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A Cognitive Linguistic account of the translator's sociocultural situatedness and its role in the translation of a medieval devotional text into Present-Day English

ABSTRACT

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The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies sparked researchers' interest not only in the translation as a cultural and sociological phenomenon, but also in the translator as an agent, rather than a figure who should fade into invisibility. Accordingly, the translator's cognitive activity is seen as situated in their physical, social and cultural environment. The paper adopts a Cognitive Linguistic approach to the translator's sociocultural situatedness, showing how it may bear on the translator's linguistic choices. The paper concludes that to obtain a complete picture of the translator's activity, it is necessary to illuminate and explore the interconnection of language, cognition and culture.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, the translator's sociocultural situatedness, Translator Studies

1. Introduction

The emergence of the Translator Studies has been a recent development in the broader field of Translation Studies. The discussion offered by the present paper concerns the idea of the situated translator and focuses particularly on the sociocultural aspects of this notion. Importantly, the conception of the translator's sociocultural situatedness implies that the social and cultural environment has a bearing on the translator's cognition and on the product of their work. The

question of how the translator's sociocultural situatedness underpins their cognitive activity is grounded on recent advances in Translation Studies.

At present, Translation Studies bring attention to translation as a social and cultural phenomenon, underscoring the role of the translator as an agent who through their actions contributes to the shape of the target culture receiving their work, particularly in the sphere of beliefs and ideologies permeating that culture. However, it is sometimes posited that this view gives undue emphasis to the translator while discrediting the need to engage with linguistic analyses of textual evidence. As House (2015: 89) puts it, “[t]he widespread assumption today of translation as an art coupled with a cult of individual translators, their creativity, influence, status, moral stance, ideological ‘positioning’ and so on, encourages a view of translation as a translator’s essentially novel creation”. This approach has promoted “an ‘anti-equivalence position’, which celebrated a de-thronization of the original and a consequent enthronization of translators as authors in their own right” (House 2015: 89). Pym (2012: 166) discards “approaches based solely on subjective hermeneutics (“I will interpret the text in any way I want”)” because “communication means that we cannot make our decisions solely in accordance with our own criteria” (Pym 2012: 166). Indicating the confines within which the translator operates, Pym espouses the idea that translators “are responsible for their product as soon as they accept to produce it. The key question is not *how* to translate but *whether* you should translate, here, at this very moment, from this very text, for this or that person” (Pym 2012: 166; original emphasis). This view begs the question of how the sociocultural embedding of the translator’s cognitive activity manifests itself in the translated text. The present paper adopts a Cognitive Linguistic approach to the problem, arguing that insights from Cognitive Linguistics may inform the investigation of the translator’s sociocultural situatedness and its influence on the translated text.

2. From the Cultural Turn to the Translator Studies

The early explorations of translation relied on theories and analytical tools from the structuralist tradition (cf. Bukowski/ Heydel 2009). It laid the groundwork for the prescriptive approach to translation, based on the primacy of the language system, rather than linguistic usage. Central to that framework was the notion of equivalence, defined in terms of identity between the source and the target text. It implied refuting linguistic relativism, an idea which highlighted system-level incommensurability as well as cultural asymmetries related to significant differences between the worldviews underlying the source and the target language (cf. Gregersen 2013, Tymoczko 2013). As linguistic approaches to translation were put into practice, scholars gradually came to the conclusion that the explanatory power of linguistics was limited. It was thought that linguistics was incapable of addressing questions arising from social and cultural factors involved in translation.

