

MIRRORING THE *CLOUD* IN CAMBRIDGE,  
PEMBROKE COLLEGE, MS 221:  
RICHARD METHLEY'S GLOSSES TO THE  
*DIVINA CALIGO IGNORANCIE* AND *SPECULUM  
ANIMARUM SIMPLICIUM*

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This chapter investigates a sample of glosses written by Richard Methley as part of his Latin translations of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, called *Divina Caligo Ignorancie*, and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, called the *Speculum simplicium animarum*. Such an investigation requires first the presentation of a few features linked to Methley's contemplative practice by considering passages from his spiritual autobiographical treatises, all written in Latin. Following that, the chapter offers a brief summary of the scholarship linked to the study of the glosses of the Middle English version of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer*, by an anonymous translator, known by his initials as M.N. Third, it describes the manuscript context in which Methley's translations and his own glosses of both texts are extant.<sup>2</sup>

Medieval and modern reception of Porete's *Mirouer* is haunted by the fact that it was condemned as a heretical text in 1310 and that the propositions used for the condemnation of the Free Spirit heresy were extracted from the *Mirouer*.<sup>3</sup> My readings show awareness of this association, but hopefully contribute further thoughts to those that have been proposed by Michael Sargent, Marleen Cré and Nicholas Watson, among others.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is published OA under the Creative Commons licence BY-NC-ND, with generous financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri, 'The glosses by "MN" and Richard Methley to *The Mirror of Simple Souls*', *Archivio italiano per la storia della piet * 5 (1968), 357–82. This chapter is one of the outcomes linked to the University of Lausanne-based project 'Re-configuring the Apophatic Tradition in Late Medieval England' (2022–6) generously sponsored by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

<sup>3</sup> For an edition of the French *Mirouer*, see Marguerite Porete, '*Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour*', in *Il Movimento del libero spirito. Testi e documenti*, ed. Romana Guarnieri, *Archivio Italiano per la storia della piet *, 4, pp. 513–708; see also this edition reprinted with a Latin text by Paul Verdeyen, *Marguerite Porete: Le Mirouer des Simples Ames*, CCCM 69 (Turnhout, 1986). I use *Mirouer* when talking specifically about the French text, and *Mirror* when discussing the Middle English version.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Sargent, 'The Annihilation of Marguerite Porete', *Viator* 28 (1997), 253–79; Marleen Cr , 'Further Thoughts on M.N.'s Middle English Translation of Marguerite's *Mirouer des simples ames anienties*', in *A Companion to Marguerite Porete and The Mirror*

## Methley's Contemplative Practice

Methley (1450–1527/8), Carthusian monk at the Charterhouse of Mount Grace, in North Yorkshire, wrote several religious texts, four of which are still extant.<sup>5</sup> They include the *Scola amoris languidi* (*The School of Languishing Love*), written in 1484, the *Dormitorium dilecti Dilecti* (*The Bedroom of the beloved Beloved*), written in 1485, the *Refectorium salutis* (*The Refectory of Salvation*), written in 1487, and the Middle English *To Hew Heremyte, A Pystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes*, which could date from later in his life.<sup>6</sup> The dates of composition of the three Latin autobiographical texts are relevant to the argument offered below.

The late fifteenth-century contemplative tradition in England was greatly influenced by the affective tradition and the sensory mysticism practised by the early church fathers and carried on in the West by male and female individuals within monastic enclosures. It also flourished in the late medieval period among individuals specialised in the solitary life, such as hermits, anchoresses and anchorites. However, next to this essentially affective contemplative tradition, the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, which advocated a form of contemplative practice devoid of feeling, images and cognition, played an important role for practitioners whose goal was to reach a heightened state of consciousness. The monastic libraries of medieval Britain attest to the presence of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and its extensive commentary tradition, with contributions by Hugh of St Victor, Robert Grosseteste, Thomas Gallus, and the Carthusian Hugh of Balma among its most prominent exponents.<sup>7</sup> For instance, *Viae Syon lugent*, written by Hugh of Balma in the second half of the thirteenth century, is extant in more than one hundred manuscripts disseminated throughout Europe.<sup>8</sup> One of these manuscripts, Oxford, Bodleian Library,

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of Simple Souls, ed. Robert Stauffer and Wendy R. Terry (Leiden, 2017), pp. 240–63; Nicholas Watson, 'Melting into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Translation of Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*', in *Prophets Abroad: Continental Women Visionaries in Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 19–49.

