009, p. 6) clarifies, what marks off medieval approaches to memory from those of today’s cognitive psychology is “how entirely the imagination is implicated in cognition and in memory.” This understanding of memory had important implications for the development of medieval culture, not least cultural transmission (cf. also Carruthers, 2008). Erll (2011, p. 116) elucidates this point, saying that “media of memory such as monuments, books, paintings (...) create media worlds of cultural memory according to their specific capacities and limitations – worlds that a memory community would not know without them.” Indeed, with limited literacy in medieval lay communities, images frequently served both mnemonic and devotional purposes (Marchese, 2014). They filled up spaces as diverse as the pages of illuminated manuscripts and the walls of cathedrals. Images of various types created the medieval iconosphere, “an environment permanently filled with images” (Bałus, 2017, p. 94), which supported the local memoryscape, a real or symbolic space within which collective memory is spatialised (Kapralski, 2010, p. 27). For example, in Julian’s time, the iconosphere of Norwich had many sites related to Christian piety, including the expression of female devotion (cf. Hill, 2010), which have been preserved until now.

A great deal of scholarly attention is given to the anchoress's interaction with visual representations and material objects of religious significance. For instance, Blud (2021) says that Julian could conjure up vivid imagery in the readers' minds because her fellow Christians were familiar with certain types of images. Indeed, invoking such representations might facilitate the retrieval of whole chunks of conceptual knowledge from the memory of the readers. In fact, in the Short Version of *The Showings*, Julian mentions "alle the peynes of Cryste as halye kyrke schewys and techys, and also the payntyngys of crucyfexes that er made be the grace of God aftere the techynge of haly kyrke to the lyknes of Crystes passyon" (Windeatt, 1994, p. 182) ('all the sufferings of Christ as Holy Church reveals and teaches, and also in the paintings of crucifixes that are made by God's grace in the likeness of Christ's Passion, according to the Holy Church's teaching')<sup>1</sup>. It is also reasonable to argue that the mystic knew the so-called Passion icons depicting, for instance, Christ's tortured body and blood-covered face or the Crown of Thorns on Christ's head (cf. Baker, 1994; Barratt, 2008). Julian's knowledge of iconographic conventions might have originated from a range of sources. For Dresvina (2019), illuminated manuscripts were items which could be used for close and repeated inspection. When manuscripts, such as those of the Books of Hours, were used regularly, the pictures used as prompts for contemplation (Kendrick, 2011, p. 159) could be internalised, alongside the prayers (Scott-Strokes, 2006, p. 17).

What this suggests is that the imagery Julian conjures up in her work is grounded in the sociocultural context of the late Middle Ages, in which objects from material culture played a pivotal role in the practices of affective spirituality. Importantly, objects such as prayer books filled with religious images or visualisations in churches, etc. served as repositories of the relevant perceptually-based conceptual knowledge (cf. also Stadnik 2015), which shaped the worldview of the community to which the anchoress belonged. In the Cognitive Linguistic analysis this paper offers, I will seek to demonstrate that in the Long Text Julian invokes such familiar images from conventional iconography. Importantly, in so doing, the anchoress goes beyond the orthodox interpretations given by the late medieval Church. Specifically, she acknowledges that the many years of meditation allowed her to understand more from what she had been shown. In Cognitive Linguistic terms, it may be concluded that Julian transforms the images she retrieves from memory so as to present new perspectives on the religious conceptualisations which were well-entrenched in her cultural community. In this way, she reconceptualises the familiar notions related to Christ's Passion as well as the relationship between God and people.

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<sup>1</sup> This excerpt is taken from Windeatt (1994). The excerpts in the subsequent sections are taken from Crampton (ed.) (1994). The present-day English translations are taken from the relevant passages from Spearing (1998) and Windeatt (2015).

### 3. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar: The situatedness of conceptual content

As already indicated, it is impossible to discuss Julian's imagery without accounting for her sociocultural situatedness. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the link between perception, action situated in the late medieval environment and conceptualisation, which underpins the anchoress's use of conventional images and the way she shapes the imagery of her work. Cognitive Linguistics offers methods that enable to examine the problem. Of immediate relevance and interest to this study is Langacker's (e.g. 2008, 2017) Cognitive Grammar. The framework presupposes the meaningfulness of the language user's grammatical choices, which help shape the often subtle ways in which some culturally-informed aspects of conceptualisation are conveyed.

