The Mystical Utterance and the Metaphorical Mode in the Writings of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete

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The shared conceptual underpinnings of contemporary metaphor theory and Christian mystical expression form the basis of this study of the works of two very different fourteenth-century French mystics, Marguerite d'Oingt (*c.*1240-1310) and Marguerite Porete (d.1310). The former, a Carthusian prioress, wrote a series of vivid visionary narratives, the *Pagina meditationum*, the *Speculum*, and *Li via de Seiti Biatrix*, but, to date, has been the subject of little scholarly attention. The latter, meanwhile, is perhaps best known for her condemnation for relapsed heresy and her death at the stake in Paris, on account of her radical mystical text, the *Mirouer des simples ames*.

These two women's writings present very different examples of late medieval mystical expression. Nevertheless, the two are intimately connected in the sense that both *oeuvres* are driven by a desire to express their respective experiences of the mystical presence of God. What precisely is meant by 'mystical experience' constitutes this mode of expression's fundamental paradox: by its very definition, the perfection of divine encounter lies beyond the scope of human communication. Metaphor's capacity for (partial) revelation in circumstances where other modes of communication fail, however, suggests that when applied as a hermeneutic device, theoretical perspectives of metaphor provide a fresh interpretative framework with which to explore the more enigmatic aspects of mystical thought.

Drawing on a number of modern theoretical approaches, including those of Paul Ricoeur, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, this investigation explores the extent to which metaphor's conceptual and cognitive underpinnings engage with, and potentially unlock, the sensitivities of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's post-experiential accounts of mystical phenomena. To this end, metaphor may be seen to represent mysticism's cognitive analogue, a means of effecting linguistic and cognitive transformation impossible to express through literal language alone.

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INTRODUCTION

> 'Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be apprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness.'[1]

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* marked a paradigm shift in the study of metaphor. This 'cognitive turn' radically changed how scholars approached metaphor, traditionally understood as a literary device used to portray a comparison between two disparate entities, by arguing that metaphors are principally cognitive, and only secondarily linguistic.[2] Metaphorical expressions, Lakoff and Johnson propose, underpin thought and action, and by extension, structure the mind's perception of the world and how the world relates to the mind. Their observations and resultant theoretical framework bear a striking resemblance to the ways in which scholars have sought to comprehend mankind's articulation of divine experience. In identifying metaphor's capacity for (partial) revelation in circumstances where other modes of communication fail, Lakoff and Johnson's 'cognitive metaphor theory' bears a striking resemblance to the Pauline phrase, 'videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate.'[3] Often found at the heart of contemplative Judeo-Christian expression, St Paul's enigmatic phrase to the Corinthians encapsulates both the elusive nature of mystical experience and the

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[1] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 193.

[2] Gerard Steen writes of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory that it redefines metaphor as 'a highly revealing instance of the human capacity for making sense' and a crucial component in the construction of 'conceptual world[s] with [their] own laws.' See *Understanding Metaphor in Literature: An Empirical Approach* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 3. Also René Dirven and Wolf Paprotté, 'Introduction,' in *The Ubiquity of Metaphor: Metaphor in Language and Thought*, ed. by René Dirven and Wolf Paprotté (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985), pp. vii-xix. Here at p. viii.

[3] 1 Corinthians 13:12. 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner.' All Biblical quotations are taken from the Vulgate and/ or the Douay-Rheims translation.

resultant struggle to articulate its perfection using the imperfect tool of human language.[4]

The shared conceptual underpinnings of contemporary metaphor theory and of Christian mystical expression form the platform of this study of the works of two very different fourteenth-century French mystics, Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete. Little is known about the lives of these two writers, although their legacies mark tipping points in the long histories of religious and French literature. Writing in a combination of Latin, Old French, and her local Francoprovençal, Marguerite d'Oingt (*c.*1240-1310) is responsible for two short visionary works and a biography of Béatrix d'Ornacieu (*c.*1260-1308/9), as well as a small collection of letters, apparently all composed within the confines of her Carthusian monastery at Poleteins, in the Rhône-Alps region. The only extant examples of medieval Carthusian women's writing, Marguerite d'Oingt's works are noteworthy for their vivid blend of Biblical imagery and conservative appropriation of Patristic exegesis, interwoven with strands of Cistercian thought.[5] Although often mentioned in passing in anthologies of women's mystical writing, she remains on the periphery of mainstream academic attention.[6]

Marguerite Porete (d.1310) occupies a more notorious place in the canon of medieval mystical writing. What scant details are known about the author of the complex dialogic treatise, the *Mirouer des simples ames*, can be found in the

[4] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. xvi.
[5] Ulrike Wiethaus, 'Marguerite d'Oingt,' in *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by William W. Kibler, Grover A. Zinn, John Jr. Bell Henneman and Lawrence Earp, Garland Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 110.
[6] Scholarly treatments of Marguerite d'Oingt's writings are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

documents relating to her trial by the inquisition in Paris for relapsed heresy.[7] Her sentencing on 31st May 1310, and death at the stake the following day, marked 'the first known instance of an inquisitorial procedure ending with the burning of both a book and the accused author.'[8] However the *Mirouer* continued to circulate anonymously. Its esoteric and occasionally controversial claims concerning the seven-stage mystical ascent of the Soul captured the attention of late medieval thinkers across Europe, finding a particularly receptive audience amongst the English Carthusians of fifteenth-century London.[9] Reunited with the historical figure of its author little over half a century ago, the text has been subject to considerable scholarly scrutiny, as well as increasing interest outside the academy.[10]

Marguerite Porete's and Marguerite d'Oingt's articulations of encountering, or participating in, a 'way of life' with the divine do not, in terms of historical context, literary style, or mystical content, appear, at first glance, to have much in common.[11] Nevertheless, the two are intimately connected by the sense that both their *oeuvres* are driven by a desire to express their respective

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[7] The trial documents are now held in the Archives Nationales, Paris, box J428. Paul Verdeyen S.J. edited the documents and published his findings in 'Le procès d'inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309-1310),' *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 81 (1986): 47-94.

[8] Sean L. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), p. 3.

[9] Romana Guarnieri first published her thesis connecting one of the condemned articles from Porete's trial to the *Mirouer* in the *Osservatore Romano* (16th June 1946) under the title, 'Lo specchio delle anime semplice e Margherita Porete.' Extant manuscripts of translations of the *Mirouer* include those in Middle English, Italian and Latin. See below for details of the *Mirouer*'s manuscript tradition.

[10] Robert E. Lerner notes that in 2001, an 'installation opera' about Marguerite Porete based on a libretto by the poet Anne Carson was performed in New York City; in 2002 a 'Requiem für Marguerite Porete' with 'dance and musical interpretation' was performed in Karlsruhe. See 'New Light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,' *Speculum*, 85 (2010): 91-116. Here at p. 91. More recently, the figure of Marguerite Porete was the subject of a television documentary based on the novelist Ken Follett's *World Without End* (New York: Penguin, 2010). 'Great Women,' *Ken Follett's Journey Into the Dark Ages*. Episode 2. Dir. by Jann Turner. Written by Tilman Remme. Tandem Communications. 21st August 2012.

[11] Bernard McGinn prefers to describe mysticism not as a singular experience, but as a 'way of life.' See *The Foundations of Mysticism,* p. xvi.

experiences of the mystical presence of God. This is a problematic notion, for, as Bernard McGinn notes, '[e]xperience as such is not part of the historical record.'[12] The objective of establishing meaning in a mystical account, must, by definition of the experience it recounts, always lie beyond the reaches of the rational mind. Yet, as F. Samuel Brainard asks, 'what does our interpretation address if not the experience signified?'[13] This is an issue for all scholars of semiotics, and acutely felt within the remits of this discussion. To accept that a 'sign' signifies its referential 'reality' is to suggest that the mystical text is a transparent revelation of the experience it recounts. Yet to do so is to refute the possibilities of mediation, and with them the associated functions of imagination and cognition. On the other hand, to contradict the referential qualities of a sign is to inhibit oneself from accepting any notion of experience or 'reality', with no capacity to judge what is real and what is not.

Before turning to the question of establishing meaning in mystical testimony, it is worth pausing over what is meant here by the term 'mysticism.' Scholars of the subject have long debated the particular parameters of what might be thought of as a 'category' of Christian mystical experience, and their conclusions are rarely unanimous.[14] Etymological indicators suggest that the terms 'mystic' and 'mysticism' derive from a Latin transliteration of the Greek

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[12] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism,* p. xiv.

[13] F. Samuel Brainard, 'Defining 'Mystical Experience,'' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64, 2 (Summer 1996): 359-393. Here at p. 385.

[14] Andrew Louth characterizes mysticism 'as a search for and experience of immediacy with God,' in *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. xv. McGinn similarly defines it as 'part of [Christianity's] belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence with God.' See *Foundations of Mysticism,* p. xvii. Nicholas Lash, on the other hand, challenges the assumption that 'the mystical element' is only part of Christianity's belief. 'The 'mystical life',' he writes, 'is really nothing other that the Christian life lived to the maximum intensity.' *The Beginning and the End of "Religion"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 171. Other parameters for the definition of mysticism are set out later in the introduction. The definition of metaphor is similarly contested. David Punter concludes his study of the topic by writing that 'there is no single, universal, ahistorical definition of 'metaphor.' *Metaphor*, The New Critical Idiom (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 144.

root *myein*, 'to close the eyes.'[15] As such, the *mystikos* is someone who seals him- or herself off from the outside world, physically at least. Ocular sight is rejected in favour of spiritual vision, the latter drawing metaphorically on the former but signifying clarity of thought and judgement and a sharpening of the powers of the mind; the faculties of reason, imagination, and memory.[16]

Regarding Marguerite Porete as a mystic in light of this rubric, however, presents an initial problem. There is no indication of sight or visionary activity of any kind in the *Mirouer des simples ames*; indeed in chapter 49 of the treatise, Porete's *Dame Amour* explains that there can be no comparison between the annihilated soul and those who participate in other forms of divine ecstasy, suggesting that contemplation and ecstasy, often the pinnacle of a visionary narrative, ought to be surpassed in order for the soul to reach the final stage of union with God.[17] In their interpretative essay to the latest English translation

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[15] Robert Grosseteste in the 1230s provides an etymological definition of mysticism in his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise, *The Mystical Theology*. Grosseteste writes: 'Mistica theologia est secretissima, et non iam per speculum et per ymagines creaturarum cum Deo locutio […]. Dicitur autem misticum a *mio*, verbo greco quod significant "disco occulta" et "doceo occulta" seu "secreta" et "obscure" et "constringo" et "claudo", unde mistica theologia dicitur quasi clausa et constricta; ea enim que dicta est, clausa est et constricta ab oculis omnium actu videntium aliquid creatum.' 'Mystical theology is the most secret talking with God, no longer through a mirror and through the images of creatures […]. But the word "mystical" is taken from *mio*, a Greek verb which means "I learn hidden things" and "I teach hidden things" or "secrets", and "I hide" and "I press together" and "I close." Whence theology is called "mystical" in the sense of "closed" and "constricted." For that theology which is referred to is closed and kept from the eyes of all who are actually seeing something created, and by that fact from the eyes of all common men actually living the present life.' *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on De Mystica Theologia*, ed., trans. and introduction by James McEvoy, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations, 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 64-65. For more on the Greek etymology of the term, see Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 1-2.

[16] Sight and vision as metaphors for knowledge and the mental faculties are part of a long tradition that can be traced back to antiquity. For a discussion of the history of sight and vision as metaphors for knowledge and the mental faculties, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), especially Chapter One, 'Illumination and Language,' pp. 3-20.

[17] 'Voire encore, dit Amour, pouse que, pour ce bien vouloir, ilz peussent faire miracles et recevoir checun jour pour l'amour de Dieu martire; encore, dit Amour, n'y a point de comparasson, puisque voulenté demoure.' *Mirouer*, ch. 49, pp. 146-148. All quotations from Marguerite Porete's work are taken from *Le Mirouer des simples ames*, ed. by Romana Guarnieri/ *Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. by Paul Verdeyen S.J., Corpus Christianorum Continuatio

of the *Mirouer*, Edmund College, J. C. Marler and Judith Grant go as far as to write that, in contrast to other religious and spiritual texts of the period, Porete's 'spirituality is purely intellectual, with no indications that she had received any of the private revelations of the secrets of the divine nature which are the distinguishing marks of genuine mysticism.'[18]

Other scholars, however, would propose that it is precisely this *lack* of visions that qualifies Marguerite Porete's status as a mystic, and that of the two women, it is Marguerite d'Oingt whose writings fall beyond the remit of mystical literature. Marguerite d'Oingt's emphasis on visionary experience brings her text into dialogue, for example, with the later English spiritual writer Julian of Norwich (*c*.1342-*c*.1416), who, Kevin J. Magill argues, belongs not to a category of 'mystical' but 'visionary' writing.[19] Similarly, Denys Turner suggests that there is a palpable difference between a mystic's desire to overcome the confines of their selfhood and modern tendencies to foreground that same selfhood as the site for divine, ineffable experience.[20] According to

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Mediaevalis, 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), p. 188. Henceforth referred to as *Mirouer*. 'Indeed truly, says Love, suppose that willing this good they could do miracles and receive martyrdom each day for the sake of their love of God, and still, says Love, there would be no comparison since their will remains.' *Mirror*, p. 128. All translations are taken from *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. by Ellen L. Babinsky, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 142. Henceforth referred to as *Mirror*. Babinsky's chapters match those of Guarnieri's edition. In chapter 118, the Soul explains that visions, actions of piety, and contemplation form part of the lower stages of the mystical trajectory towards the divine, but are absent from the fifth stage, once the Soul has relinquished her will back to God. See also Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200-1350*, vol. 3 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), p. 247.

[18] Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., J.C. Marler, and Judith Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay,' in *The Mirror of Simple Souls* by Margaret Porette [sic], trans. by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., J.C. Marler, and Judith Grant, Notre Dame Texts in Medieval Culture, 6 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. xxxv-lxxxvii. Here at p. lxxi.

[19] Kevin J. Magill, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic or Visionary?*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[20] Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). W. T. Stace excludes them from his formulation of mystical experience on two counts: first, because they 'have the character of sensuous imagery'; second, because they are sometimes rejected by mystics themselves. W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 49. William Wainwright, meanwhile, argues that visions and voices should be rejected since, unlike unitary states of mystical consciousness that are void of

these perspectives, Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* adheres to a definition of mystical experience and expression; Marguerite d'Oingt's 'visionary' texts do not.

That visions constitute a more contentious area of spiritual, otherworldly, or divine experience is not a novel idea. Questioning the relationship between seeing and knowing, and the extent to which *how much* a man can know equates with the correct meaning of God's Word, St Augustine's typology of visions, for example, found in his *De Genesi ad litteram* differentiates between three types of vision.[21] The lowest of the three, 'visio corporalis,' involves seeing the material world with the physical eye and is limited by the viewer's position in time, space, and physical orientation. The second category, 'visio spiritualis,' is characterised by a turn from outer to inner seeing, a more cerebral, spiritual form of vision. The inner eye of the soul sees images offered to the imagination ('imaginatio'), the faculty of the soul that accumulates the information received via the sense organs and gathers it into a coherent conceptual representation. However Augustine suggests that this imaginative vision is still insufficient to comprehend divine ideas because it is facilitated by images ('enigmata' or 'phantasmata'), and is therefore as liable to corruption by the devil as they are to inspiration by the divine. The third and final stage of his trichotomy is 'visio intellectualis,' the highest form of vision by the rational soul performed by the eye of the mind. This intuitive insight is infallible, free from imagery, and, like

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specific detail, visions point towards 'empirical content.' William J. Wainwright, *Mysticism: A Study of its Nature, Cognitive Value and Moral Implications* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), p. 1.

[21] Augustine discusses his typology of visions, their causes, hierarchical relationship, and impediments to such visions at length in Book 12, especially in Chapters 7-25. See Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Genesi ad litteram*, ed. by J. Zycha, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 28, 1 (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1884). *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* trans. John Hammond Taylor, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, 42, vol. 2 of 2 (New York and Ramsey, N.J.: Newman Press, 1982).

Moses' vision of God in Exodus 33:23, comprehended not corporeally or spiritually, but intellectually.[22]

Augustine's doubts as to the authenticity of his ambiguous middle category, 'visio spiritualis,' may form the basis for many scholars', both medieval and modern, disregard for, or mistrust of, visionary experience.[23] Other authorities, meanwhile, patristic and medieval, stress the importance of visions. Gregory the Great (d.604), for example, holds up St Benedict of Nursia (*ca*.480-547) as a paradigmatic mystic, whose cosmic visions constitute exemplary indications of spiritual experience.[24] By the high Middle Ages, the monastic emphasis on visionary experience within a life of prayer and meditation suggested that in the right context, visionary activity could catalyse a transcendence of the mind.[25]

Opting to eliminate visionary experiences from the category of mystical consciousness points towards a larger methodological obstacle in the drive to

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[22] 'Tollamque manum meam, et videbis posteriora mea: faciem autem meam videre non poteris.' 'And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face thou canst not see.' Exodus 33:23.

[23] Other recent scholars, meanwhile, propose that accounts of visionary experience were a means by which to legitimate women's writing in a period generally held to be resistant to women's access to formal theological training and dubious of female intellectual capacity. See for example, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff's *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6. 'Visions led women to the acquisition of power in the world […]. Visions were a socially sanctioned activity that freed a woman from conventional female roles by identifying her as a genuine religious figure.' See also Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999).

[24] Pope Gregory I, *The Life of St Benedict by Gregory the Great: Translation and Commentary*, trans. by Terrence G. Kardong (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), especially Section 15, 'The Vision of the World in the Light of God.'

[25] In his *Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei,* for example, William of St Thierry (d.1148) writes that he lives in hope of one day seeing God 'face to face,' despite the warnings of Exodus 33:17-20. See Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: From Gregory the Great to the Twelfth Century*, vol. 2 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (London: SCM Press, 1994), especially pp. 260-274, for a discussion of William's mystical theology and the theme of the role of vision in the soul's path towards the *similitudo Dei* and *unitas spiritus* in his writings.

define 'mysticism.' In attempting to 'control' and examine accounts of religious phenomena modern scholarship risks being too strict in its attempts at classification.[26] As a result, 'complex phenomena, such as the interplay between transcendence and immanence, or that between the communal and the individual,' is reduced in an effort to make 'evaluative judgements about what is central and what is peripheral to the mystical life, or, even more damningly, what constitutes "true" as opposed to "false" mysticism.'[27]

The consequences of overly categorizing the concept of 'mysticism' are more critical than many scholars allow for. Christian mystical literature finds its thematic inspiration in the Bible, the narrative framework of which is punctuated by visions and revelations. In the Old Testament, God reveals his plan for mankind, and manoeuvres the crucial terrestrial agents of that plan into strategic positions, through a series of apparitions, dreams, and voices.[28] Similarly, in the New Testament, visions are used by God to establish his Church and to prepare the way for the incarnate Christ. Zacharias, Joseph, and Ananias, amongst others, are the recipients of God's instruction and prophecy mediated through visions, dreams, and revelations.[29] Paul's celebrated statements concerning speculation and its relationship to mankind's knowledge

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[26] Amy Hollywood, 'Introduction,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-33. Here at p. 4. See also Barbara Newman, 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?: The Clash Between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture,' *Speculum*, 80, 1 (Jan. 2005):1-43.

[27] Hollywood, 'Introduction,' p. 4.

[28] God promises Abraham *per visionem* that he will be the father of many nations (Genesis 15:1); Jacob's celebrated dream of the ladder extending from heaven confirms that Abraham's covenant will be carried through him (Genesis 28:10-17); Joseph's visions, and his interpretations of his and other's visions, are central to his saving of the Egyptians and the Israelites (Genesis 37, 40, 41); Samuel (1 Samuel 3) and Solomon (1 Kings 3:5) are also recipients of pivotal visions in the Old Testament.

[29] Zacharias learns that he will be the father of John the Baptist in a vision (*apparuit autem illi angelus Domini,* Luke 1:11); Joseph learns that Mary has conceived miraculously in a dream (Matthew 1:20), and later is told in two dreams to escape Herod's massacre and that he and his family are safe to return (Matthew 2:13, 2: 19); it is due to a vision from God that the Christian Ananias visits Paul in Damascus and converts him, restoring his sight (Acts 9:10-18). Peter (Acts 10:1-6) and Paul (Acts 16:9-10, Acts 18:9-11, and 2 Corinthians 12:1-6) also receive visions whose messages constitute a vital role in the formation of Christian doctrine.

of God are grounded, likewise, in literal and metaphorical vision. 1 Corinthians 13:12, and indeed its counterpart Romans 1:20, are, as mentioned above, often referenced as a touchstone in Christian mystical theology.[30] To question the appropriateness or authenticity of a divine vision is to cast doubt on the cornerstone of the Christian faith and the bedrock of the mystical edifice itself. According to the Greek theologian Origen (*c.*184/185-*c.*253/254), it is in the interpretation of Scripture that the essence of mysticism can be found.[31] If the visions of the prophets are to be excluded from 'true' religious experience in the same way that that the visions of later mystics are sometimes excluded or explained away in terms of psychiatric disorders or idiosyncrasies of the nervous system, then the parameters of mysticism have to be re-drawn, or else discarded entirely.[32]

This study therefore adopts a broad definition as to what a 'mystical' person, experience, or text entails and uses the terms 'mystic' and 'visionary' interchangeably, depending on the context.[33] In doing so, it allows, on the one hand, for the many manifestations of mystical awareness expressed during the Middle Ages, from the apophatic and cataphatic traditions of the early church, to the more sensory examples of the high and later medieval period, variously described as 'love mysticism', 'bridal mysticism', 'Passion mysticism', and

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[30] For a comparative study of Paul's statements of 1 Corinthians 13:12 and Romans 1:20, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, 'Speculations on Speculation" Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion', in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte.* Kolloquium Kloster Fischingen 1998, ed. by Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Walter de Gruyter: Tübingen, 2000), pp. 353-408. Here at p. 354.

[31] See Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition,* pp. 52-74.

[32] The extent to which the Bible can be explored and explained through modern scientific research is the subject of Steve Jones' recent publication, *The Serpent's Promise: The Bible Retold as Science* (London: Little, Brown, 2013).

[33] Robert Ellwood's definition of mysticism is particularly helpful here. He writes that for an experience to be considered 'mystical', it must take place: '[In a] religious or profane context, immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as encounter with a higher or ultimate divine reality in a direct, according to the subject, rational way, that engenders a deep sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary.' Robert S. Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 2.

'ecstatic mysticism.'[34] On the other hand, however, it is important to emphasize that a broad definition does not suggest that there is an 'average' mystic, or an 'average' mystical experience. Rather, it presumes that mysticism is a sub-category of religious experience and articulation, with religious experience defined as involving a physiological or psychological engagement with a divine agent, an appreciation of and engagement with the sacred nature of the liturgy, a belief in the afterlife, and profound reflection upon what Brainard terms 'ultimate life concerns' and questions of 'ultimate reality and truth.'[35]

Mystical expression also recounts a shift in human consciousness, from what might be thought of as a state of everyday, waking awareness, to one of 'nonordinariness.'[36] This may be a sense of miraculous phenomena, or of events and cognitive processes that appear to occur beyond the remit of the natural ordering of the world. Others have sought to define this quality of mysticism using terminology such as 'ineffable' and 'anomalous,' but neither of these terms are particularly helpful in defining the 'mystical.'[37] 'Ineffable' suggests an impossibility to describe the experience, and yet the existence of a text problematizes the notion that the experience lies beyond linguistic or pictorial depiction. Similarly, 'anomalous' implies a drastic rupture with the normal and the everyday. However, mysticism draws on a sense of the universal and the innate consciousness of being human, and therefore cannot be regarded as a state of consciousness wholly divorced from fundamental human concerns. In

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[34] Barbara Newman provides a useful overview of some of the more prevalent modes of twelfth- through fourteenth-century mystical expression in her essay 'Gender,' in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. by Julia A. Lamm (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 41-55.

[35] Brainard, 'Defining 'Mystical Experience,'' p. 372 and p. 375.

[36] Brainard, 'Defining 'Mystical Experience,'' especially pp. 372-375. See also Wayne Proudfoot, who writes that the mystic 'must identify his experience under a certain description, and that description must preclude naturalistic explanation.' *Religious Experience* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 137.

[37] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature: Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh, 1901-2* (London: Burns and Oates, 1952), passim; Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, p. 148.

the words of William James, mysticism represents 'that filmiest of screens' that detaches our 'normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it […] [from] potential forms of consciousness entirely different.'[38]

However, when a mystical experience is articulated, it is not only the mystic who provides coherence and meaning to mystical expression. In order for an utterance to be regarded as 'mystical,' it must engage with a community. It is this collective, contextual interest in the expressed experience that decides that as a category of experience, the label 'mystical' is an appropriate one to apply to the account. Some critics, especially those who view mystical literature as signifying a transparent 'reality,' assume that the authority for establishing an experience's or a text's mystical nature comes from the person having the experience, or the named author of the text.[39] This is akin to regarding the mystical account as an empirical account of experience, rather like reading a metaphor as a literal statement, as opposed to an intricate web of signs and signifiers, designed to be decoded by a discourse community participating within the codifier's hermeneutic framework. As Brainard argues:

> [T]he judgement of an experience's veracity – of whether an experience is genuinely mystical or merely delusionary – is made by the one applying the label 'mystical'. What we seek in a mystic's testimony is evidence of what our *community of discourse* judges to be genuinely mystical. [original emphasis][40]

Mystical writing demands a delicate balancing act on the part of its reader to distinguish between experience and account. Direct access to mystical experience is impossible. In this sense, all mystical accounts are to be regarded

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[38] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 305.
[39] Brainard, 'Defining 'Mystical Experience,'' p. 365.
[40] Brainard, 'Defining 'Mystical Experience,'' p. 379.

with an awareness of the constructedness of mystical prose and its relationship with the culture and context in which it is received.[41]

Such an open-ended perspective on mystical phenomena does not necessarily sit comfortably with the twenty-first century critic, and the psychologists Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach wonder whether the disregard for the significance of visions is perhaps more indicative of a modern discomfort with accounts of holy individuals, 'seen to exist at the interface of humanity and divinity.'[42] Similarly, Bruce Holsinger, in his analysis of Hildegard of Bingen's musical compositions, writes of the 'ideological problem[s]' and 'quandaries' associated with 'the historical challenge of analyzing works that are asserted by their authors to be divinely inspired.'[43] Kroll, Bachrach, and Holsinger's remarks point towards a discomfort amongst scholars of premodern religions, caused by the dualistic nature of visionary literature as concerning issues of belief and spiritual faith on the one hand, and ideological value-systems and practices on the other, in conjunction with an interwoven textual overlay of poetic and rhetorical intertextual allusions and borrowings.

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[41] See McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, pp. 27-30.

[42] Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 203-204. See also Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 69. McIntosh writes: 'mysticism in modernity also withdraws into […] the world of the inner self – a world whose claims to wisdom, authority and truth could easily be marginalized by religious and academic authorities, even as they have been suborned and co-opted by modern individualistic consumerism. At this point, 'the mystic' has, in Western culture more generally, become something of a marginal eccentric at best, whose peculiar inner experience […] has come to seem a thing of pious curiosity, perhaps, but clearly of little relevance for the serious task of academic theology.'

[43] Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 91.

Clare Barbetti expresses this tension particularly forcefully. Writing about the difficulties presented by 'that amorphous subject, spirituality,' Barbetti states:

> [I]t is decidedly difficult to analyze that which claims to be unmediated communication from God without side-stepping the 'God-issue' altogether and performing a purely anthropological analysis. […] This difficulty speaks to an interesting tension in the values of the contemporary Western academy, between a lukewarm wish not to discredit the beliefs of 'divinely inspired' authors and a snobbery concerning 'illogical' beliefs that underlies a drive to catalogue them as mere artifact.'[44]

In its analysis of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's lives, works, and literary reception, this thesis seeks to be sensitive to Barbetti's 'God-issue,' careful to situate its literary and cognitive analysis in relation to the theological underpinnings of the two women's literary aims and conceptualizations of belief. To regard mystical writing as 'mere artifact' is to sever it from the structures that make it coherent, and in turn to undermine the objectives of analysis.

However, Barbetti's observations also point towards two deeper and interrelated human concerns. What is problematic for scholars of visionary texts is not the divide between medieval and modern perspectives or the discomfort of a modern academy with the notion of a divine, invisible author. After all, the

[44] Clare Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory*, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 86.

earlier discussion of Augustine's tripartite and hierarchical classification of modes of seeing indicates that people of the ancient and medieval worlds were, at times, as uneasy with the role and underlying motivation of visionary experience as moderns. The fourteenth-century anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* similarly cautions novices against misunderstanding the spiritual senses and rails against the 'hypocrites' who:

> [T]urn their bodily senses inwards on themselves, physically, which is unnatural. They strain themselves, as though they could possibly see inwardly with their bodily eyes and hear inwardly with their ears; and so with all their senses of smell, of taste and of touch. And so they reverse the order of nature; they so overtax their imagination with this fantastic behavior and without the least discretion, that finally they turn their brains in their heads.[45]

Mistrust of visions, and with it the broader unease about mysticism as an experience and as a textual category, acknowledges two perennial questions about the human condition: the difficulties of being bound by subjectivity and language.[46] In part, perhaps the discomfort is a product of not having yet developed a sufficiently sophisticated vocabulary to compensate for the web of consciousness, experience, the melding of the self and the divine 'Other,' and the subsequent composition and articulation of these events that is mysticism.

It is the claim of this thesis that metaphor and its theoretical underpinnings provide an underestimated conceptual model with which to address this problem. Put simply, a metaphor is a statement that, in some way,

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[45] Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by James Walsh S. J., The Classics of Western Spirituality (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981), chapters 52 and 53, pp. 220-224. The instructions to the novices can be found in chapter 52.

[46] Kroll and Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind*, p. 206.

presents a descriptive contrast and implies an epistemological truth different to those implied by its literal referent. The Eucharistic imagery used by St John in his Gospel account of Jesus Christ's feeding of the five thousand provides a case in point. St John quotes Christ as saying:

> I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world.[47]

Received as a literal statement, Christ's words evoke the following response: 'The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'[48] As a metaphorical statement, however, the passage from John's Gospel encapsulates one of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith: that Christ is the daily source of the life and nourishment of the Church. In order for this inference to occur, a number of cognitive processes must take place. The audience are required to engage with the 'infra-linguistic' qualities, or signs and signifiers, of the statement; its accepted 'truth-qualities.' Similarly, they must verify that statement according to a combination of individually- and communally-held norms, categories and logic; factors controlled by common usage and context.

As with its definition of mysticism, this study takes a broad view of what constitutes a 'metaphor' in linguistic terms. Figurative expressions such as analogy, allegory, simile, hyperbole, metonymy, parable, fable, and myth are drawn together here under the umbrella-term 'metaphor.' A metaphor can constitute a word, a phrase, a sentence, a recurrent motif, or extend across an entire work (or works, in the case of Marguerite d'Oingt). This broad approach is explicable on two counts. First, within many modes of creative expression,

[47] John 6:51-2.
[48] John 6:53.

narratives are constructed by 'extended and sustained metaphors', within which there may well be particular instances of metonymy, simile or analogy.[49] However whilst they differ from readings of 'metaphor' as poetic and rhetorical devices, these figurative tropes all share similar fundamental concerns about the cognitive nature of language, conceptual transference of meaning, and an epistemological need for meaningful expression.[50] Second, as Lakoff and Johnson propose, the term 'metaphor' in this instance not only signifies a figure of speech, but also a mode of thought.

To return to the main tenets of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory, metaphor manifests itself on two levels; as a metaphorical linguistic expression underpinned by conceptual metaphor.[51] Metaphorical linguistic expressions are the words or phrases found in verbal expression, whose metaphorical meaning is determined by its user's and audience's ability to recognise and process its figurative, as opposed to literal, status. A recurrent metaphorical statement in both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's writings, for example, is that 'human skin is parchment.'[52] Cognitive metaphor theory proposes that linguistically, but more importantly, conceptually, the structure of the metaphorical phrase can be divided into two domains, one of

[49] Colin Murray Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 11-20.

[50] The separate and shared aspects of metaphor and metonymy are, for example, an area of ongoing debate. Recent publications on the subject include: *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Persepective*, ed. by Antonio Barcelona, Topics in English Linguistics, 30 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000); Verena Haser, *Metaphor, Metonymy, and Experientialist Philosophy*, Topics in English Linguistics, 49 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005). Lakoff and Johnson discuss the question of metonymy in Chapter Eight of *Metaphors We Live By*, 'Metonymy.'

[51] See Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially Chapter One, 'What Is Metaphor?,' for a useful introduction to cognitive metaphor theory.

[52] 'Skin is parchment' is an extended metaphor across all three of Marguerite d'Oingt's works; see Chapter Three for an extended discussion of this metaphor and its implications. Marguerite Porete uses the metaphor explicitly in chapter 66 of her *Mirouer*: 'ceste leçon n'est mie mise en escript de main d'omne, mais c'est du Saint Esperit, qui escript ceste leçon merveilleusement, de l'Ame est parchemin precieusement,' p. 188. '[T] his lesson is not placed in writing by human hand, but by the Holy Spirit, who writes this lesson in a marvellous way, and the Soul is the precious parchment.' *Mirror,* p. 142.

which is partially projected, or 'mapped' onto the other.[53] In this case, some of the qualities of 'parchment' are 'mapped' onto the notion of 'human skin' to indicate something about that skin which is not apparent or expressible through literal language alone.

It is often suggested that this perspective finds its earliest articulation in Aristotle, particularly in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, the philosopher writing in the former that 'a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity of dissimilars.'[54] In contrast to literal language, which 'convey[s] only what we know already', or absurd phrases, which 'simply puzzle us', Aristotle suggests that 'it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh.'[55] Metaphor conveys new ideas and new facts, he writes, and its effect is crucial to creating meaning.[56] Perhaps more significantly for this discussion, Aristotle also suggests that metaphor causes the enigmatic or the abstract to become visible: 'the words, too, ought to set the scene before our eyes'.[57] The *Rhetoric* makes it clear that metaphor is not simply a linguistic construction, but a cognitive

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[53] George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 276.

[54] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. by I. Bywater, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 of 2, Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1459^{a} 7-8. Aristotle writes: 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy […] It is a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius.' *Poetics*, 1457^{b}7-9, p. 2332; 1459^{a} 5-7 and pp. 2334-35. See Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 2-4, for a brief overview of Aristotle's contribution to cognitive metaphor theory. J. E. Mahon provides a comparative survey of Aristotelian metaphor and modern metaphor theory in 'Getting Your Sources Right: What Aristotle Didn't Say,' in *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, ed. by Lynne Cameron and Graham Low (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 69-80.

[55] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. by W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 of 2, Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1410^{b} 11-13, p. 2250.

[56] 'It is also good to use metaphorical words; but the metaphors must not be far-fetched, or they will be difficult to grasp, nor obvious, or they will have no effect.' Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410^{b} 32-33, p. 2251. See also 1411^{b} 24-33, pp. 2252-53: 'all such passages are distinguished by the *effect of activity they convey*.' My emphasis.

[57] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410^{b} 33-34, p. 2251.

process too. In 'setting before the eyes' a systematicity of the similarity of dissimilars, metaphor functions to produce images in the mind's eye, where meaning is made. Aristotle's evocation of another form of vision, which is intimately connected to knowledge, resonates with the argument made here; that metaphor and mysticism share something of a similar cognitive and conceptual framework.

Aristotle's observations have much in common with modern theories of metaphorical linguistic expression. To return to the example 'human skin is parchment,' cognitive metaphor theory suggests that one domain, in this case 'human skin,' is 'seen' in terms of another domain, 'parchment.' The domain that is 'mapped' is known as the 'source' domain, and the domain onto which the features of the source are mapped is known as the 'target' domain.[58] At a cognitive level, the metaphorical linguistic expression is underpinned by conceptual metaphor, made up of two supraordinate domains, which organise the linguistic expression. In the case of 'human skin is parchment,' the conceptual metaphor underpinning the statement would be THE BODY IS A SURFACE, or THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, depending on how the user of the metaphor conceives of the fundamental structure of 'parchment' and its function and purpose.[59] The source domain, SURFACE or CONTAINER, and the target domain, BODY, form the two concepts that organise and provide systematicity for the components and their interactivity within the metaphorical linguistic expression. In order for the mapping to be successful, the conceptual properties of the source domain must not violate the

[58] These terms are discussed more fully in Chapter One. The particular terminology of 'source' and 'target domains' is taken from Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor, originally articulated by Lakoff in *Fire, Women, and Dangerous Things*, p. 276.

[59] Following Lakoff and Johnson, this thesis distinguishes metaphorical linguistic expressions from their conceptual underpinnings by putting the latter in uppercase letters. This indicates that the particular wording of the conceptual metaphor does not occur verbally, but rather underpins the metaphorical expression found in the text.

fundamental structure of the target domain. Providing both domains share a similar image-schematic structure, the projection is likely to be successful.[60]

In mapping one domain onto another, a number of the superordinate conceptual metaphor's source domain's attributes, entities, and propositions are transferred into the realm of the target domain, so that the metaphor's user or audience is able to make other inferences about the target domain and its related attributes, based on the properties of the superordinate source. These inferences are known in pragmatics as 'entailments.'[61] Metaphorical entailments are the perceptual facts or truths that arise from the metaphorical expression and which, in turn, characterise its systematicity. In the case of THE BODY IS A SURFACE, for example, the metaphor 'it was written all over his face' would give rise to the following entailments: the face is a surface, a surface is something you can write on, writing conveys information. Therefore, 'is was written all over his face' signifies that 'his face' is the vehicle for information. Taking this as a 'true' state of affairs, 'his face' becomes the focus for where we might seek information about 'him,' and, by extension, the unexplained 'it' of the phrase. In this way, metaphor provides a coherent conceptual structure for our understanding of the two abstract target domains in the utterance, 'him' and the thing affecting 'him.' Metaphor is therefore a linguistic *and* a cognitive device, organising and revealing aspects of thought, meaning, and action obscured by other modes and registers of expression.

A debate common to the fields of mysticism and metaphor concerns the role played in both by culture and context. As demonstrated above, in order for

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[60] Antonio Barcelona, 'Clarifying and Applying the Notions of Metaphor and Metonymy Within Cognitive Linguistics: An Update,' in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, ed. by René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), pp. 207-277. Here at p. 213.

[61] See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, especially Chapter Sixteen, 'Metaphorical Coherence.'

an utterance to be regarded as 'mystical,' it must engage with a community. It is this collective, contextual interest in the expressed experience that decides that, as a category of experience, the label 'mystical' is the appropriate one to apply to the account. In the case of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete, this cultural framework is constructed on two levels. First, by the eternal and macrocosmic notion of the Christian church and faith, potent as both a spiritual and a terrestrial phenomenon, and second by the microcosmic intellectual and political debates and the shifting spiritual landscape of the thirteenth century. Situating both women in relation to the historical backdrop of the late Middle Ages, in so far as the limited primary sources allow, permits a speculative survey of the influences on and possibilities for the two women's capacities to creatively explore and exploit metaphorical linguistic expression. The evidence for ontological, topological, logical, memorial, and imaginative mappings at work in these women's writings opens up new ways for a modern readership to engage with the patterns and entailments that underpin their expressions of mystical piety.

This is due in part to the fact that metaphorical processing allows for a conceptual union between reason and imagination.[62] As ontological, topological and logical attributes are mapped from the source to the target domain, the abstract concept adopts an internal coherence from the rational structural and orientational patterns and entailments deriving from the source domain. If this is successful, other cognitive faculties, such as memory and imagination, both at individual and communal levels, also elaborate the statement, shaping it to constitute expected, or novel meanings. This delicate cognitive intersection between reason and the imagination is termed 'imaginative rationality.'[63]

[62] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 192-193.
[63] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 193.

Christian mystical writing makes for an interesting case study in an exploration of 'imaginative rationality.' Liturgically and scripturally grounded, the textual space of Western Christian mystical literature, much like the liturgical space in which it is produced, constitutes a site for memorial activity anchored in visual sacred objects and images, which finds a rationale in the metanarrative of the life of Christ as mediated by Scripture. The experiences and visions of the mystic frequently borrow intertextual allusions from Scripture, as well as from other religious and classical texts, whilst simultaneously revealing, implicitly or explicitly, the mystic's meditative and contemplative practices, and often exhorting the reader to follow in their devotional path. On one hand, these intertextual borrowings provide a rationale for the mystic's articulation of their experience. On the other, the invitation for the pious reader to enter into meditative contemplation constitutes an offer for their imagination to work creatively with the text. Religious rumination on a text - be that performed internally within the text's narrative by its protagonists, or externally by the reader or listener, engaged in the act of reception, functions as both a theoretical model and a practical demonstration of imaginative rationality.

To contextualise these comments, it is worth a brief examination of Augustine's celebrated account in Book IX of his *Confessiones* of an experience that puts these theoretical perspectives into practice, and grounds them in Christian experience.[64] It is entirely possible that both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete would have been familiar with the narratives of the *Confessiones*, and Augustine's recollections of his experience of the divine highlight four distinct aspects of his experience that resonate with their writings. These include: mystical transcendence realised and articulated through an embodied notion of the intellect, the transitory nature of mystical union with

[64] On the debate as to whether Augustine should be regarded as a mystic, see McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism,* pp. 229-231.

the divine, the capacity of language both to promote and limit this experience, and the need to communicate this experience in order for it to be recognised.

Augustine writes that, shortly before his mother's death, they were together in Ostia, waiting to travel back to their native North Africa. Talking alone, they wondered 'qualis futura esset vita aeterna sanctorum, quam nec oculus vidit nec auris audivit nec in cor hominis ascendit.'[65] As they speculated on the 'joy of that life,' Augustine recalls that he and his mother experienced a spiritual movement towards the divine, described in terms of a conceptual passage from the corporeal to the cognitive and beyond into their own souls:

> perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua. et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis […].[66]

As they spoke of the wonders of encountering divine wisdom, briefly coming across it 'toto ictu cordis', Augustine recalls that they 'came back to the clattering of our mouths, where the spoken word has its beginning and its

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[65] Augustine, *Confessions,* vol. 1 of 2: 'Introduction and Text,' ed. by James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), Book IX, Chapter 23, p. 113. '[W]hat the eternal life of the saints would be, which eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor hast it entered into the heart of man.' Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Vernon J. Bourke, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 21 (Washington, D. C.; The Catholic University of America Press, orig. publ. 1953, repr. 1966, 2008), p. 251. In the accompanying notes to his translation, Bourke suggests that Augustine is borrowing from 1 Corinthians 2.9 here.

[66] Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 113; 'we advanced step by step through all bodily things to the sky itself, from which the sun, moon, and stars shine out over the earth, and we ascended still farther into our interior cogitation, conversation, and admiration of Thy works and came to our own minds. Then, we transcended them, so that we might touch that realm of unfailing abundance.' Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 251-252.

end.'[67] Despite the fleetingness of their encounter, Augustine and his mother continue to imagine what eternal mystical union might entail. They envisage a state of silent imagelessness, in which the soul, having passed beyond itself, hears God's Word spoken not 'through' the soul, 'but through Himself'.[68] This Neoplatonic description and conceptualisation of mystical union between the soul and the divine is strikingly similar to that described by Marguerite Porete. Augustine reinforces this sense of union by suggesting that the soul hears God 'non per linguam carnis neque per vocem angeli nec per sonitum nubis nec per aenigma similitudinis'; that is, not by means of a metaphor.[69] Until such a state of total absorption in God can be attained, Augustine seems to imply, humanity's conceptualisation of the mystical divine occurs through linguistic articulations of embodied cognition. How, and why, this is the case, will be the subject of this thesis.

Chapter One investigates in detail the theoretical underpinnings of modern cognitive metaphor theory and demonstrates both its applicability to the paradox of medieval mystical language, as well as the methodological hurdles it presents. Over the course of the following five chapters, vocabulary and terminology move between literary, theoretical, religious, philosophical and at times, scientific registers of discourse, and it is important that this is not done carelessly, nor that it is implied that certain terms are to be used interchangeably. A theological referent to 'the body', for example, does not necessarily carry the same level of meaning as a philosophical or literary conceptualisation of that same 'body' or notion of 'embodiment.' Similarly, the terms 'mysticism', 'cognition' and 'metaphor' carry with them a rich tapestry of

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[67] Augustine, *Confessions,* p. 113; 'an all-out thrust of our hearts,' Saint Augustine*, Confessions*, p. 252. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 252; 'remeavimus ad strepitum oris nostri, ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur.' Augusine, *Confessions*, p. 113.

[68] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 252-253; 'non per ea sed per se ipsum,' Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 114.

[69] Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 114; 'not through fleshly speech, or through the voice of an angel, or through the crash of thunder, or through the darkness of a similitude.' Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 253.

meaning and association; the opening chapter seeks to build on these introductory remarks concerning these terms and to highlight the methodological obstacles of a study involving parallel vocabularies. There are, however, considerable advantages to this approach. As Kroll and Bachrach comment, 'part of the task in examining phenomena from one discipline utilizing the methodology of another is to develop a vocabulary of exchange.'[70] By observing that one area of human consciousness and cognitive processing has features in common with another field of awareness and articulation, it is possible to translate knowledge between the two. In this case, knowledge of cognitive metaphor theory can be transferred to a theoretical perspective on mysticism, and *vice versa*.

Chapter Two turns its attention to the contextual particularities of the textual corpus under review: two examples of mystical writing, composed at the close of the thirteenth century. Both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete lived and wrote sometime between *c.*1260 and 1310. However it must be borne in mind that both women wrote within respective intellectual and religious milieux that were highly conscious of a longer past. It is the nature of spiritual literature to draw 'nourishment' from 'the sources of tradition,' and both women's works are no different.[71] However this particular period is also recognised by modern scholarship as a particularly high point in the textual tradition of Christian mysticism, as well as a time of significant change in the manifestation of spiritual practices and lay literary reception.[72] In the wake of the twelfth-century monastic reforms, the traditional Benedictine model of

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[70] Kroll and Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind*, p. 8.

[71] Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 17.

[72] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, passim; Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, p. 150. The question of lay literary reception is covered in more detail in Chapter Two. Harvey J. Graff's *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), especially Chapter Three, 'New Lights of Literacy and Learning: From the Tenth-Eleventh to the Thirteenth Centuries,' provides a broad summary of the changes to medieval modes of literacy, in terms of both theory and practice.

monasticism had been supplemented by a number of new orders for men and for women, including the Carthusians, whilst outside the cloister the contours of society were shifting too.[73] Changes in agriculture and technology, and the subsequent urbanisation of Europe, had begun to catalyse new centres of wealth and power, challenging the traditional social alignments.[74] Laypeople, meanwhile, began to explore other means of leading a Christian life without committing to formal vows, particularly in the urbanised regions of the Low Countries, the Rhineland, and northern Italy. Amongst these were the Beghards and their female counterparts, the Beguines, individuals and loosely formed communities, who, from around 1200, lived a combination of the active and contemplative life, devoted to prayer, teaching, care of the sick, and penance. Initially celebrated by the Church, by the thirteenth century their reputation for vernacular interpretation of Scripture, close relations with the friars, and public piety had turned certain scholars and clerics against them. Whether Marguerite Porete was associated with this religious collective, as her trial documents suggest, will be a matter for conjecture.

This environment 'coincided,' Barbara Newman suggests, 'with the first stages of a far-reaching change in the relationship between Latin and Europe's burgeoning vernaculars', in turn posing new questions about 'just what was

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[73] For more introductory literature on the subject, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150* (London: Macmillan, 1984); Derek Baker, "The Whole World a Hermitage": Ascetic Renewal and the Crisis of Western Monasticism,' in *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L. T. Bethell,* ed. by Marc Anthony Meyer (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 207-223; Walter Simons, 'New Forms of Religious Life in Medieval Western Europe,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* ed. by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 80-113.

[74] Gérard Sivéry provides an overview of rural depopulation, the profound shifts in the structuring of late medieval rural society, and the effect of growing commercialisation in 'Rural Society,' in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 5, c. 1198-1300,* ed. by David Abulafia and Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 38-49. Wider reading on these changes in Western European society includes M. M. Postan's classic study, *The Medieval Economy and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); N. J. G. Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1974).

appropriate for a lay Christian to know,' and from which sources.[75] Chapter Two situates the figures of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete against this backdrop, and raises the questions of what it may have meant to be a female writer composing spiritual texts in her vernacular tongue. Once again, this poses more complex issues that some scholars recognise. The decision to write in the vernacular, Francoprovençal in the case of Marguerite d'Oingt, and most likely a Picard dialect in the case of Marguerite Porete, has been called a 'democratic' choice, indicative of their respective desires to disseminate their theologies widely, amongst those 'illiterati' who could not read or understand Latin.[76]

Yet neither Marguerite d'Oingt's nor Marguerite Porete's texts fit comfortably with this description. On one hand, the Carthusians' reputation for seclusion and the survival of only one complete manuscript witness of Marguerite d'Oingt's works suggest that her writing was not intended for circulation far beyond the charterhouse walls. On the other hand, Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* implies an author familiar with a wide range of sources, secular and religious, ancient and contemporary, some of which would certainly have been translated into the vernacular by the mid-late thirteenth century.[77] Despite the text's double condemnation for heresy, and Marguerite

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[75] Barbara Newman, 'Latin and the Vernaculars,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 225-239. Here at p. 225.

[76] Newman, 'Latin and the Vernaculars,' p. 228. The Picard original of the *Mirouer* is the subject of Lerner's article, 'New Light,' and is the subject of further discussion in Chapters Two and Four.

[77] College, Marler, and Grant identify traces of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in Porete's *Mirouer*, perhaps mediated through Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose,* which Newman demonstrates shares much in common with Porete's later work. Newman also illustrates possible borrowings from Gérard of Liège's mid-thirteenth century treatise on *fine amour*, his *Quinque incitamenta ad deum amandum ardenter,* with its citations from Augustine, pseudo-Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of St Victor, developed further by the anonymous *Règle des fins amans*, a beguine rule composed around the same time as the *Mirouer*. Jean Orcibal, meanwhile, highlights Marguerite's use of the Nicene Creed, the echoes of pseudo-Dionysian thought in the *Mirouer*, and its resemblance to passages concerning spiritual love and liberty by William of St Thierry in his *Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei*. William's *Epistola*

Porete's resultant death at the stake, the *Mirouer* continued to circulate and was translated into a number of European vernaculars, as well as into Latin.[78] Porete's theology, meanwhile, suggests a more esoteric, specialised readership than the broad category of 'the laity' implies. In this respect, it is hardly surprising that it later found a home amongst the Carthusian collections of mystical writing at the Sheen Charterhouse in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century and annotated by the Carthusian annotator and critic, James

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and Bernard's *Sermones in Cantica canticorum,* Robert Taylor observes, were available in French versions by *c.* 1200. Chapter Two treats Porete's intertextual borrowing in more detail. See Colledge, Marler, and Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay,' pp. lxix-lxx; Barbara Newman, 'The Mirror and the Rose: Marguerite Porete's Encounter With the *Dieu d'Amours,*' in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 105-123; Jean Orcibal, '*Le Miroir des simples âmes* et la "secte" du Libre Esprit,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 176 (1969): 35-60; Robert Taylor, 'The Old French "Cistercian" Translations,' in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 67-80.

[78] The *Mirouer* was first condemned sometime between 1296 and January 1301 by Gui II de Colmieu, bishop of Cambrai and publicly burnt in Valenciennes. However it appears that Marguerite continued to circulate her text, and was consequently brought before Philip of Marigny, the new bishop of Cambrai and sent to Paris by the autumn of 1308 to face the accusation of relapsed heresy under the jurisdiction of the Dominican William Humbert. Humbert ordered the destruction of all copies of the *Mirouer*, but to date, one Middle English version of the *Mirouer* survives in three manuscripts, London, British Library Ms. Additional 37790, Oxford, Bodleian Library Ms. Bodley 505, and Cambridge, St John's College Ms. 71. The Middle English was translated into Latin by Richard Methley at Mount Grace Priory, Yorkshire, in 1491, and survives in a single manuscript, Cambridge, Pembroke College Ms. 221. One continental Latin version of the text survives in six manuscripts, primarily of Italian provenance, five of which are held at the Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Mss. Chigiano B IV 41, Vat. Latin 4355, Rossiano 4, Latin 4953, and Chigiano C IV 85. A sixth Latin fragment survives in Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Latin 46. One Italian translation survives in two versions, Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana Ms. 1468, and Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Ms. XII F 5, the latter a revision of the former. Descriptions of these manuscripts can be found in: Romana Guarnieri, 'Il movimiento del Libero Spirito,' *Archivio italiano per la storia della pieta*, 4 (1965): 351-708; Paul Verdeyen, 'La première tradition latine du *Miroir* de Marguerite Porete,' *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 58 (1984): 388-89; Marilyn Doiron, '*The Mirrour of Simple Souls:* An Edition and Commentary,' by Marguerite Porete, PhD dissertation (Fordham University, 1964); John P. H. Clark, ed. and intro., *Speculum animarum simplicium, A Glossed Latin Version of The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. by Richard Methley, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 266, 2 vols (Salzburg: Institut fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2010); Michael G. Sargent, 'Medieval and Modern Readership of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames anienties*: The French and English Traditions', in *Middle English Religious Writing in Practice: Texts, Readers, and Transformations*, ed. by Nichole R. Rice (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 47-89; Sargent, 'Medieval and modern readership of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames anienties*: the manuscripts of the continental Latin and Italian tradition,' *In principio fut interpres*: The Medieval Translator/Traduir au Moyen Age 15, ed. by Alessandra Petrina (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 85-96.

Grenehalgh.[79] This brief discussion of the role of the vernacular in late medieval French mystical writing demonstrates that its development, use, circulation, and reception were a far more delicate and complex matter than Newman's notion of 'democratisation' suggests. As Kathryn Kerby-Fulton notes, the notion of a 'vernacular canon' in this period is something of a modern construction. 'Vernacularity', she writes, 'was […] a boundary for very few of the writers and thinkers' of the later Middle Ages.[80] As a result, this thesis does not explore the notion of vernacular reception in isolation from its Latin counterparts, but rather regards it more holistically within its broader cultural context.

That said, the particularities of the vernacular variants used by Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete continue to intrigue, and form an important part of their reception history. The Carthusian composed her *Pagina meditationum* in Latin, her *Miroir* and hagiography of Béatrix d'Ornacieux in Francoprovençal, and her letters in a form of Middle French, interwoven with words and phrases borrowed from Francoprovençal.[81] These works were

[79] See Michael G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 27, 3 (July 1976): 225-240; Sargent, *James Grenehalgh as Textual Critic,* 2 volumes, Analecta Cartusiana, 85 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistisk und Amerikanistik, 1984); Nicolas Watson, 'Melting Into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Version of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames anienties,*' in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 19-49; Marlene Cré, 'Women In the Charterhouse? Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* in British Library, MS Additional 37790,' in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Llandybic: Dinefwr Press, 2000), pp. 43-62; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), especially pp. 272-296.

[80] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 16. Kerby-Fulton remarks: 'Studies of vernacularity itself are valid and important in their own right and have been revealing in their own way, but they have come to monopolise what we do and artificially fence-off bodies of literature in a way that would have puzzled literate Richardians.'

[81] *Les Œuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt*, ed. and intro. by Antonin Duraffour, Pierre Gardette, and Pauline Durdilly, Publications de l'institute de linguistique romane de Lyon, 21 (Paris: Société d'édition 'Les belles lettres', 1965), pp. 63-64. Marguerite d'Oingt's editors suggest that she was most comfortable composing in Francoprovençal, but sufficiently literate in Middle French to correspond with those who did not use her dialect.

collected sometime after her death in 1310, along with three posthumous miracle accounts attributed to her; the collection survives in a fourteenth-century manuscript, Grenoble Municipal Library, Ms. 5785R. [82] Two seventeenth-century copies, Grenoble Ms. 5786R, with parallel French translations, and an uncatalogued variant, housed in the archives of the Grande Chartreuse, whose spine reads '66b, 7 ORNA 5' and whose contents echo those of Ms. 5786R but are contained in a different order, remain unedited.[83] A fourth Provençal witness, dated to the fourteenth century and partially published in 1953, is judged by d'Oingt's modern editors, Antonin Durraffour, Pierre Gardette, and Pauline Durdilly, to be 'infidèle' and 'bavard.' They rather scathingly write: 'le scribe provençal […] lui ajoute des explications de son cru, souvent inutiles, parfois obscures. Cette version ne peut guère servir à améliorer le texte de A [Ms. 5785R].'[84]

Tracing the textual history of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames* is a more complex task, and is considered in more detail in Chapters Two and Four. Of interest here is the Middle French version of the *Mirouer,* extant in one surviving manuscript, Ms. Chantilly, Musée Condé F xiv 26, dating to *c.*1500. This is the witness presented by Romana Guarnieri in 1965 linking the historical figure of the heretic Marguerite Porete to the *Mirouer*, and forms the basis for Guarnieri's 1986 transcription of the text.[85] Although Robert Lerner

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[82] Durraffour, Gardette, and Durdilly provide a paleographic study of, and historical notes on, Grenoble Ms. 5785R in *Les Œuvres*, pp. 15-20. All quotations given here are from the edition of this manuscript by Durrafour *et al*. English translations are taken from Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski's translation of Durrafour's edition, unless otherwise stated. See *The Writings of Margaret of Oingt, Medieval Prioress and Mystic,* Translated From the Latin and Francoprovençal With an Introduction, Notes, and Interpretative Essay, by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Focus Library of Medieval Women (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990). The numbered paragraphs in both the edition and the translation are the same, and therefore only provided for the French quotations.

[83] *Les Œuvres*, pp. 20-22.

[84] *Les Œuvres*, p. 23.

[85] Romana Guarnieri first published her thesis connecting one of the condemned articles from Porete's trial to the *Mirouer* in the *Osservatore Romano* (16th June 1946) under the title, 'Lo specchio delle anime semplice e Margherita Porete.' Guarnieri later published her transcription

has recently and convincingly posited that the Middle English translation may point towards a more faithful version of the now lost original version of the *Mirouer*, his hypothesis requires further testing before the Middle English tradition can supersede the Middle French as the scholarly model of choice for analyses of the text.[86]

One final remark about Porete's *Mirouer* ought to be clarified before turning to a synopsis of Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Porete's text is not named in her trial documents, and a glance at the bibliography will reveal that modern scholars of Porete's text have long been divided and confused as to her work's correct title. Of the two in use, this thesis follows Blanca Garí in accepting the shorter of the two, *Le Mirouer des simples ames*, as the correct one.[87] The longer title, *Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour*, is the result of scribal error. Derived from the Chantilly manuscript's table of contents and first used as a title by Guarnieri in her edition of the text, the longer title is a reproduction of an unpunctuated passage in chapter 13. Here, *Dame Amour* responds to *Raison's* plea that the work's

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of the Chantilly manuscript as 'Le mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour,' in Romana Guarnieri, 'Il movimiento del Libero Spirito'. The edition is at pp. 513-635.

[86] Lerner suggests that the Middle English translation is a closer descendant of the now lost Old French archetype of the *Mirouer* on several counts. He notes that the rivers mentioned in chapter 82 are 'Oise or Muese', the names of two rivers in the Hainault region. In the Middle French Chantilly manuscript, these are rendered 'Aise ou Sene.' The shift, Lerner suggests, demonstrates that the Middle French copy may have been made for a Paris-centric readership, rather than one located in the Low Countries as Porete's readership would have been. The Middle English translations also contain the 'best witness for the wording of' the three favourable referees of the text, 'frère Ion of Querayn,' 'daun Frank, chantour of Þe abbey of Viliers,' and Godfrey of Fontaines. The Chantilly manuscript omits them completely, and the Latin translation gives considerably less detail. Lerner's final pieces of evidence for his preference of the Middle English over the Middle French are based on his theory that certain phrases are doctrinally 'more daring' and 'more consistent with Marguerite's overall thought,' but require further investigation, including comparisons with the other Latin translations, as well as the Italian tradition, of the *Mirouer* in order to be consolidated. See 'New Light,' pp. 97-103. See also Nicholas Watson, 'Melting Into God the English Way.'

[87] Garí writes of Guarnieri's longer title, 'es posible que se trate de un error,' in Blanca Garí and Alicia Padrós-Wolff, trans., *El Espejo de las almas simples*, El Árbol del paraíso, 45 (Barcelona: Icaria, 1995), p. 59, n. 1. See also Luisa Muraro, 'Le *Mirouer des simples ames* de Marguerite Porete: Les avatars d'un titre,' *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 70, 1 (1996): 3-9.

'doubles mots' are explained once again for the benefit of the 'communes gens.'[88] *Dame Amour* replies:

> ou sont ces doubles motz, que vous me priez que je distincte et declaire pour le prouffit de ceulx pour lesquieulx vous faites a nous si humble requeste, et aussi pour les auditeurs de ce livre, lequel nous nommerons le "*Mirouer des Simples Ames, qui en vouloir et en desir demourent*"? [my emphasis]. [89]

Left to stand, the long title ironically pronounces the function of the book as being antithetical to the ultimate spiritual state of the *ame adnientie*, who is without both will and desire. Luisa Muraro comments that if the term 'mirouer' is given (one of) its medieval synonyms, 'manual for', it appears odd that Porete would write a 'manual for simple souls who are annihilated and remain only in the will and desire of love.' Annihilated souls 'n'ont besoin de rien […] et encore moins d'un manuel où se mirer.'[90] Following the insertion of modern punctuation into the passage, however, as Suzanne Kocher suggests, the passage reads as follows: 'the hearers of this book, which we will title, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, who remain in will and desire.'[91] The shorter title reduces the disagreement as to the text's intended and inscribed audiences. Rather than merely addressing the elite, the esoteric, and the 'noble', as Joanna Magure Robinson proposes, Porete's *Mirouer* is a text that anticipates and confronts the

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[88] *Mirouer*, ch. 13, p. 54; 'double words', 'common folk,' *Mirror*, p. 94.

[89] *Mirouer*, ch. 13, p. 54; 'where are these double words, which you pray me to distinguish and clarify for the profit of those whose sake you make to us such a humble request, and also for the hearers of this book, which we will name the "Mirror of Simple Souls Who Remain in Will and Desire."?' *Mirror*, p. 94.