<sup>5</sup> They include *Scola amoris languidi* (1484), *Cellarium* (1484, does not survive), *Dormitorium dilecti Dilecti* (1485), *De Marie nomine et sacramento altaris* (1486/7, does not survive), *Trivium excellencie* (1487/8, does not survive), *Refectorium salutis* (1487); they are followed by *Speculum animarum simplicium* (1491) and *Diuina caligo ignorancie* (1491); see Richard Methley, *The Works of Richard Methley*, trans. Barbara Newman, intr. Laura Saetveit Miles, Cistercian Studies Series 286 (Collegeville MN, 2021), pp. ix–x.

<sup>6</sup> For the Latin versions, see Richard Methley, 'The *Scola amoris languidi* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse, transcribed from the Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.56', ed. James Hogg, *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker: Dritter internationaler Kongress über die Kartäusergeschichte und -Spiritualität*, 5 vols, Analecta Cartusiana 55 (Salzburg, 1981–2), 2.138–65; Richard Methley, 'The *Dormitorium dilecti Dilecti* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse, transcribed from the Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.56', ed. James Hogg, *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, 5.79–103; Richard Methley, 'A Mystical Diary: The *Refectorium salutis* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse', ed. James Hogg, *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, 1.208–38; Richard Methley, 'The Self-Verification of Visionary Phenomena: Richard Methley's "*Experimentum veritatis*"', ed. Michael Sargent, *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, 2.121–37; for modern English translations of the first three treatises, see Methley, *The Works*, pp. 9–128.

<sup>7</sup> See the Medieval Libraries of Great Britain webpage: <http://mlgb3.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>.

<sup>8</sup> See Dennis Martin, trans. and intro., *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte* (New York, 1997), pp. 12–14.

MS Douce 262, is a London Charterhouse production which contains in its first part, written in *c.* 1500, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *Viae Syon lugent* and *De septem gradibus contemplacionis*. The Carthusians' interest in all things linked to the Christian spiritual theological tradition, including the apophatic tradition transmitted through these writings, is well attested.<sup>9</sup>

This broad devotional perspective made it possible for contemplative writers with access to repository libraries to absorb, digest and amalgamate various spiritual strands to create new spiritual and sometimes idiosyncratic teachings. Richard Methley's autobiographical accounts and translations with glosses display a personal interest in the apophatic tradition as shaped by its late medieval translators. Yet his personal mysticism is highly dependent on the cataphatic and affective tradition, as practised by Richard Rolle, whose writings were popular among the Carthusians.<sup>10</sup> Methley's mystical system combines both traditions in a configuration that is highly idiosyncratic and which requires compromises. The way in which he combines affective mysticism such as practised by Richard Rolle and later Margery Kempe (whose manuscript was extant at Mount Grace) with texts from the apophatic tradition such as the *Cloud*-corpus deserves attention.

The *Scola amoris languidi*, written in 1484, shows the extent to which Methley's mysticism relies heavily on the Rollean tradition.<sup>11</sup> Like Rolle, he advises a sitting posture for the practice of three meditation sessions: at dawn, after noon and after midnight. Yet he adds that he doubles Rolle's fifteen-minute timing for these sessions after Vespers or supper. The Rollean practice of meditation is carefully arranged around the Carthusian monastic routine, with care not to disturb it in any way.<sup>12</sup> The Rollean influence is of course not limited to practicalities. Methley's bridal mysticism, influenced by the Song of Songs, more particularly the 'amore languet', echoes Rolle's own practice.<sup>13</sup> The devotion to the Name, another significant aspect of Methley's practice, is obviously also inspired by Rolle.<sup>14</sup> The following evidence from the *Refectorium salutis* mentions Rolle explicitly, together with *feruor*, *dulcor* and *canor*:

<sup>9</sup> See Vincent Gillespie, 'Preaching to the Choir: Another Look at English Carthusian Transmission of Vernacular Spiritual Writings', in *The Capital's Charterhouses and the Record of English Carthusianism*, ed. Julian Luxford (Toronto, 2023), pp. 152–204; see also in the same volume, Michael G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late-Medieval Spiritual Writings: A Reconsideration of Walter Hilton and Nicholas Love', pp. 117–51. For a discussion of MS Douce 262, see Christiania Whitehead's essay in this volume.

<sup>10</sup> For a list of manuscripts containing Richard Rolle's Middle English Writings, see Ralph Hanna, *The English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Exeter, 2010); see also Michael G. Sargent, 'The Transmissions by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 225–40.

<sup>11</sup> On Rolle, see Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, 1991); Denis Renevey, *Language, Self and Love: Hermeneutics in the Writings of Richard Rolle and the Commentaries on the Song of Songs* (Cardiff, 2001); and, more recently, Andrew Albin, *Richard Rolle's Melody of Love: A Study and Translation with Manuscript and Musical Contexts* (Toronto, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Methley, *The Works*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Methley makes it his distinctive quality as a means of comparison between him and Rolle.

