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Reason: Pedagogy and Complementarity in Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the role of reason in *The Mirror of Simple Souls* by Medieval French Beguine Marguerite Porete (c. 1250-1310). Our first strategy will be revising the function of Reason as a character throughout the text's dialogues, in which Reason, Love, and Soul participate as main characters. Secondly, we intend to compare Reason and Love, as well as to understand whether these different forms of intellect are complementary or opposite to each other in some way, given the text's inscription in a premodern Medieval philosophy. Finally, we would like to understand reason within the frame of the possible pedagogical uses that Marguerite conferred to it in her text.

Keywords: Marguerite Porete, Love, Reason, Medieval Female Mysticism, *Intellectus rationis*, *Intellectus amoris*, Pedagogy.

In the following study, we intend to explore, in the first place, why French Beguine and mystic Marguerite Porete (13th-14th c.) inserted Reason as one of the main characters from her renowned book *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, a dialogical treatise. Mystic experience (that is, the experience of union with God) is commonly presented in the medieval female mystic tradition as that which transcends the comprehensible or the perceivable through reason. That is why the insertion and centrality of Reason as an allegoric character and mediator require a deeper examination since this prominence is not self-explanatory as mystic experience does not conceive Reason as the only means to its complete fulfilment. Exploring the possibilities of this question about Reason's protagonism opens two paths. The first points toward the –in our opinion, quite fruitful– comparison between the allegoric characters of Love and Reason so as to understand if their relationship is one of opposition or complementarity, by associating those perspectives with the different philosophical traditions coexisting in the Middle Ages[1]. On the other hand, the second path leads us to propose the possible pedagogical usefulness of incorporating the allegoric character of Reason in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*.

To elaborate on all of the above we must, firstly, briefly identify the character of Reason. This appears in the first part of *The Mirror* (chapters 1 to 122), where a group of allegoric characters are introduced: Love, Reason, and Annihilated Soul being the main characters and the ones who take part in a collaborative dialogue. These characters give an account of Love's crucial role in Marguerite's text: to show lost souls the way towards the Country of Liberty[2]. It is by Love's hand that we can see Reason for the first time as part of a mystic experience. Love states:

"Hijos de la Santa Iglesia -dice Amor-, por vosotros he hecho este libro, a fin de que oigáis, para valeros mejor, la perfección de la vida y el estado de paz a los que puede llegar en virtud de la caridad perfecta de la criatura a la que le es concedido este don de toda la Trinidad. Don del que oiréis dirimir en este libro a través de las respuestas de Entendimiento de Amor a las preguntas de Razón" (Porete, 2005, p. 35).

"Children of the Holy Church –says Love-, for you I have made this book, so you can hear, so you can better make use of life's perfection and the state of peace to which it can get to, by virtue of the creature's perfect charity upon which the gift of the whole Trinity is bestowed. A gift about which you will hear its settling in this book through the answers of the Understanding of Love to the questions of Reason" (Porete, 2015, p. 34-35)[3].

Questioning through dialogue is the communicative entrance with which the character of Reason is present and inserted in *The Mirror*. From Love's wisdom and Reason's rational questions (which identify the souls under Reason's rule and, hence, attached to Virtues), a window is opened to elucidate the paths that can lead the soul to its liberty. Thus, ordinary people will be able to comprehend the insufficiency of the very same reasoning they make use of. An example of such dialogue is the following:

"Razón: Pero, dama Amor —dice Razón—, querríamos, si os place, entender bien y más abiertamente ese don? que el Espíritu Santo da a tales Almas (...)? Amor: ¡Ay, Razón! —dice Amor—, siempre seréis tuertos vos y los que se alimentan de vuestra doctrina. Pues ciertamente está medio ciego el que tiene las cosas delante de los ojos y no las reconoce. Y es lo que os pasa a vos" (Porete, 2005, p. 82).?

"Reason: But, lady Love –says Reason–, we would want, if you please, to understand better and more openly that gift which the Holy Spirit gives to such Souls (...). Love: ¡Ah, Reason! –says Love–, you will always be one-eyed, you and the ones that feed from your doctrine. For, certainly, he who has things before his eyes yet still doesn't recognise them is half blind. And that's what happens to you" (Porete, 2005, p. 82).

However, considering all of the above, it's crucial to ponder the following: why is there a predominant presence of Reason if we, as readers, are facing the tale and teachings of a mystic experience which is unintelligible under rational principles? To answer this question, we have to notice that, first, the road to perfection proposed by Porete entails seven states moving upwards from "el abandono del pecado hasta la gloria" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.327) ("the renunciation of sin to glory"), of which the first four states remain under the rule of Reason, while the other three are governed by Love. Secondly, we must note that said path implies three instances of death (those of sin, of nature, and of spirit), and two downfalls: the fall of Virtues into Love and the fall of Love into Nothing "que lleva al alma al más profundo anonadamiento de sí, capaz de renunciar al propio Amor por amor" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.327) ("which leads the soul to the deepest annihilation of itself, capable of giving up Love for love"), a moment that depicts the descending path. In regard to this, it's fundamental to highlight that it is precisely in the change from Reason's domain to Love's where Marguerite Porete's main concern is to be found, since, as Garí points out, she:

"le interesa sobre todo enseñar cómo se alcanza ese estado, es decir, mostrar el paso entre ambos regímenes, el de la Razón y el del Amor, que es a la vez el de la muerte al espíritu y el que asciende del cuarto al quinto nivel de perfección" (Porete, 2005, p. 23).

"is, above all, interested in teaching how to reach that state, that is to say, showing the passage between both regimes, Reason's and Love's, which is at the same time the one of death to the spirit and the one that ascends from the fourth to the fifth level of perfection" (Porete, 2005, p. 23).

Also, it is worth mentioning that to understand the importance of Reason through the path the lost ones start, and the passing from one regime to the other, it's necessary to acknowledge the fact that this road entails highlighting *begging* as the very first step lost souls take before arriving in the state of liberty, and that these begging as the action takes place, precisely, under Reason's rule. In Soul's case, present throughout Porete's text, begging occurs first when the pleading creature, as they try to find God, makes use of rational tools such as *thinking* and *writing*.

"Y cuando vio que no encontraba nada, se puso a *pensar*, y su pensamiento le dijo que fuera a buscar lo que reclamaba en el fondo nodal del entendimiento de la pureza de su supremo pensar, y allí fue a buscarlo esta mendicante criatura, y *pensó que escribiría sobre Dios de la manera como quería encontrarlo en sus criaturas*. Y así *escribió esta mendicante lo que estáis oyendo*" (Porete, 2015, p.136) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"And when she saw that she didn't find anything, she began to *think*, and her thought told her to go look for what she was claiming in the nodal fund of her supreme thinking's understanding of purity, and there she went looking for it, this begging creature, and *thought that she would write about God in the way she wanted to find him in her creatures*. And so, this beggar wrote what you are hearing" (Porete, 2005, p.136) (italics are ours).