In the 1990s, the Cultural Turn brought about considerable changes in the nature of the object of investigation and the scope of research in the field. As greater methodological openness and interdisciplinarity were sought, the Turn diminished the role of linguistic, text-centred models pivoting on equivalence, giving emphasis to the investigation of translation as a cultural and sociological phenomenon and the redefinition of equivalence in terms of similarity, not identity (cf. Tymoczko 2013). This implied that meaning should be seen as inherently instable and changeable. The Turn resulted in directing scholarly attention to the translated text and the way it was received in the target culture. Importantly, the Cultural Turn precipitated a parallel shift of scholarly interest, turning it to the translator and their activity embedded in the context of the target culture (cf. Venuti 1995). Chesterman (2009) argues for expanding the scope of Translation Studies to include the Translator Studies. As Chesterman (2009: 20) has it, this area of investigation subsumes “research which focuses primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation.” The translator has come to be seen as an agent situated in their physical, social and cultural context, who, in turn, contributes to the shape of their environment.

The emergence of the Translator Studies has overlapped with the relatively recent development in the area of cognitive approaches to translation, based on cognitive scientific research covering phenomena subsumed under the umbrella term ‘grounded cognition.’ As Barsalou explains, cognitive processes are grounded in “the modalities, the body, the physical environment, and the social environment. From the grounded perspective, [...] cognition emerges from interactions of these processes with these four domains” (Barsalou 2020: 2). Drawing on empirical research, Risku (2013) defines translation as socioculturally situated interaction. For the scholar, “cognition is seen as situated action in complex physical and social situations,” and meaning “results from our interaction with our current environment” (Risku 2013: 6). The research into the translator’s situatedness may include empirical studies (cf. Halverson 2014). However, one can envisage broadening the scope of this approach beyond research carried out under controlled laboratory conditions. Cognitive Linguistics expands the perspective by incorporating in its analyses the translator’s embedding in their sociocultural environment. In so doing, it gives priority to the exploration of the interdependence of cognition, language and culture.

3. The interplay of language, culture and cognition through the lens of Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive Linguistics constitutes a theoretical and methodological framework which adopts a situated view of linguistic meaning and usage. For cognitive linguists, language is “a function of generalised cognition” (Evans/ Green 2006: 168). Cognitive Linguistics embraces the conception known as experiential realism, the

view that “the concepts we have access to and the nature of the ‘reality’ we think and talk about are a function of our embodiment” (Evans/ Green 2006: 46). The notion of embodiment, underscoring the centrality of the human body for our construction of reality, is inextricably linked to the language user’s sociocultural situatedness, “the ways in which individual minds and cognitive processes are shaped by their interaction with sociocultural structures and practices” (Frank 2008: 1). The influence of culture on language can be seen in the conventionalized ways of perceiving (hence, conceiving) various aspects of reality that are linguistically encoded (cf. Bartmiński 2009 for the conception of the linguistic worldview).

Both the bodily and the sociocultural aspects of the language user’s experience affect categorization, “our ability to identify entities as members of groups” (Evans/ Green 2006: 168). As such, categorization is a basic process operative in conceptualization, or the dynamic process of meaning construction at the conceptual level, with which Cognitive Linguistics equates meaning. Categorization judgments are characterized by the prototype effects: particular entities may constitute ‘better’ or ‘worse’ examples of the category in question (e.g. sparrow vs. ostrich for the BIRD category). How we perceive similarity between various entities is not a straightforward matter. On Tabakowska’s (2003) account,

similarity is in general perceived and established with particular purposes in view, the governing principle being that of pragmatic relevance. Thus it is ultimately based upon *choice*, and conditioned by particular systems of values, beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, etc. In short, it is culturally determined. [...] Things become similar when a particular observer conceptualizes them as such. (Tabakowska 2003: 361–362; original italics)

This understanding of the culture-specific aspects of similarity perception, hence categorization as well, dovetails with Geeraerts and Cuyckens’s (2007: 5) view of language as a “repository of world knowledge, a structured collection of meaningful categories that help us deal with new experiences and store information about old ones.” It means that language stores culture-specific conceptualizations, both past and present, which presupposes a palimpsest-like nature of linguistic meaning.