<sup>14</sup> See Denis Renevey, *Devotion to the Name of Jesus in Medieval English Literature, c. 1100 – c. 1530* (Oxford, 2022).

... languidus effectus nam vita mea consistit in amore languore dulcore feruore, canore, rarius tamen in sensibili feruore quia dilectus michi promisit quod frequencius in languore sicut et ille almus Ricardus dictus de hampol frequencius in calore de quo non legi quod tam frequens fuerit in languore.

[For my life consists of love, languor, sweetness, warmth, and song, yet perceptible warmth is the rarest. The Beloved has promised me that I would experience love more often in languor, just as the kindly Richard of Hampole experienced it more often in warmth. I have not read that he experienced such frequent languor.]<sup>15</sup>

However, as early as 1484, when Methley recorded profound mystical experiences in the *Scola*, their expression depends on the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition mainly known to Methley via Hugh of Balma's *Viae Syon lugent* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The account by Methley of the experience he had on the feast of Saint Peter in Chains on 1 August 1484 describes the effect of desire and love of the Beloved as a heavenly rapture completely devoid of thoughts of anything, even of the Creator.<sup>16</sup> Methley paraphrases a well-known *Cloud of Unknowing* passage to state his own views on the quasi-inexpressible characteristics of the mystical experience:

Et sicut qui periculum metuunt ignis, non clamant: ignis inuasit domum meam, venite et adiuuate me; quia in angustia vel pocius agonia positi, vix possunt vnum verbum loqui sed clamant ignis ignis ignis; vel si forciore est spiritus impetus clamant: A, A, A, in hac voce simul volentes intelligi periculum suum; sic ego secundum meum modulum. Nam in primis sepius commendavi spiritum meum deo dicens In manus tuas, aut vocaliter, aut (quod magis puto) spiritualiter. Sed inualescente languore amoris vix cogitare potui formans in spiritu hec verba: Amor, Amor, Amor. Et tandem deficiens ab hac forma exspectavi quoniam totaliter spiritum exspirare possem: A, A, A, tantummodo aut consimili modo canens pocius quam clamans in spiritu pre gaudio.

[When people are alarmed by a dangerous fire, they do not shout, 'Fire has attacked my house, come and help me!' In their anguish, not to say agony, they can hardly utter a word. So they just shout 'Fire, fire, fire!' Or if the spirit moves them even more powerfully, they scream 'Ah, ah, ah!' – and they mean by that sound to express their danger. So it was with me, in my small way. At first I kept commending my spirit to God by saying 'Into your hands,' either vocally or (as I suspect) mentally. But as the languor of love grew more intense, I could hardly think and I only formed in my spirit the word *Amor, Amor, Amor!* Love, love, love! Finally, as I fell away from even that formula; I waited for the moment when I could totally breathe forth my spirit. Then I could only sing (rather than shout) *Ah, ah, ah*, or something like that, in my spiritual joy.]<sup>17</sup>

More than just paraphrasing the passage, Methley turns the one short word or one-syllable word advocated here by the *Cloud* author into one of his favourite ways of expressing the highest spiritual experience in a state of unknowing.<sup>18</sup> Struggling with the failure of Latin to provide a one-syllable word equivalent to 'love', Methley resorts to the onomatopoeic 'A'. The reference to breathing out the word as song

<sup>15</sup> Methley, *Refectorium*, p. 221; Methley, *The Works*, p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Methley, *The Works*, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Methley, *Scola*, p. 146; Methley, *The Works*, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Methley, *The Works*, p. 38; Methley, *Scola*, p. 156.

suggests a less anguished and precipitate use of it than in its previous occurrence in the context of the burning house mentioned above. Languishing love triggers here a form of meditation that harmonises the emotional, which Methley associates with vocalisation on a single note, and the spiritual, expressed as a mantra-like use of ‘A’ breathed out in a single, long breath.<sup>19</sup> Methley partakes of the tradition that Hugh of Balma and the *Cloud*-author circulated as part of their adaptation of Pseudo-Dionysius where, when Pseudo-Dionysius discusses cognition and its absence in mystical theology, they add love.<sup>20</sup>