And then, she resorts to *the questions*:

"pues preguntando puede llegarse lejos, y *preguntando puede encontrarse el propio camino*, o reencontrarse si se ha salido de él" (Porete, 2015, p.170) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"since by asking you can go far, and by asking you can find your own way, or find yourself again if you have left it" (Porete, 2005, p. 170) (italics are ours).

Thinking, writing, and questioning are tools, then, that involve a rational logic that, even though they lead the Soul to beg for it is still too soon to have an encounter with God, they set the start of the road for these souls to arrive at the so awaited dejection which, let's not forget, occurs in those states of most elevated understanding governed by Love. However, the one who recognises in this treatise the importance of such an action (begging) as a rational and erratic, though necessary, the process is indeed the allegoric character of Soul, who is, also, convinced of this need. All of what we have exposed so far can be seen in Soul's confession to Trinity when she mentions the importance of creatures begging:

"El Alma: Cierto, pues *es necesario hacerlo* antes de llegar en todo al estado de libertad, *estoy segura*. Y con todo —dice esta Alma que escribió este libro—era tan necia en la época en que lo escribí, o más bien que Amor lo hizo por mí a petición mía, que

ponía precio a cosas que no se podían hacer, pensar ni decir, como haría aquel que quisiera encerrar el mar en su ojo, llevar el mundo sobre la punta de un junco, e iluminar el sol con un farol o una antorcha. Era más necia que quien quisiera hacer estas tres cosas. Cuando puse precio a lo que no podía decirse/ y me hallé presa en escribir estas palabras./ *Pero así emprendí mi camino/ para acudir en mi propio socorro,/ y alcanzar al fin la cúspide del estado del que hablamos/que es el de la perfección*" (Porete, 2015, p. 137- 138) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"Soul: True, for *it's necessary to do it* before getting completely to the state of liberty, I'm sure. And yet –says this Soul that wrote this book– I was so foolish at the time that I wrote it, or rather that Love wrote it for me at my request, that I put a price on things that cannot be done, thought nor said, as would do the one who wanted to lock the sea within his eye, carry the world on the tip of a reed, and illuminate the sun with a lantern or a torch. I was more foolish than someone who'd want to do those three things. When I put price to what cannot be said | and I found myself prisoner of writing these words. | *But that's how I started my way* | to come to my own rescue, | *and to reach finally the cusp of the state which we talk about | that is of perfection*" (Porete, 2005, p. 137-138) (italics are ours).

The role of Reason through Soul's journey to the Country of Liberty is also illuminated in her appearance as the "gatekeeper" of said path, a metaphor that identifies her as an initiator of the way to God. In Porete's words:

"Razón: ¡Ah, por Dios, dama Amor! -dice Razón-, dinos qué será de Vergüenza, la más bella de las hijas de Humildad; y también de Temor, que tantos bienes ha hecho al Alma y tantos bellos servicios; y qué será de mí misma, que no he dormido mientras me han necesitado. ¡Ay de mí! -dice Razón-. ¿Nos echará de su casa ahora que ha alcanzado señoría?

Amor: ¡No, no! -dice Amor-. Al contrario, vosotras tres permaneceréis en su mesnada y seréis las tres *guardianas de su puerta*, de forma que nadie que vaya contra Amor pueda penetrar en su casa sin que os despertéis; pero no os comportéis de ninguna otra manera más que como *porteras*, pues si no os veríais confundidas; y no seréis escuchadas en ningún caso más que como tales" (Porete, 2015, p. 103) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"Reason: Ah, by God, lady Love! –says Reason–, tell us what will become of Shame, the most beautiful of Humility's daughters; and also of Fear, that so many goods have done to Soul and so many beautiful services; and what will be of myself, that I haven't slept while I've been needed. Woe is me! –says Reason–. Will you throw us out of her house now that you've reached ladyship?

Love: No, no! –says Love–. On the contrary, you three will remain in her legion and will be the three guardians of her door, so that no one who's against Love can penetrate into her house without waking you up; but do not behave in any other way than as doorkeepers, since if you do, you would see yourselves confused; and you won't be listened to in any case more than as such" (Porete, 2005, p. 144).

In this way, we observe (as Laura Durán does in her article about *The Mirror*, whom we paraphrase in what follows) that when Reason asks Love what will become of her and her servants (Virtues), Love answers that they will remain as “porteras de la casa del Alma” (Durán, 2021, p.20) (“doorkeepers of Soul’s house”), therefore, it is Reason who first discerns what kind of behaviour leads or not to the path of God.

To forgive, to write, to think, to ask oneself: all of them are actions with an initiatory sense, but, furthermore, these are actions that Soul carries out the moment she embarks on an inner quest. As Garí states in her article:

“Margarita busca primero en el mundo [exterior] un espejo donde reconocerse y no encuentra nada; al interiorizar entonces su búsqueda hace de su entendimiento un espejo que refleja lo divino sobre el mundo” (Garí, 1995, p.60).

“Marguerite seeks in the [exterior] world a mirror where to recognise herself and she doesn’t find anything; when interiorising, then, her search she makes of her understanding a mirror that reflects the divine upon the world” (Garí, 1995, p. 60).

Like Garí, we observe that the beginning of the mystical path is the interiorization of the quest, and the first stage of such process is marked by reflection, mediation, question, thinking that is begging, also, writing, which is especially capable of revealing or, at least, investigating Porete’s Soul’s inner “I”. Reason has, hence, a fundamental and initial place in the experience. The centrality of Reason’s role is due to both her initial and mediating importance and to Soul’s need to abandon her in order to reach the encounter with God. In mystic experience, Reason is the border that must be trespassed.

Complementarity or Opposition? Love and Reason in Medieval Mysticism.

The starting point for the assessment of a likely opposition or complement of the characters of Love and Reason is to observe the extent to which each of them possesses a coupled form of understanding, inasmuch as Marguerite Porete sees both of them as paths of knowledge. The result is clear: Reason’s understanding tends to judgement, is insufficient, and cannot comprehend what is essential within mystic experience, as it is, according to Porete, a “too low” understanding for it to “highly comprehend”, in contrast to divine Love’s understanding, who “comprende bien y sin obstáculos” (Porete, 2015, p.48) (“comprehends well and with no obstacles”).