[90] Muraro, 'Les avatars d'un titre,' p. 6.

[91] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 12.

very essence of humanity's emotional and cognitive faculties, will and desire, and the complexities of their relationship with a divine Other.[92]

Chapters Three and Four examine Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's respective mystical works in close detail. Despite a peak in nineteenth-century scholarly interest in the Carthusian prioress's writings due to their philological importance as an early example of written Francoprovençal, comparatively little attention has been paid to her compositions in contrast to the volumes dedicated to other mystical writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[93] Where Marguerite d'Oingt's writings have caught the eye of modern scholars, her work has tended to be viewed in one of two lights; either as a foil to other, more poetic works of medieval women's mysticism, or as textual evidence of purportedly 'objective truths' about the state of the Church in the later Middle Ages or what it meant 'to write as a woman in the Middle

[92] Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's 'Mirror of Simple Souls'*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), especially at pp. 32-34.

[93] In his analysis of the Latin *Pagina meditationum,* Victor Le Clerc writes that Marguerite's prose is sprinkled with 'mots étrangers à la langue latine' but that it displays nothing of the 'barbarie sauvage qui infestait alors trop souvent les oeuvres monacales.' To which *oeuvres* Le Clerc refers is not clear. Marguerite's Francoprovençal *Meditations* are, Le Clerc argues, written with 'moins d'originalité [...] moins de mysticisme et d'obscurité que dans d'autres Méditations chrétiennes écrites par des femmes, comme Gertrude et Mechtilde,' but nevertheless, he concludes, it is a piece written with all the 'élans de la foi et de l'amour [...] dont se composent, dans les écrivains ascétiques, les elevations à Dieu.' In 'Marguerite de Duyn, prieur de la chartreuse de Poletin,' in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. 20 of 43 (Paris: L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1842). Reprinted in 1971 (Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint). Here at p. 307 and pp. 310-311. Modern treatments of Marguerite d'Oingt's works include: Catherine Müller, 'How To Do Things With Mystical Language: Marguerite d'Oingt's Performative Writing,' in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. by Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 27-45; Catherine M. Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d'Oingt de l'autre côté du miroir* (New York: P. Lang, 1999); Jessica Barr, *Willing to Know God: Dreamers and Visionaries in the Later Middle Ages* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), especially Chapter Two, 'Active Reading and the Language of God'; Sean L. Field, 'Agnes of Harcourt, Felipa of Porcelet, and Marguerite of Oingt: Women Writing About Women at the End of the Thirteenth Century,' *Church History*, 76, 2 (June 2007): 298-329; Stephanie Paulsell, '*Scriptio divina*: Writing and the Experience of God in the Works of Marguerite d'Oingt,' PhD dissertation (University of Chicago, 1993).

Ages.'[94] Chapter Three suggests that neither of these perspectives account fully for the complexities of d'Oingt's prose, nor do they shed light on her conceptualisation of divine experience. Instead, it proposes a reading of her *Pagina meditationum*, *Meditationes*, and *Li Via Seiti Biatrix Virgina de Ornaciu,* which draws attention to her use of metaphor, analysed using cognitive metaphor theory, and in particular, to the function of a key structural concept in all of her writing: THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, discussed earlier. Tracing this conceptual metaphor across her corpus of writing reveals a highly experiential sense of mystical awareness, in which language is intimately connected to mystical knowledge. Textuality, corporality, and specularity are all shown to share similar conceptual structures that frame her narrative and provide an internal coherence and shape to the three works. Animating a pastorally-driven collection of works, Marguerite's metaphors are, Chapter Three proposes, designed to be lived by.

Chapter Four turns its attention to the *Mirouer des simples ames*, the dense and ambitious work by the condemned heretic Marguerite Porete. The work was initially banned by the Bishop of Cambrai, Guy de Colmieu sometime before the period 1296-1306, but Porete appears to have continued to circulate her writings, and by late 1308 was imprisoned in Paris under the watch of the Dominican William of Paris. Between March and May 1310, a collective of theologians and canon lawyers from the University of Paris scrutinised fifteen articles extracted from Marguerite's controversial text, and, on 1st June 1310, she was burnt at the stake in an event often referred to in Henry Charles Lea's phrase as 'the first formal *auto-de-fé* of which we have cognizance at Paris.'[95] In

[94] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Idea of Writing as Authority and Conflict in the Works of Margaret of Oingt,' in *The Writings of Margaret of Oingt: Medieval Prioress and Mystic,* Translated From the Latin and Francoprovençal With an Introduction, Notes, and Interpretative Essay, trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Focus Library of Medieval Women (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 71-83. Here at p. 71.

[95] Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1 of 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, orig. publ. 1888), pp. 122-123.

contrast to Marguerite d'Oingt's *oeuvre*, Porete's writings have been subject to far more intense scholarly scrutiny. Since Guarnieri's reunion of the then presumed anonymous text with the historical figure of its author in 1965, the *Mirouer* has been translated twice into English, twice into modern French, twice into Spanish, and once into German and Italian.[96] The text's complicated manuscript tradition, the controversies of Marguerite Porete's trial and her connections with the higher echelons of the ecclesial and scholarly worlds, and the actual extent of her heresy, are the subject of continuing debate and outlined in more detail in the chapter. The ways in which Porete articulates new patterns of conceptualising and loving God, figuratively and creatively, demonstrate that Porete's use of metaphor functions as a conceptual device to keeps its protagonist, *l'Ame*, wavering on the brink of a state of *unitas indistinctionis* with the divine. As with the analysis of Marguerite d'Oingt's writings, this discussion is anchored in the tropes of the codex, the body, and the mirror and their relationship to a specular and mystical epistemology. Porete's epistemology lies not in the specifics of literal language, but in its use as a means to unlock new cognitive registers of meaning. As Nicholas Watson suggests, Marguerite Porete's use of metaphor 'is not merely a rhetorical trope but almost a metaphysical principle' in her effort to verbalise the ineffability of mystical awareness.[97]

In their alignment of mysticism and 'conceptual embodiment,' both Chapters Three and Four engage, to a certain extent, with feminist and post-feminist critical interests in the medieval representation of the female body, a particularly vocal scholarly tradition in the field of visionary and spiritual discourse. In her evocatively titled *Speculum de l'autre femme,* for example, Luce Irigaray writes that the mode of communication she terms 'la mystérique,'

[96] Romana Guarnieri, ed. 'Le mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour,' in Romana Guarnieri, 'Il movimiento del Libero Spirito,' pp. 513-635. See the Bibliography for details of modern translations of the full text of the *Mirouer*.

[97] Nicholas Watson, 'Translating the Untranslatable: Marguerite Porete and the *Mirouer des Simples Ames*,' *New Comparison*, 12 (1991): 124-137. Here at p. 131.

constitutes 'le seul [lieu] où dans l'histoire de l'Occident la femme parle, agit, aussi publiquement.'[98] The hysteria, mystery, and femaleness of 'la mystérique,' and particularly that of the late medieval period, Irigaray suggests, causes the female, 'les plus ignorants' to be 'les plus éloquents.' [99] Women writing as women, critics such as Irigaray and Hélène Cixous have argued, demand and portray a consciously female, and feminised, identity in their works.[100]

The application of feminist theory to medieval writing has generated a significant corpus of secondary literature concerning the depiction, and sometimes conflation, of medieval women's voices, identities, and bodies, particularly in relation to poetic and spiritual expression.[101] Yet while some recent studies of Passion piety, *imitatio Christi*, the Resurrection, saints' *vitae* and their relics, sexuality and chastity, performativity, and ascetic traditions of abstinence and self-mortification have shed new light on the role of the body in Christian discourse, this thesis' approach to 'the body' and 'bodily experience' in mystical writing differs from much of the contemporary discourse concerning the gendered, sexualized and politicized body in Christian spirituality.[102] Rather than following the recent critical tendency to view the body as a locus for sexuality and desire, or as symbolic of the marginalised, the

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[98] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974), p. 238. '[T]he only place in the history of the West in which the woman speaks and acts so publicly.'*Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). p. 191.

[99] Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*, p. 239; 'the most ignorant' to be 'the most eloquent.' *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 192.

[100] See Hélène Cixous' classic essay, 'Le rire de la méduse,' in *Le rire de la méduse et autres ironies* (Paris: Galilée, 2010), pp. 35-68, for her argument that women's writing constitutes a call to women to free themselves from the repression of men and reclaim their place in history. Originally published in *L'Arc* (1975), 61: 39-54.

[101] Examples of this approach include Joan M. Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante* (New York and London: Colombia University Press, 1975); the collection of essays entitled *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, ed. by Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

[102] This claim is dealt with more fully in Chapters Three and Four, which include bibliographic details of the main advances in the field.

grotesque, and the abject, this discussion assesses the role of the body in terms of its capacity to act as an organising agent of, and vehicle for, mystical expression, drawing on the notion that metaphor and embodiment are intimately related, mentioned above.[103] It regards the structural image schema of the body, governed by a contrast between the 'inner' and the 'outer,' as constituting one of the mind's most basic means by which to conceive of itself, and suggests that by using this schema as a thematic foundation for the articulation of their experience, mystics are able to coherently explore and explain the suprasensory experience underpinning mystical literature.[104] As a result, the perspective taken here towards 'the body' is relatively free of gender-orientated discussion and does not make a distinction between male and female articulations of mystical experience.

This draws on recent findings in the field of embodied cognition and the notion that it is as 'physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, [that] we experience the rest of the world as outside us.'[105] As Lakoff and Johnson summarise, 'Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation.'[106] The structural metaphor of 'containment' helps to organise, and coherently articulate to a discourse community who share a similar schematic comprehension, the mind's experience of its immediate environment, its spatial orientation, its composition,

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[103] Caroline Walker Bynum presents a perceptive critique of medieval religious 'body criticism' in 'Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective,' *Critical Enquiry*, 22 (1995): 1-33.

[104] Commenting on how Augustine distinguishes between the 'inner' and the 'outer' man in *De Trinitate,* 12.1, Denys Turner writes, 'human self-awareness appears to be structured by these facts so that our ways of perceiving ourselves are governed in *some* contrast between "inner" and "outer" […]. Thus do the spatial relations of the body to the "world" become a metaphor for consciousness in relation to its objects. […] [T]he language of interiority is, at this level of generality, neutral as between any particular epistemology whatever – it is as near to being a "pre-cultural" and "natural" fact of human cognitivity as any is.' *The Darkness of God,* p. 91.

[105] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 29. For an overview of the recent theoretical advances in the field of embodied cognition, see Lawrence Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition*, New Problems of Philosophy (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

[106] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 29.

and its interaction with others. Applied in this context, the BODY AS CONTAINER metaphor allows for a sensitive reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings that focuses closely on how the mystical protagonist presents and authenticates her experience linguistically, and in turn, conceptually, without recourse to modern boundaries of sex and gender.

This perspective takes its influence from the reception history of the manuscript British Library Additional 37990, one of the Carthusian Middle English translations of the by then anonymised *Mirouer*.[107] Contained alongside copies of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*, and Thomas de Froidmont's *Golden Epistle*, this codex appears not to ascribe the same role to sex and gender in mystical writings that many modern scholars appear anxious to do. As Marleen Cré observes, '[t]he present-day critical and interpretative angle that interprets all spiritual texts by women as expressing a typically *female* spirituality seems not to have been shared by the readers of Amherst.'[108] In this context, the *Mirouer*'s author is assumed by the scribe, 'M.N.' to have been a man. This may, of course, suggest that most medieval authors were (and indeed are) assumed to be male, yet it also points towards the fact that the spirituality presented by the *Mirouer* did not strike M. N. as being manifestly 'female' in its composition. As the explorations of Chapter Three demonstrate, Marguerite d'Oingt's writings draw heavily on male-authored sources; as a result, there is little in either set of works to suggest that a specifically gender-orientated reading is either consistent with the contexts the texts were produced in, or illuminative of their author's thought. These chapters argue that Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's respective conceptualisations of corporeity and 'the body' form are quite similar and form a coherent platform for ordering and expressing their divine

[107] The other two Middle English manuscripts are BL Add. 37990, Cambridge, St. John's College, ms. 71, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 505, both dated to the mid-1400s.
[108] 'Amherst' is the former name of British Library Ms. Additional 37990. Cré, 'Women in the Charterhouse?,' p. 43.

experience, albeit in very different ways and with differing pastoral, intellectual and theological emphases.

The final chapter brings the seemingly very different writings of the two women into closer focus, and returns to the challenge of exploring to what extent Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's literary signs or symbols signify something of how the mystic 'sees' the divine. This prompts a return to the modern tendency to categorise mysticism in some way, the salient features of how the mystic 'sees' the divine defining the type of experience she has undergone. Chapter Five demonstrates how problematic a venture this is, and proposes that an assessment of the metaphorical language in both women's writings points, not towards a need for division in mystical writing, but rather towards a continuity in their modes of expression. Where previous critics have emphasised polarity, this discussion will instead propose that both writers' works can be placed on a scale of mystical cognition, whose conceptual framework might be seen to be structured by two recently proposed ideas in the fields of cognitive metaphor theory and mystical criticism respectively: 'imaginative rationality' and 'imaginative theology'.[109] Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings may be read as representations of mystical, metaphorical worlds, in which metaphor functions as the organising principle of their modes of expression. As such, both women's works participate in a 'reality' within the paradigm of those worlds; a 'reality' made possible by metaphor's ability to unite two modes of thought, reason and the imagination.[110]

[109] 'Imaginative theology' is a phrase created by Barbara Newman in *God and the Goddesses*: *Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), in particular at pp. 292-301. The ramifications of the term are explored in Chapter Five.
[110] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 192.

It is to cognitive metaphor theory that this discussion now turns. In examining metaphorical language, and the conceptual structures that underpin it, the critic or scholar is exposed to a series of revelations, from the negation of the literal, to the realisation that the telos of the metaphor may transcend the linguistic structures that ground it, and may even point towards something human language cannot capture. As such, thinking about metaphor opens up a vocabulary and theoretical framework which may provide another means of understanding and articulating the enigmatic and paradoxical phenomenon that is mystical thought and its representation within the *logos*-centric Christian tradition, whilst navigating the cultural contours of pious expression in the later Middle Ages.

CHAPTER ONE

The Metaphorical Utterance and the Mystical Mode: Caught Between Experience and Expression

Metaphor is both the linguistic and the conceptual analogue to mystical experience. This is not to suggest that one mode of expression may be substituted for the other: not all that is metaphorical need necessarily belong to the realm of the mystical, and cognitive metaphor processing is not a re-creation of mystical union. Rather, metaphor, much like mystical writing, asks its user or recipient to adjust their perceptual abilities; to move away from a world-view structured by fixed referents, by subjects and objects, and to be drawn into a negotiation of meaning that re-formulates their understanding of reality and truth.

Mystical expression demands much of its reader; its often enigmatic web of paradoxical statements, its reversing of natural phenomena, or, in the case of Marguerite Porete, its apparent rejections of reason, require a reappraisal of what is possible within the world of the text and ask that the audience engages with the protagonist according to a new matrix, in an otherwise unimaginable relationship with the divine other. This is one of the main tenets of hermeneutic theory. Reader-response criticism has long suggested that the meaning of a text lies in the interaction between author and audience, or speaker and listener.[1] It is in participating in the perpetual dialectic of concealment and revelation, and of the implicit illuminating the explicit, two prevalent features of mystical writing, that a reader engages with a text, and in doing so, establishes new meaning, or a new world.

[1] A classic work in the field is Wolfgang Iser's 'Interaction Between Text and Reader,' in *The Reader in the Text*: *Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 106-119.

The following account of modern cognitive theories of metaphor demonstrates that metaphor functions conceptually and hermeneutically in much the same way. As a linguistic entity and as a conceptual structure, metaphor's meaning lies in the 'gap' between the source and the target domains, within which the mapping process takes place. Starting with the dominant features of the linguist George Lakoff's conceptual theory of metaphor, developed in conjunction with the philosopher Mark Johnson, and articulated in their seminal study *Metaphors We Live By*, the purpose of this chapter is to test elements of their theory of 'cognitive metaphor' against the interpretative possibilities and obstacles presented by a corpus of medieval mystical writing.[2]

Given the complexity of the subject matter, however, it soon becomes apparent that no theoretical framework can ever wholly capture the conceptual workings of either the metaphorical or the mystical utterance.[3] Instead, in proposing an interpretative methodology with which to explore the writings of the two very different thirteenth-century French mystics, Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete, this study draws on the work of a number of scholars working across the two fields and with both medieval and modern material, principally Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, Paul Ricoeur, Bernard McGinn, Steven Katz, and Robert Forman. The sensitivities of the chronological gap between medieval mysticism and modern metaphor theory cannot be underestimated, and flagging the resultant methodological issues here has important consequences for the unfolding of the subsequent four chapters. Starting with a broader perspective on the conceptual underpinnings of both metaphor and mystical expression will reveal that the process of finding meaning in mystical writing is strikingly similar to the cognitive frameworks involved in finding meaning in metaphor. Ultimately, a mystical text is both the

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[2] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, passim.

[3] Ellen Winner remarks, 'The lesson to be learned is that there is no "pure" measure of metaphor comprehension.' See *The Point of Words: Children's Understanding of Metaphor and Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 47. See also Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature*, especially pp. 9-10.

locus and the product of its own metaphorical content, and to view the two as participating in a symbiotic relationship is to be alive to the questions, if not always the answers, they pose concerning the interpretative, imaginative, and transformative potency of language, thought, and belief.

A brief overview of Lakoff and Johnson's modelling of cognitive metaphor theory and main terminology was provided in the introduction; namely that linguistic metaphorical expression is composed of two 'domains,' the 'target domain,' the more abstract entity being described, and the 'source domain,' the realm in terms of which the target domain is being illustrated. In mapping one domain onto another, the target becomes clearer because elements from the source domain, deemed to bear a resemblance to aspects of the target, highlight certain qualities of the target domain whilst simultaneously disguising others.[4] Different source domains can be mapped onto a single target domain, which allow the metaphor's focus to be adjusted in accordance with the various qualities of the target deemed essential by the user or audience.[5] This ability of the source domain to highlight or eclipse selective elements of the target domain reinforces the observations made above concerning textual hermeneutics, and finds a particular analogue in mystical writing and its anxieties concerning the referential qualities of language.

At the heart of Christian mystical expression lies a paradoxical need to communicate an experience of God that is rendered impossible by the inadequacy, or fallen nature, of human language. An abundance of descriptive imagery is countered by the recognition that its referential object is impossible to objectify, strikingly articulated by the sixth-century Greek-Syriac writer later known as Pseudo-Dionysius in his treatise *The Mystical Theology*, in which he

[4] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 10-13 and p. 61.
[5] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 28.

considers the various ways of naming God.[6] Developing a referential spectrum ranging from the 'symbolic' to the 'conceptual' properties of God, Pseudo-Dionysius moves between the tangible (the 'images […], forms, figures, and instruments') and the abstract (the 'good, existent, life, wisdom, power') in his desire to describe the divine which, even as it describes, requires a corrective, an 'un-saying.'[7] This tension becomes the motor behind the discourse: it is the power of language to both illuminate and eclipse that makes his mystical thought meaningful. The opening prayer to *The Mystical Theology* provides a classic example:

> Trinity!! Higher than any being,
> any divinity, any goodness!
> […]
> Amid the deepest shadow
> they pour overwhelming light
> on what is most manifest.
> Amid the whole unsensed and unseen
> they completely fill our sightless minds
> with treasures beyond all beauty.[8]

This affirmative, or *kataphatic*, outpouring serves only to illustrate its inadequacy by failing to capture a complete rendering of God and turns to negative, or *apophatic*, theology; mystical discourse caught between the creative and the reductive, with the ever-elusive point of reference and the text's

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[6] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Mystical Theology,' in *Pseudo-Dionysius*: *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colin Luibhéid and Paul Rorem, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 133-142.

[7] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Mystical Theology,' p. 139. On 'un-saying' or 'speaking away' in Pseudo-Dionysius, see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially pp. 2-3 and pp. 36-40.

[8] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Mystical Theology,' p. 135.

hermeneutic key located somewhere in the gap between the two.[9] A similar dialectic can be found in Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's prose.[10] Both women use vivid imagery to depict their respective mystical experiences, and yet, at the height of their descriptions, acknowledge that language fails them. Porete's *Ame,* for example, speaks of 'ung desir boullant de l'amour,' and of 'deffroissant et debrisant soy mesmes,' followed by falling into nothingness. The Soul plunges into the abyss in which paradoxically 'non veoir luy fait veoir parfaicetement elles mesmes.'[11] This striking juxtaposition between intense feeling, nothingness, and apparent revelation ('veoir parfaicetement') is more than mere rhetorical flourish. As in the Pseudo-Dionysius, Porete's mystical meaning is located neither in the affirmative domain of love nor in the nothingness of the abyss, but rather in the space between, the 'non veoir fait veoir.' Language ceases to behave referentially and transforms into a mediating mode: it may not point towards God, but rather it mediates the soul's passage beyond its world-view, carrying it into a higher domain.

In this context, language delineates the systematic withdrawal from earthly signs and signifiers, not only revealing the extent of the mystical experience, but also structuring and motivating it too. This is the crux of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory. Linguistic expressions reveal not only how a given culture's language is constructed, but also how that culture's conceptual system functions.[12] Underpinning a metaphorical utterance is the framework of the speaker's thought processes, conditioned by a series of

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[9] '[T]he more it climbs,' Pseudo-Dionysius writes, 'the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him that is indescribable.' 'The Mystical Theology,' p. 139.

[10] The influence of Neoplatonic Dionysian thought on Marguerite Porete is widely acknowledged. See, for example, Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 224.

[11] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, pp. 320-328. '[A] boiling desire of love'; 'breaking and bruising the self'; 'not-seeing makes her see herself perfectly.' *Mirror*, pp. 190-192.

[12] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 'Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 286-329.

supraordinate key conceptual metaphors which Lakoff and Johnson identify as including such concepts as UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING and LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE, two particular examples that resonate with dominant themes found in mystical expression.[13]

Broader conceptual metaphors are linked together to form coherent 'systems' through 'entailment relationships'.[14] Entailments, the inferences that can be made from a conceptual metaphor, combine to make the internal logic of the metaphor, and in turn contribute to its 'truth-claim,' what it purports to be revealing about a given target domain. For example, in a linguistic expression underpinned by the conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD, such as Marguerite d'Oingt's exclamation, 'Domine dulcis!,' certain assumptions can be made about the target domain, 'Domine,' which result from the implications of the properties of the source.[15] 'God' is conceptualised as spiritually nurturing, gentle, and good, a conceptualisation that links logically, according to the pattern of metaphors in the 'world' of the *Pagina meditationum*, to her later description of Christ as the 'sweet electuary.'[16] Grouping the entailments of a metaphor allows for the creation of a map of the speaker's linguistic and underpinning conceptual metaphors, and by extension, the charting of the speaker's understanding of their experience, thought, and action. This is not a solitary exercise. Metaphor, like mystical expression, operates within a discourse community, and an analysis of metaphor must take into account how that culture contributes to the speaker or reader's ability to conceptualise the world proposed by a metaphorical statement or a mystical text.

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[13] For linguistic examples of the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, see *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 48; LOVE AS A PHYSICAL FORCE can be found on p. 49. Other classic examples of conceptual metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson, include THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS; IDEAS ARE OBJECTS, and ARGUMENT IS WAR.

[14] Lakoff and Johnson, 'Conceptual Metaphor,' p. 291.

[15] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 88, §109. *A Page of Meditations*, p. 41.

[16] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 76, §23. *A Page of Meditations*, p. 29, see also n.3.

This raises an aspect of Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical model that problematizes their particular articulation of metaphor's reception and processing and this study of medieval mystical literature. *Metaphors We Live By* makes little mention of by whom, or in what context, Lakoff and Johnson envisage their conceptual metaphors to be understood. Their linguistic data is drawn from metaphors that occur in the 'everyday' speech of modern, Western speakers, Lakoff writing that his methodology focuses on the 'speech of an idealized native speaker.'[17]

Whilst there is clearly a disjunction between the language, thought, and actions of the modern Western speaker and that of the thirteenth-century mystic, it is not possible to dismiss Lakoff's 'idealized speaker' out of hand. All hermeneutic activity, to varying degrees, supposes the existence of an idealised author, reader, speaker, or listener, upon whose interpretative activity the theoretical model can be pinned. This is felt acutely in the study of medieval texts, given the often fragmentary nature of the extant evidence relating to their composition, dissemination, and reception. On the other hand, there is no 'average mystic' or 'average mystical experience,' and the distortions that result from even a tacit assumption that there is an 'average' or 'common' writer of the Middle Ages go without saying.[18] This is not to suggest that it is ever possible to re-construct a portrait of the particular historical writer or speaker. Later medieval mystical writing, with its intertextual borrowings from Biblical imagery, exegetical commentaries, and, in the case of Marguerite Porete, allusions to secular material such as the poetic traditions of the *Puys*, and often with an explicit desire to dissolve the identity of the self in contact with the divine, often makes it extremely difficult to extract a biographical narrative

[17] Their data is drawn from 'conventional expressions […], which deal with the conventional part of the language [and…] the ideas they express […] in the conventional conceptual system on which that language is based.' George Lakoff, 'Metametaphorical Issues: A Figure of Thought,' *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 1, 3 (1986): 215-225. Here at p. 223.

[18] See the Introduction for more on the fallacy of the 'average mystic.'

onto which a text and its reception can be safely pinned.[19] Adopting any theoretical approach to a literary artefact forces the creation of an 'idealised speaker,' even as the argument persists that first, no such thing can be re-created, and, second, that in doing so, we distort the literary material in question.

Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between three types of cognitive metaphor, structural, orientational, and ontological, which are inherent within human conceptual systems. However, this raises further questions regarding how these systems are 'grounded.'[20] On one hand, concepts are understood because humans are physical entities, and meaning is made out of a physical interaction with the world, no matter how abstract. Marguerite Porete's *Ame*, for example, frequently refers to being 'in' time, particularly when she is referring to time spent in contact with the divine: 'en ung moment,' 'en ung moment de heure.'[21] According to Lakoff and Johnson's schema, the conceptual metaphor underpinning this statement is a structural one. The Soul is conceptualised as a physical entity, structurally, in relation to time, which also takes on a physical, relational structure. Similarly, the frequently occurring metaphor, BODY IS A WRITING SURFACE, to be found in both Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's texts, combines both orientational and ontological

[19] *Puys* were poetic societies, originating in the thirteenth century and emerging from the traditions of the Trouvères and the Jongleurs, whose compositions were heavily influenced by the lyrics of the Troubadours. The earliest mentioned *puy* is that of Valenciennes, Marguerite Porete's probable hometown, in 1229. For more on the *puy* tradition, see Alan E. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), especially at p. 129; Jean Devaux, 'From the Court of Hainault to the Court of England: The Example of Jean Froissart,' in *War, Government and Power in Late Medieval France*, ed. by Christopher T. Allmand (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 1-20, especially pp. 6-7 and ns. 20 and 21 for additional bibliography. The relationship between Porete's *Mirouer* and the *puys* is investigated by Barbara Newman in *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred*, Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 111-166.

[20] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. On structural, orientational, and ontological conceptual metaphors, see pp. 7-32. On how conceptual systems are grounded, see pp. 56-87.

[21] *Mirouer*, ch. 77, p. 214; *Mirror*, 'in one moment,' p. 151. *Mirouer*, ch. 9, p. 34; 'in a moment of an hour,' p. 87.

concepts. Spatially, the human body is conceptualised as taking on the structure of the book, in Marguerite d'Oingt's writings, or the wax tablet in Porete's, whilst ontologically, its boundaries can be mapped onto those of the human form. In identifying experiences as entities or substances, it becomes possible to refer to them, systematise them, group them, and quantify them – and make meaning about them.[22] Conceptual metaphor is physically grounded and an innate part of the processes of human experience and the construction of what constitutes interpretation, belief, and an accepted truth.

On the other hand, metaphorical linguistic expressions and their conceptual systems depend upon what is known, and which aspects of the source and target domains in question are valorised by both the cognitive processes of the individual and the culture in which they operate.[23] Returning to the idea of the selective nature of metaphor, this is partly what makes metaphor so pervasive within cultural groups: metaphors appear naturally within a culture because they illuminate that which corresponds to that culture's collective experience and disguise what corresponds with very little.[24]

This is where Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical model proves less helpful. Beyond insights such as that metaphor 'reveals' and 'structures' thought relative to both an individual's and a culture's world-view, their methodology fails to provide a framework for distinguishing *how* the mappings between source and target domains take place, nor does it allow for detailed discussion of how the given culture contributes to the act of making meaning from metaphor. The two-domain model provides an important structural platform

[22] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 25.

[23] 'What we call "direct physical experience" is never merely a matter of having a body of a certain sort; rather *every* experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions.' Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 57.

[24] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 68.

from which to begin analysing metaphor, but arguably is too static and inflexible to account for metaphor's many interpretative modes and the transformative role it can have on both user and recipient.

Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner propose an evolved model of Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical framework in the form of Blending Theory.[25] Rather than viewing metaphor as functioning in terms of a source- and target- domain relationship, with a strict directional trajectory in the mappings between the two domains, blending theory extends this relationship, regarding metaphor processing as a mental operation that involves the interaction of various 'mental spaces' or 'packets of meaning,' which combine within the metaphor to create another 'packet' or space with a new, emergent notion of understanding.[26] These 'mental packets' are short-term mental constructs, catalysed by the metaphor, and include not only the information and structure of the two domains but also additional contextual and cultural information. The source domain (or 'input space', as it is known in Blending Theory) constitutes one mental space; the target domain (also known as an 'input space') constitutes another, whilst a third, the 'generic space', contains the information deemed common to the two input spaces within the rules of the culture in which the metaphor operates. The interaction between these three spaces produces a fourth space, known as the 'blended space.' This composite structure of spaces

[25] 'Blending Theory' is also variously known as 'Conceptual Integration,' 'Mental Blending,' or 'Conceptual Blending' theory. Fauconnier and Turner provide a summary of Blending Theory in 'Conceptual Integration Networks,' *Cognitive Science*, 22, 2 (1998): 133-187. An extended investigation and articulation of their theory can be found in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). See also Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind*: *The Origins of Thought and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Seana Coulson and Todd Oakley, 'Blending Basics,' *Cognitive Linguistics*, 11, 3/4 (2000): 175-196; Seana Coulson, *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[26] Mark Turner, 'The Cognitive Study of Art, Language, and Literature,' *Poetics Today*, 23:1 (2002): 9-20. Here at p. 10. The notion of 'mental spaces' is derived from Gilles Fauconnier's earlier work on cognition. See Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings In Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

is called a Conceptual Integration Network.[27] Within the network, the conceptual projections can move between the spaces in multiple directions and with arguably infinite resultant cognitive results or entailments.

Unlike Lakoff and Johnson, who posit that conceptual mapping moves in a single direction, from the source to the target, each of these mental packets or spaces engages in 'multiple projections.'[28] The resultant 'blend' never reflects the whole combination of the other input spaces, but rather is a space in which meaning makes sense because its composite parts are seen in relation to the meanings constructed by the other input spaces.[29] This network of mental spaces involves at least three cognitive activities.[30] First, the content is projected from each of the inputs into the blended space in a process known as 'composition'. Second, the pattern of the blended space is filled out with matching information from long-term memory and inferences, so as to 'complete' or make sense of the event or situation. Third is 'elaboration', during which the blended space is stimulated by these projections and during which both pre-existing as well as novel conceptualisations can be formed indefinitely.

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[27] Fauconnier and Turner, 'Conceptual Integration Networks,' pp. 142-144. A diagram illustrating the mental spaces and their relationship to one another can be found in *The Way We Think*, p. 46. See also Joseph O'Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson, 'Blending and Metaphor,' in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. by Raymond W. Gibbs and Gerard J. Steen, Selected Papers From the 5th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, 1997, Issues in Linguistic Theory, 175 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), pp. 101-124. Here at p. 105.

[28] This movement is termed 'unidirectionality.' George Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,' in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 202-251. Here at p. 245. Olav Jäkel questions Lakoff and Johnson's hypothesis of unidirectionality in 'Is Metaphor Really a One-Way Street? One of the Basic Tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor Put To the Test,' in *Issues in Cognitive Linguistics: 1993 Proceedings of the International Cognitive Linguistics Conference*, ed. by Leon de Stadler and Christoph Eyrich (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 367-388. Eve Sweetser, 'Compositionality and Blending: Semantic Composition in a Cognitively Realistic Framework,' in *Cognitive Linguistics: Foundations, Scope, and Methodology*, ed. by Theo Janssen and Gisela Redeker, Cognitive Linguistics Research, 15 (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 129-162. Here at p. 135.

[29] Lakoff and Johnson come close to making this point in their suggestion that understanding is achieved through a combination of conceptual projections onto an event or object and the certain interactional 'dimensions,' which define how a perceived entity is dealt with and understood. *Metaphors We Live By,* pp. 176-79.

[30] O' Grady, Oakley, and Coulson, 'Blending and Metaphor,' p. 107.

Seen from this perspective, metaphor and its theoretical implications bear a strong structural resemblance to the hermeneutics of mystical writing mentioned earlier. The network of mental spaces is analogous to the mystical text itself, containing 'inputs' by the author, their cultural and spiritual background, and intertextual allusion, amongst others. The 'blended space,' meanwhile, with its possibilities of new meaning, is reminiscent of the 'gaps' found in mystical texts between the implicit and the explicit, and the dialectic of concealment and revelation. It is only in these blended spaces, or 'gaps,' that the metaphor or the mystical text share a logical rationale with the experiences or events they describe.

This is evident in one of the foundational symbols of the Christian faith and a recurring image in the mystical corpus, the Eucharist, in which the faithful join in union with Christ by consuming his body and blood. In this case, the source domains involve the bread and the wine, mapped onto the corresponding target domains (body and blood). The subsequent entailments shape a matrix in which the believer 'consumes' Christ. If the additional elements highlighted by blending theory are added to this interpretation, the way in which the metaphor produces meaning becomes even clearer. The two input spaces are formed by the bread and the wine, on one hand, and the body and blood of Christ, on the other. Conceptual blending causes the components in the first input space to map onto their counterpart in the second input space in the process of 'composition': the bread onto the body, the wine onto the blood. Where these spaces share common features, the abstract 'solidness' of the bread and the body, or the 'red' of the wine and the blood, a third, generic mental space takes shape. Another mental space containing long-term memories associated with the components of the two input spaces or the generic space may also materialise here, adding additional imagery to the blend in the process of 'completion.' Finally, the structuring of the generic space allows the cross-space mappings of the input spaces to blend in the fourth

mental space. It is only in this blended space that the bread *becomes* the body of Christ, and the consumption of the wine *becomes* unification with the divine. As long as the blend functions in accordance with these principles and structures, the metaphor can be inspired mentally and cognitively re-enacted and elaborated in ways that are, at least in principle, infinite.[31] Despite the literal events and imagery that make up the mental spaces perhaps being implausible or impossible within the natural or physical order, within the blended space metaphor possesses its own reality and its own rationale. Participating in the Eucharist possesses a theological reality and reinforces Christian truth.

As such, metaphor and mystical texts share even more in common than has previously been recognised.[32] Both phenomena can be thought of as loci, or sites, in which a dynamic and transformative process takes place, which involves both author and audience in a symbiotic relationship. Paradoxically, whilst it is the speaker's experience that is narrated, that experience is impossible to re-discover. Rather, it is in the audience's interpretative experience that the meaning is made. This idea is particularly acute in the reception of medieval mystical literature. The irony of mystical writing is that its interpretation always occurs *post hoc*; there is, by definition of the mystical event, no access to the experience of the text's author, and, even if there were, by articulating it, the illocutionary act propels the expression of that experience

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[31] Hugo Lundhaug offers a reading of Eucharistic imagery using Fauconnier and Turner's 'Blending Theory,' in *Images of Rebirth*: *Cognitive Poetics and Transformation Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul*, Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies, 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 32-34.

[32] The role played by metaphor has recently become an area of interest for scholars of religious language, although not, it appears, specifically of mystical discourse. See, for example, Kurt Feyaerts' edited collection of essays, *The Bible Through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantic Perspective* (Berlin and New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Ristro Uro, eds., *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions From Cognitive and Social Science*, Biblical Interpretation Series, 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Erik Konsmo, *The Pauline Metaphors of the Holy Spirit: The Intangible Spirit's Tangible Presence in the Life of the Christian*, Studies in Biblical Literature, 130 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010); Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John's Eternal King* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), especially Chapter Two, 'Waterskiing Across Metaphor's Surface: A Linguistic and Literary Metaphor Theory.'

into a public realm, no longer constrained by the privacy of the author's original experience. Paul Ricoeur expresses the tension of mystical writing particularly well in his discussion of the dialectic between event and meaning:

> My experience cannot directly become your experience […]. Yet, nevertheless, something passes from me to you […]. Something passes from one sphere of life to another. This something is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. Here is the miracle. The experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public. Communication in this way is the overcoming of the radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived.[33]

Ricoeur's words capture the dynamism of mystical texts and could be regarded as equally applicable to metaphor too in their mention of the transfer 'from one sphere of life to another.' Indeed what contributes to drawing metaphor and mystical writing into dialogue in this particular context is the idea that both rely on *use* in order to be understood.[34] In the act of interpretation, or use, shown by Fauconnier and Turner to involve a complex process of mental activity, the metaphor effects a secondary 'experience' in the recipient.[35] The same can be said of mystical writing. Ricoeur's observations suggest that a mystical text is also a locus of perpetual secondary experiences, in which, like

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[33] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 9-10.

[34] As Donald Davidson has claimed, 'metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more.' Metaphor, Donaldson contends, '*says* only what shows on its face – usually a patent falsehood or an absurd truth (original emphasis).' 'What Metaphors Mean,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 200-220. Here at p. 201 and p. 214. A critical analysis of Davidson's theory of metaphor, situated within its intellectual context, can be found in Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), especially at pp. 27-31.

[35] These are the findings of Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. in 'Researching Metaphor,' in *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, ed. by Lynne Cameron and Graham Low (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 29-47.

metaphor, the possibilities for new meaning are endless, at least within the cognitive remit and ideological expectations of the recipient and their environment.

Quite what these secondary experiences consist of, beyond the theoretical notion of 'mental spaces' and a 'blended space' in which meaning is made, remains an issue for conjecture. However, another of Ricoeur's works, in which he discusses the roles of cognition, imagination and feeling in relation to metaphor, provides some clarifying insights.[36] Adopting the Aristotelian position that a good metaphor 'sets before the eyes' the sense it wishes to convey, Ricoeur suggests that within the metaphorical utterance is a pictorial dimension, which he labels the 'picturing function' of metaphorical meaning.[37] For Ricoeur, the essence of metaphoric meaning resides in the realm of the mind's eye, foreshadowing Lakoff and Johnson's proposal that metaphor is not linguistic but cognitive in function.[38] Ricoeur terms his theoretical framework for the processing of metaphor a 'psychology of imagination,' which he adjusts in accordance with the semantic properties of metaphor.[39] Unlike the views of other theorists discussed here, his is a three-stage pattern of metaphoric processing, the implications of which provide a further reading of metaphor that deepens its conceptual relationship with mystical expression.

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[36] Paul Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 228-247.

[37] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 229. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410^{b} 33-34, p. 2251.

[38] That metaphor engages with cognitive processes is a relatively common idea amongst twentieth-century scholars of the subject. I. A. Richards, for example, anticipated much of what were to become the dominant principles of cognitive metaphor theory and blending theory in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1936), in which he wrote: 'fundamentally, it [metaphor] is a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts. Thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom.' Here at p. 94. A brief historical overview of scholarly positions on the role of metaphor as a cognitive device can be found in Mark Johnson, 'Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 3-47.

[39] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 233.

On contact with metaphor, the imagination is catalysed into being the space where a deciphering process takes place, involving the cognitive activities of thinking and seeing: 'thinking' because the imagination must restructure the semantic fields in question; 'seeing' because, in calling these semantic fields into being, the imagination envisages them. The imagination is engaged in a productive activity: there is an instantaneous conjuring of all of the various 'combinatory possibilities' between what Ricoeur calls the 'two ratios' of the metaphor.[40] These 'ratios' correspond to Lakoff and Johnson's 'domains' and Fauconnier and Turner's 'mental spaces.' What Ricoeur adds to these two schools of thought, however, is that this imaginative assimilation is not merely a question of constructing linear patterns of resemblance between the 'ratios'. Rather, this productivity is based on new combinatory possibilities being seen '*through*' (original emphasis) the older, incompatible meanings of the metaphoric word or phrase.[41] The imagination's primary ability is to produce new meanings by assimilation, but to produce them not '*above*' the difference between primary and subsidiary subjects, but 'in spite of and through' them.[42] In this, Ricoeur appears to derive some of his inspiration from Max Black's interaction theory, in which Black famously suggested that metaphor functions like a 'filter', or 'screen', allowing what he calls the 'principal subject' (which corresponds to Lakoff and Johnson's target domain) to be 'seen through' the metaphorical expression.[43] Once again, Ricoeur foreshadows an important aspect of Fauconnier and Turner's blending theory. Metaphor functions by detaching its recipient from one matrix of knowing represented by the metaphorical expression in its most literal, objectifying sense, and in a kind of poesis, 'lifting' the recipient into a more participatory

[40] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 233.
[41] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 234.
[42] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 234. Ricoeur's thesis here is reminiscent of an argument made by Donald Davidson in the same year. Davidson suggested that in metaphor processing, a metaphor possesses 'two different meanings at once, a literal and a figurative meaning. Imagine the literal meaning as latent, something that we are aware of, that can work on us without working in the context, while the figurative meaning carries the direct load.' Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean,' p. 205.
[43] Max Black, 'Metaphor,' in *Philosophical Perspectives of Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 63-82. Here at p. 73 and p. 75.

kind of knowing, in which the 'ruins of the intraworldly objects of everyday existence' are shed in favour of a new method of making meaning.[44] The metaphor as a linguistic device is simply a shell. Regarding metaphor as a locus for making meaning, however, is to view it as participating in a process that is strikingly similar to the mental experiences described in a mystical journey.

The idea that metaphor represents a locus for making meaning has considerable ramifications for the study of religious language. Religious language is, in and of itself, no different to secular language: at a lexical level, the words used to express mystical experience are no different to those used to convey other, everyday experiences that involve emotion, feeling, and cognition. Christian language, for example, and its cognitive possibilities are simultaneously controlled by a series of semiotic codes, which, within the Christian culture, are, and indeed must be, highly conventional.[45] If they are not, as the case of Marguerite Porete demonstrates, the alternative is to consider them heretical. As Robert Neville demonstrates in his work on religious symbolism, the semiotic codes that govern any religious tradition are binding, and 'contain the possibilities for all the formal interpretations or propositions involving their symbols.'[46] Where Ricoeur's argument is helpful is in his suggestion that new, metaphoric meaning is seen 'through' the old, and predicated upon its own logic of reasoning and assimilation. In this sense, religious language is no different: its meaning is constructed 'through' and 'in spite of' ordinary language and projected into a different domain by the 'combinatory possibilities' offered according to the cultural logic of the given

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[44] Paul Ricoeur, 'Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,' in *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 73-118. Here at p. 100 and p. 104.

[45] See Robert Cummings Neville, 'A Pragmatic Semiotic Theory of Religious Symbolism,' in *Metaphor and God-talk*, ed. by Lieven Boeve and Kurt Feyaerts (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 15-32.

[46] Neville, 'A Pragmatic Semiotic Theory,' p. 19.

religion. As such, within the Christian mystical tradition, source and target domain construction, and the subsequent formulation of metaphorical entailments, must be delineated semantically and syntactically in accordance with the conventional expectations of the discourse community in which they operate.

The '*pictorial*' dimension or '*figurative*' character of metaphor (original emphasis), meanwhile, is not so much a 'mental picture' *per se,* but rather, Ricoeur suggests, an exposure to a 'flow of images,' initiated by discourse.[47] 'To imagine,' Ricoeur observes, 'is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode.'[48] A mental processing of metaphor involves a matrix of perception and interpretation that involves a relational 'seeing as', as opposed to merely 'seeing.' Ricoeur's theory of relational seeing opens new possibilities concerning the scope of metaphor's function. 'Seeing as' suggests a reciprocal unity between metaphor user and receiver, which converges at the site of the metaphorical utterance. The user is presented with the opportunity to project the subject of their 'inner vision' into the metaphoric statement, encapsulating metaphorically what may have been impossible to capture in literal terms. The recipient of the metaphor, meanwhile, is presented with a variety of potential assimilations, which range from the literal 'seeing,' to 'seeing as' the user might have intended the metaphor to be interpreted, to 'seeing as' if a wholly new range of meanings had presented themselves. A symbiosis between user and recipient develops, in which both are drawn into a desire to make the other 'see.' The metaphoric utterance induces the recipient to imagine him or herself in the place of the user – to actively re-cast him- or herself into a different cognitive sphere in order to capture the absent subject of the metaphoric reference.

[47] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 235.
[48] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 236.

Applying this hypothesis to mystical texts and the metaphors they contain proves particularly illuminating. If metaphor permits a 'seeing as' for both user and recipient, then arguably it allows the devout reader/ listener to enter, albeit partially, into something of the mystical experience themselves. More specifically, on coming into contact with a metaphor that depicts an element of mystical experience, the audience, via its imagination, is given the possibility to 'see as' the mystic might see; to experience a small part of the mystical experience within their own imaginative sphere.[49]

Ricoeur's final step in his three-stage theory takes into account what he calls the 'suspension,' or 'moment of negativity brought by the image in the metaphorical process.'[50] The referential qualities of metaphor imply that, when meaning is created out of metaphor, the imagination must hold two sets of antithetical ideas together simultaneously. The imagination begins with the sense of the metaphor, in which metaphoric sense emerges from a new semantic relevance that has arisen from the remains of the literal sense, destroyed by semantic incongruity. However, alongside the 'new' meanings is a need for 'suspension' – the negative conditions that result from metaphor's ability to create more radical perspectives that have resulted from the collapse of ordinary descriptive language. When seen as being held in tandem by the imagination alongside the pictorial, creative element of metaphor, Ricoeur's 'suspension' ('epoché') of ordinary descriptive reference seems to express a set

[49] Michael Sells reaches a similar conclusion but does so through his approach to apophatic language. Rather than viewing mystical texts as reflective of mystical experience, he argues that their function is to foster an experience within the reader. Language and meaning become fused in what he terms 'meaning events,' in which descriptive language and the meaning behind the language perform the same function. *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, p. 9 and pp. 215-216.

[50] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 238. Monroe C. Beardsley memorably termed this the 'metaphorical twist'; the moment at which the listener or reader realises the metaphorical status of the utterance in recognising the features of the subsidiary or source domain that are not related to the primary or target domain but which constitute the 'difference, i.e. the sortal, semantic and/or pragmatic contradiction' or 'logical opposition' when related to the primary subject. See Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Metaphorical Twist,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. by Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 105-122. Here at p. 112.

of linguistic and cognitive processes and challenges not unlike those found in the tensions of Pseudo-Dionysius' *apophatic* and *kataphatic* struggle. Within the three stages of Ricoeur's theory of imagination and metaphor are a series of profound ontological questions concerning what 'is' and what 'is not.'

Recent discussions of metaphor also seek to define metaphor's role in clarifying existential degrees of knowledge and perceptual truth.[51] Ricoeur addresses this by accounting for the place and role of 'feeling' in metaphoric processing, and again exposes an issue that is as pertinent to the study of mysticism as it is to metaphor. He argues that feeling *and* imagination are necessary for a semantic approach to metaphor and prefaces this with the caveat that 'genuine feelings are not emotions.'[52] He contends:

> By saying that it is felt, we underscore the fact that we are included in the process as knowing subjects. If the process can be called, as I called it, predicative *assimilation*, it is true that *we* are assimilated, that is, made similar, to what is seen as similar. This self-assimilation is a part of the commitment proper to the 'illocutionary' force of the metaphor as speech act. We feel *like* what we see *like* (original emphasis).[53]

That feeling catalyses a 'self-assimilation' at the site of the metaphoric utterance is reminiscent of the suggestion that mystical texts contribute to inducing a similar mystical experience in the reader, as well as encapsulating something of the 'felt' experience of the mystic themselves. Ricoeur summarises this as follows: 'to *feel*, in the emotional sense of the word, is to make *ours* what has been put at a distance by thought in its objectifying

[51] Lakoff and Johnson, for example, devote an entire chapter to their understanding of truth in *Metaphors We Live By*. See Chapter 24, 'Truth.'
[52] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 243.
[53] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 243.

phase.'[54] Feeling, therefore, places the user (either utterer or receiver) of the metaphoric utterance at its heart: it makes the cognitive processes *belong* to the user in a way that cognitive metaphor theory and blending theory do not. Perhaps more importantly, however, there is a reverse side to this notion of self-assimilation. Feeling also involves a kind of suspension – akin to that of the imagination – whereby emotions can be experienced without recourse to the literal, first-hand emotions themselves. Feeling, in a Ricoeurian sense, functions as literal emotion transcended – it is the essence of an experience or event without the actual experience or event; a 'being' there without 'being there.'

This quality of religious language has not gone unnoticed. Stephen H. Phillips explores this aspect of religious language from a different perspective.[55] Exploring the reception of mystical discourse by non-mystics, Phillips contends that non-mystics can understand mystical testimony despite their lack of individual mystical experience due to the role played by figurative language. He suggests that the primary function of figurative language in this context is its ability to create analogies, both implicit and explicit, on which the non-mystic draws to shape knowledge and meaning out of the mystical statement. Metaphor constitutes a crucial part of this 'implicit analogizing,' which Phillips terms the 'peculiarly mystical.'[56] In recognising the importance of metaphor in mystical language and highlighting its 'peculiarity,' his observations can be seen to relate to those of Ricoeur outlined above, as well as more broadly with the conceptual theory of Fauconnier and Turner. What for Phillips constitutes the 'peculiarly mystical' is, for Ricoeur, the 'seeing as.' Theorists of conceptual blending, meanwhile, know this as the 'blended space.' Phillips acknowledges this quality in mystical language and

[54] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 243.

[55] Stephen H. Phillips, 'Mystic Analogizing and the "Peculiarly Mystical",' in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 123-142.

[56] Phillips, 'Mystic Analogizing,' p. 128.

its reception, but does not explore the potential of his observations in any depth.

A second, striking similarity to Fauconnier and Turner's articulation of metaphor processing as essentially a 'limitless' cognitive activity can be seen in Phillips' proposal that mystical texts are 'essentially open-ended.' Phillips suggests that:

> the essential open-endedness of mystic analogizing suggests a *radical* open texture for […] traditional religious concepts [and that] there is no reason to suppose that a nonmystic cannot at all understand mystic testimony, including, to some degree, what the special experiences are like (original emphasis).[57]

Phillips' claim echoes one of this chapter's key propositions: that through metaphor's own 'open-ended' qualities, non-mystics can, in different ways, find cognitive access to the deeper meanings of mystical testimony. However this sense of 'open-endedness,' be it of metaphor or of mystical writing, requires some moderation. To return to Lakoff and Johnson's 'selectivity' of metaphor, they write that 'the very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another […] will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept.' [58] This systematicity, according to cognitive metaphor theory, structures metaphor processing so that it cannot be wholly 'open-ended.' What is 'hidden' by the metaphor creates certain limits as to what can be perceived by those processing it. Indeed, any discussion of metaphoric processing soon becomes redundant if the person processing the metaphor does not believe

[57] Phillips, 'Mystic Analogizing,' p. 135.
[58] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 10.

properties of both the target and source domains to be true.[59] In both metaphorical and mystical utterances, language, epistemology, cognition, imagination, and feeling are all underpinned by the belief systems of the individual and the community, which, in linguistic terms at least, are controlled by the semantic function of language. These are the conclusions reached variously by Robert Neville in his work on Christian language and by Paul Ricoeur in his analysis of metaphor and the imagination, both mentioned above. It is not incorrect to refer to both metaphor and mystical writing as being 'open-ended.' Rather, both share a similar structural quality that tempers this 'open-endedness.' The limitless number of interpretative possibilities catalysed by each phenomenon is not related to *what* they relate, but *how* they do so.

The cognitive processing of metaphor or of mystical prose involves the simultaneous correlation, or 'flow,' to use Ricoeur's terminology, of numerous mental images, and it is this aspect of metaphor and mystical reception that also makes them both such potent modes of expression. Fauconnier and Turner's framework is useful in explaining this relationship. In analysing a metaphor, it is possible to work out the interaction of the blended space to the input spaces, and the ways in which those inferences within the blend translate back towards the input spaces. However, all of the mental spaces involved in the blend are combined simultaneously in the cognitive processing of metaphor, and it is

[59] Paul Henle's adoption of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory provides a helpful platform for a discussion of the truth-value system of metaphor. Henle remarks that, whilst the function of metaphor is to extend language, this does not imply that metaphor always affords complete understanding: 'Often, […] metaphor is only partly understood. One develops a feeling for the kind of parallel required without quite seeing what it is.' Henle develops his thesis by proposing whenever something new is created – be it an object, image, or idea - a metaphor may be used to fill the lexical gap. In such cases, he concludes that, often, metaphor has the ability to conjure meaning for the person hearing the metaphor without them having ever experienced its literal components or referents. Henle uses the example of the 'breastplate' of a turtle, biologically termed a 'plastron'. He suggests that a person would not necessarily know what a 'plastron' was, nor perhaps have ever seen a turtle, but in knowing that the metaphor 'breastplate' is a borrowing from the semantic field of armoury could map whereabouts on the body and what the function of the 'plastron' or 'breastplate' might be. 'Metaphor,' in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor,* ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 83-104. Here at pp. 95-96. See also Beardsley, 'The Metaphorical Twist,' p.107-109.

only at the site of the blend that the structural efficiency of the integrated network unavailable in the other spaces becomes apparent.

The example of the Eucharist discussed above is emblematic of this dualism of 'open-endedness' and semantic control. In a metaphorical analysis of the Eucharist, the features of the two source domains (the bread and the wine) that that are mapped onto the target domains of Christ's body and blood include the 'redness' of the wine and the blood, the 'solidness' and 'nutritional value' of the bread and the body, to which 'whiteness' might be added, and the Christian context of communion. That Christ's body is symbolised by bread, and not by some other substance, is controlled by the biblical account of the Last Supper. There is no possibility of 'open-endedness' or deviation from this model, which is controlled by the semiotic code of the Christian faith. However these shared elements of the two domains can also give rise to new entailments. In a blended model, this would be described as the generic space of one conceptual model becoming the input space for another conceptual network. For example, the 'redness' may trigger associative connections with the blood of the martyrs or the 'whiteness' of the paschal lamb. As a result, the generic space of the metaphor of the Eucharist becomes the input space triggering a conceptual network for the metaphor of sacrifice and so on. In this respect, the Eucharistic metaphor is, in Phillips' terms, 'open-ended' and the interpretative possibilities 'limitless.'

An exploration of conceptual metaphor and Christian mysticism demonstrates that the two phenomena share a striking number of interpretative features in common. When juxtaposed, an interdisciplinary dialogue emerges between the two modes of discourse and thought, in which each serves to illuminate and help articulate the shadowy reaches of the other. Both metaphor and mysticism have, at various times in their long histories as areas of study,

suffered from levels of distrust in the fields of philosophy, linguistics, and theology.[60] However, neither metaphor nor mysticism deserves to be labelled as deviant modes of expressions of thought or language. Rather than representing a break with other forms of representation and interpretation, both entities require a hermeneutic framework that regards them as transforming the literal, the objective, or the everyday world, whilst retaining sufficient structural similarities with the 'old' world so as never to risk becoming representations of the fantastic, the grotesque, or the absurd. Both phenomena participate in open-ended, imaginative interpretation, tempered and structured by semantic codes, which in turn are codified by perceptual truth and belief. Metaphor and mystical writing can both be conceptualised as dynamic loci, or sites of meaning, which require their own logic and structure, and which, in return, offer a participatory and revelatory interpretative experience.

A fundamental question remains, however. Having established these theoretical similarities, it is necessary to turn to their implications and what they can be seen to achieve. Amongst the respective theories of metaphor and of mystical experience and expression, two sets of binary philosophical positions have emerged. All four perspectives offer a means of interpreting events, experiences, states of consciousness, or indeed their articulations. Amongst scholars of mysticism, the positions held by 'contextualists' and 'perennial psychologists' or 'decontextualists' continue to question what constitutes a referent for mystical experience. In *Metaphors We Live By*, meanwhile, Lakoff and Johnson, open up a debate as to how representations of

[60] Johnson sketches out the troubled history of metaphor amongst scholars, from the Ancient Greeks to the early twentieth century, in 'Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition.' Similarly, it is possible to trace a distrust of mysticism as an overly subjective mode of thought, expression, and literary genre from the medieval period to the modern day. In 1401, for example, the French prelate Jean Gerson presented his mistrust of some mystical reports in his *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*. More recently, McIntosh observes that the academic theology of the modern period has displayed a suspicion of spirituality based on its highly subjective nature. Quoting the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), McIntosh writes that mysticism's poetic language of devotion is often seen as needing to be 'exchanged for a literal one, or transformed into such by being explained.' See *Mystical Theology*, p. 26.

truth might be approached, focussing on the arguments put forward by the perspectives of objectivism and subjectivism.

The contours of these two separate debates reveal that they have far more in common with each other than has previously been recognised. Exploring both in tandem, and with regard to the particular features of the mystical literature under consideration here, highlights the usefulness, as well as the limitations, of all four perspectives. An interpretative angle is established that both preserves and discards elements of the two debates in the creation of an alternative schema, and in doing so, presents an outline of what might be achieved by the proposal that conceptual metaphor and mystical writing share a thematic unity. Reaching an accurate definition of mystical experience constitutes a key theme in the continuing debate between two groups of theorists, the 'constructivists' and the 'perennial psychologists,' also known as the 'decontextualists.' Focussing on questions of mystical experience and expression, these groups dispute the extent to which mystical consciousness and its mediation are either catalysed or structured by their context, or whether mysticism reflects an innate human capability to harness the mystical mode.

William James was the first scholar of the twentieth century to suggest that other modes of consciousness might co-exist alongside normal daily existence, modes he refers to as 'mystical.'[61] Placing a premium on the personal experience of religion, as opposed to its systematic presentation or its relationship to ecclesial organisation, James posits a more profound and intuitive human faculty than that of the senses, the highest expression of which he calls 'mystical states of consciousness.'[62] Of such states, he contends that four

[61] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience,* pp. 371-420. For a brief overview of James' theory, see Louise Nelstropp, Kevin Magill, and Bradley B. Onishi, *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 3-6.
[62] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 379.

characteristics must be present. The first two, 'ineffability' and 'noesis,' must occur in order for the experience to be termed 'mystical.' A less frequent and second pair, transience and passivity, are also noted.[63] This emphasis on experience causes James to argue that any doctrinal structures expressed in the context of mystical consciousness merely constitute a post-experiential interpretation of the event by means of pre-existing belief structures. Instead, he prefers to focus on the contours of the mystical experience itself; one that he postulates contains a common, universal core. James' theory catalysed the 'perennialist' school of thought amongst philosophers of mysticism, whose basic tenet holds that a common core of mystical experience cuts across the historical, cultural, and political differences of particular religious groups.[64] At the core of the mystical experience, they argue, lies a deep and intensely personal encounter foundational to human consciousness, and the study of any textual account of these experiences serves only to move the reader closer to this universal state of being.[65]

'Contextualism' is a direct challenge to this position. Steven T. Katz argues that no state of pure, universal mystical consciousness exists, since all experience is rooted in its cultural context.[66] This applies not only to subsequent

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[63] An extended discussion of James' psychological theory can be found in G. T. Alexander, 'Psychological Foundations of William James' Theory of Religious Experience,' *Journal of Religion*, 56 (1976): 421-434.

[64] Critics of the Jamesian approach include Rudolf Otto, who disapproved of James' disregard for doctrine, and W. T. Stace and R. C. Zaehner, both of whom, despite their differences, challenged James' assertion that mystical states can be easily differentiated from other states of consciousness. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*: *An Inquiry Into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1928); W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy;* R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry Into Some Varieties of Praeternaturnal Experiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957). Evelyn Underhill, meanwhile, disagreed with James' comparison of mystical states to drug-induced states of consciousness in *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1911).

[65] Two classic statements of the perennialist position can be found in Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1944) and Frithjof Schuon, *L'Unité transcendante des religions* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1948).

[66] Katz writes: '*There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences*. Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they

interpretations of the experience, but also to the shape of mystical consciousness itself as experienced at the time of an encounter with the divine. The cultural and conceptual background that the mystic brings to his or her own experience places pre-experiential limits on what they may or may not experience within their respective tradition. Contextualism proposes that the study of mystical phenomena must take into consideration its historical context and ideological premises. If it does not, deficiencies will ensue 'which skew the entire discussion in ways which distort any and all conclusions or suggestions made.'[67]

The methodological approach to both metaphor and to mysticism outlined above may appear more closely aligned with the contextual rather than the perennial perspective. In the combination of theories proposed by Ricoeur, Lakoff and Johnson, and Fauconnier and Turner, language use, referential imagery, cognition, imagination, and feeling are all widely accepted as products of, and reactions to, our historical, literary, cultural, social and political contexts. Yet realising a 'truly' contextualist reading of medieval texts is often impossible. The frequently incomplete nature of their physical record and transmission, coupled with modern editorial issues, lacunae in the broader historical framework, and disparities in the ideologies between medieval accounts and modern scholarly approaches, render it almost impossible to study a medieval text with the singularly anthropological lens of the contextualist. The lives and works of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete are a case in point. Comparatively little material evidence relating to the lives,

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are unmediated. That is to say, *all* experience is processed through and organised by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways' (original emphasis). Steven T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), pp. 22-74. Here at p. 26. His other articles on the subject include: 'The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience,' in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 1-45; 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning,' in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 3-35; 'Mysticism and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture,' in *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 7-67.

[67] Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism,' p. 32.

contexts, and works of the two survives, and what does has led to a multitude of scholarly suggestions about the nature of their mystical experiences.