Langacker argues that a linguistic expression's meaning comprises a specific construal of conceptual content and the conceptual content itself. The same situation or experience may be portrayed in different ways due to the human capacity for adopting various perspectives on the apprehended situation. Langacker relies on the visual metaphor to illuminate the relation between content (a scene/situation) and construal (the specific way of viewing that scene/situation). Also, the viewer is simultaneously the conceptualiser. The visual metaphor facilitates our understanding of the parameters of construal: specificity, focusing, prominence, and perspective. Specificity (granularity or resolution) is defined as the extent to which a given scene is characterised in detail. The latter property may increase or decrease gradually and so it forms a continuum with schematicity (*a plant* vs. *an apple tree*). Focusing pertains to the activation of some portion of conceptual knowledge necessary for the construction of meaning of a particular expression, sentence, etc. Some elements of the conceptual content is foregrounded, while others are backgrounded (in *cut the apples across into slices culinary concepts are* the basis for meaning construction). When characterising perspective, Langacker (2008, p. 73) says that, if "conceptualization (metaphorically) is the viewing of a scene, perspective is the viewing arrangement." Since the parameter of perspective underscores the bond between language and perception, perspective has three interrelated facets to it: spatial, temporal and epistemic.

As already mentioned, the notion of construal means that some conceptual content is linguistically encoded in a particular way so as to convey the intended meaning. Although in his exposition of the tenets of Cognitive Grammar Langacker often described construal operations, he is less specific about the nature of the conceptual content. In Langacker (2008), the scholar expands on the idea of domain, saying that a linguistic expression invokes "a set of cognitive domains as the basis for its meaning (i.e. as the content to be construed). Collectively, this set of domains is called a matrix" (Langacker, 2008, p. 44). Still, the scholar permits a broad definition of domain in terms of "any kind of conception or realm of experience" (Langacker, 2008, p. 44). Accordingly, the linguistic expression *the glass with water in it* invokes a whole matrix

of domains, such as the concept of CONTAINER immanent in the concept of GLASS, as well as the concept of WATER and that of LIQUID inherent in it (Langacker, 2008, p. 44). With the idea of domain matrix in place, it is possible to break down the scene of drinking a glass of water the expression conjures up into its conceptual components. The reason why it might be problematic to use the notion of domain when discussing Julian's imagery is that, on her account, the experience of receiving revelations constituted a unified, multisensory whole and should be analysed as such.

The point to be made is that simulation, or re-enactment of modality-specific states (cf. Barsalou, 2005), which Langacker assumes to be "a basic component of conceptual semantics" (Langacker, 2017, p. 266), involves the integration of various aspects of experienced situations which occur during the individual's interaction with the physical, social-cultural environment (Barsalou, 2016). That is, multimodal simulation is not merely embodied as it presupposes that the mind is situated, or, to use another term, grounded (but cf. also e.g. Robbins and Aydede 2008). As defined by Barsalou (2016, p. 14), the conception of grounded cognition implies that "cognition doesn't simply reside in a set of cognitive mechanisms. Instead, cognition emerges from these mechanisms as they interact with sensory-motor systems, the body, the physical environment, and the social environment." What emerges through the operation of those processes is situated conceptualisation. Supported by simulation, understood as a mechanism serving representational purposes, situated conceptualisation integrates the input streams into a coherent whole (Barsalou, 2016). To the extent that it entails the representation of a category in relevant situations, based on the accumulation of particular experiences in memory, simulation may be viewed as situated. For example, when discussing the representation of the CHAIR category, Barsalou (2005) explains that the representation of the concept differs relative to the situation the individual interacts with an object from this category. What may follow are predictions pertinent, for example, to action, social and affective aspects of the situation (e.g. an airplane chair vs. a kitchen chair). Since situated conceptualisations arise in response to the demands of a local context, a category's representation may be tailored to the relevant situation in which the individual is embedded. Barsalou (2016, p. 17) also concludes that, while the construct of situated conceptualization enables to understand a present situation, it constitutes "a record of a past situation stored in memory" as well. Thus, the notion may help account for individual differences between members of a cultural community.<sup>2</sup>

This view should be compared with Langacker's idea of domain. In addressing what provides a linguistic expression's conceptual content, Langacker (2008) connects domains to similar conceptions and offers a link between domains, frames, as well as Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs) (cf. e.g. Evans and

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<sup>2</sup> But see Stockwell (2020), who relates ICMs to situatedness. See also Barsalou et al. (2011, p. 1108), who appears to lay more emphasis on the idiosyncratic aspects of situated experiences.

Green, 2006). To the extent that they are abstracted from cultural common ground, frames, ICMs, and domains are likely to miss out on singular details related to the individual's perception and situated action. Thus, Langacker's approach that connects domains to frames and ICMs seems to give priority to the investigation of generalised conceptual patterns behind imagery, rather than to images containing traces of idiosyncratic experiences. In this sense, invoking the conception of situated conceptualisation may be seen as a means to expand the toolkit of analytical concepts which Cognitive Linguistics offers.