The reason is not, then, a likely vehicle for reaching the highest levels of liberty of the soul, as neither are institutions and instances that unfold under their law. In other words, Virtues, the Sacred Scriptures, and the Holy Church (“the little one”, as Porete calls it). In this way, Love and Reason are, to some extent, contrary, because Reason’s understanding, due to its own constitution (rational, argumentative, inquisitive), cannot comprehend Love’s understanding nor the possibilities for liberation that it offers. Love’s understanding, inextricably associated with divinity, is in itself an intuitive knowledge that derives from the unitive experience or God Himself; a knowledge that presents itself as clarification, without human rationality’s mediation. To Durán, as in Marguerite Porete’s case as in Mechthild of Magdeburg’s:

“es por amor que el alma se une a Dios y, en tanto tal, el amor tiene un lugar por sobre el pensamiento o conocimiento... [que es] posibilitado sólo por el Amor”(Durán, 2021, p.22),

"it's because of love that the soul is united with God and, as such, love has a place above thinking or knowledge... [which is] enabled only by Love" (Durán, 2021, p. 22)

As to Garí, Love's understanding "refleja la experiencia del alma como experiencia de un saber que se es" (Garí, 1995, p-60) ("reflects the experience of the soul as an experience of knowing that you are"), which is also "saber-otro que se sitúa más allá de la ley, de la razón mediadora" (Garí, 1995, p.58)[4] ("other knowledge situated beyond the law, beyond mediating reason").

In *The Mirror*, though, we see that this difference of capabilities between both intellects is acknowledged by Reason, which is clearly seen when she states:

"esto no lo puede entender nadie a no ser que lo aprenda de vos [Amor] a través de vuestras enseñanzas, pero no a través de mi entendimiento" (Porete, 2015, p. 50).

"nobody can understand this unless they learn this from you through your teachings, but not by means of my understanding" (Porete, 2015, p.50).

Although, based on Love and Reason's contrary abilities, we could state that they are in an opposition relationship –an opposition that is also completely hierarchical, in which Love is deliberately superior and annuls the importance of Reason–, the reality in *The Mirror* is different. If we read carefully, we can observe that, indeed, the rule of reason is an absolutely necessary step in the mystical path toward the union with God. It is not replaceable nor expendable, since, as we already saw, it possesses an initiatory role: reason is the first step inwards, marked by thought, doubt, the soul's plead, and the exercise of questioning. It happens that institutions and instances existing under the law of Reason are Christianity's first school, hence strictly necessary for starting the journey to liberty. It is through them that ordinary people get to know the Christian doctrine, as they also apprehend with these institutions the first models of Christian piety, charity (Mary, mother of God, but also Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist), and the Holy Trinity, examples that allow the adoption of Christianity's main maxims and God's wishes in one's life. The reason, further, is necessary for mystic experience due to another factor. Reasoning is the dialectic instance which, through thought and inner questioning over God, allows the Soul to understand the need for negation, overcoming, and transcendence of Reason herself: only the excess of Reason allows Reason's liberation – an absolutely necessary step, as we saw, for the road from the liberation of the soul to the encounter with God –, which can be seen in Love's statement below:

"Pero ahora, esta Alma ha ganado y aprendido tanto con las Virtudes que está por encima de ellas" (Porete, 2015, p. 60)

"But now, this Soul has won and learnt so much with Virtues that it is above them." (Porete, 2015, p. 60)

Here we observe that the soul that looks for its own liberation learns, in the first place, from Virtues, and only after that learning, it comes to be "above" them, a moment that coincides with the passing from Reason's government to Love's.

Reason and Love, then, are not actually related in opposition. Instead, they collaborate with each other, as it can be seen when Love expresses her willingness to dialogue with Reason and the latter, in turn, points out that she will not "tener mayor gozo ni mayor honor que el de ser sierva

de tal señora" (Porete, 2015, p. 78) ("have greater joy nor honour than that of being the servant of such lady"). So that Reason finds herself voluntarily in the service of Love.

In regard to the initiatory role of Reason's understanding, the following fragment is particularly illustrative:

"Razón: ¿Cuándo estuvieron sujetas las almas? Amor: Cuando permanecieron en el amor y la obediencia a vos, dama Razón, y también a las otras Virtudes; *y tanto permanecieron que se hicieron libres*" (Porete, 2015, p. 40) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"Reason: When were the souls subject? Love: When they remained in love and obedience to you, Lady Reason, and to the other Virtues; *and too long they endured that they made themselves free*". (Porete, 2015, p. 40) (italics are ours).

Here, certainly, continuity is shown between the passage from Reason's understanding to Love's as complementary and integrated parts of the same process. In this respect, we must remark that complementarity between Love and Reason is not a fortuitous event^[5]. Indeed, the notion of complementarity is illuminated if we point out an historical-philosophical approach to *The Mirror*. During the High Middle Ages (9th-10th c.) there were two philosophical theories developed around sexual difference: the theory of complementarity of the sexes and the theory of Aristotelian polarity^[6]. Furthermore, a part of European Feudal thought envisioned that "el amor es un intelecto, uno de los dos intelectos con los que nace cada criatura humana" (Rivera, 2005, p.103) ("love was an intellect, one of the two intellects each human creature is born with") where both intellects are *intellectus rationis* and *intellectus amoris*, that is to say, the intelligence of reason and the intelligence of love, where the latter is typically associated with feminine understanding. It is in this tradition of thought where Porete is located along with other mystic women. Regarding the existing gender-intellect correspondence during the High Middle Ages, Cirlot and Garí remark:

"la teología era el dominio de los hombres, el de la alta cultura. La visión dicotómica, tan propia de la cultura medieval, siempre repartidora de funciones, hizo recaer la experiencia en las mujeres. En una ordenación del mundo a partir de los géneros, a lo masculino correspondían la cultura clerical, la escritura, el latín, el conocimiento teológico, mientras que a lo femenino correspondían lo laico, la oralidad, las lenguas vulgares, la experiencia" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.38),

"theology was men's domain, that of high culture. The dichotomous vision, so typical of Medieval culture, always distributing functions, made experience fall on women. In a world order based on gender, to the masculine corresponded clerical culture, writing, theological knowledge, while to the feminine corresponded the secular, orality, vulgar languages, experience" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.38),

Thus, we identify a gender-based distinction of understandings. Regarding, in addition, that during this period, along with the proliferation of a new feminine spirituality^[7], that proposes the vindication of women's intellect (the understanding of Love), feminine mysticism thus takes distance from "la enseñanza teológica y teórica y a la mediación con las instituciones ofrecidas en esa relación por la figura masculina del sacerdote" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.26) ("the theological and theoretical teaching and the mediation of institutions offered in such relationship by the male

figure of the priest"), fundamentally identified with the law and rationality (intellect) associated with men, while "conocimiento experiencial femenino (...) exige para sí el reconocimiento de su relación inmediata con lo Divino" (Cirlot & Garí, 1999, p.26) ("feminine experiential knowledge (...) demands for itself the acknowledgement of its direct relationship to the Divine").