Methley’s *The Bedroom of the beloved Beloved* uses the ‘Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat’ (Cant. 5: 2) verse as its ‘refrain’ throughout its thirty-six chapters to convey how one can only be awake for God if one is asleep to the world. To have continual peace, Methley advises the passive attitude of both body and mind and claims to have ‘mentis quietem ... non momentane vt quidam cauillantur sed potius continue’ [such peace not just for a moment, as scoffers say, but constantly].<sup>21</sup> The claim, also made formerly by Rolle with regard to his experience of *canor*, and more vehemently in the early fourteenth century by Porete in her *Mirouer*, constituted one of the points against the orthodoxy of the latter.<sup>22</sup> We can assume Methley already knew the Middle English version of Porete’s *Mirouer* in 1485, six years before the completion of the *Dormitorium* in 1491. His own confidence with regard to achieving continuous contemplative peace, perhaps to be distinguished from exalted states of union, was probably boosted by his reading of the Middle English version of Porete’s text and from his involvement with the mystical theology of ‘sancti dionysii magni contemplatiui’ [Saint Dionysius, the great contemplative] whose feast day (9 October) Methley recalls to the attention of his readership.<sup>23</sup>

His mystical diaries place a great deal of emphasis on contextualising his contemplative experiences within the Carthusian monastic hours and the physical space of the Charterhouse. The ‘writing – to the moment’ technique, that is (supposedly) writing his visionary experiences as they happen, and the great attention given to temporal markers linked to the liturgical year and the hours of the Divine Office, are characteristic of Methley’s *Refectorium*.<sup>24</sup> The weight given by Methley to the specific spaces within the Charterhouse and the practice that they generate support the idea that he had his brothers from Mount Grace as his intended audience. The manuscript evidence supports this claim. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.56 is

<sup>19</sup> For an interpretation of that passage that argues for Methley’s return to an affective meditative response, and thus a partial failure to receive the *Cloud*-author’s didactic message, see Rebecca Field, ‘Contemplation in Translation: Richard Methley’s *Caligo Ignoranciae* and the problem of “hybrid” spiritual pedagogy’. I am grateful to Rebecca Field for having let me read this extract from her Cambridge D.Phil. thesis.

<sup>20</sup> See Martin, *Carthusian Spirituality*, pp. 23, 141.

<sup>21</sup> Methley, *Dormitorium*, p. 98; Methley, *The Works*, p. 83.

<sup>22</sup> 568 See Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete’s Mirror of Simple Souls* (Albany, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Methley, *Refectorium*, p. 217; Methley, *The Works*, p. 96

<sup>24</sup> See Laura Saetveit Miles, “‘Writing – to the Moment.’ Narrative Immediacy, Mystical Theology, and the Sanctification of Time in Richard Methley’s *Refectorium Salutis*’, *Viator* 51. No. 2 (2021 for 2020): 297–333; see also Laura Saetveit Miles, ‘Richard Methley and the Translation of Vernacular Religious Writing into Latin’ in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 449–66.

the unique manuscript witness of *Scola, Dormitorium* and *Refectorium*. It is written in several hands, with corrections and annotations that supply evidence of readerly interest within a monastic community, which was probably that of Mount Grace, Methley's own monastic home.<sup>25</sup>

#### A Survey of the Interpretations of the Glosses by M.N.

Methley, in the footsteps of the anonymous Middle English translator M.N., who was probably a Carthusian, offered a Latin translation with glosses of Marguerite Porete's Middle English *Mirror*. Discussions on the glosses by M.N. have led to opposite perspectives. One, which was initiated by Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri in the 1960s, argues that, if M.N. was not aware of the heretical content of *The Mirouer* when he completed his first translation, he had been made aware of it by his critics who were in possession of the list of fifteen propositions extracted from the book and which were condemned at Paris in 1310: that led to his second translation with his fifteen glosses, which Colledge and Guarnieri argue deal with the most controversial passages of the *Mirouer*.<sup>26</sup> Watson instead offered a more benign view of Marguerite's *Mirouer*, highlighting its experimental nature and arguing for the fact that Marguerite herself composed it to test for herself the extent to which its allegorised form could bring about the process of self-transformation it imagines.<sup>27</sup> According to Watson and Cré, M.N.'s glosses deal rather with problems linked with the rhetoric of ecstasy. Out of the fifteen glosses, only two deal with theological matters. The first deals with perfection which only applies to moments of union. The second addresses also the question of union and insists on the brevity of such moments.