#### **4. A Cognitive Linguistic analysis of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love***

The Cognitive Linguistic examination of Julian's Long Text will proceed in two stages. First, it is aimed to demonstrate how the anchoress uses conventional images from the tradition of affective piety by providing an analysis based on Langacker's Cognitive Grammar. Additionally, the examination seeks to discuss the role of situated conceptualisation in the evolution of Julian's understanding of the divine message. While Langacker's framework offers tools to examine the scenes from the story of Christ's Passion, which lie at the core of Julian's revelations, the second part of the analysis focuses on elucidating how situated conceptualisation helps illuminate the imagery of the final chapters of Julian's work, marked by metaphorical language (cf. e.g. Lakoff and Turner, 1989). This means indicating how situated conceptualisation might underpin the emergence of conceptual metaphors. Accordingly, attention will be paid to the situated nature of relevant conceptual knowledge Julian invokes to reflect on the meaning of revelations.

With respect to the linguistic data to be used for analytical purposes, it must be noted that, although the Short and the Long Version are related, each gives a different account of the visions Julian of Norwich received in May 1373. Importantly, the longer version reflects Julian's deeper understanding of God's message, attained after years of contemplation. Windeatt (2008) points out the iconic relationship between the growth in Julian's understanding and the intensity of the contemplation. He observes that "[a]s more is understood, more is visualised and, overall, *A Revelation [of Love]* presents images caught with a photographic precision by a painterly eye, along with the outcome of meditation on the fuller visual details that it records" (Windeatt, 2008, p. 102). Hence, the Cognitive Linguistic analysis will focus on the longer version of Julian's account, *A Revelation of Love* (henceforth, *A Revelation*).

It is worth noting that Julian points explicitly to her own method of investigation, proper to the nature of the revelations she received. The anchoress asserts that it is impossible to separate the revelations themselves from the development of their fuller understanding:

I saw and understode that every revelacion is full of privities. And therefore me behovith now to tellen three propertes in which I am sumdele esyd. The frest is the begynnyng of techyng that I understod therein in the same tyme. The second is the inward lernyng that I have understodyn therein sithen. The third, al the hole revelacion from the begynnyng to the end, that is to sey, of this boke, which our Lord God of His goodnes bryngyth oftentymes frely to the syte of myn understondyng. And these three arn so onyd as to my understondyng that I cannot, ner may, depart them. (ll. 1851-1861)

'I saw and understood that every showing is full of mysteries, and so I should now describe these three aspects through which I have been somewhat consoled. The first is the initial stage of teaching which I understood from it while it was being shown to me; the second is the inner teaching which I have come to understand from it since then; the third is the whole revelation from beginning to end, that is to say, as set out in this book, which our Lord God in his goodness often brings freely to my mind's eye. And these three are so united in my mind that I neither can nor may separate them.'

The anchoress describes her own method of expanding on the meaning of the showings in Chapter 51, which presents the parable about the Lord and the Servant. What facilitates her reflection on the showings is the inspection of individual properties of the apprehended scene and the relations between them:

For twenty yeres after the tyme of the shewing, save three monethis, I had techyng inwardly, as I shal seyen. *It longyth to the to taken hede to all the propertes and condition that weryn shewd in the example thow thou thynke that they ben mysty and indifferent to thy syte.* I assend wilfully with grete desire, and seeing inwardly with avisement al the poynts and propertes that wer shewid in the same tyme as ferforth as my witt and understondyng wold servyn, beginning myn beholding at the lord and at the servant, and the manner of sytting of the lord and the place that he sate on and tho color of his clothyng, and the manner of shapp and his cher withouten and his nobleth and his godeness within; at the manner of stondyng of the servant, and the place wher and how, at his manner of clothyng, the color and the shappe, at his outward havyng, and at his inward goodnes and his onlothfulhede. (ll. 1865-1876)

'for three months short of twenty years after the time of the revelation, I received inner teaching, as follows: 'You need to pay attention to all the properties and attributes shown in the parable, though they may seem mysterious and indeterminate in your eyes.' I willingly agreed with great eagerness, looking inwardly with careful consideration at all the details and properties which were shown at the time of the vision, so far as my wit and understanding would serve. I began by looking intently at the lord and the servant, and the way the lord was sitting, and the place where he sat, and then the colour of his clothing and how it fitted, and his outward appearance, and his inner nobility and goodness, at the way the servant was standing and where and how, at the type of clothing he wore, its colour and fit, at his outward behaviour and at his inner goodness and his readiness.'

The method she presents in Chapter 51 is reminiscent of the conception of situated conceptualisation, in which individual aspects of an apprehended scene are grasped and brought together to form a coherent whole. Since the foregoing discussion of Julian's work presupposes a set of features defining the mystic's

idiosyncratic way of construing selected scenes/situations from the domain of affective spirituality, the concept which may help capture those properties in a more systematic way is that of textual attractor. On Stockwell's (2009, p. 25) account, good (prototypical) attractors in texts display, for instance, newness, agency, definiteness (e.g., *a man vs. the man*), empathetic recognisability (human being > animal > object > abstraction), certain sensory features (e.g., brightness, largeness). In terms of grounded cognition, such attractors are useful because they may help foster inference via patterns completion (cf. Barsalou, 2005). What is perceived as salient guides the process of drawing "inferences from the simulation that go beyond the information given" (Barsalou, 2009, p. 1284).