Throughout this period, then, the theory of polarity of the sexes implied the defense of the legitimacy of one of the intellects, i.e., the *intellectus rationis*, which was identified as masculine, establishing a hierarchy that underrated the *intellectus amoris*, according to women's inferiority, at the same time that, in such context of epistemic tension, medieval mystic women were the ones who, with their writings, depicted *intellectus amoris* as an absolutely key element in the configuration of their experience[8], defending its relevance and value (as we can see, this happens with the role of Love in *The Mirror*)[9]. Therefore, this exercise constitutes the legitimation of an understanding typically considered feminine, and with that, the legitimation of women's authority as knowledge-producer subjects, usually through *intellectus amoris*—or knowledge through intuition— since:

"En la mística femenina, el amor a Dios no es una idea, sino una experiencia terrible en la que el alma arrastra al cuerpo a participar en ella" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.42),

"In feminine Mysticism, love for God is not an idea, but a terrible experience in which the soul drags the body to take part in it" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.42),

experience that altogether takes place in the woman's body. Why? Because, according to the thinking of the time, "Dios se había querido manifestar a lo más inferior, a lo más frágil, que dentro de los valores medievales profundamente misóginos eran las mujeres" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.38) ("God had wanted to show Himself to the most inferior, the most fragile, to that which, in the deeply misogynistic medieval values, were women"), so much so that even when men were those who experimented the unitive experience – such as Master Eckhart, his disciple Henry Suso, as well as Saint John of the Cross, all of them after the bloom of twelfth-and-thirteenth-century Medieval Feminine Mysticism– "la feminización constituía la necesaria humillación para la unión con Dios" (Cirlot & Garí, 2021, p.39) ("feminisation constituted the necessary humiliation for the union with God).

In this sense, our reading of *The Mirror of Simple Souls* is supportive of other scholar's perspectives, for example, Blanca Garí and Laura Durán who are quoted here, in which we, as they either do, see in Medieval Mystic writings as a vindication of love's intellect –a confirmation that love is a fundamentally feminine legitimate and necessary path of knowledge– and with that the authority of women, in contrast to the predominance that learned theology and scholastics had enjoyed until when talking about God.

Nonetheless, our goal is to also emphasise, besides Love's understanding's vindication –an absolutely key element in *The Mirror*–, the readiness for conciliation with Reason's intellect. In other words, Marguerite Porete does not show total rejection of what then was seen as a masculine ability, but she offers a possibility for integrating both understandings, an integration whose ultimate goal is to arrive at the union with the Divine. To be clear: this necessary character of Reason for the path to God is not an interpretative novelty of our own. This has been pointed out by Blanca Garí, for instance, who affirms that the text *The Mirror of Simple Souls* would not

make sense without Reason's participation, even in spite of the fact the book itself represents her as "desentendimiento" (Garí, 1995, p.61) ("misunderstanding"), as well as Garí states that

"Razón ... es la gran mediadora de la libertad, [ya que] a través de ella llegan los rayos de Entendimiento [al Alma] que ella misma no entiende" (Garí, 1995, p.64);

"Reason... is the greatest mediator of liberty, [since] through her the rays of understanding reach [the Soul] that she herself does not comprehend" (Garí, 1995, p.64); and, in similar way, it appears mentioned in Durán's work:

"La palabra de Amor no se debe contradecir (...) Razón es la oponente de Amor, facultad que debe morir para que el Alma alcance su transformación. Con todo, Razón es *esencial* en la conversión" (Durán, 2021, p.15) (la cursiva es nuestra).

"Love's word must not be challenged (...) Reason is the opponent of Love, the faculty that must die for the Soul to reach its transformation. With all, Reason is essential in the conversion" (Durán, 2021, p.15) (Italics are ours).

What we want to do, regarding the acknowledgement of the need for Reason as our basis, is to show an emphasis this wish about integrating understanding, and rethink this in relation to the terms with which sex was thought about during this part of the Middle Ages, so that the defence of both intellects' complementarity implies a defence of sexual complementarity, of human capabilities as a whole. Thereby, we observe that the treatment of Reason as a necessary element in the mystical pathway, from an author, who at the same time assigns Love's understanding one of the highest qualities, obeys an integration impetus of constructing a thinking and undivided existence, but integral and complex in its multiplicity.

In this manner, we assert that Medieval mystic Marguerite Porete's genius (we stick, for now, to what we have seen so far in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*) is not limited to simply inverting the hierarchical binomial established around sex (thence, around intellect) by the Aristotelian polarity theory, binomial where, formerly, Reason and the masculine voice had the authority to talk about God. However, after having fiercely defended *intellectus amoris*' legitimacy in her mystic experience, she also advocates for the legitimacy and need of *intellectus rationis* (allegorically embodied by Reason in *The Mirror*) as the main backbone of our spiritual experience. It seems to us that, perfectly in tune with the philosophy of complementarity of the sexes, *The Mirror* transfers this complementarity to its correlate in the two possible understandings for the human being. This implies that Reason and Love complement each other and, once they are integrated into the other, constitute a totality. Reason in *The Mirror* is no less for taking an initiatory role. Marguerite Porete does not propose a progressive hierarchy, but a conjunction of opposites in an order, where its two constituents are necessary conditions for the inner path ahead.

Reason: One of the Pedagogical Strategies to Teach the Road to Perfection.

Resuming our questioning about Reason's protagonism, let us remember that the second path that is opened is due to the proposal concerning the possible pedagogic use of incorporating this allegorical character in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. For this, let's stop with the fact that Marguerite Porete, since she started writing about her vital experience about searching for God, does not only produce a mere narrative about her, but she also presents us:

"(...) un tratado didáctico, mistagógico, que pretende comunicar a otros y otras esa experiencia, y que pretende enseñar desde ella" (Cirlot & Garí, 1999, p.237).

"(...) a mystagogical, didactic treatise, that intends to communicate to others such experience, and that wants to teach from it" (Cirlot & Garí, 1999, p.237).

Writing, then, could be for Marguerite Porete the pathway that leads her towards perfection, and the dialogue she inserts in her text, one of the pedagogical methods for passing through the seven stages and three deaths. Further, that interaction is composed by the same authorities, that is to say, Love and Annihilated Soul, in a manner that both characters confer legitimacy to their own discourse thanks to their contact to and direct knowledge of God.