The perennial philosophers' account, on the other hand, offers an appealing alternative model. In suggesting that a universal common core exists between various expressions of mystical consciousness, irrespective of doctrinal, epistemological, and ontological differences, perennialism removes the methodological concerns of temporal, cultural, or religious dislocation. This enables accounts of mystical experience from various chronological periods and religious traditions to be compared and contrasted with critical ease. According to this perspective, the mystical theologies of Plotinus, Gregory of Nyssa and Meister Eckhart, for example, can be drawn together without concern for their respective contextual backgrounds.[68]

In this context, perennialism appears to remove most major methodological hurdles. According to this approach, metaphors derived from any mystical text could, theoretically, be compared and contrasted, regardless of tradition or chronology. Pseudo-Dionysius' use of metaphor, for example, could be analysed alongside that of Evelyn Underhill without concern for their respective cultural contexts. Indeed, Marguerite Porete and Marguerite d'Oingt would need minimal introduction or historical examination. According to the perennial philosophical tradition, their shared common essence of mysticism alone constitutes the hermeneutic key that reveals their meaning.

Yet perennialism contains one flaw. In decontextualising the mystical utterance, the perennialist philosophers ignore one of its most important

[68] See, for example, Anthony N. Perovich Jr., 'Innate Capacities and the Nature of the Self,' in *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*, ed. by Robert K. C. Forman (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 213-245.

features: language itself. Without language, there is no mystical utterance, no projection of the mystical experience into any other sphere than into that of the mystic's own private consciousness. To echo the words of Ricoeur, without this 'communication' there is no way of overcoming 'the radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived.'[69] As such, perennialism seems to undercut its own thesis by means of its methodology, making it impossible to harness in a working approach towards mysticism and metaphor.[70]

Recent revisions to the perennialist position have engendered new perspectives on the mystical mode. In *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, Robert K. C. Forman concludes that there is at least one form of mystical experience that is both innate and free from all contextual influences, the Pure Consciousness Event (PCE).[71] In contrast to the contextualists, Forman concentrates his analysis on the operations of mystical consciousness. He argues:

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[69] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* p. 10. As Steven Katz observes, perennialists such as W. T. Stace paradoxically rely on language as a means of comparing mystical experience even as they negate it. In *Mysticism and Philosophy,* Stace suggests that due to the similarity of language used in, amongst others, Meister Eckhart's Christian discourse, the Jewish Kabbalist's notion of *devekuth*, and the Buddhist creed of *sunyata* or the Void, and their comparable descriptions of the ineffable, the sublime, and the paradoxical, these accounts all point towards a 'common core,' a shared mystical essence. Katz, on the other hand disagrees, pointing out that such a reading implies that Stace bases his argument on the 'surface grammar of the mystical reports,' despite simultaneously contending that such linguistic material is irrelevant. Steven T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism,' pp. 46-47.

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[71] Robert K. C. Forman, 'Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting,' in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. by Robert K. C. Forman (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 3-52.

> [T]he key process in mysticism is not like a construction process but more like one of unconstructing. Meditative procedures encourage one to gradually lay aside and temporarily cease employing language and concepts. If one truly forgets all concepts and beliefs for some period, then those concepts and beliefs cannot play a formative role in creating the mystical experience(s). This forgetting model shows how at least some forms of mysticism – that is, the pure consciousness event (PCE), a wakeful but objectless consciousness – should be viewed as *decontextualized* (original emphasis).[72]

Forman does not suggest that during a PCE the mystic's consciousness is blank. Rather, it is characterised by a paradoxical 'knowing something,' such as being awake, or being in the presence of 'something,' whilst simultaneously 'knowing nothing,' having no 'mental or sensory objects.'[73] Thus the mystic comes into contact with his or her own consciousness, into a state that is not linguistically formulated and is naturally intuitive. Forman defines consciousness not as an 'awareness of anything at all' but rather as an 'awareness per se, which *can* become aware of anything at all.'[74] This forms the platform from to which he constructs his theory of 'perennial psychology.' As an essentially human psychophysiological construct, consciousness has an ability to 'tie itself together through time.' 'In consciousness,' Forman concludes, 'we may have something that transcends cultures and eras.'[75]

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[72] Robert K. C. Forman, 'Introduction: Mystical Consciousness,' in *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*, ed. by Robert K. C. Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-41. Here at p. 7.

[73] Forman, 'Introduction: Mystical Consciousness,' p. 7.

[74] Forman, 'Introduction: Mystical Consciousness,' p. 16.

[75] Forman, 'Introduction: Mystical Consciousness,' p. 27.

This refinement of the perennial philosophers' approach makes perennial psychology more accessible from a medievalist's perspective. In locating a common shared and innate quality of consciousness at the heart of the mystical tradition, it is possible to compare the resultant transformative processes at work during mystical experience across cultures and ages, despite fissures in time and space, perspectives and worldviews. Implicit within Forman's conclusion is an argument for a single conceptual spectrum of mystical experience, in which the innate and the contextual constitute two poles of epistemological discourse, but where neither pole can be wholly discounted in favour of the other.

There are, however, two problems in the methodology underpinning Forman's perennial psychology. The first concerns the mystical reports chosen to illustrate the theory. All, be they from the Hindu Upanishadic, the Buddist Mahayanic, or the Christian mystical traditions, are carefully selected because they point towards a contentless state of consciousness. They relate a transformatory process that releases an innate quality of spiritual purity, rather than the production of a new spiritual quality. Perennial psychologists rule out all other forms of expression that do not point towards their definition of a PCE. The methodological obstacle here is clear: by pre-selecting the texts according to pre-defined criteria, there can be no argument. Forman's theory is not able to cope with any other forms of expression other than those that form a neat 'fit' with his formulae. It is not clear whether the texts drive his theory, or whether his theory defines his choice of texts.

The second problem is that the perennial psychologists' thesis does not recognise that all mystical accounts are composed retrospectively and, once composed, exist and circulate within a contextual domain. In this sense, all mystical experience is mediated: if it remains unmediated, how and by whom

are such writers deemed to belong to a mystical tradition? The only reason that Meister Eckhart's sermons or the Buddhist *Lotus Sūtra* can be discussed at all by Forman is because they have been composed, mediated, and disseminated in textual form. They are, quite literally, contextualised.

These tensions and methodological hurdles are, to a large extent, driven by questions of language, referentiality, and, most elliptical of all, definitions of truth. Contextualism suggests that there is a neat 'fit' between context, experience, expression, reality, and truth. According to this perspective, to separate expression from context or experience only serves to 'sever all grounds of their intelligibility.'[76] As a result, this stance shares some philosophical similarities with another interpretative model, which Lakoff and Johnson call the 'myth of objectivism.'[77] The objectivist paradigm asserts that it is possible to arrive at a position of absolute and unconditional truth and that all reality is objective and rational. Meaning is measured in terms of its unconditional 'fit' with an external world constructed solely out of objects which possess inherent properties and a reality independently of any thoughts, experiences or interactions projected onto them. Human experience is structured through contact with these objects, and the words that describe these objects correlate

[76] Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism,' p. 47.

[77] Lakoff and Johnson write that they do not use the term 'myth' in 'any derogatory way,' but rather, 'like metaphors, myths are necessary for making sense of what goes on around us. All cultures have myths, and people cannot function without myth any more than they can function without metaphor. And just as we often take the *metaphors* of our own cultures as truths, so we often take the *myths* of our own cultures as truths. The myth of objectivism is particularly insidious in this way. [original emphasis]' *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 185-186. The objectivist paradigm is found at the heart of logical positivism as posited by the Fregean and Husserlian traditions, as well as in the neorationalist orientations inspired by Noam Chomsky's work on linguistics and language acquisition. For an introduction to these philosophical traditions, see Alvin I. Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), especially Chapters Three, 'Truth and Realism,' and Eleven, 'Constraints on Representation.' See also Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 195.

exactly with their inherent properties. As such, language is endowed with a fixed meaning and its objective should be to clarify meaning and convey truth.[78]

In modern, Western culture, objectivism's antithesis is traditionally understood to be subjectivism.[79] Lakoff and Johnson propose that the subjectivist tradition derives from the Romantic privileging of imagination, intuition, and aesthetic experience over rationality, categorisation, and a natural structuring of the objectified world. Lakoff and Johnson situate modern subjectivism in the 'domain of art and perhaps in religion' as a perceived 'retreat for the emotions and the imagination.'[80] The subjectivist tradition offers an account of truth based on private significance to the individual, whose structure is structured solely by that individual's 'feelings, experiences, intuitions, and values.'[81]

At first glance, subjectivism's perspective on truth appears to correlate easily with the description of mystical states and their descriptions given in the introduction. Subjectivism's emphasis on interiority, feeling, experience, and the aesthetic engages with the attributes commonly associated with mystical literature: the shift in human consciousness, the emphasis on 'nonordinariness,' the creativity of visionary experience, and its apparently ineffable or inexpressible qualities. This concentration on intimate experience, as opposed to the systematic or 'lawlike' meaning of context and human reality, resonates

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[78] Lakoff and Johnson provide a summary of objectivism and their critique of its truth-value in *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 186-188; pp. 195-222. Lakoff also challenges the objectivist paradigm in his preface to *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things,* pp. xi-xvii. See also George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[79] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 223.

[80] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 192.

[81] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 224.

with Forman's articulation of mystical experience as an 'awareness *per se*, that can become anything at all.'[82]

Yet, like perennial psychology, subjectivism provides little help as a hermeneutic framework. Its premise that experience and context are essentially unstructured, and that meaning cannot be adequately represented, undermines the very essence of the written word. If truth were entirely subjective, there would be no point in trying to communicate it. As the earlier discussion concerning the semantic framework of mystical expression has demonstrated, mystical writing *is* structured, and the experiences it recounts must be told in terms of an absolute truth grounded in Christian doctrine.[83]

This is also a criticism levelled at perennial psychologists by theologians.[84] If 'true' mystical experience involves, as Forman suggests it does, a process of 'decontextualisation,' of 'gradually lay[ing] aside and temporarily ceas[ing…] language and concepts,' it is difficult to see why mystical texts would be composed or transmitted at all. If the act of composition is to compromise the purity of the 'consciousness event,' by shrouding it in language and concepts, it seems strange that any mystic would wilfully jeopardise the essential nature of that experience. Conversely, and particularly if this perspective is applied to the late medieval period, it seems incongruous that

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[82] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 223; Forman, 'Introduction: Mystical Consciousness,' p. 16.

[83] Peter Moore writes: 'The lack of doctrinal presuppositions might prevent the mystic not only from understanding and describing his mystical states but even from experiencing the fullness of these states in the first place. 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), pp. 101-131. Here at p. 112.

[84] McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 136-140.

such effort would be made to collect, copy, translate and disseminate mystical material to the considerable extent that it appears to have been.[85]

This is not to suggest that perennial psychology, its linguistic corollary, subjectivism, or contextualism and its corollary, objectivism, should be discarded out of hand. Rather, a preservation of the fundamental tenets of all four perspectives leads to a blended, more flexible framework might be termed 'post-experiential *re*contextualism.' In the same way that the analysis of theoretical approaches to metaphor has illustrated, so too a singular approach to complex material such as that of the mystical tradition will never prove sufficiently comprehensive to cope with its many manifestations.

A blended approach, however, begins with the premise that the *capacity* (not, necessarily the *ability*) to experience a state of mystical consciousness is, in itself, an innate quality of human existence. Entry into this mode of being may well involve a passing beyond the constructions of ordinary discursive thought, and an entry into an unbounded mode of being characterised by profundity and nonordinariness; this is certainly the case argued for the cognitive possibilities of metaphor. Recognising this 'common denominator' of mystical consciousness captures the underlying unity of mysticism and permits comparisons such as those between the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart, or, as in this case, between the diverse figures of Marguerite Porete and Marguerite d'Oingt.

[85] Bernard McGinn provides insight into just how popular the mystical mode of expression had become by the later Middle Ages in *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200-1350*, vol. 3 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

Once again, the framework and vocabulary provided by cognitive metaphor theory helps to articulate this approach. From the perspective of the mystic, his or her experience is projected into a contextualised world. 'Post-experiential *re*contextualism' is based on the observation that once mystical consciousness is communicated, it is contextualised.[86] It is context that characterises the diversity of mystical expression, but that also restricts it historically and culturally, categorising and modifying it to suit religious, political, and cultural boundaries, and thereby rendering it meaningful.

From the perspective of the mystic's audience, meanwhile, the experience of the mystic is 'seen through' the veil of the contextual world. On the other hand, subsequent audiences are always subject to the influences of contemporary ideologies. Katz's theory of contextualism is not, as he argues, a singular process of identifying the 'interpretative structures' that shaped the mystic's experience and the subsequent mediation of this experience.[87] Rather, contextualisation takes place from a number of perspectives; paradoxically beginning with the notion that mystical consciousness itself is free from context. Hence the coining of the term '*re*contextualism.' Any analysis of the mystical constitutes a rebuilding, be it by the mystic themselves, as he or she recalls and shapes their experience into a contextualised form, or by their audience, scholarly or otherwise, who engage with and enter into the reported experience.

As such, mysticism shares a philosophical core with Lakoff and Johnson's proposed alternative to objectivism and subjectivism, which they call 'experientialism.' This perspective combines the objectivist need to draw on objects and structures with the subjectivist focus on internal aspects of

[86] As Moore observes, 'the immediate data of the philosophical analysis of mysticism are not the mystical experiences themselves, but the mystic's accounts of these experiences.' 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique,' p. 101.
[87] Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning,' p. 4.

understanding, and suggests that the interaction between the two perspectives permits a fuller understanding of cognition within a given physical environment.[88] Their notion of 'experientialism' is fundamental to this thesis' exploration of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings, and is applicable to the broader conceptualisation of the mystical tradition. Experientialism is a synthetic framework in which the cognitive processes of reason-based categorisation and inference combine with the imaginative ability of the mind to discern similarities between the projected properties of objects and events. These are the cognitive processes underpinning conceptual metaphor; that which Lakoff and Johnson term 'imaginative rationality.'[89]

As with objectivism, the scholarship of mysticism requires a 'rising above' of individual or collective bias.[90] This is occasionally an issue for modern scholars, who approach medieval mystical writing with too fixed an ideological perspective and reveal an anachronistic over-privileging of current phenomena over chronologically more sensitive hermeneutic methodologies.[91] However the objectivist paradigm asserts the importance of externally validated truth and knowledge 'based on the importance of such knowledge for successful functioning' in a given environment.[92] The mystical paradigm, on the other hand, like metaphorical reality, is composed of relative truth, consistent with both an individual's and a community's conceptual system and set of cultural norms. Yet mystical writing also preserves something of the subjectivist myth. Meaning and relative truth do not rely on rational knowledge alone, but also on memory, feeling, past experience, and intuition. After all, 'meaning is not cut

[88] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 229-231.

[89] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 193.

[90] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 227.

[91] This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Examples of this over-privileging include some of the feminist readings of medieval women writers, or indeed the 'medicalising' of Margery Kempe's spiritual narrative. Denys Turner, meanwhile, cautions against the 'psychologizing' of mystical speech in *The Darkness of God*, pp. 245-253.

[92] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 226.

and dried,' as Lakoff and Johnson observe, but is 'a matter of imagination and a matter of constructing coherence.'[93]

'Post-experientialist *re*contextualism' must, therefore, tread a careful path in its examination of mystical discourse. It assumes a symbiotic relationship between language and belief, whereby language represents the vehicle of expression and belief the locomotive force that directs this vehicle in accordance with contextual and individual influence.[94] As in Ricoeur's thesis that 'feeling' is a crucial component within metaphoric processing, so too at the heart of both the composition and reception of mystical writing lies the notion that 'attitudinal purification is necessary for right perception.'[95] As Frederick J. Streng argues, '*what* one knows is closely related to *how* one knows,' and therefore 'to see beyond the apparent, or superficial, world means a change in the mechanisms of apprehension.'[96]

To return to an idea expressed earlier, mystical language, like metaphorical language, does not function solely as a description of mystical experience, but is capable of conveying the experience of post-experiential reception. That it is able to do so is well documented.[97] Yet crucially, Streng, himself a contextualist, differs in his approach to mysticism to those expressed

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[93] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 227.

[94] Bimal Krishna Matilal observes that the meaning of mystical language is entirely bound up with expectation, emotion and context. In writing about poetry, Matilal writes: 'where the emotion is transmitted […] expression dons a new cloak of meaning […] The language of the mystics has to be contextualized in the same way.' 'Mysticism and Ineffability: Some Issues of Logic and Language,' in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 143-157. Here at p. 151.

[95] Frederick J. Streng, 'Language and Mystical Awareness,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), pp. 141-169. Here at p. 142. See also pp. 166-167.

[96] Streng, 'Language and Mystical Awareness,' p. 142.

[97] See Bernard McGinn, 'The Language of Love in Christian and Jewish Mysticism,' in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. by Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 202-235; Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning,' particularly at p. 5.

by his contextualist contemporaries. He argues not only for the transformational qualities of mystical language, but also for the 'catharsis in thinking' that this language is able to catalyse.[98] His emphasis on the role language plays in cognition recalls the earlier discussion in this chapter concerning the dynamic capacity of metaphor to catalyse and inform thought processes and evoke new image schemas, or conceptual integrated networks, in the mind.

Once again, the theoretical functions and capabilities of both mystical discourse and the metaphoric utterance intersect. Both require user and audience to discard literal or absolute perceptions of an event or image formulation, and instead use language as a vehicle with which to reformulate a world-view in accordance with belief. The particular structures and methods employed by mystical writers undoubtedly differ across time and space, and even within certain cultural and religious traditions. How they are manifested in the works of Marguerite Porete and Marguerite d'Oingt will constitute the beginnings of an interpretative methodology illustrating how figurative language is deployed as both a descriptive and transformational medium in thirteenth-century French Christian mystical discourse.

All access to the mystical experience is, ultimately, retrospective. However, like metaphor, it reveals its meaning partially, imaginatively, and, importantly, according to a structured rationale. Indeed, mystical expression *is* metaphorical, and it is therefore appropriate to use metaphor theory to talk about mysticism. The mystical experience itself resides in an indefinable time and place; however, its subsequent linguistic expression is wholly contextual, and, as such, the context that buttresses the recording of the ineffable requires careful examination. This will be the subject of the following chapter. Without

[98] Streng, 'Language and Mystical Awareness,' p. 143.

an understanding of the respective contexts in which Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete composed their works, and the environments in which they may have been received, it is impossible to *re*contextualise their writings and therefore to understand the world-views that aided them in shaping their mystical expression in the first place. Context allows for the structural mappings to be revealed, and the generic mental spaces of their complex figurative imagery to be more sensitively interpreted.

No one theory is sufficient to illuminate the polysemous nature of mystical expression or the metaphorical utterance. However a re-contextualist approach, which takes in a range of methodological perspectives, allows theoretical boundaries to be broken down, and opens up a multivalent reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's enigmatic accounts of spiritual speculation.

CHAPTER TWO

Texts and Contexts: The Carthusian Prioress and the *pseudo mulier*

Scholarly attempts to establish the contextual details of the lives, experiences, and writings of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete have been slow to emerge. Surveying the field of Porete scholarship over the last six decades, Nicholas Watson remarks that 'any hope that Guarnieri's scholarly *coup* would lead to a balanced appraisal of the *Mirouer*'s place in history has been slow to come to fruition.'[1] In very different ways, attempts to reconcile the portraits, no matter how incomplete, of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete as authorial figures with their literary works have been problematized by issues of mistaken identity, a fragmentary manuscript corpus, and in Marguerite Porete's case, a legacy tainted with the stain of heresy. Although the historical evidence relating to both women is limited, even details that have

[1] Nicholas Watson lists the *Mirouer*'s complex and anonymous manuscript tradition, its implication in inquisitorial procedures, its bastardised incorporation into the papal bull *Ad nostrum*, rumours of an additional manuscript copy held in a 'secret' location, and the false discovery of a German translation as just some of the obstacles faced by scholars of Porete's text. See 'Melting Into God the English Way,' p. 21. Nineteenth-century investigations surrounding the figure of Marguerite d'Oingt, though subject to less scholarly scrutiny, were also troubled by errors in the manuscript tradition (see Introduction for details of the surviving manuscripts containing Marguerite d'Oingt's works). Ms. 5786R and Ms. 66b, 7 ORNA 5 incorrectly cite her name as 'Marguerite d'Oin,' 'Marguerite de Duin' and 'Marguerite Douin,' an error that was carried forward in subsequent studies and the earliest editions of her work, and which led to Samuel Guichenon's belief that Marguerite was, in fact, from the small village of Duyn in the Savoy and a descendant of the noble family of Duygnt-la-Val-d'Isère. See *Histoire de Bresse et de Bugey* (Lyon: J. A. Huguetan & M. A. Ravaud, 1650), p. 90. Pierre Gardette lists other orthographic variations of Marguerite's name in his introductory notes to *Les Œuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt,* p. 11. The errors in her nomenclature were resolved by Antoine Péricaud, and latterly by M. Valentin-Smith, who established that the prioress 'Marguerite d'Oin' of Ms. 5785R was a descendant of the d'Oyngt family, whose estates were not far from Lyon and Poleteins. Valentin-Smith confirmed this with a will dated 25th July 1297, in the name of Guichard d'Oyngt. Alongside Guichard's two main inheritors, his sons Guichard and Louis, the will mentions specific bequests to his daughters, Catherine, Isabelle, Agnès, and Marguerite. This document re-connected the figure of Marguerite with one of the oldest and most influential families in the Lyonnais, whose genealogy extends back to the early eleventh century. See Antoine Péricaud, *Variétés historiques, biographiques, & littéraires* (Lyon: L. Boitel, 1836), p.110; Valentin-Smith's findings are detailed in the introductary notes to *Les Œuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt*, p. 11, also ns. 7 and 8.

become widely accepted in most secondary literature are difficult to corroborate when subjected to scrutiny.

The writer who calls herself 'ego Margareta, ancilla Christi' was the fourth prioress of Poleteins, a Carthusian chapterhouse located in the parish of Mionnay in the Rhône-Alps founded sometime between 1225 and 1226.[2] Documentary evidence suggests that Marguerite was a member of the powerful d'Oyngt family, landed nobility with a history dating to the early eleventh century.[3] What little else has been deduced about Marguerite d'Oingt is drawn from the details she leaves behind in her writings, and the marginal notation found in the only complete and surviving manuscript of her works, Ms. 5785R, Grenoble. In the opening lines of the *Pagina meditationum*, Marguerite states:

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[2] *Pagina meditationum,* § 1, p. 71. *A Page of Meditations*, p. 25. Marie-Claude Guigue's introductory notes to Edouard Philipon's 1877 edition of Marguerite's writings suggest that the Poleteins charterhouse was probably founded between 1225 and 1226, based on a surviving document decorated with the seals of Marguerite de Bâgé and her husband, Humbert de Beaujeu. Marguerite and Humbert were members of the local nobility whose marriage had united the fiefdoms of Miribel and Beaujeu in the area surrounding Lyon. Marguerite de Bâgé financed the opening of the chapterhouse at Poleteins as an appeal to God for the protection of Humbert on his summons by King Louis IX to fight against the Count of Toulouse. Guigue's description of this document notes that Marguerite promised to ensure that the chapterhouse was well resourced, with sufficient buildings, accommodation, land, and a pond. She promised to fund all necessary building work, provide grazing for the rearing of cattle and sheep, a vineyard, meadows, woods, a windmill, and to waive all charges and taxes pertaining to the land and to goods bought and sold there. See *Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oyngt, Prieure de Poleteins, publiées d'après le manuscrit unique de la Bibliothèque de Grenoble*, ed. by E. Philipon with introductory notes by M.-C. Guigue (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2010), pp. x-xii, and p. xxxiii, n. 3. First published in Lyon, 1877.

[3] For a detailed account of the d'Oingt family from 1093-1383, see Antoine Vachez, *Chatillon d'Azergues: son château, sa chapelle et ses seigneurs* (Lyon: Imp. d'Aimé Vingtrinier, 1869), pp. 46-52. Vachez traces the line back to Umfred d'Oingt, whose lordship is mentioned in maps belonging to the abbey of Savigny, and notes that the family had connections with many of the other powerful families of the region. He states that two of Marguerite's sisters, Isabelle and Agnès, became nuns at Alix in the Beaujolais region, although his revised edition of the same work, *Le Château de Châtillon d'Azergues, sa chapelle et ses seigneurs* (Lyon: Brun, 1883) goes a step further, claiming that Agnès became the sixth prioress of Poleteins in 1314, see pp. 57-58. To date, this has been neither proven nor discounted.

> Anno Domini millesimo. ducentesimo. octogesimo. sexto. dominica in septuagesima, ego Margareta, ancilla Christi, eram in ecclesia in missa [...].[4]

Micheline de Fontette's work on the formation and daily life of medieval Carthusian nuns suggests that Marguerite must have been at least twenty-eight at the time of revealing her visions to Hugo, Prior of Vallis Bone (Vallebonne), as the *incipit* to the *Speculum* recounts, and almost certainly older still. She would have been already subject to a rigorous period of study, prayer, and meditation prior to her being committed as a cloistered member of the Carthusian community.[5] On consecration as Prioress, Marguerite would have participated in a rite absent from other monastic orders of the period, which de Fontette calls 'le seul point vraiment original du statut des moniales chartreuses.'[6] Presented with a veil and a ring from the Bishop as symbols of virginal consecration, and a stole and maniple as an emblem of her benediction as a deaconess, Marguerite would have been permitted to read the epistle at mass and from the gospels at the evening office. She had probably already been

[4] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 71, § 1. 'In the year of our Lord 1286, on the Sunday of Septuagesima, I Margaret, the maidservant of Christ, was in church at mass […].' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 25. At no other point does Marguerite mention her name, although a later scribe, possibly the compiler of Ms. 5785R, includes her name in the various *incipits* and *explicits*.

[5] Those who wished to become a cloistered nun were required to approach the Carthusian convent before the age of twenty-eight, and were expected to spend a year reflecting on their vocation before God in a period known as 'Postulancy.' This was followed by the 'Novititate,' during which the nun received the Carthusian habit and spent long periods studying and in prayer and meditation. Only after two years might the nun offer herself to the Order and to God by making the 'Temporary Profession,' a vow made for three years, and renewable for a further two. Her final commitment, or 'Solemn Profession,' formalised her status as a cloister nun. See Micheline de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon* (Paris: Vrin, 1967), especially at p. 87; see also James Hogg, 'Everyday Life in the Charterhouse in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,' in *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, ed. by M. Heinrich Appelt (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980), pp. 113-146.

[6] Micheline de Fontette, 'Recherches sur les origines des moniales chartreuses,' in *Etudes d'histoire du droit canonique, dédiées à Gabriel Le Bras*, vol. 2 of 2 (Paris: Sirey, 1965), pp. 1143-1151. Here at p. 1150.

installed as prioress before beginning to compose and circulate her visionary experiences.[7]

Although the Carthusian Order had a reputation for monastic contemplation devoted to poverty, silence and prayer, it is apparent from the few external documentary sources, as well as details found within Marguerite's own writing, that she both came from, and in Poleteins had entered into, an elite community founded by and made up of noble and aristocratic women from the Rhône-Alps.[8] Her correspondence with other monks and nuns suggests that, despite the rule of enclosure, as prioress she was familiar with the concerns of daily, non-religious life, as she conveys in one letter to an unnamed monk:

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[7] Two pieces of evidence point towards this. Firstly, a note in Ms. 5785R writes in the *Speculum*'s *incipit:* 'Anno domini millesimo ducentesimo nonagesimo quarto, Hugo, prior Vallis Bone attulit ad capitulam generale, donno Bosoni priori Cartusie hanc visionem sibi missam ab ancilla Dei domina Margareta, priorissa condam de Pelotens.' *Speculum*, p. 89. 'In the year of our Lord 1294, Hugo, prior of Vallebonne brought to the Chapter General, by the gift of Boso, prior of the Grande Chartreuse, this vision, sent to him by the servant of God Marguerite, sometime prioress of Poleteins.' My translation. Even if Marguerite was not prioress at the time of her experiencing the visions of the *Speculum*, it was clearly important to the compiler of Ms. 5785R that she be remembered in the role, perhaps to give her writing an added sense of authority. However, it is highly likely that Marguerite would, indeed could, only have met Hugo as a prioress. The strict rules of enclosure upheld by Carthusian nunneries meant that the prioress was responsible for overseeing all communication entering and emanating from the charterhouse and, in accordance with the *Antiqua Consuetudines* (sometimes known as the *Antiqua Statuta*), statutes issued by the Grande Chartreuse *c.*1259 (although not promulgated until 1271), which ruled that all Carthusian nunneries were to be led by a male prior. It is quite possible that Hugo was the supervisory prior of Poleteins to whom Marguerite reported as prioress.

[8] The austere, rigorous, yet bookish life of the Carthusian order is depicted in Guibert of Nogent's early description of the first charterhouse in his *De vita sua,* ed. by E. R. Labande (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981). Similarly, a century later, in 1214, the Carthusian Raimond d'Aurouse was forced to take shelter at Bertaud, a Carthusian nunnery. Recounting his experience at the chapterhouse, he exclaimed: 'Contraints par le mauvais temps de séjourner là, nous avons appris par la sévérité du lieu, les roches tourmentées et les montagnes croulantes, dans quelle pauvreté corporelle ces moniales se trouvent nécessairement, et quelle rigueur d'un froid terrible elles ont à souffrir.' See Dom Maurice Laporte, *Aux sources de la vie cartusienne: traits fondamentaux de la Chartreuse*, vol. 2 of 7 (La Grande Chartreuse: In Domo Cartusiae, 1960). Here at pp. 536-537. Poleteins benefited considerably from its links to the French nobility. In 1245, Pope Innocent IV placed Poleteins under the special protection of the Holy See, and, some time later, Louis X (1289-1316) further reinforced the privileges that had been bestowed on the convent. Other royal benefactors included Philippe de Valois, Jean II, Charles V, Charles VI, Charles VII, Louis XI, Charles VIII, and François I, as well as various donations given by the Dukes of Bourbon and Savoie.

> je vos di que je sui tant occupee es besoygnes de nostra mayson, que n'ay poir de pensar a choses qui bones soent, quar je ay tant a fayre que ne say de qual part je me torne. Nos n'avons pas culit de ble. a VII. moys de l'ant et nos vignes sont tempestees. D'autre part nostre yglyese est en si mal point que il la nos covient refayre en partia, et cetera.[9]

The historical figure of a medieval woman such as Marguerite d'Oingt contradicts what has become a popular binary stereotype amongst modern scholars of the medieval woman. Frequently characterised as either subservient, largely illiterate and incapable of leadership, or as responsible for disseminating a counter-discourse to that of the misogynistic and patriarchal Church, generalisations about medieval women are rife in modern scholarship and not always of much help.[10] The Carthusian prioress administered a large estate, presided over her religious community, read aloud from the Scriptures, and engaged in written communication with monks and nuns. As the next chapter will demonstrate, Marguerite d'Oingt's own mystical compositions suggest a woman with a keen sense of creative intelligence, despite her protestations to the contrary.[11] This outlining of Marguerite's historical background suggests

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[9] *Item ex alia epistola*, p. 142, §139. 'I tell you that I am so occupied with the business of our house that I cannot think of those things that are good, for I have so much to do that I do not know where to turn to first. We did not harvest the wheat in the seventh month of the year, and our vineyards are devastated by a storm. In addition, our church is in such bad repair that we have to rebuild it in part, etc.' *From Another Letter*, p. 65. Another letter to a certain Agatha, abbess at Saint-Pierre de Lyon, tells of the financial strains being put on the charterhouse's income by certain tithes, and suggests that Poleteins was perhaps more involved with the world of money and revenue than the Carthusian founders might have envisaged for their successors. On this letter to Agatha, see Guigue, *Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oyngt,* p. xxv and p. xxxviii, n. 44.

[10] For a detailed survey of these stereotypes, see the 'Introduction' to Alcuin Blamires' *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-18.

[11] Barbara Newman deals with the question of 'creative intelligence' amongst communities of medieval female religious, and the apparently paradoxical claim of 'she didn't write it' by women mystics and their hagiographers in 'More Thoughts on Medieval Women's Intelligence: Denied, Projected, Embodied,' in *Voices In Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 231-243. For Marguerite d'Oingt's claims of ignorance and illiteracy, see the *Pagina meditationum*, p. 72, § 4. *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

that she does not easily fit the stereotypes created for medieval women. Furthermore, as a historical figure, Marguerite d'Oingt presents the modern scholar with a series of questions concerning what it meant to be literate, to give religious instruction, to communicate in the vernacular, and to disseminate textual accounts of mystical consciousness. Participating in these activities as a woman in the Middle Ages alters the parameters of these questions, but not, perhaps, in the way that the majority of today's feminist scholarship has sought to do. Tracing the finer nuances of these queries, if not offering definitive answers, is the rationale for the second half of this chapter. As will become clear, a very similar set of queries arises when sketching out the contextual details of Marguerite d'Oingt's contemporary, the woman known only as 'Margareta, dicta Porete,' the *pseudomulier*.[12]

What can be discerned about the woman burnt as a relapsed heretic in Paris on 1st June 1310 amounts to very little, particularly in comparison to the amount of secondary material consequently generated. The text for which she

[12] The reference to 'Margareta, dicta Porete' is found repeatedly in the trial documents, now housed in the Archives Nationales, box J428. The epithet *pseudomulier[e]* was given to her by the anonymous continuator of the *Chronicon* of Guillaume de Nangis, written at Saint-Denis shortly after Marguerite's death. Paul Verdeyen S.J. edited the trial documents and some contemporary commentaries on the trial, such as the *Chronicon*, as well as others including the *Grandes chroniques de France* and that of Géraud de Frachet, who also refers to Marguerite as a 'pseudomulier[e]'. See 'Le procès d'inquisition.' References to the *pseudomulier[e]* are at pp. 87-90. References to 'Margareta, dicta Porete' are at pp. 56, 62, 78, 82, and 88. Verdeyen's contribution to the calendaring and editing of the inquisition's records of Marguerite Porete's trial and his compilation of the Latin critical edition of the *Mirouer* are valuable sources of information and scholarship for the study of Porete's life and text. However, as both Colledge and Lerner observe, Verdeyen's work has also been responsible for several misconceptions. Colledge notes that Verdeyen's assumption that Porete was a 'Beguine from Valenciennes,' based on his literal reading of the trial documents, may, in fact, be 'no more than casual denigration' on the part of her inquisitors. Lerner, meanwhile, remarks that Verdeyen's dating of the trial documents to 11th April 1309, rather than the correct date of 11th April 1310, 'set scholarship back' considerably, particularly in continental European publications. Ellen Babinsky corrects the error in the introductory notes to her English translation, whilst Field discusses the broader impact of the errors in chronology relating to Porete's trial on modern scholarship in *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor,* pp. 4-6. See also Edmund Colledge, 'The Latin Mirror of Simple Souls: Margaret Porette's "ultimate accolade"?,' in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval Tradition: Essays in Honour of S. S. Hussey*, ed. by Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 177-183, here at p. 179; Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 92, n. 9; Babinsky, 'Introduction,' in *The Mirror of Simple Souls,* p. 20, pp. 23-24, and p. 55, n. 72.

was condemned, the *Mirouer des simples ames*, mentions her name only once, and even here remains characteristically enigmatic. Addressing *l'Ame*, *Dame Amour* says:

> O tres bien nee, dit Amour a ceste precieuse marguerite, bien soiez vous entree ou seul franc manoir.[13]

Her cognomen, 'Porete,' meanwhile, is only referenced in the trial documents, and despite its adoption as Marguerite's surname by modern scholars, it is probably, Robert Lerner argues, only a nickname, since 'no such name has yet been found in thirteenth-century documents from the region.'[14]

Throughout the trial records, Marguerite is referenced as being 'de Hannonia,' suggesting that she was a native of the region of Hainaut, now part of modern Belgium, although the widely accepted notion that she was born in Valenciennes has been questioned by both Colledge and Lerner.[15] The only documentary evidence connecting Marguerite Porete to Valenciennes exists in the Parisian trial records, in which it is noted that the Bishop of Cambrai had first tried her in that town, thus making it possible, but not certain, that she

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[13] *Mirouer*, ch. 52, p. 152. 'O very high-born one, says Love to this precious pearl, it is well that you have entered the only noble manor.' *Mirror*, p. 129. Babinsky suggests that the Old French reference to the 'marguerite' is both a reference to the name of the author, as well as to the parable of the pearl in Matthew 13: 45-46. *Mirror*, p. 225, n. 35. The practice of conflating the assumed identity of the author with that of the perceived inscribed narrator is a common methodological obstacle in the critical analysis of mystical writing (and indeed any form of historical literature). This is discussed in relation to both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete in subsequent chapters.

[14] Lerner suggests that scholarship cease the use of 'Porete' and refer to her simply as 'Marguerite,' so as to put her on a par with other female authors known only by their first names, such as 'Hadewijch' and 'Mechthild'. 'New Light,' p. 92. However this study continues to call her by her full, if inaccurate, name of Marguerite Porete so as to avoid the possibility of confusion with her Carthusian counterpart.

[15] See Colledge, 'The Latin Mirror,' p. 179; Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 93.

hailed from Valenciennes.[16] Almost a century later, in 1401, Jean Gerson challenged the work of a certain 'Marie de Valenciennes,' who, he argued, had written that divine love freed the individual from all law and doctrine.[17] It is highly likely that this 'Marie' was in fact Marguerite Porete and the work Gerson was referring to was the *Mirouer*; further evidence in favour of the suggestion that Marguerite was indeed from Valenciennes, and also an indication that the inquisition had not been successful in destroying every copy of the work and that Gerson may even have set eyes on a copy himself. In sum, however, Lerner concludes that all that may be safely assumed about Marguerite Porete is that she came from the 'Valenciennes vicinity.'[18]

The mysteries of Marguerite Porete's identity do not end here. A more problematic issue for the study of Porete and her text is the continuing uncertainty as to whether she was a beguine or not, and if so, whether she lived and wrote as part of a beguinage or as an itinerant *beguina* with no fixed community.[19] The impact and consequences of this aspect of her identity have largely shaped the various critical stances adopted by modern scholars towards the *Mirouer*. These scholarly positions are examined in more detail in Chapter

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[16] Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 93. The trial records reveal that Marguerite's book had previously been tried by Gui de Colmieu (d.1305), Bishop of Cambrai, sometime between 1296 and 1305, and publicly burnt in Valenciennes with the order that she must never disseminate its contents again. Continued use of the text was forbidden on pain of excommunication – an order Marguerite appears to have ignored - and she was once again brought before the Bishop of Cambrai, Colmieu's successor, Philip of Marigny, sometime between 1306 and 1308. See Verdeyen, 'Le process d'inquisition,' pp. 78-79; Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, corrected and reprinted 1991, reprinted 2007, orig. publ. 1972), p. 71; also Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 93. An analysis of the trial records relating to this first condemnation can be found in Colledge, Marler and Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay,' pp. xxxix-xl.

[17] Jean Gerson, *De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis*, in Gerson, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Palémon Glorieux, vol. 3 of 10 (Paris: Desclee et Cie, 1962), pp. 51-52.

[18] Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 93.

[19] Ernst W. McDonnell's *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture: With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) remains one of the key texts in the study of beguine and beghard communities, their history, and their writings. McDonnell deals specifically with Marguerite Porete on pp. 400-492. Another helpful overview of the beguine movement can be found in Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), especially at pp. 199-207.

Four. What follows sets out the evidence relating to Marguerite's religious and social status, taking into consideration the documentary and contextual evidence and its recent interpretations.

Thirteenth-century northern Europe was a melting pot of both established and newly founded religious movements, within which the beguines, and their male counterparts, the beghards, formed a vocal community. Beguines could choose to live alone, as recluses, mendicants, itinerant teachers, or preachers, or to live together in loosely organised communes, beguinages, or in groups aligned to a monastery.[20] These movements fitted easily into urban life, and answered a calling from those women who could not afford the dowry required to enter a convent, or found that their personal circumstances excluded them from entering into established orders. As Richard Southern summarises, 'in many ways, it [is] an idyllic picture – women escaping from the sordid frustrations of the world into the liberty of an unpretentious spiritual life: enjoying vivid experiences of a loving God, and occupied in useful services ranging from the care of the sick to the embroidery of ecclesiastical vestments.'[21]

Contemporary reactions to these new movements were divided. Some churchmen wrote favourably about the beguines, including Jacques de Vitry (*c.*1160 - 1240) and, later, the scholar and bishop Robert Grosseteste (*c.*1175-1253), who, around 1240, taught that the beguines represented the highest and

[20] These feminine religious movements most frequently aligned themselves with the Premonstratensians, who had, prior to the end of the twelfth century, included women in their establishments. Even after their exclusion of women, they continued to support them in the realisation of their commitment to poverty, contemplation, and continence. Similarly, groups of religious laywomen sought out the guidance of Cistercian monks, who like their Premonstratensian brothers, offered a level of religious and pastoral guidance to the women. See Babinsky, 'Introduction,' pp. 6-7.

[21] R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 32.

most perfect religious group 'because they live from the proceeds of their own work and do not burden the world by exacting what they need.'[22] Other theologians, whose interpretation of canon thirteen of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which expressly forbade the founding of new religious orders, was more exacting, were highly suspicious of the new movement.[23] The beguines' lack of officially sanctioned status left them vulnerable to accusations of heresy, and the range of lifestyles open to them, either as nomads or as residents of a beguinage, led to confusion and contempt amongst the clergy.[24] By the close of the thirteenth century, beguines had become the target of satirical poetry and their reputation for interpreting and disseminating Scripture in the vernacular, as well as their propensity for mystical experience and expression, frightened the Church into taking repressive measures against them.[25]

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[22] Quoted in Paul Mommaers, *Hadewijch: Writer, Beguine, Love Mystic* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), p. 36.

[23] See *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. and trans. by Norman P. Tanner, vol. 1 of 2 (Washington D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990).
Available online: http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum12-2.htm. Accessed 22/01/2014.

[24] See H. Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammennhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961), p. 344.

[25] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski lists the poets Gautier de Coincy (d.1236), Rutebeuf (*c.*1245-1285), and Jean de Meun (*c.*1240-*c.*1305) as amongst those intent on satirizing the 'institutional novelty,' 'too friendly relations with the friars' and 'lack of rigour in the beguines' way of life.' See 'Satirical Views of the Beguines in Northern French Literature,' in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. by Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 237-249. Here at pp. 240-241. Newman also deals with Jean de Meun's satirical treatment of beguines in *God and the Goddesses,* pp. 107-108. Lerner lists further sources ridiculing the beguines in *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 39-44. A thirteenth-century sermon by the Franciscan Gilbert of Tournai is often cited as evidence of the Church's critical view of the beguines 'audacious use of vernacular scripture.' Writing for the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, Gilbert castigated the beguines for their manipulation of Scripture in public articulations of vernacular spirituality. 'Sunt apud nos mulieres, que Beghine vocantur, et quedam earum subtilitatibus vigent et novitatibus gaudent. Habent interpretata scripturarum mysteria et in communi idiomate gallicata, quae tamen in sacra Scriptura exercitatis vix sunt pervia.' Quotation from Sean L. Field, 'Annihilation and Perfection in Two Sermons by Gilbert of Tournai for the Translation of St. Francis,' *Franciscana*, 1 (1999): 237-274. Here at pp. 255-256, n. 49. A century earlier, in 1175, the parish priest of Liège, Lambert li Bègues, commonly referred to as an early advocator of the Beguine movement, was charged with heresy for translating the Acts of the Apostles and the *Vita Sancti Agnetis* into French verse for his parishioners. See

The type of beguinal life led by Marguerite Porete, if indeed she was associated with the movement at all, continues to be a matter for debate. On the one hand, Victoria Cirlot and Blanca Garí, drawing on the work of Marie Bertho, suggest that Marguerite may have been an itinerant beguine due to the fact that she must have been in possession of considerable independent resources in order to finance the production of multiple copies of her text.[26] Not only that, but the length of the *Mirouer* alone suggests that copying it would have taken at least one hundred folios and therefore reproducing it would have cost a substantial sum of money.[27] Cirlot and Garí speculate that Marguerite may herself have been a trained scribe or copyist, learning her craft at a beguinage or monastic school, perhaps under the supervision of Franc of Villiers, the third of the figures to append his approbation to the *Mirouer*. The Cistercian monastery at Villiers was, they note, a francophone community in the region of Hainaut known for the *mulieres religiosae* who worked in its library. They suggest that Marguerite may have been educated or possibly have worked in the library there, giving her access to the works of Church Fathers, including Augustine, Dionysius, and Gregory of Nyssa, as well as those of William of St Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the writings of the school of St Victor, traces of whose thought can all be identified in the *Mirouer*. No evidence exists to discount Cirlot and Garí's suggestion, and indeed, were it to be proven that Marguerite was more closely connected to Villiers than has been demonstrated to date, this would constitute a considerable advance in the contextualisation of

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Walter Simons, "Staining the Speech of Things Divine': The Uses of Literacy in Medieval Beguine Communities,' in *The Voice of Silence: Women's Literacy in a Men's Church*, ed. by Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 85-110. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton also observes that beguine superiors, known as 'Marthas' both preached and 'wielded a surprising degree of pastoral power,' hearing 'a kind of pre-confession,' which, presumably was conducted in the vernacular. See *Books Under Suspicion,* p. 242.

[26] Victoria Cirlot and Blanca Garí, *La mirada interior: Escritorias místicas y visionarias en la Edad Media* (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 2008), pp. 213-214. See also Marie Bertho, *Le Miroir des Âmes Simples et aniénties de Marguerite Porete. Une vie blessée d'amour* (Découvrir: Paris, 1993). McDonnell also concludes that Marguerite must have been an 'unattached beguine […] refusing to submit to authority.' *The Beguines and Beghards*, p. 367.

[27] Suzanne Kocher, *Allegories of Love in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls*, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), p. 163. See also Lerner, 'New Light,' for his estimates as to the probable length of the *Mirouer*, based on the missing seventeenth-century Bourges copy and Ms. Chantilly, *Musée Condé*, XIV F 26, p. 108.

her text. Until these suggestions can be verified, however, they remain little more than another speculative piece in Porete's puzzle.

Robert Lerner, meanwhile, dismisses the suggestion that Marguerite Porete was an itinerant beguine on two counts; the first being that 'this form of beguinal life was unknown to the Franco-Flemish area,' and the second that 'nothing in the documentary evidence can be taken to show that Marguerite ever left the vicinity of Valenciennes before her trial in Paris.'[28] Yet, as with so many investigations into the details of Marguerite Porete's life and work, Lerner's and Cirlot and Garí's conclusions are based on a lack of, as opposed to the production of, any substantive evidence.

What problematizes an outright dismissal of Marguerite's identity as a beguine are the references to her as a *beguina* by contemporary documentation. The two Parisian trial records and a *Sentences* commentary by the Carmelite theologian John Baconthorpe (*c.*1290-1345) label Marguerite a 'beguina,' whilst the later *Grandes chroniques de France* mention her as a 'beguine clergesse'; sufficient evidence for modern scholars including Barbara Newman, Bernard McGinn, and Amy Hollywood to depict Marguerite as a member of a beguinal 'textual community,' engaging in a discursive network of vernacular theology which spans the dawn of the thirteenth century to at least midway into the fourteenth.[29] Taking the contemporary documentation at face value, it is

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[28] Lerner, 'New Light,' p. 93.

[29] For the references in the Parisian trial documents, see Verdeyen, 'Le procès d'inquisition,' p. 60 and p. 78. John Baconthorpe's comments relating to Porete were first noticed by Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du panthéisme au moyen âge et au seizième siècle* (Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1875), p. 109, n.3. Verdeyen overlooked this detail in his collection of Porete references, but Lerner suggests that Baconthorpe's comments make it appear as if Marguerite was a beguine that lived in a beguinage. See *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 206; 'New Light,' p. 93. The citation from the *Grandes chroniques* can be found in Tanya Suella Stabler, *Now She Is Martha, Now She is Mary: Beguine Communities in Medieval Paris (1250-1470)*, PhD diss. (University of California, 2007), p. 206, n. 3. Stabler takes the quotation from *Les grandes chroniques de France,* ed. Jules Viard, vol. 8 of 10 (Paris: Champion, 1934), p. 273. For discussions of Marguerite as a participant in beguinal

tempting to reconstruct a set of circumstances that would place Marguerite at the heart of the Franco-Flemish beguine community.[30] Newman, McGinn, and Hollywood establish textual parallels between the *Mirouer* and the writings of known beguines such as Mechthild of Magdeburg and Beatriz of Nazareth, and, as Chapter Four examines, elements of all of these texts can be seen to echo and resonate with each other. The shared metaphorical imagery, literary, and theological expression of these women writers are striking, and appear to typify a certain type of radical mystical consciousness or union prevalent in vernacular theology of the period, that which McGinn calls 'a goal of "union without difference" […] the insistence that in the ground of reality there is absolute identity between God and the soul.'[31] Whether or not Marguerite's writing may be seen wholly to reflect this ideology will be a matter for debate.

A second factor used to equate Marguerite Porete with the beguine movement concerns the erudite nature of her writing, with its apparent exposure to, and use of, a range of both monastic and popular writings, and 'grasp, at least of the basics, of scholastic thought.'[32] In attempting to account

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'textual communities' (drawing on Brian Stock's celebrated notion of textual communities first expounded in *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).), see Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), passim; Bernard McGinn's edited volume, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York: Continuum, 1994), passim; Amy Hollywood, *The Soul As Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), passim.

[30] The beguine communities of Flanders and Hainaut were heavily patronised by the daughters of Baldwin IX, emperor of Constantinople, Jeanne (b. 1199/1200) and Marguerite (b. 1202). The community of 'fratres beghini et sorores beghinae' was strengthened in Valenciennes under the auspices of Jeanne, and later developed and consolidated by Marguerite. See McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards*, p. 208. Short biographies of both Jeanne and Marguerite by Karen S. Nicholas can be found in 'Countesses as Rulers in Flanders,' in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. by Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 129-135.

[31] Bernard McGinn, 'Introduction: Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete*, ed. by Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 1-14. Here at p. 12.

[32] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, p. 274.

for this, modern scholars frequently find it convenient to associate Marguerite with the beguines' reputation for assimilating and disseminating Scripture in the vernacular and their particular interest in speculative theology. Ernest W. McDonnell encapsulates this concern in his writing about two Flemish beguines' mystical prose, Hadewijch's *Visions* and lyrics, and the *Seven Maniren van Heiligher Minnen* by Beatriz of Nazareth:

> It is difficult to conceive how such works […] could spring up almost simultaneously without some preparation for their language and intellectual climate through a vernacular moral-didactic literature.[33]

McDonnell speculates as to whether beguine communities may have possessed libraries or produced writings for 'their own edification and to satisfy the spiritual yearnings of the lay public,' but this remains unproven.[34] Male clergy, in particular the Dominican friars, were also known to have preached in beguine houses, which offers another potential avenue through which beguines, and perhaps Marguerite Porete, may have come into contact with the ideas on the Trinity found in their devotional literature.[35]

More recent work has, however, placed Marguerite more firmly into the intellectual and textual milieu of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Sean Field discusses the possible scenarios that may have led to an interaction between Marguerite, her *Mirouer,* and the celebrated secular master of theology at Paris, Godfrey of Fontaines, the third of the 'clerkis Þat haue

[33] McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards*, p. 365.

[34] McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards*, p. 365.

[35] Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, p. 252. McDonnell also highlights the interaction between the Dominican friars and the beguines in *The Beguines and Beghards*, p. 225.

redde Þis boke.'[36] Field presents a strong case. Basing his thoughts on the Middle English text's description of what Godfrey 'seide' and 'counsailide,' and on circumstantial evidence relating to the active relationships between beguines and university theologians, Field proposes that Godfrey and Marguerite may have actually met in person, sometime between 1300-03, when Godfrey was making one of his frequent journeys between Liège, where he held a canonry, and Paris.[37] The strength of Field's argument is derived from his comparative analyses of the *Mirouer* and Godfrey's own intellectual history and his reinsertion of both of these into their contemporary scholastic and religious milieux. His conclusion that 'in Godfrey, Marguerite had located an authority who was on record as saying that it was legitimate to ask one bishop to overturn his predecessor's condemnation' is difficult to fault, and indeed sheds light on elements of the text's circulation, intended readership and reception that will be returned to in due course.[38]

In his detailed analysis of the *Mirouer*'s circulation post-1310, Lerner also presents a compelling hypothesis: that Marguerite may well have been a resident not of the beguinage of Valenciennes, but of that of Masny, situated some thirty kilometres from Valenciennes and patronised by Jeanne of Flanders' younger sister, Marguerite.[39] Yet one detail in both Field's and Lerner's

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[36] Sean L. Field, 'The Master and Marguerite: Godfrey of Fontaines' Praise of The Mirror of Simple Souls,' *Journal of Medieval History*, 35, 2 (2009): 136-149. The three approbations do not appear in Ms. Chantilly, *Musée Condé*, XIV F 26. They are, however, extant in the three Middle English versions found in British Library Ms. Additional 37790, Oxford, Bodleian Library Ms. Bodley 505, and Cambridge, St. John's College Ms. 71, used by Marylin Doiron in her English edition, '*The Mirror of Simple Souls*: A Middle English Translation,' *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà,* 5 (1968): 241–355. Guarnieri appends Doiron's Middle English to the end of her Middle French edition of the *Mirouer*. It is from this Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis edition that all Middle English quotations are taken. *Mirouer*, p. 404.

[37] *Mirouer*, p. 406. Field, 'The Master and Marguerite,' pp. 140-141. Field cites Stabler's PhD thesis, 'Now She is Martha, Now She Is Mary,' in demonstrating that university masters frequently preached to beguines, particularly in Paris, on p. 141, n. 23. Godfrey's travels to the Low Countries are also set out in detail at p. 141, n. 24.

[38] Field, 'The Master and Marguerite,' p. 148.

[39] Lerner bases his thesis on the possibility of a now-lost early copy of the *Mirouer,* produced in the vicinity of Valenciennes, making its way to England in the hands of Walter de Manny, a

hypotheses remains untested: the veracity of Marguerite's beguinal status. In assuming that she lived, thought and wrote as part of a beguine community, both scholars project a narrative that seeks to make sense of her writing through the lens of inquisitorial records and the Clementine bulls, *Cum de quibusdam mulieribus*, and *Ad nostrum*, discussed at the ecumenical Council of Vienne, 1311-12 and whose prose bears striking similarities to phrases and ideas found in the *Mirouer*.[40] The first of these decrees forbade the practices of women 'commonly known as beguines,' some of whom spoke 'as if insane' on the Trinity and the divine essence; the second condemned beguines and beghards for upholding a radically mystical and antinominian heresy. Both Guarnieri and Lerner suggest that 'the only source for *Ad nostrum* that can be established is the list of tenets extracted from *The Mirror of Simple Souls* used by the inquisition to try Marguerite Porete.[41]

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member of Philippa of Hainaut's entourage who accompanied her to England in 1327 for her marriage to Edward III. De Manny was a close associate of Michael Northbrook, bishop of London and co-founder, with de Manny, of the London Charterhouse and a possible candidate for the Carthusian scribe 'M.N.' who translated the *Mirouer* into Middle English sometime during the fifteenth century. 'Manny', Lerner notes, is an Anglicanisation of 'Masny,' and Walter travelled frequently back to his hometown on military engagements, diplomatic missions, and family business. Lerner proposes that Marguerite Porete may have lived as a beguine at Masny and have been patronised by the Countess of Flanders or the local aristocracy, thus allowing for an extant copy of her recently condemned text to have remained there after her death in 1310 and to have subsequently travelled across the Channel seventeen years later. See Lerner, 'New Light,' pp. 103-110.

[40] *Ad nostrum* enumerates what the council understood to be eight fundamental errors in the beguines' beliefs: '(1) humans can attain a sinless state, (2) in which sensuality is so subordinated to the soul that the body may be freely granted whatever it likes, (3) in this 'spirit of liberty' individuals are not subject to human obedience, (4) and can attain the same perfection of beatitude on earth as in heaven; (5) every intelligent nature is blessed in itself, (6) and the acts of virtue are necessary only for those who are imperfect, for the perfect soul no longer needs to practice them; (7) the carnal act is not a sin; (8) the perfect should not rise during the elevation of the Host, for to think of the sacrament of the Eucharist or the Passion of Christ would be a sign of imperfection, a descent from the heights of perfection.' Quoted in Gwendolyn Bryant, 'The French Heretic Beguine: Marguerite Porete,' in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. by Katharina M. Wilson (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), pp. 204-226. Here at p. 207. For the text of the Bull *Ad nostrum*, see *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. by Aemilius Ludwig Richter and Emil Friedberg, vol. 2 of 2 (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), cols. 1183-1184. Lambert writes that when the *Ad nostrum* is compared to Marguerite Porete's text and the articles extracted from it used at her trial, the *Mirouer* was 'a quarry for certain suspect statements' condemned in the bull. See *Medieval Heresy,* p. 205.

[41] Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 82; Guarnieri, 'Il movimiento del Libero Spirito,' p. 416.

Despite Guarnieri's, Lerner's and Field's research, to date no document positively connecting Marguerite Porete with an established beguine community in Hainaut has been identified, and nor does the *Mirouer* fit neatly into what might be broadly thought of as a genre or canon of beguine literature.[42] Rather, an alternative biography for Porete might be posited, the reasons for which stem both from textual evidence contained within the *Mirouer* itself, and from the circumstances in which medieval lay women were able to disseminate expressions of their faith. To continue to regard Marguerite Porete as a beguine, to the exclusion of other potential contextual influences on her writing, is to reconstruct both the historical figure and her text within a falsely restrictive paradigm, with a range of occasionally pejorative associative connotations, but without sufficient corroborating evidence. Marguerite may well have been a beguine, or have had access to beguinal literature. But placing too much emphasis on the *Mirouer*'s identity as a beguinal text is to compel it to engage in an anachronistic dialogue with other texts emanating from beguine communities, or to seek correlations between the content and sub-text of her writing and heretical doctrine, neither of which allow for the text to stand alone and speak for itself.

An indication that Marguerite Porete may not have been aligned with the beguine movement can be found in the *Ame*'s song in chapter 122. The Soul sings:

> Amis, que diront beguines,
> et gens de religion,
> Quant ilz orront l'excellence
> de vostre divine chançon?

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[42] McDonnell, *The Beghards and Beguines*, p. 367; Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 229-230. Walter Simons advises against the conceptualisation of a coherent beguinal genre of writing. Contemporary sources are, he argues, too overtly hostile and too little can be gleaned from works written by beguines to form an impression of their literacy. See *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 80-85.

Beguines dient que je erre,
prestres, clers, et prescheurs,
Augustins, et carmes,
et les freres mineurs,
Pource que j'escri de l'estre
de l'affinee Amour.[43]

Within the framework of her spiritual hierarchy and seven-stage journey towards the divine, the Soul appears to associate the beguines with those trapped in the lower stages of mystical ascent. These 'gens de religion' are members of Porete's *Saincte Eglise la Petite*, overly fixated on the material symbolism of the Scriptures and the sacrament:

> Telz gens, dit ceste Ame, que je appelle asnes, quierent Dieu es creatures, es monstiers par aourer, en paradis creez, en paroles d'omnes, et es escriptures.[44]

In criticising the beguines, juxtaposing them with the 'prestres, clers, et prescheurs, Augustins, et carmes, et les freres mineurs,' Porete may be alluding to a trend prevalent in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century vernacular literature and already mentioned briefly above: that of satirical poetry targeting the beguine movement. Barbara Newman, amongst others, has demonstrated the striking similarities between Porete's *Mirouer* and its 'unlikely intertext,' Jean de Meun's completed version of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la rose,* to be discussed further in Chapter Four. The *Roman* includes a biting attack on the

[43] *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 344. 'O my Lover, what will beguines say/ and religious types,/ When they hear the excellence/ of your divine song?/ Beguines say I err,/ priests, clerics, and Preachers,/ Augustinians, Carmelites,/ and the Friars Minor,/ Because I wrote about the being/ of the one purified by Love.' *Mirror*, p. 200.

[44] *Mirouer*, ch. 69, pp. 194-196. 'Such folk, says this Soul, whom I call donkeys, seek God in creatures, in monasteries for prayer, in a created paradise, in words of men and in the Scriptures.' *Mirror*, p. 144.

beguine movement and its relationship to the mendicant friars in the figures of *Atenance Contrainte* and *Faux Semblant*.[45] The former, a beguine, is portrayed as having too close an association with *Faux Semblant*, dressed as a friar, and the two characters are satirized as emblematic of false piety, a lack of regulation, and sexual liberty.[46] Porete, like Jean de Meun and his contemporaries, groups the beguines with other mendicant preaching orders such as the Augustinian Friars and the Carmelites, perhaps implicitly engaging with a concern that had long troubled the ecclesiastical authorities. As Gilbert of Tournai had complained a century earlier, many in the Church viewed these 'falsi prophetae' with distrust, who openly interpreted the mysteries of Scripture and spread their subtleties and novelties 'without respect, with daring, in their communities, their workshops, and on the streets.'[47]

It seems unlikely that Marguerite Porete would have belonged to one of the very communities whose practices were commonly ridiculed as being antithetical to those she advocates in the *Mirouer*. Rather, it is quite possible that Marguerite lived and wrote as a laywoman, unattached to a particular religious association or group. Support for this hypothesis can be found in the content and structure of the *Mirouer* itself. Unlike Marguerite d'Oingt's mystical composition, with its frequent and often almost verbatim quotations from religious writings, ranging from the Scriptures to biblical exegesis, Porete's text, whilst doctrinally more daring, is also more fluid and less reliant on the citation of authoritative sources for the exposition of her ideas. Whereas d'Oingt's writing is reflective of a life spent in structured prayer, immersed in Scriptural exposition and exegesis, with ready access to library materials, and perhaps

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[45] Newman, 'The Mirror and the Rose,' p. 105. See also Blumenfeld-Kosinksi, 'Satirical Views of the Beguines,' p. 242; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, pp. pp. 107-108.

[46] Blumenfeld-Kosinski demonstrates that the two dominant criticisms levelled at the beguines and the friars in thirteenth-century satirical poetry, excessive and predatory lust and unmediated access to Scripture and unauthorized public preaching, were exploited by a number of poets including Matheolus, the anonymous author of the *Songe du paradis,* and Rutebeuf. See 'Satirical Views of the Beguines,' particularly pp. 242-244.