To conclude, for Julian, the images employed in the Long Text are prompts for contemplation of divine truths inherent in the revelations. Thus, the relevant conceptualisations conveyed by the Long Text are situated in the late medieval culture of Julian's day. It is the anchoress's careful consideration of the properties of the apprehended scene (illumination, colour, movement, etc.) that gives rise to inferences which lead her to recognise what was God's meaning. In this way, she turns the scenes from the showings into the object of conception (i.e. what is conceptualised, cf. Langacker, 2008, p. 260). It is significant that she shies away from immersing herself in the situations from the story of Christ's Passion, which was required in the tradition of affective piety (cf. Baker, 1994). In conventional iconography, the traditional representations of the scenes from the Gospels are tailored to the demands of late medieval affective piety. In her work, Julian demonstrates how to perceive more in those images so as to understand God's meaning in a more profound way.

#### 4.1. Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*: From materiality to showings

The first passage substantiates the claim that some of the conceptual building blocks of *A Revelation* may be based on the established iconography and the late medieval iconosphere, particularly those aspects that are correlated with affective devotion. This is validated by Julian's account of the key event that triggered the series of revelations the mystic presents in her work:

My curate was sent for to be at my endeing, and by than he cam I had sett my eyen and might not speke. He sett the cross before my face and seid, "I have browte thee the image of thy maker and Saviour. Louke thereupon and comfort thee therewith." Methought I was wele for my eyen were sett up rightward into Hevyn where I trusted to come be the mercy of God, but nevertheless I assented to sett my eyen in the face of the Crucifix, if I might; and so I dede. For me-thought I might longer duren to loke even forth than right up. After this my sight began to failen and it was all derke about me in the chamber as it had be night, save in the image of the Cross wherein I beheld a comon light, and I wiste not how. All that was beside the Cross was uggely to me as if it had be mekil occupied with the fendes. After this the other party of my body began to dyen so ferforth that onethys I had ony feleing, with shortnesse of onde; and than I went sothly to have passid. (ll. 89-101)

'My curate was sent for to be present at my death, and by the time he came my eyes were fixed and I could not speak. He set the cross before my face and said, 'I have brought you the image of your Maker and Saviour. Look upon it and take comfort from it.' It seemed to me that I was well as I was, for my eyes were looking fixedly upwards into heaven, where I trusted that I was going, by God's mercy. But nevertheless I consented to fix my eyes on the face of the crucifix if I could, and so I did, because I thought this seemed to me that I could manage to look straight ahead of me for longer than I could look upwards. After this my sight began to fail and all grew dark around me in the room, as though it had been night, except for the image of the cross, in which I saw an ordinary, household light [in Spearing's (1998) translation; in Windeatt's (2015) rendering, "in which I saw a light for all mankind] – I could not understand how. Everything except the cross was ugly to me, as if crowded with fiends. After this the upper part of my body began to die to such an extent that I had almost no feeling and was short of breath. And then I truly believed that I was at the point of death.'

The portable crucifix, which probably had a figure of Christ painted on its surface (Gunn, 2008, p. 36), was the tangible object that spurred the multi-sensory, dynamic conceptualisation of what the recluse had experienced. It should be noted that the light emanates from the cross and therefore it is viewed against the dark background of the room. This figure-ground organisation has a clear axiological dimension in that, except for the crucifix, everything in the room is dark and, in Julian's own words, "uggely." Therefore, it must be observed that Julian invokes the opposition of the concepts of LIGHT and DARKNESS, which, as indicated by Vereza and Puente (2017, p. 9), may imply the conceptual metaphor TRUTH IS A LIT OBJECT. That opposition between light, which enables perception, and darkness, which does not allow the human eye to perceive things and get to know the world (cf. Vereza and Puente, 2017), underlies other relevant passages in the Long Text, which constitutes a record of the many years of Julian's struggle to understand the revelations.

The crucifix as a late medieval artefact constitutes an example of a good textual attractor because, as can be gleaned from Stockwell (2009, p. 24), such attractors are often "referred objects that are presented as having a unified and coherent structure and identity: these are likely to be textualised as noun phrases." For Julian, the crucifix is a salient object, which prompts inferences that help complete, and hence comprehend, the perceived scene as it unfolds in front of her eyes:

In this sodenly I saw the rede blode trekelyn downe fro under the garlande hote and freisly and ryth plenteously, as it were in the time of His passion that the garlande of thornys was pressid on His blissid hede. Ryte so, both God and man, the same that sufferd thus for me, I conceived treuly and mightily that it was Himselfe shewed it me without any mene. And in the same sheweing sodenly the Trinite fullfilled the herte most of joy; and so, I understood, it shall be in Hevyn withoute end to all that shall come there. For the Trinite is God, God is the Trinite. The Trinite is our maker and keeper, the Trinite is our everlasting lover, everlasting joy and blisse, be our Lord Jesus Christ; and this was shewed in the first and in all, for where Jesus appereith the blissid Trinite is understand, as to my sight. And I said, "Benedicite, Domine." (ll. 102-125)