In 2006, Cré and Kerby-Fulton separately discussed the *Mirouer* and its translation with glosses by M.N. and reached completely different conclusions.<sup>28</sup> Kerby-Fulton aligned her views to Colledge and Guarnieri's in *Books Under Suspicion*, providing additional evidence for knowledge of the Free Spirit heresy in England from extracts of *The Chastising of God's Children* and Grote's Latin translation of Ruusbroec's *Spiritual Espousals*. In *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse*, Cré argues that the position of M.N.'s Middle English *Mirrouer* as the last long text in the Amherst manuscript (BL, Additional MS 377909) speaks to its ambitious and elevated aims in an anthology that proposes a progressive reading from front to back cover. Thus the *Mirror*, in the company of Julian's Short Text and Ruusbroec's *Vanden blinkenden steen* in Middle English, among others, is regarded as the ultimate contemplative text by the compiler of Amherst.<sup>29</sup> The anthology also offers a

<sup>25</sup> See Methley, *The Works*, pp. xiii–xiv. The *Experimentum veritatis* and *To Hew Heremyte, A Pystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes* are extant in London, Public Record Office Collection SP 1/239, which does not provide information about their copying and their readership; for *Hew Heremyte*, see Richard Methley, 'Richard Methley: To Hew Heremyte, A Pystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes', ed. James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana* 31 (1977), 91–119.

<sup>26</sup> Colledge and Guarnieri, 'The Glosses', p. 358.

<sup>27</sup> Watson, 'Melting', p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> See Marleen Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse: A Study of London, British Library, MS Additional 37790* (Turnhout, 2006); Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval Writing* (Notre Dame, 2006), esp. pp. 272–96.

<sup>29</sup> See Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism*, pp. 165–97.

compilation, called the *Via ad contemplacionem*, which is made up of extracts from Hugh of Balma's *Mystica Theologia*, Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *A Pistle of Preier* and *A Pistle of Discrecioun of Stirrings*.<sup>30</sup> It is also extant in BL, Additional MS 37049, another Carthusian manuscript.<sup>31</sup> To come back to the *Mirouer*, Cré supports the view that M.N. admired the text, found it difficult textually and mystically, and felt that its dream-vision form invited interpretation, offered by M.N. in the form of glosses. Cré and Watson support the view that the glosses are interpretative rather than corrective, and show no sign of knowledge, and thus anxiety, about the potential heretical content of the treatise.

Sargent highlights the difficulty of reaching sufficient theological precision when using the vernacular, especially when dealing with texts heavily reliant on the Pseudo-Dionysian apophatic tradition.<sup>32</sup> The text was also attributed to Jan van Ruusbroec, whom the compiler of Amherst, and possibly also M.N., believed to be the prior of the charterhouse in Paris.<sup>33</sup> He argues that the English Carthusian translators of the *Mirouer* had no doubt about its orthodoxy, but found it difficult and therefore in need of interpretation. Sargent supports this point further by insisting that M.N. and subsequent translators considered the text to be 'compelling, esoteric, but fundamentally orthodox', yet to be put only into the hands of experts in the contemplative life.<sup>34</sup>

The spiritual autobiographies of Richard Methley portray him as a confident expert in the contemplative life, keen to offer himself as a model for others to imitate. As a religious writer and an experienced contemplative, he must have felt ideally suited to authorise further Porete's *Mirror*, in a Latin translation with glosses.

#### Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 221

Richard Methley composed several mystical diaries in Latin. Those that are still extant show him to navigate seamlessly from affective devotional and mystical outbursts to expressions conveying ineffability and unknowing that rely on the language borrowed from the Pseudo-Dionysian *Mystical Theology*, via Hugh of Balma, or the *Cloud*-author, a passage of which is paraphrased in his *Scola amoris languidi*.<sup>35</sup> The following mystical diaries, the *Dormitorium* and the *Refectorium*, make similar gestures and point to Methley's daring statement about his 'constant peace of mind in contemplation', rather than a momentary one. Methley frames all of his mystical experiences within the liturgical year and the Carthusian monastic hours, combined with a detailed description of the physical spaces (cell, choir, refectory, etc.) where the experiences were given to him. Methley writes for a coterie of

<sup>30</sup> Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism*, pp. 240, 319–20.

<sup>31</sup> Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism*, pp. 239–40.

<sup>32</sup> Sargent, 'Annihilation', p. 266.

<sup>33</sup> For more details about this misattribution, see Sargent, 'Annihilation', p. 262.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Sargent, 'Medieval and Modern Readership of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples âmes anienties*: The French and English Traditions', in *Middle English Religious Writing in Practice: Texts, Readers, and Transformations*, ed. Nicole Rice (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 47–89; see esp. 63–4.

<sup>35</sup> See Renevey, *Devotion*, pp. 156–7; for an interpretation that reads less favourably the blending of the cataphatic and apophatic traditions in Richard Methley's spiritual system, see Rebecca Field, 'The *Cloud of Unknowing*: a Rhetorical "how-to" Manual for Contemplative Practice' (D.Phil. Diss., Cambridge, 2023); see n. 19.