[47] Gilbert of Tournai, *Collectio de scandalis ecclesie*. The Latin quotation can be found in Field, 'Annihilation and Perfection,' pp. 255-256, n. 49. My translation.

reflective of the Carthusian impulse to collect and copy religious works, Porete's *Mirouer* adopts and reworks biblical and monastic imagery in a manner more suggestive of an author who has been exposed orally to religious material, hearing or reading selected extracts from sermons or a book of hours, and who may have even heard scholars, beguines or preachers speaking or debating publicly, such as those of whom Gilbert of Tournai had complained so bitterly.[48]

It is possible that Marguerite Porete's intellectual development and talent for mystical expression were shaped by extended and intense, but generally unstructured and unregulated, contact with a range of clerics and scholars in the Franco-Flemish region. Assuming that Lerner's thesis that Porete came from the 'Valenciennes vicinity' is correct, the city and its environs would have formed an ideal environment in which Marguerite could absorb, discuss, and shape her particular vision of mystical devotion, with its striking blend of courtly and religious imagery. As Juliet Vale's study of late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century culture and society in northern France shows, the city of Valenciennes was situated on a north-south axis running from Paris to an area between Bruges and Ghent, and was one of the most densely urbanized in Europe.[49] An important commercial centre and home to Franciscan, Carmelite, and Dominican orders from the mid-thirteenth century, Valenciennes was also regarded as a symbolic 'political' capital due to the frequent presence of the king or other nobility and their respective courts and administrations.[50] As a result, it was a site of increasing contact not only between the various lay and religious communities resident and travelling through the region, but also between the noble rural classes and the urban élite. Porete may easily have been

[48] For more on the Carthusians' bibliophilic tendencies, see Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians'; see also Chapter Three.
[49] Juliet Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and Its Context, 1270-1350* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1982). See, in particular, pp. 25-32 and p. 42.
[50] Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 26.

from either grouping, although the latter appears a more obvious choice, due to the sustained contact with theologians, friars, and secular minds she would have needed in order to pool the resources necessary for the composition of a text such as the *Mirouer*.

Operating within this cosmopolitan environment, and with access to funds and the requisite materials, an educated woman belonging to the city's urban élite would have witnessed a range of religious practices, which were often brought to the fore in the civic *festes*, celebrations lasting one or two days and involving jousting, feasting, dancing and religious activities. Vale notes that Valenciennes was famed for these celebrations, which fused the secular chivalric culture of the noble rural classes with those of the urban bourgeois in an period of increasingly public religious fervour, a combination of which, Newman argues, can be seen in the *Mirouer*'s particular manifestation of 'la mystique courtoise.'[51] As a writer, Porete slips seamlessly between the world of chivalric practices and its secular discourse of love and that of the divine Other, the quest for unbounded desire and the 'endless deferral of consummation' transposed into a narrative of self-denial and annihilation.[52]

Set against this backdrop, it is possible to offer another perspective on the historical figure of Marguerite Porete. Although it is important not to overemphasize the role of autobiography in Porete's writing, these aspects of the cultural and religious customs of Valenciennes' late medieval culture suggests that she may have composed the *Mirouer* not as a beguine, but as a pious and well-read individual, immersed in and reflecting on the cultural practices of late-thirteenth century northern France. Regarding her as such provides the modern reader of the *Mirouer* with a more flexible and less

[51] Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist,* especially Chapter Five, '*La mystique courtoise*: Thirteenth Century Beguines and the Art of Love'.
[52] Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, p. 13.

restrictive platform from which to begin to analyze Porete's writing and, in this case, her use of metaphor.

Drawing attention to the substantial lacunae in the contemporary records of Porete's life and writing, as well as to the paucity of evidence relating to the life and works of Marguerite d'Oingt, serves to highlight the obstacles encountered and sensitivity required in any modern treatment and comparison of their works. However, the following discussion suggests an alternative approach to contextualising these two writers by drawing attention to a more fundamental series of questions. These include the processes of literary composition, definitions of (female) authorship in the vernacular, and the implications of audience reception and textual dissemination within the intellectual and ecclesiastical milieu of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; questions which demonstrate both the shared conceptual bonds linking the two mystics and areas in which the two women's forms of expression can be seen to diverge. A focus on these questions will, in turn, lay a stronger methodological platform from which to engage with a series of interrelated issues concerning how metaphor might function within this particular framework of medieval mystical literature.

The following outline situates both women more decisively within their respective contemporary environments and draws attention to some of the more problematic and interrelated features of the period. These include the growth of an increasingly textual society, the remit of intellectual freedom, the rights of and roles played by women in these debates, the concept of heresy and the validity of an institutionalised inquisition, and the part played by the vernacular in these developments. Many of these questions feed into a broader challenge faced within this study: finding adequate definitions for notions such

as literacy and literature, particularly in the domain of mystical expression where they intersect with questions of experience and ephemerality.

Positing a sufficiently stable narrative in order to address a body of literature which defies objective analysis leaves more issues unanswered than it does resolved. Mystical writing as a mode of expression, is, as Franz Baüml memorably wrote, 'the creation of a fiction that a fiction is not a fiction.'[53] However, it is also the case that, as the fifteenth-century manuscript transmission of Porete's *Mirouer* demonstrates, not even the mystical texts themselves can be seen to constitute an accurate representation of their author's composition. In some ways, the texts are as elusive as the experience they purport to describe, subject as they often have been to editing, re-ordering, abridging, and, in the case of Marguerite Porete, de-authorization by her text's Carthusian collectors and copyists. Through their modern republication and analysis, these texts undergo a secondary wave of 'glossing and interpretation' as they are analysed and authenticated. It is with this process, and with both writers' theological, cultural, and literary contextualisation, that the following discussion will concern itself.

What can be said with certainty is that Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete lived and wrote against the rapidly shifting religious and political backdrop of Western Christendom. One aspect in particular, namely the opening up of new manifestations of religious lifestyles, may appear antithetical to another paradigm shift that occurred during the period. As Richard Kieckhefer puts it, one of the deep-seated concerns amongst the schools and the monasteries was to 'define more narrowly the boundaries of

[53] Franz H. Baüml, 'Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy,' *Speculum*, 55, 2 (April 1980): 237-265. Here at p. 262.

permissible belief and conduct.'[54] Given the complexity of the period, it is perhaps too easy for modern scholars to slip into the convenience of binary opposition. Assuming a culturally defined male-female dichotomy means that the religious and intellectual environment at the turn of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century can swiftly become one characterised by pioneering women and repressive men, or alternatively, heretical and subversive females juxtaposed against pious and God-fearing churchmen. Both extremes are frequently accompanied by questions of intellectual capacity and the development of vernacular expression.[55] Marguerite Porete, for example, is repeatedly typecast in the roles of both pioneer and heretic, a hazard that Chapter Four will be careful to navigate.[56]

Barbara Newman provides a useful contribution to this discussion concerning the over-valorisation of certain characteristics of empowerment or embargo by a modern academy dealing with medieval theology and literary art. Writing about the problems of medieval heresy, censorship and modern reception, she argues that modern literary critics are too quick to imagine 'texts, ideas, or even metaphors designated "heretical" because they impress a modern reader as subversive or in violation of some preconceived theological norm, a norm that might actually be patristic or modern rather than medieval.'[57] Heresy is, after all, Newman observes, a juridical concept, and one that exists only when and if an authoritative churchman pronounces on it. It is therefore unhelpful to regard the *Mirouer* solely as a heretical piece of writing to the exclusion of other features, and to imagine the text as one written in defiance of, or subjected to, rigorous examination by an institutionalised Inquisition.

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[54] Richard Kieckhefer, 'The Office of Inquisition and Medieval Heresy: The Transition from Personal to Institutional Jurisdiction,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46, 1 (January 1995): 36-61. Here at p. 40.

[55] Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Robertson, and Warren discuss this in some detail in their introductory essay to their edited volume, *The Vernacular Spirit.*

[56] College's extensive work on the *Mirouer*, for example, repeatedly emphasises the heretical nature of Porete's work. See Watson, 'Melting Into God the English Way,' p. 24, also n. 16.

[57] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 305.

Indeed, as Kieckhefer demonstrates, it is too easy to overstate the sophistication and efficacy of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century's repression of heresy and imagine that Porete somehow fell victim to a uniform and terrible agency, 'perfected by the instructions of Inquisitors-General Torquemada and Valdés.'[58]

Questions concerning the heretical nature either of Porete's possible lifestyle or spiritual practice, or of the appearance of articles and themes from the *Mirouer* in contemporary or later condemnatory materials such as *Ad nostrum* and *Cum de quibusdam*, have been amply treated elsewhere.[59] As Field's recent study shows, work still remains to be done on the nature of Porete's trial and its political circumstances.[60] The obstacles created by restricting the lens through which the *Mirouer* is viewed to one tinted by the connotations (modern or medieval) of heresy are of a similar order to those encountered when the text is regarded primarily as a beguinal composition. To examine the *Mirouer* as an example of fourteenth-century heresy risks overlooking much of Porete's artistic skill in favour of what can only ever amount to a partial recovery of events and textual reception. Given the need for context, or recontext, as the previous chapter suggested, to purposefully limit the context of the *Mirouer*'s reception without sufficient corroborating evidence is a counterproductive exercise, particularly when examining her use of metaphor.

Whilst the period from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century is frequently considered to be one of increasing ecclesiastical censure and

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[58] Jean-Pierre de Dieu, 'The Inquisition and Popular Culture in New Castile,' in *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Stephen Haliczer (London: Croom-Helm, 1987), pp. 129-146. Here at p. 132.

[59] These include, but are not limited to: Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, passim; Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, passim; Guarnieri, 'Il movimiento del Libero Spirito'; Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor,* passim.

[60] Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor,* passim.

persecution, it was also one in which new debates concerning intellectual freedom were coming to the fore. Godfrey of Fontaines' quodlibetal debates between 1286 and 1296/7 at the University of Paris, for example, present him arguing variously against the rights of prelates or bishops alone to condemn particular opinions as heretical or erroneous, and in favour of masters of theology standing on the side of divine truth in matters relating to salvation. On several occasions, Godfrey's intellectual record suggests that, in matters of theology, he 'could not avoid teaching the truth just because it would run into opposition.'[61]

On those occasions where disagreement resulted from theological confusion or scandal amongst students, Godfrey argued that free debate was permissible and indeed necessary in establishing the truth.[62] Field suggests that, in the figure of Godfrey of Fontaines, Marguerite Porete had purposefully located an 'authority who was on record as saying that it was legitimate to ask one bishop to overturn his predecessor's condemnation.'[63] In his discussion of Porete's trial by a panel of twenty-one theologians and canon lawyers, Field demonstrates that Godfrey's argument was, to a certain degree, upheld. Marguerite was not sent to the stake solely on the word of the Bishop of Cambrai, Philip de Marigny, nor that of a single inquisitor, William Humbert.[64] Although the outcome of Porete's trial can hardly be upheld as a victory for intellectual freedom, it was, at least, subject to something of a discussion. It is worth speculating perhaps that if Marguerite had chosen to participate in that discussion by replying to her inquisitor, the result of the trial might have been different. The dialogue between the characters of *Raison*, *Dame Amour*, and

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[61] Ian P. Wei, 'The Self-Image of the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, 3 (1995): 398-431. For a discussion of Godfrey of Fontaines' quodlibeta relating to masters refusing to engage with or opposing the Church's views, see Wei, pp. 421-428. Here at p. 424.

[62] See Field, 'The Master and Marguerite,' p. 146, also n. 48.

[63] Field, 'The Master and Marguerite,' p. 148.

[64] Field, 'The Master and Marguerite,' p. 149.

l'Ame, however, is entirely concerned with the question of true intellectual freedom. In this sense, the *Mirouer* shares a common thread with Godfrey of Fontaines' stance on philosophical and academic liberties: for the *Ame* to be united with the divine, she must discard the overly-literal practices of *Raison* and adhere to the divinely-inspired truth represented by *Dame Amour*. Porete's writings might therefore be seen as echoing Godfrey's criticism of the excessive restrictions of the episcopacy, and *Raison* as a critical allegory of what Godfrey saw as the intellectual limitations of some bishops in comparison with the freer thinking of the masters.

Just as Godfrey argued for a broader sense of intellectual autonomy in the schools, his contemporaries were debating the parameters of another form of intellectual engagement: the topic of teaching doctrine and the right to preach on the role of prophecy, particularly by women. Whilst some church officials and a number of figures within leading monastic orders, including the Cistercians, the Franciscans, and the Carthusians, gave their support to women's intellectual development and leadership, other clerics and scholars were strongly opposed to the idea that women might provide religious instruction outside the home or to anyone other than their children.[65] The

[65] Contemporary thirteenth- and fourteenth-century society was well furnished with textual examples of women playing a formative role in their children's religious education and exercising the gift of prophecy. Biblical examples include the suggestion in Proverbs 4: 3-4 that Solomon was taught wisdom by his mother, whilst Mary, the sister of Aaron (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges, 4:4), and Huldah (4 Kings 22:14) are all named as prophetesses who play a public role in extolling the word of God. Thomas Aquinas used these examples, amongst others, in his debate on whether women had the right to teach outside the home. See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'When Women Preached: An Introduction to Female Homiletic, Sacramental, and Liturgical Roles in the Later Middle Ages,' in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 31-55, particularly pp. 34-35. Other examples include the role played by Monica in Augustine's early education, the Carolingian queen Dhuoda's ninth-century *Liber manualis*, written for her son *c.* 841-845, and Anselm of Canterbury's account to his biographer Eadmer of how he learnt from his mother that God was in heaven. See Nicole Bériou, 'The Right of Women to Give Religious Instruction in the Thirteenth Century,' in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 134-145. The most popular counterclaim to women's right to preach was derived from Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he wrote, 'Mulieres in ecclesiis taceant, non enim permittitur eis loqui,

question of women speaking in the Church was touched upon earlier: Marguerite d'Oingt, as a Carthusian prioress, was authorised to read from the epistle at mass and from the gospel at the evening office. In a related vein, the condemnatory remarks of Gilbert of Tournai concerning beguine women preaching and reading publicly from scripture have frequently been considered by modern scholars as pointing towards Marguerite Porete's religious practices and the content of her text.[66]

As Nicole Bériou demonstrates, however, the thirteenth-century debate surrounding women's right to teach and preach on matters of scripture and doctrine was more widespread, profound, and complicated than these examples might suggest, crystallising around two distinct types of speaking: preaching and prophesying.[67] In 1245, the secular master Gauthier de Château-Thierry (d.1249) argued on the *questio* 'Does anybody, either a woman or a man, have the right to preach?' Gauthier concluded that only clerics had the authority to read aloud from scripture, expounding it in the literal sense, and to interpret it according to the other three senses of scriptural interpretation, the allegorical, the anagogical, and the moral. For Gauthier, preaching amounted to the office of teaching Christian doctrine through the explanation of scripture, an exercise that, as chapters three and four of this thesis will demonstrate, both the Carthusian's and the laywoman's texts appear to undertake.

Bériou cites a second figure, Eustace of Arras (*c*.1225–91), as countering Gauthier's position.[68] Reflecting on holy women such as Saint Catherine and Mary Magdalene, the Franciscan stated that providing the Holy Spirit had

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sed subditas esse'; 'Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak, but to be subject.' 1 Corinthians 14:34.

[66] Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, p. 85.

[67] Bériou, 'The Right of Women,' p. 137.

[68] Eustace debated this question sometime between 1263-66. Bériou, 'The Right of Women,' p. 139.

inspired women to preach (Eustache specifies 'virgins'), the right to speak about scripture and doctrine might be afforded to those women upon whom the ability of prophesy had been bestowed. Bériou suggests that Eustace 'probably had in mind the crucial spread of mysticism among women during his time.'[69] Whilst it is unlikely that the positions voiced by secular and religious authorities such as Gauthier and Eustace had any direct influence on either Marguerite d'Oingt's or Marguerite Porete's spiritual or textual practices, it is not inconceivable that traces of these arguments had spread from the schools and the monastic orders into the wider religious and lay communities by the later thirteenth century, thereby shaping both writers' intellectual parameters and environment. For the purposes of this discussion, it is also worth noting the interrelated nature of these debates concerning mysticism, scriptural interpretation – both literal and metaphorical – religious instruction, and public dissemination. All of these facets of the changing nature of women's religious experience are brought to bear in the subsequent discussions of Porete and d'Oingt's writings and have important implications for the study of mysticism and its use of the metaphorical utterance. All, that is, apart from one.

The extent to which the notion of gender played a part in shaping medieval intellectual and religious discourse relating to intellectual freedom, religious education, and public preaching and prophecy is, on the one hand, a question central to the debate, and much ink has been spilt on the subject. On the other hand, gender was not the only criterion used to discern who had access to scriptural and doctrinal material. Over-emphasising the role masculinity and femininity played in shaping these debates risks distorting the evidence at hand or yielding an anachronistic interpretation, particularly if an attempt is made to overlay the fragments of historical evidence with the mystical writings themselves. Despite Caroline Walker Bynum's oft-cited observations that identifiable within male- and female-authored mystical

[69] Bériou, 'The Right of Women,' p. 139.

writing are two distinct, gendered voices, what is striking about Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's mystical expression is that gender, if it is referenced at all, is considered in terms of spiritual equality.[70] Marguerite d'Oingt's conceptualisation of saints and sinners, for example, is characterised by its inclusivity. The Creator's saints, she writes, are:

> tot assy com li peysson qui sont dedenz la mar qui beyvont toz jors a plein seins enoer et seins l'ayguy amermer. […] Quar tot assi com li fluyvo sallont de la mar tuit et tuit y retornont, tot assi li beuta Nostron Segnour et li doucors, cum bein que illi se expandet a tot, illi retornet toz jors a luy. E per co ne pot illi ja mays descreytre.[71]

Sinners, meanwhile, are doubly castigated for their materialistic and lazy approach to religion. Several paragraphs in the latter half of Marguerite d'Oingt's *Pagina meditationum* are devoted to the criticism of the 'religiosi, quia portant se sic inordinate in verbis suis et continentiis sicut seculares.'[72] Some people ('aliqui'), d'Oingt cautions, 'seem' to exhibit the signs of a devout and pious faith but do not have the virtue of patience. Those, she writes, 'sunt boni, sed non sunt perfecti.'[73] Others, for whom she reserves her harshest criticism, drink good wine, eat well, and fall asleep during vigils; 'Sed ipsi non sunt pigri

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[70] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), especially at p. 156.

[71] *Speculum*, §19, p. 96. 'The saints will be within their Creator as the fish within the sea: they will drink as much as they want, without getting tired and without diminishing the amount of water. […] For just as the rivers all come out of the sea and go back to it, so it is for the beauty and sweetness of Our Lord: although they flow everywhere, they always return to Him. And for that reason they can never grow smaller.' *Mirror*, p. 44.

[72] *Pagina meditationum*, §64, p. 81; 'the religious behave and speak so irregularly that they are almost like secular people.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 34.

[73] *Pagina meditationum*, §65, p. 82; 'are good, but not perfect.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 35.

neque sompnolenti ad malum faciendum.'[74] These impostors of the faith are characterised by their inability to comprehend and use language properly: they talk ill of each other, scold and tell lies, and are 'impotentes ad ferendum unum parvulum verbum si dicatur eis; immo respondent per signa, per verba et reddunt malum pro malo.'[75]

Marguerite d'Oingt's description of humanity's fidelity to the Christian faith, and her criteria in determining a hierarchy ranging from saint to sinner, is strikingly similar to that found in Marguerite Porete's writing. The *Mirouer* also employs the metaphor of the rivers flowing into the sea as a means of illustrating the annihilated souls' relationship to God (discussed in detail in Chapter Four) and Porete describes those she regards as incapable of attaining spiritual perfection as constrained by the limits of logic and reason. These 'bestes' and 'asnes' struggle to understand the polysemy of divinely inspired language, *Raison* herself complaining to *l'Ame:* 'car plusieurs doubles mots y a, qui sont fors a entendre a leur entendement.'[76]

Both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete conceptualise humanity in inclusive terms: where divisions in humanity are adumbrated, these are not on gendered grounds. Both women admonish those who lack religious integrity and couch their disapproval in terms of the ability to communicate and interpret with intellectual and spiritual depth. Gender is not absent from their

[74] *Pagina meditationum*, §70, p. 82; 'but when it comes to bad things, they are neither lazy nor sleepy.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 35.
[75] *Pagina meditationum*, §64, p. 81; 'incapable of remembering the smallest word told to them; on the contrary, by signs and words they return bad for bad.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 34.
[76] *Mirouer*, ch. 68, p. 192; 'beasts and donkeys,' *Mirror*, p. 143. *Mirouer,* ch. 13, p. 54; 'for there are several double words which are hard to grasp with their intellect.' *Mirror*, p. 94.

works, but it does not constitute the social and cultural marker that their historical context might, at first glance, suggest.[77]

The earlier overview of thirteenth-century debates concerning women's rights to interpret scripture, and to religious instruction and its public dissemination in a mystical or prophetic mode of discourse, highlights a second element shared by Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's writing, the roots of which may be established in the historical context laid out above. For those involved in debating women's access to scriptural and doctrinal teaching, the most contentious scholarly and theological issue appears to have had less to do with their access to religious or doctrinal material *per se*, than with the idea of where and how their exegesis and prophecy were communicated.

Tuition in private, preferably in the home or chapel, seems to have been acceptable for a woman in the role of a student learning from a priest or as a teacher to her own children. Public teaching or purportedly prophetic utterance was regarded as considerably more subversive. To return to the angry words of Gilbert of Tournai's *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae*, the dangers of oral transmission were two-fold. In the wrong hands, access to divine truths by uneducated laypeople without intermediary or supervisory monitoring by the clergy, particularly using a vernacular tongue, was believed by a sizable majority within the ecclesiastical establishment to open the floodgates to heresy. Gilbert specifically refers to the beguines in his sermon, but his sentiments were echoed by church authorities with reference to other laywomen, semi-religious

[77] Kathleen E. Garay discusses this subject with reference to the mystical writings of Marguerite Porete, Marguerite d'Oingt, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* in "A Naked Intent Unto God': Ungendered Discourse in Some Late Medieval Mystical Texts,' *Mystics Quarterly*, 23, 2 (June 1997): 36-51.

and even those whose monastic orders had once supported the foundation of women's houses and their education.[78]

Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's writings are, in very different ways, inextricably linked to ideas of oral transmission. The *Pagina meditationum* is catalysed when Marguerite d'Oingt's narrator hears the words of Psalm 17:5 being read aloud at mass; the dialogic form and internal linguistic structure of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* has, meanwhile, been viewed by some as evidence that Porete's text was intended for oral delivery.[79] The *Mirouer*'s characters frequently implore each other to listen carefully, whilst reaching out beyond the fourth wall of the text to an imaginary inscribed audience. It is also worth noting the difference between the two locutionary spaces contrasted here, which may provide additional clues as to what lies at the heart of the subsequent histories of the texts and their authors.

One locutionary space is constituted by a liturgically-grounded utterance made in the cloistered confines of a Carthusian monastery. As for the other, it is very difficult to posit where and by whom Porete's *Mirouer* may have been intended to be read, whether silently or aloud in a private room or chamber, perhaps performed publicly in the street, at one of the *festes*, or perhaps at court.[80] Protected by the authority invested in the citation of scripture, as well as by the cloister and limited contact with the outside world, d'Oingt's writing did not circulate far beyond her chapterhouse at Poleteins, but nor did it appear

[78] See D. H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 37.

[79] Robinson suggests that the *Mirouer* may have been designed for public delivery in *Nobility and Annihilation,* p. 130. Kocher, meanwhile, argues that there are no stage directions in any of the surviving copies of the *Mirouer* and that the performative action, such as it is, is contained 'within what the characters say.' See *Allegories of Love*, p. 10. The internal linguistic structure of the *Mirouer* is examined in detail by Juan Marin in 'Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 103, 1 (2010): 89-109.

[80] Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry,* pp. 25-26.

to elicit anything other than praise from her monastic contemporaries.[81] The public fate of Marguerite Porete and her *Mirouer* is, meanwhile, all too familiar, although the subsequent transmission and translation of her work was, despite the inquisition's attempts to suppress it, more widespread than modern scholars initially realised.[82]

The surviving manuscripts of the two women's writings leave little indication as to how they were originally intended to be read or listened to, or by whom. Although the introductory remarks provided some indications as to possible audiences in view of the use of the vernacular by both authors, it is also possible to posit some further suggestions as to potential audiences and modes of reception in the light of more recent scholarship. In the case of Marguerite d'Oingt's short visions and reflections, it is likely that she had an audience of her fellow Carthusian nuns in mind, and perhaps too the monks of other chapterhouses or those resident at the Grande Chartreuse. Although the early Carthusians regarded themselves more as hermits or recluses than as monks, evidence exists to suggest that they adopted elements from the Benedictine Rule, one of which may have been the prescription for individual monks to read for themselves ('sibi legere'), and which, as D. H. Green observes, was also extended to nuns, providing they were sufficiently educated.[83]

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[81] Ms. 5785R's inclusion of the posthumous apparition of Marguerite as a dove to Dom Durand implies that she was held in high regard by her Carthusian community.

[82] The book was burned as a result of the initial trial in Valenciennes, and William Humbert ordered all copies to be surrendered to Church authorities following Porete's condemnation. Sargent concludes that 'the pattern of transmission and survival of the *Mirouer* was […] quite broad, but relatively thin.' See Michael G. Sargent, 'The Annihilation of Marguerite Porete,' *Viator*, 28 (1997): 253-279. Here at p. 262. For an estimate of how many copies of the *Mirouer* may have been circulating in late medieval Western Europe, with a particular focus on the English Carthusian translations (into Middle English and Latin), in the Low Countries and in Italy, see Lerner, 'New Light,' especially pp. 109-116.

[83] For more on the controversy regarding the Carthusians' indebtedness to, and implementation of, the Benedictine Rule, see James Hogg, 'The Carthusians and the 'Rule of St Benedict',' in *Itinera Domini: Gesammelte Aufsätze aus Liturgie und Mönchtum: Emmanuel v. Severus OSB zur Vollendung des 80. Lebensjahres am 24. August 1988 dargeboten, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinertums,* ed. by A. Rosenthal, Supplementband, 5 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), pp. 281-318. Giles Constable provides further details of secondary literature

Providing that Marguerite d'Oingt's contemporaries and peers possessed the ability to read her Latin *Pagina meditationum* or her Francoprovençal vernacular compositions, her writing may therefore have been intended to function as a devotional work, to be read privately in the cell as a theoretical handbook and pastoral guide to visionary experience and spiritual growth.[84]

Speculating on the intended audience for Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames* is more difficult. Given the text's colourful use of allegory, particularly with reference to tropes of courtly love, economic transaction, and social rank, as well as the less frequent direct quotations from biblical and patristic sources noted earlier, it seems likely that Porete was directing her text towards a well educated, urban audience.[85] Geneviève Hasenohr's discovery of four fifteenth-century examples of extracts or treatises combining thematic echoes of the *Mirouer*'s ideology suggests that there was a particular appetite for the work in and around the Loire valley, amongst private collectors and

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concerning this debate in *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, p. 59, n. 55. See also Green, *Women Readers*, p. 7.

[84] Writing about Latin literacy, David Bell divides the ability to read and write into four 'levels,' ranging from the capacity to 'read a text without understanding it' to being able to 'compose and write a text of one's own.' Whilst Bell's formulation is explicitly about Latinate reading communities, it is a helpful framework with which to also examine vernacular textual communities. Whilst Marguerite d'Oingt clearly belongs to this final category, her intended audience may not necessarily have possessed an equivalent level of literacy, and, in Bell's terms, have been able to 'read and understand non-liturgical texts,' i.e. mystical and visionary writing. See David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), p. 60. Jessica Barr also concludes that Marguerite d'Oingt's work is intended to function as a 'path towards visionary knowledge that is theoretically applicable for the reader or auditor of her work.' *Willing To Know God,* p. 68.

[85] The allegorical nature of Porete's work, especially with reference to the allegories of love, social rank, economic exchange, and gender relations, is the subject of Kocher's monograph, *Allegories of Love*. Maria Lichtmann suggests that in view of the text's all-female cast (with the exception of *LoinPrès*), 'Marguerite's mysticism is overtly female' and therefore must have been addressed to a female audience. See 'Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart: *The Mirror of Simple Souls* Mirrored,' in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. by Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 65-86. Here at p. 69. This, however, does not constitute conclusive evidence for a solely female audience, although a significant body of recent scholarship has signalled the wider readership of mystical writing amongst female audiences. See, for example, Newman's argument in 'Latin and the Vernaculars'; D. H. Green, *Women Readers*, p. 45.

monastic audiences alike.[86] However, as Edmund College, Michael Sargent, Nicholas Watson, and Marlene Cré have shown, Porete's work perhaps found some of its most appreciative readers amongst the Carthusian order.[87] Translated into Middle English from the French by a figure known only by his initials, 'M. N.,' and extant in a further two manuscripts, all three Middle English versions of the now anonymous *Mirouer* were produced, or at least commissioned, by the Carthusian community.[88] Although M. N. voiced his concern as to the orthodoxy of some of the content of the *Mirouer*, and proceeded to gloss what he saw to be its more contentious passages, Cré suggests that the *Mirouer*, along with its fellow travellers, was probably a well-circulated text, at least within the confines of the Charterhouse:

> The preoccupation of all the texts in the anthology with the solitary contemplative life makes it eminently suitable for a Carthusian audience. All the texts in the manuscript require that the true contemplative should withdraw from the world in a most radical way.[89]

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[86] Geneviève Hasenohr reports the discovery of a book entitled *Myrouer des simple ames aneanties* that was offered for sale by a bookseller in Tours and a treatise written by an anonymous Celestinian near Orléans dedicated to a nun that was intended to resolve some difficult and dangerous theories from a book entitled *Le livre de la simple ame aneantie* in her essay, 'La littérature religieuse,' in *La littérature française aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, ed. by Daniel Poirion, 1, Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters 8 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1988), pp. 266-303. A second study by Hasenohr reveals a further two discoveries: an early fifteenth-century guide to spiritual life written for an aristocratic woman in the Loire valley that spoke of the soul bidding goodbye to the virtues and moving to a higher spiritual degree and estate, and a late fifteenth-century manuscript in the Valenciennes archive containing an anthology of spiritual texts in which Hasenohr identified two chapters taken from the *Mirouer*, alongside works by Jean Gerson, Hugh of St Victor, and Bonaventure. See 'La tradition du *Miroir des simples âmes* au XVe siècle: de Marguerite Porete (†1310) à Marguerite de Navarre,' *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres: L'année 1999, janvier-mars*, vol. 4 (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 1999), pp. 1374-1366.

[87] See Colledge, 'The Latin Mirror of Simple Souls'; Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians'; Watson, 'Melting Into God'; Cré, 'Women in the Charterhouse?'

[88] None of the surviving copies of the *Mirouer* bear Marguerite Porete's name, or give any indication as to her identity or fate. M.N.'s initials are found in British Library Ms. Additional 37790. For a detailed overview of the scholarly debate as to the identity of M. N., see Lerner, 'New Light,' pp. 103-107. The same translation occurs in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 505, and Cambridge, St John's College, MS 71.

[89] Cré, 'Women in the Charterhouse?,' pp. 47-48.

Indeed, in the *Mirouer*, the *ame adnientie* is described as deriving her name from her status: nothingness equates to the soul's solitude in God.[90] M. N.'s glosses, however, indicate more precisely how at least one subsequent audience treated the text. Writing in the preface to his translation, M. N. explains that he had made an earlier attempt at translating the work but that readers had struggled to interpret the text correctly. British Library Ms. Additional 37790 is therefore a witness to M.N.'s attempt to interpret, or 're-read,' the *Mirouer* and to ensure a more accurate reception for the work amongst his contemporaries. His glosses imply a need for, and a directive towards, a hermeneutic approach to Porete's mystical expression. Her work may have been censored by the ecclesiastical authorities on account of its heretical nature and public dissemination, but, stripped of its cultural, political, and geographical connotations and without the autograph of a condemned heretic, the *Mirouer* was recognised amongst the English Carthusians as a text that required the meditative and introspective reading practices advocated by the monastic life. In this sense, Marguerite Porete's text is perhaps closer to that of Marguerite d'Oingt's than has previously been recognised. Inherent within both women's writings is the notion that words, in their conceptualisation, composition, reception, and interpretation, possess an ability to re-capture or re-enact something of the cognitive associations that accompany the soul's ascent to mystical ecstasy.

M.N.'s glosses are also an indication that, whether composed orally or received aurally, or written directly onto parchments and read privately and individually, no surviving linguistic element of either woman's writings can be regarded as a stable entity.[91] It is tempting to regard their expression as a

[90] See *Mirouer*, ch. 81, p. 230-232. *Mirror*, pp. 156-157.

[91] Two theoretical positions are helpful here: Paul Zumthor's notion of *mouvance*, and Bernard Cerquiglini's concept of *variance*. Zumthor proposes that no medieval text can be regarded as a finished article, or 'un achèvement,' leading him to suggest that medieval literary production always constitutes 'un texte en train de se faire.' Writing on the *Chanson de Roland*, Zumthor characterizes *mouvance* as 'une quasi-abstraction,' which manifests itself in the interaction of

replica of experience, to view the 'accepted report' of the event as being of 'greater importance than the event itself.' As William Ivins Jr. remarks, 'what we think about and act upon is the symbolic report and not the concrete event itself.'[92]

Both Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's works sit at the intersection of symbolic report and concrete event, and between the fixed and the ephemeral. How these enigmas are to be interpreted, in a medieval, or a modern setting, depends on how the texts are regarded as literary artifacts, and the resultant interpretative mode ascribed to them. In turning now to detailed examinations of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's writings, the following two chapters will focus on their respective uses of metaphorical language, and, like M. N., seek to access some of the more concealed aspects of their mystical expression.

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variant readings of different manuscript witnesses of a particular work: 'les textes concrets qui la réalisent présentant, par le jeu des variantes et remaniements, comme une incessante vibration et une instabilité fondamentale.' *Essai de poétique médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 73, p. 507. See also pp. 43-47 and 65-75. Whereas Zumthor's theory is predicated principally on texts deriving from oral transmission, in which textual variation reflects the potential for performative variation, Cerquiglini's model of *variance,* meanwhile, focuses solely on written medieval texts and their circulation. Cerquiglini argues that: 'l'écriture médiévale ne produit pas de variantes, elle est variance.' *Eloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 111.

[92] William M. Ivins Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 180.

CHAPTER THREE

The Writings of Marguerite d'Oingt: Metaphors of Codices and Corporeity

Marguerite d'Oingt's troubled relationship with verbal expression is perhaps the most frequently discussed aspect of her writings.[1] Within the limited corpus of secondary scholarship generated by Marguerite's compositions, however, critical interest has tended to prefer one of two dominant methodological approaches. On one hand, much of the anthology-based criticism has tended to dismiss or only pay scant attention to the intellectual, theological, and cognitive feats achieved by Marguerite d'Oingt's linguistic post-experiential expression of mystical consciousness.[2] On the other hand, meanwhile, more recent examples of sustained literary criticism have offered conclusions that cast the prioress as overly aware of both self and textual creation, particularly given the period and literary mode in which she was writing.[3] A closer reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's metaphorical language reveals, however, an intricately woven thematic schema based on conceptual metaphors of containment and embodiment, which not only articulates the

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[1] See, for example, Blumenfeld-Kosinksi, 'The Idea of Writing'; Müller, 'How To Do Things With Mystical Language'; Barr, *Willing To Know God,* particularly Chapter Two, 'Marguerite d'Oingt: Active Reading and the Language of God.'

[2] Examples of such approaches to Marguerite's writings include: Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature;* Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); Roberta L. Krueger, 'Female Voices in Convents, Courts, and Households,' in *A History of Women's Writing in France,* ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 10-40.

[3] Examples of such approaches to Marguerite's corpus include: Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Idea of Writing'*;* Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d'Oingt;* Barr, *Willing to Know God.* Müller's monograph places an emphasis on Marguerite d'Oingt's auto-referentiality and her sense of femininity. Müller writes that she was a figure able to 's'écarte[r] audiacieusement de la tradition médiévale' and that she represented 'un défi au discours exégétique traditionnel' and erroneously suggests that Marguerite does not 'see' the water flowing down the mountain in the vision recounted in the second of her letters, but rather 'se laisse inonder […] pour devenir elle-même ce fleuve,' p. 126. A similar emphasis on individuality can be seen in Barr's analysis of Marguerite d'Oingt's writings. Barr focuses on the power of, and role played by, individual reading in d'Oingt's corpus, although she too has a tendency to portray the authorial figure of Marguerite as possessing an overly individual sense of self, and suggests that the *Speculum* in particular demonstrates a 'process of self-reflection […] trigger[ed] in her soul.' *Willing to Know God,* p. 55.

vividness of her mystical experiences, but also draws them together into a coherent triumvirate. Her writings demonstrate a Carthusian mind familiar with theological ideas drawn primarily from Biblical and exegetical material, and confident to use them imaginatively within the parameters of her late-thirteenth-century discourse community. Marguerite d'Oingt's three mystical texts, the *Pagina meditationum*, the *Speculum*, and *Li Via Seiti Biatrix Virgina de Ornaciu*, encapsulate this thesis' theoretical argument that both metaphor and mystical experience share a common core, grounded in experience, cognition, and the imagination.

Isolating the key target domain within Marguerite's mystical writing is not difficult: the purpose of all three of her mystical texts is to articulate her relationship with the divine. How she shapes the articulation of this relationship, however, reveals much about how she may have conceptualised these experiences. Marguerite's particularly vivid use of metaphor might almost be seen to function in the Aristotelian sense, 'setting before the eyes' the sense of God which she wished to convey, and thus offering her audience a descriptive, almost pictorial narrative with which to imagine these experiences for themselves.[4] Whilst her prose is less self-consciously esoteric than that of Porete, and her vivid descriptions provide her reader with a clearer sense of causality and narrative direction, Marguerite d'Oingt warns that her experiences are not intended to be easily understood. They are, she warns:

> si secretes et de si obscur entendiment que segont nostrum petit entendiment oy non nos est viayres que oy seyt neguna persona

[4] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410[b] 33-34, p. 2251. This aspect of her writing resonates with the discussion in Chapter One of Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. Metaphor, Ricoeur, possesses a 'picturing function,' which conjures the image created cognitively by the metaphor in the imagination. 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 229.

qui per sent ne per clergi o puit entendre se li sanz espiriz non li ureyt los euz del cors.[5]

Of primary interest here are the source domains that Marguerite draws on in order to narrate a metaphorical Divinity. In isolating these domains, and mapping them onto her ineffable target, an initial objective will be to shed some light on the possible literary resources that Marguerite may have been drawing on, and to relate them to what Gerard Steen would call her 'other context variables.'[6] Building on the previous chapters' discussion of the importance of context in the analysis of metaphor, and the religious, political, and intellectual trends of the thirteenth century that may have shaped and influenced Marguerite d'Oingt's work, this analysis now turns to a closer reading of her prose. In doing so, it will bring historical context into dialogue with the metaphorical imagery of her text, and in turn illuminate the possible conceptual integration networks that underpin her mystical expression. Lakoff and Johnson's 'imaginative rationality' finds an articulation within an image -schema shaped by a dialectic of enclosure and permeability, which provides not only an internal coherence to Marguerite's three mystical compositions, but also a structural logic with which to engage with the speculative spheres of mystical experience.

The exploration of the mind's creative capacity to make sense of mystical experience through the cognitive tools at Marguerite's disposal relates to this chapter's second objective. The idea of '*re*contextualisation' explored in the opening chapter proposed that both mystical expression and metaphor act as a dynamic space in which an audience actively participates in the process of reception and interpretation. To this end, this investigation of Marguerite

[5] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 126, §101; 'such secret and such hard to understand things that, as far as we know, no one can understand them, neither through intelligence nor through learning, unless the Holy Spirit opens a person's eyes of the heart.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 58.

[6] Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature,* p. 29.

d'Oingt's corpus will question the extent to which she constructs a coherent conceptual world for her audience, allowing them to 'see,' in some capacity at least, as she may have 'seen.' By exploring the sources of her metaphorical imagery and positing their underlying cognitive framework, it is possible to locate d'Oingt's expression within the wider tradition of Christian mystical discourse, and to demonstrate that her writing deserves a more central place in the canon of fourteenth-century mystical literature than it has perhaps been afforded to date.

Chapter One outlined a number of theoretical approaches to the way in which the mind both facilitates and restricts the structures of Christian language, thought and belief. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, for example, suggest that the selective mappings between the domain structures control the ways in which concepts are understood, whilst Paul Ricoeur and Robert Neville propose, albeit in different fields, that the mind is primarily influenced by semiotic structures. Within the remit of these discussions, Mark Johnson proposes another approach to the way in which the mind structures, organises and articulates conceptual metaphors which resonates with some the dominant figures of expression found in women's medieval mystical writing. Like Ricoeur and Neville, Johnson argues that the way in which the mind conceives of the world is not arbitrary or open-ended, but instead is 'highly constrained by […] aspects of our bodily functioning […involving] everything that makes us human.'[7] The ways in which events are experienced, structured, and conceptualised are, Johnson argues in collaboration with George Lakoff in their more recent study, *Philosophy in the Flesh,* rooted in the 'peculiar nature of our bodies.'[8] Lakoff and Johnson's theory of embodiment suggests that, as physical and reproductive bodies, constructed as fleshly containers, and bounded by an elastic and penetrable

[7] Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*: *The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. xvi.
[8] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 19.

skin membrane, humanity both experiences, and projects onto that experience, a parallel set of conceptual structures grounded in containment and embodiment.[9] Conceptualising the world in terms of objects, substances, and boundaries, which are subject to those patterns of spatiality, orientation, force, and composition experienced by our physical selves, equips humanity with a coherent framework and vocabulary, without which life's events would be impossible to process and translate. This forms the basis of Lakoff and Johnson's understanding of how our conceptual system is 'grounded.' 'We typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical – that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated.'[10]

In the context of Marguerite d'Oingt's mystical expression, certain aspects of Lakoff and Johnson's theory of embodiment require some adjustment. They argue, for example, that categorising and objectifying is an integral part of being human.' We cannot, as some meditative traditions suggest,' they write, '"get beyond" our categories and have a purely uncategorized and unconceptualized experience. Neural beings cannot do that.'[11] This statement bears a striking resemblance to the constructivist position articulated by Steven Katz and his dislike of the perennial psychologists' theory of Pure Consciousness Events. However, given that, in the case of mystical experience, no record exists of what *actually* happens during a mystic's ecstatic state, and that all categorisation occurs post-experientially, what is of interest here is the role embodiment plays in the

[9] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 25-30; *Philosophy in the Flesh,* pp. 34-38.

[10] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 59. Theories of embodiment and embodied cognition now constitute a wide and flourishing area of multi-disciplinary research. Lakoff and Johnson's approaches are just one of many contributions to this field and have not always been universally accepted. However, for the purposes of this thesis, their methodological framework provides a stimulating platform from which to discuss the issue in relation to medieval Christian mysticism. For a comprehensive overview of the history of and recent developments in, and reception of, the field of embodied cognition, see Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition*, passim.

[11] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 19.

mediating process in order to render the account both recognisable and coherent in narrative form.

That the world and our experiences in it are conceptualised in terms of humanity's own physiological structures resonates with an early sentiment expressed in the *Pagina meditationum*. Drawing on the imagery of Book One of Genesis, Marguerite addresses God with the words: 'tu […] me fecisti ad ymaginem et similitudinem tuam.'[12] Within a cosmic schema, her own creation is emblematic of God's creation of all things; man as embodied microcosm of the macrocosm. Indeed, that embodiment forms a conceptual platform both for the verbal expression of Christian mystical experience, and for a broader understanding of humanity's role within and relationship to the created cosmos, is to echo one of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, 'et verbum caro factum est.'[13]

Before turning to an analysis of metaphor and embodiment in Marguerite's works, it is worth outlining some of the attitudes expressed in recent scholarship towards the body in mystical writing. The prevalence of the human body in Christian literary and iconographic traditions is an area of long-standing academic commentary, and more recent scholarship on the topic has both drawn attention to, and called for, a reassessment of a number of interrelated themes, including Passion piety, Eucharistic devotion, the doctrine of the Resurrection, ascetic practices of fasting and self-mortification, and sexuality and chastity.[14] Indeed, even when the human body appears

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[12] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 77, §7; 'you made me in your image and likeness.' *A Page of Meditations,* p. 27. Genesis 1:27: 'And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him'; also 1 Corinthians 11:7: 'man indeed ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God.'

[13] John 1:14. '[A]nd the Word was made flesh.'

[14] Introductory reading to this field includes Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, reprinted 2008, orig. publ. 1988); Caroline Walker Bynum, ed., *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 1200-1336,* Lectures on the History of Religions, New Series, 15 (New York: Columbia

absent from mystical expression, as in the works of the fourteenth-century Flemish mystic, John Ruysbroeck (*c.*1293-1381), for example, its very absence is cause for modern comment.[15]

Within the field of female mystical writing, a focus on the human body as a locus for ascetic self-punishment, sickness and suffering, and for imitation of, and union with, Christ, perhaps constitutes the most evident common denominator in a corpus otherwise notoriously difficult to stabilise.[16] Feminist critics frequently focus on the female mystic's body as a vehicle for visionary expression, arguing that corporally based imagery equipped female mystics with a meaningful discourse through which to counteract the 'patriarchal and forthrightly misogynistic society' in which they found themselves.[17] 'Where men fought heresy with theology and the stake, the tangible power of the institution they controlled,' argues Jo Ann McNamara, 'women fought with their own bodies.' [18] Laurie Finke, meanwhile, seeks to reinforce the connection between female mystical experience and its expression. Echoing Elizabeth Petroff's theory that 'visions led women to the acquisition of power in the world while affirming their knowledge of themselves as women,' Finke suggests that the discourse through which these visions were expressed 'was constructed out of

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University Press, 2013); J. G. Gager, 'Body-Symbols and Social Reality: Resurrection, Incarnation and Asceticism in Early Christianity', *Religion*, 12 (1982): 345-363; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

[15] See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* pp. 109-110.

[16] The question of establishing what is meant by the term mysticism, and who, what and why a holy person qualifies them to be called a mystic (as opposed to, for example, 'visionary' or 'prophet') continues to be debated and redefined by modern scholarship; see the Introduction for how this thesis defines the term 'mystic.' Works concerning the role of the body in female mystical writing include: Wiethaus' edited collection, *Maps of Flesh and Light,* Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body In the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004); Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, passim.

[17] Jo Ann McNamara, 'The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy: Clerical Authority and Female Innovation in the Struggle With Heresy,' in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Women Mystics*, ed. by Ulrike Wiethaus (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), pp. 9-27. Here at p. 13.

[18] McNamara, 'The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy,' p. 13.

disciplines designed to regulate the female body, and it is, paradoxically, through these disciplines that the mystic consolidated her power.'[19]

Modern perceptions of embodiment are, however, problematic when applied to medieval literature. Where modern feminist scholarship focuses predominantly on the female body as a means for the metaphorical figuring of the divine, it has a tendency to project new ideas onto mystical expression that are frequently not apparent at the level of the texts themselves, such as social constructions of gender and the notion that gender is conceived of in terms of hierarchical power structures.[20] The danger of these approaches is that in treating gender – itself a product of culture and society - as a tool for historical organisation and categorization, the resultant pictures of the historical past become increasingly difficult to tease out from the cultural models of the present.[21] When coupled with an attempt to decipher how certain communities perceived their lives and experiences – religious or otherwise – the methodological tensions only intensify.

Of fundamental importance to this analysis is the premise that the concept 'body' need not always signify 'human body,' nor need it imply a 'body' with a determined sex or gender.[22] Instead, this reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's works focuses on the idea of corporeity, both literal and metaphorical, in terms of its physiological structure and orientation and suggests that this provides a more sensitive, contextually sensitive basis from which to explore her conceptual metaphors of embodiment. By mapping the bodily metaphors in

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[19] Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature,* p. 6; Laurie A. Finke, 'Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision,' in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Women Mystics*, ed. by Ulrike Wiethaus (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), pp. 28-44. Here at p. 29.

[20] See, for example, Finke, 'Mystical Bodies,' pp. 36-37.

[21] For a critque of the problems of gender as a tool for categorization with particular focus on Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* see Kathleen Biddick, 'Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible,' *Speculum*, 68, 2 (1993): 389-418.

[22] It is perhaps noteworthy that Johnson makes no reference to gender in either *The Body in the Mind*, or in his collaborative studies with George Lakoff.

her writings, a coherence opens up which suggests not only how Marguerite may have projected patterns drawn from source domains located within her daily existence, but also how the target domains of another, mystical, experience might be rendered intelligible. Metaphor in this sense, functions as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, not only a linguistic mode of expression, but also a means of structuring the abstract target domains of her mystical experience, and in turn projects the means by which to imagine a world-view predicated on structures of spiritual theology.

A striking example can be found in Marguerite's *Li Via Seiti Biatrix Virgina de Ornaciu,* which merits quoting in full. Describing Beatrix's vision of the Elevation of the Host, Marguerite focuses on a complicated pattern of light held between the priest's hands:

> Icilli clarta li eret vyaires que fut tota rionda, et dedenz la clarta apparisseyt una granz vermelia si tras resplandenz et si bela que, de sa grant beuta, illi enluminavet tota la clarta blanchi. Et cilli clarta gitavet si grant resplandour que illi fayseit resplandir tota la vermelia si que li una beuta enluminavet si l'autra et si ytiant li una en l'autra que eles rendiant si meravillousa beuta et si grant resplandour que un veet tota la beuta de la blanchi clarta dedenz la vermeli et la beuta de la vermeli veet hon dedenz la beuta [de la] clarta blanci.
>
> Et dedenz la clarta blanchi apparisseyt huns petit enfes […]. Desus cel enfant et de totes pars apparisseyt una granz clarta semblanz a or qui rendeit si grant illumination que illi trahit totes les autres a si et tota s'en entravet dedenz lour. Et les autres traiant tota cela a lour, et totes s'en entravont dedenz liey. Ycetes quatro divisions se appareyssant en una mema semblanci et beuta et replandour. Et li eret viaires que cilli

> comunauz beuta et resplandors apparissit tota dedenz cel enfant. Et li enfes apparisseyt toz dedenz cela resplandour.[23]

In her accompanying notes to this passage, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinki suggests that the tri-partite configuration of light with a child at the centre symbolises the Trinity as both three and one.[24] Indeed, such Eucharistic visions are not uncommon in mystical literature, and the particularities of Marguerite's description can be seen to mirror an earlier depiction of the Trinity by the Rhenish mystic, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). In Book Two of her *Scivias*, Hildegard describes seeing a bright light, at the centre of which is the figure of a man, surrounded by fire:

> Et illa serena lux perfudit totum illum rutilantem ignem, et ille rutilans ignis totam illam serenam lucem, ac eadem serena lux et idem rutilans ignis totam speciem eiusdem hominis, ita lumen unum in una ui possibilitatis exisistentis.[25]

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[23] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix Virgina de Ornaciu*, pp. 118-120, §84-85. Blumenfeld-Kosinski's translation of this passage is very economical, and omits the second half of §84, perhaps to avoid repetition. However, in omitting this detail, Blumenfeld-Kosinski loses some of the lexical mirroring of the Francoprovençal; the mirroring and repetition of the language appears to mimic the pattern of the light, expanding and repeating itself much as the light expands and diffuses. Here the passage is translated in full: 'It seemed to her that this brightness had a circular shape, and that in the brightness there appeared a great red brightness, so resplendent and so beautiful that it illuminated with its great beauty all of the white brightness. And this brightness projected such a great splendour that it illuminated all of the redness so that each of these beauties illuminated the other so brightly that they radiated such a marvelous beauty and such a great splendour that one saw all of the beauty of the white brightness in the red brightness and the beauty of the red brightness in the beauty of the white brightness. And in that white brightness appeared a little child; she could not describe nor make anyone understand the great beauty of this child. Above this child there appeared a great brightness which looked like gold; it gave off such a vivid brilliance that it enfolded all the other brightnesses into itself and entered itself into the other brightnesses. And the other brightnesses enfolded that last one, while they themselves entered into it. These four visions manifested themselves in the same manner and with the same beauty and splendour. And it seemed to her that the beauty and splendour they had in common appeared united in that child. And the child appeared in the midst of this splendour.' *The Life of the Virgin Beatrice of Ornacieux*, pp. 54-55.

[24] *The Life of the Virgin Beatrice*, p. 55, n. 1.

[25] Hildegardis, *Scivias*, ed. by Adelgundis Führkötter, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), p. 124, ll. 15-20. 'And that bright light bathed the whole of the glowing fire, and the glowing fire bathed the bright light; and the bright light and the glowing fire poured over the whole human figure, so that the three were one light in one

Similarly, the German Dominican nun Christina Ebner (1277-1356) and the French saint, Jeanne-Marie de Maille (1331-1414), both reported seeing a Christ-like figure raised with the host at mass.[26] How Marguerite came into contact with this imagery is not clear, but light, luminosity and the human form are also amalgamated in Marguerite's *Speculum.* However, in this instance, Marguerite reverses the imagery of the *Via,* and instead depicts Christ as the source of light, so that his body forms the outer frame whilst the light emanates from within:

> En ses tres nobles mayns e en ses pies appareyssant les glorioses playes que il suffrit per amour de nos. De cel glorious pertuis sallit una si tras granz clarta que co eret uns granz ebaymenz assi come si tota li beuta de la divinita sallit per mey.[27]

Hildegard and, later, Marguerite, clearly conceptualise the divine in terms of both a luminous and a fleshly body, the former figured as spherical and expansive, possessed of an inner and an outer shape, capable of containing matter in a series of concentric shapes whose boundaries are permeable.[28] To date, there has been little investigation into the sources of

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power of potential.' Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, Book 2, Vision 2, trans. by Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 161.

[26] See Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls,* pp. 171-172. For more on the symbolism of the Eucharist, see Ann W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[27] *Speculum*, p. 98, §24. 'On His noble hands and feet appeared the glorious wounds that He suffered for the love of us. From these glorious wounds poured forth such a great light that one was stunned by it. It was as if all the beauty of the Divinity was passed on through it.' *Mirror*, p. 45. This depiction closely mirrors another portrayal of Christ found in the mystical visions of Marguerite's contemporary, the Viennese Agnes Blannbekin (*c.*1244-1315). Agnes claims that 'She saw the blessed wounds of Christ inexpressibly glorified, translucent and radiating in a clear light […]. From one single puncture, an inexpressible light flowed.' *Agnes Blannbekin, Viennese Beguine: Life and Revelations,* trans. by Ulrike Wiethaus, Library of Medieval Women (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. 19.

[28] For a discussion of Hildegard's imagery and the depiction of the human form within co-centric luminous circles in the works of Dante and Joachim of Fiore, see Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984), pp. 96-101.

Marguerite's luminous imagery, or into her broader conceptualisation of corporeity and embodiment. That such motifs are so prevalent in her expression, however, is consistent with twelfth- and thirteenth-century developments in theological and philosophical thought.[29] Although plotting a history of corporeity in the western Christian tradition lies beyond the scope of this study, briefly noting some examples of its prevalence in monastic and scholastic circles demonstrates that Marguerite was perhaps more deeply influenced by, and in textual dialogue with, her intellectual ancestors and contemporaries than has been acknowledged.

The generation of scholars immediately preceding Marguerite's lifetime brought ideas concerning the physical world, matter and form to the fore in an unprecedented way with the advent of Aristotle's scientific corpus in Latin translation. One of the earliest figures to engage with this corpus was Grosseteste, whose treatise *De luce* (*c.*1225) questioned the problem of body and corporeity in terms of light.[30] Grosseteste considered corporeity as a universal phenomenon, arguing that the cosmos is constituted by a body in the same way as a body constitutes the human form, and that all bodies are brought into being by the conjunction of matter and light. Grosseteste understood light as the foremost and most perfect of bodies: 'Formam primam corporalem quam corporeitatem nominant lucem esse arbitror.'[31] He states clearly that light ('lux')

[29] This forms part of the subject matter of Suzannah Biernoff's *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), particularly Chapters Three and Four. Biernoff does not mention Marguerite's visions in her study, but her observation of the interrelated nature of patristic and medieval thought on the body, light, vision and optics constitutes a fascinating contextual backdrop against which to place Marguerite's description of her vision.

[30] Robert Grosseteste, '*De Luce*: A Critical Edition,' ed. and notes by Cecilia Panti, in *Robert Grosseteste and His Intellectual Milieu: New Editions and Studies*, ed. by John Flood, James R. Ginther, and Joseph W. Goering, Papers in Medieval Studies, 24 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), pp. 193-238. See also: Cecilia Panti, 'The Evolution of the Idea of Corporeity in Robert Grosseteste's Writings,' in *Robert Grosseteste: His Thought and Its Impact*, ed. by Jack P. Cunningham (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), pp. 111-139.

[31] Grosseteste, *De luce,* p. 226. 'The first corporeal form which some call corporeity is in my opinion light,' Robert Grosseteste, '*On Light*: An English Translation,' trans. by Neil Lewis, in *Robert Grosseteste and His Intellectual Milieu: New Editions and Studies*, ed. by John Flood, James R.

is spherical in form and is able both to expand and spread equally in all directions, and yet is also able to diffuse light ('lumen') from the farthest reaches of the sphere back into itself and therefore to contain itself. Light, Grosseteste claimed, is at once both container and contained: it is, in many ways, embodied.

Aristotle's observations on bodies had similarly profound effects amongst other thirteenth-century Latin commentators and their development of doctrinal positions, particularly in the adoption and application of hylomorphism. Albert the Great (1206-1280), for example, and his student Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), broke with earlier traditions by suggesting that man consists not of a soul merely inhabiting the body, but rather is a being that consists of a soul of form united to a body. Corporeity, for Aquinas, was fundamental to his conceptualisation of the universe:

> Ergo oportet quod prima forma substantialis perficiat totam materiam. Sed prima forma quae recipitur in materia, est corporeitas, a qua nunquam denudatur […]. Ergo forma corporeitatis est in tota materia, et ita materia non erit nisi in corporibus.[32]

Late medieval conceptualisations of corporeity were inextricably linked to explorations of optics and vision, and were not only a matter of science, but also of Christian morality and doctrine. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Peter of Limoges composed his *De oculo morali*, a manual

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Ginther, and Joseph W. Goering, Papers in Medieval Studies, 24 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), pp. 239-247. Here at p. 239.

[32] Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super sententiis*, ed. by R. P. Mandonnet, O. P., vol. 1 of 4 (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), p. 229. See distinctio VIII, quæst. V, art. 2. 'Therefore it is becoming that the first substantial form is accomplished in complete matter. But the first form to be received into matter is that of corporeity, from which it is never separated […] Therefore, all matter is clothed in the form of corporeity, and therefore matter will not exist except in corporality.' My translation.

for preachers that describes the eye and vision physiologically, allegorically and analogically.[33] The themes of vision, knowledge, and man's relationship with God are all drawn together in the works of medieval scholars including Grosseteste, Aquinas, Roger Bacon and Peter of Limoges, and it appears that these tropes were, by the end of the thirteenth century, filtering into a wider discourse community.[34] With regard to the metaphorical bodies of Marguerite d'Oingt, it is not possible to suggest a direct relationship between the ideas emerging from the schools in Paris and Oxford and communities such as that of the Carthusian nuns at Poleteins. However, d'Oingt's late medieval mystical expression clearly locates her within a wider intellectual environment that was receptive to, be it directly or indirectly, the scholarly philosophical and metaphysical thought of the previous century. Marguerite's work therefore takes its place alongside other modes and registers of enquiry concerning the relationship between humanity, the cosmos and the divine, and in turn demonstrates that 'embodied cognition' was as much a part of medieval discourse as it is of modern.

The corporeal image, at once physically possible and yet paradoxical in its formation as container and contained, is one that appears repeatedly throughout Marguerite's writings.[35] Prevalent in her writing are three

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[33] Peter of Limoges, *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, trans. and intro. by Richard Newhauser, Medieval Sources in Translation, 51 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 2012). See also Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*, pp. 124-125.

[34] See Dallas G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology, and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially Chapter Three, 'Peter of Limoges, Perspectivist Optics and the Displacement of Vision.'

[35] Other examples include Christ figured as both container and not contained by the world: 'Illum qui tam magnus quod totus mundus eum capere non poterat et qui tenebat totum mundum in suo pugno,' *Pagina meditationum*, p. 73, §9. 'He was so big that the world could not contain Him and who held the whole world in His hand,' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 27. In the *Speculum*, meanwhile, Marguerite envisions Christ's body as simultaneously transparent, reflective, and opaque, and with both a revelatory inside and an outside: 'Ices glorious cors eret si tres nobles et si trapercans que l'on veoyt tot clarament l'arma per dedenz. Cil cors eret si tres nobles que l'on si poit remirer plus clarament que [en] un mirour. Ciz cors eret sit res beuz que l'on y veit los angelos et los sains assi come se il fussant peint en lui.' *Speculum*, p. 98, §24. 'This glorious body was so noble and so transparent that one could clearly see the soul inside of it. This body was so noble that one could see oneself reflected in it, more clearly than a mirror.

figurative 'bodies' upon which this discussion of her works focuses: those of the human body and the codex, and, as both a reflection and a container of these first two, the mirror. All three are widely acknowledged as common tropes of medieval literary expression, but a focus on their occurrence in Marguerite's *oeuvre* suggests their primary function is to provide her writings, and by extension, thought, with an internal coherence and systematicity.[36] These three source domains form an emergent pattern in which, at given points in her narratives, each of these three 'bodies' metaphorically represents one or both of the others, morphing as they do into each other, and back again to their original form. This polyvalent, almost kaleidoscopic, aspect to Marguerite's prose is reminiscent of Ricoeur's suggestion that the cognitive processing of metaphor involves a simultaneous correlation, or 'flow,' of numerous mental images. How and why Marguerite d'Oingt's mystical writing evokes this 'flow' of image-schemas in the mind lifts her prose from a series of static, visionary vignettes to a highly dynamic mode of expression, in which the invitation to imagine her experiences becomes a catalyst for the reception and interpretation of mystical thought afresh.

Marguerite's hearing of Psalm 17:5, sung at mass, catalyses the experience she recounts in the *Pagina meditationum*.[37] As such, her own book,

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This body was so beautiful that one could clearly see the angels and the saints, as if they were painted on it.' *Mirror*, p. 45.