From said argumentative, didactic dialogue contained within the first part of *The Mirror*, where Marguerite Porete inserts the character of Reason, and that, shows her true pedagogical intention for the Simple Souls to understand and learn from *The Mirror* by reading it, we could infer that Porete –first of all– does not completely abandon the argumentative logic in which Reason remains locked. In fact, she gives Reason space to reflect within the dialogue, because she asks about ordinary people. This character speaks from *intellectus rationis* and not from the logic of the active and the contemplative, logic that for Reason are just "palabras de doble sentido que se hacen difícil de comprender para su entendimiento" (Porete, 2015, p.49) ("double-meaning words that make themselves difficult for their understanding"). It is because of this that we believe Reason (as an allegoric character) is put in the work as the pedagogic way and strategy to catch those souls that are still under Reason's rule and that, by feeling identified with her presence, manage to start, and be led towards perfection. In Porete's text that is made evident when Reason, repeatedly asks Love to clarify some doubts for ordinary people. An example of that can be seen in Chapter 13 when Reason says:

"Ahora, Amor -dice Razón-, habéis condescendido a nuestros ruegos aclarando las cosas para los activos y los contemplativos; pero os ruego aún que se lo aclaréis a la gente común, algunos de los cuales podrían por ventura alcanzar este estado. (...) y si se lo explicáis, este libro mostrará a todos la verdadera luz de la verdad (...)" (Porete, 2015, p. 49).

"Now, Love –says Reason– you have condescended to our pleas clarifying things for the active and contemplative; but I still beg you to clarify this to ordinary people, some of them might, by chance, reach this state (...) and if you explained this, this book would show everybody the true light of truth (...)" (Porete, 2015, p. 49).

The road of experience moves upwards within the dialogue. Yet this ascension to God does not advance linearly – the image of a staircase is insufficient –, otherwise, it's travelled in the form of a spiral, since the soul's ascent has the particularity of approaching and taking distance from God, as the sway of a descending feather. It is a form of construction present throughout *The Mirror* that is guided by the "cercanía y distancia como nudo de la relación amorosa, traducida aquí en amor místico" (Porete, 2005, p.18) ("closeness and distance as a knot of the loving relationship, translated here as mystic love"). The far-close behaviour, set up from the courtly novel^[10], is present from the beginning, specifically in the prologue to *The Mirror*, when Porete explains her book's function and with that commits herself to contrast God and Soul's relationship

with that of the King and the maiden's. According to Coral Cuadrada, this comparison made by Marguerite implies the assertion that:

"El amor humano está relacionado con el divino, que se puede experimentar la unión con Dios sin mediación alguna. (...) Margarita toma de la expresión y de las imágenes cortesanas francesas, con frecuencias utilizadas en la literatura y en la música, representaciones que le sirven para describir la fusión del amor" (Cuadrada, 2018, p. 309).

"Human love is related to the Divine, it's possible to experience the union with God without any mediation. (...) Marguerite takes from French courtly expressions and images, frequently used in literature and music, useful representations to describing the fusion of love" (Cuadrada, 2018, p.309).

On the other hand, to philosopher Wanda Tommasi:

"hay dos relatos que circunscriben el recorrido del Alma en su itinerario hacia la unión con Dios: el primero se refiere al significado mismo del libro, el segundo a la actitud del alma que "mendiga" a Dios" (Tommasi, 2002, p. 91).

"There are two narratives that circumscribe Soul's trip in her itinerary towards the union with God: the first one refers to the very meaning of the text, the second to the attitude of the soul that 'begs' to God" (Tommasi, 2020, p.91).

And precisely, the first narrative refers to the history of the maiden and King Alexander that is to be found, as we mentioned earlier, in *The Mirror's* prologue. Said the above, it is in this comparison of love's fusion that Marguerite Porete makes between the Soul and God – as opposed to a mundane and courtly love – where we observe Porete's second major pedagogical strategy, which, although it is not directly related to Reason (nor its pedagogical use just described), it does reveal the author's authentic pedagogical intention, so that her primordial goal writing *The Mirror* is to teach, to show the path, for the ordinary people to have an example, in the clearest manner, of how Soul's way to God is and to accomplish the so awaited unitive experience. If we consider the main purpose of *The Mirror* teaching, then, the use of Reason as a pedagogical strategy acquires, under this view, even greater importance.

To summarize what has been just said, there are two pedagogical strategies with which Porete illustrates the mystical pathway: the first one is when Reason is conferred a relevant place within the dialogue, and the second, is that of comparing these fusions of love between the Soul/God and maiden/King through characteristic elements of troubadour poetry. Both are strategies of a different kind, but with the same objective: to make the mystic experience's understanding, throughout her treatise, a more accessible form of knowledge.

It is also important to point out that Love confers Reason, within the treatise, a space for dialogue, debate, and the logical argumentative questioning, despite being conscious that Reason is not at the level of its own knowledge. In this sense, Love's humility is a fundamental characteristic, because it is the feature that evinces her true pedagogical intention. The purpose and true invitation of Love, then, is for ordinary people to be guided through the discovery of Reason's insufficiency of knowledge and to overcome it. Love's will is to dialogue with Reason manifests, too, that there is no intention to rank both forms of understanding, even when Reason's insufficiency is always an assertion through the dialogues. This is due to the fact that, as we already

mentioned, the first states governed by *intellectus rationis* are, without doubt, necessary for the path that leads Soul to its annihilation.

The question about pedagogy, as we can see in *The Mirror*, is a crucial matter and it is indeed present throughout the most part of the treatise. We have seen, also, how Marguerite Porete enquires about the use of different narrative strategies as didactic tools to accomplish her goal in *The Mirror*: "producir un discurso didáctico que tenga efectos en la vida de sus lectores" (Durán, 2021, p.2) ("to produce a didactic discourse that has an effect in the lives of her readers"). Porete's work, then, is linked to pedagogy since "se pretende comunicar un saber, posibilitado por la experiencia del amor (...)" (Durán, 2021, p.2) ("it intends to communicate knowledge enabled by the experience of love (...)"). A matter that should be highlighted is that the fact that one of Reason's main functions is her pedagogic role is by no means trivial, not in a context where women were quite limited when teaching about God. This happens, just as Cirlot and Garí assert – and as we have previously seen – at the time of Beguines, Dominicans, and Medieval Franciscans, when there is an emergence of tension between theological and theoretical teaching strictly related to the masculine figure of the priest (seen as the institution's mediator), as opposed to the feminine experience's knowledge that claims the recognition of the immediate relationship with the Divine (Cirlot & Garí, 1999, p.26). These two forms are opposed generating a tension that –as said by the aforementioned authors– grows over time, since the proliferation of the latter knowledge – feminine experience– could promote the disappearance and discredit of institutional mediation, for what women remained deliberately excluded from teaching. Actually, Durán comments in a footnote that:

"Enrique de Gante mostró la disposición para permitir a las mujeres -quienes no accedían a la enseñanza universitaria en teología- ejercer un papel restringido como doctoras de teología *ex beneficio*, por contraposición al ejercicio *ex officio*" (Durán, 2021, p. 16).