‘At this I suddenly saw the red blood trickling down from under the crown of thorns, hot and fresh, plentiful and lifelike, as though it were the moment of his Passion when the crown of thorns was pressed on to his blessed head, he who was both God and man, the same who suffered for me like that. I believed truly and strongly that it was he himself who showed me this, without any intermediary. And as part of the same showing the Trinity suddenly filled my heart with the greatest joy. And I understood that in heaven it will be like that for ever for those who come there. For the Trinity is God, God is the Trinity; the Trinity is our maker and protector, the Trinity is our dear friend for ever, our everlasting joy and bliss, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this was shown in the first revelation, and in all of them; for it seems to me that where Jesus is spoken of, the Holy Trinity is to be understood. And I said, ‘Benedicite domine!’

By saying that she noticed the blood trickling down Christ’s face “as though it were the moment of his Passion,” the mystic clarifies that she was aware of the fact that she was shown a vision, which constituted the object of conception, and so she did not participate the original events of the Passion. Regardless of its nature, Julian’s mystical experience had to be conceptualised in order to be verbalised. It is worth indicating that the anchoress signals her disengagement from the apprehended scene, separating out the object of conception (the viewed) from the subject of conception (the viewer/conceptualiser). This approach facilitates reasoning about the import of the vision.

In terms of Cognitive Grammar, the crucifix becomes the figure attracting the attention of the dying woman, the rest of the scene remains obscure and serves as the ground. What adds to the significance of the artefact as the figure is the emphasis on the physical proximity of the crucifix (“He sett the cross before my face”) and its relative newness inasmuch as Julian is made to turn her gaze towards it. The fact that she uses the definite article adds definiteness to the construed scene, in which *the* grounds the noun *crucifix* relative to the deathbed scene. The sudden appearance of another figure, the drops of blood trickling down Christ’s face, opens up a new perspective with distinct temporal, spatial and epistemic dimensions. Since Jesus’ face seen in close-up is now the perceptual ground, this higher granularity of the image seems to increase the scene’s empathetic recognisability. Specifically, the empathy hierarchy (Langacker, 1985) is reversed (the object/crucifix > the human/Christ). However, when the revelation begins, there emerges a new epistemic level from which the scene is viewed, that of God’s perspective, which once again reverses the hierarchy of empathy towards greater abstraction (the human/Christ > the Passion as the event meant to save sinful humanity, a shift which is metonymically motivated). The perspective grounded on human perception changes to a divine viewpoint, in which the vision continues as if beyond the spatial and temporal constraints limiting human perception and cognition.

The multisensory aspects of the showing should be addressed as well. Julian appeals to the sense of sight (“the rede blode”), tactile and sensations and thermoception (“trekelyn downe fro under the garlande hote and freisly and ryth

plenteously”), as well as goal-directed action implied in the pressing of the garland of thorns onto Christ’s head (“the garlande of thornys was pressid on His blissid hede”). Accordingly, the conventional iconographic, static image of the icon presenting Christ’s face is transformed to convey the idea of ceaseless movement. The conceptualisation is constructed progressively (cf. Langacker, 2008 for the difference between sequential scanning and summary scanning). The reader is invited mentally to scan the downward motion of the drops of blood, which involves scanning the multiple locations that the drops successively occupy. In the sentence “I saw the rede blode trekelyn downe fro under the garlande,” Julian chooses to use a progressive participle (*trekelyn*). Thus, the vantage point for viewing the conceived scene prevents the reader from attending to the beginning and the end of the profiled process. As a result, the reader is given access to an “internal perspective” on the scene, which may account for its spatial and temporal immediacy and its potential to foster greater bodily resonance.

It is useful to observe that in Chapter 16 Julian construes the scene from Passion in a similar way. As she says, “Thus I saw the swete fleshe dey, in semyng be party after party, dryande with mervelous peynys” (l. 606-608) (“So I saw Christ’s dear flesh dying, seemingly bit by bit, drying up with amazing agony.”) Julian focuses on Christ’s suffering, in particular the changes in the colour of the face and the withering of the body. The present participle *dryande* and the phrase *party after party* ‘bit by bit’ prompt the imagery of Christ’s protracted suffering. What underpins this and the preceding excerpt is a suspension of human time-scale.