[36] The critical material on these three tropes in medieval literature is vast. Introductory reading on the trope of the mirror includes Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, trans. by Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Edward Peter Nolan, *Now Through A Glass Darkly: Specular Images of Being and Knowing From Virgil to Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). A list of introductory reading on the role of the body in the medieval period can be found earlier in the chapter (see p. 130, n. 14); a list of similar material on the idea of the medieval codex as literary symbol is detailed below (pp. 140-41, n. 44) .

[37] Marguerite writes: '[E]go Margareta, ancilla Christi, eram in ecclesia in missa quando incipiebat cantari introitus misse, scilicet: "Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis."' *Pagina meditationum*, p. 71. 'I Margaret, the maidservant of Christ, was in church at mass when, as an introduction to the mass, the following verse was being sung: "The signs of death will surround me."' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 25. The quotation differs slightly from the Vulgate, which reads: 'circumdederunt me dolores mortis.'

the *Pagina*, is brought into existence through her engagement with Holy Scripture, thereby setting up a thematic and structural framework which is developed across all three of her works. That Scripture acts as a stimulus for, and the subsequent locus of, spiritual insight and self-conscious reflection is reminiscent of Augustine's famous conversion to Christianity in his *Confessiones*.[38] Whilst there are significant differences between these records of divine inspiration and self-reflection, namely that Augustine's involves silent reading, whilst Marguerite's takes place publicly on hearing the Psalm sung, both accounts involve a transition from the outer to the inner word; the externally perceived word of God motivating the composition of an inner book of divine experience. Marguerite's description of her own conversion ('Deinceps invenietis quomodo me converti'), and of her inner book are entirely bound up with cognitive processes.[39] The first four paragraphs of the *Pagina* express this process using five different verbs of thought and cognition, reinforcing a sense of the varied and complex reflective activity associated with both forging a relationship with the divine, and bringing the metaphorical book of her inner experience, as well as her literal outer corpus of writing, to life.[40]

The interplay between cognition and the inner book of recorded experience finds a coherent structure in Marguerite's use of the metaphor of the heart. In a long passage, she writes that her body acts as a container for her thoughts, and that God wrote all these thoughts into her heart:

> Ego cogitavi quod cor hominis et mulieris est ita mobile quod potest vix esse in uno statu, et ideo ponebam in scriptis

[38] See Augustine, *Confessions,* Book VIII, Chapter 12, for an account of his conversion to Christianity.

[39] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 72, §5. 'Now you will find out how I converted […].' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

[40] Marguerite says that she thought ('cogitavi'), recalled ('recolui'), considered ('consideravi') and contemplated ('respicere'). See *Pagina meditationum*, pp. 71-72, §1-4; *A Page of Meditations*, pp. 25-26.

> cogitationes quas Deus ordinaverat in corde meo ne perderem eas cum removissem illas a corde meo, et ut possem eas cogitare paulatim quando mihi Deus suam gratiam daret.[41]

Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Barr both comment on the vivid imagery of this passage.[42] Both critics draw attention to the role of the *Pagina* as a 'transcription' or textual model for meditation, Blumenfeld-Kosinski suggesting that Marguerite imagines herself as a 'kind of spiritual *scriptorium* (original emphasis).'[43] However neither Barr nor Blumenfeld-Kosinksi situate Marguerite's textual metaphors of the heart within their wider medieval literary context. The heart was a common metaphor in the Middle Ages, often figured as an inscriptional space or as an internalized stage for writing in which the imagery of book production could be combined with a pectoral consciousness of the heart as a seat of emotion, perception and cognition.[44] Similarly, Marie Polo de Beaulieu suggests that the heart's association with psychological and vital physical functions, coupled with its central location in the body, meant that it was widely

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[41] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 72, §4. 'I thought that the hearts of men and women are so flighty that they can hardly ever remain in one place, and because of that I fixed in writing the thoughts that God had ordered into my heart so that I would not lose them when I removed them from my heart, and so that I could think them over little by little whenever God would give me His grace.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

[42] See Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Idea of Writing,' p. 75; Barr, *Willing To Know God*, pp. 51-55.

[43] Blumenfeld-Kosinksi, 'The Idea of Writing,' p. 75.

[44] Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000). Jager explores numerous sources that dealt with the heart as both a metaphorical and literal site of memory, understanding, imagination, and emotion dating from antiquity to the later Middle Ages. Amongst these, he includes Aristotelian, Biblical, patristic, monastic, and popular literary sources written in Greek, Hebrew, Latin and the vernaculars. For more on the heart as a locus for memory, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture,* 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, orig. publ. 1990), especially pp. 59-60. Ernst Robert Curtius places the heart as a text metaphor within a broader schema of interior writing that dates back to the Classical period. See *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), especially Ch. 16, 'The Book as Symbol.' First published in German as *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Franke AG Verlag, 1948).

held to represent 'le centre vital l'être' and even 'une sorte de microcosme de l'être.'[45]

Marguerite was likely to have been drawing on a wide pool of literary sources in figuring her heart as both text and inner scriptorium.[46] The Old Testament mentions God's law as written on the heart in both Deuteronomy 6:6 and 9:10, and in Proverbs 3.1:3, whilst in Jeremiah 31.33, God Himself acts as the scribe who writes on the heart. However it is in the works of St Paul that the dual role of the inner tablet of the heart as internalised Law and incarnate revelation is crystallised. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul writes:

> qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum et inter se invicem cogitationum accusantium aut etiam defendentium in die cum iudicabit Deus occulta hominum secundum evangelium meum per Iesum Christum […].[47]

The entailments of Paul's pectoral metaphor are numerous: the heart serves as an internal record and as an outer reflection of the 'secrets of men,' a place to 'bear witness' and to 'judge.' Similarly, in 2 Corinthians, Paul discusses the notion of the letter and the Holy Spirit, in which he refers to the epistle of

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[45] Marie Polo de Beaulieu, 'La Légende du coeur inscrit dans la littérature religieuse et didactique,' in *Le "Cuer" au moyen âge (Réalité et Senefiance)* (Aix-en-Provence: Centre Universitaire d'Études et de Recherches Médiévales d'Aix, 1991), pp. 299-312. Here at p. 311.

[46] Amy Hollywood notes, for example, that in the third of his *Sermones in Cantica canticorum*, Bernard of Clairvaux argues that 'one must look to the book of experience and compare it with the book of Scripture in the hopes that one might bring one's own experience and that of the biblical text together.' 'Introduction,' p. 27.

[47] Romans 2:15-16. 'Who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.'

Christ as written 'in tabulis cordis carnalibus.'[48] Marguerite's introduction to the *Pagina* draws heavily on this Pauline heart-text metaphor as a vehicle for interiority and revelation:

> idcirco precor omnes qui hoc scriptum legent ne faciant inde malum suum profectum quod presumpserim scribere hec, quia pensare debetis quod non habeam sensum nec clericatum in me quo scirem hec extrahere de corde meo, vel scribere sine alio exemplari nisi gratia Dei fuisset operata in me.[49]

That her text is both located within her and yet available for external examination, and written by her but according to the exemplar of God, divides Marguerite's narrative voice into two, presenting her both as author and protagonist. Temporally situated within both the past and the narrated present, as both observer and recorder of her experience, this division is emblematic of the broader questions concerning mystical consciousness discussed in Chapter One. If inner mystical consciousness is only made possible by innate and indescribable experience, then its outer manifestation lies in its narration and reception as post-experiential expression. Marguerite's protagonist may possess the capacity to experience, but it is the ability of the narrative voice to recollect and recount that gives Marguerite's works their mystical quality.

Marguerite's early disclaimer that her text is modelled on God's exemplar is also, according to Blumenfeld-Kosinski, evidence that 'like other mystical women,' Marguerite feared being judged as presumptuous or

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[48] 2 Corinthians 3:3. 'In the fleshly tables of the heart.'

[49] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 72, §4. 'I ask all those who read this text not to think badly [of me] because I had the presumption to write this, since you must believe that I have no sense or learning with which I would know how to take these things from my heart, nor could I write this down without any other model than the grace of God which is working within me.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

'audacious' in the writing down of her pious thoughts.[50] That Marguerite describes herself as 'unus minimus vermiculus' is, for Blumenfeld-Kosinski, only further confirmation that the nun was using the 'topoi of modesty [so] that her male superiors approved of her.'[51] However whilst the Pauline metaphor of the textual heart suggests that the interior book of the heart will be read and judged by God, there is no additional evidence to imply that Marguerite was troubled by external judgments involving her role as a female writer. It seems more likely that, given her skill in borrowing imagery from other literary sources, these self-deprecating statements are intended to demonstrate her dexterity in weaving authoritative quotations into her own narrative. That she likens herself to a small worm may indicate a borrowing from Psalm 27:7 ('ego autem sum vermis') or might suggest a familiarity with one of Augustine's sermons in which he probes the universality of mortality, or indeed with a passage from Anselm of Canterbury's (1033-1109) *Cur Deus homo* on human nature and creation.[52]

Modern scholars frequently remark on the modesty topoi found in medieval women's writing and their notion of 'fragilitas feminei sexus,'

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[50] Blumenfeld-Kosinksi, 'The Idea of Writing,' pp. 75-76.

[51] '[E]go sim unus minimus vermiculus,' *Pagina meditationum*, p. 73, §8. Blumenfeld-Kosinksi, 'The Idea of Writing,' p. 76.

[52] 'Videtis enim, fratres, quemadmodum non tantum ingentes bestiae et magna animalia, ut sunt boves aut cameli vel elephanti, sed et muscae, sed et vermiculi minimi, quomodo nolint mori, et diligant se.' Augustine, *Qui amat animam suam perdet illam*, *Sermon* 368, Chapter 4, in Patrologia cursus completus, series latina, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1841-1864), vol. 39, col. 1654. Henceforth Patrologia Latina. 'After all, you can see, brothers and sisters, how not only huge wild beasts and large animals, like oxen and camels and elephants, but also flies, but also the tiniest little worms, how they don't want to die, and how they love themselves.' In *Sermons*, trans. by Edmund Hill, O.P., The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, vol. 3 of 10, 341-700 (New York: New City Press, 1990), p. 301. '[N]ecesse est humanam naturam aut ad complementum eiusdem perfectionis esse factam, aut illi superabundare, quod de minimi vermiculi natura dicere non audemus.' Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, I.18, ed. by F. S. Schmitt, *S. Anselmi Cantariensis archiepicopi opera Omnia, ad fidem codicum recensuit,* 6 vols. [the first printed at Sekau, 1938, the second at Rome, 1940, all reset for the Edinburgh, Nelson edition] (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946-1961), vol. 2, p. 77. 'It is necessarily the case that human nature was created either to complement the perfection of creation or to be superfluous to it. Now, we dare not make the latter statement with regard to even the smallest worm's nature.' *Why God Became a [God-]man*, 1:18, in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2010), p. 328.

although their disclaimers are perhaps best read as devotional formulae, following the conventions of introductory topoi and rhetoric.[53] This certainly appears to be the case in other women's mystical writings, including those of Hildegard and the thirteenth-century Benedictine mystic, Gertrude the Great of Helfta (1241-1298).[54] However it is also quite feasible that Marguerite's apparent disclaimer draws on an older, biblical precedent. In Isaiah, a vision of God is described that echoes the claims made by Marguerite in the introductory passages of the *Pagina*:

> et erit vobis visio omnium sicut verba libri signati quem cum dederint scienti litteras dicent lege istum et respondebit non possum signatus est enim et dabitur liber nescienti litteras diceturque ei lege et respondebit nescio litteras.[55]

In drawing on the scriptural metaphor of heart as text, Marguerite frames her writings with a series of entailments that had also captured the imaginations of earlier patristic minds as well as those of her monastic contemporaries. The process of likening the inscribed heart to a textual record is a dominant theme in the works of the Church Fathers, occurring in the

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[53] Katharina M. Wilson writes that 'Medieval women writers do use a particular version of the affected modesty topos by adding *fragilitas feminei sexu* to the disclaimers.' 'Introduction,' in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. by Katharina M. Wilson (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), pp. vii-xxix. Here at p. xxvii, n. 71. See also Wilson's essay on Hrotsvit of Gandersheim in the same volume, in which she writes of the tenth-century Saxon canoness that: 'One stylistic characteristic may be attributable to her sex: she is exceedingly fond of using diminutives.' 'The Saxon Canoness: Hrotsvit of Gandersheim,' pp. 30-46. Here at p. 42.

[54] 'Sed ego, quamuis haec uiderem et audirem, tamen propter dubietatem et malam opinionem et propter diuersitatem uerborum hominum, tamdiu non in pertinacia, sed in humilitatis officio scribere recusaui, quousque in lectum aegritudinis flagello Dei depressa caderem […] manus ad scribendum apposui.' Hildegard of Bingen, 'Protestificatio,' *Scivias,* p. 75. 'But I, though I saw and heard these things, refused to write for a long time through doubt and bad opinion and the diversity of human words, not with stubbornness but in the exercise of humility, until, laid low by the scourge of God […] I set my hand to writing.' *Scivias*, p. 60. On Gertrude the Great, see Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, p. 229.

[55] Isaiah 29:11-12. 'And the vision of all shall be unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that is learned, they shall say: Read this: and he shall answer: I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book shall be given to one that knoweth no letters, and it shall be said to him: Read: and he shall answer: I know no letters.'

writings of both the Greek and Latin traditions.[56] However, with the rise of scholasticism and the founding of new monastic orders, in particular those of the Cistercians and the Carthusians, who placed a special emphasis on textual culture, the metaphor of the heart as book evolved to encompass new levels of complexity with vivid figurative imagery.

Monastic and scholastic writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries developed Augustine's pectoral imagery by ascribing psychological meaning not only to the content of the heart-text, but also to the process by which the codex was produced and inscribed. In a treatise on the Last Judgment, Richard of St Victor (d.1173) focuses on a book of the heart that records the individual's conscience, writing: 'unusquisque enim in corde suo quasi scriptum gerit unde sua eum conscientia accusat, vel defendit.'[57] As with Marguerite's *Pagina*, Richard's metaphorical heart is depicted as a textual record of human conscience, a theme he develops further in a sermon for the feast day of Saint Augustine. Taking one of the most inspiring metaphors of biblio-pectoral imagery, Psalm 44:2, Richard describes the book of the heart as being written by the Holy Spirit, dictated by the preaching of God's word.[58] He extends this further by portraying the heart as a parchment that is

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[56] Jager provides an overview of how the heart developed to resemble a book in the hands of the Church Fathers in *The Book of the Heart*, pp. 17-26. Amongst the patristic writers responsible for interpreting this metaphor, Jager lists Basil of Caesarea (*c*.329-379), Ambrose of Milan (*c*.330-397), John Chrysostom (*c*.347-407), Jerome (*c*.347-420), and Augustine (354-430). It is difficult to estimate just how familiar Marguerite may have been with patristic scholarship. However, it is likely that many of the allegorical expressions and associated ideas elaborated by these authoritative figures would have entered into widespread use amongst the medieval monastic communities and that, as a Carthusian prioress, Marguerite would have had some, albeit perhaps indirect, knowledge of the more vivid figurative imagery employed by the Church Fathers. For the reception of the Fathers in the medieval West, see Irena Backhus, *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

[57] *De judiciaria potestate in finali et universali judico,* Patrologia Latina, 196: 1182A. 'Each person carries in his heart a written record as it were, whereby his conscience accuses or defends him.' Translated in Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, p. 49.

[58] 'Lingua mea calamus scribae velociter scribentis'; 'my tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth quickly.' For Richard's sermon, *Sermo in festo sancti augustini*, see Patrologia Latina, 177: 1205B-1206D. For more detail on this passage, see: Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter, *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor* (New York: New City Press, 2011), pp. 162-163, n. 20.

prepared for inscription:

> Corde quoque nostra, quae pergameno figurari diximus, et in quibus spiritualis haec scriptura spiritualiter scribitur, ad modum materialis pergameni conficiuntur per amaram poenitentiam, extenduntur […] raduntur […] et in quaternionem formantur.[59]

Richard was not the only scholar to employ the details of manuscript production in order to structure his exegesis on the workings of the inner self.[60] However, the imaginative process with which heart and parchment become synonymous in his and his contemporaries' works provides a stimulating backdrop to the development of Marguerite's interchangeable source domains of the book and the body. The introductory passage to the *Pagina* closes with the implication that, with God's help, the thoughts of her innermost self may be ordered in the way in which she remembered them: 'ab hora qua cepi ea scribere donec omnia in scripto posuissem.'[61] The form and content of Marguerite's works are mirrored in the metonym of her heart: literary and fleshly corpora metaphorically embodying the other.

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[59] Richard of St Victor, *Sermo in festo sancti augustini*: Patrologia Latina, 177: 1205D-1206A. 'Truly our hearts, which we say are figured by parchment, and in which this writing of the spirit is spiritually inscribed are prepared by bitter penitence in the same way as a material skin. They are stretched […] they are scraped […] and they are formed into quires.' English translation by Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, p. 50.

[60] Curtius observes a similar use of Psalm 44:2 in the sixth-century *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville, who transposes the metaphor onto the image of a ploughed field, and traces its development through Carolingian poetry and into the high Middle Ages. See *European Literature*, pp. 313-319. See also Jesse M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language, Theory, Mythology, and Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 34. Jager similarly explores the use of the heart as a prepared parchment in the writings of Richard of St Victor's teacher, Hugh (c.1096-1141), Peter Comestor (d. 1179/89) and in an anonymous twelfth-century sermon from Durham Cathedral (Durham Cathedral Library Ms. B.IV.12, fols 37^{v} – 38^{v}). See *The Book of the Heart*, pp. 50-52.

[61] *Pagina meditationem*, p. 72, §4; 'beginning with the hour in which I began to write this and up to the moment when I had put everything down in writing.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

The remainder of the *Pagina* focuses on Marguerite's devotion to Christ. Some of her most striking imagery is associated with the birth and passion of Christ, two events that she both conflates and alternates between, eliding the passage of Christ's life within the textual space of a sentence:

> certe iste amor duxit eum ad tantum quod fecit eum iacere in quodam parvo presepio inter unum bovem et unum asinum, et peius fecit eum adhuc suffere quia fuit derisus et consputus in facie et multe alie vilitates fuerunt.[62]

Throughout her treatise, Christ's corporeal form remains at the forefront of Marguerite's visionary experience. As her account moves from Christ's own labour, and her unusual description of him as a maternal figure, giving birth to the world, to his suffering on the cross via the shared imagery of blood across the two scenes, her detailing of the torture becomes particularly graphic:

> sudor tuus sanctus fuit ut gutte sanguinis […] unus dabat tam magnam alapam quod facies remanebat tota nigra […] te ligaverunt ad quamdam columpnam uni tam districte te verberaverunt quod videbatur quod esses excoriatus ita eras sanguine coopertus; et postquam ita verberaverunt te, posuerunt in tuo tenero capite quamdam coronam de spinis que perforabant tibi vitalia.[63]

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[62] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 74, §10. 'He whom love drove to so much that He had Himself thrown into a small manger between an ox and an ass, and made Himself suffer even worse things, since He was derided and [people] spit into His face and many other vile things.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 27-28.

[63] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 78, §33-35; 'your holy sweat was like drops of blood […] one of them gave you such a blow that your face was left all black […] they tied you to a certain column where they whipped you so stretched out that it seemed you were stripped of your skin, so covered in blood were you, and after they had whipped you, they put on your tender head a crown of thorns that pierced your vital parts.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 31.

Despite the shift in focus from the bibliophilic to the corporeal, Marguerite continues to draw from a manifestly textual source domain. Her emphasis on verbs of stripping or flaying ('excoriare'), beating ('verberare'), stretching ('distringere'), tying to a column ('ligare'), and piercing or pricking ('perforare') of Christ's skin imaginatively re-structures his body as a parchment being prepared for inscription. Marguerite's use of colour intensifies this metaphorical reconstruction of Christ's body. Earlier in the *Pagina*, she writes that Christ was so tortured at his passion that he seemed to resemble a leper, implying that his skin was white.[64] In the passage quoted above, meanwhile, Christ's skin is described as 'black' and 'red' – two common colours of ink used in medieval book production.[65] If Marguerite's additional evocation of the whiteness of his skin metaphorically recasts his body as the highest grade of parchment, and the black and the red symbolise the inks required for writing, then encapsulated within this passion scene are all of the elements required for Christ to be metaphorically transformed from body to book, from incarnate Word to Gospel.[66] Although Marguerite does not elaborate on the theological issues associated with the apparent paradox of

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[64] Allusions to leprosy occur throughout the Bible. In 4 Kings 5:27, a leper is described as 'leprosus quasi nix' ('a leper as white as snow'). For more on the symbolism of skin colour and whiteness, see Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p. 163.

[65] See Amy Ione, *Innovation and Vizualization: Trajectories, Strategies, and Myths*, Consciousness, Literature and the Arts, 1 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), p. 78.

[66] Writing on the body has a long history in Christian literature. In the fourth century, the Spanish-Roman poet Prudentius (*c*.348-*c*.413) compiled his *Liber Peristephanon,* a lyrical collection of martyrs' legends in which St Eulalia compares the wounds inflicted on her by her torturers to purple writing in praise of Christ, whilst the schoolmaster Cassian is tortured by his own pupils who pierce him with their styluses. By the thirteenth century, Beryl Smalley suggests that the analogy between Christ's body and the letter of scripture would become a Christian common place. However as James Kearney observes, it was in the fourteenth century that the image would truly capture the imaginations of scholars and writers anxious to capture something of the mystery of the incarnate Word. The Benedictine encyclopedist and author Pierre Bersuire (*c*.1290-1335) describes Christ as 'a book written with the skin of the virgin […]. That book was spoken about in the disposition of the father, written in the conception of the mother, exposited in the clarification of the nativity, corrected in the passion, erased in the flagellation, punctuated in the imprint of the wounds, adorned in the crucifixion above from the pulpit, illuminated in the outpouring of blood, bound in the resurrection, and examined in the ascension.' Taken from Bersuire's *Repertorium morae*, translated in Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book*, p. 17. See also Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 1, n. 2; James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Whilst Bersuire's exposition of Christ as a book is clearly more elaborate than that of Marguerite d'Oingt, the two share a similar conceptual formulation and structure.

Christ as flesh and Christ as language, the idea appears to lie behind the analogy made here in the *Pagina*. In figuring Christ's body as a metaphorical codex, Marguerite hints at many of the antithetical mysteries that underpin the Christian faith: the relationship between the celestial and the material; the letter and the spirit; the human word and the divine Word.

The double apotheosis of the body and the book, both of Marguerite's heart and of Christ's body and the respective books of both, undergoes a further transformation in the second of her writings, the *Speculum*. The work opens with the disclaimer that Marguerite is recounting the experiences of 'una persona que jo conoisso.'[67] However, as with the *Pagina,* the catalyst for the visions that follow is the holy life of Jesus Christ, written:

> en son cor que oy li eret semblanz alcuna veis que il li fut presenz e que il tenit un livro clos en sa mayn per liey ensennier.[68]

In framing her second composition in the same way as her first, Marguerite gives a strong indication that the anonymous protagonist of the *Speculum* is carried over from one narrative to the next. The same symbiotic pattern is evoked here too: Marguerite's body functions as a container for the divinely inspired text, while the text of the *Speculum* itself is metaphorically figured as an embodied version of its protagonist:

> citi creatura, per la graci de Nostre Seignor, aveit escrit en son cor la seinte vita que Deus Jhesu Criz menet en terra.[69]

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[67] *Speculum*, p. 90, §1; 'a person of my acquaintance.' *Mirror*, p. 41.

[68] *Speculum*, p. 90, §2; 'into her heart [so] that it sometimes seemed to her that He was present and that He held a closed book in His hand in order to teach from it.' *Mirror*, p. 42. My addition in brackets.

[69] *Speculum*, p. 90, §2. 'By the grace of our Lord, this creature had written into her heart the holy life that Jesus Christ had led on earth.' *Mirror,* p. 41.

Once again, the focus of Marguerite's devotion is Christological, however in the *Speculum*, it is a book in Christ's hand that acts as the vision's initial focus. Echoing the colour imagery of the *Pagina*, Marguerite writes that the outside of the book was covered in red, black, and white letters, while its clasps bear letters of gold. The metaphorically-figured book of Christ of her earlier work is embodied in the form and structure of the ornamental book of the second vision; the outer body of Christ, which symbolised his life and deeds, now refigured in the outer binding of this holy book, which in turn, it is implied, will contain the Word.

Blumenfeld-Kosinksi questions Marguerite's statement that 'En les letres blanches eret escrita,' and suggests that Marguerite may be referring to large initials containing intricately drawn images.[70] However, if, Marguerite's visions are conceptualised in terms of containment and embodiment, it is possible that 'en les letres' alludes to a subtler notion that the letters themselves function as containers, which encapsulate and propagate meaning. Just as Christ's body can be transformed into a metaphorical, and then a literal, book within the mystical realm of Marguerite's writing, so too the components of this symbolic transformation – the coloured letters themselves – may be reasonably imagined as transformatory in form and content, acting as a metaphorical gateway to further experience and understanding of the divine.[71] A similar potency is attributed to letter formation in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. In his treatment of Grammar, the first of the seven arts, Isidore outlines the importance of letters, observing:

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[70] *Mirror* p. 42, n. 1. For the quoted text, see *Speculum*, p. 90, §4; *Mirror*, p. 42.

[71] Mary Carruthers observes that 'medieval and ancient writers do not distinguish between what we call "verbal" and "visual" memory; that the letters used for writing were considered to be as visual as what we call "images" today; and that as a result the page as a whole, the complete parchment with its lettering and all its decoration, was considered a cognitively valuable "picture." *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 34, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, orig. publ. 1998), p. 122.

> Litterae autem sunt indicies rerum, signa verborum, quibus tanta vis est, ut nobis dicta absentium sine voce loquantur […]. Usus litteram repertus propter memoriam rerum. Nam ne oblivion fugiant, litteris alligantur.[72]

Isidore's letters are imbued with a sense of mystery, imagination, and memory, able to conjure a representative image despite the lack of its original source. Conceived of as receptacles that bind ('alligantur') whilst simultaneously permitting memorial recovery ('repertus'), Isidore's letters resonate with the structure of the paradoxical container discussed earlier. As Mark E. Amler notes, Isidore possessed a 'mythographic perception of language as a verbal construction motivated by extraverbal reality': for the Spaniard, language possessed the capacity to transform from 'an end into a means to a higher truth.'[73] It is quite possible that Marguerite had some knowledge of Isidore's work: the *Etymologiae sive origines* served as a foundational work in the early Middle Ages and was a crucial component in early medieval monastic elaboration of the reading of Scripture.[74] Given Marguerite's monastic education at Poleteins, it is possible that she drew inspiration from Isidore's transformatory mystical and metaphorical figuring of letters into her own conceptualisation of the holy book as represented in the *Speculum*.

Marguerite's description of this book, inscribed in a trinity of colours and surrounded or bound by gold, also anticipates a vision narrated in her

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[72] See Liber 1.3 in Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. by W. J. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press , 1911). 'Indeed, letters are tokens of things, the signs of words, and they have so much force that the utterances of those who are absent speak to us without a voice […]. The use of letters was invented for the sake of remembering things, which are bound by letters lest they slip away into oblivion.' Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 39.

[73] Mark E. Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in the History of Language Series, 44 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1989), p. 171.

[74] Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*, p. 135.

hagiographic work and discussed earlier in the chapter. The book figured in the Speculum bears a marked resemblance to the co-centric spheres of light in the Eucharistic vision of the *Via Seiti Biatrix*, which are both contained by, and contain a gold light. Marguerite thus shapes her audience's own receptive experience, establishing in one piece of writing the signs and symbols that the audience will discover in the next. In creating this systematicity, Marguerite not only creates a logical coherence for the expression of her own visions, but also conditions their subsequent reception. The metaphors of her text function in an intratextual interchange, shaping an internal cognitive map that both protagonist and audience can navigate. Colours and structures repeatedly modulate with respect to their matter and form, but also remain conceptually, and importantly, theologically, consistent due to Marguerite's manipulation of metaphors of embodiment.

The outer appearance of the holy book provokes the protagonist to reflect on the inner 'livro de sa concienci,' which she finds to be antithetical in content to that of the life of Christ.[75] It is only in meditating on the book of her vision that she is able to correct her own book of her conscience. In doing so, Barr suggests that Marguerite presents her audience with a 'series of telescoping books, each giving rise to the next.'[76] However, it would perhaps be more accurate to describe Marguerite's account as a 'kaleidoscope' of books: the appearance of one book may catalyse that of the next, and the form, structure and content of these visionary books may shift according to the perception of the viewer or reader, but all of the books brought into view here, be they scriptural, mystical, or metaphorical, coexist symmetrically across Marguerite's body of works and within the cognitive field of both the narrator's and the audience's imaginative reality.

[75] *Speculum*, p. 92, §7. *Mirror*, p. 42.
[76] Barr, *Willing to Know God*, p. 56.

Meditating on her own imagined book causes it to transform, opening and revealing 'uns beauz mirors, et no hy aveit fors que due page.'[77] Occurring at the mid-point of the *Speculum*, the opening of this book evokes that of the great book of life in Revelation:

> et libri aperti sunt et alius liber apertus est qui est vitae et iudicati sunt mortui ex his quae scripta erant in libris secundum opera ipsorum.[78]

The structure and composition of Marguerite's book represent a myriad of symbolic connotations. Conceived as a mirror, the open book is, James Wimsatt notes, 'designed to be an image of truth,' whilst its composition of two facing pages causes the codex to structurally reflect the purpose of the life of Christ.[79] In Jesus, the books of the two Testaments are made possible; one prefiguring the life reflected in the other. If, in Marguerite's works, books and fleshly bodies are synonymous, then the opened book of the *Speculum* simultaneously symbolises the fulfilment of the Old Testament's prophecy and the judgement of Revelation. The entailments of Marguerite's metaphor point towards the notion that at the heart of Marguerite's mystical narrative lies the encapsulation of Scripture.

The opening of the third and final chapter of the *Speculum* echoes the introductory lines of the second, but transforms the earlier symbolism found in the first two chapters of the work. Whilst Marguerite meditates on Jesus' position at the right hand of the Father, she describes her heart as 'si elevas.' Her heart has replaced the book of the two earlier visions and is now the agent

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[77] *Speculum*, p. 94, §15; 'a beautiful mirror, and there were only two pages.' *Mirror*, p. 43.

[78] '[E]t libri aperti sunt: et alius liber apertus est, qui est vitae: et judicati sunt mortui ex his, quae scripta erant in libris, secundum opera ipsorum.' [A]nd the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Revelation 20:12.

[79] James I. Wimsatt, *Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature* (New York: Western Publishing Company, 1970), p. 29.

that transports her, as in chapter two of the *Speculum*, to 'un lua qui eret plus granz que toz li monz et plus reluysanz que li solouz de totes pars.'[80] Here, Christ is refigured too. Her vision is one of Christ's resurrected body, not of his book, introduced in terms of his birth before again being elided with the Passion. Jesus, she writes:

> eret vestiz de cella gloriousa roba qu'il prit el tres noble cors de Nostra Donna. En ses tres nobles mayns e en ses pies apparyssant les glorioses playes que il suffrit per amour de nos.[81]

Christ is conceptualised in terms of both containment and permeability: 'vestiz' in flesh and matter, and radiating light from his wounds. Like the triune spheres of light and the holy book, both of which contain and are contained by divine truth (the light by the golden light, the book by the golden clasps), so too the corporeal Christ is imagined in terms of Marguerite's key conceptual metaphor, embodied containment. The *Speculum* has come full circle, from Marguerite's outer, narrated book, to the book of Christ, through which she is able, through prayer, to look into the book of her heart.

The *Speculum* ends with an outpouring of abstract metaphors to describe the divine, beginning with his beauty ('beuta'), his freedom ('frans'), and his joy ('delyez'), and ending with his eternity ('eternauz').[82] It is at this point in her writing that Marguerite is perhaps at her closest, stylistically and theologically, to the mystical expression of Marguerite Porete. The allusions to joy, freedom, and love echo the descriptions of soaring ecstasy of Porete's annihilated soul, whilst her portrayal of the saints and their reciprocal

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[80] *Speculum*, p. 98, §23; 'a place much larger than the entire world, and more brilliant all over than the sun.' *Mirror*, p. 45.

[81] *Speculum*, p. 98, §24; 'was clothed in this glorious garment which He assumed in the noble body of Our Lady. On His noble hands and feet appeared the glorious wounds that He suffered for love of us.' *Mirror*, p. 45.

[82] See *Speculum*, pp. 98-100, §25-34. *Mirror*, pp. 45-46.

relationship with God is markedly similar to that depicted by Porete of *l'ame adnientie*. Of the saints, Marguerite d'Oingt writes:

> [Deus] los ha fait si beuz et si glorious que la Trinita veit chacuns en se, assi come un veit en un bel mireour co que li est devant.[83]

The saints themselves are figured as receptacles of the divine, but Marguerite is careful not to assert that they are in any sense equivalent to the Trinity reflected in them. Whereas earlier in the *Speculum*, Jesus' body is described as 'si tres nobles que l'on si poit remirer plus clarament que [en] un mirour,' this closing account of the saints is semantically different; their bodies are described in terms of their similitude to a mirror, not their equivalence or superiority. Humanity, meanwhile, is portrayed not by means of a metaphorical mirror, but with the metaphor of painting.[84] As such, Marguerite creates a hierarchy arranged around resemblance, perception and truth. At the top is Christ, seen 'more clearly than in a mirror.' His image is pure: there is no intermediary matter or substance with which to gain access or to give it form. At the mid-point are the saints, who see the Trinity within themselves 'as in a mirror,' and at the bottom is man, created in God's image. Man is likened to a painting; he can be represented in the form of God, but can only ever constitute a representation of divine truth.

The *Speculum*'s final lines resolve the thematic arc of Marguerite's work, bringing the focus back to its original theme of revelation understood through

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[83] *Speculum*, pp. 100-102, §35. '[God] made them so beautiful and so glorious that each of them sees the Trinity in himself, as one sees in a beautiful mirror that which is in front of it.' *Mirror*, p. 46.

[84] 'Et tot assi com li saint se delectunt en veir la beuta Nostron Seignour, se deduit nostre bons creares en la beuta y en l'amour de se beles creatures qu'il a fait a sa ymagi et a sa semblanci, assi come li bons meitres regardet volunteyrs una bela carta, quant il l'a bein fayta.' *Speculum*, p. 102, §36. 'And just as the saints take pleasure in seeing the beauty of Our Lord, so our good Creator takes pleasure in the beauty and love of the beautiful creatures He has made in His image and semblance: thus a good master likes to look at a beautiful painting when he has painted well.' *Mirror*, p. 46.

bibliophilic metaphor. The prioress ends her visionary account by extending the optimism and potential of mystical experience to all those who believe in God:

> et per co sont benatru li net de cuor, quar il verent Deu tot apertament. Et il memes lo promet en l'avangelo et dit que benatru sont li ne de cuor, quar il verrent Deu faci a faci, en sat re grant beuta.[85]

Drawing on Paul's celebrated expression of 1 Corinthians 13:12, Marguerite suggests that the faithful will one day see God 'face to face' – that the terrestrial hierarchy she has constructed to illustrate man's relationship to God will be overturned.[86] In choosing to end with the words of St Paul, Marguerite once again frames her own work with the macrocosmic account of Scripture. Literal and metaphorical books contain and reflect one another, structured symbolically in much the same way that Marguerite shapes her understanding of the triune God and his relationship with man through Christ.

The final extant mystical work by Marguerite, the hagiographic *Li Via Seiti Biatrix Virgina de Ornaciu*, completes the staged division of the authorial-protagonist voice across her corpus. Whereas the *Pagina* merges the voices of the two figures, and the *Speculum* blurs the distinction between Marguerite and the anonymous 'creatura' of the narrative, the *Via* marks a clear distinction between the figures of Marguerite and Béatrix, although

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[85] *Speculum*, p. 102, §39; 'and that is why the pure of heart are blessed, because they will see God clearly. He himself promises this in the gospel and He says that blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God face to face in His great beauty.' *Mirror*, p. 47.

[86] 'Videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum.' 1 Corinthians 13:12. 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.' As Blumenfeld-Kosinksi notes, the Francoprovençal word *apertement* is 'frequently used in medieval texts to describe things that will be revealed.' See the *Mirror*, p. 47, n. 3.

paradoxically, it is in this distinction that the thematic trajectory of Marguerite's works will find its resolution. Unlike her earlier works, in which bibliophilic and corporeal images gave way to each other, Marguerite's portrayal of Béatrix invites the unison of both the book and the body in a single representation. In writing the life of another mystic, Marguerite metaphorically reconstructs Béatrix's body through the text, whilst literally constructing the book of Béatrix's life. Béatrix's body and book now serve as an alternative expression of pious devotion, achieved through the ascetic imitation and Eucharistic transubstantiation of Christ's life and body.

As with the protagonists of the *Pagina* and the *Speculum*, Béatrix's mystical experience finds its expression in her heart:

> illi sentivet si grant graci et si grant gloyri en son cuor de la amour de Nostrum Segnour que a peynes que illi la poet sustinir.[87]

Whilst Marguerite's references to her own heart are, on the whole, intellectualised allusions to it acting as a vehicle for God's law, or as a receptacle for her experience of her conscience, Béatrix's heart assumes a more physical and affective response to the divine.[88] To a certain extent, this reflects the general style and tone of the narrative: the work is longer, broader in scope, and more vividly described than the more economical expression of the *Pagina* and the *Speculum*.[89] However, it also signals a shift

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[87] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix,* p. 106, §45; 'she felt […] such great grace and such a radiance of the Lord's love in her heart that she could hardly bear it.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 48.

[88] Marguerite ends the *Pagina* with the words: 'Domine dulcis, scribe in corde meo illud quod vis ut faciam. Scribe ibi tuam legem, scribe ibi tua mandata ut nunquam deleantur.' p. 88, §109. 'Sweet Lord, write into my heart what you want me to do. Write your law, write there your orders so that they will never be erased.' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 41.

[89] Marguerite's economic use of language and imagery, particularly toward the end of the *Pagina*, is reminiscent of the sparse style of Guigo I, the codifier of the Carthusian order and

in tone and emphasis, suggesting that Béatrix's piety is characterised in terms of the aspiring lover of Christ, rather than in the moralising devotion of Marguerite. Despite the shift in style, genre, and narrative voice, the metaphorical focus remains consistent. As with the rest of Marguerite's corpus, the dominant source domain in the *Via* draws from the transformation of form and matter, both ethereal and tangible.

The extent of Béatrix's holiness is emphasised in the narrative's introduction. Drawing on familiar tropes from both ancient and contemporary hagiographic sources, Marguerite depicts the young Carthusian as the archetypal 'puella senex'; spiritually precocious and concerned with the welfare of her community.[90] Yet whilst these early topoi consolidate and confirm Béatrix's character, creating extra-textual resonances with other hagiographic narratives with which Marguerite's audiences would no doubt have been familiar, it is the portrayal of the self-inflicted torture during her conflict with the devil that draws the corporeal figure of Béatrix into sharp relief.[91]

Béatrix's self-injurious practices are said to exceed the fasting and abstinence associated with strict monastic life, and are instead driven by a

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author of the *Meditationes*, a series of 476 aphorisms concerning the mysteries of Christian belief and practical rules for the Carthusian monk to live by. See *Guigo Ier: Les Méditations (Recueil de pensées)*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par Un Chartreux, Sources chrétiennes, 308 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983).

[90] For more on the figure of the *puella senex*, see John Anthony Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hannover and London: University Press of New England, 1987).

[91] Marguerite's apparent disapproval of Beatrix's excessive self-injuries ('que erant acunes veys senz grant discrecion') echoes a common feature of descriptions of ascetic holy men and women. Giles Constable cites a number of medieval figures who called for moderation in ascetic practices, including Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom among the Church Fathers, Benedict of Nursia, Bruno of La Chartreuse, and Bernard of Clairvaux. See Giles Constable, 'Moderation and Restraint in Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages,' in *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought*, ed. by Haijo Jan Westra (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992), pp. 315-327.

focus on burning and puncturing her body. Highlighting the disparity between her charity to others and the extreme tortures she inflicts on herself, Marguerite writes:

> Quant illi eret cusinyeri y enfermeri, illi o feyseyt mout cheritousament. Et quant oy li coventavet fayre alcunes choses al fua, illi meteyt tant faci sus la chalour del fua que oy li eret vyayres que li cervella li brulat en la testa et que li huel li erragissant de la testa et mente vez illi attendeyt qu'il volassant en terra.[92]

The use of colour in this passage is highly evocative. The mention of fire and burning recalls the dominant colours of Marguerite's earlier writings, red and black, and echoes both the *Pagina* and the *Speculum* by placing the emphasis on human skin as the locus where the torture is both realised and symbolised. The young nun is also described as walking barefoot through the snow and ice and carrying hot coals to burn the skin on her hands in another pair of images designed to draw the audience's attention to the colours white, red, and black. Béatrix's flesh is emblematic of Christ's body as it is figured in Marguerite's first work, and of the book of Christ in the second. Imitation of Christ as both divine body and Word converge simultaneously in the figure of the Carthusian ascetic.[93]

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[92] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 106, §47. 'When she was a cook and a nurse, she showed great charity. And when she had to do something on the fire, she moved her face so close to the heat that it seemed to her that her brain was on fire and that her eyes came out of her head, and often she expected to see them falling on the floor.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice,* p. 49.

[93] Béatrix also displays self-induced stigmata, piercing her hands with nails. Marguerite writes that on doing this, however, clear water flows from her wounds as opposed to blood. This may be in reference to Béatrix's physical purity, or may be indicative of a more complex combination of images. A popular prayer of the early fourteenth century, often performed during mass, the *Anima Christi*, took the body, blood, and, strangely, water from the side of Christ as its focus: 'Anima Christi sanctifica me. Corpus Christi, salva me. Sanguis Christi, inebria me. Aqua lateris Christi, lava me. Passio Christi, conforta me.' It is possible that Marguerite was drawing on the imagery of this prayer when she composed this passage in Béatrix's *vita*. Stigmata, however, were increasingly common in accounts of holy lives. Miri Rubin gives details of the use and circulation of the *Anima Christi* in *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*

There is, however, another role ascribed to Béatrix's body that is antithetical to its metaphorical re-enactment of the holy book and body of Christ. Her body also acts as a figurative battleground upon which she and the devil struggle to claim ownership of her body and her mind.[94] As the devil torments her physically, so too Béatrix tortures her body: 'mout grant penenci fayre.'[95] Béatrix's corporeity thus becomes a commodity for which the nun and the devil bargain in vain, neither able to transform it sufficiently to succeed in their aims. Whilst the devil continues to attack Béatrix's body, the narrative denies the audience any detail on the devil's part. Yet when the devil attacks Béatrix's cognitive faculties, the emphasis turns towards the dangers posed by the devil's evil:

> Adon ne layssiet neguna chosa que il poet damagier l'arma ne lo cors al deplaisir de son creatour, qu'il totes ne les li mit avant per semblances et per figures ta[n]t vilment quant el poeyt. Les granz viutas et ordures que il li amenavet devant per diverses maneres non oserit negunt recontar […].[96]

Spiritual attack is clearly more perilous than physical assault, and it is from this point in the narrative that Béatrix's piety undergoes a radical transformation, from being predominantly physical to visionary. She is saved from the devil by praying to the Virgin, who appears, saying:

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 156-157. Following the composition and widespread dissemination of the life of St Francis (1181-1226) in St Bonaventure's *Legenda major* (1265) in which St Francis receives the stigmata, numerous holy men and women are described as stigmatics. For more on mystical stigmata, see Augustin Poulain, 'Mystical Stigmata,' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912). Available online: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14294b.htm. Accessed 23/01/14.

[94] Kieckhefer writes that hagiographic descriptions of saints' struggles with the devil represent 'a darker side to mystical experiences.' Following the classic temptation of St Anthony, 'Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Peter Olafsson and John Ruysbroeck all encountered the devil almost as a counterthrust to the joy of mystical revelation.' *Unquiet Souls,* p. 174.

[95] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 106, §46; 'impose a great penance.' *The Life of Saint Beatrix*, p. 49.

[96] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix,* p. 108, §53. 'He omitted none of the things that could do harm to her soul or body […] and he offered them to her in her imagination through images as nastily as he could. Nobody would dare describe the horrible foulness and filth which he paraded before her eyes.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 50.

> non aes pour ne neguna dotanci, car […] ju preno l'arma et lo cors de toy en ma garda y en ma deffension; et te garderey et deffendrey del poyr del dyablo et de sos enginz.[97]

The imagery implicit in the Virgin's promise to Béatrix is particularly noteworthy. Mary offers to take both Béatrix's body and soul into, or under, her guard and protection: metaphorically she promises to subsume that makes Béatrix a corporeal being (composed of body and soul, in accordance with hylomorphic philosophy, into the meta-structure of holy corporeal essence). One body thus incorporates another in the Christian message of salvation, echoing and reinforcing the imagery used within Marguerite's schema of corporeity, permeability, and transformation. Just as earlier corporeal matter such as light, human flesh, and the codex are metaphorically imagined as potential representations of the same essential structure, so too the envisioned Mary possesses the metaphoric potential to incorporate Béatrix.

It is important to note that whilst divine corporeity is imagined as possessing the capacity to subsume humanity's corporeal form, Marguerite is careful never to suggest that the reverse might also be possible. Over the course of her three works, Marguerite frequently alludes to God being 'in her heart' or, as in the case of Béatrix, 'li graci de Nostrum Segnour fut toz jors en liey.'[98] However, as becomes apparent in a later episode in the hagiography, the containment of the divine within the human corpus is a more problematic idea.

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[97] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 108-110, §57; 'do not fear anything, [for] I take your soul and your body under my guard and protection and I will protect and defend you against the power of the devil and his tricks.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 50.

[98] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 112, §67; 'the grace of our Lord was always within her.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 52, §67. See also: *Pagina*, p. 72, §4; *A Page of Meditations*, p. 26.

Her *vita* reports that around Advent, Béatrix began to feel troubled by her apparent lack of devotion. On Christmas Day, she is reluctant to join her fellow nuns in receiving the Host, but feels compelled to do so by a feeling of desire for her 'creatour.'[99] Throughout the *vita*, the Host is never referred to either in the Latin as the 'hostia,' or in its Francoprovençal translation, the 'oti.' Rather, it is personified as the 'salvour,' the 'creatour,' and, as Béatrix finally takes the Host, 'lo beneyt cors de Nostrum Segnour.'[100] As Béatrix consumes the consecrated bread, the Host develops an increasingly embodied form. In a graphic image, the Host remains in Béatrix's mouth: 'lo gros de una lentili de l'oti.'[101] In one of the few images drawn from a domestic source domain, the body of Christ is figured as a tiny piece of food; conceptually, corporeity is paradoxically imagined as simultaneously abstract, infinite and omnipotent, whilst also being tangible, miniscule, and ordinary.[102]

As in previous passages, Marguerite manipulates the chronology of these events. The narrative oscillates from the Incarnate Christ of the Nativity, alluded to in this episode taking place on Christmas Day, to the events of the Last Supper, symbolised by the Eucharist, and finally to the Passion in the broken body as represented by the singular piece of the Host. Once again, Marguerite telescopes the events of the Gospels into the span of her own work, transposing the meta-narrative of salvation onto a singular mystical experience.

This notion of the Host as both symbol of, and catalyst for, the consumption of Christ's flesh is a prevalent theme in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century narrative accounts of female mystical experience, discussed

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[99] *Li Via Seiti Beatrix*, p. 122, §91; 'creator,' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 56.
[100] *Li Via Seiti Beatrix*, p. 122, §89, 91, 92; 'the blessed body of our Lord.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice* p. 56.
[101] *Li Via Seiti Beatrix*, p. 122, §92; 'a lentil-sized piece of the Host.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 56.
[102] Blumenfeld-Kosinksi remarks on Marguerite's 'homely similes' in a note to her translation. See the *Mirror*, p. 40, n. 1.

in detail by Caroline Bynum in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast.* Bynum notes that sensual experiences associated with the sacrament feature in the lives of the Low Country mystics Marie d'Oignies (1177-1213), Ida van Leuven (*c.*1211-1290), and Marguerite d'Ypres (d.1237), and in the account of the life of the Italian Angela of Foligno (1248-1309).[103] One possible source for this imagery, Bynum suggests, can be found in Bernard of Clairvaux's comparison of the consumption of the sacrament with the process of chewing, eating, and digesting the divine.[104] However, she also places the increasing preoccupation with the physicality of Christ within a broader theological and historical context, citing the rise in heretical movements such as those of the the Cathars and the Albigensians, both of whom denounced the role of the body, flesh, and matter, as a further reason for the Church's late medieval emphasis on the bleeding, suffering Christ.[105]

It was perhaps a combination of both of these trends, the textual and the contextual, that influenced Marguerite's imagery in this episode of Eucharistic devotion and its effect on Béatrix is profound. Marguerite describes her struggling to swallow the Host, and that 'li oti que illi aveyt en la bochi se vayt si creytre que illi ot tota la bochi pleyna […] et li aveyt tal savour come de cher et de san.'[106] Throughout the *vita,* Béatrix has been depicted in the role of

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[103] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 116-119 and p. 141. There are a number of parallels between episodes in Marguerite's writings and *The Book of Blessed Angela of Foligno*. Angela was said to see the Christ child during the Elevation of the Host on several occasions in her *Memoriale*: 'Alia vice dixit quod vidit in hostia sicut puerum Christum, sed videbatur esse magnus et multum dominans sicut qui teneret dominationem.' Angela de Fulginio, *Memoriale*, ed. by L. Thier and A. Calufetti, *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum,* 25 (1985): 125-400. Here at p. 196.'The Memorial,' in *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works*, trans. by Paul Lachance (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), pp. 146-147.

[104] See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 116. See also Sermon IV.5 in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. by G. R. Evans, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 233. Lakoff and Johnson develop the metaphor of eating as the acquisition of an abstract concept in *Philosophy in the Flesh,* pp. 241-243.

[105] See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 252-53.

[106] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 122, §93; 'the Host that she still had in her mouth began to grow until her mouth was completely filled by it […] and she tasted flesh and blood.' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 56. Angela da Foligno describes a similar experience in her *Memorial*. Her scribe, Brother Arnaldo, writes: 'quando communicat, hostia extenditur in ore'; 'when she receives

imitatio Christi. Yet as she consumes Christi's crucified body, the narrative makes it clear that she cannot simply incorporate Christ into her own body. It is only by engaging in prayer that she is able to swallow the Host, at which point 'illi o sentit ferir el cuor.'[107]

Bynum suggests that the fourteenth-century preoccupation with 'becoming Christ' was made ideologically possible 'in eating Christ's crucified body.'[108] However, as Marguerite's hagiography makes clear, incorporating Christ alone is not sufficient a devotional practice. 'Imitatio' is not simply a case of incorporating 'flesh into flesh.'[109] Conceptually, it may be structured as incorporating one corporeal form into another, but, as Béatrix's hagiography makes clear, for humanity at least, this can be neither a permanent nor an objective state of affairs. Béatrix senses a joyful feeling in her heart during 'los tres jors de Chalendes,' but on the fourth, 'li granz consolacions se departit en partia de son cuor': for its duration, the mystical experience of consuming Christ is expressed in terms of embodied realism.[110] It is made possible – made 'real' within the confines of the post-experiential narrative – due to the interaction between corporeal forms, but, for the mystic, the experience itself can only ever consist of metaphorical representation when compared to the meta-incorporation of the human by the divine.

Within the narrative arc of Béatrix's *vita,* Marguerite captures a sense of the entirety of her textual corpus and its associated imagery. Béatrix's own body and book reflect those of Christ illustrated in the *Pagina* and the *Speculum*

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communion, the host lingers in her mouth.' However, unlike Béatrix, Angela tells Arnaldo that: 'quando descendit in corpus meum, dat mihi unum sentimentum maximum placibile'; 'when it [the host] descends into my body it produces in me a most pleasant sensation.' See *Memoriale*, pp. 308-310; *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works*, p. 186.

[107] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 124, §95; 'she felt it penetrate her heart,' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 56.

[108] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* p. 256.

[109] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 257.

[110] *Li Via Seiti Biatrix*, p. 124, §98; 'the three days of Christmas'; 'the feeling of consolation left her [heart] –but not completely,' *The Life of Saint Beatrice*, p. 57.

respectively, and the chronology of Béatrix's life, from childhood to Carthusian mystic, is imagined through the lens of the life of Christ, from Incarnation to Passion. The law of God, as it is written in the Old Testament, and, in Marguerite's heart in the *Pagina*, thus becomes lived experience: Béatrix embodies the experience of the Gospels through the metaphorical expression of her mysticism. Béatrix's book, her *vita*, is therefore both Marguerite's book, figured literally and metaphorically, and a representation of the meta-book of Scripture. Marguerite's *oeuvre* comes full circle, finding its conclusion in the word of God.

Form and content constitute a symbiotic structure in the writings of Marguerite d'Oingt. Her textual corpus contains, and is contained and contextualised by, the holy book of Scripture in the same way that her mystical experiences and her account of Béatrix's experience find shape and meaning in the experience of Christ. The apotheosis of the book becomes a means through which to express the mysteries of the divine, the corporeity of the flesh and the codex providing structure to the otherwise inexpressible. Throughout the *Pagina*, the *Speculum* and the *Via Seiti Biatrix*, Marguerite manipulates colour, spatial relations, and aspectual or event-structuring concepts, as defined by Lakoff and Johnson in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, to give a sense of tangible reality to her mystical expression.[111] Despite the repeated refrain that language fails her, Marguerite presents mystical experience in both sensual and material terms, creating coherence from an imaginative conceptualisation of corporeity and the way in which it interacts with its environs. She is careful never to ascribe objective truth to the experiences she reports: the imagery she draws on – the ornate book of Christ, the mirror of the *Speculum* - are not objects or substances of the everyday world. Yet nor are her works to be regarded as subjective

[111] See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, especially pp. 16-36.

representations: mystical expression is clearly not a 'figment of our imaginations nor spontaneous creations of our brains.'[112]

Rather, in drawing on the container/contained paradox, Marguerite creates a logical coherence for her mystical experience based on its image-schematic structure. In locating metaphors of corporeity in Marguerite's works, an image-schema composed of insides, outsides, and permeable boundaries forms naturally and rationally to support her metaphors of embodiment in what Lakoff and Johnson would call a 'gestalt-structure in the sense that no parts make sense without the whole.'[113] Mystical experience in Marguerite's narratives is coherent precisely because she expresses it in these image-schematic terms: the book of the *Speculum* is the book of Christ because it is possible to map the image-schema from the body of Christ in the *Pagina* onto it. If these gestalt structures did not form part of the mystical narrative, mystical expression would not make sense – it would be ungrounded and decontextualized, just as it is figured in the philosophy of Forman's Pure Consciousness Events.

Themes of embodiment and a privileging of corporeity may not initially appear to correlate with the strict ascetic traditions of the Carthusian order as outlined in the previous chapter. Indeed, Marguerite herself repeatedly privileges non-corporeal experience over physical, bodily action.[114] However, as her writings illustrate, being embodied constitutes being part of a greater, all-encompassing whole. Marguerite is very much part of her world, of her order's ascetic and meditational practices, and of their bibliophilic affinities. As Lakoff and Johnson observe, embodiment and the embodied mind are largely

[112] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 25.

[113] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 32.

[114] Marguerite makes frequent allusions to her (and Béatrix's) 'uouz del cor' (her 'spiritual eyes') and writes that the 'caro est tota plena pigricia et sompnolencia et vult semper contra spiritum' ('the flesh is full of laziness and sleepiness and always goes against the spirit.'). *Pagina*, p. 87, §107; *A Page of Meditations*, p. 40.

concerned with empathy: 'imaginative projection,' they conclude, 'is a vital cognitive faculty.'[115]

Imaginative projections of the mystical experience lie at the heart of Marguerite d'Oingt's corpus and her theology. The body and book of the divine both frame and structure the body of her work and her belief, and in turn shape a mystical reality for protagonist, author, and audience. For Marguerite, metaphor captures the inexpressibility of the mystical experience, if only in part, and provides it with an experiential structure. As she writes of Christ:

> illum qui tam magnus quod totus mundus eum capere non poterat et qui tenebat totum mundum in suo pugno.[116]

Metaphor is, in this case, to be lived by.

[115] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 565.

[116] *Pagina meditationum*, p. 73, §9. 'He who was so big that the whole world could not contain Him and who held the whole world in His hand,' *A Page of Meditations*, p. 27.

CHAPTER FOUR

Metaphors To Imagine By:

Metaphorical Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames*

The metaphorical nature of Marguerite Porete's text is apparent in its very title, the *Mirouer des simples ames*.[1] As the work of Sister Ritamary Bradley, Herbert Grabes, and Margot Schmidt, amongst others, has shown, the perceptual and interpretative qualities of the mirror constituted a vital source of imagery for medieval writers; a source deeply rooted in the classical and early Christian traditions.[2] The range of meanings attributed to the Latin noun 'speculum' is vast, incorporating 'mirror,' 'image,' 'representation,' 'painting,' 'picture,' 'description' and a 'means of knowledge […] either purely informative or normative,' whilst its adjectival counterpart, 'mirus,' evokes the sense of something being 'marvellous' or 'extraordinary' – all terms that might legitimately be applied to the *l'Ame's* experience of the divine in Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer*.[3]

The connotations inherent in the Old French translation of 'speculum,' 'miroir,' similarly give rise to notions of looking, recognising, thinking and perception.[4] As such, the text's title is immediately suggestive of a series of dialectic relationships: the seen and the known, the reflective and the

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[1] For a discussion of the controversy surrounding the title of the work and the decision here to use the shortened version of the title, see the Introduction.

[2] Sister Ritamary Bradley, 'Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum* in Mediaeval Literature,' *Speculum,* 29, 1 (Jan. 1954): 100-115; Grabes, *The Mutable Glass*; Margot Schmidt, 'Miroir,' in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, ed. by M. Viller et al., vol. 10, part II, cols 1290-1303 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937-). See also Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. by Katharine H. Jewett (New York and London: Routledge, 2001); Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly*; Hamburger, 'Speculations on Speculation.'

[3] Kocher, *Allegories of Love,* pp. 8-10; Schmidt, 'Miroir,' cols 1290-1291.

[4] See the *Dictionnaire du moyen français*, available online at www.atilf.fr/dmf. Accessed 30/04/2014. See also A.J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Français: Le Moyen Âge,* 2nd edition (Paris: Larousse, 1992), p. 389, and Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, pp. 8-9.

introspective, the literal and the metaphorical. This continuing dialectical element within the *Mirouer* carries its protagonist, *l'Ame*, towards the cusp of achieving a state of 'unitas indistinctionis' with the divine as she proceeds through a series of seven mystical stages, which centre on the relinquishment of her will.[5] However, as this chapter will suggest, the metaphors she chooses to express this state of union, the entailments they give rise to, and, by extension, the conceptual structures that underpin them, keep both the Soul and, by implication, the reader, from making the ultimate transition from human to divine, either within the scope of the text or, indeed, within the earthly lifespan of the human self.

Following Guarnieri's linkage of the historical figure of Marguerite Porete to her enigmatic treatise, treatments of her life and work have frequently been caught in a circular logic, trying to match the historical figure of the author to the text, and in turn, trying to bring the text into harmony with the wider notion of the canon of late medieval mystical writing or the historical period in which she was writing.[6] Although the need for contextual information has been

[5] 'Unitas indistinctionis,' the state of indistinct union of the soul with God, is often considered a defining feature of mystical expression, found in accounts of spiritual union as early as those of Plotinus (204-70) and Proclus (412-485). In an overview of the subject, Bernard McGinn traces the development of such expression from Biblical accounts in 1 Corinthians 6:17 and John 17:21 through Patristic expression and notes that 'extensive analyses of the forms of union began in the twelfth century.' However it was with the advent of the thirteenth century that 'there was a surge of accounts that speak of union of identity or indistinction with God (*unitas identitatis/ unitas indistinctionis*). Although this form of union often used philosophical categories drawn from Neoplatonic philosophy, it was not an academic revival, but part of the lived experience of the exponents of the New Mysticism.' McGinn cites Meister Eckhart as the 'foremost spokesman of the union of identity in which the soul becomes annihilated in order to be totally merged with God,' although a significant number of scholars have suggested that Eckhart was familiar with Porete's writings and that his theology of the 'poverty of the spirit' was influenced by them. See Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Random House, 2006), pp. 427-429; see also *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 217; 'Love, Knowledge, and *Unio Mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition,' in *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. by Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn (New York: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 59-86. A comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Marguerite Porete's writings and those of Meister Eckhart is given by Hollywood in *The Soul As Virgin Wife*, passim.

[6] See, for example, Grace M. Jantzen's essay, ' Disrupting the Sacred: Religion and Gender in the City,' in *Mysticism and Social Transformation*, ed. by Janet K. Ruffing (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp. 29-44. Jantzen argues that 'various modern interpretations of Marguerite [continue […]], in the guise of scholarly exposition, [to show] assumptions about

highlighted here, critical studies must remain sensitive to, if not sceptical of, the dangers of assuming and privileging a historical or ideological stance over and above what is presented by the textual material in question. As Chapter Two illustrated, the period in which Porete was writing and the circumstances surrounding her trial were far more complicated than the absolutist nature of her condemnation allows for, and, as a result, critical approaches to the *Mirouer* need to remain vigilant as to the various agendas at work in both medieval and modern receptions to both author and text.

Newman suggests that these hurdles can, in the case of medieval women's literary production, be lessened if the texts in question are read not as participating in (or attempting to dismantle) some falsely static state of affairs.[7] These might include a 'monolithic' vision of the medieval Church, or, as Kieckhefer points out, an overstating of the sophistication and efficacy of the inquisition.[8] Rather, literary texts of the medieval period must be read as articulations of, and reflections on, 'the capacious as well as contentious breadth of Christian discourse.' 'In pretending otherwise,' Newman writes, 'we merely perpetuate the inquisitors' program of defining Insiders and Outsiders, even if we praise what they damned and damn what they praised.'[9]

In its reading of Porete's work and analysis of her use of metaphor, this chapter follows Newman's counsel by seeking neither to condemn nor to condone Porete's status as a relapsed heretic. Rather, it takes its lead from the methodological approach adopted in the previous discussion of Marguerite d'Oingt's writings, and gives primacy to the text and its implications. In

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women, religion, and the city […] uncomfortably parallel to Philip's inquisitorial regime in the fourteenth century.' She cites Jean Leclerq, Edmund Colledge, and Ernst McDonnell as guilty of turning to Porete's text and trial documents 'to justify her burning anew.' See p. 32 and pp. 42-43.