"Henry of Ghent showed the willingness to allow women – who did not have access to university training in theology – to exercise a restricted role as doctors in theology *ex beneficio*, in contrast to the *ex officio* practice". (Durán, 2021, p.16).

Such tension, which is detrimental to those women who felt the need to teach from their experience, refers to Marguerite Porete's work, and it is Laura Durán who identifies it when she asserts that the personification of Reason (and the other characters), besides allowing the audience to have a "representación de los medios para encontrar a Dios" (Durán, 2021, p.15) ("representation of the means to find God"), it will allow readers to elude the author's own voice, "quien de este modo evita disculparse por escribir y enseñar siendo mujer" (Durán, 2021, p.16) ("who in this way avoids apologising for writing and teaching being a woman"). Therefore, we can say that pedagogy is a transversal resource for Medieval mystic women and, as such, a space for resistance where these women –belonging to the "nueva teología [que] se caracterizó por la escritura en lengua vernácula y por el lugar central de la experiencia mística" (Durán, 2021, p.2) ("new theology [that] is characterized for being written in a vernacular language, and for the central place of the mystic experience") that emerges in the 13th century– conceived it as a place that confronts the historical limitations assigned to them.

Conclusion.

In a conclusion, we consider it fundamental to summarize that Reason's presence is crucial in *The Mirror of Simple Souls* for the following reasons. In the first place, because Marguerite Porete's main concern is to teach Soul's passage from the Rule of Reason to Love's government, inasmuch as this is a necessary process for the liberation of the soul – as, at the same time, it is not the only vehicle to reach that goal. The understanding of Reason must be overcome and replaced by the understanding of Love, with whom, notwithstanding, is found in a complementarity relationship regarding the totality of the mystical pathway. Secondly, Reason is the main element because, by being inserted in the dialogue of *The Mirror*, it is used as a pedagogical tool to guide the soul towards the awaited union with God.

About the Echoes of Love's understanding and the Idea of Complementarity in the 20th c.

We wish to finish our work by reflecting on the concept of complementarity and its possible resonance in 20th-century female authors' writings. Certainly, this Theory about the sexes, which also advocated for the legitimacy of another form of knowledge (i.e., *intellectus amoris*) did not survive Marguerite Porete's times. Modernity, just as Rivera poses, settled its epistemic foundations on a theory inherited from Aristotelian polarity: Humanism's unity of the sexes (Rivera, 2005, p.98) which, like its predecessor, only recognizes the value of *intellectus rationis*, this time associated to a universal and sexually neutral subject.

Intellectus amoris tradition, though, has marginally survived in the echo of Medieval mystic women's voices: either through the direct reception of their texts (like Master Eckhart's case in the 13th c., who may have known *The Mirror* and, more recently, Simone Weil's case, who read *The Mirror* when its authorship had not been restored to Marguerite Porete), or through spontaneous feminine philosophical and aesthetical proposals that seek to go back to concepts such as love's understanding of the search for intellectual and sexual complementarity.

Virginia Woolf, for instance, with her approach to androgyny and the unity of mind in *A Room of One's Own*, narrates in one of the final chapters of her essay:

"Porque cuando vi a la pareja subir al taxi, la mente sintió como si luego de dividida, se hubiera adherido de nuevo en una fusión natural. La razón lógica y natural sería que los dos sexos cooperaran. Hay un instinto profundo, aunque irracional, en pro de la teoría de que la unión de hombre y mujer procura la mayor satisfacción, la más cabal felicidad. Pero la vista de dos personas subiendo al taxi y la satisfacción que eso me produjo, hizo que también me preguntara *si no habría en el espíritu dos sexos, correspondientes a los dos en el cuerpo, y si no sería preciso unirlos para lograr completa satisfacción y felicidad*. Y me puse a delinear de cualquier manera un plano del alma, en el que dos poderes presidían, uno varón y otro hembra; y en el cerebro del hombre el varón predomina, y en el cerebro de la mujer la hembra predomina. El estado normal y placentero es cuando están los dos en armonía, colaborando espiritualmente. Hasta en un hombre, la parte femenina del cerebro debe ejercer influencia; y tampoco la mujer debe rehuir contacto con el hombre que hay en ella (...) *una gran inteligencia es andrógina*" (Woolf, 2010, p.93) (las cursivas son nuestras).

"For certainly when I saw the couple get into the taxi-cab the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in a natural fusion. The obvious reason would be

that it is natural for the sexes to cooperate. One has a profound, if irrational, instinct in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her (...) *a great mind is androgynous.*" (Woolf, 2015, p. 71).

We can see here that androgyny is, for Woolf, an idea about the mind, a balanced state between the male and female spirits that coexist in the mind of each person, in which both intellects (and the values and forms of writing that, in the first five chapters of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf tries to distinguish them according to sex) collaborate, without impeding creative activity. This is the mind which has total liberty for representation. Thus, the mind that is able to create integral works, faithful to the original vision of its author, requires both understandings: a great intelligence is androgynous (an example of which is Shakespeare). Woolf makes explicit, for all of us women, her ideal of sexual and intellectual complementarity, while she proposes her aesthetic theories about the mental and material conditions that allow the production of integral works of art (particularly novels).

Another woman who has highlighted the concept of complementarity is María Zambrano, with her proposal about the poetic Reason as methodology for thinking. She asserts in her work *Claros del bosque*.

"Y la visión lejana del centro apenas visible, y la visión que los claros del bosque ofrecen, parecen prometer, más que una visión nueva, un medio de visibilidad donde la imagen sea real y *el pensamiento y el sentir se identifiquen* sin que sea a costa de que se pierdan el uno en el otro o de que se anulen" (Zambrano, 2019, p.31) (las cursivas son nuestras)

"And the faraway vision of the centre is barely visible, and the vision that forest clearing offer, seem to promise, more than a new vision, a way of visibility where the image is real and *the thought and the feeling identify themselves* without losing or cancelling each other out" (Zambrano, 2019, p. 31) (italics are ours).