To illustrate the point, the prototypical sense of the lexical item *heart* in *Lexico.com* is “a hollow muscular organ that pumps the blood through the circulatory system by rhythmic contraction and dilation.” Culture-specific conceptualizations include the idea of the heart as “the centre of a person’s thoughts and emotions,” as in *close to one’s heart*, *heart of stone*, etc. Also, the *OED heart* entry confirms that this sense has been preserved since the period of Old English to the present day.¹

1| <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/85068> (accessed: 21 March 2021).

How do these insights relate to the idea of the translator's sociocultural situatedness? In a nutshell, it is a commonplace that the translator is a language user from a specific speech community. This view presupposes that the translator is familiar with the views of the world prevalent in their community, both at present and in the past. It is with respect to their embedding in this context that the translator addresses the question "Why translate?" (cf. Pym 2012). With its comprehensive view of the relation between language, culture and cognition, Cognitive Linguistics is a framework particularly apt for the exploration of how the translator's answer to that question bears on the translated text.

4. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and translation

The present paper argues that Cognitive Linguistics provides the theoretical models and analytical tools capable of accounting for the research problem this paper sets out to explore. To understand how Cognitive Linguistics may inform the study of translation, it is necessary to consider how it views meaning. As Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007) say, central to Cognitive Linguistics is the primacy of semantics, including grammar, seen as meaningful, or symbolic of the conceptual content it conveys. This assumption lays at the core of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar.

For Langacker (2008), meaning inheres both in conceptual content and in the specific way of presenting that scene or situation. For Langacker and other cognitive linguists, lexicon and grammar form a continuum, which means that there is no principled distinction between open and closed class forms. The scholar relies on the visual metaphor to illuminate the relation between content (a scene/situation) and construal (the specific way of viewing that scene/situation), with the viewer being at the same time the conceptualizer. The construal parameter of specificity is defined as the extent to which a given scene is characterized in detail, while the focusing parameter pertains to the activation of some portion of conceptual knowledge necessary for meaning construction of an expression, sentence, etc. One of the aspects of the perspective parameter is the subjectivity/objectivity of construal. Langacker draws a parallel between subjective/objective construal and watching a theater play: the viewer is the subject of conception and the viewed is the object of conception. The construal is maximally subjective when the subject of conception is "offstage" and as such is not perceived. The construal is maximally objective when an entity that does not engage in viewing is the onstage focus of attention.

Langacker's model draws on the Cognitive Linguistic understanding of similarity, already presented in this paper. It presupposes that the language user's construal choices, both in terms of conceptual content and its linguistic encoding, may affect categorization as they prompt the activation of certain cognitive

domains in rank order according to their perceived salience and relative to the local context. This general idea underlies the Cognitive Grammar-based approach to translation offered in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2015). The scholar observes that translation

can be conceived of as *re-conceptualization* of a SL message in the totality of its context and situation. The term *re-conceptualization* [...], is partly dictated by new construal parameters in the target language form (TL grammar and meaning structures), different context (author/speaker – i.e., translator, time, place, addressee – TL audience), but also brought about by subjective preferences of the translator in picking up or devising particular target language forms, which do not *profile* the same entities, i.e., do not identify them as *figures* against the base *ground* [...]. The translator and their readers' mental spaces are populated by characters bearing some *semblance to the original SL ones*, interacting in ways, which remind us of the source interactions, but clearly re-constructed. (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2015: 22)

This cognitively-oriented view of translation gives emphasis to the perceived similarity of the translation to the original, rather than to its faithfulness. What is most relevant to the present study is that the analysis of construal parameters in the translated text may help investigate how the translator's sociocultural situatedness influences the re-conceptualization of the original conceptual content and its expression in the target language.

5. Translating Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* into Present-Day English

The present paper offers a Cognitive Linguistic analysis of how a late medieval text is rendered into Present-Day English. The textual evidence is taken from Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and its translation, *The Showings*, by Mirabai Starr, an author and a translator of other mystical writings.