[7] Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist,* p. 246.

[8] Kieckhefer, 'The Office of Inquisition.'

[9] Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist,* p. 246.

particular, this exploration of the *Mirouer* focuses on a similar triadic structure of symbols – the protagonist's voice, the book, and the mirror – and questions the portrait of language, cognition and mystical experience Marguerite Porete presents to, or indeed problematizes for, both her medieval and modern readership.

In any analysis of the *Mirouer des simples ames*, it is often simpler to account for what the text does not assert rather than what it does. Porete does not suggest that the attainment of the mystical states of consciousness she describes is a universal possibility; nor does she, unlike her mystical counterpart Marguerite d'Oingt, claim to provide a record of lived 'experience.'[10] The *Mirouer* does not constitute a vision-narrative; it does not recount a mystical experience ordered in accordance with the deeply ritualised liturgy of the Christian ecclesial tradition, and nor does it attempt to explain mystical experience using the schemas characterised by a tangible reality. There are no sustained descriptions of the Passion, for example, and the dialogic voices offer no sense of time or space. It presents an uncompromising view of what the Soul perceives to be humanity's failings – an over-dependency on literal or rational thought and an over-attachment to the material trappings and manifestations of the Christian church – and frequently despairs over the fallen medium of human language as a tool with which to transmit *Dame Amour's* theology.[11] Yet the *Mirouer* is also a text that seeks to inspire hope. Although literal language and the notion of embodied thought are marks of humanity's distance from God, the *Mirouer des simples ames* is both suggestive of, and testament to, the idea that humanity possesses a cognitive ability to

[10] See, for example, the opening lines of the *Mirouer*: 'Vous qui en ce livre lirez,/ Se bien le voulez entendre/ Pensez ad ce que vous direz/ Car il est fort a comprendre.' *Mirouer*, p. 8. 'You who would read this book,/ If you indeed wish to grasp it,/ Think about what you say,/ For it is very difficult to comprehend.' *Mirror*, p. 79.

[11] The Soul says to *Dame Amour*: 'Vrayement, dame Amour, tout ce que vous avez dit de ceste grace parmy bouche de creature n'en feroit fors que barbetez, au regart de vostre oeuvre.' *Mirouer*, ch. 38, p. 122. 'Truly, Lady Love, everything you have said about this grace through the mouth of a creature would only be muttering compared to your work.' *Mirror*, pp. 118-119.

progressively alter its perceptual mode of approaching the world, and that, in turn, the soul may be rewarded by means of an alteration by the divine. As such, Porete's text, in both theory and praxis, can be seen to enact the cognitive qualities of metaphor outlined in the opening chapter.

The condemnation of 1310 pronounced the subversive nature of the *Mirouer* in relation to church doctrine of the late medieval West. A closer reading of Porete's metaphorical structures suggests, however, that her challenge was not directed at the Church *per se*, but instead towards mankind's perception of reality and truth. As the following discussion will suggest, the language, structure, and conceptual underpinnings of the *Mirouer* function in much the same way as Ricoeur suggests that metaphor operates. Echoing his words quoted in the first chapter, Porete's mystical expression serves as a kind of poesis, 'lifting' her audience into a more participatory kind of knowing in the hope of a new imaginative reality and capacity to make meaning.[12]

The seven-stage journey made by the Soul, and the dialogue between the three main characters, *Dame Amour*, *Raison*, and *l'Ame,* possesses a dual function, both propeling its protagonists through the narrative whilst clarifying the mystical trajectory for its audience, and, as a result, constitutes what might be regarded as a study in cognitive transcendence. Porete's *Mirouer* is a representation, or 'mirouer,' of the imagination, personified by *l'Ame* and represented by the text, and, as it shifts in its focus from the literal to the figurative, it evokes the schematization of a new, spiritualised world-view. Drawing on the earlier suggestion that mystical writings function as spaces or loci that contain their own schematic structures, logic, and rationale, a principal

[12] Ricoeur, 'Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,' p. 100 and p. 104.

aim of this investigation is to explore the means by which Porete is seen to shape the parameters of that world-view.[13]

To return to the opening comments concerning Marguerite's choice of title, the *Mirouer* clearly draws on classical and medieval notions of the speculum/miroir as an evocative symbol of illusion and deception, and, as both figurative object and book title, it is undoubtedly indicative of the text's didactic aims of self-knowledge and introspection.[14] Medieval audiences would have been familiar with the two-fold capacity of the mirror at once to show to the world what it is and what it ought to be, a model which most likely filtered into the medieval consciousness from Augustine's reflections on St Paul's celebrated phrase in 1 Corinthians 13:12.[15] Didactic manuals such as those known as the *speculum principum,* compendiums encompassing history, doctrine or morals, and single-volume encyclopaedias, were popular compositions between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and indeed, as Kocher observes, the *Mirouer*'s intent to teach its audience is made apparent in its repeated use of dialogic

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[13] Lichtmann, for example, suggests that Marguerite's creativity is mainly linguistic: '[using] all the linguistic means at her disposal, particularly paradox and contradiction, to annihilate in language as in reality all understanding, will, love, and even the self itself [… in her] dissent from and subversion of the predominant patriarchal order.' See 'Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart,' p. 72 and p. 74.

[14] For a reading of Porete's *Mirouer* in relation to the mirror-imagery in the myth of Narcissus and the alternative title that Jean de Meun gave to the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Miroir des amoreus,* see Newman, 'The Mirror and the Rose.' Drawing on the work of Herbert Grabes, Hollywood also highlights the capacity of the mirror in the medieval consciousness to act as an agent for deception and deformity. See *The Soul As Virgin Wife*, p. 87. Schmidt suggests that within the genre of 'la littérature des Miroirs […] ces ouvrages peuvent globalement être divisés en deux groupes: les Miroirs *instructifs* et les Miroirs *exemplaires*, ou normatifs, selon qu'ils visent à enrichir la connaissance ou à éclairer la vie morale et spirituelle (original emphasis).' 'Miroir,' col. 1292.

[15] For the Latin quotation of 1 Corinthians 13:12 and its English translation, see p. 7, n.3. See also the Epistle of St James 1:23-24. Sister Bradley traces the resonances of Augustine's commentary on these verses and in particular on the conception of the mirror, found in his *Enarratio in psalmum,* 103 and in the *Soliloquies*, from the fifth to the twelfth centuries, in the works of exegetical writers including Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory the Great, Alcuin, Bernard of Clairvaux, Alain of Lille, and Hugh of St Victor. Bradley also notes the transmission of the metaphorical mirror into secular works by Jean de Meun, Dante, and later, Chaucer and Hocleve, and suggests that the thematic kernel of all of these writers is broadly similar: the mirror acts as a portal through which man may know himself and God. See 'Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum*.'

questions and answers, and narrative examples in the form of parables and glosses.[16]

Marguerite Porete's figurative imagery suggests, however, that the mirror, in its metaphorical sense, plays a more central role in terms of the text's conceptual structure than Schmidt allows for in her conclusion that the *Mirouer*'s title is merely a technical one, used to signal its pedagogical intention. In contrast to Marguerite d'Oingt's writings, Porete's *Mirouer* does not include specific mirror-imagery, nor does it relate events or scenes in which the characters make use of a mirror-like metaphor.[17] However, as a conceptual metaphor, the inherent qualities of the mirror permeate every aspect of the *Mirouer* and encapsulate many of the work's aspects that have proven so enigmatic. In its capacity to reflect apparent realities, the mirror possesses the ability to simultaneously conjure, manipulate, and in some cases, seemingly, if only momentarily, resolve a number of dialectical paradoxes: the nature of truth-based perception, presence and absence, contained and container, and emanation from and return to the same 'originary source.'[18]

In this sense, the specular qualities of the mirror might be equated with the conceptual capacities of metaphor. Object and reflection, and the relational dynamics between the two, which catalyse what the viewer believes he or she sees in the mirror, might be seen to echo the cognitive relationship between

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[16] Kocher, *Allegories of Love,* p. 10. Newman argues that in naming her text the *Mirouer*, 'Marguerite was following a thirteenth-century fashion,' and as such, 'there would be little point in positing a specific source for the title.' 'The Mirror and the Rose,' p. 110.

[17] In contrast to, for example, Guillaume de Lorris' comparison of the Fountain of Love to the mirror of Narcissus, found towards the beginning of the *Roman de la rose*, or indeed Jean de Meun's revisiting of the same subject some sixteen thousand lines later. See Newman, 'The Mirror and the Rose,' pp. 109-112.

[18] McIntosh discusses the writings of Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart in relation to those by a number of modern philosophers and theologians including Emmanuel Levinas, Edith Wyschogrod and Michel de Certeau. He finds the idea of human personal awakening, its origin in a prior 'originary dynamic,' and humanity's need, or '*telos*,' to surrender itself back into the divine infinity a feature of Porete's writing that is 'almost to be considered postmodern' for her time. *Mystical Theology,* pp. 220-224.

Lakoff and Johnson's 'source' and 'target domains.' Located between the object and its true reflection is a third, cognitive 'image'; that which the viewer *believes* themselves to see.[19] This third 'image' is a manipulation of the 'true' reflection, shaped by the cognitive and emotional forces of the viewer, and made coherent by his or her expectations of the object, causing it to adopt what the viewer *calls* the object's reflection. One entity, the object, comparable to Lakoff and Johnson's 'source domain,' sheds light on the other, the true reflection, or 'target domain.' In seeing the reflection, however, the viewer only selectively maps certain elements of the object onto certain elements of the 'true reflection,' and thus sees the reflection, or as Fauconnier and Turner might call it, the 'blend.' What is seen in a reflection is the figurative or 'perceived' reflection; in other words, the metaphor. Looking into a mirror is therefore akin to 'seeing metaphorically.'

Although Thomas Tomasic's observations relate to earlier monastic literature, his analysis of perceptual truth-value systems provides some helpful additions to this argument.[20] Writing on neoplatonic logic in the works of William of St Thierry, Tomasic argues that in a mystic's use of seemingly contradictory ideas (such as God being both transcendent and immanent), these are only seen to be contradictory or nonsensical when judged according to a two-valued or bivalent logic, predicated on two truth propositions, 'true' and 'false.' Rather, Tomasic suggests, mystical statements are better understood when regarded in accordance with a three-value propositional logic based on

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[19] This notion is similar to that voiced by Plato in a celebrated parable taken from Book X of the *Republic*, in which Socrates argues that a 'painting of a bed represents a third degree from reality: the Form of the bed is first, the artificial bed, as imitation of the first, stands second and the painting of the bed, as imitation of the second, stands third.' Quoted in Frederic M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas, 16 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992), pp. 55-56. See Nolan for a discussion of Augustine's theory of spectral perception, mirrors, and 'antisimilitude' in *De Trinitate,* Book X, in *Now Through a Glass Darkly,* pp. 57-58; Grabes also gives a useful overview of the function of the mirror-symbol in medieval thought in *The Mutable Glass,* Chapter One, 'A Typology of Works Bearing Mirror-Titles.'

[20] See Thomas Michael Tomasic, 'Neoplatonism and the Mysticism of William of St.-Thierry,' in *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe,* ed. by Paul Szarmach (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 53-75. Here at p. 60.

true, false, and middle (or indeterminate). As as result, the mystic may make statements about the simultaneous immanence and transcendence, or unknowability and familiarity, of God without asserting the possibility of 'forming any informative concept, or predicate' about God.

This three-value truth system is helpful to a discussion of 'metaphorical seeing.' The viewer's 'perceived' reflection in the mirror, discussed above, is comparable to Tomasic's 'middle' truth system; neither true nor false, it is a positive representation of what is simultaneously there, and what is not. In terms of metaphor theory, these observations can be seen, once again, to engage with conceptual blending theory. As with Tomasic's 'middle' truth system, Fauconnier and Turner argue that, in metaphor, 'mental spaces' combine to create a 'blended space,' which neither wholly reflects, nor exists independently of, the elements that make up the input spaces. The 'blended space' possesses its own truth-system and its own rationale, constructed from the dominant features that it draws on from the other various inputs. It does not, however, purport to reflect a truth-system beyond its own parameters. Within the blended space, truth is 'seen' metaphorically.

'Seeing metaphorically' is central to the Soul's discourse in the *Mirouer*. Throughout her ascent towards God, the Soul speaks of the process as one of increasing illumination, in which she becomes 'pure et clariffiee.'[21] As she reaches the sixth stage, Porete writes that the Soul is in such a state of humility that she sees nothing:

> ceste Ame, ainsi pure et clariffiee, ne voit ne Dieu ne elle, mais Dieu se voit de luy en elle, pour elle, sans elle; lequel (c'est assavoir Dieu) luy monstre, que il n'est fors que lui. […] Et si n'est, fors cil qui est, qui se voit en tel estre de sa divine majesté,

[21] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 330; 'pure and clarified.' *Mirror*, p. 193.

> par muance d'amour […] Et pource se voit de luy en telle creature.[22]

This passage is emblematic of Marguerite Porete's expression of the reciprocal mystical relationship between the Soul and God. The clarified and unblemished Soul is figured as God's reflection, as the locus, receptacle, and unmediated experience of the absolute presence of the divine. The Soul acts as mirror for God, although the extent to which she reflects, or is reflective of, Him is unclear. The implications of either assertion, when taken to be a literal statement, would have been sufficient alone to bring Marguerite Porete to the attentions of the ecclesiastical authorities, and were no doubt responsible for her condemnation for heresy. Yet they also imply that the ambiguities found in the passage above are part of the *Mirouer*'s broader thematic and schematic pattern, in which the negotiation of the parameters between the literal and the figurative, the object and its reflection, or indeed the source and target domain, form one a vital tool in Porete's attempt to articulate the ineffability of mystical union.

This is primarily conveyed by means of the symbiotic relationship between the Soul and her book, established in the Prologue. Addressing a fictional audience, *Dame Amour* entreats the text's listeners to first hear another narrative: 'entendez par humilité ung petit exemple de l'amour du monde, et l'entendez aussi pareillement de la divine amour.'[23] Within two paragraphs, then, the original narrative has been supplanted by a counterpart; one text mirrored by a second, which, in turn, is designed to influence the audience's

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[22] *Mirouer*, ch. 118. pp. 330-332; 'this Soul, thus pure and clarified, sees neither God nor herself, but God sees Himself of Himself in her, for her, without her. God shows to her that there is nothing except Him. […]. And so nothing is, except He who is, who sees Himself in such being by His Divine Majesty through the transformation of love […]. And thus also He sees Himself of Himself in such a creature.' *Mirror*, pp. 193-194.

[23] *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 10; 'listen with humility to a little exemplum of love in the world and listen to it as a parallel to divine love.' *Mirror*, p. 80.

perception of the former. This 'petit exemple,' widely acknowledged to be a borrowing of the Old French romance, the *Roman d'Alexandre* by Alexandre de Paris, tells of a princess who has fallen in love with a faraway king.[24] The princess has the king's portrait painted ('fist paindre ung ymage qui representoit la semblance du roy'), and by means of this image, the princess, 'avec ses autres usages songa le roy mesmes.'[25] The focus of the narrative has slipped seamlessly from the text, the *exemplum,* to the image, the *speculum*.

The *Ame* responds to *Dame Amour* with her own narrative, '[s]emblablement vrayement, dit l'Ame qui ce livre fist ecrire': she too loves a distant king, but the image she possesses of him is 'ce livre,' which he gave to her and which 'represente en aucuns usages l'amour de lui mesmes.'[26] Although the Soul borrows from the courtly world of the *exemplum*, the transposition of her relationship with the faraway king into a sacred register is significant. 'Ce livre,' her textual creation and God's gift to her, is the *Mirouer*. Neither the princess' image nor the Soul's book are 'true' reflections or representations in the sense of the mirror metaphor discussed earlier, but rather both are conditioned by the love *felt* for the representation, and as such, are both metaphorical. Yet the phrase 'l'amour de lui mesmes,' as Hollywood notes, is ambiguous. It points not only towards the Soul's love for God, but also God's love for the Soul, a reciprocal element not alluded to in the *Alexandre* narrative. As Hollywood observes, 'in Porete's mystical theology, as in traditional Christian thought, God is identified with love, a representation of his love is a

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[24] Alexandre de Paris, *Le Roman de Alexandre*, ed. by Edward C. Armstrong and others, trans. by Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Lettres Gothiques/ Livre de Poche, 1994). See Emilie Zum Bruun and Georgette Epiney-Burgard, *Women Mystics in Medieval Europe*, trans. by Sheila Hughes (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 153; also Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, pp. 68-69.

[25] *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 12; 'she had an image painted which would represent the semblance of the king'; 'with her other habits she dreamed of the king.' *Mirror*, p. 80.

[26] *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 12; 'this book' […] 'which makes present in some fashion His love itself.' *Mirror*, p. 80.

representation of God him/herself.'[27] The Soul, whose narrative this is, finds divine inspiration in the book that God gave to her, itself a reflection of God.

Within the Prologue's narrative arc, the *Mirror* has already come full circle. The Soul, through her correct interpretation of the reflective properties of the book, has ascertained the correct way towards God. In part, the Soul achieves this because, she says, God gave her this book 'pour moy souvenir,' for her memory of him.[28] As Mary Carruthers observes, medieval readers were conscious of the mind's need to construct images in order to process, categorise, and make sense of information, as well as to conjure 'new' thoughts based on the 'florilegia' of the memory.[29] Mnemonic images, both visual, as in the princess' painting, and verbal, as in the Soul's book, were used as the platform or catalyst for memorisation or conceptualisation, and were assigned a two-fold function. The material likeness ('similitudo') of the mnemonic device served as an aid in the recall of the object remembered, whilst the affective or attitudinal association with the object ('intentio') and mood ('modus,' 'color') functioned to retrieve or fix the referent as something 'known.' For the Soul, the book operates as an aid to retrieve and establish the memory of her distant king in her mind, but ultimately, for the *ame adnientie*, it is her love, her 'intentio,' that forms the crucial component of her ability to conceptualise her divine lover. The Soul must surpass the materiality of the book in order to truly love God, a feat that, implicitly, the princess of the *exemplum* does not achieve. Just how the Soul is capable of loving God thus constitutes the main focus of the *Mirouer*'s narrative:

> elle se dispouse a tous estres, ains qu'elle viengne a parfait estre; et vous dirons comment, ains que ce livre fine.[30]

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[27] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, p. 89.

[28] *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 12; *Mirror*, p. 80.

[29] See Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* pp. 116-170. Here at pp. 116-117.

[30] *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 14; 'the Soul disposes herself to all the stages before she comes to perfect being. And we will tell you how before this book ends.' *Mirror*, p. 81.

By the close of the prologue, 'ce livre' has been transformed into a metaphorical space in which the main protagonists, *l'Ame, Dame Amour*, and *Raison*, can play out the Soul's progression towards 'parfait estre.' The *Mirouer*, the two *exempla,* and now the gifted book, structured symbiotically in a similar way to the works of Marguerite d'Oingt, become a bibliophilic representation of the interior life of the Soul. Just as the Carthusian prioress claims textual authority from the divine for her writings, so too in the Prologue, Porete's Soul diverts authorial authority from the power of her own, human, creativity, to that of the divine.[31] In doing so, the book also becomes a metaphor for the Soul. As *l'Ame* has her originary source in God, so too the textual *Mirouer* finds its genesis located in God.[32]

If to read the *Mirouer* is to look at, or into, the Soul, then, as the focus of the narrative shifts from the didactic moral allegory of the *exemplum* to the inner journey of the Soul, the body of the book itself might be seen to represent the inner mind of the Soul. Techniques of personification, whereby the central combatants or debaters are figured as voices that dramatize internal conflict, were a common theme of both Old French romance and twelfth-century mystical theologies, finding their inspiration in the dialogic tendencies of the schools.[33] In the personified figures of *Dame Amour*, *Raison* and *l'Ame*, therefore,

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[31] It is frequently remarked in modern analyses of Porete's writings that her works differ substantially from those of other late medieval women mystics because she does not rely on a male amanuensis or apologise for the lowliness of her work. As Lichtmann writes: Marguerite's mysticism 'laid claim to authenticity and spoke with the authority of its own experience.' However, in claiming in the Prologue that the *Mirouer* was a gift from God, Porete effectively shifts authorial license from her own hand to that of the divine. Lichtmann, 'Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart,' p. 69. See also Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, pp. 89-90.

[32] One of the main tenets of Porete's theology is the notion that humanity is formed from, and should desire to return to, a state of pre-creational unity with the divine. The Soul tells her audience that she was created from nothing in a moment of outpouring of God's love, in a moment when 'le vray noyau affiné de divine Amour, qui est sans matere de creature, et donné du Creatour a creature.' *Mirouer*, ch. 18, pp. 72-74; 'the true pure seed of divine Love, without creaturely matter, which is given by the Creator to the creature.' *Mirror*, p. 101.

[33] See Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, pp. 94-95. Hollywood draws here on the work of Charles Muscatine, 'The Emergence of Psychological Allegory in Old French Romance,' *PMLA*, 68 (Sept. – Dec. 1953): 1160-1182. Kocher also comments on the capacity of the *Mirouer* to be read as a 'private verbal psychomachia.' See *Allegories of Love*, p. 13.

Porete presents her audience with a textual stage upon which the faculties of human cognition can perform, acting out the mental 'imitatio' necessary for the Soul, and the book, to achieve their mystical resolution.

If, at a microcosmic level, the book is conceived as a container for the faculties of the mind, then so too, the personified faculties can be seen as behaving as collective entities themselves, microcosmically representing the shared inner, cognitive, faculties of a macrocosmic humanity. At an early juncture in the text, *Dame Amour*, having previously spoken of the 'franches Ames,' instructs *Raison* to subsequently speak only of one soul: 'pour plus brefment parler, prenons une Ame pour toutes, dit Amour.'[34] The voice of the Soul is cast as an Everyman, with whom the audience, both as imagined within the confines of the text, and actual, might relate. Caught between the voices of *Dame Amour* and *Raison*, the Soul's purpose is to progress spiritually from the lower world of logic, literalism, and materiality, to the higher spiritual state symbolised by Love. As such, she shares elements of the faculties personified by both of the other protagonists, and it is the shared discourse of questions and answers that both symbolises and catalyses the Soul's cognitive journey. The role of the Soul is both to teach and to represent; once again, Porete transforms her protagonist into the conceptual metaphorical underpinning of both the text and the mirror.

The self-conscious nature of the dialogue between these characters frequently manifests itself in terms of a 'textual consciousness,' particularly with regard to *Raison*. Almost as if breaking through an imaginary fourth wall, all three principal characters often make reference to 'ce livre,' whilst *Dame Amour* reveals in the second chapter of the *Mirouer* that the structure and plot-line of the narrative will be shaped 'par l'Entendement d'Amour aux demandes

[34] *Mirouer*, ch. 9, p. 32. 'To speak more briefly, let us take one Soul as an example, says Love.' *Mirror*, p. 87.

de Raison.'[35] *Raison*'s questions, however, are predicated on the basis that she cannot understand *Dame Amour*'s depictions of the Soul's journey towards God. Their dialogue is punctuated by *Raison*'s pitiful refrain: 'Hee, pour Dieu, Amour, dit Raison, dictes que c'est a dire.'[36] In both *Dame Amour* and *l'Ame* blame *Raison*'s failure to understand their discourse throughout the length of the book, Porete subtly and partially shifting authorial authority from her own hand to that of *Raison*.[37]

Yet *Raison*'s inability to comprehend the text's message does not only function as a rhetorical device, designed to drive the narrative forward. In attempting to explain the mystical trajectory of the annihilated soul, *Dame Amour* and *l'Ame* furnish their discourse with parables and proverbs drawn from scriptural and secular sources, which they refer to as 'gloses.'[38] Designed to reinforce, reflect, and expose the subtleties of the language of mystical consciousness, the 'gloses' might be seen to act as conceptual containers for the main message of the text, structured conceptually as possessive of a core ('un noyau') and by implication, an inner and an outer surface.[39] Yet even with the aid of such didactic tools, *Raison* is unable to comprehend what is being explained to her:

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[35] *Mirouer*, ch. 2, p. 14; 'through the Intellect of Love and following the questions of Reason.' *Mirror*, p. 81.

[36] *Mirouer*, ch. 11, p. 42. 'Ah, for God's sake, Love, says Reason, say what this means.' *Mirror*, p. 90.

[37] 'Raison […], <Ain>si ont honny <et> gasté voz demandes ce livre, car pluseurs sont, qui l'eussent entendu a bresves paroles, et voz demandes l'ont fait long pour les responces dont vous avez besoing, pour vous et pour ceulx que vous avez nourriz, qui vont le cours du lymaçon.' *Mirouer*, ch. 53, p. 156. 'Reason […], your questions have dishonoured and ruined this book, for there are many who would have understood it with few words. But your questions have made it long because of the answers you need, both for yourself and for those whom you nourish who move along at a snail's pace.' *Mirror,* p. 131.

[38] See, for example, chapter 55 for the proverbs of the one-eyed king and the mother owl, and chapter 124 for the parable of the farmer. Kocher discusses these proverbs in *Allegories of Love*, p. 161, and the parable at pp. 148-152.

[39] This forms an interesting parallel with an observation in the previous chapter concerning Marguerite d'Oingt's imagery. In the *Speculum*, Marguerite describes letters as having a 'content,' perhaps drawing on Isidore of Seville's comment.in the *Etymologiae*, 'Litterae autem sunt indicies rerum, signa verborum […].' Conversely, *Raison* in the *Mirouer* struggles to read the 'content' of the words; the 'gloses' do nothing to aid her spiritual insight.

> Glosez ces mots, se vous les voulez entendre, ou vous les mal entendrez, car ilz ont aucune semblance de contrarieté, qui n'entend le noyau de la glose, mais semblance n'est mie verité, mais verité est, et nulle aultre chose.[40]

Interpretation and access to spiritual truth are, then, inextricably linked to modes of cognition, perception, and figurative vision. Apparent contradiction is a recurring obstacle for *Raison*; she remains unable to surpass the dialectical elements of the *Mirouer* and is confused by its paradoxes. She symbolises an inability to process anything other than in accordance with a literal order of signification, regarding the world in terms of Tomasic's bivalent logic. *Raison*'s mode of cognition is rooted entirely in the realm of the literal:

> Hee, Raison, dit Amour, tousjours serez borgne, et vous et tous ceulx qui sont nourriz de vostre doctrine. Car celuy est bien borgne, qui voit les choses devant ses yeulx, et ne les cognoist mie, et ainsi est il de vous.[41]

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[40] *Mirouer*, ch. 97, p. 270. 'Gloss these words, if you want to grasp them, or you will grasp them poorly, for they have some appearance of contradiction for the one who does not attend to the core of the gloss. But appearance is not truth, but truth is, and not some other thing.' *Mirror*, p. 171.

[41] *Mirouer*, ch. 43, p. 132. 'Ah Reason, says Love, you will always be one-eyed, you and all those who are fed by your doctrine. For, to be sure, one has faulty vision who sees things before his eyes and does not understand them at all. And so it is with you.' *Mirror*, p. 122. In the notes to her translation, Babinsky remarks that Porete may here have been drawing on the 'traditional concept of spiritual progress, that reason and love are the two eyes of the soul.' For an example of this trope in monastic literature, with which Porete may have been familiar, see William of St Thierry's commentary on the Song of Songs, in which he writes: 'Duo sunt oculi contemplationis, ratio et amor […]. Fiuntque saepe duo isti oculi unus oculus, cum fideliter sibi cooperantur, cum in contemplatione Dei, in qua maxime amor operator, ratio transit in amorem et in quemdam spiritualem vel divinum formatur intellectum, qui omnem superat et absorbet rationem.' *Exposé sur le Cantiques des Cantiques: Texte Latin, Introduction et Notes*, ed. by J.-M. Déchanet, O. S. B., trans. by † M. Dumontier, O. C. S. O., Sources chrétiennes, 82 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962), §92, p. 212. 'Contemplation has two eyes, reason and love […]. Often when these two eyes faithfully cooperate, they become one; in the contemplation of God, where love is chiefly operative, reason passes into love and is transformed into a certain spiritual and divine understanding which transcends and absorbs all reason.' *Exposition on the Song of Songs* in *The Works of William of St. Thierry*, trans. by Mother Columba Hart, Cistercian Fathers Series, 6, vol. 2 of 2 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970), p. 74. The resonances between William's and Porete's articulations are clear.

Being 'borgne,' or 'one-eyed,' is a metonym for *Raison*'s cognitive limitations. With only one ocular faculty, speculative thought is rendered impossible; she cannot focus on the dialectical composite parts of paradox, contradiction, or indeed metaphor, simultaneously. *Raison* epitomises precisely how not to interpret or perceive spiritual discourse and the experiences with which it is associated. She represents a study of the dangers of too rigid an epistemology, and her incapacity to be guided across the boundary of literal into figurative thought is ultimately responsible for her death. In chapter 87, *Raison* cries out:

> Hay Dieux, dit Raison, comment ose l'en ce dire? Je ne l'ose escouter. Je deffaulx vrayement, dame Ame, en vous oïr: le cueur m'est failly. Je n'ay point de vie.[42]

There is more than a hint of comic irony surrounding the circumstances of *Raison*'s death. The personification of the 'plodding logic' of the 'excessively intellectualised' theological and scholastic environments of *Saincte Eglise la Petite* and the schools is killed by the very forms of language on which she is thought, as an embodiment of worldy logic, to thrive: those of exposition and dialogue.[43] That her demise is also attributed to heart failure is striking too. Reminiscent of the pectoral imagery used by Marguerite d'Oingt, *Raison*'s heart functions as a metonym for her experience and record of thought and emotion. Her heart, like her vision, is flawed, and unable to cope with the demands of spiritual feeling and vision, therefore setting her up as a foil to the Soul's superior spiritual and ocular abilities. Indeed, it is to the representation of these affective qualities, and the mystical possibilities to which they give rise, that this chapter now turns.

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[42] *Mirouer*, ch. 87, p. 246. 'Ah God! says Reason. How dare one say this? I dare not listen to it. I am fainting truly, Lady Soul, in hearing you; my heart is failing. I have no more life.' *Mirror*, p. 163.

[43] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 167.

The text frequently alludes to a fictionalised audience, characterised within the imaginary confines of the text, some of whom are already 'adnientifs par vraie amour,' whilst others, like *Raison,* are expected to wrestle with the *Mirouer*'s meaning.[44] In what has been described, somewhat contentiously, as the text's 'postscript,' the Soul announces:

> Aucuns regars veulx je dire pour les marriz qui demandent la voye au pays de franchise, lesquelx regars moult de bien me firent ou temps que j'estoie des marriz, et que je vivoie de lait et de papin et que encore je sotoioie. Et ces regars me aydoient a souffrir et endurer durant le temps que j'estoie hors de voie […] car par demandes vait l'en moult loing, et par demandes s'adresse l'en a sa voie, et radresse l'en, quant on en est yssu.[45]

This passage condenses several of the *Mirouer*'s thematic strands. Addressing 'les marriz,' the sad souls, whom she will later call 'les enfants,' the Soul evokes

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[44] *Mirouer*, ch.1, p. 10; 'annihilated by true love,' *Mirror*, p. 80.

[45] *Mirouer*, ch. 123, p. 348. 'I wish to speak about some considerations for the sad ones who ask the way to the land of freeness, considerations which indeed helped me at the time when I was one of the sad ones, when I lived from milk and pabulum, and when I was still ignorant. And these considerations helped me to suffer and endure during the time when I was off the path […]. For by questions one can wander very far, and by questions one is directed to the way; one returns after one has gone away from [the path].' *Mirror*, p. 202. Nicolas Watson suggests that the *Mirouer*'s last seventeen chapters constitute a 'postscript' to the original composition of the *Mirouer*. The Chantilly manuscript contains two mentions of an *explicit*, the first after chapter 122, and the second at the text's close, after chapter 139, which provides the rationale for Watson's argument. Watson suggests that this 'postscript' clarifies and concludes the *Mirouer* without apology or a plea for forgiveness. Its subject matter is no different than the main body of the text, but both its structure and content appear more in-keeping with scriptural precedent: the Apostles, Mary Magdalene, and John the Baptist appear in the narrative for the first time and the plot is driven by parables rather than the soul's own spiritual trajectory. Watson, 'Translating the Untranslatable,' p. 131. Bernard McGinn also takes this view of the work's later chapters, suggesting that they were later additions to the original text, supplemented by Marguerite as part of her defence of the *Mirouer* after its initial condemnation. See McGinn, "Evil-sounding, Rash, and Suspect of Heresy': Tensions Between Mysticism and Magisterium in the History of the Church,' *The Catholic Historical Review*, 90 (2004): 193-212. Here at p. 196, n. 13. Robert Lerner takes issue with these assumptions. He suggests that a closer reading of the Middle English and Latin manuscripts of the text demonstrate that the chapters following the Chantilly's explicit at the end of chapter 122 are unlikely to be evidence of the composition of new material in the aftermath of Marguerite's first condemnation. See 'New Light,' especially pp. 100-101.

the double metaphor of the spiritual journey and the mystical landscape, and suggests that it is in the processes of questioning and understanding that progress may be catalysed in both metaphorical spheres.[46] Read in the context of the work, however, Porete's idealised readers, those 'adnientifs par vraie amour,' are expected to understand that questions alone are insufficient, hence the death of *Raison*.[47] The Soul's advice to the 'marriz' implies that it is the *mode* in which these questions are asked that is of import, not their form or content *per se*. For *l'Ame*, spiritual enlightenment is not derived from knowledge acquired during logical questioning, but from symbolic or figurative understanding gained subsequent to a shift in the structures of cognition. *Dame Amour* pleads:

> Entendez ces motz divinement, par amour, auditeurs de ce livre! Ce Loingprés, que nous appellons esclar a maniere d'ouverture et de hastive clousure, prent l'Ame ou cinquiesme

[46] The metaphor of the spiritual journey is found in all major world religions and is deeply embedded in the Christian mystical tradition, featuring widely in many of its writings, both biblical and exegetical. For example, Origen's *Homily XXVII On Numbers* draws on the theme of the wandering of Israel in the wilderness as symbolic of the Christian pilgrim's meditation on his destiny. Origen's journey is full of persecution and, like that of Marguerite's sad souls in the quotation above, does not follow a straight line. Instead, the difficulties of the journey constitute their own logic and are an integral part of both its trajectory and completion. The metaphor of the journey can be traced, thread-like, throughout the canon of Christian mystical literature, from Augustine to a contemporary of both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete, St Bonaventure. Michelle Karnes reads Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* as a medieval study of human cognition, in which, though reflection on the figure of Christ, the individual progresses from the human to the divine through the process of understanding. Karnes writes: 'The triple way of gazing at [the] wonders that the *Itinerarium* describes – seeing external things and then internal things and finally divine things –"reflects," Bonaventure explains, "the threefold existence of things in matter, in the understanding, and in the Eternal Art." In Bonaventure's Christian theory of cognition, the process of understanding is only complete once a thing's relationship to God has been grasped.' Such a reading of Bonaventure's writing may be mapped onto what Porete appears to be extolling to the sad souls at the beginning of chapter 123. Understanding is the key to ascending to the state of annihilation, but, Porete stresses, understanding alone is insufficient. *How* the soul understands, and how it arrives at such a state of illumination are equally, if not more, important elements in the cognitive journey towards spiritual union. Questions, answers, and the realization of understanding form the framework of this journey, and, in turn, the textual framework of the *Mirouer* itself. See Origen, *Homily XXVII On Numbers* in *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs*, trans. by Rowan A. Greer, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 245-269; Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), especially pp. 99-110.

[47] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 167.

> estat et la mect ou siziesme, tant comme son oeuvre demoure et dure, et ainsi est aultre […].[48]

Her plea encompasses two points of interest. The 'auditeurs,' both real and imagined, are not provided with a literal framework in order to interpret the text, but rather a figurative one, rooted in the affective, rather than the rational, intellect. Correct interpretation and understanding, *Dame Amour* suggests, will occur in relation to two key faculties of human consciousness, those of love and of knowledge, but will only come to fruition when employed 'divinement.' Learning to distinguish between the various modes and registers of language and discourse, and, where need be, overcoming conceptual boundaries, forms one of the primary navigational aids in understanding the text and the experiences that it points towards. As such, the *Mirouer* might be read as an exposition of, and study in, the use, effect, and cognitive processing of metaphor. The key to Porete's epistemology lies not in the specifics of her literal language, but in its use as a means to unlock new cognitive registers of meaning. As Nicholas Watson suggests, Marguerite Porete's use of metaphor 'is not merely a rhetorical trope but almost a metaphysical principle.'[49]

The second point of interest in *Dame Amour*'s plea concerns the Soul's encounter with *Loingprés,* the divine manifestation of the courtly lover with whom the Soul participates in the paradigm of 'amor de lonh,' transposed by Porete into a spiritual dimension.[50] The pinnacle of the Soul's ascent, and the

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[48] *Mirour*, ch. 58, pp. 168-170. 'Understand these divine words in a divine manner through Love, hearers of this book! This Farnearness, which we call a spark in the manner of an aperture and quick closure, receives the Soul at the fifth stage and places her at the sixth as long as His work remains and endures. And therefore she is other.' *Mirror*, p. 135.

[49] Watson, 'Translating the Untranslatable,' p. 131.

[50] Kurt Ruh places Marguerite Porete's use of *Loingprés* in the context of other Beguine writers, namely Hadewijch and Mechthild. Like Porete's *Loingprés*, Hadewijch writes of a figure known as *Verre-bi,* the personification of the paradoxical proximity and distance of God. See 'Le *Miroir des simples âmes* der Marguerite Porete,' in *Verbum et Signum: Festschrift für Friedrich Ohly*, ed. by Hans Fromm, Wolfgang Harms and Uwe Ruberg (Munich: Fink, 1975), pp. 365-387. McGinn

realisation of her conceptual journey towards the divine, is captured by *Dame Amour* in her description of *Loingprés*'s revelation to the Soul, which propels her temporarily from the fifth to the sixth stage and causes her to be 'aultre.' From the depths of the abyss of humility, where the Soul rests at peace in the fifth stage, having returned her will to God, she is occasionally transported up to the sixth where she experiences the divine by means of an opening, as a peak of consciousness characterised as an 'esclar' or 'spark.'[51] At this point, the Soul ceases to be aware of herself, and instead:

> Dieu se voit en elle de sa majesté divine, qui clarifie de luy ceste Ame, si que elle ne voit que nul soit, fors Dieu mesmes, qui est, dont toute chose est; et ce qui est, c'est Dieu mesmes; et pource ne voit elle sinon elles mesmes; car qui voit ce qui est, il ne voit fors Dieu mesmes, qui se voit en ceste Ame mesmes, de sa majesté divine.[52]

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follows Newman 's observations in *Virile Woman* in grouping these writers as exponents of a 'courtly mode' of mystical language who characterise their spiritual experiences as a 'yearning for the beloved,' but suggests that the textual influences on which they draw are two-fold; that they emanate both from monastic exegesis on the Song of Songs 3:1-2 and from more contemporary troubadour lyric concerning the absent lover. See *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 169. Newman terms Porete's blend of mystical and courtly imagery 'mystique courtoise' in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, p. 137. Kocher pays particular attention to the motifs of courtly love, especially in relation to troubadour poetry, in the *Mirouer* in *Allegories of Love*, pp. 56-79. See also Ellen L. Babinsky, 'The Use of Courtly Language in *Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties* [sic] by Marguerite Porete,' *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 4 (1987): 91-106.

[51] The reference to the 'esclar' as the highest stage of contemplation, or the essence of the soul, is a common motif in mystical expressions of the Christian West. The neoplatonic belief that the human soul possesses the intellectual and affective capacity to contain or comprehend a 'spark' of the divine can be traced through the writings of Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Gallus, Bonaventure, and later in the writings of Meister Eckhart, John Tauler, and Julian of Norwich, amongst others. For a survey of the complex medieval theology of *scintilla*, see Robert A. Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991): 195-219. Denise N. Baker traces the role of *scintilla* in the mystical theology of Julian of Norwich in 'The Structure of the Soul and the 'Godly Wylle' in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*,' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. by Edward Alexander Jones (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 37-50.

[52] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 330. 'God sees Himself in her by His divine majesty, who clarifies this Soul with Himself, so that she sees only that there is nothing except God Himself Who is, from whom all things are. And He who is, is God Himself. And thus she does not see according to herself, for whoever sees the One who is does not see except God Himself, who sees Himself in this same Soul by His divine majesty.' *Mirror*, p. 193.

The contents of this passage, and its ramifications within the text, have been the subject of considerable debate. It has been mined for evidence suggesting that Porete was an adherent of a number of different theological positions, including the annihilation of the self, deification, and the heresy of the free spirit, although as previously noted, scholarly conclusions as to the text's subversive nature have rarely proven definitive.[53] However, for the purposes of this discussion, the Soul's description of the exalted sixth stage proves a point of departure for three rather different, but related, enquires concerning the *Mirouer des simples ames*.

The Soul's depiction of the 'ouverture' and the 'esclar' suggests a dramatic change in her conceptual faculties, which is all the more profound when juxtaposed with the prior description of the fifth stage, and the 'abysme sans fons,' in which:

> Or est telle Ame nulle, car elle voit par habondance de divine cognoissance son nient, qui la fait nulle, et mectre a nient. Et si est toute, car elle voit par la profondesse de la cognoissance de la mauvaistié d'elle, qui est si parfonde et si grant, que elle n'y trouve ne commencement ne mesure ne fin.[54]

Whilst resting in the fifth stage, the Soul exists in a series of cognitive and physical paradoxes, 'seeing her nothingness,' 'placed in nothingness,' with 'neither beginning nor middle nor end.' Yet she is also subject to an 'abundance of divine Understanding' and possesses an embodied perception of space and

[53] McGinn notes that this suggestion in the *Mirouer* that 'a person can become God' because a 'soul united to God is made divine' constitutes one of the text's key condemnatory passages and is responsible for its reception as a founding tenet of a 'new spirit' heresy propagating 'blasphemies.' See *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism,* p. 491.

[54] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 326. 'Now such a Soul is nothing, for she sees her nothingness by means of the abundance of divine Understanding, which makes her nothing and places her in nothingness. And so she is all things, for she sees by the means of the depth of the understanding of her own wretchedness, which is so deep and so great that she finds there neither beginning nor middle nor end.' *Mirror*, p. 192.

motion in being 'assise ou fons de bas.'[55] These inconsistencies are resolved, however, in the descriptions of the sixth stage, found in chapters 58 and 118. Here, the Soul 'sees' in a new way, 'et si est souvent ou siziesme ravie, mais pou ce luy dure.'[56] The inertia of vision, time, and space that characterise the fifth stage are both put into perspective and also overcome by the new cognitive faculties the Soul possesses in the sixth, although it is important to note that these are not her own, autonomous, faculties, but rather those through which the grace of God functions.

This new mode of 'seeing' can perhaps be better explained in light of the observations made in Chapter One, in that it correlates with some, but importantly not all, of the imaginative attributes of metaphor as articulated by Paul Ricoeur. In his discussion of the imaginative effects that metaphor is able to induce in a recipient of metaphor, Ricoeur provides a stimulating series of observations with which it is possible to frame Porete's description of the sixth stage. Echoing the Aristotelian theory found in the *Rhetoric*, that metaphor possesses the capacity to 'set before the eyes' the sense that it wishes to convey, the means by which Ricoeur suggests that it does so are especially useful here. This overcoming of objectivity and rational thought is represented in the *Mirouer* by the death of *Raison* in chapter 87, which, if Reason and the Soul are seen to be share elements of the same cognitive faculties, may equally be read as a tipping point in the narrative following which the Soul also surpasses the rational limits of an objectively structured world. As the Soul falls into the 'abysme sans fons' in the fifth stage, she might be said to become something akin to the sublime: in her nothingness, her form is represented by boundlessness and her consciousness is subsumed by an awareness of the absolute greatness of *la divine Bonté*.[57] The Soul is unable to grasp the enormity of her fall into the abyss – 'elle voit elle mesmes, et si ne se voit' – and yet is able

[55] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 328; 'at rest in the bottomless depths.' *Mirror*, p. 192.
[56] *Mirouer,* ch. 58, p. 168; 'and so she is often carried up to the sixth, but this of little duration.' *Mirror*, p. 135.
[57] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 324; 'the Divine Goodness,' *Mirror*, p. 191.

to comprehend the singularity and wholeness of the event in willing one thing, 'Et pource ne veult que ung: l'Espoux de sa jouvance, qui n'est <que> ungs.'[58]

The only description that *Dame Amour* provides to the 'auditeurs' of this sixth stage is that:

> l'oeuvre de l'esclar, tant comme elle dure, n'est aultre chose que la demonstrance de la gloire de l'Ame. Ce ne demoure en nulle creature longuement, sinon seulement en l'espace de son mouvement.[59]

The revelation of the sixth stage is simply portrayed in terms of an 'overflowing from the ravishing aperture' and a 'goodness [that] pours out' from the Divine.[60] This outpouring, an experience that the Soul 'ne elle n'eust oncques mere, qui de ce sceust parler,' is strikingly similar to the description that Ricoeur gives of the work of the imagination when engaged in metaphor processing.[61] When prompted by the 'pictorial' character of metaphor, Ricoeur observes, the imagination does not conjure a static mental image, but rather exposes the mind to a 'flow of images.'[62] The phenomena that both Porete and Ricoeur describe, be they mystical or metaphorical, or, indeed, a combination of the two, are suggestive of what might be termed 'cognitive transcendence'.

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[58] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 328. 'Therefore she wills [but] only one thing: the Spouse of her youth, who is [but] only One.' *Mirror*, p. 193. My additions.

[59] *Mirouer*, ch. 58, p. 170; 'the work of the Spark, as long as it lasts, is nothing other than the showing of the glory of the Soul. This does not remain in any creature very long, except only in the moment of His movement.' *Mirror*, pp. 135-136.

[60] *Mirror,* p. 135 and p. 194. 'L'ouverture ravissable de l'espandement de celle ouverture'; '*Mirouer*, ch. 58, p. 168; 'bonté espandue,' *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 332.

[61] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 235.

[61] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 235.

[61] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 235.

[62] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 235.

There is a distinction to be made here between the types of conceptualisation articulated by Porete in the *Mirouer* and that articulated by d'Oingt in all three of her writings. What Ricoeur appears to suggest, and Porete's Soul appears to exemplify, is that the 'seeing' of the fifth and sixth stages is not merely, to use Donald Davidson's phrase, 'seeing one thing as another.'[63] In its analysis of Marguerite d'Oingt's use of conceptual imagery, the previous chapter concludes that d'Oingt imaginatively projects structurally similar entities – the body and the book – onto both her work and her belief, which in turn shape her mystical reality. As such, she 'sees' one entity in terms of another, and, in so doing, captures something of the absent point of reference. In the case of Porete's Soul, however, the attainment and verbalisation of the fifth and sixth stages occurs differently. The *Ame*'s is a relational 'seeing'; the fifth stage makes sense when analysed in relation to, and juxtaposed with, the stages that precede and follow it. The Soul's conceptualisation of the seven stages of ascent is one of proportionality, and, after the death of *Raison*, her sense of relation and proportion changes.

Crucially, the Soul still inhabits the body when she participates in the fifth and sixth stages, and therefore still inhabits the physical world that she occupied as she moved through stages one to four. Only once she has fallen into the abyss, and relinquished her will by giving it back to God, does she no longer possess the ability to 'see' for herself. Instead, she 'sees' because God sees through her:

> Et pource se voit Bonté de sa bonté par divine lumiere, ou siziesme estat, duquel l'Ame est clariffiee. Et si n'est, fors cil qui est, qui se voit en tel estre de sa divine majesté, par muance d'amour de bonté espandue et remise en luy.[64]

[63] Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean,' p. 218.

[64] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 332. 'And thus Goodness sees itself by His goodness through divine light, at the sixth stage, by which the Soul is clarified. And so nothing is, except He who is, who sees

This new mode of 'seeing' represents the Soul's newfound mystical reality. Still able to perceive the trappings of her former existence, the Soul does not merely compare old with new existences. Rather, she 'sees' as God 'sees' through her, a notion comparable to what Ricoeur describes as metaphor producing meaning by assimilation; the new meaning produced 'in spite of and through' the older subjects.[65]

The notion that the Soul's mystical experience is depicted as 'seeing though', or seeing metaphorically, has important implications for the rest of the *Mirouer*, and on how Marguerite Porete may have conceived of the parameters of her spiritual relationship with the divine. The religious and intellectual milieu in which Marguerite Porete was writing was influenced in particular by two strands of theology: first, the re-emergence of pseudo-Dionysian thought, and its emphasis on the notion of ascent towards, and union with, God, and second, the flourishing of new modes of expression in the form of vernacular,

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Himself in such being by His Divine Majesty through the transformation of love by the goodness poured out and placed in her.' *Mirror*, p. 194.

[65] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 234. This idea of the Soul 'seeing through' the facets of her previous existence engages with the debate regarding Porete's ethical piety and the extent to which the *Mirouer* can be read as an antinomian text, which expounds an amoral or anarchical position contrary to the theological foundations of the church. The Soul's relationship with, and apparent rejection of, the Virtues, and her transformation into an entity that no longer requires the norms, the sacraments, or the church in order to mediate the distinction between her consciousness and that of the Godhead has caused some critics to label the *Mirouer* an example of the heresy of autotheism. However, as *Dame Amour* states in chapter 21: 'C'est vérité que ceste Ame a prins congé aux Vertuz, quant a l'usage d'elles et quant au desir de ce que elles demandent, mais les Vertuz n'ont mie prins congié a elles, car elles sont tousjours avec elles; mais c'est en parfaicte obedience d'elles.' *Mirouer,* pp. 78-80. 'It is true that the Soul takes leave of the Virtues, insofar as the practising of them is concerned, and insofar as the desire for what they demand is concerned. But the Virtues have not taken leave of her, for they are always with her, but this is from perfect obedience to them.' *Mirror*, p. 103. In the earlier stations of the seven-stage ascent, the Soul's piety is marked by her excellence in achieving the standards of the Virtues. However by the fifth stage, she no longer needs to appropriate the Virtues, for they have become so much a part of her nature that she 'sees through' them. They have become part of the very fabric of the Soul, a metaphorical lens as opposed to the frame through which she sees the world. For more on the Soul's relationship to the Virtues, see John A. Arsenault, 'Authority, Autonomy, and Antinomianism: The Mystical and Ethical Piety of Marguerite Porete in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,' *Studia Mystica*, 21 (2000): 65-94; David Kangas, 'Dangerous Joy: Marguerite Porete's Good-bye to the Virtues,' *The Journal of Religion*, 91, 3 (July 2011): 299-319.

or 'vulgar' theology.[66] The interaction of these two modes of thought witnessed what Juan Marin calls new, 'radical exploration[s] of mystical union,' in which the mystic appears to write of a 'union without difference' between the soul's identity and that of God.[67] Along with Hadewijch and Mechthild, Marguerite Porete is frequently cited as responsible for teaching that 'the soul herself can and must be refigured or reimagined, and as such become united without distinction in and with the divine.'[68] Amy Hollywood takes this idea even further. Porete's Soul, Hollywood argues, moves beyond a volitional unity with God, and experiences a 'transformation […] into the divine through its annihilation.'[69]

Having located such ostensibly dramatic ideology at the heart of Porete's theology of 'anéantissement,' it is perhaps understandable that so much modern critical analysis of the *Mirouer* is concerned with asserting the text's heterodox nature. Indeed, Joanne Maguire Robinson considers that Porete's 'doctrine of the annihilation of the soul was never a mainstream theological doctrine before or after Marguerite Porete, yet it reveals profound insights into the possible relationship between God and the soul.'[70] Whilst the latter half of

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[66] Sean Field highlights a passage by the Franciscan preacher, Gilbert of Tournai (*c.*1205-1284), which points towards the scepticism and mistrust felt by some churchmen regarding the spread of vernacular theology, particularly among laywomen, in the second half of the thirteenth century. Written for the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, Gilbert protests: 'Sunt apud nos mulieres, que Beghine vocantur, et quedam earum subtilitatibus vigent et novitatibus gaudent. Habent interpretata scripturarum mysteria et in communi idiomate gallicata, quae tamen in sacra Scriptura exercitatis vix sunt pervia.' See 'Annihilation and Perfection,' p. 256. Field is quoting from Gilbert's *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae,* reproduced in P. A. Stroick, 'Collectio de scandalis Ecclesiae,' new edition, in *Archivum franciscanum historicum,* 24 (1931): 33-62. This 'communi idiomate gallicata,' Romana Guarnieri suggests, used a variant of Old French, the vulgar *piccado* in which, she speculates, Porete wrote the original text of the *Mirouer*. See Romana Guarnieri, *Donne e chiesa tra mistica e istituzioni (secoli XIII-XV)* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004), p. 268. Amy Hollywood also suggests that the original *Mirouer* was 'presumably' composed in 'Picard, the dialectic of the French-speaking Southern Low Countries.' See 'Reading as Self-Annihilation,' in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. by Jane Gallop (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 39-63. Here at p. 59, n. 18.

[67] Marin, 'Annihilation and Deification,' p. 92.

[68] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, p. 24.

[69] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, p. 109.

[70] Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation,* p. xii.

Robinson's observation is difficult to dispute, a closer examination of the pool of ideological resources and imagery on which Marguerite chose to draw in order to articulate the soul's apparent dissolution in God is far more profound and complex than Robinson's study of the text acknowledges.

A focus on the metaphors that Porete chooses to represent her doctrine of 'anéantissement,' viewed in light of the earlier discussion regarding 'metaphorical seeing' and relativity, demonstrates that Porete conceptualises the soul's union with God in a highly nuanced way. The Soul speaks not of an absorptive union of undistinguishable consciousness with God, but rather of a spiritual relationship characterised by a continuing sense of dialectical union: in the upper reaches of her ascent towards God, the soul metaphorically characterises herself, much like the triumvirate of the Holy Trinity, as being at one with, and yet wholly separate from, the divine.

As the Soul takes her 'leave from the Virtues,' Robinson remarks that Porete makes use of numerous 'traditional mystical metaphors' in order to give shape to what Robinson describes as the 'soul's merging with God.'[71] A closer analysis of these metaphors, however, suggests that not only do they all draw on the same conceptual idea, mirroring each other theoretically, but also that their entailments imply a very different theology to that suggested by those who find the *Mirouer* guilty of extolling the heresy of autotheism.[72]

These metaphors of union are best conceptualised in terms of an idea often denied by critical analyses of Porete's writing: that of corporeity. Indeed,

[71] These metaphors include those of 'spiritual growth and maturity,' 'the giving of gifts from lover to beloved,' and 'intoxication,' all of which, Robinson argues, 'show the perfect consummation of human and divine, in which the soul […] becomes what God is.' Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation*, p. 86.

[72] See, for example, Colledge, Marler, and Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay,' in which they argue that Porete's text contains passages of 'dubious theology,' p. lvii.

within the canon of medieval women's literature, Marguerite Porete is frequently regarded as something of an anomaly. The *Mirouer* does not conform to the commonly held notion that female mystical writing constitutes a genre in which the protagonist's physicality takes centre stage. In her oft-cited study, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, Bynum sets out what has become something of a checklist in the scholarship on and categorization of medieval women's studies:

> As many recent scholars have argued, the spiritualities of male and female mystics were different, and this difference has something to do with the body. Women were more apt to somatise religious experience and to write in intense bodily metaphors; women mystics were more likely to receive graphically physical visions of God; both men and women were inclined to attribute to women and encourage in them intense bodily asceticisms and ecstasies.[73]

Bynum's definition and observations concerning such forms of medieval women's pious spiritual expression were a topic for debate in the previous chapter, although Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* is, on the whole, absent from Bynum's critical analysis and does not appear to conform to her typology.[74] The reasons for this exclusion are, at first glance, apparent from the text itself. In her doctrine of annihilation, Porete appears to argue for a negation of human creatureliness, writing that, in her hierarchy of spiritual ascendency, it is only in the lower stages of mystical ascent that the soul is bound to the body and likewise to the material symbolism of the Church. In the higher stages, meanwhile, once the soul has renounced both will and reason, she is no longer bound to the fleshly or corporeal influences of human nature, except in so far as

[73] Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 194. See also Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, passim.

[74] Where Bynum does make use of the *Mirouer*, it is with the intention of highlighting Porete's alterity in contrast to the images employed by other female religious and their hagiographers: 'Margaret [sic] Porete […] rejected the whole tradition of affective spirituality with an attack on "works" (such as fasting and communion) that went far beyond Tauler's or Eckhart's.' *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 186-87.

they are necessary to sustain life.[75] This apparent rejection of the corporeal, and Porete's focus on 'deemphasizing the body as a locus of sinfulness [… and also] as the locus of salvation,' are fundamental factors in her marginalization in the medieval literary canon of affective, highly physicalized women's piety as established by Bynum.[76]

Jennifer M. Schuberth speculates, meanwhile, that Porete's apparent refutation of 'the very means by which women gained authority for their writing and religious practices' and her lack of conformity in refusing to comply with the 'cultural norms that identified women with the body and suffering' may have been contributing factors in her chronicler's decision to label her a *pseudomulier* as opposed to naming her in the Chronicle of Nangis.[77] 'One might argue,' Schuberth writes, 'that Porete was not burned because she was a woman, but because she was not enough of a woman, which is to say, not bodily enough.'[78]

Schuberth's reflections are thought-provoking and not without a hint of irony, suggesting that it may have been Porete's lack of conformity to the very category she could perhaps most easily have fitted into – that of created humanity – that contributed to her demise. Such a reading of Porete's text,

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[75] Chapter 118 of the *Mirouer* contains Porete's most detailed description of the seven stages of the soul. Once the Soul has surpassed stages one to four, *Dame Amour* proclaims that 'Such a Soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fast nor prayer.' *Mirror*, ch. 9, p. 87. Instead, she is 'in such love without the work of the body, without the work of the heart, without the works of the spirit' that Porete likens the annihilated soul to the Virgin Mary, who had, without 'any intermediary in her soul, the glorious life of the Trinity in her mortal soul.' Chapter 93, pp. 168-169.

[76] Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, p. 107.

[77] Jennifer M. Schuberth, *Allegories of Annihilation: Porete's "Mirror" and the Medieval Self*, PhD dissertation (University of Chicago, 2008), p. 12. For the reference to Porete as a *pseudomulier*, see Verdeyen, 'Le procès d'inquisition,' pp. 88-89. See also Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit,* pp.70-71, n. 26. More detail is provided in a footnote in Chapter Two.

[78] Schuberth, *Allegories of Annihilation*, p. 12. McGinn also notes Porete's lack of conventionality in relation to the affective subject matter of her female contemporaries: see *The Flowering of Mysticism,* p. 247.

however, is predicated on the notion that both medieval text and its contemporary reception correlate neatly with the modern category of female affective piety as outlined by Bynum. In her analysis of Porete's use of allegory, Kocher argues that, whilst the *Mirouer* does, in fact, adhere to some of the 'democratising, lay tendencies of late medieval piety,' it does not do so in terms of bodily metaphor. Quoting Bynum, Kocher writes:

> [Porete's] treatise shows only infrequent interest in what Bynum calls the 'cultivation of bodily experience as a place for encounter with meaning, a locus of redemption.' A reader who set out to study bodies in the *Mirror* would discover few, and find them used figuratively rather than literally.[79]

The *Mirouer* does not engage with the type of corporeal imagery used so vividly and dramatically by Marguerite d'Oingt. Vision-narratives that derive their stimuli from the imagery of Christ's birth and Passion and from the Eucharist are all but absent from Porete's prose, whilst those who advocate such methods are scorned by *l'Ame* as being overly dependent on material artefacts for spiritual progress. In a series of statements made throughout the work, the Soul claims:

> laquelle Ame ne desire ne ne desprise pouvr<e>té ne tribulation, ne messe ne sermon, ne jeune ne oraison […] tous les maistres de sens de nature, ne tous les maistres d'escripture, ne tous ceulx qui demourent en amour de l'obedience des Vertuz, ne l'entendent et ne l'e<n>tendront, la ou il a fait a entendre […] et n'est pas ce merveille, car le corps est trop gros pour parler des emprises de l'esperit. […] anges et ames nulz

[79] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 180. Kocher's quotations are taken from Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 32; Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss About the Body?,'p. 15.

> corps n'est a la value de veoir, et par plus forte raison ne peut veoir nulz corps la Trinité.[80]

This rejection of the body, Kocher rightly notes, is not motivated by asceticism: Porete's perspective 'turns not against the body but away from it.'[81] Kocher's interpretation of the *Mirouer*'s renouncement of the body and reason, and its repudiation of traditionally embodied Christian symbolism leads her to suggest that 'this bodilessness facilitates descriptions of the Soul's disappearance into God, an event that the mystic might find more difficult (or disturbing, or inaccurate) to describe in more physical terms.'[82] As was the case in the previous chapter's discussion of corporality and corporeity, however, Bynum's influential perspectives on medieval women's piety and physicality, and Kocher's subsequent reading of the *Mirouer* as a text which 'eschews bodies,' is founded on a notion of bodiliness that privileges *human* corporality over all other forms of physical substance and matter.[83]

Two adjustments can be made to Kocher's reading of the *Mirouer*, based on the earlier reflections concerning 'metaphorical seeing.' These adjustments will form the basis of the final task of this chapter: an analysis of Porete's 'traditional mystical metaphors' and the extent to which they, and the theoretical framework that underpins them, represent her particular conceptualisation of mystical union with the divine. The first adjustment proposed to Kocher's thesis is that the human body is not rejected entirely by

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[80] *Mirouer*, ch. 9, p. 32 and p. 34; ch. 32, p. 108; ch. 33, p. 110. 'Such a Soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fast nor prayer […] none of the masters of the natural senses, nor any of the masters of Scripture, nor those who remain in the love of the obedience to the Virtues, none perceive this, nor will they perceive what is intended. […]. And this is not surprising because the body is too heavy to speak of the enterprises of the Spirit. […]. Corporality is not worthy to see such angels and souls and, by greater reason, corporality cannot see the Trinity since it cannot see the angels nor the souls.' *Mirror*, p. 87 and p. 114.