Carthusian monks, perhaps more specifically and at least initially some Carthusian monks from Mount Grace, who would have known Methley personally and would have been witness to his fainting and peculiar physical performances within the Charterhouse.<sup>36</sup> That could also explain the ‘writing – to the moment’ style he uses in the *Refectorium* and his other mystical diaries, as it certainly brings to the fore causal relationships between the contemplative experiences and their outer physical manifestations.

Four years after the completion of the *Refectorium* in 1487, Methley translated and glossed *The Cloud of Unknowing* (completed 12 August 1491), and Porete’s *Mirouer* (completed 9 December 1491) which I think he believed, like the scribe of Pembroke College, MS 221, to have been written by the Carthusian Jan van Ruusbroec.<sup>37</sup> The *Divina caligo ignorancie* occupies folios 1v to 39v. Folio 40r is blank, and so was folio 40v, to which has been added the title *Speculum animarum simplicium* and a note at the foot of the folio. The other item in the manuscript is an extract from Richard of St Victor on Psalm 121, on folio 103v.<sup>38</sup> William Darker (+ 1512/13), monk of Sheen Charterhouse, has been identified by Ian Doyle as the scribe who copied Methley’s works.<sup>39</sup> The presence of the initials ‘TB’ may point to Thomas Betson, brother and librarian of Syon Abbey (+ 1516), where the manuscript could have been brought from neighbouring Sheen. Some manuscript annotations indicate that some late medieval readers cross-referenced *Divina* and *Speculum*. For instance, a hand at the top of folio 6r invites the reader to read chapter thirteen of the following treatise, that is the *Speculum*. The same hand offers in the right hand column of the same folio another reference to the *Speculum*. An annotation on folio 60v directs the reader back to chapter four of the *Divina caligo*. The word ‘Dionisius’ appears in the right hand margin of folio 98r. The last annotation, on folio 99r, makes reference to the translator, ‘Richardum Ffurth alias de methley’, that is Richard Methley. These annotations by late medieval readers, most probably Carthusian ones, reflect the rationale behind this anthology: here are Latin translations of two ambitious texts on the contemplative life that focus mainly on the third state or degree of contemplative experience, expressed by means of the apophatic Pseudo-Dionysian tradition.<sup>40</sup>

Two unresolved issues have to do with hands other than the main scribe. They amount to about ten, according to Colledge and Walsh, or four, according to

<sup>36</sup> The red ink annotator of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, British Library, Additional MS 61823, properly assessed that Methley, who is mentioned four times in the manuscript, shared similar experiences to Margery Kempe; see Katie Bugyis, ‘Handling the *Book of Margery Kempe*: The Corrective Touches of the Red Ink Annotator’ in *New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies and Reading Practices: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, John Thompson, and Sarah Baechle (Notre Dame, 2014), pp. 138–58; esp. 139–40; see also Renevey, *Devotion*, pp. 190–1.

<sup>37</sup> See Sargent, ‘Medieval’, p. 71; see Richard Methley, *Speculum animarum simplicium: A Glossed Latin Version of The Mirror of Simple Souls*, ed. John Clark, *Analecta Cartusiana* 266, nos 1–2 (2010); Richard Methley, *Divina caligo ignorancie: A Latin Glossed Version of The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. John Clark, *Analecta Cartusiana* 119, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>38</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. iii.

<sup>39</sup> A. I. Doyle, ‘William Darker: The Work of an English Carthusian Scribe’, in *Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users*, ed. Christopher Baswell (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 199–212.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of this third degree, see Hugh of Balma’s third part to *Viae Syon lugent* on the ‘unitive way’ in Martin, *Carthusian Spirituality*, pp. 106–55.

Doyle.<sup>41</sup> Also, Colledge and Walsh, following Doyle, identify one of the hands as that of James Grenehalgh, which is supported by the presence of his monogram in one of his comments on fol. 31 rb, and at the top of fol. 47ra. The question of Grenehalgh's hand however remains unresolved, as Michael Sargent has expressed doubts about its presence in Pembroke 221.<sup>42</sup> What is significant however is that the manuscript contains texts written by Carthusian monks, the *Cloud*-author and supposedly Jan van Ruusbroec, copied by a Carthusian hand, and circulated within the Carthusian milieu before it made its way to Syon. Its initial *Sitz im Leben* is thus the safe, orthodox but spiritually ambitious fifteenth-century Carthusian milieu.