5.1. Preliminaries

Devotional literature may pose a particular challenge to the translator. One of the possible reasons for this concerns the nature of religious language used in the sphere of collective and individual life having to do with the Sacred (Grzegorzczkova 2012: 258). For Grzegorzczkova (2012: 263), it is impossible to comprehend the phenomenon of religious language without realizing that in religious acts understanding the meanings of words and experiencing a sense of participation in the reality to which the words refer become united. Since conceptualizations of the Sacred pertain to abstract domains, their verbalization often relies on

conceptual metaphors, which involve understanding abstract notions in terms of concrete concepts. On the one hand, metaphors such as GOD IS FATHER reveal certain cultural preferences, hence are indicative of fairly stable cognitive models underlying the relation between the human and the Divine. On the other, conceptualizations such as GOD IS SHEPARD may become obsolete. This might happen when changes occur in the embodied and socioculturally situated experience of members from a given speech community.

Defined as a subtype of religious literature, mystical texts originate from age-old traditions across various cultures and therefore they might be seen as other-worldly in the extreme. Not only do they contain conceptualizations of phenomena which, for some people, “no longer exist in the disenchanted, secular world: angels, demons, souls, graces, and so forth” (Gomola 2016: 123), but also their meaning has become cryptic due to the extensive changes in the embodied, sociocultural life of a speech community.

Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* date back to the late Middle Ages. The anchoress's work is integral to Christian mysticism, which, in and of itself, is not a uniform phenomenon. Today, it is noted that Christian mysticism has provided “a fruitful avenue to pursue interreligious dialogue” (Lamm 2013: 3). However, since mysticism is a fuzzy concept, its indiscriminate use may sometimes give rise to the various manifestations of pseudo-mysticism permeating current popular culture (see Rutkowska 2014). In relation to Julian of Norwich's work, the latter point can be illustrated by reference to Chewning (2009). The scholar demonstrates that in some works of contemporary fiction the representations of the anchoress and her ideas remain at odds not only with what scholars say about the historical Julian, but also with the textual evidence from *Revelations of Divine Love* itself. Chewning (2009: 110) argues that the works “construct a Julian whose thought and lifestyle estrange her from her historical moment, but enable her to mirror, comfort, and flatter the present day.” The dangers of misrepresentation of the anchoress and her work in translation can also be gleaned from Barratt (2009). The scholar offers a cautionary comment for anyone wishing to popularize Julian's ideas: “Far more stands between modern readers and Julian than just the obsolescence of her own, or her scribes', language. She is often obscure and difficult and must be approached with all the resources of scholarship as well as with good intentions, for we still know too little about her and her texts” (Barratt 2009: 24). While arguing that there will “always be a place for translations for readers who cannot read Middle English” (Barratt 2009: 23), Barratt points out that, as far as the language of the original is concerned, “Modern English is not simply Middle English with different spelling and certain obsolete words replaced” (Barratt 2009: 23). From this perspective, it would seem that the major obstacle to translating Julian's work pertains to the deceptive simplicity of her thought and language.

5.2. Mirabai Starr as the translator of *The Revelations of Divine Love*

The reasons why Starr translated a late Middle English text into Present-Day English is not given directly, but can be gleaned from *Introduction* and *A Note on Translation of The Showings*. In the former, Starr says that “Julian of Norwich’s message is as relevant now as it was in the Middle Ages: God loves us completely, exactly as we are” (Starr 2014: xx). This answer builds on three conceptual metaphors which are central to Starr’s understanding of Julian’s message: SIN IS SEPARATION FROM OUR DIVINE SOURCE, GOD IS OUR MOTHER and MYSTICAL TEACHINGS ARE A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

The metaphors the translator uses to shed light on the life and work of Julian of Norwich filter out those aspects of the mystic’s conceptualizations which the translator finds potentially problematic, given their complex theological background and/or their cultural specificity. In her “Note on the Translation”, Starr invokes a nexus of metaphors to introduce the reader to the problem of translating Julian’s text:

Julian of Norwich offers us some delicious morsels of language in her original text that did not make it to your table. It does not work to transform a Middle English text into an accessible teaching for contemporary sensibilities with all of the original arcane phraseology sprinkled in. It interrupts the flow. But I can’t resist sharing a few tantalizing tastes of what you’re missing here. [...] In addition to such charming yet awkward words [e.g. *homely*], Julian uses certain terms that fit for her time but which I feel could alienate my contemporaries—particularly those among us who are not Christians yet are on a serious path of spiritual awakening and seek wisdom teachings in multiple traditions. Therefore, I changed the evocative term “my even Christians” to “my fellow spiritual seekers.” (Starr 2014: xxi)

One may distinguish two important conceptual metaphors crucial for understanding Starr’s approach: one is the MYSTICAL TEACHINGS ARE DELICIOUS FOOD metaphor and the other READING IS DEVOURING. Starr wants “to make a place at Julian’s table for people of all faiths and none, without offending those of her own root tradition” (Starr 2014: xxiii). It follows that the translator’s role is defined as the one who caters to the reader’s tastes.

On the other hand, Starr admits that as a translator “of the Christian mystics, [she] must continuously check [her] impulse to change some of [her] subject’s more dogmatic notions to suit [her] own interspiritual sensibilities” (Starr 2014: xxiii). Given her overtly stated interest in inter-spirituality, Starr’s own engagement with Julian’s text does not seem accidental. “A Note on the Translation” is sprinkled with appeals to the reader conceptualized as a spiritual seeker, rather than to people firmly rooted in their own religious tradition. The final section of the volume, “About the Author,” informs us that Starr “teaches and speaks widely on contemplative practice and inter-spiritual dialogue.” Given the above outline

of Starr's sociocultural situatedness, it is reasonable to describe Starr's approach to the translation of Julian's text by invoking the TRANSLATOR AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE metaphor. To conclude, Starr acts as someone knowledgeable about different spiritual paths, who nourishes the reader with spiritual resources and mediates mystical wisdom in an accessible way.

5.3. A Cognitive Linguistic analysis of Starr's translation of Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*

Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* is a work that has been translated into Modern English a number of times, the extant manuscripts being typically the basis for the translations. The anchoress's work (also known as *The Revelations of Divine Love*) consists of the short account of her mystical experience (*A Vision Shown to a Devout Woman*) and the long version (*A Revelation of Love*), composed years after the original event. It is this theologically-informed and intellectually sophisticated work that Starr translated. Her source text is Baker's (2005) edition of Julian's long version, not the manuscripts of the long version, which date from after Julian's lifetime. To discuss how Starr's role as a spiritual guide bears on the translation, this paper focuses on the most fundamental issues, setting out to illustrate the implications of the translator's approach to a medieval text in terms of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar.

To begin with, Starr divides the text of her translation into three main parts: *Part I Revelation of Love* (Chapters 1–26), *Part II Every Kind Of Things Shall Be Well* (Chapters 27–50) and *Part III You Will Not Be Overcome* (Chapters 51–86). The partition does not appear in the manuscripts of Julian's long version. One may also note the absence of chapter summaries in Starr's rendering. The possible reason for this is that Baker's (2005) edition does not retain them either. Nevertheless, Baker's (2005) version does not contain any titles for individual chapters, neither does it have any subdivisions of the chapters into sections that could correspond to the structure of Starr's rendering. What Baker as an editor adds are chapter headings indicating specific revelations, etc. However, this should not be seen as Baker's own division of Julian's long text because the headings appear throughout the volume and correspond to its subsequent parts (Introduction, A Glossary of Frequently Used Words, Julian's *Showings*, Contexts, Criticism and Selected Bibliography, respectively).