In conclusion, to construe the conceptual content of the relevant scenes in *A Revelation*, Julian draws on the late medieval imagery and selects tangible objects from the familiar environment that are likely to serve as good textual attractors. In terms of Cognitive Grammar, she uses objective construal by turning the Passion scenes into the objects of conceptualisation. She imbues the attractors with characteristics that underscore the multi-sensory nature of human interaction with those objects. One of the features of this construal is the high-grained (detailed) imagery, which enhances a sense of their physical proximity and embodied interaction with them. Another important feature of the construal is appeal to movement, for instance, through the use of verbs of motion, which are used in their non-finite forms.

#### 4.2. The concept of LIGHT in Julian’s *Revelation of Divine Love*

The preceding discussion has indicated that situated conceptualisation seems to play a pivotal role in Julian’s imagery. Its significance follows from the fact that it may elicit a sense of subjective realism. In the words of Barsalou (2016), situated simulation may induce a sense that the simulated experience is subjectively real. This seems to be the mechanism underlying the practices of affective piety. However, as already observed, while enabling the reader to project themselves into the scenes to comprehend them more fully, Julian is careful to indicate that the

meaning of the revelations does not inhere in what can be visualised. Therefore, whereas in Chapter 4 (but cf. also Chapter 10, 16 and 21) the anchoress depicts the vision in detail, the imagery used in the subsequent and final chapters of the Long Version becomes ever more abstract, less reliant on evoking a sense of “being there,” in the simulated scene (cf. Barsalou, 2005, 2016). The problem can be illustrated by the following excerpt, in which the images of Christ’s bleeding wounds morph into a deluge of blood traversing the boundaries between hell, heaven and earth:

And after this I saw, beholding the body plentifully bled in seming of the scoryng, as thus: The faire skynne was brokyn ful depe into the tender flesh with sharpe smyting al about the sweete body. [...] Beholde and se: The pretious plenty of His dereworthy blode desendith downe into Helle and braste her bands and deliveryd al that were there which longyd to the curte of Hevyn. The pretious plenty of His dereworthy blode overflowith al erth and is redye to wash al creaturs of synne which be of gode will, have ben, and shal ben” (ll. 473-492).

‘And after this I saw, as I watched, the body of Christ bleeding profusely, in weals from the scourging. It looked like this: the fair skin was very deeply broken, down into the tender flesh through sharp blows all over the precious body [...] Behold and see! The precious plenty of his beloved blood went down into hell and broke their bonds and freed all those who were there who belonged to the court of heaven. The precious plenty of his beloved blood overflows the earth and is ready to wash from sin all who are, have been or will be of good will.’

Taken from Chapter 12, the excerpt shows that the Long Version gradually shifts towards the understanding of God’s meaning in a way not dissimilar to that of the *via negativa* tradition, i.e. looking beyond what concrete images help visualise. Also, many scholars have commented on the circular way of reasoning employed by Julian to develop understanding of what she was shown (e.g. Windeatt, 2008). Thus, the images of Christ’s suffering reappear, for instance in Chapter 16, as already indicated in the previous section. This might mean that the text of the Long Version could be anything but coherent.

Yet, in Chapter 1 of *A Revelation*, the anchoress begins with the presentation of the contents of the text, asserting the interconnectedness of all the showings. Clearly, the first showing, analysed in the preceding section, is meant to underlie all the revelations presented in the Long Text:

This is a Revelation of love that Jesus Christ, our endless blisse, made in sixteen Sheweings or Revelations particular. Off the which, the first is of His pretious coronng with thornys; and therewith was comprehended and specified the Trinite with the incarnation, and unite betwix God and man soule, with many faire sheweings of endless wisdome and teacheing of love, in which all the sheweings that follow be groundd and onyd. (ll. 1-6)

‘This is a revelation of love that Jesus Christ, our endless bliss, gave in sixteen showings or special revelations. The first concerns his precious crowning with thorns, and by this

was understood and specified the Trinity with the Incarnation and unity between God and the soul of man, with many fair showings of unending wisdom and teachings of love, on which all the showings that follow are founded and in which they are all united.'

The question to be addressed is which aspects of the first showing the anchoress selects to maintain the intended coherence of the imagery. To illustrate the point, the analysis in this section pertains to Chapter 83.

In Chapter 83 of *A Revelation*, one of the concluding sections of the Long Text, Julian says she experienced touch, sight, and feeling of God's three properties of life, love and light. Thus, she recognises that God's life entails "mervelous homlihed" 'marvellous familiarity,' divine love involves "gentil curtesye" 'gracious courtesy,' and light is "endless kyndhede" 'endless kindness.' Echoing the words from John's Gospel about Christ, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1, 4-5), Julian goes on to invoke a series of conceptual metaphors clustering around the concept of LIGHT:

Our feith is a light kindly command of our endles day that is our fader, God, in which light our Moder, Criste, and our good lord, the Holy Gost, leidith us in this passand life. This light is mesurid discretly, nedefully standand to us in the night. The light is cause of our life, the night is cause of our peyne and of al our wo, in which we diserven mede and thanks of God. For we, with mercy and grace, wilfully knowen and leven our light, goeand therin wisely and mytyly. And at the end of wo, sodenly our eye shall ben openyd, and in clerte of light our sight shall be full, which light is God our Maker, and Holy Gost, in Christ Jhesus our savior. Thus I saw and understode that our feith is oure light in our night, which light is God, our endless day. (ll. 3354-3364)

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

It is worth noting that this highly abstract passage marks the end of Julian's long journey towards developing a deeper understanding of the revelations she received in May 1373. From the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, it is possible to identify a number of conceptual metaphors in the excerpt. According to the standard view, the central tenet of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is that metaphor is not a matter of language, it is human thought itself that is metaphorical (Evans and Green, 2006). In standard CMT analyses, a conceptual metaphor is typically understood as "a systematic set of correspondences between two

domains of experience” (Kövesces, 2020, p. 2). It can be posited that what guides the anchoress’s thinking is the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS LIGHT. However, Julian does not rely solely on the LIGHT concept, but entwines its use with that of NIGHT or DARKNESS. So she does in other chapters of the Long Text too. On Gillespie and Ross’s (1992) account, the dark overtones that pervade the imagery seem to point to Julian’s interest in the apophatic. This idea seems to square with the conclusion following from the above excerpt. Through the use of this highly abstract language, Julian implies that, in this life, people can only receive the amount of illumination which they need. Eternal life in heaven will involve acquiring fuller understanding. As the anchoress has it, “in the brightness of light our sight will be clear.”

It would seem that the contrast between light and darkness is used to capture Julian’s progress in grasping divine truths. To recall the central scene of the showing from Chapter 4, Julian stresses the inner light inherent in the cross, a phenomenon she could not account for: “it was all derke about me in the chamber as it had be night, save in the image of the Cross wherein I beheld a comon light, and I wiste not how. All that was beside the Cross was uggely to me as if it had be mekil occupied with the fendes” (‘After this my sight began to fail and the room was dark all around me as though it had been night, except for the image of the cross, in which I saw an ordinary, household light – I could not understand how. Everything except the cross was ugly to me, as if crowded with fiends’). In Chapter 10, the figure of the crucifix reappears,

And after this I saw with bodily sight, in the face of the crucifix that henge before me in the which I behelde continually, a parte of His passion - despite, spitting and sollowing, and buffetting and many langoryng peynes, mo than I can tel, and often changing of colour. And one time I saw how halfe the face, begyning at the ere, overrede with drie blode til it beclosid to the mid-face. And after that, the tuther halfe beclosyd on the same wise, and therewhiles it vanyssched in this party, even as it came. This saw I bodily - swemely and derkely, and I desired more bodily sight to have sene more clerely. And I was answered in my reason: If God wil shew thee more, He shal be thy light; thee nedith none but Him. (ll. 346-360)

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

As before, the memory of the crucifix’s image gives rise to inferences based on completing the pattern provided by conventional iconography. What Julian adds onto the image of Christ’s face is the property of changing colours, as well

as changing illumination, which corresponds to the dark overtones that prevent her from grasping the meaning of the showing. It would seem that, as the image of the cross reappears, so do the metaphors of LIGHT. Julian appears to use the original experience of beholding the crucifix as a source of conceptual patterns, which she transforms to help her improve understanding of the showings. Basing on research presented in Gillespie (2013), I argue that the coherence of the conceptual patterns hinges on Julian's situated conceptualisations of LIGHT, which, tailored to the context of the chapters in which they appear, underpin the relevant passages in the Long Text, allowing Julian to make inferences and to unpack the problems she discusses.

To understand the sociocultural context of the LIGHT imagery, it is necessary to indicate Julian's embeddedness in the broader cultural environment of the late Middle Ages. The scope of the paper does not allow to discuss them in detail. Therefore, it must suffice to mention to potential relevance of medieval theories of perception (cf. e.g. Collette, 2001), and, more importantly, the medieval metaphysics of light (cf. Gillespie, 2013, Sparavigna, 2014). Importantly, it is not claimed that the anchoress had ever read any particular treatises or was familiar with specific manuscripts. Rather, the point is to hint at the situated nature of concepts. To invoke another thinker prominent in the Middle Ages, some traces of the medieval understanding of the concepts of NECESSITY and CHANCE, based on the philosophy of Boethius, can also be found in Chapter 11 of the Long Text on the problem of sin ("And I saw truly that nothing is done be happe, ne be aventure, but al thing be the foreseing wisdom of God" 'And I saw that truly nothing happens by accident or luck, but everything by God's wise providence'). In other words, Julian's sociocultural situatedness in the late medieval milieu might have enabled her to become familiar with various contemporaneous theories, which could have been encompassed by the worldview of her community. With this caveat in mind, it is useful to invoke Robert Grosseteste's metaphysics of light, to indicate how different from our present-day view of light was the medieval understanding of the phenomenon. In his treatise *De luce* ('On light'), Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253), the bishop of Lincoln and a medieval scholar, argues that light is the first form of things and that God is the uncreated light (*lux*). Light understood as *lumen* derives from *lux* (Gillespie, 2013), and it is this light that, for instance, the sun and the moon are the sources of. For Grosseteste, light interconnects the spiritual and physical/corporeal reality (Trepczyński, 2017). The latter idea seems particularly apt as it appears to offer a useful framework for understanding Julian's varied use of the concept.