### Methley's Glosses

However surprising that may be, Colledge and Guarnieri, whose research on Porete is influenced by their broader interest in unveiling the heresy of the Free Spirit, mention, but leave practically untouched, the fact that M.N. could possibly have known *The Cloud of Unknowing*. They notice indeed similarities of language between M.N. and the *Cloud*.<sup>43</sup> Further on, they point out the fact that Methley strengthens this claim by making comparisons between the *Mirror* and the Pseudo-Dionysian canon. They add: 'Several other places will be found where Methley adduces pseudo-Dionysius in order to support his contention that the teaching of the *Mirror* can be harmonized with the highest mystical doctrine.'<sup>44</sup> Colledge and Guarnieri held the right key to unlock some of the difficulties of the Middle English *Mirroure*, Methley's *Divina caligo ignorancie* and *Speculum animarum simplicium*. Instead, they ignored the *Divina caligo* altogether and opted for a *lectio difficilior*, that is a reading of *The Mirouer* in the light of the Free Spirit heresy.

Far from having to 'harmonise' the *Mirror* with the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition (which is what I think Colledge and Guarnieri have in mind with their 'highest mystical doctrine'), Methley treats the *Cloud* and the *Mirror* as mystical treatises that equally represent and emerge from the apophatic tradition mediated in the medieval period by Thomas Gallus and Hugh of Balma. The copious glosses of the perfectly orthodox *Cloud of Unknowing* show that the difficulty resides in making sense of difficult apophatic passages that characterise the treatises of Pembroke 221. The prologue to *Divina caligo ignorancie* refers to Methley having tackled the content of *The Cloud of Unknowing* for about fourteen years. He shows awareness of his limitations with the apophatic content of the treatise, and especially about the reference to union with the divine as exposed 'secundum Dionysium'.<sup>45</sup> Methley immediately stresses the differentiation of substance between the soul and God during this stage, as a response 'contra heresim Begardorum', some of whom adopted pantheistic, antinomian and quietist views.<sup>46</sup>

One of Methley's first glosses in the *Divina caligo* is to explain to what kind of people the labels 'communis' (ordinary), 'specialis' (special) and 'singularis' (singular) correspond. Methley claims, and he has the manuscript tradition for

<sup>41</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. iv.

<sup>42</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. iv, n. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Colledge and Guarnieri, 'The Glosses', p. 373.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. 1.38.

<sup>46</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. 2.II, 103; see also Miles, 'Richard Methley and the Translation of Vernacular Religious Writing into Latin', p. 459.

support, that the book was written especially for a ‘singularis’, that is a solitary, who must have been a member of the Carthusian order.<sup>47</sup> Methley surely believes that the Carthusian audience is, and possibly should be, the only audience for the *Mirror*. The Latinisation of these two texts with a complex hermeneutic apparatus enhances their status and brings them into the fold of traditional religious culture on the shelves of Mount Grace, Sheen and Syon.<sup>48</sup>

I would like to consider the following passage from chapter 34 of *The Cloud*, in its original language, followed by Methley’s translation and gloss:

& 3it he 3euiþ not þis grace, ne worcheþ not þis werk, in ani soule þat is vnable þerto. & 3it þer is no soule wiþoutyn þis grace, abil to haue þis grace: noo, wheþer it be a synner soule or an inocent soule. For neiþer it is 3ouen for inocense, ne wiþholden for synne. Take good kepe þat I sey wiþholden, & not wiþdrawen. Bewar wiþ errour here, I preye þee; for euer þe nere men touchen þe trewþ, more war men behoueþ to be of errour. I meen bot wel. 3if þou canst not conseyue it, legge it bi þi syde tyl God come & teche þee. Do þen so, & hurt þee not.

[Et tamen non dat hanc gratiam, nec operatur hoc opus, in aliqua anima inhabili ad hoc. Et tamen nulla est anima sine hac gracia habilis habere hanc gratiam, vtrum sit anima peccatoris siue anima innocentis, quia neque pro innocencia datur, neque pro peccatis retinetur. Diligenter attende quod dico ‘retentum’, non ‘subtractum’. Cave hic, rogo te, ab errore; quia quanto plus propinquamus veritati, tanto plus oportet nos ab errore cavere. Bene intendo, si nescis concipere, dimitte, donec Deus docere te veniendo dignetur. Sic igitur age, et teipsum noli peiorare.