Here she shows us the vision that emerges from the contemplation of the clearing is the union between feeling and thinking as one: for us, the complementarity of Love and Reason's understandings. Letting aside the evident similarities between the language used by Zambrano in her work and that used by the Medieval female mystic (a language that puts special emphasis on love, the revelation through poetic beauty, the annihilation, and the ineffable experiences, to say the least). Blanca Garí also explores the relationships between *The Mirror of Simple Souls* and the text *Philosophy and Poetry*, another book by Zambrano, in her text *Le plus de l'amé* regarding

these themes. For Garí, this last book by Zambrano “[tiene] el anhelo de reconciliación de ambas, filosofía y poesía, en la razón poética” (Garí, 2010, p.62) (“[has] the longing for the reconciliation of both philosophy and poetry in poetic reason”), as it also shows a rediscovery and reconquest of “la inteligencia de amor y [d]el arte de conocer desde la razón mística y la razón poética” (Garí, 2010, p.57) (“the intelligence of love and the art to learn from mystic reason and poetic reason”). We, for our part, note that the proposal of the complementarity of understandings (love and reason) in Zambrano’s work is especially evident, even though the vindication of sexual complementarity is not as explicit as in Woolf’s essay.

To conclude this little circuit of intertexts between *The Mirror* and the writings of contemporary authors, we also intuit, as so does Simone Weil, 20th-century philosopher, that this loss of understanding through love –which characterized the transition to Modernity– has been a loss that largely explains this spiritual crisis, but also the social and material ones, in which the West has been constantly submerged. Weil argues, in her writing *L’agonie d’une civilisation vue à travers un poème épique*, that the effects produced by the Albigensian crusades in Languedoc:

“Europa jamás ha vuelto a encontrar el mismo grado de libertad espiritual que se perdiera como resultado de esa guerra” (Weil, 1960, p. 3).

“Europe has never found the same degree of spiritual liberty that was lost as a result of that war” (Weil, 1960, p. 3).

In this text, the author does not explicitly mention the notion of intellectual nor sexual complementarity. However, she talks about the alliance between the troubadour culture and the Cathar lifestyle that took place in Languedoc, an alliance that advanced in peace and with a sense of loyalty that, to our view, refers to the importance of love and its corresponding understanding. We agree on this with María Milagros Rivera, who states that Simone Weil “defines Cathar religion and troubadour culture as a civilization: a Mediterranean civilization destroyed by force”, this culture’s emblems being:

“una altísima inspiración y libertad espirituales: una sociedad que tuvo en cuenta el *intellectus amoris*, el entendimiento del amor y la potencia mediadora de la lengua” (Rivera, 2005, p. 110).

“A towering spiritual inspiration and freedom: a society that took into account the *intellectus amoris*, love’s understanding, and language’s mediating potential” (Rivera, 2005, p.110).

This consequential spiritual crisis in the West has been commented by Gilbert Durand, French anthropologist, who has thoroughly studied the history of symbolic thinking in Western culture. Alain Verjat, who closely studies Durand’s work, observes that the latter shows that said crisis is due to the fact that “occidente apostó (y desgraciadamente ganó) por el racionalismo y el cartesianismo, de los que el método científico es el producto directo, tanto en las ciencias ‘exactas’ como en las ciencias ‘humanas’” (Verjat, 2011, p.19) (“the West bet for (and unfortunately it won) Rationalism and Cartesianism –its direct product being the scientific method– both in ‘exact’ sciences and ‘human’ sciences”). This event unfolds ever since, in Western history, Aristotelian conceptualism, i.e., “el pensamiento directo, que se funda en el realismo de la percepción” (Verjat, 2011, p.19) (“direct thought, which emerges from the realism of perception”), oriented towards

objective knowledge “de las realidades del mundo profano y del dominio de la naturaleza” (Verjat, 2011, p.19) (“of the realities of the profane world and the domination of nature”), overcame Platonism in the symbolic thought that supported an indirect thinking that could “designar algo más allá de los sensible” (Verjat, 2011, p.19) (“design something beyond the perceptible”). This is a fact we mentioned earlier from the perspective of the theory of the polarity of the sexes, which implied, too, the defense of one of the intellects’ legitimacy (*intellectus rationis*). This crisis, then, lays its foundations ever since only one path to knowledge is recognized as valid, while symbolism became increasingly discredited in philosophy, “de tal modo que el Siglo de las Luces pudo proclamar el triunfo de la razón, relegando todo lo que no fuera racional al desván de las supersticiones” (Verjat, 2011, p.19) (“so that the Age of Enlightenment could claim the triumph of reason, relegating anything but what is rational to the attic of superstitions”).

Returning to the authors’ approaches: the troubadour culture, their visions on love, and their spiritual freedom and richness, persecuted through the Crusades against Albigensian (Rivera, 2005, p.107) are longed by Simone Weil, as María Zambrano looks forward to a reconciliation between philosophy and poetry, while Virginia Woolf looks for synthesis and complementarity both intellectual and sexual through androgyny, which is proposed as one of Woolf’s solution to gender-sex oppression against women – which is not the only one^[11]. That is to say, each of these authors perceive, in one way or another, “una pérdida insoportable de libertad humana en la historia” (Rivera, 2005, p. 109) (“an unbearable loss of human liberty in history”). Further, it is important to consider that all of them wrote amidst crisis in their corresponding territories (two World Wars and, in Weil and Zambrano’s cases, the Spanish Civil War), and that they were intensely related to war. So they wrote in a moment when questioning about how they got to such a critical point led them through similar paths of thoughts. Thus, our intention is to point out the need to build a philosophy that does not deny otherness^[12], the affections, or (transcendental) knowledge that is not mediated by reason. This is a reflection that has taken quite an important place within feminine thought, both past –as we saw in Marguerite Porete, and other Beguines and mystic women– and current, as Zambrano, Woolf, and Weil’s contributions have shown.

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Notes

[1] It’s worth mentioning that the protagonist’s building as allegoric characters is a clear reference to Medieval Courtly Literature, specifically from Jean Meung and Guillaume de Lorris’ *Román de la Rose*.

[2] A place that is both a “un modo de ser y un estado” (Garí, 1995, p. 54) (“way to be and a state”) where mystic experience takes place, crucially marked by the renunciation of the will and the annihilation of the soul.

[3] All the quotes in this article that required translation to English have been translated by Catalina Soto Caballero and edited by Yennadim Medina Reales.