Starr subdivides the chapters into sections and gives each section its own title. The concise titles, often in the form of participial clauses or noun phrases, state the gist of the sections. For instance, in Chapter 7 that portrays Julian's vision of the bleeding from Christ's wounds, Starr distinguishes two sections, *Herring Scales* and *Our Friendly Lord*, in Chapter 11 three sections, *A Single Point*, *Rightfulness* and *Perfectly Arranged*. In terms of Cognitive Grammar, titles formed using participles (e.g., in Chapter 4, *Encountering the Trinity*, Chapter 15 *Shifting*

Between Certainty and Despair) profile non-processual relationships (as opposed to verbs profiling processes) or profile a thing (“identifiable as a conceptual reification of the verbal process”, Langacker 2008: 119). In other chapters, titles take the form of nominal expressions (e.g., Chapter 62, *Father and Mother of Creation, Universal Truth*). In Langacker’s (2008: 105) model, a thing is defined as “any product of grouping and reification,” or “a unitary entity” (Langacker 2008: 107). The nominalization serves to render the processes the visions portray into noun concepts evoking category prototypes. That is, for Langacker (2008: 104), “an object is conceptually autonomous, in the sense that we can conceptualize it independently of its participation in any event.” The reader is thus prompted to detect the essence of the spiritual message, or its decontextualized conceptual content.

To expound on the Cognitive Linguistic view of Starr’s partitioning of the original text, it is instructive to introduce Langacker’s idea of mental scanning of conceptual content activated by linguistic forms. For Langacker (2008: 112), the use of finite verb forms implies construing some conceptual content as a process in a way that entails sequential scanning of a verbal process, as opposed to nouns which impose on its summary scanning. As Langacker (2008: 111) explains, “the end result [of summary scanning] is that all the component states are simultaneously active and available. They form a single gestalt comparable to a multiple-exposure photograph.” This type of construal underlies the two titles for the respective sections in Chapter 7. The titles given by Starr undercut the unfolding of the vision and the flow of Julian’s thought because they signal to the reader that each section comprises a separable particle of the mystic’s meaning, as if it were reducible to a snapshot-like format. Also, since both titles are given in bold and thus attract the reader’s attention, they acquire greater prominence, which may suggest that the notions of herring scales and friendly God are the gist of Julian’s vision in Chapter 7. However, the reader of Starr’s version gets to learn that, for Julian, the vision of Mary in the opening section, placed right under the title *Herring Scales*, runs in parallel to the scene of Christ’s abundant bleeding and the two scenes, with Mary and Christ as their focal participants, lead the mystic to the realization how special the human-God relation is.

As Starr breaks down the text’s complex structure into more manageable units of meaning, one can discern the conceptual simplification of the original manifesting itself at other levels as well. In Chapter 7, Julian compares the copious bleeding from wounds on Christ’s head to three domains from her everyday life:

Thes thre thynges cam to my mynde in the tyme: pelettes for roundhede in the comyng oute of the blode; the scale of heryng for the roundhede in the spredyng, the droppes of the evesyng of a howse for the plentuoushede unnumerable” (Barker 2005: 13).

Starr's translation of the excerpt reads

Three images came to my mind at the same time: one was the roundness of the drops of blood as they emerged from his head; another was way the drops looked like the scales of a herring as they spread over his forehead; and the other was that the flow was so abundant it reminded me of rain cascading from the eaves of a house (Starr 2014: 19).

Starr omits the lexeme *pelettes* 'globules', 'pills', but also 'beads', as in rosary (MED). The items mentioned by Julian are considered similar due to their round shape (the conceived similarity is the basis for establishing Julian's categorization underlying the comparison). Hence, the mystic creates a conceptual pattern in accordance with the iconic principle of quantity: she multiplies the images to convey the idea of plenteousness of Christ's bleeding. In Starr's translation, this pattern is distorted due to the prominence given to the image of herring scales, rather than the drops of Jesus' blood, as already elucidated.