Indeed, in Chapter 10, Julian goes on to comment on the lack of illumination in the showing of Jesus' blood-covered face, conjuring up a situated memory of beholding another tangible object of religious significance:

This second sheweing was so low and so litil and so simple that my sprets were in grete travel in the beholding, mornand, dredfull, and longand. For I was sum time in doute whither it was a shewing. And than divers times our gode Lord gave me more sight

whereby I understode treuly that it was a shewing. It was a figure and likenes of our foule dede hame, that our faire, bright, blissid Lord bare for our sins. It made me to thinke of the holy vernacle of Rome which He hath portrayed with His owne blissid face whan He was in His herd passion wilfully going to His deth and often chongyng of colour. Of the brownehede and blakehede, reulihede and lenehede of this image, many mervel how it might be, stondyng He portraied it with His blissid face, which is the faire hede of Heavyn, flowre of erth, and the fruite of the mayden wombe. Than how might this image be so discolouring and so fer fro faire? (ll. 370-381)

‘This second showing was so humble and so small and so simple that my spirits were greatly troubled as I saw it, grieving and fearing and longing; and I doubted for some time whether it was a showing. And then several times our good Lord let me see more clearly so that I truly understood that it was indeed a showing. It was the form and likeness of the foul, dead covering which our fair, bright, blessed Lord bore when he took on human flesh for our sins. It made me think of the holy vernicle at Rome, on which he printed his own sacred face during his cruel Passion, willingly going to his death, and often changing colour. Many marvel how it may be, the brownness and blackness, the pitifulness and the leanness of this image, considering that he printed it with his sacred face, which is the fairness of heaven, the flower of earth and fruit of the Virgin’s womb. Then how could this image be so discoloured and so far from fair?’

The property of light is crucial in that the vernicle of Rome shows what was believed to be the image of Christ’s face, devoid of beauty and fairness. Julian understands that both properties are concealed, remaining veiled behind the darkness of human sins, which Christs redeemed. It seems that, for her, physical/corporeal reality may reflect the properties of the spiritual world. This understanding could mean that, on the mystic’s account, light binds the two realities together, which, to some extent, blurs the boundaries between them, as shown in Chapter 12. From the grounded cognition perspective, it might be imply the need to go beyond the traditional distinction between concrete and abstract concepts, as indicated in Barsalou et al. (2018). The problem requires an in-depth examination and a separate treatment in another study.

## 5. Conclusions

The issue of the relation between perception, action and cognition is a long-standing problem in cognitive science. The analysis of Julian of Norwich’s the Long Text presented in this paper has been designed to inform the debate by offering a Cognitive Linguistic analysis of a late medieval mystical text, supported by the conception of situated conceptualisation. It has been indicated that the latter notion might be helpful as an analytical tool complementing Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar and Cognitive Linguistic approaches to conceptual metaphor. As for the theorising of conceptual metaphors, it has been beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss in detail more recent views of metaphor (cf. Kövesces, 2020) The study indicates that Julian’s

familiarity with the visual and material culture of the Middle English period underpins the Long Version of her account of the experience she received in May 1373. The references to religious artefacts (the crucifix, the vernicle) might be motivated by the mystic's desire to invoke a shared basis of embodied interaction with the physical and sociocultural milieu of the time. What is less self-evident is the late medieval worldview, the conceptual foundations of which must be retrieved. The conception of situated conceptualisation plays a pivotal role in the process, facilitating the identification of situated conceptual patterns behind language in use, rather than separate concepts.

Julian of Norwich is typically associated with the words "*al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele*" (ll. 937-938), a passage from Chapter 27 of the Long Text. Perhaps the best example asserting Julian's popularity can be found in T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, "And all shall be well/ All manner of thing shall be well/ When the tongues of flame are in-folded/ Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one" (Eliot, 1971/1943, p. 59). However, Julian's thought seems to be much more intricate as it transcends what might seem to be the words of simple consolation. Her work calls for further studies exploring the cognitive foundations of the two versions. Cognitive Linguistics may help inform diachronic research by linking the cognitive-linguistic aspects of texts such as Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation* with recent insights from research into the human mind. Still, the benefit of undertaking such studies should not remain one-sided. It is hoped that cognitive scientists may feel inspired to accept the challenge of exploring the evolution of the interplay between language, cognition and culture across both space and time.

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