[81] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 180.

[82] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 183.

[83] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 183.

the *ame adnientie*. Rather, the Soul describes those who have returned their will to God and turned away from the practices of *Saincte Eglise la Petite* as:

> gens a piez sans voie, et a mains sans oeuvre, et a bouche sans parole, et a yeulx sans clarté, et a oreilles sans oïr, et a raison sans raison, et a corps sans vie, et a cueur sans entendement, de tant comme touche cest estre.[84]

Just as when the Soul takes leave of the Virtues, but they do not leave her, so too here the Soul is portrayed as having taken leave of her physical faculties as she progresses towards a state of annihilation in God, but they remain with her in spite (or perhaps because) of the fact.[85] The sensual capacities associated literally with the physical attributes, such as the mouth speaking or the ears hearing, recede, but the implication is that the Soul's ability to conceptualise and perceive figuratively is no less acute.

Second, a continuing sense of embodiment pervades the *Mirouer,* even as the materiality associated with the human body is shunned. Throughout the course of the text, the Soul continues to be conceptualised in embodied terms, either as a physical entity capable of containment, or as a substance that may be

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[84] *Mirouer*, ch. 86, p. 242; 'folk with feet but no path, hands but no work, mouth but no words, eyes but no vision, ears but no hearing, reason but no reasoning, body but no life, and with a heart but no intellect, as long as they are at this stage.' *Mirror,* p. 161.

[85] The Soul's liberation from the Virtues has been the source of considerable scholarly interest. Chapter 21 of the *Mirouer* contains the controversial statement: ' C'est vérité que ceste Ame a prins congé aux Vertuz, quant a l'usage d'elles et quant au desir de ce que elles demandent, mais les Vertuz n'ont mie prins congié a elles, car elles sont tousjours avec elles; mais c'est en parfaicte obedience d'elles […]. Or est il ainsi que ceste Ame a tant gaigné et aprins avec les Vertuz, que elle est dessus les Vertuz, car elle a en elle tout ce que les Vertuz scevent aprendre, et encore plus, sans comparaison.' *Mirouer*, pp. 78-80. 'It is true that this Soul takes leave of the Virtues, insofar as the practicing of them is concerned, and insofar as the desire for what they demand is concerned. But the Virtues have not taken leave of her, for they are always with her, but this is from perfect obedience to them. […]. So this Soul has gained and learned so much with the Virtues that she is now superior to the Virtues, for she has within her all that the Virtues know how to teach and more, without comparison.' *Mirror*, pp. 103-104. Lichtmann notes that this claim was responsible for the first of the Inquisition's articles in the process against her and was condemned again at the Council of Vienne. See 'Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart,' pp. 79-80.

enveloped by another container of form. Even at the pinnacle of her earthly ascent towards God, the Soul retains spatial, orientational, and motor faculties: Porete draws on all that constitutes physical humanity in order to figuratively depict the Soul. For example, at the point in the narrative when the Soul 'est venue en cognoissance de son nient,' *Dame Amour* describes her as follows:

> Or avez vous ouy comment ceste Ame est venue en croyance du plus. Or vous diray, dit Amour, comment elle est venue en cognoissance de son nient. C'est en ce qu'elle cognoist, que elle ne aultres ne cognoist nient de ses horribles pechez et deffaultes […]. Telle Ame, dit Amour, n'a retenu nul vouloir, ainçoys est venue et cheue a nient vouloir, et en certain saviour de nient savoir, et ce nient savoir et ce nient vouloir l'ont excusee et enfranchie. […]. Ceste Ame a en tous lieux sa paix, car elle porte paix tousdis avec elle, si que pour telle paix luy sont tous lieux convenables, et toutes choses aussi.[86]

The verbs used by *Dame Amour* are striking: 'retaining,' 'falling,' releasing,' and 'carrying' all structure the way in which Porete's audience is impelled to conceptualise the Soul as possessing, metaphorically at least, an embodied, physical quality. Indeed, it is not until the Soul has reached the seventh stage of her mystical ascent, a stage not recounted by the *ame adnientie*, that there is any suggestion of a complete divide between the soul and the human body.[87] The seventh stage lies beyond language, in a 'close silence de l'amour divine,' but

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[86] *Mirouer*, ch. 47, pp. 142-144. 'Now you have heard how this Soul arrived at belief in the greater part. Now I will tell you, says Love, how she arrived at understanding of her nothingness. Thus she understands that neither she nor any other understands the nothingness of her horrible sins and faults […]. Such a Soul, says Love, has retained no will, but instead has arrived at and fallen into willing nothing and the certain knowledge of knowing nothing. And this knowing-nothing and willing-nothing have released and freed her. […]. This Soul has her peace in all places, for she carries peace with her always, so that, because of such peace, all places are comfortable for her, and all things also.' *Mirror*, p. 126.

[87] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 332: 'Et le septiesme garde Amour dedans elle, pour nous donner en parmanable gloire, duquel nous n'aurons cognoissance jusques ad ce que nostre ame ait nostre corps laissé.' 'The seventh stage Love keeps within herself in order to give it to us in eternal glory, of which we will have no understanding until our soul has left our body.' *Mirror*, p. 194.

for the duration of the preceding six stages – the length of the *Mirouer* – the Soul's description of her mystical ascent remains conceptually embodied, verbally communicated, and cognitively conceptualised.[88] As the Soul explains:

> Hee, sire, […] comment suis je en mon sens demouree, quant j'ay pensé aux dons de vostre bonté, qui avez donné a mon ame la vision du Pere et du Filz et du Saint Esperit, que mon ame verra sans fin?[89]

These observations suggest that a reading of Porete's mystical expression need not be, as Kocher argues, bodiless, and that instead, the conceptual embodiment of the Soul serves as an aid to the reader's understanding of Porete's mystical theology of union with the divine. Substance, form, and matter are, in fact, central to the Soul's advancement towards God, and it is the way in which Porete employs and develops such imagery that provides the clearest message as to how she may or may not have preached an identity of absorptive union with the divine, and, by extension, what kind of mystical consciousness the *Mirouer* points towards.

Consistent with the *Mirouer*'s theme of textual consciousness and bibliophilic imagery, Porete makes use of a striking metaphor that emphasises the Neoplatonic idea that the soul carries within it the image of God from which the soul originally emanated. In chapter 50, Porete writes:

> Ceste Ame est emprainte en Dieu, et a sa vraye emprainture detenue par l'union d'amour; et a la maniere que la cire prent la

[88] *Mirouer*, ch. 94, p. 262; 'a hidden silence of divine love,' *Mirror*, p. 169.

[89] *Mirouer*, ch. 33, p. 108. 'Ah Lord, […] how I am still remaining in my mind when I ponder the gifts of your goodness, you who have given my soul the vision of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit whom my soul will see for eternity?' *Mirror*, p. 114.

> forme du seel, en telle maniere a ceste Ame prinse l'emprainte de cest vray exemplaire.[90]

The implication that the soul receives her form and identity directly from God, without any form of mediation, is frequently cited as one of the main tenets of Porete's apparent antinomianism.[91] However *Dame Amour*'s wax metaphor gives rise to several entailments that suggest that Porete's choice of imagery need not signify an unmediated and purely symbiotic relationship of mystical union. The soul originates in God, is given the form of wax, and, in re-establishing her relationship with God, takes on the shape and appearance of God.[92] However, at no point does Porete suggest that the wax itself disappears. The distinctions of form and substance remain, even though mystical union has been achieved. As such, the soul may metaphorically be seen *as* God, but never indistinct from God.[93]

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[90] *Mirouer*, ch. 51, p. 148. 'This Soul is engraved in God, and has her true imprint maintained through the union of God. And in the manner that wax takes the form of the seal, so has this Soul taken the imprint of this true exemplar.' *Mirror*, p. 128. For a discussion of the seal-in-wax metaphor, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* p. 21 and p. 55. The image is attributed to Aristotle, but re-emerges in a Christian context in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius and later, in those of Aquinas.

[91] See Arsenault, 'Authority, Autonomy and Antinomianism.'

[92] As such, it may be argued that Porete's text is suggestive of a double-genesis: the Soul is formed twice in the process of becoming separated from God. The origins of this double creation are uncertain, although McGinn notes that the fourth-century monk and ascetic, Evagrius Ponticus, follows Origen in positing the theory of a two-stage creation: 'In the beginning, God created the ideal world of minds, or spiritual beings (*logikoi*), perfectly united with him in 'essential gnosis of the Trinity.' When these beings fell away from contemplative unity, he then made the universe we experience, characterized by multiplicity, differentiation, and varying degrees of materiality.' McGinn does not argue for a direct link between the theology of Evagrius and that of Porete, although the similarities that the two share are striking. See Bernard McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition,' *The Journal of Religion*, 74, 2 (April 1994): 155-181. Here at p. 159.

[93] Carruthers discusses the 'seal impressed in wax' imagery in relation to Thomas Aquinas's reading of Aristotle's *De anima* and the process of sensory perception as involving either 'material' or 'spiritual' change. Describing sight perception, Aquinas writes that this involves a 'spiritual' change, and uses Aristotle's example of the imprint of a seal on wax to demonstrate this. Carruthers explains: 'For [Aquinas] the wax does form a physical likeness of the original seal. What he evidently means by 'spiritual' is that the wax material does not take on the gold or the bronze of the original, *but not that nothing physiological at all happens to it*. As Myles Burnyeat has argued, for Aquinas Aristotle's notion of 'spiritual' change is the act of perceiving itself, which certainly affects us even though the sense organ itself does not change […]. The

That Marguerite Porete has recourse to metaphor in order to express such experience with the divine is not surprising. Yet comparing the theological underpinnings of her use of metaphor with modern cognitive theories of metaphor reveals striking similarities. As the first chapter observed, metaphorical mappings never involve a complete mapping of all of the properties of the source domain onto the target domain, or, to use Fauconnier and Turner's methodology, the blended space is never representative of all of the elements contained in all of the input spaces. In a similar manner, the Soul appropriates some of the properties of wax, and, in turn, the appearance of some of the attributes of the divine. The Soul is not an *exact representation* of the Trinity or of the divine, but a partial (or selectively mapped) imprint. She simultaneously represents both something gained and something lost, just as she took 'leave of' and yet subsumed the Virtues as part of her very essence. Indeed, the *Ame* herself might be thought of as a 'blended space', a site at which a profound change has taken place, predicated on her appropriation of a new, mystical world-view.

This duality lies at the heart of the soul's repeated statements that the perfected soul is 'sans nul pourquoy' ('without a why'), 'sans volounté' ('without will'), or, more radically still, 'sans se' ('without herself'). In 'being without,' the *ame adnientie* lacks nothing, but similarly, Porete does not argue that, in this life at least, the Soul possesses 'All.' Robinson suggests that 'the soul is both "All" and "nothing", the intersection of which [being] where God and human meet.'[94] However, such an interpretation problematizes the *Mirouer* on two fronts. First, it suggests that the 'end-point' for the Soul is contained within the text's narrative. Yet following the fullest of her accounts of absorption into God, the Soul continues to speak for some twenty-two chapters,

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seal's image is not just ghostly like that of a photographic slide projected onto a screen, but is a sort of imprint that effects a real change in the perceiver.' *The Book of Memory*, pp. 69-70. Carruthers' reading of Aquinas' uses of the seal imagery bears a strong resemblance to this reading of Porete's appropriation of the same metaphor.

[94] Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation*, p. 48.

indicating that she cannot yet have accomplished the ascent to the seventh stage, 'que nous aurons en gloire, dont nul ne sçait parler.'[95] Second, as David Kangas argues, reading the Soul's experience solely in terms of a dialectic of all and nothing, in which only when the Soul becomes 'nothing' can she receive 'everything,' is potentially obscuring and reductive.[96] Doing so ties the text into the paradigm of paradox, which the audience is either asked to accept or try to resolve. Reading the *Mirouer* solely in terms of paradox implies that the text possesses no viable didactic or spiritual purpose. Yet analysing it by attempting to resolve the paradox is to force the text to adhere to logic and reason – precisely the format that the Soul rejects. Instead, annihilation, or 'to will nothing' is to shed all perception of the world that pertains to its created value, and instead, both actively and passively, to transform the frame of perception from the literal to the figurative. The Soul does not convert into God, but rather consents to 'see' and 'be seen' in terms of the unmediated divine.

In discussing the Soul's experience of mystical union, scholars have drawn attention to other metaphors of transformation in the *Mirouer*, namely those of her being like iron in fire, and like a river flowing into the sea. It is in these two metaphors, Juan Marin suggests, that Porete's *Mirouer* demonstrates most clearly her theology of annihilation.[97] Both images are, Marin argues, indicative of an overt ideological shift from the radical yet orthodox idea of deification to a 'consciousness of indistinction.'[98] The two images, of iron and of water, appear to have their roots in an earlier passage written by Bernard of Clairvaux, although Porete makes some alterations to his metaphors that will receive further scrutiny below. In his *De diligendo Deo*, Bernard writes of the experience of union that lies at the pinnacle of the mystical journey of ascent towards God:

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[95] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 330; 'which we will have in glory, of which none know how to speak.' *Mirror*, p. 193.
[96] Kangas, 'Dangerous Joy,' p. 313, also n. 22.
[97] Marin, 'Annihilation and Deification.'
[98] Marin, 'Annihilation and Deification,' p. 101.

> Quomodo stilla aquae modica, multo infusa vino, deficere a se tota videtur, dum et saporem vini induit, et colorem, et quomodo ferrum ignitum et candens, igni simillimum fit, pristina propria que exutum forma, et quomodo solis luce perfusus aer in eamdem transformatur luminis claritatem, adeo ut non tam illuminatus quam ipsum lumen esse videatur, sic omnem tunc in sanctis humanam affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a semetipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem.[99]

Although the Cistercian abbot's metaphors of union appear to suggest a dissolution of the mystic in God, Bernard is careful never to assert any form of substantial unification.[100] In his descriptions of the transformation of water, iron, and air, he makes sure that it is only the appearance that is transformed, not the substance itself. Using visual qualifiers ('videtur,' 'simillimum'), Bernard engages with what might be referred to as the 'metaphorical seeing' discussed earlier. The source domains he uses to describe the soul – water, iron, and air – may all be able to be transformed by some form of omnipotent power, and may, conceptually at least, be infinite in volume or source, but they never lose their essential identity. Rather, they unite with the form of God in a perfect mirroring

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[99] Bernardus Claraeuallensis, *Liber de diligendo Deo,* in *Sancti Bernardi Opera,* ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H.M. Rochais, vol. 3 of 9 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963), p. 143. 'As a drop of water seems to disappear completely in a big quantity of wine, even assuming the wine's taste and colour; just as red, molten iron becomes so much like fire it seems to lose its primary state; just as the air on a sunny day seems transformed into sunshine instead of being lit up; so it is necessary for the saints that all human beings melt in a mysterious way and flow into the will of God.' Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God,* trans. by Robert Walton, with an analytical commentary by Emero Stiegman, Cistercian Fathers, 13B (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), p. 30. Robert Lerner suggests that Bernard borrowed the images of fire and air from Scotus Erigena's translation of Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua*, but speculates that the image of the wine and the water was Bernard's own. See 'The Image of Mixed Liquids in Late Medieval Mystical Thought,' *Church History*, 40, 4 (Dec. 1971): 397-411. Here at p. 397, n. 3. For a detailed history of these three metaphors in religious writing, see Jean Pépin, '"Stilla aquae modica multo infusa vino, ferrum ignitium, luce perfusus aer": L'origine de trois comparaisons familières à la théologie mystique médiévale,' *Divinitas* (*Miscellanae André Combès*), 11 (1967): 331-375.

[100] See Etienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St Bernard*, trans. by A.H.C. Downes (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 120-123.

of structures, or as Bernard expresses it, they unite, 'non tam essentiarum cohaerentia facit, quam conniventia voluntatum.'[101] Once again, the mapping of essential characteristics is only partial between the soul and the divine, the underpinnings of metaphorical thought echoing those of its mystical subject matter.

The *Mirouer* repeats Bernard's iron and fire imagery in chapter 52. *Dame Amour* tells *Raison* that the Soul enters into and remains within the 'abundances and flowings of divine love':

> comme le fer est vestu du feu, et a la semblance perdue de luy, pource que le feu est le plus fort qui l'a mue<e> en luy; tout aussi est ceste Ame vestue de ce plus, et nourrie et muee en ce plus, pour l'amour de ce plus, sans faire compte du moins.[102]

In the introduction to her translation of the text, Ellen Babinsky maintains that Porete 'insists that the iron *becomes* fire itself by virtue of the strength of the fire (original emphasis).'[103] However, on closer inspection, Marguerite appears to echo Bernard's phrasing more carefully than has been previously noted. Like the Cistercian, Porete uses qualifiers ('vestu,' 'semblance') to shift her imagery away from the literal and towards the figurative, mitigating any suggestion that the iron itself turns into flame, and, once again, the active emphasis is on

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[101] *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, Sermon 71. 7, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H.M. Rochais, vol. 2 of 9 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1958), p. 220; 'not so much by the identity of essences as by the concurrence of wills.' Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. by Irene M. Edmonds, Cistercian Fathers Series, 40, vol. 4 of 4, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980), p. 54. Bernard appears to be drawing on the Pauline notion found in 1 Corinthians 6:17, 'Qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est.' 'But he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.'

[102] *Mirouer*, ch. 52, p. 152; 'like iron invested with fire which has lost its own semblance because the fire is stronger and thus transforms the iron into itself. So also this Soul is completely invested with this greater part, and nourished and transformed into this greater part, taking no account of the lesser.' *Mirror*, p. 130. Babinsky translates the Middle French 'vestue' as 'invested,' although it would perhaps be more accurate to translate it as 'clothed' or 'shrouded,' assuming 'vestue' is the past participle of the Old and Modern French verb 'vestir.'

[103] *Mirror*, p. 45.

appearance as opposed to being grounded in any form of physical, objective reality. Iron *appears* to become fire when it is taken over by the potency of the divine flames. But molten iron is not fire: Porete's conceptualisation of union, like that of Bernard, is that of a partial mirroring of form as opposed to content. In this case, the substances remain separate, even when they appear united.

The second of Marguerite's metaphors of mystical union under scrutiny here also takes its influence from Bernadine expression, although her manipulation of the imagery seems unique within the corpus of Christian spiritual writing.[104] Whilst explaining how the Soul no longer has a will and has given it over to God, *Dame Amour* says:

> Ainsi comme feroit une eaue qui vient de la mer, qui a aucun nom, comme l'en pourroit dire Aise, ou Sene, ou une aultre riviere; et quant celle eaue ou riviere rentre en mer, elle pert son cours et le nom d'elle, dont elle couroit en plusieurs pays en faisant son oeuvre. Or est elle en mer, la ou elle se repouse, et ainsi a perdu tel labour. Pareillement il est de ceste Ame.[105]

The correlation between Bernard's drop of water in the wine and Marguerite's rivers flowing into the sea is clear, although Porete is not alone amongst her contemporaries in drawing on aqueous imagery in order to express the

[104] Borrowings from oceanic imagery are, however, common in the *Mirouer*. See, for example, chapters 28, 80, 81 and 83. McGinn traces the metaphors of 'ocean' and desert' in mystical literature in 'Ocean and Desert.'

[105] *Mirouer*, ch. 82, p. 234-36. 'Thus she would be like a body of water which flows from the sea, which has some name, as one would be able to say Aisne or Seine or another river. And when this water or river returns into the sea, it loses its course and its name with which it flowed in many countries in accomplishing its task. Now it is in the sea where it rests, and thus has lost all labor. Likewise it is with this Soul.' *Mirror*, p. 158. See Lerner, 'New Light,' for a discussion of the names of the river in the Middle French and Middle English manuscript traditions. See also the Introduction.

experience of being mystically united with the divine.[106] For Juan Marin, this passage condenses the essence of Porete's theology:

> Dissolution is to be completed, a mutual melting where nothing remains of the human nature, not even its name. Annihilation leads to total deification. […]. No metaphorical drop of wine will serve. By stretching Bernard's metaphor to the point that it breaks down, changing it into one substance divided only in terms of magnitude, she sets the stage for her claim that it is the chasm between humanity and divinity that seems real. While in Bernard human consciousness of distinction is lost, in Porete divine consciousness of indistinction is regained.[107]

However, the 'dissolution' of which the *Mirouer* speaks is not complete, and nor is annihilation equated literally with deification.[108] Whilst Marguerite's choice to depict the relationship between the annihilated soul and the divine as a river flowing into the sea does, at first sight, appear to break with the Bernadine paradigm of soul and God as two separate substances, in her decision to name the rivers, her chosen imagery resonates more strongly with Bernard's theology

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[106] In her poetry, Hadewijch also wrote of sinking in the sea of love: 'My soul melts away/ In the madness of Love, / The abyss into which she hurls me/ Is deeper than the sea'. Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, trans. Mother Columba Hart (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1980). See poem 7, 'The New Path', stanza 4, ll. 43-45, at p. 145. For the Dutch, see Hadewijch, *Strofische Gedichten*, ed. by Josef Van Mierlo, S. J., 2 vols, Leuvense studiën en tekstuitgaven, 13 (Antwerp: Standaard Boekhandel, 1942). Mechthild of Magdeburg similarly makes use of watery imagery in order to convey her mystical experiences in *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. by Hans Neumann, 2 vols (Munich: Artemis, 1990). For the English translation, see *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. by Frank J. Tobin, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1998). For an analysis of the possible origins, and subsequent use of these metaphors in Mechthild's work, see James C. Franklin, *Mystical Transformations: The Imagery of Liquids in the Work of Mechthild von Magdeburg* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978).

[107] Marin, 'Annihilation and Deification,' pp. 100-101.

[108] Marin is not the only scholar to read the metaphor of the rivers and the sea as symbolic of the soul's complete unification with God. Robinson writes: 'This is a perfect representation of the journey of the soul to annihilation: it comes from the sea, follows its own path, and eventually finds its way back to its origin. […] The river, or the soul, is transformed into the sea and becomes indistinguishable with it.' *Nobility and Annihilation*, pp. 96-97.

than has previously been acknowledged.[109] Although Kocher asserts that the *Mirouer* 'contains […] no physical portrayal of its characters, nor landscape, time, or seasons', the allusions to natural and geographical imagery in the text are, in fact, numerous, and the relationship between rivers and the sea is not without a particular significance here.[110] Rooting the Soul firmly in her own, unspecified, physical landscape, Marguerite makes a clear distinction between the terrestrial, or earth-bound nature of the human soul, and the distant, abstract notion of the sea.[111] To take the entailment of the metaphor further, whilst the waters of the river flow into the sea, losing their identity as they do so, the rivers themselves never cease to exist or disappear.[112] This constitutes a subtle echoing of Bernard's imagery. Just as the Cistercian follows his metaphor with the insistence that the soul's substance, though transformed, 'manebit quidem,' so too the implications of Porete's example suggest that the river remains, physically established and evocative of the annihilated soul on earth, and yet part of a larger chain of events that will ultimately take it to its

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[109] An earlier example of this metaphor occurs in chapter 61 of the *Mirouer*: 'car d'autant comme il y a a dire d'une goute d'eaue envers toute la mer, qui est moult grant, autant a il a dire du premier estat de grace envers le second', ch. 61, p. 176. 'As one might compare a drop of water to the total ocean, which is very great, so one might speak of the difference between the first stage of grace and the second,' *Mirror*, p. 138.

[110] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 10. Instances of natural and geographical imagery occur, for example, in chapter 9: 'Ceste Ame […] si siet en la vallée d'Umilité, et en la plane de Verité, et se repouse en la Montaigne d'Amour.' *Mirouer*, ch. 9, p. 34. 'This Soul […] sits in the valley of Humility and on the plain of Truth, and rests on the mountain of Love.' *Mirror*, p. 87. Also chapter 80: 'Ceste Ame a apparceu par divine lumiere l'estre du pays dont elle doit estre, et a passé la mer, pour succer la mouelle du hault cedre. Car nul ne prent ne n'ataint a ceste mouelle, s'il ne passe la haulte mer, et se il ne noye sa voulenté es ondes d'icelle.' *Mirouer*, ch. 80, p. 226. 'This Soul has perceived by divine light the being of the land of which she must be. And [she] has crossed the sea in order to suck the marrow of the high cedar. For no one receives or attains this marrow if he does not cross this high sea, if he does not plunge his will into the waves.' *Mirror*, p. 155. For other allusions to geographical and natural imagery, see chapters 54, 91, 95, 98, 123, 124.

[111] As discussed in Chapter Two, Marguerite Porete was most likely from the province of Hainault in north western France (now Wallonia, part of modern Belgium). The Aisne forms the left-bank tributary of the River Oise, which in turn forms a right-bank tributary of the River Seine. The source of the Oise is in Hainault province, to the south east of Valenciennes. See also Lerner 'New Light.'

[112] Marguerite likens the river to the soul that loses its name in chapters 82-83: 'Vous avez de ce pour ce assez exemple, pour gloser l'entente comment ceste Ame vint de mer, et eut nom; et comment elle rentre en mer, et ainsi pert son nom, et n'en a point, fors le nom de celluy,' *Mirouer*, ch. 82, p. 236. 'You have from this enough of an example to gloss the intention of how this Soul came from the sea and had a name, and how she returns into the sea and so loses her name and has a name no longer, except for the name of Him,' *Mirror*, p. 158.

promised source.[113] As such, the entailments of Marguerite's metaphor imply that what the *Mirouer* is indicating is not a 'consciousness of indistinction', but rather a subtler notion whereby metaphor allows for the Soul's spiritual or affective ability to imagine her mystical and cosmic relation to the divine, whilst maintaining the enduring distinction between man and God.

Read in this light, *l'Ame*'s statement that 'tel estre fait avoir une amour et ung vouloir et une oeuvre en deux natures' resonates with Bernard's expression. In the same way, in the *De diligendo Deo*, the promised union of the human and the divine is decribed as: 'nothing less, but also nothing more, than a perfect accord between the will of the human substance and the will of the Divine substance, in a strict distinction of the substances and the wills.'[114] In spanning the divide between the literal and the figurative, the imagery of the river and the seas allows for a 'double-vision' of both geographic reality and mystical metaphor in which, providing both are understood correctly, both mystic and audience are allowed to cognitively grasp what is being conveyed. The 'rivers' and the 'sea' are indeed two substances, or two 'natures', but it is the 'flow' from one to the other, and the symbiotic relationship between the two, that Marguerite expresses as being of 'one work.' Total deification is not an entailment of this metaphor, only the imaginative possibility of the soul's capacity to conceptualise her union with the divine.

In her recent linguistic study of the *Mirouer,* Wendy Terry draws attention to Porete's grammatical structuring in these metaphors of union.[115] Terry notes that, in all of Porete's expressions of union with the divine, the verbs relating to the Soul are passive: 'le fer est *vestu* du feu, et a la semblance

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[113] *Liber de diligendo Deo,* p. 143. 'Will indeed remain.' *On Loving God*, p. 30.

[114] *Mirouer*, ch. 52, p. 154. 'Such being makes me have one love and one will and one work in two natures.' *Mirror*, p. 130. Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St Bernard,* p. 125.

[115] Wendy Rachele Terry, *Seeing Marguerite in the Mirror: A Linguistic Analysis of Porete's 'Mirror of Simple Souls'* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), especially pp. 127-129.

perdue de luy, pource que le feu est le plus fort qui l'a *mue*<*e*> en luy' [my emphasis].[116] Even when the metaphor suggests total absorptive union between the Soul and the divine, the agency of the activity remains distinct from its subject:

> Le sourhaulcement ravissable qui me sourprent et joinct au millieu de la mouelle de Divine Amour en quoy je suis fondue, dit ceste Ame; c'est donc droit qu'il me souviengne de luy, car je suis remise en luy.[117]

Not only does Porete conceptualise the divine and the Soul as separate substances, or as having separate structural (or corporeal) identities in the metaphor of the river and the sea, she is also consistent in asserting that it is God, not the Soul, who is responsible for her annihilation. One constituent of the partnership is transformed by another in a process that may be likened to the interaction suggested by cognitive metaphor theory between the source and target domains. Just as the target domain is partially transformed by its contact with, and appropriation of, certain elements of the source domain, so too Porete's Soul is partly transformed by the activity of the divine within her.

As the opening chapter discussed, which particular aspects of a source domain are mapped onto the corresponding target domain may be influenced by any number of contextual factors. In the metaphors of mystical union in the *Mirouer*, Marguerite Porete is careful to control the mappings generated between the Soul and the divine by repeatedly figuring the Soul in a lower, subservient position relative to God. The Soul is 'une riviere' to the 'mer' that is

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[116] *Mirouer*, ch. 52, p. 152; 'iron *invested* with fire which has lost its own semblance because the fire is stronger and thus *transforms* the iron into itself.' *Mirror*, p. 130 [my emphasis].

[117] *Mirouer*, ch. 80, p. 228 'The Ravishing Most High who overtakes me and joins me to the center of the marrow of divine Love in whom I am melted, says this Soul. Thus it is right that He come to my aid of Himself, for I am dissolved in Him.' *Mirror*, pp. 155-156.

God; 'une mauvaisté' to the 'bonté' that is the divine.[118] The Soul is permitted to appropriate some of the greater qualities of God, and therefore may perceives herself to have been taken into a higher and transformed state, but, within the remit of the text at least, this transformation is never seen to fully take place.

One of the purposes of the *Mirouer* is to convey this sense of transformed metaphorical self to the reader. Although the text makes frequent reference to those who will not understand the subtleties of *Dame Amour*'s discourse, there is an implicit notion that a community of similar *ames adnientie* also exists with whom the Soul identifies, and who are also privy to the mystical secrets of the text.[119] Exemplifying how the annihilation of the Soul comes about, the text calls on those who are also able to 'see metaphorically' to join with *l'Ame* and *Dame Amour* and undergo a similar transformation of literal to mystical vision. Both the theme and the content of Porete's narrative involve the explicit application of the truths communicated by its protagonists to the imagined reality of her reader, inviting them to join the Soul in a metaphorically parallel vision, in 'une aultre vie.'[120]

In his analysis of the text, Patrick Wright remarks that 'the book, the image, the soul, the love and the lover are all self-reflecting mirrors.'[121] Yet, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, this statement both reduces the potency

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[118] *Mirouer*, ch. 130, pp. 372-374. *Mirror*, pp. 210-211.

[119] See, for example, the *Mirouer*'s prologue, in which an 'authorial voice' can be heard: 'Et pource nous vous dirons […]' and later, in chapter three, *Dame Amour* begins: 'Pource ycy commencerons […].' The voice of *l'Acteur*, which is occasionally assumed to be that of Marguerite, makes only one appearance in the *Mirouer*. However its use of 'nous' suggests that the authorial voice, together with those of *l'Ame* and *Dame Amour*, constitutes part of a wider community, all of whom have attainted the state of annihilated perfection. See *Mirouer*, p. 14 and p. 16. *Mirror*, p. 81. Kocher discusses the figure of 'l'acteur' and the dangers of conflating this figure with the historical Marguerite Porete in *Allegories of Love*, p. 167. See also Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d'Oingt,* p. 62.

[120] *Mirouer*, ch. 5, p. 18. *Mirror,* p. 82.

[121] Patrick Wright, 'Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls and the Subject of Annihilation,' *Mystics Quarterly*, 35, 3-4 (2009): 63-98. Here at pp. 72-73.

of metaphorical thought and gives no agency to the divine, the source from which, Porete suggests, all entities emanate, and to which all must return. Rather, the *Mirouer* is a study in the potentiality of the metaphorical imagination. It is not a record of claimed 'experience,' nor does not imply that 'a perfected state of oneness is possible with God in this life.'[122] Instead it points to 'a shift in the centre of [the Soul's] awareness from the self to a point beyond the self,' a point between the reality of the self and its 'true' representation in the mirror.[123] It is within this third realm of perceived reality, that of the metaphor, that union between the *ame adnientie* and God occurs. Towards the close of the text, the Soul sings the words: 'Si beste estoie.'[124] Grammatically, the tense has changed from the present to the past, and yet she continues to speak. This encapsulates the very essence of the *ame adnientie*. Caught in the liminal space between the terrestrial and the celestial, she is both of the world and its imagery and not. Presence and absence, mediation and immanence, bounded and unbounded, distinct and indistinct: the Soul becomes a space in which, like the text she narrates, all of these possibilities can be encountered simultaneously and without conflict.

Marguerite's *Mirouer* does not guide its reader towards an understanding of mystical experience by means of metaphorical descriptions of objects, nor does it purport to offer an account of a realisation of mystical knowledge that is tangibly related to the physical world of lay religiosity at the turn of the fourteenth century. Rather, Porete's work presses for the realisation of a perceptive intelligence, in both the Soul and her reader, which is able to make judgements about humanity's relationship to the divine based on feeling and aesthetic sense, as opposed to reason and logic. The text argues for a mysticism grounded in intuition and specularity, free from empirical universals or conceptions. In this sense, Mark McIntosh remarks, there is a quality to

[122] Wright, 'Marguerite Porete's Mirror,' p. 65.

[123] Louis Dupré, 'The Christian Experience of Mystical Union,' *The Journal of Religion*, 69, 1 (January 1989): 1-13. Here at p. 4.

[124] *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 340. 'Such a beast I was,' *Mirror*, p. 198.

Marguerite Porete's mystical expression that is remarkably both of its time and yet indicative of a postmodern mode of thought and anthropology.[125] It is at once an account of the Soul's existence and its desire to remove those boundaries of existence; a call both to consciousness and pre-consciousness, participating in a constant process of becoming metaphorically 'other.'

[125] McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 213-224, especially p. 222.

CHAPTER FIVE

Making the Ineffable Intelligible: The Image and the Imagination in Mystical Metaphor

Marguerite Porete's appeal to move beyond the boundaries of fixed reference or perception is at odds with the aim of many modern discussions of mystical literature, which are often characterised by a drive to arrange the material into thematic or subject-specific groupings or genres.[1] One dominant perspective within this discourse is predicated on a particularly sensitive issue; the extent to which mystical expression points towards a 'real' or fictitious experience. The earlier discussions of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings, articulated through the lens of modern metaphor theory, observe that, in very different ways, these two women's works do not fit easily with modern notions of truth and fiction.

In drawing together these observations, this final chapter has a number of aims. The first is to reinsert d'Oingt's and Porete's writings into current scholarly debates concerning medieval mystical literature. In doing so, it suggests that the academy's desire to overly-categorise mystical writing is both distorting and unfounded. A survey of the ways in which d'Oingt's and Porete's works engage with, or break away from, a number of diverse critical paradigms demonstrates that certain modern literary models provide an insufficiently nuanced methodology with which to categorise mystical thought.

[1] See Newman, 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?,' especially pp. 1-2, for an overview of the ways in which Newman regards modern criticism of mystical writings as having 'tended to break down along disciplinary lines.' Newman states that literary critics 'have turned to medieval dream theory,' whilst 'scholars of spirituality and gender have examined visionary writers as a group' and anthropologists and 'theorists of religion have produced transhistorical […] studies that include medieval sources within a broader analysis of the vision as a form of religious experience,' p. 2. See also Hollywood, 'Introduction.'

Instead, it is possible to replace this concern to identify fixed categories with another line of enquiry, namely a heightened emphasis on the cognitive faculties as recognised within the medieval worldview, and reviewing them through a modern lens whose contours are formed by the exigencies of cognitive metaphor theory. The resulting discussion proposes that when cognitive models of reason, the imagination, image and impression are explored with reference to spiritual expression, the conclusions drawn demand a re-evaluation of what is meant by truth, fiction, and authenticity in the field of mystical writing. The hermeneutic model offered by cognitive and conceptual metaphor theory, this chapter suggests, provides an alternative perspective from which to approach these issues, engaging with the medieval text and its invitation to new modes of thought, understanding, and 'imaginative rationality.'

In modern literary terms, the dominant method of categorisation is one of genre. Until quite recently, scholars of mysticism have been content to distinguish its written testimony as belonging, broadly speaking, to one of two genres, classified by Peter Dinzelbacher as 'erlebte Visionen' (experienced visions), and 'literarische Visionen' (literary visions). [2] According to Dinzelbacher's thesis, the first of these is characterised as relating to a singular transportation to heaven or hell during which the visionary experiences a vivid and realistic journey which, in turn, produces a conversion of life. The second genre, Dinzelbacher contends, was more prevalent in the later Middle Ages, portraying consciously prepared experiences that are highly emotive, less geographically specific, concern multiple encounters with heavenly figures, and are more receptive to allegorical interpretation. His study makes use of these two typologies of revelation to hint at a third 'type,' in which elements of the experienced vision merge with and borrow from the literary narrative, and *vice versa*, but he does not explore this in any depth. Arguably, this third 'type' of

[2] Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 23 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1981).

mystical articulation would have been the most fruitful for Dinzelbacher to interrogate further. The implication that visionary literature both draws on, and is reflective of, differing spectrums of experience and modes of thought is a suggestive one and deserves more attention.

Given mysticism's propensity towards apparent paradox; the authorial voices that deny their authorship, the articulations of experience that question their state of experiential consciousness, and the despair at the unsuitability of language as a vehicle for communication (even as mystics employ language to do so), it is not surprising that binarisms have emerged in the analytical drive to understand mystical literature. However, this study's assessment of the metaphorical language in the writing of both Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete points not towards a need for divisions and classification in mystical writing, but rather towards continuity in the mystical mode of expression. Where previous critics have emphasised polarity, these writers' works can be placed on a scale of mystical cognition, the conceptual framework of which is structured by 'imaginative rationality' and 'imaginative theology.'[3]

Despite the troubled relationship between visionary and mystical experience discussed in the Introduction, literary scholars frequently couple medieval mysticism with the genre of the dream vision under an all-encompassing label of 'visionary writing.'[4] As categories, both the dream and

[3] 'Imaginative rationality' is a label given to the cognitive structuring of metaphor by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By,* p. 192. It is discussed in further detail in Chapters One and Three. 'Imaginative theology' is a phrase coined by Newman in *God and the Goddesses*; see, in particular, pp. 292-301. Her terminology is discussed in further detail at the end of this chapter.

[4] A. C. Spearing, for example, describes mystical works as 'scriptural and Christian visions,' which, on occasion are used as 'other-world vision[s] for theological and political polemic.' He does not distinguish between the dream and the vision, preferring to see the two as sub-genres of the same broader category of literature. See *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 11-14. Steven Kruger, meanwhile, posits a binary opposition of divine and mundane dreams, into which, like Dinzelbacher, he also inserts a 'middle vision,' which blends features of both genres. However like Spearing, Kruger does not specify how and

the vision often share certain characteristics: both appeal to the unconscious or transcendent mind, feature a narrator guided by a spiritual or intellectual authority, and appear to resolve irreconcilable dilemmas of the terrestrial or waking world. Such comparisons of mystical writings to dream visions often centre on the state of human consciousness at the time of the experience and, by extension, implicitly or explicitly, the authenticity of the experience being related. One approach, for example, has been to stress the role of dreams in drawing the marvellous and the fantastical into the real world, connecting them with a person, a time, and a place, while providing their readership or audience with an accountable explanation of the illusions of sleep.[5] Yet herein lies a problem. When contrasted to this dream 'reality,' mysticism is seen to represent the articulation of a symbolised or allegorical experience, divorced from the 'real' world and unconnected to explicable states of consciousness such as sleep. According to this paradigm, these two modes of revelation, the dream vision and the mystical vision, are seen as representing two antithetical literary forms the essence of which is reducible to a simple binary of fact and fiction, or, 'experienced' and 'literary.'

A comparison of Marguerite d'Oingt's Christocentric, tangible and visceral use of metaphor with the more lyrical and allegorical qualities of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* appears, at first glance, to reinforce this distinction. The Carthusian's visionary writing is grounded in what Richard Kieckhefer calls a 'liturgical realism,' an extreme correlation between the events of the liturgy and the physical states perceived and experienced by the visionary protagonist.[6] Her references to the dates on which the visionary experiences occurred and to specific physical locations at the time of the visions she recounts; of being in the church during mass and at prayer before the altar and

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when the genre of the dream ends and mystical truth begins. See *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), in particular p. 129.

[5] See E. V. Gordon's introduction to *Pearl*, ed. E. V. Gordon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. xiv-xv, for an example of this perspective. Dreams, Gordon suggests, 'represent some sense of reality – some real event described in the language of allegory.'

[6] Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls,* p. 92.

at matins, and to Béatrix eating with her community in the refectory, or lying alone in her cell, situate her protagonists' spiritual journeys within a chronologically defined, material space, whilst her figurative imagery is deeply rooted in the dominant devotional trends of her age. The images that catalyse and provide her visions with symbolic significance: the crucified Christ on the cross, the codex decorated in the colours of the Passion, the ascetic suffering depicted in her hagiography of Béatrix, and the graphic imagery of the Eucharist that transforms into the flesh of Christ, are carefully constructed so as to provide a meditative account based variously on an appeal to the imagination, the rational intellect, and the emotions.

Literary form and content echo each other across Marguerite d'Oingt's corpus. Her writing contains, and is framed and contextualised by, the holy book of Scripture in the same way that her experience and her account of Béatrix's experience find shape and meaning in the experience of Christ. The apotheosis of the book and the body, in the form of both Christ's and Béatrix's suffering flesh, becomes a means through which to express the visionary mysteries of the divine, the corporeal nature of the flesh and the codex providing a tangible structure and sequence to the otherwise inexpressible. Throughout the *Pagina*, the *Speculum* and the *Via Seiti Biatrix*, Marguerite creatively manipulates concepts of colour, spatial relations, and aspectual or 'event-structuring concepts,' as Lakoff and Johnson call them, to give an impression of tactile reality to her expression.[7]

Such a decidedly material experience of Christocentric ecstasy, in which the mind is guided by means of emotionally charged allegorical comparisons (such as the wounded body, and the codex inscribed in red and black ink) not only suggests a realism and authenticity to Marguerite d'Oingt's experience, but also something of who might share in this experience, and how. An

[7] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy In the Flesh,* especially pp. 16-36.

audience participating in a similar liturgical environment may also conceptually configure a corresponding schema out of the same physical symbols, and engage their own cognitive faculties in pursuit of similar spiritual encounters. In creating her liturgical systematicity, Marguerite shapes a coherent model in terms of the expression of her own visions, and with respect to their subsequent reception. The metaphors of her text echo and resonate with each other, creating a conceptual map that both protagonist and audience can navigate by means of a joint participation and a shared lived experience in the events and narratives of the liturgy.

This sense of realism is heightened by Marguerite d'Oingt's framing of her protagonists' spiritual experiences with physically manifested states of human consciousness and emotion. Her visionaries feel and respond to fear ('pavorum') and pain ('dolorem'), sleep 'en bona pays,' faint, and, even when experiencing the heights of spiritual ecstasy, do so in relation to the conceptual and material awareness of their human selves:

> illi remaneyt en si grant consolacion y en si grant joy de cuor de la vision et del granz secrez de son bon creatour que a bein po que illi se sentievet corporalment, mais li eret ades vyayres que illi deffallit del cors et se sentivet come en espirit.[8]

Marguerite d'Oingt's emphasis on materiality, her use of chronological and liturgical structures, the location of her experiences within a navigable spatial setting, and her use of metaphorical imagery drawn from biblical and exegetical motifs, centring on the themes of embodiment and the embodied

[8] *Li via seiti Biatrix*, p. 128, §104; 'because of the vision and great secrets of her good Creator, she experienced such great consolation and joy that it hardly seemed to her that she was fainting and she had the impression that she was only spirit.' *The Life of the Virgin Saint Beatrice*, p. 58. Earlier in the *Via*, Marguerite narrates a instance during which Béatrix saw the saints 'non […] pas des heuz corporaz mays en spirit; et veit son cors el leit a bein po semblablo al cors mort.' *Le via seiti Biatrix*, p. 118, §81. '[But she saw them] not physically, but spiritually; and she saw her own body in the bed, and it looked like a dead body.' *The Life of the Virgin Saint Beatrice*, p. 54.

mind, invite a strong sense of empathy, a 'vital cognitive faculty' and a crucial facet in metaphoric processing.[9] Metaphor, in this sense, functions not only as a linguistic mode of expression, but also precisely as described by cognitive metaphor theorists: as a means of structuring more abstract target domains of experience, and in turn providing a means by which an audience might imagine the reality of Marguerite d'Oingt's spiritual theology.

These observations suggest that Marguerite d'Oingt's literary *oeuvre* fits comfortably into the category of 'authentic' visionary literature outlined above.[10] The dominant features in all three of her visionary accounts can be correlated with Barbara Newman's description of 'authentic' visionary literature as frequently including episodes of revelation and journeys into the otherworld, as well as accounts taken from 'spiritual diaries.'[11] To read d'Oingt's writing, with its blend of recounted human states of consciousness with the authority of scripture, as an example of 'authentic' experience is, however, to expose it to a second, and in this context, recurrent, series of questions concerning the extent to which language, recounted truths, and spiritual experience reflect an objective account of reality. Although the case has been made here for a *re*contextualist approach to mystical writing, in so far as a text's historiographical context sheds light on its internal composition and its external dissemination and reception, schematising an otherwise arbitrary 'montage of events into spiritual autobiography' is deeply problematic, particularly with regard to how the text's metaphorical language functions as vehicle for the cognitive practices at stake. [12]

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[9] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 565.

[10] Newman discusses the genres of 'authentic' and 'fictional' visionary literature in *God and the Goddesses,* pp. 26-33.

[11] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 26.

[12] Denise Despres, *Ghostly Signs: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1989), p. 20. Kieckhefer also notes the proliferation of potentially unreliable autobiographical detail in fourteenth-century saints' *vitae*. See *Unquiet Souls*, pp. 4-7.

Despite the sprinkling of autobiographical features in d'Oingt's texts, which root the narrative in a medieval monastic historicity, the dominant metaphor across her corpus of writings is that of Christ's life, suffering and Passion. It is only through this biblical biography of Christ that the reader is able to imagine, in accordance with the semantic limitations that metaphor involves, the figures of d'Oingt and her protagonists, and to shape a cognitive map that re-orders the protagonist's life into a corresponding pattern of Christological self-knowledge and revelation. Within Christian exemplary literature, the use of Christ's life as an exegetical trope is a common one. What is more problematic here, however, is that a reader's perception of Marguerite d'Oingt's visionary protagonists may be too closely aligned with the beatific or mystical vision being related to be accurately described as 'authentic,' if, indeed, 'authentic' equates to biographical account.

Terms such as 'autobiography' in a discussion of the 'authenticity' of Marguerite d'Oingt's discourse need to be used with caution. Denise Despres, for example, in her study of visual meditation in the later medieval period, tempers her use of the expression 'spiritual autobiography' by suggesting that a suitable synonym might be 'exemplary fiction,' designed to be imaginatively and conceptually, but not factually, true. In her discussion of the mystical genre and its reception, Despres' focus on the cognitive function of the imagination is extremely helpful in its suggestion of an alternative framework to the descriptive categories of 'authentic' and 'fictional' visions. However, Despres does not quite adhere to her observations. Later in her study, she establishes a correlation between 'authentic' experiences and 'details from personal experience' which embellish accounts derived from Scripture in mystical thought, and thereby misinterprets the purpose and function of the mystical text.

This is not to suggest that the personal details added to these texts in order to validate the visions, or to place them in context are to be discarded entirely. However, to regard Marguerite d'Oingt's writing as indicative of some form of 'reality' is problematic on a further two counts. First, notions of 'authenticity' and 'autobiography' are antithetical to the mystical genre, with its emphasis on the dissolution of the self in favour of experience of the divine; an image used to particular effect in Marguerite Porete's mystical prose. Whilst d'Oingt frames her accounts of visionary experience with personal details, these contextual descriptors serve primarily as catalysts for the visionary's entry into the celestial, or divine, realm. Mystical 'authenticity' does not equate to fact, reality, or objectivity. Rather, it is a lens through which to structure cognition and perception; a *mode* of seeing as opposed to seeing *itself*.

There is a certain irony in viewing Marguerite d'Oingt's mystical writing as a portrayal of authentic or autobiographical experience. As the analysis of her texts has demonstrated, the details of each of her visionary experiences are almost wholly derived from scriptural or exegetical precedents. These extra-textual allusions contribute, Newman suggests, to the visionary's 'truth-claims'; the validity of her vision depends on the 'learned weight of allegorical, scriptural, theological, and scientific exegesis.'[13] However, they do so in a way not explored by Newman in *God and the Goddesses*. By drawing on scriptural precedent, Marguerite d'Oingt is not making 'truth-claims' but rather is extending an invitation to her audience to participate in what might be called 'belief-claims.' This idea stems from the earlier discussion of Chapter One regarding the interrelated systematicity of language and cognition and the limitations of its inherent 'open-endedness.' Arguably Marguerite d'Oingt utilises figurative imagery, or metaphor, from scriptural precedent in order to articulate lacunae in a narrative that she cannot otherwise explain, but for which the cognitive processes of the imagination can substitute.

[13] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 302.

Chapter One proposed that metaphor possesses the capability to conjure meaning for the person hearing the metaphor without that individual ever having come into contact with the source domain, and knowing only something of the target domain. In Marguerite d'Oingt's case, this might, in theory, apply to any of the scriptural metaphors she employs in order to describe her experience of the ineffable. For example, not all of the nuns in her order would have been trained as scribes, but, as Chapter Two has demonstrated, they would have had sufficient exposure to writing practices to imagine and process the metaphor of the inscribed heart and its relationship to the codex of Christ in the *Speculum*. Thus, not only does metaphor processing involve the mapping of the source domain onto that of the target, to use Lakoff and Johnson's terminology, in order to find ways to imagine, contextualise, and relate to the indescribable experience, but so too, within the cognizance of the target, certain gaps in experiential knowledge can be filled by the imagination and by the belief that those imagined details are true (or false). If the person processing the metaphor does not *believe* certain properties of both the target and source domains to be true, then any discussion of intended or implied meaning becomes redundant; the 'truth-claim' of the mystical discourse loses its claim to authority. As Monroe C. Beardsley notes:

> [although] in part the connotations of the *word* [the target domain] derive from what is generally true of the *objects* [from which the target is literally derived], they do not coincide completely. For the connotations are controlled not only by the properties the object actually has, but by those it is widely *believed* to have – even if the belief is false (original emphasis).[14]

What might be deduced from Beardsley's observations is that whilst one of the supporting pillars of metaphor is truth, its foundations are constituted by belief. If these observations are applied to the discussion of 'authenticity' and

[14] Beardsley, 'The Metaphorical Twist,' p. 107.

'truth-claims' in Marguerite d'Oingt's writing, it becomes clear that at both a linguistic and a conceptual level, her visionary literature is not a product of, and nor does it purport to engage with, modern notions of objective reality. 'Authentic' experience as related by d'Oingt is metaphorical and used to structure ineffable experience, not the other way around. An analysis of Marguerite d'Oingt's three mystical testimonies problematizes Dinzelbacher's 'erlebte Visionen' in more ways than it clarifies his categories, and, in this instance, Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames* does little to recalibrate those distinctions between 'authentic' and 'fictional' mystical prose.

If Marguerite d'Oingt's text is an exponent of metaphorical 'liturgical realism,' then Marguerite Porete's mystical writing might appear to constitute its counter opposite. Porete's dialogic prose is set within an unspecified, imaginary location in a continuous present tense without chronological or grammatical indications as to its timeframe. As Suzanne Kocher notes, the *Mirouer* possesses a frameless quality, without physical description of its characters or landscape, which functions to situate the text in the cognitive landscape of the mind, where the characters' voices act as personifications of the soul's mental faculties in her spiritual progression towards the divine.[15] It is this emphasis on cognition that draws Marguerite Porete's writing and conceptualisation of mystical experience into a reciprocal dialogue with the very different visionary literature of Marguerite d'Oingt.

Marguerite Porete's experimentation with literary conventions causes her text to appear as an exemplary model of Dinzelbacher's 'literarische Visionen.' Borrowing heavily from a diverse range of both ancient and contemporary styles and motifs, from biblical, patristic, and twelfth-century exegesis to contemporary romance, Porete's text is perhaps more accessible to modern scholars as a self-conscious manifestation of literary art, or, more

[15] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 10.

precisely, of abstract pastiche. The impulse to shape narratives from earlier sources, both oral and written, and to choose elements from a wide range of literary styles and genres, from hagiography to dream vision, and from romance to chronicle, to name just a few, is commonplace in medieval literary composition.[16] Yet whilst deciphering Porete's inter- and extra-textual allusions, her targets of satire, and her sources of inspiration is no less challenging a prospect than determining the implications of her religious experience, it is perhaps more comfortable for modern scholars to focus on the fictional nature and literary composition of texts such as Porete's than it is to explore the ramifications of her intellectual and spiritual claims.[17]

Recent efforts undertaken to reveal Porete's literary sources are fundamental to the advance of more philosophical approaches. However, the function of Porete's self-consciously literary style has more to do with the intended cognitive processing of her mystical articulation than has been recognised. The purpose of her abstract style, dialogic form, literary borrowings, and use of metaphor, is not purely for artistic effect. Rather, the aesthetic qualities of the *Mirouer*'s use of metaphor mirror its spiritual rationale, permitting an audience to imagine, if not directly experience, something of the transcendent.

This sense of otherworldliness derives, in large part, from Marguerite Porete's neo-Platonic metaphors of eminence and return. Over the course of her spiritual progression towards the mystical seventh stage of unity with the divine, the *Ame* is described as 'fluans et decourans de la Divinité,' or 'fondue';

[16] Newman notes the 'impulse towards artistic refinement' in medieval vision texts. She writes: 'the popularity of visions as a literary genre encouraged a nearly irresistible tendency to improve on experience, or at times to invent it from whole cloth. This impulse can be discerned in both highly stylized, formulaic texts and strikingly original, idiosyncratic ones. We see one tendency in the saints' lives, where the subject's visions often conform so closely to conventional types […] that their authenticity is impossible to gauge.' 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?,' p. 4.

[17] See Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 300; *From Virile Woman To WomanChrist,* pp. 246-247.

terms that suggest a distinct absence of materiality. The annihilated soul is 'franche,' 'descombree de toutes choses' by the 'muance d'amour.'[18] These descriptions of states of transience combine with the soul being cast as a series of entities associated with movement, such as an eagle or a river, in order to create a protagonist whose identity appears constantly in flux, both internally, to her fellow interlocutor, *Raison*, and externally, to the audience or readership. Porete's use of grammar and syntax is also formulated to showcase *l'Ame*'s mutability in her relationship both to and with the Divine. The following passage, taken from chapter 118, illustrates the verbal, nominal and syntactical fluctuation of *l'Ame* during her interaction with God at the fifth stage:

> Or, a ce qui n'est fors en mauvaistié, qui est donc toute mauvaistié, est dedans luy enclos franche voulenté de l'estre de Dieu […] Et pource espant la divine Bonté par devant ung espandement ravissable du mouvement de divine Lumiere. Lequel mouvement de divine Lumiere, qui est dedans l'Ame espandu par lumiere […] <…> du lieu la ou il est, ou il ne doit pas estre, pour le remectre la ou il n'est, dont il vint […].[19]

In semantic terms, both the Soul and the Divine are depicted in this passage in a reciprocal relationship based on fluidity and symbiosis. What was 'en mauvaistié' is now in a state of flux, 'espandu par lumiere.' The syntax also mirrors this shift from enclosure to overflow, the final clauses paralleling and

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[18] *Mirouer*, ch. 28, p. 96; 'flowing and running out of the Divinity,' *Mirror*, p. 109. *Mirouer,* ch. 80, p. 228; 'melted,' *Mirror*, p. 155. *Mirouer*, ch. 85, p. 240; 'free,' *Mirror*, p. 160. *Mirouer*, ch. 60, p. 176; 'unencumbered from all things,' *Mirror*, p. 138. *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 332; 'transformation of love,' *Mirror,* p. 194.

[19] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 324. The lacuna signaled by the brackets, <…>, marks an omission in Ms. Chantilly, *Musee Condé,* XIV F 26. In Verdeyen's Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis Latin edition, this is rendered as 'ad mouendum uelle animae', *Speculum*, p. 325. Babinsky translates the extract as follows: 'Thus enclosed within the one who is not except in wretchedness, who is therefore total wretchedness, is free will from the being of God who is Being […] And thus the Divine Goodness pours out from (His) bosom one rapturous overflow of the movement of Divine Light. Such movement of Divine Light, which is poured into the soul by light […] in order to move the will of the soul from the place where it now is, where it ought not to be, in order to dissolve it where it is not, whence it comes […].' *Mirror*, p. 191.

contradicting each other by turn. It is this emphasis on mutation and transformation that gives the text its abstract quality, and contributes to Kocher's conclusion that the *Mirouer*'s action is placed 'in a spiritual rather than a material domain, the inner rather than the outer, the contemplative rather than the active, the soul or mind rather than the body.'[20] However, Kocher's suggestions that material references are used 'mainly as a starting block from which to push away,' and that the sense of abstraction is derived from a theme of 'bodilessness,' which in turn 'facilitates descriptions of the Soul's disappearance into God,' are disputable.

As the previous chapter established, Marguerite Porete's text does not present physicality in the same way as other thirteenth-century women mystics. The distinctive aspects of late medieval piety so prevalent in female-authored texts, including those by Marguerite d'Oingt, and brought under scrutiny by, in particular, Caroline Bynum's and Sarah Beckwith's studies, are largely absent from the *Mirouer* or, conversely, objects of derision by a Soul who mocks *Saincte Eglise la Petite*'s fixation with the materiality and performativity of the Scriptures and the Eucharist.[21] Porete's focus is the staged erosion and eventual annihilation of the speaking subject. In the lower stages of the soul's trajectory towards God, the body is described as needing to be 'pulverised' ('moulue'), 'en deffroissant et debrisant,' and that the 'gros du corps est osté et diminué par oeuvres divines.'[22] As a result, '[b]odily sensations, illness, visions, and physical martyrdom do not', Kocher concludes, 'figure in Porete's stock of images and in her theology.'[23]

[20] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 181.

[21] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, passim; Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, passim.

[22] *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 322; 'pulverized in breaking and bruising,' *Mirror*, p. 190. *Mirouer*, ch. 65, p. 188; 'grossness of the body is taken away and diminished by divine works.' *Mirror*, p. 142.

[23] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 181

There is, however, a distinctly physical essence to many of Porete's metaphorical evocations of *l'Ame*, particularly those depicting the Soul's relationship to the divine. The comparators explored in the previous chapter, of the rivers flowing to the sea, and of iron melting in the fire, are not corporeal in the sense of possessing a human body.[24] They do, however, exhibit qualities of form, substance and boundary, all of which are subject to patterns of spatiality, orientation, force, and composition; the very attributes Lakoff and Johnson assign to the embodied object. These, in turn, are the components that provide the metaphorical vocabulary with a coherence for aspects of thought processing, which, in this case, involves the post-experiential articulation of relations with the divine.[25]

The description of *l'Ame* as 'emprainte en Dieu, ainsi comme est la cire d'un seel,' is a metaphor whose origins and development Mary Carruthers explores at length in *The Book of Memory,* and whose medieval entailments play an important role in this context.[26] Carruthers demonstrates the importance of the seal-in-wax as a metaphorical representation of cognition and memory function in both classical and medieval thought, and ranging in meaning from a marker of ethical behaviour to the formation of character.[27] Consistent throughout the various philosophical, rhetorical, patristic and monastic uses of the metaphor that Carruthers analyses, however, is the notion that sealing wax, and by extension the wax tablet, is conceived of as a metaphor for embodied cognition. In the writings of Plato, Socrates, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, and others, wax functions as a visual representation of the mental faculties and as a vehicle for simultaneously pictorial and verbal memorial and cognitive

[24] See *Mirouer*, chapters 52 (iron and fire), and 82 (river and sea).

[25] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 25-30; *Philosophy in the Flesh,* pp. 34-38.

[26] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*. See p. 378, n. 48 for additional bibliography.

[27] See, for example, Hugh of St Victor's metaphor of wax likened to novices undertaking their moral education in the *De institutione novitiorum*, Patrologia Latina, 176: 933B. See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 89, for an English translation.

processing.[28] Carruthers observes that as a metaphor for cognition, the seal is inherently visual, but, as a 'model of inscription,' it is also 'verbal' in nature, as in the case of writing on a wax tablet or stone surface.[29]

The metaphorical entailments emanating from the figuring of wax as the source domain for the *Ame* are complex. The 'seel,' the Divine, creates the *Ame*, or the 'cire,' which becomes an embodiment of the Divine. By extension, imagining the Soul as wax causes her to become a 'model for inscription'; she is the cognitive model through which the reader or audience becomes cognizant of mystical experience and of God. Variously embodied as water, iron, or wax, the Soul is the primary vehicle for the conceptualisation of her journey towards union with the Divine, and, despite Amy Hollywood's proposal that Porete 'eschewed visionary experience,' her figurative 'bodies' possess both an aesthetic and a descriptive quality, which in turn structure how the report of her experience is received and understood.[30] This visual aspect to Porete's Soul is a vital element of its role as a metaphorical vehicle for mystical experience.

Porete both embodies and locates her articulation of mystical experience to a greater, if subtler, degree in the figure of *l'Ame* than the critic such as Kocher and Hollywood suggest, and in this respect, her writing can be more readily compared to that of Marguerite d'Oingt than might first be apparent. Conceptualising the Soul as an embodied entity, as a 'vaissel,' for example, facilitates descriptions of the Soul as being able to 'retraire dedans'; she possesses an interior and an exterior, and thereby lessens the impossibility of the paradox that:

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[28] See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 24-25 and p. 34.

[29] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 24-25.

[30] Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 8.