When it comes to the translation of certain nouns from the domain of Christianity, some of them, for instance the lexeme *God*, retain their prototypical meaning in Present-Day English. However, in Starr's version, the item *God* is often superseded by *Beloved*. The translator admits that Julian often refers to God as Lord, but justifies her choice by saying that "in the spirit of inclusivity [...] Beloved is the default name" [in her translation] (Starr 2014: xxii). For instance, Starr renders "And alle thys our Lorde shewde in the furst syght and yave me space and tyme to beholde it" (Barker 2014: 15) into "This is what the Beloved showed me in the first revelation, and he gave me time and space to contemplate it" (Starr 2014: 21).² The metaphor GOD IS HUMAN BELOVED dates from the biblical times (cf. *The Song of Songs*). Julian invokes it sparsely, typically when it is justified by the context. The above metaphor should not be seen in isolation from the biblical marriage imagery. It constitutes a whole nexus of conceptualizations in which God is the husband and his people are his wife. *The Song of Songs* can be regarded as "an extension of the marriage metaphor that occurs in many places in the Bible" (Ryken/ Wilhoit/ Longman 1998: 539).

Julian's text confirms this claim. In Chapter 52, the mystic says: "And thus I saw that God enjoyeth that he is our Fader, God enjoyeth that he is our Moder, and God enjoyeth that he is our very Spouse and our soule is his lovyd wyfe" (ll. 2074–2076). Starr (2014: 142) renders the excerpt into "God rejoices that he is our Father. God rejoices that he is our Mother. God rejoices that he is our Beloved and we are his true lover." It is worth indicating that "our very Spouse" and "our soule is

2| Given the differences between manuscripts of Julian's long version, it is necessary to ensure a common basis for comparison of the source and target text. Hence, this paper offers quotations from Baker's (2005) edition.

his lovyd wife” mean ‘our true spouse’ and ‘our soul is his (be)loved bride,” respectively. In Langacker’s terms, *God* and *Beloved* do not share the same profile/base relation (i.e., they do not profile the same relationship within the same conceptual base), not least because God is conceptualized as being more than our beloved, as the excerpt clearly shows. The nouns *father*, *mother*, *spouse*, *wife* share to a large extent the same conceptual base in that they pertain to family relations. The Present-Day English nouns *spouse* and *wife*, and their Middle English forms, pertain to culture-specific marriage domains, although some differences can be found in how the roles within the family are now understood. Nevertheless, it is clear that *Beloved* may profile relations outside the conceptual base pertinent to marriage. The lexeme *Beloved* is less specific, imposing a coarse-grained (more schematic) construal onto the Divine-human relation, while the prototypical meaning of the Present-Day English noun *lover* (used by Starr in reference to the human) concerns sexual/romantic relationships outside marriage, as attested in *Lexico.com*. Thus, Starr’s preference for *Beloved* over *Spouse* affects the original construal as it upends the bridal imagery from the biblical tradition. This results in eliminating the culture-specific aspects inherent to Julian’s original conceptualization.³

As already mentioned, the translator renders Julian’s “fellow Christians” into “spiritual seekers”, as in “And ther was I lernyd that I shulde se myn awne synne and nott other mennys” (Baker 2005: 118) translated as “Here I was reminded too that I must not focus on the imperfections of others but instead take responsibility for my own” (Starr 2014: 212). This is connected with a related change in the translation. It is worth observing that the phrase “se myn awne synne and nott other mennys” means “see my own sin and not the sins of other people.” The Middle English noun *sinne* has the prototypical sense “opposition to God’s will, moral obliquity; moral evil, understood as offensive to God” (MED). In Starr’s rendering, ‘to sin’ is often translated as ‘to miss the mark’, while the noun *sin* is translated using nouns such as *imperfection*. In Langacker’s terms, the noun *sinne* typically profiles the human-God relation. To invoke Langacker’s idea of trajector/landmark alignment, the status of the participants of the relations is not equal: it is God (the primary focus, the trajector), not the human being (the secondary focus, the landmark), that provides the point of reference for judging human actions. This alignment is different in the target construal. With the use of