[4] This characterization of Love as the highest possible form of understanding for the Soul, along with the insufficiency and abandonment of Reason, is a theme that was “común a buena parte de la mística femenina del siglo XIII y XIV” (Garí, 1995, p. 63) (“common to a large part of 13th-14th centuries Female Mysticism”), and therefore, quite frequent in the emerging “Teología Vernácula” (Durán, 2021, p. 1) (“Vernacular Theology”) of the 12th century. It is important to highlight that Marguerite Porete’s writing is framed within a major feminine spiritual movement that crystallised in Western territories since 1200 (Cirlot & Garí, 1999, p.17), where, besides the novelty about a group of women taking hold of writing for the first time, new currents of feminine spirituality and new religious movements led by women emerged such as, for example, Cathars, nuns, recluses, and beguines. Marguerite Porete belonged in the last group: the *mulieres religiosae*.

[5] What’s more, the problem of love and reason as two fundamental human capabilities, along with whether they complement or compenetrates each other, possess a long trajectory in Medieval thought. As pointed out by Meis in her article, “Razón y amor en la teología medieval incipiente: Aproximación desde la confluencia de las fuentes griegas y latinas” (2002) (“Reason and Love in Early Medieval Theology: An approach from the Confluence of Greek and Latin Sources”), theological development of authors such as Hildegard von Bingen, William of St. Thierry, Anselm of Canterbury, and Bonaventure –among others– underscores, in different ways, the importance of the collaboration between both human capabilities (love and reason) in the search for Truth and, thence, God.

[6] The complementarity of the sexes Theory establishes that men and women are substantially different, but equal in worth. Active mostly during the 12th and 13th centuries, this thought implies that both men and women complemented humanity, that is to say, we belonged to the same species. According to María-Milagros Rivera, this Theory was “efecto y causa de mucha libertad en la vida de las mujeres” (Rivera, 2005, p-96) (“effect and cause of too much freedom in women’s life”). Contrary to this one is the polarity of the sexes theory, which has its origins with Aristotle. This Theory poses that both men and women are substantially different and that men are superior to women. This thought was mainly spread by the Church and Universities through the thirteenth century (Rivera, 2005, p. 98).

[7] Considering that in the 12th century proliferation of secular and heretic spiritual groups had already begun – paradoxically at the same time the clergy’s authority and power was in the process of consolidation (Walker Bynum, 1984, p.19) – medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum affirms that beguines (group to which Marguerite Porete belonged to) were, probably, “the first ‘women’s movement’ in Western history” (Walker Bynum, 1984, p.14). At the same time, she points out that after the year 1200, mystic women were already more numerous than mystic males (Walker Bynum, 1984, p.18), that is to say, she observes a rise in spiritual and religious participation of medieval women.

[8] In this sense, the mystic tradition in itself questioned Reason as a means to God’s knowledge, the “Biblical interpretation... based on rational, philosophical and theological arguments” (Lerner, 1993, p.65), by stating that “transcendent knowledge came not as a product of rational thought, but as a result of a way of life, of individual inspiration and sudden revelatory insight” (Lerner, 1993, p.66), and that “mystics saw human beings, the world and the universe in a state of relatedness, open to understanding by intuitive and immediate perception. Its practitioners saw God as immanent in all of creation, accessible through unconditional love and concentrated dedication manifested in sincere prayer and religious devotion” (Lerner, 1993, p.66). Women, who did not have access to elite education as theologians, in spite of remaining excluded from this knowledge, used mysticism “as an alternate mode of thought to patriarchal thinking” (Lerner, 1993, p.77).

[9] Mystic women were not the exception. Just like Rivera, Tomassi and Weil propose from diverse perspectives, the relevance of *intellectus amoris* was defended by both male and female troubadours, Cathars and Albigenses, as well as by the "knightly Civilization" that emerged in Provence and was expressed in Occitan language.

[10] It is important to highlight that many of the beguines have been inspired by courtly poetry, and because of this, finding expressions of this style is not an aspect exclusive to Porete. As it is mentioned in the introduction to the text *El lenguaje del deseo* [The Language of Desire] (1999), many writings by beguines are marked by, first, the use of vernacular languages or mother tongues to "expresar sus experiencias... para cantar sus exigencias apasionada del amor" (Hadewijch, 1999, p.39) ("express their experiences... to sing their hot-blooded demands of love"), a matter that ends up emancipating those languages. Second, the inspiration of Courtly Poetry. And thirdly, the renovation of spirituality. These three elements allow that beguines' writings, such as those by Hadewijch of Ambers, Marguerite Porete, and Mechthild of Magdeburg, become an exceptional contribution that "se encuentran, junto a trovadoras, trovadores y autores de las canciones de gesta, en el origen de las grandes literaturas europeas" (Hadewijch, 1999, p.39) ("can be found, along with both female and male troubadours and chanson the gestic authors, at the origin of the great European literature").

[11] Not the only one, since androgyny posed by Woolf. A Room of One's Own last chapter is just one of the feminist proposals of the essay. In the rest of the chapters, in tune with difference feminism or "social feminism" (Marcus, 2010, p.145), Woolf's approach reaffirms the category "women" and its consequent "difference", based "on the belief that women's values and skills, whether innate or culturally constructed, are excluded in male-dominated societies". In this way, in a "complex and often contradictory" synthesis (Marcus, 2010, p.144), Virginia "calls for a new understanding a valorisation of specifically female values" (Marcus, 2010, p.145) –in a vindication of female difference– as well as she points towards a dilution of the same category "women" through androgyny and the necessary sexual complementarity of the sexes. De este modo, en una síntesis "complex and often contradictory" (Marcus, 2010, p.144), Virginia tanto "calls for a new understanding and valorisation of specifically female values" (Marcus, 2010, p.145), en una reafirmación de la diferencia femenina, como apunta también a una dilución de la categoría "mujer" a través de la propuesta de la androginia y la necesaria complementariedad sexual de los intelectos.

[12] Just as Gilbert Durand tried in *Science de L'Homme Et Tradition* (1975), after understanding that throughout history many thinkers that did not fit in the dominant Western philosophy's principles were excluded. Thus, Durand "expresa la necesidad de escribir una historia de la «antifilosofía», de rescatar a «todos los "rechazados" por el pensamiento occidental oficial»" (Hadewijch, 1999, p.34) ("expresses the need to write a history of 'anti-philosophy', to rescue «all of the 'rejected' by the official Western thought»"), and so he makes an extensive list where he names those forgotten men ("the others") from the Middle Ages to present times- However, Durand's complaint also seems to reproduce otherness and marginalization since it does not include any woman, as pointed out by María Tabuyo in *El lenguaje del deseo* (Hadewijch, 1999, p.34-35).

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