> Aussi ne font elles, dit Amour, nulle chose qui soit contre la paix de leur estre de dedans, et si pourtent en paix l'ordonnence d'Amour. Les personnes qui telles sont, sont si remplies, que elles ont dedans elles, sans mendier dehors elles, le divin soleil, par quoy elles pevent garder purté de cueur […].[31]

Porete's references to light and the interiority of the heart resonate with the imagery used by Marguerite d'Oingt. In both cases, the embodied protagonist constitutes both the internal recipient, and the external reflection, of divine grace. That Porete's Soul can also be regarded as an embodied concept, as theorised by Lakoff and Johnson, is evident from *l'Ame*'s frequent description as a subject with both locational and spatial properties. The Soul is depicted in a number of symbolic geographic locations throughout the course of the *Mirouer*, Porete combining and contrasting the biblical image of the holy mountain with the beguinal representation of the abyss in order to reinforce the extremity and the singularity of the mystical journey.[32] However, Porete's use of the geographically abysmal imagery is also transformed into the interior landscape of the *Ame*. The Soul falls into the abyss 'sans fons' in the fifth stage of her progression towards the divine, she also describes herself as 'abysmé en

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[31] *Mirouer*, ch. 73, p. 206; 'vessel,' *Mirror*, p. 148. *Mirouer*, ch. 113, p. 304; 'retreat with[in],' *Mirror,* p. 184. *Mirouer*, ch. 24, pp. 88-90; 'Also these Souls, says Love, do nothing which would be contrary to the peace of the being of their interior, and so they carry in peace the ordinance of Love. Such persons are so filled that they possess the divine sun within themselves, without begging for anything beyond themselves, by which they can guard a purity of heart.' *Mirror*, p. 106.

[32] References to the Soul atop the mountain can be found in chapters 65, 74, and 118. The 'abysme abysmee sans fons' is a common image in the *Mirouer,* and is found variously as the 'abysme de toute pouvreté' in chapter 38 and as the 'fons de la vallee, dont elle voit le mont de la Montaigne.' *Mirouer*, ch. 74, p. 206; 'bottom of the valley, from which she sees the height of the mountain.' *Mirror*, p. 148. The Bible makes frequent use of the imagery of the holy mountain, and it is likely that Porete derives her mountainous allusions directly from Scripture or from the numerous medieval exegetes who commented on the same sources. Examples can be found in the Books of Exodus, Ezekiel, the Psalms, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah. As noted in an earlier footnote, Hadewijch makes use of the image of the abyss and also of the mountain in her visions and poems. A wide-ranging survey of the development of the 'mountain' as symbol can be found in Walther Kirchner, 'Mind, Mountain, and History,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 11, 4 (Oct. 1950): 412-447.

humilité' and as possessing the spiritual capacity to reach the depths of the 'abysme du fons de [sa] propre mauvaistié.'[33] The interior landscape of the Soul mirrors the abstract, exterior landscape which she inhabits, and, at the fifth stage, uncovers new depths of spiritual awareness. This transformation is only possible, however, because Porete represents the Soul as an embodied entity; were she not, the fall into her interior depths would be impossible to conceptualise.

Linked to the locational aspect of Porete's imagery is her portrayal of the Soul's motion. The Soul is depicted as one who flies high and swims, 'arrives' metaphorically at her own 'understanding of her nothingness,' 'falls from love,' and is 'carried up to the sixth' stage.[34] As such, the *Ame* is also a mirror for her own spiritual journey, and in this sense, there is little abstraction to be found in Marguerite Porete's prose. Her mysticism takes a distinctly rational approach to mystical ecstasy, grounded in a common understanding of orientation and the physical landscape, which is matched by her cognitive expression and, arguably, a reader or audience's conceptualisation of the Soul and her environment. In her portrayal of the *Ame* and her world, Porete's mystical expression might be seen to encapsulate the modern theoretical model of embodied cognition. Just as the embodied selves of Marguerite d'Oingt's protagonists become reflective of the trajectory of her text, and structural representations of her theology, so too Porete's Soul can be seen in her embodied nature to help structure and conceptualise mystical experience. It is because she possesses both an exterior, which climbs the mountain or sinks into the abyss, and an interior, within which she rises in ecstasy or sinks into

[33] *Mirouer*, ch. 40, p. 126; 'fallen into the abyss of humility' (my translation). Babinsky translates this as 'in the abyss of humility,' rendering the action more neutral and diminishing Porete's striking emphasis on the Soul's fall, see *Mirror*, p. 120. *Mirouer*, ch. 117, p. 312; 'abyss of the depth of my own wretchedness,' *Mirror*, p. 187.

[34] *Mirror*, ch. 22, p. 104; 'vole hault,' *Mirouer*, p. 82. *Mirror*, ch. 28, p. 109; 'nage,' *Mirouer*, p. 96. *Mirror*, ch. 47, p. 126; 'est venue en cognoissance de son nient,' *Mirouer*, p. 142. *Mirror*, ch. 118, p. 193; 'cheue d'amour,' *Mirouer*, p. 328. *Mirror,* ch. 58, p. 135; 'ou sizieme ravie,' *Mirouer*, p. 168.

wretchedness, that a reader can conceive of, and imagine, the nature of her divine encounter.

Marguerite Porete also imagines the Soul as a structural metaphor for her textual environment in a striking similar way to the bibliophilic manner in which Marguerite d'Oingt conjures a relationship between her writing, her protagonists, their bodies and that of Christ, and ultimately, with Holy Scripture. Addressing *Raison*, *Dame Amour* explains that the Soul has taken leave of the Virtues and the 'escole' of Reason, and is now taken up with learning the 'divine leçon':

> [M]ais ceste leçon n'est mie mise en escript de main d'omme, mais c'est du Saint Esperit, qui escript ceste leçon merveilleusement, et l'Ame est parchemin precieusement; la est tenue la divine escole, a bouche close, que sens humain ne peut mectre en parole.[35]

As the 'parchemin précieux' that carries 'cest leçon,' the Soul is metaphorically reconfigured as the surface onto which the *Mirouer* is divinely written, an image that carries a double meaning. First it re-emphasizes that, as in Marguerite d'Oingt's writings, Porete's work is divinely, not humanly, inspired, crafted, and written. Echoing the words of the *Mirouer*'s Prologue, authorial responsibility is deftly shifted from human to godly agent, not as a plea of humility, but rather as a means of underlining the divinity of the message the book contains. Porete's statement that it was the Holy Spirit who wrote 'ceste leçon' is highly likely to be derived from Scripture, and the implications of her

[35] *Mirouer*, ch. 66, pp. 188-190. 'But this lesson is not placed in writing by human hand, but by the Holy Spirit, who writes this lesson in a marvelous way, and the Soul is the precious parchment. The divine school is held with the mouth closed, which the human mind cannot express in words.' *Mirror*, p. 142.

imagery are profound.[36] In Biblical imagery, the Holy Spirit is frequently represented as God's agent in the writing of Scripture. By borrowing the image of the Holy Spirit as author, and conceiving of the *Saint Esperit* as the scribe of the *Mirouer*, Porete therefore imagines her own text as a subsidiary of the Bible. This is not to suggest that Porete configures her text as equal in status to Holy Scripture. However, as a manifestation of her mystical theology, the *Mirouer* is explicitly imagined as a micronarrative to the Bible's macronarrative. This is perhaps the clearest indictor within the text as to how Porete may have viewed and conceptually situated her own work, and it is concurrent with this thesis' suggestion that the *Mirouer,* and similarly the writings of Marguerite d'Oingt, make extensive use of the metaphors of the book and the embodied self, and of a mirroring technique between these two key metaphors, in order to make sense of their respective mystical experiences and articulations of theology.

Second, Porete's metaphor of the *Ame* as parchment, echoing Marguerite d'Oingt's graphic imagery of writing on the body, and no doubt drawing on the same complex network of textual sources, re-configures the Soul conceptually as the structural support, or embodiment of the *Mirouer*.[37] The Soul *is* her text, in the same way that her interiorised, spiritual landscape mirrors the *Mirouer*'s interior, textual landscape. The same idea was proposed in the previous chapter: that to participate in a reading of the *Mirouer* is to look at, or into, the Soul. Metaphorically speaking, however, this raises a further series of theoretical questions as to how Marguerite Porete may have conceived of her mystical experience.

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[36] That the books and letters that make up the Bible were written by prophets and messengers of God, all of whom worked under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is frequently attested to in Scripture. See, for example, 2 Peter 1:20-21: 'Non enim voluntate humana allata est aliquando prophetia: sed Spiritu Sancto inspirati, locuti sunt sancti Dei homines.' 'For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.' See also 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

[37] See Chapter Three for an extended discussion of this metaphor's potential sources. Carruthers also discusses the image of writing on the body as a metaphorical structuring of thought and memory in *The Craft of Thought,* particularly at pp. 102-103.

Lakoff and Johnson, and, more recently, Zoltán Kövecses, propose that metaphorical mappings from the source onto the target domain are transferred in a single direction.[38] In other words, only the attributes of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain within cognitive processing; simultaneous bidirectional metaphorical projections do not exist within a single metaphor. Applying this theory to Porete's metaphor of the Soul as parchment would suggest that only the concrete attributes of parchment might be applied to the more abstract domain represented by the Soul. However, Porete's articulation of the Soul and the book suggests a more complex interaction between the two conceptual domains. In a later passage, she writes:

> Et ainsi escripsit ceste mendiant creature ce que vous oez; et voult que ses proesmes trouvassent Dieu en elle, par escrips et par paroles.[39]

To find God within the Soul 'par escrips et par paroles' twists the metaphor of the Soul as book, so that it is the spiritual qualities of the Soul that give rise to the corresponding mystical attributes of the *Mirouer*. Here, the book is not referenced directly, but rather is alluded to metonymically in the form of writing and words, words which Porete may be suggesting are read aloud as opposed to forming an integral part of the *Mirouer's* codicological, material existence. If the former is intended, reinforced by the use of the verb 'oez,' and the Soul is regarded as speaking orally, then arguably it is the Soul that represents the source domain here, and her voice that metaphorically constitutes 'this book' as the abstract target domain. If, on the other hand, the 'escrips' and 'paroles' are intended as written signs, the directionality of the metaphorical mapping can be seen to change. As written signs, it is the words that become the signifiers of the Soul's hidden and mystical meaning, the words

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[38] Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), especially at pp. 127-129.

[39] *Mirouer*, ch. 96, p. 268. 'And so this mendicant creature wrote what you hear. And she desired that her neighbours might find God in her, through writings and words.' *Mirror*, pp. 170-171.

constituting the source domain in relation to the intangible target. Porete's intended meaning here is obscure, and perhaps intentionally so. In either case, Porete suggests that at the heart of the elusive target domain, be it the codex or the *Ame*, lies humanity's knowledge of, and relationship with, the divine. The Soul and the book, or codex, are simultaneously and reciprocally constructed as both signifier and signified, each standing for the external representation and the inner, hidden meaning of divine truth.

In answer to *Raison*'s question concerning the catalyst and duration of the *Ame's* spiritual transformation, she answers that she has enjoyed a state of annihilation:

> Des le temps, dit l'Ame, que Amour me ouvrit son livre. Car ce livre est de telle condicion, que si toust que Amour l'ouvre, l'Ame scet tout, et si a tout, et si est toute oeuvre de parfection en elle emplie par l'ouverture de ce livre.[40]

In the same way that mystical understanding is attained by the protagonist of Marguerite d'Oingt's *Speculum* through gazing into Christ's book, the spiritual transformation of Porete's Soul is metaphorically figured as the opening of book, at the heart of which lies knowledge: *l'Ame* 'scet tout.' The multi-directionality of the metaphor of 'Soul as book' is captured in a single phrase, 'toute oeuvre de parfection en elle emplie par l'ouverture de ce livre.' The reference to the 'oeuvre de parfection' is ambiguous, held in tension by the dual roles of the Soul and the book, and used interchangeably throughout the *Mirouer*. The 'oeuvre' may be an allusion to the literary, or to the spiritual work

[40] *Mirouer*, ch. 101, p. 278. 'Since the time, says the Soul, that Love opened her book to me. For this book is of such a kind, that as soon as Love opened it, the Soul knew all things, and so possesses all things, and so every work of perfection is fulfilled in her through the opening of this book.' *Mirror*, p. 174.

of the Soul; both of which are resolved in, by and through her by means of the nature of her relationship with *Dame Amour*, the divine.

This discussion of the *Ame*'s metaphorical physicality, and the means by which her corporeity contributes to the ways in which the *Mirouer*'s theological message can be understood, suggests that the concept of the 'embodied' mystical protagonist requires further scholarly attention. Kocher's argument that Marguerite Porete's prose shows 'only infrequent interest' in the body as a locus for redemption collapses, because, as the metaphorically constitutional, orientational, and dimensional properties of the *Ame* reveal, it is the very nature of the Soul's embodied status that permits her, and by extension, her audience, to conceive of an imagined union, and therefore reconciliation, with God.[41] In this case, Kocher's definition of the 'body' is too literal to allow for the subtleties of Porete's use of embodied metaphor. The *Mirouer*'s Soul makes use of the attributes of embodiment without needing a 'body' in order to do so, although towards the close of the text, as the Soul reaches her desired state of annihilation the the divine, Porete reduces her descriptions to a series of verbs and adjectives. In the closing stanza of the Soul's song before the text's first *explicit*, she denies even her pronominal self:

> J'ay dit que je l'aymeray.
>
> Je mens, ce ne suis je mie.
>
> C'est il seul qui ayme moi:
>
> Il est, et je ne suis mie.[42]

In the following sixteen chapters, Porete resurrects the Soul's voice, but never again is she referred to as a structural entity or depicted in terms of

[41] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, p. 180.

[42] *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 346. 'I have said that I will love Him. / I lie, for I am not. / It is He alone who loves me; / He is, and I am not.' *Mirror*, p. 201.

geography or motion. The cognitive essence of the Soul remains; she continues to remember, to contemplate, to have affection, and to love, but her embodied status begins to fade.[43] The audience remains aware of *l'Ame* until the text's close, but, unlike the protagonists of Marguerite d'Oingt's visionary writing, vividly depicted until the close of her narratives, the Soul's image is described as: 'hoc est quod uidelicet resoluatur per adnichilationem.'[44] The audience is left with an image of visionary activity, not undertaken by the Soul, but rather by God, whose sight is mediated through, and therefore is, the sight of the Soul:

> car ses deux yeulx vous regardent tousdis; et se bien ce considerez et regardez, ce regard fait estre l'Ame simple.[45]

Not only does this closing image encapsulate the very essence of the annihilated Soul, in that God sees through her, but it also leaves the Soul as the embodiment of 'all' and 'nothing.' 'All,' in that she is entirely subsumed and incorporated by God and therefore spiritually complete; but also 'nothing,' in that she is fully transparent and consumed by the divine. The audience is left with a resolution only possible through the acceptance of paradox; the articulation of the Soul's realisation of mystical ecstasy is an articulation that lies beyond the linguistic capacities of the text. It may be argued that Porete's closing image of God seeing 'through' the Soul and the simultaneous lack of representative imagery reflects a more accurate depiction of the upper limits of spiritual experience than the vivid, but ultimately static, series of vignettes portrayed by Marguerite d'Oingt. Read as such, the *Mirouer*, with its fleeting and paradoxical imagery of an embodied but ever-evolving Soul, is perhaps a more candid representation of Dinzelbacher's 'erlebte Visionen.'

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[43] *Mirouer*, ch. 133, pp. 390-394. *Mirror*, pp. 216-217.

[44] *Speculum*, ch. 138, p. 401. 'It is that she is dissolved by annihilation,' *Mirror*, p. 220.

[45] *Mirouer*, ch. 139, p. 404; 'for His two eyes always see you. And so ponder and consider that this seeing makes the Soul Simple.' *Mirror*, p. 221.

This reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's works demonstrates that the distinctions made between 'authentic' and 'literary' mystical prose, or between 'biographical' and 'fictional' writing, are inherently porous. Both women's writings can be seen to correlate with, and yet undermine, the imposition of a generic analytical framework based upon such diametrically opposed poles as reality and fantasy, states of waking and dreaming, or objective truth and subjective belief. This is because mystical writing, rather like the notion of cognition itself, is the product of both impulses: the desire to capture and make sense of the experience as precisely as possible, and yet at the same time the acknowledgement that all cognitive processing of one's own, or another person's, experience is bound up with culturally constructed conceptual pathways and the imprecise act of information retrieval and recall.

Defined categories serve only to classify elements of an individual's writings in relation and contrast to those of other mystics, and do little to shed light on the articulation of visionary phenomena themselves. Instead, mystical modes of thought, experience, and verbalisation, ought to be regarded in terms of a spectrum, and the following remarks will propose the possibilities of two spectra within which Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's visionary writing can be located and fruitfully compared. These are the continua of meditative and contemplative thought, and theory and praxis. To regard d'Oingt and Porete's literary works as participating within these spectra is to situate them both within their contemporary cultural milieux, whilst permitting parallels to be drawn with modern theoretical approaches to their writings.

Although the categories of 'authenticity' and 'literariness' are deeply problematic for the study of mystical writing, they point towards a further two elements within the act of discourse, both of which are crucial to spiritual literature, but which pose additional theoretical questions. These two elements

might be broadly labelled as 'experience' and 'construction.' Whilst mystical 'experience' is both the catalyst for visionary writing, as well as its stated objective to re-capture, it is, by definition, beyond human capacity to re-create. Reviewing mystical and visionary writing, the conclusions drawn by modern commentators have ranged from establishing them as 'dream narratives' to dismissing them as episodes of 'hysteria,' to more recent investigations of spiritual writing as evidence of psychological phenomena and psychiatric diagnoses. [46] However, all of these attempts to explain and categorise 'experience' as evidenced by mystical writing face the same set of methodological hurdles.

The complications of authorship discussed in Chapter Two call into question the reliability of visionary literature as evidence of an experienced reality. The frequency of literary tropes and inter-textual borrowing, meanwhile, serve, somewhat paradoxically, to both clarify and confuse the matter. On one hand, stock imagery and common motifs help the reader to locate or place the recounted event or experience within a recognizable cultural framework, rendering it more identifiable and, arguably, meaningful. On the other hand, the very notion of categorisation brings this discussion full-circle. Categorization, and with it the recognition of the 'constructed-ness' of a literary account, re-introduces this chapter's earlier distinction between 'authenticity' and 'literariness,' and with it the dangers of a perceptual hierarchy, privileging the 'reality' of a mystical experience over its apparently fictitious opposite.

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[46] Until quite recently, 'hysteria' was the most common psychiatric diagnosis ascribed to Margery Kempe. For a discussion of the term, its use by scholars, and the diagnosis of other disorders apparent in her writing, see Richard Lawes, 'The Madness of Margery Kempe,' *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland, and Wales*, Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Charnley Manor, July 1999, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), pp. 147-167. Further psychoanalytic studies of medieval visionary writers can be found, for example, in: Jerome Kroll and Roger De Ganck, 'The Adolescence of a Thirteenth-Century Nun,' *Psychological Medicine,* 16 (1986): 745-756; 'Beatrice of Nazareth: Psychiatric Perspectives on a Medieval Mystic,' *Cistercian Studies*, 24 (1989): 301-323; Eugene G. d'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999); Kroll and Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind*, passim.

A further methodological obstacle concerns the lack, in medieval visionary narratives, of detail sufficiently detailed to discern the complex psychological portrait needed to construct a modern diagnosis of mental disorder. Some recent studies have sought to portray mystical writing as a report of psychodrama, the spontaneous re-enactment of specific happenings or inner mental processes in an individual's past. Yet even if the descriptive limitations of the mystical account are acknowledged, or accepted as contributing in some way to the diagnosis of the condition portrayed, this approach risks being overly reductionist. Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach's conclusions concerning Marguerite d'Oingt's portrayal of Béatrix d'Ornacieux, for example, have a tendency to over-emphasise the psychopathology of the saint's experience without allowing sufficient discussion of the theological and historical dimensions of her *vita* and their associated symbolism.[47] To emphasise the psychology and neurophysiology associated with self-harming behaviours such as those enacted by Béatrix is to risk distorting the text into a medical report in which human behaviour and its motivation are taken as factual realism, drawing the modern scholar once again into the irresolvable struggle between the subjective and the objective, the literal and the metaphorical.

This reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's mystical writing suggests a different approach to medieval spiritual expression, an approach that highlights the very constructed-ness of the text through its focus on figurative language without underestimating the role played by the notion of 'experience.' Metaphor, after all, is constituted by a blend of reality and fiction. Grounded in the perceived realities and experiences of the speaker and their audience, both utterer and recipient process metaphor in terms of a 'mappable' correlation between what they believe to be the most accurate and appropriate qualities of the source and target domains. As the conceptual space

[47] Bachrach and Kroll, *The Mystic Mind*, especially Chapter 11, 'Beatrice of Ornacieux.'

created by the source and target domains, the metaphor constitutes a negotiated 'truth,' a believable reality constituted by the interaction between the structural components of two domains of meaning. Max Black's theory of metaphor expresses this idea in slightly different terms, but reaches a similar conclusion. Black suggests that metaphor functions by means of a filter, the 'reality' of the target domain being illuminated by the 'screen' or lens of the source domain.[48] However Black develops his theory to suggest that the relationship between the two domains:

> enable[s] us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor's production helps to constitute. But that is no longer surprising if one believes that the world is necessarily a world *under a certain description* – or a world seen from a certain perspective [original emphasis].[49]

Black's notion that metaphor allows for a reality that it itself contributes to, through the interaction between the two domains and the activity of 'filtering' or 'screening,' correlates with this study of metaphor in mystical writing, in which it has been argued that metaphor permits a reader, medieval or modern, to revisit elements of that reality without losing sight of the constructed-ness of the prose and its processing. Whilst Black suggests that metaphor possesses a generative ability to create novel views of a domain, he also proposes that metaphor can yield insights into 'how things are.'[50] This is not the same, Black argues, as asking whether or not metaphorical statements are able to represent the 'truth,' since a focus on 'truth' brings about a distorted connection between statement and reality. Metaphor is not bound by the binary of fiction and fact, but rather, in Black's words, it always 'says something.'[51]

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[48] Black, 'Metaphor,' p. 75.

[49] Max Black, 'More About Metaphor,' in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 19-43. Here at pp. 39-40.

[50] Black, 'More About Metaphor,' pp. 40-41.

[51] Black, 'More About Metaphor,' p. 41.

This 'something' is the 'representational aspect' of metaphor, and it is the delving into the structures, analogies, and appropriateness of the metaphor at the level of cognitive processing that reveals the apparently paradoxical ability of metaphor to conjure a new awareness about the reality of 'how things are.'[52]

Black's observations correspond with the use of cognitive metaphor theory as a heuristic lens through which to view Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's articulations of their mystical experiences and to provide a helpful conceptual framework with which to renegotiate the traditional distinctions between the truth or falsehood of mystical expression. Over the course of the two women's works, both texts construct what might be thought of as a mystical 'world' in which their metaphorical utterances correspond to a schema of embodiment, conceptualised by means of a wide range of source domains: light, the codex, the body, the Eucharist, iron, water, wax, and fire.

For the duration of the mystical narrative, these metaphors represent logical, rational possibilities for transformation, 'real' within the parameters of the mystical world they exist in. Their figurative language functions literally within the world of their texts; iron does not disappear when subjected to the heat of a flame, but transforms from a solid to a liquid. The schema highlighted in Marguerite d'Oingt's work is derived from a literal view of medieval textual production; the body and the skin of Christ depicted in the *Pagina* correspond logically, within the world constructed by her writing, to the binding and folios of the book in the *Speculum.* In this context, metaphor functions as literal language within an imaginary world: possibilities that could not be represented in what Samuel Levin calls the 'actual world' or 'the world in which we live,' such as the body being a book, become logical constructions within a reader's

[52] Black, 'More About Metaphor,' p. 41.

understanding of the mystical realm.[53] It is by means of these metaphors' entailments and their internal logic that the mystical world makes sense to the non-mystic: in metaphorical representation, what 'shifts' is not the literal meaning of the metaphorical language *per se*, but rather, as the earlier quotation by Black demonstrates, it is the conceptualisation of the world in which it is perceived that modulates the metaphor's meaning. In an observation equally applicable to medieval and modern texts, Levin writes: 'what is metaphoric is not the language, but the world.'[54]

Both Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings may be read as representations of mystical, metaphorical worlds, in which metaphor is the organising principle of their modes of expression. Both women's works participate in a 'reality' within the paradigm of those worlds; a 'reality' made possible by metaphor's ability to unite two modes of thought, reason and the imagination.[55] The cognitive activity underpinning the processing of metaphor involves the categorizing of metaphorical entailments and inferences in order to make meaning, an activity characterised by a series of cognitive decisions held to be rational and logical. Yet the 'truth-value,' and associated 'reality,' that this rationality gives rise to are only realisable in the realm of the imagination, in which it is possible to reconstruct a partial, if not complete, mental image of the metaphorical world being alluded to. The imagination can be seen to work in much the same way as cognitive metaphor processing, being both spontaneous, yet simultaneously controlled and constrained.[56] In the case of metaphor processing, it is the latter mode that is stimulated, at least initially, constrained and controlled by the conceptual limits and internal rationality of the relationship between the source and target domains.

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[53] Samuel Levin, *Metaphorical Worlds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 2.

[54] Levin, *Metaphorical Worlds*, p. 2.

[55] See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 192.

[56] E. S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN, and London: Indiana University Press, 1976). See also Levin, *Metaphorical Worlds*, pp. 73-77.

It is impossible, within the remit of this study, to undertake anything other than a very broad view of what is may be meant by the term 'the imagination,' either in a medieval or modern sense.[57] Of interest here, however, is a very specific sense of the imagination, in which metaphor functions within mystical writing as a device for thinking about the ineffable; a rhetorical tool that doubles as an exploratory, cognitive device for imagining the divine. This chapter has, in large part, demonstrated the extent to which modern readings of metaphor theory can be successfully traced in medieval mystical writing. However, the medieval mind was equally concerned with models of human psychology, and the underpinning processes through which the mind engages in the production of knowledge and understanding.

It is unlikely that Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete came into direct contact with the primary sources expounding these ideas. Yet psychological schemas undoubtedly constituted an integral element within the wider medieval intellectual and cultural environment. Sketching out some of the parallel dynamics between medieval and modern articulations of the mechanisms of thought and language reveals a striking correlation between the two, which can be brought into focus in relation to mystical expression. Mystical writing and metaphor theory can be seen to constitute two closely linked phenomena, and indeed, both constructs occupy a far more significant place in theological, devotional, and speculative thought than some studies have allowed for.

A particularly influential example of early medieval human cognition can be found in Augustine's characterization of his memory in the *Confessiones*,

[57] A useful introduction to the medieval imagination can be found in Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). Originally published as *L'imaginaire médiéval* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1985). A more recent study can be found in Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*, passim.

in which he highlights the role played in medieval cognitive pattern-making by 'rationes,' the ordering apparatus inherent within the mind.[58] Augustine writes that 'rationes':

> aliae sunt, non sunt imagines earum, quas mihi nuntiauit carnis oculus: nouit eas quisquis sine ulla cogitatione qualiscumque corporis intus agnouit eas.[59]

'Rationes' are not 'images,' for which Augustine uses the word 'res,' but rather are cognitive devices for putting thoughts in order. They are characterised as the cognitive processes by which images or conceptual artefacts are structured in relation to one another, and distinguish and assimilate patterns out the stock of images and experiences stored in the mind.[60] In Augustine's writings, these cognitive schemas consist of locational measurements, of mathematical numbers and dimensions, but they are not to be confused with 'reason' in the modern sense of the word.[61] They derive from the Latin 'ratio,' meaning 'computation' or 'calculation,' an important distinction in this context if the role played by 'rationes' is identifiable in the cognitive function performed by metaphor and can be located in the writings of Marguerite Porete. Porete's scorn for scholastic logic and reason, manifested in her character *Raison* (given the name *Ratio* in the Latin translation), renders the suggestion that a cognitive system grounded in 'reason' underpins Porete's work a particularly delicate task. Porete's criticism of *Raison*'s conceptual

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[58] Carruthers provides an overview of Augustine's *rationes* in *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 32-34. See also Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[59] Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, Chapter 12, p. 126; 'these are quite different. They are not the images of those lines which my fleshly eye has reported to me. They are known by whoever recognizes them interiorly, without cogitation about any body whatsoever.' Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 280. Carruthers provides a slightly different translation of this passage: 'they are of another sort, not images of those things which my bodily eye has reported to me: whoever learns to use them knows intuitively without any reference to a physical body.' *The Craft of Thought*, p. 33.

[60] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* p. 34.

[61] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 33.

blindness and inability to comprehend the deeper workings of Scripture is voiced early in the *Mirouer* and is a recurrent theme throughout the text:

> Hee, Entendement de Raison, dit l'Ame Adnientie, que vous avez d'arbitres! Vous prenez la paille et laissez le grain, car vostre entendement est trop bas, par quoy vous ne povez si haultement entendre, comme il esconvient entendre a celluy qui bien veult entendre l'estre dont nous parlons.[62]

Dame Amour and the *Ame*'s critique of *Raison* may appear antithetical to the proposal that a rational framework can be found within in the *Mirouer*. Yet in chapter 21, *Dame Amour* explains that whilst in the early stages of the Soul's ascent, 'ceste Ame fist, quequ'il luy coustast de cueur et de corps, tout ceu que Ra<i>son lui enseignoit,' in the Soul's transformation by Divine Love, the role of 'maistress' *Raison* is reversed so that she becomes the Soul's 'pure serve.'[63] Porete's articulation of mystical ascent involves the Soul taking leave of the Virtues and of Reason, but they remain in service to her until she reaches the seventh stage and perfect union with God. In this sense, the thought processes attributed to reason and logic are not rejected by the Soul, but rather are recast in the cognitive mould of the mystical Soul. It is the conceptualisation of Reason that is transformed, rather than the definition of reason itself; Reason continues to be aligned with 'ordenance,' but, as the earlier discussion of metaphorical worlds illustrated, it is the parameters of this 'ordering' that have shifted.[64] It is therefore possible to discuss an internal rationale to Porete's expression of cognitive ordering without conflicting with the narrative's ideological purpose. Although the structure and plot of the *Mirouer* have been described in terms of

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[62] *Mirouer*, ch. 12, p. 50. 'Ah, Intellect of Reason, says the Annihilated Soul, how you are so discerning! You take the shell and leave the kernel, for your intellect is too low, hence you cannot perceive so loftily as is necessary for the one who wishes to perceive the being of which we speak.' *Mirror*, p. 93. Akbari notes that this image can also be found in Dominicus Gundissalinus' *De divisione philosophiae*. See *Seeing Through the Veil*, p. 17, also n. 62, p. 249.

[63] *Mirouer*, ch. 21, p. 80; 'this Soul did whatever Reason taught her, whatever the cost to heart and body,' *Mirror*, p. 103. *Mirouer*, ch. 39, p. 122; 'simple handmaid,' *Mirror*, p. 119.

[64] See *Mirouer*, ch. 39, pp. 122-126; *Mirror*, pp. 119-120.

a cyclical pattern of repetition and reformulation, personifications and events being repeatedly revisited and clarified with the use of the same terms and images and with added layering of further metaphors, it is actually the metaphors and the ways in which the figurative images resonate with each other across the text that give the *Mirouer* its coherent structure, driving the narrative towards its conclusion.[65]

Whilst Augustine employs numbers, measurements, and calculations as the essential mnemonic practices by which to fashion his thought patterns, Marguerite Porete and Marguerite d'Oingt employ a pattern of embodiment, structured by conceptual metaphor, in order to construct and articulate the mental means with which to imagine mystical experience. Embodied images employed metaphorically, which this study has defined as objects possessing a conceptually similar structure to the human body, function in much the same way as Augustine's 'rationes,' as 'tools of the mind.'[66]

For Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete, conceptual metaphor functions in a similar way to Augustine's 'rationes.' Their use of source and target domains work in essentially the same way as Augustine's articulation of the 'rationes,' as devices that, in the act of imaginative recall, construct a relational dynamic based on what the reader or listener distinguishes as being the appropriate entailments arising from the interaction between the two. This activity is recollective, grounded in memorial, mnemonic techniques, as well as compositional, shaping inventive and sometimes original ways in which to conceptualise events and experiences. This echoes Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor: it is simultaneously constrained by the parameters and associations of the source and target domains whilst also being, as Black, and Fauconnier and Turner argue, highly generative and open to novel interpretations. Thus a

[65] Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, pp. 54-56.
[66] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* p. 34.

metaphor such as Marguerite Porete's rivers flowing into the sea, representative of the Soul's dissolution into the divine, is both constrained by a commonly held, rational logic concerning geography and the flow of water, and yet simultaneously catalytic, inspiring recollection of associations with other watery metaphors of union, such as Bernard of Clairvaux's metaphor of water mixing with wine. A similar process can be seen in Marguerite d'Oingt's *Speculum*, in which she writes of the saints:

> Et citi doucors ne se pot decreytre assi po et menz que li ayguy de la mar. Quar tot assi com li fluyvo sallont de la mar tuit et tuit y retournont, tot assi li beuta Nostron Segnour et li doucors, cum bein que illi se expandet a tot, illi retornet toz jors a luy.[67]

Metaphor's paradoxical capacity to be both generative and restrictive, where appropriate producing cognitive patterns afresh whilst limiting them in accordance with memorial practice, is reminiscent of the enigmatic nature of mystical writing itself, caught between 'authenticity' and 'fiction.' Yet, in both cases, the resolution to this contradiction can be found in the cognitive model of processing itself. In order to ascertain the 'truth-value' of a metaphor, or of a mystical utterance, it is necessary mentally to process the invented nature of the statement in order to arrive at a position in which it is possible to be inventive.[68] Simply put, it is in recognising the metaphorical construction that the mind is able to be creative with the metaphor's entailments.

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[67] *Speculum*, p. 96. 'This sweetness cannot decrease any more or any less than can the water of the sea. For just as the rivers all come out of the sea and go back to it, so it is for the beauty and sweetness of Our Lord: although they flow everywhere, they always return to Him.' *Mirror*, p. 44.

[68] Carruthers notes that the medieval mind was also thought to function in this way. 'Thus comes about a curious but fundamental quality of the medieval analysis of *res memorabiles*, one very difficult for many moderns to understand. What is "truthful" about them is not their content, that is *what* they remember, but rather their form and especially their ability to find out things and/ or characters in a story, the general shapes and "faces" of a building […]. The "things" in such a [cognitive] map [are] […] important not so much for what they are as for what we do to and with them.' *The Craft of Thought*, p. 35.

This recognition of the 'constructedness' of metaphor as a catalyst to creativity and new thought finds a similar framework in the medieval discourse of cognition. As Carruthers demonstrates in *The Craft of Thought*, the medieval notion of invention, or 'inventio,' carried with it both the implications of creativity and, conversely, of inventory, or storage.[69] It is through the deployment of the articles kept in memorial storage, the 'res,' organised by means of the 'rationes,' that the generation of new material can take place. In large part, this has been the objective of this thesis: to identify the structural composition of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete's respective spiritual imaginations by means of their use of metaphor, and to match the functioning of the inventories of their figurative imagery with the ways in which they may have conceived of the creativity of mystical experience.

However, in both of their works, metaphor does not only function as a means by which to plot a conceptual map across the course of the text. In comparing and contrasting one metaphorical representation with another, the reader or listener 'moves' through the narrative, highlighting metaphor's rhetorical quality of 'ductus,' 'the way in which a composition guides a person to its goals.'[70] In her discussion of the tropes of Scripture, Carruthers suggests that such figurative language functions rather like 'the stations of the way,' or 'route indicators' on a conceptual map which takes its reader, or pilgrim, from a particular starting point towards its target ('skopos').[71] She describes these 'route indicators' as 'stylistic ornaments' and notes that these figurative schemes were particularly important for monastic composition: meditating on the more complex tropes of the Bible was, as Augustine commented, 'obscuritas utilis et salubris,' 'a productive and health-giving difficulty' in the pathway to

[69] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 8-12.

[70] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 78.

[71] See Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, particularly Chapter Three, 'Cognitive Images, Meditation, and Ornament.' Here at p. 116.

meditative enlightenment.[72] The stylistic ornaments of a text give its subject-matter a 'mood' ('modus,' 'color'), an 'attitude' ('intentio'), and a reading 'tempo'. As such, 'choice is involved for the author in placing ornaments in a work, and choice for an audience in how to "walk" among them. And as in all performances, variation from one occasion to another is a given.'[73]

Observations concerning medieval cognitive 'wayfinding' through Scriptural tropes are applicable to this exploration of metaphorical imagery in mystical writing. Chapter Two's analysis of the Middle English Carthusian transmission of Porete's *Mirouer* suggested that encapsulated in M. N.'s preface and glosses to his translation of the work was a directive to read it through a hermeneutical lens. In this sense, Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's mystical prose demands of its reader a recognition that inherent in its conceptualisation, composition, reception, and interpretation lies a possibility to capture or experience something of the ineffable qualities associated with the soul's ascent into mystical ecstasy. As a stylistic tool for conceptualisation, the cognitive processing underlying a metaphor possesses the mnemonic capacity to spark memory and recollection, and to construct and organise thought pattern and direction, in terms both of creating an internal coherence to the shape and scope of the text and of directing a reader's or listener's comprehension of the text's broader ideology. Metaphoric processing also involves a sequential cognitive progression of 'belief making'; an assessment of the relationship between the source and target domains predicated on logic and rationality, in order to ascertain the 'truth value' of the metaphorical statement. It is only when the mind has performed this sequence that the metaphor is understood to reveal its meaning.

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[72] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana, De vera religione,* in *Sancti Augustini Opera*, ed. by Joseph Martin, 4.8.22.7-8. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), p. 131. Quoted in Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 116.

[73] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 117.

This process is markedly similar to the one described above by Carruthers, and can be seen at work in the mystical writings analysed in the thesis. Across the corpus of Marguerite d'Oingt's writing, for example, one embodied image directs the reader or listener to another. The bound ('ligari'), stretched ('districte'), whipped ('verberaverunt'), and pierced ('perforabant') body of the crucified Christ in the *Pagina meditationum*, identifiable with the colours of the Passion, red, black, and white, directs an audience towards the next of Marguerite's striking images, the decorated codex of the *Speculum,* but, when readers or listeners arrives at it, they are invited to think back to the initial image of Christ as they contemplate the significance of the *Speculum's* book, inscribed in 'letres blanches,' 'neyres,' and 'vermelles.' D'Oingt's writing repeats the effect in the depiction of the ascetic Béatrix d'Ornacieux's body, in which the saint's own body becomes the basis for her hagiography. Each time a new stylistic image is introduced, the reader is asked to reflect on the images that have preceded it in order to think about the new image effectively.

The consequences of this style of cognitive activity are profound, and may shed light more broadly on how these examples of mystical writing were intended to be delivered and reflected upon. Here it is worth recalling metaphor's capacity to conjure images in the mind, a notion proposed by Aristotle and developed by numerous patristic and medieval scholars including Augustine, who, in relation to the writings of St Paul, wrote:

> Quis enim legentium vel audientium quae scripsit apostulus Paulus uel quae de illo scripta sunt non fingat animo et ipsius apostolic faciem et omnium quorum ibi nomina commemorantur? […] Neque in fide nostra quam de domino Iesu Christo habemus illud salubre est quod secundum speciem de homine cogitamus.[74]

[74] Augustinus Hipponensis, *De trinitate*, ed. by W.J. Mountain, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 50 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), Book VIII, Chapter IV. 'Who, upon reading or listening to

Augustine's observations resonate with the points made above. That images are formed in the mind as a result of textual reception is important; that medieval thought was taught, and conditioned by and through, the use of images is well documented.[75] What is important, Augustine states, is not the particularity of the image formed by the mind during the process of listening or reading, but rather the *sorts* ('speciem') of thoughts one has, and the way in which they are used. As such, his argument appears to challenge any notion that recall and mental imagery must be grounded in objective truth. Rather, in order to be effective, the cognitive activities involved in conjuring mental imagery should be focused on the process itself, as opposed to the use of mental images in order to re-capture an event or experience verbatim, in perfect detail. Within the framework and focus of this thesis, Augustine's account of cognition can be aligned with the observations above concerning the possible mental processes at work when metaphorical statements are employed in the context of mystical prose.

Using Augustine's theory of cognition as a guide, it may be argued that the primary function of metaphor in mystical writing is twofold. First, it must conjure an image in the mind, attracting the attention of the reader or listener. But, more importantly, metaphor acts as a locus for cognitive, meditational activity. Which images the metaphor conjures are not unimportant *per se*, but it is the conscious cognitive activity associated with the development of those images that drives the mystical impulse inherent in these texts. Encapsulated within metaphor are the notions of stasis and flux: the metaphor 'fixes' its

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what Paul the Apostle wrote or was written about him, does not fashion in his mind both the appearance of the Apostle and also of all those whose names are there remembered? […] But for our faith in Jesus Christ, it is not the image which the mind forms for itself that leads us to salvation, but according to our mental representation, what about [?] his humankind.' Trans. by Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought,* p. 121 and p. 313, n. 10. See also Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 251-254. For more on Aristotle's arguments concerning cognitive representation, see Richard Sorabji's introductory notes to his translation of *De memoria et reminiscentia*, translated as *Aristotle on Memory*, with commentary and notes (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1972), pp. 2-17.

[75] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 118-124.

referent between two poles, or domains, even whilst it requires its interpreter to move or negotiate between them, and even between metaphors, in order to establish meaning. Metaphor invites the reader or listener to progress from invention to inventiveness, from passivity to activity, in order to arrive at a point of fresh, or more focused, thought.

This process is similar to the process of meditation and contemplation prescribed by monastic literature. Both Marguerite d'Oingt, worshipping within the strict regime of the Carthusian order, and Marguerite Porete, who, although no insights into her religious practices survive, alludes to a range of devotional practices in the *Mirouer*, lived and wrote within a complex web of spiritual praxis and 'theoria.' This range of practices include the use of images as aids in visualisation routines; 'lectio divina,' with its accompaniments of 'oratio' and 'meditatio'; the contemplation of sacred scenes in books and on church walls and ceilings; hagiographic narratives, visionary accounts and an increasing emphasis on guided descriptions of the Passion and the Nativity; and a growing interest in ascetic practices such as disrupted sleep, fasting, and corporeal punishment indicate that meditation and visualisation. The resulting cognitive practices associated with such reflective thought are hardly a surprising development, and are perhaps even to be sought in mystical writing and the study of its reception. In this sense, no matter how 'authentic' a vision may be, in the environment of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, most visionary accounts may be thought of as 'constructed,' an inner world constructed by the outer world, the body, and the mind.

In her conclusion to *God and the Goddesses*, Newman suggests a 'new category of medieval writing,' which she terms 'imaginative theology,' and into

which she gathers numerous texts traditionally held as exemplary of other literary genres.[76] She defines this category as:

> the pursuit of serious religious and theological thought through the techniques of imaginative literature, especially vision, dialogue, and personification […]. Imaginative theology […] focuses on *how* theology might be performed; it draws attention to theological method and epistemology […] For the imaginative theologian, like the poet, works with images and believes […] that 'the road of the imagination […] reveals the face of God to whoever follows it to the end.' [original emphasis][77]

Newman recognises the anachronism of her terminology; the texts she groups under this rubric would probably not have been recognised as 'theological' by either their authors or their contemporaries, and the role of the imagination, Newman writes, 'had a more limited, technical meaning in medieval psychology than it has today.'[78] Yet her observations are perceptive, and can be expanded and developed further than the scope of *God and the Goddesses* allows for. Newman does not give a definition of what she means by 'the imagination,' and nor does she include Porete or d'Oingt in her observations. But further probing of her terminology and its application to the insights made over the course of this thesis help to draw some thought-provoking conclusions about language, literature, modes of cognition, and metaphor.

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[76] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 292. Newman groups such diverse texts as *Piers Plowman*, Dante's *Commedia*, Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowls*, the *Roman de la Rose*, Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*, and visionary works including those by Hildegard, Hadewijch, and Birgitta of Sweden into this new category. Imaginative theology is compared and contrasted with other 'literary' models of theological thought, namely, monastic, scholastic, pastoral, mystical, and vernacular. See *God and the Goddesses*, pp. 293-304.

[77] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, pp. 293-297.

[78] Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, p. 297.

'Imaginative theology' should not be confined to the purely semantic discourse in which Newman leaves it. Despite the fact that she never offers a definition for the 'imagination', the notion itself, and the concomitant juxtaposition of image and reflection on the divine, is powerful and worth developing. 'Imaginative theology' goes to the centre of a thought system heavily based upon images, images which are overlaid, and which conjure a multi-faceted heuristic frame and response. Porete and d'Oingt illustrate common and individual approaches to expressing the mystical within the period, and within a continuity of past Christian discourse on the subject. To explore the thought-worlds of these two women, it is necessary to explore the way in which they use their languages, and the ways in which they populate their linguistic landscape. Cognitive metaphor theory, applied sensitively to the particular example, is a productive way to draw the meaning from the kaleidoscope of images with which both women furnish their readers. In the movement from experience to text, and the recollection and re-imagining of the mystical experience, the modern reader follows the journey from words to wordlessness, through a process of cognitive image-making, to the final contemplation of the divine. How the metaphors are chosen, what they entail, how they blend tradition and experience, allow for modern insight into medieval cognition. This is shadowed, and not so darkly, in the medieval iteration of this process. Medieval models of reason and reckoning, of image and impression bear fruitful comparison with their modern analogues. That the two should be recognised as such is the major contention of this discussion.

Metaphor permits, and allows for, an exploration of the 'imaginative rationality' of mystical writing's metaphorical world; it both structures thought and opens up a heuristic framework for an exploration of that thought. To this end, it is both a manifestation of thought and praxis. When metaphor ceases in mystical writing, the account of mystical experience ceases too: when, in one of her letters, Marguerite d'Oingt struggles to express the meaning of the word 'vehemens,' or her experiential understanding of it, she has no other choice but

to be silent.[79] Similarly, Marguerite Porete's *Ame adnientie*, though annihilated, remains vocal and extant until the close of the text. Metaphor grounds mystical expression in a meditative, imaged-based consciousness; the higher states of visionary thought, and the move into contemplative, imageless, thought contains no interior faculties of imagination, memory, or sensuality. Yet, whilst it remains, metaphor allows the mind to 'see,' and an exploration of that seeing perhaps allows for a 'thinking' and a 'seeing' in something of the manner that the medieval mystics articulated their sight, and thoughts, of God.

[79] *Item alia epistola*, §143-4, pp. 144-6. *Another Letter*, p. 66.

CONCLUSION

This review of mystical writing through the combined lenses of cognitive and conceptual theories of metaphor does indeed reveal fresh perspectives on both modes of expression. A careful reading of the interpretative possibilities offered by metaphor exposes a means by which to explore and articulate some of mysticism's many complexities, namely its relationship to metaphor's hidden cognitive capacity, to reveal, or perhaps inspire afresh, pathways of thought directed towards the divine. Applied to mystical literature, metaphor theory allows for an examination of mysticism's debts, both textual and contextual, to the traditions of biblical exegesis, liturgy, prayer, and contemplation, and indeed encourages a discussion of mysticism's perpetual paradox, caught as it is between the fullness of experience and the limitations of expression. However, by taking the writings of Marguerite Porete and Marguerite d'Oingt as two case studies, this study has demonstrated that, in paying close attention to the methodological exigencies of late medieval texts, further light can be shone onto the academy's understanding and application of metaphor theory. Christian mysticism requires that an analysis of its constituent conceptual structures and 'mental spaces' be realised in unison with the fundamental tenets of the faith: receptive to doctrine, and perceptive of the deeper resonance of belief. In being brought into dialogue, mysticism and metaphor demand much of each other, but the ensuing interchange is both striking and rewarding.

Lakoff and Johnson's model of metaphor provides an initial framework for this interpretative process. Their two-domain theory provides a stable structural framework with which to probe a corpus characterised by its often highly abstract nature. However, as Chapter One has established, this theoretical frame requires further support in order to cope with the complexities of mystical material. Fauconnier and Turner's more flexible

hypothesis of the 'blended space' of the metaphorical utterance broadens the scope of Lakoff and Johnson's vision, and in turn offers a theoretical underpinning that privileges the sensitivities of context and ideology. When the two theories are combined, a hermeneutic web emerges that is sufficiently supple to engage with a mode of expression predicated on apparent linguistic and conceptual paradox, revealing previously unnoticed facets of its enigmatic discourse.

The boundaries of geography, language, and the particular manifestations of spiritual practice do not impede a comparative reading of both women's works; rather, in acknowledging their existence, as contextualists would suggest, such a reading is made all the richer. It is through the adoption of elements of Fauconnier and Turner's 'blending theory' that these elements of contextualism can be brought into focus. Fauconnier and Turner's hypothesis that metaphor constitutes a 'blended mental space,' comprised of various 'input spaces,' affords historical, religious, political, cultural, and social contextual factors a vital but not preponderant role. This hermenutic approach illuminates, for example, the question of whether of not Marguerite Porete belonged to a beguine community, textual or actual. Establishing textual connections between her writing and those of figures such as Mechthild of Magdeburg and Hadewijch of Brabant, as Barbara Newman does so effectively, helps locate an otherwise hard-to-place author more firmly within her literary milieu.[1] Yet this does little to shed light on the conceptual, cognitive framework underpinning Porete's prose. Over-privileging contextual factors, to the virtual exclusion of the more imaginative (or enigmatic) aspects of mystical writing, risks falsely distorting a mystical text in the service of modern conceptions of a medieval contextual 'reality' which exists only in twenty-first century scholarly discourse.

[1] Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, especially Chapter Five, 'La mystique courtoise.'

This particular application of metaphor theory as a hermeneutic device not only permits the mystical writer to be placed within her historical or literary milieu, but also allows for insights into the particular ways in which she may have imagined her relationship with the divine; the cornerstone of her mystical expression. This is not quite the same as simply trying to reconstruct Marguerite d'Oingt's or Marguerite Porete's cognitive processes and mystical 'product' from the language materials they produced.[2] Mystical prose is only ever a partial revelation of divine experience, and to suggest that metaphor theory provides anything other than a partial reconstruction of cognitive processing would be to deny the foundations upon which it is based. What has been demonstrated by this exploration of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's spiritual testimonies is that metaphor theory permits a glimpse of them from two perspectives. First it allows them to be imagined within their respective, and occasionally colliding, worlds, as Carthusian prioress and educated laywoman. Second, it reveals an insight into the imaginative worlds they create beyond their contexts and histories; into the metaphorical worlds contained within their texts.

Mystical text and mystical author are neither synonymous, nor are they to be divorced from each other. Rather, one is seen through the other and *vice versa*, in much the same way that metaphorical meaning is comprehended 'through' and 'in spite of' its literal word or phrasing.[3] Crucially, however, this combinatory approach to metaphor theory also allows the texts and their content to stand alone, as it were, and to possess a creativity and an imaginative rationality all of their own. Seen in this way, the mystical text, and the experience it points towards is a deeper representation of Fauconnier and

[2] As Gerard Steen argues, such an approach is 'quite problematic and at the end of the day too speculative to be taken seriously. It has long been known in literary criticism, for instance, that author's [sic] intentions and general plans for writing cannot be reliably recovered from the text.' *Finding Metaphor in Grammar and Usage: A Methodological Analysis of Theory and Research,* Converging Evidence in Language and Communication Research, 10 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007), p. 363.

[3] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' p. 234.

Turner's 'blended space.' What is established is that the mystical text itself represents the hermeneutic gap between Lakoff and Johnson's source and the target domains; the space in which imperfect language and indescribable experience meet and are negotiated. As such, the mystical text is a metaphor.

Advancing this hypothesis one step further correlates with both d'Oingt's and Porete's very different articulations of a similar assertion: that the experiences they recount are simultaneously 'in-the-world' or 'of-the-world,' whilst also separate from it. Two examples drawn from their respective works illustrate this schema in different ways. The first concerns Porete's contentious suggestion that the *ame adnientie* is able to join the community of *Saincte Eglise la Grande* whilst still on earth, 'through' and 'in spite of' the material trappings of *Saincte Eglise la Petite*. According to Porete's tripartite typology of souls, the lost souls who remain obedient to *Raison* are only able to conceptualise God by means of these material, institutional, and earthly symbols. Lost souls:

> sont qui du tout mortiffient le corps, en faisant o<e>uvres de charité; et ont si grant plaisance en leurs oeuvres qu'ilz n'ont point cognoissance qu'il soit nul meilleur estre que l'estre de oeuvres de vertuz et mort de martire […] par l'aide d'oraison remplie de prieres, en multipliance de <bo>n vouloir, tousjours pour la t<en>ue que telles gens ont ad ce, et que ce soit le meilleur de tous les estres qui pevent estre.[4]

Sad souls, on the other hand, recognise the inherent deception in regarding 'oeuvres' and 'prieres' as a means to an end, somewhat akin to

[4] *Mirouer*, ch. 55, pp. 158-160; 'completely mortify the body in doing works of charity; and they have such great pleasure in their works that they have no awareness that there might be any better being than the being of the works of the Virtues and death by martyrdom […] with the aid of an orison filled with prayers, in the multiplication of good will, always for the purpose of retaining what these folk possess, as if this might be the best of all the beings that could be.' *Mirror,* p. 132.

regarding them as literal statements. These souls are able to pass from *Saincte Eglise la Petite* to the higher Church: 'ceste, qui telle est, ne quiert plus Dieu par penitence ne par sacrement nul de Saincte Eglise.'[5] The sad souls are capable of participating in the ascent to annihilation, during which they continue to live in the world, but without any direct requirement of it.[6] Porete's annihilated soul can thus be conceptualised in metaphorical terms: she exists beyond the confines of the literal, material world, but nevertheless maintains a relational position to it. Her 'otherness' is qualified by the fact that she is seen to have moved 'through' the limitations of *Raison*'s world-view, and instead inhabits a world whose structures and shapes she shares with 'les marriz,' but whose imaginative rationality is indicative of a more profound knowledge of divinely inspired reality.[7]

Though her portrayal is different, Marguerite d'Oingt nevertheless presents a similar conceptualisation of the mystical experience in *Li via seiti Biatrix*. Describing an occasion when Béatrix had fallen asleep and experienced a vision of the saintly community in heaven, d'Oingt writes:

> Totes veis illi non o veit pas des heuz corporaz mays en espirit; et veit son cors el leit a bein po semblablo al cors mort.[8]

Béatrix's awareness of her body during the experience suggests that it is simultaneously conceptualised and made sense of because it is embodied and

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[5] *Mirouer*, ch. 85, p. 242. 'This Soul who is such no longer seeks God through penitence, nor through any sacrament of the Holy Church.' *Mirror*, p. 160.

[6] This is expressed most clearly in Porete's description of 'taking leave of the Virtues' (see chapter 6 of the *Mirouer*). A highly controversial statement, this made its way into the record of her condemnation, published in *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis neerlandicae*, 2 vols (Ghent: The Hague, 1889-1906), here in volume 2, p. 63: 'primus talis est: 'Quod anima adnichilata dat licentiam virtutibus nec est amplius in earum servitute, quia non habet eas quoad usum, sed virtutues obediunt ad nutum.'

[7] Porete describes these 'sad souls' in chapter 57 of the *Mirouer*.

[8] *Li via seiti Biatrix*, p. 118, §81. 'But she saw them not physically, but spiritually; and she saw her own body in the bed, and it looked like a dead body.' *The Life of the Virgin Saint Beatrice*, p. 54.

of-this-world, and yet is also distinctly 'other.' In both cases, these writers conceive of mystical consciousness in the same way that this thesis understands metaphor. Mystical awareness involves an elimination of the spheres of quotidian reference and reality; a realisation that the trappings of the material world, the 'oeuvres' and the 'prieres,' are not an end unto themselves. This realisation constitutes a 'splitting of reference' in which the abolition of one world-view gives rise to another.[9] Out of the 'ruins' of the terrestrially-bound reference markers emerges an 'innovation in meaning' comprising the mystical schema, a new referential mode of thought and expression obtained through the destruction of the old, primary reference framework.[10] As such, metaphor theory provides the hermeneutic key not only to the mystical text, but also to the markers of mystical reference. It enables mystical awareness to be re-imagined, and thus offers the fleeting conceptual possibility, if not lived actuality, of mystical experience.

The blend of theoretical approaches advocated in the introduction has been borne out in this exploration of the literature of late medieval mysticism. The principles of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor theory have been carried over into Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's writings, and the two brought into a dialogue of exchange. The nature of this exchange is both complex and revelatory. The enigmatic qualities of mystical expression find an analogue in the structures proposed by theorists of modern metaphor, and a nuanced and sensitive vocabulary opens up with which to explore the many facets of mystical writing, as a speculative, experiential, vivid yet highly abstract mode of expression. A second, and perhaps more surprising consequence stemming from this dialogue concerns the potential of metaphor theory to bring together two seemingly very different modes of mystical thought. A common complaint in recent discussions of mystical literature has

[9] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. by Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 230.
[10] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 230.

been the academy's need to qualify a given text's mystical 'status,' and categorise it in accordance with a set of rules, which often veil a more problematic assertion concerning the perceived 'quality' of the mystical voice.[11] This approach has, however, demonstrated that with a sufficiently flexible interpretative framework, writings such as Marguerite d'Oingt's conservative mystical works can be positively engaged with more radical articulations of the divine, such as that of Marguerite Porete. Seeking out the conceptual underpinnings of their prose invites an analysis grounded in continuity as opposed to fracture, in which the narratives can be seen to participate, in varying degrees, in a spectrum characterised by 'imaginative rationality.' Teasing out the imaginative worlds mystical writers create, and the manifestations of their internal logic or rationale, presents a more inclusive dialogue of exchange than those approaches which focus on a need to segregate the canon of Christian mystical writing in accordance with parameters of literary genre, orthodoxy, or psychology.

Mapping the conceptual underpinnings of Marguerite d'Oingt's literary corpus demonstrates that her mystical expression is deserving of more critical attention than the academy has, to date, afforded it. While her works appear to be an unprepossessing and highly conformist series of vision narratives, a concentration on her manipulation of figurative language discloses a remarkable amount of detail about the imaginative world of a thirteenth-century Carthusian and her relationship to and with the divine. A sensitive application of metaphor theory to her works reveals her to have been a competent theologian and imaginative synthesiser of liturgical material, as well as possessed of a creative and poetic imagination. By illuminating her employment of various source domains, such as the codex, the body, and light, and their often-interconnected entailments, metaphor theory presents a means

[11] See Newman, 'What Did it Mean To Say "I Saw"?'; Hollywood, 'Introduction.'

of reading her works in which their 'textual residue' functions as a catalyst for understanding their more abstract projections.[12]

This has important implications for the study of medieval mysticism, especially that of women's mysticism, as well as for medieval intellectual writing more widely. By preserving the text as the fulcrum around which explorations of Marguerite d'Oingt's imaginative, theological, and literary practices take place, the modern scholar is required to establish his or her conceptual underpinnings within the confines of Marguerite's own words. These underpinnings must therefore match the content and meaning of the text, not *vice versa*. Cognitive metaphor theory, as applied here, mines the mystic's textual residue without disposing of it, and therefore reduces the risks involved when the premise of the investigation is founded on the reconstruction of a textual or historical community into which the text in question is expected to fit. As the methodological hurdles represented by the lives and texts of Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete demonstrate, modern scholars of medieval literature are all too often left with gaps in their contextual knowledge. However by starting with a medieval text's metaphorical language, this study suggests that far more can be interpreted from 'residue' than is first apparent.

Conversely, Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples ames* has been the source of considerable scholarly attempts at textual and historical reconstruction. The text's dramatic involvement in the inquisition's actions of 1310, its complex manuscript tradition, and twentieth-century re-discovery, coupled with its seemingly radicalised message of 'unio indistinctionis,' has led numerous commentators to look for a causal narrative linking the text to its historical record and the perplexing figure of its author. A reading of the

[12] This term is borrowed from Walter J. Ong's study, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, New Accents (New York: Routledge, 2002, orig. publ. 1982). '[W]e think of words as the visible marks signalling words to decoders: we can see and touch such inscribed "words" in texts and books. Written words are residue.' See p. 11.

Mirouer through the lens of metaphor theory, however, shifts the interrogative focus from the external to the internal forces at play within the confines of the text. In contrast to studies which have sought to discern the text's applicability to (or deviance from) its context, this approach, with its attention to the network and interaction of source and target domains, highlights Porete's capabilities to construct a highly systematic, logical, and transformative textual space in which the potentiality of the metaphorical imagination can be realised. The *Mirouer*'s abstraction serves as the counterpart to Marguerite d'Oingt's more stylised series of tangible mystical experiences. If d'Oingt's works recount mystical states of being, Porete's *Mirouer* provides an account of such mystical states' processes of becoming. The *Mirouer* thus ceases to be seen as a reflection of anything other than the workings of the mind, and the union of a transformed imagination with a divine rationale. Once again, this approach liberates the text from the restrictions of hermetic binaries. Questions as to its orthodox or heterodox nature, or its apparent claims to autotheism or antinomianism, recede, secondary to the primary investigation of the text's sophisticated portrayal of metaphorical, mystical, vision.

The interpretative opportunities arising from this reading of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's narratives indicate that similar results may be sought by extending the corpus of mystical material to include examples of mystical expression from the ancient to the modern day. The capacity of cognitive and conceptual metaphor theory to act as a framework in which to discuss both the theory and praxis of Christian mystical expression, and the experiences to which it alludes, suggests multiple possibilities for its application to other examples within the canon. It allows for a more inclusive dialogue across the spectrum of mystical writing, and takes seriously the notion of mysticism as the union between post-experiential narration and the metaphorical process.

This exploration of Marguerite d'Oingt's and Marguerite Porete's works demonstrates that metaphor theory can be effectively harnessed to unlock the record of past experience in a way that is contextually sensitive and without recourse to hermetic and anachronistic categories. As such, it facilitates a dialogue of exchange between theological concerns of mystical truth, the potency of human cognition, and contemporary scientific, metaphysical, and philosophical theories of meaning and reality. As a hermeneutic device, metaphor, and its theoretical underpinning, do indeed constitute the cognitive analogue to mystical expression. When these two modes of thought and expression are engaged in an interdisciplinary and reciprocal exchange, the interpretative possibilities are profound and wide reaching. Addressed together, metaphor and mysticism offer insights into how perceptual capabilities may be adjusted, and in so doing, shed light on the imaginative rationality of new worlds, new meanings, and new truths, 'per speculum in aenigmate.'

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[1] This list is not exhaustive, but rather indicates the editions and translations of the *Mirouer* referenced in the thesis. A full list of the modern editions and translations of the *Mirouer des simples ames* can be found on the website of the International Marguerite Porete Society, http://www.margueriteporete.net.

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