3| It should be mentioned that the spousal imagery is also used in the preceding chapter, Chapter 51, to capture the relation between Jesus and his beloved, “Now is the spouse, Goddys Son, in pees [peace] with this lovyd wife, whych is the feyer maydyn [fair maiden] of endlesse joy” (Baker 2005: 79). As Windeatt (2015: 198) clarifies, “in such spousal imagery [...] both the Virgin and the Church are also brides of Christ.” Starr’s (2014: 141) translation reads “Now the spouse, God’s Son, dwells in peace with his beloved wife, the Holy Church, the beautiful bride of endless joy.” It would seem that she is not consistent in maintaining the original conceptualization.

the noun *imperfections*, where *sin* may be used instead, focal prominence changes as it might imply various types of blemishes unrelated to the Divine or pertain to a single focal participant (cf. Accept the imperfections of your body and make the most of what you have, as attested in Lexico.com). In short, for Starr's fellow inter-spiritual seekers the point of reference may be their Beloved or the Holy One, but it cannot be specified in detail as the God of Christianity.

Finally, the original subjectivity/objectivity asymmetry undergoes modification. This issue concerns the modifications in the level of specificity and changes in the prominence parameter. Starr selects lexical items that impose a coarse-grained construal to remove from her translation culture-specific aspects present in the original conceptualizations, which sometimes alters how salient some aspects of the conceived scene are in the target text. In Langacker's words, objective construal "correlates with profiling and explicit mention, and subjective construal with an implicit locus of consciousness. Being implicit is not the same as being absent, however" (Langacker 2008: 77). If Starr shuns the use of nouns such as *sin* and tends to replace items such as *God* and phrases such as *my fellow Christians* with *Beloved* and *my fellow spiritual seekers*, respectively, it means that the target conceptual base invoked by each of the items in translation differs significantly from the original "onstage" region. This implies that the profiled entities and/or relations which are originally objectively construed may no longer be profiled in the onstage region (the conceptual base) in the target viewing arrangement. To resume the discussion of Starr's preference for *imperfection* over *sin*, in her version, the objective construal does not pertain to the conceptual content related to acts offensive to God because it might activate the culture-specific domains of Roman Catholicism. Instead, Starr uses the noun *imperfections* that imposes objective construal onto the conceptual base related to secular life, rather than religious belief.

6. Conclusion

The present paper has adopted the theoretical models and analytical tools from Cognitive Linguistics so as to explore the problem of the translator's sociocultural situatedness and its effect on the re-construal of the original conceptual content underlying the translated text. As a translator of a late medieval mystical text, Starr has adopted the role of a spiritual guide, who wants to familiarize the reader with the main ideas of Julian of Norwich in an accessible way. This has had crucial implications for the treatment of the original conceptual content in the translated text. In terms of Cognitive Grammar, the translator has altered the original construal parameters. This has resulted in making the text's content less culture-specific and more universal in tone. Also, some domains originally deemed central have become peripheral in the translation's conceptual base. In

simple terms, prominence has been given to an inter-spiritual understanding of mystical experience, rather than to the original, Christian perspective on it.

To conclude, Julian's thought and language are deeply embedded in the Roman Catholic culture of the mystic's day. To some extent, Starr's reduction of the original's culture-specificity may be put down to the translator's openness to readers from various backgrounds and/or having diverse spiritual needs. On the other hand, the re-conceptualization in Starr's version indicates that, to achieve her aim, the translator has largely ignored the continuity of the English language and culture. To conclude, the analysis seems to validate the claim that, to obtain a complete picture of the translator's activity, it is vital to explore the interconnection of language, culture and cognition.

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