And yet He does not give this grace, nor does this work, in any soul unfit for this. And yet there is no soul without this grace capable of having this grace, whether it be the soul of a sinner or the soul of the innocent, because it is neither given for innocence, nor withheld for sins. Note carefully that I say ‘withheld’, not ‘with-drawn’. Beware here, I beseech you, of error; for the nearer we come to the truth, the more it is necessary to guard against error. I mean well; therefore if you are unable to grasp it, let it go until God deigns to come and teach you. Act in this way, and do not harm yourself.]<sup>49</sup>

As with his entire translation of *The Cloud*, Methley’s passage follows closely the original without any attempt at alteration of the meaning. Yet after the ‘Diligenter attende’ sentence he offers the following explanatory gloss:

Retentum et subtractum in hoc differunt secundum intencionem autoris, quod quicumque quantumcumque magnus peccator vere conuersus, et perseuerans in querendo, non retinetur hoc contemplacionis donum finaliter ab eo, sed datur

<sup>47</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. 9.33–8; *The Cloud*, ed. Walsh, p. 116, n. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Gillespie states: ‘Using the works of Rolle and the *Cloud*, the writings of both Norton and Methley suggest a similar recursive tendency to calibrate their own spiritual experiences against the contemplative resources collected and copied by their colleagues, and the production of Latin versions of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and *Mirror of Simple Souls* argues for an introverted and internalised book culture rather than an outward-facing one’: Gillespie, ‘Preaching to the Choir’, p. 174.

<sup>49</sup> *The Cloud*, ed. Hodgson, p. 38.18–26; Methley, *Divina*, p. 50.29–36. Unless indicated otherwise, translations of the Latin are my own. I would like to thank Dr Ruth Tuschling for helping me with these translations. All remaining errors are of course my sole responsibility.

cum maxime oportunum fuerit, circumstancijs consideratis, sicut patet in Paulo gerarcha, in Magdalena, et alijs, quamuis propter peccatum ad tempus subtrahatur, sicut patet in Daudid qui ait: Redde michi leticiam salutaris tui. Qui enim dicit, 'Redde', fatetur se prius et habuisse et amisisse.

[*Withheld* and *withdrawn*, according to the author, differ in this way: a sinner, no matter how wicked he has been, when he is truly converted, becomes a persevering seeker after God, who does not withhold any gift of contemplation from him permanently. Such grace is given when it is most opportune, all circumstances considered; as is clear with the great priest Paul, the Magdalen and others; although it may be withdrawn for a time because of sin, as happened with David, who said 'Give back to me the joy of salvation' (Psalm 50:14). For he who says 'Give back' indicates that he had it before.]<sup>50</sup>

Chapter 34 is part of a cluster of chapters touching upon ways of dealing with sin. The author, assuming here that the apprentice is no longer a sinner, provides several pieces of advice about how to deal with past sins. If the thoughts of past sins come back, he advises fighting them back, treading them down with the foot under the cloud of forgetting. Another visual technique is to look over the sin's shoulders to find God in the cloud of unknowing, in a longing desire for God (ch. 32). In case of failure with these two techniques, one can admit defeat and let oneself be assailed by the enemies and feel as a wretch, but only to feel meekness, as God will come down to avenge the wretch from his enemies, will bring him up and will dry his ghostly eyes. Chapter 33 insists on the fact that, because of the original sin, new and fresh stirrings of sin will spring: the author returns to active aggressive action which consists of smiting them down with the double-edged sword of discretion (ch. 33).

The next chapter (ch. 34) discusses to what extent sin is an impediment to the experience of contemplation at the highest degree, given by God through grace. The *Cloud*-author uses the word 'werk', which means here the temporary accomplishment of the blessed vision of the divine and argues that, since this brief experience of union is given by grace, it does not depend on the degree of innocence or former sinfulness of the soul; as long as it is engaged in the work (here used in a more practical manner) of contemplation, it may or may not be given the experience through the grace of God. This passage is slightly contentious as it can possibly lead one to a form of quietism that would take away the benefit of exercising the virtues and a state of passivity that is unwelcome in the Catholic faith. Methley, for his part, notices the possible deviations a misunderstanding of this passage could lead one into. He is also careful about emphasising the terminology used by the *Cloud*-author. He insists on the difference between 'to withhold' and 'to withdraw' and stipulates that God will not withhold any gift of contemplation from the former sinful soul now seeking after God. This is a powerful passage as it shows that, if the experience is given through God's grace only, it is given only to the soul – whatever its former state – that is now engaged in the work of contemplation. So Methley's explanation dismisses altogether the possibility of a quietist misinterpretation and also encourages former sinners to envision their own work of contemplation in a most positive light. The examples given of Mary Magdalene and St Paul, two former great sinners, reinforces this point.

However, Methley is also aware that God can temporarily withdraw the gift of contemplation if one falls into sin, as happened to David. Methley indeed uses Psalm 50:14 to argue that David received the gift of contemplation, lost it, and

<sup>50</sup> Methley, *Divina*, p. 51.34–41; *The Cloud*, ed. Walsh, p. 184 n. 232.

prayed God that he might receive it back. Hence Methley shows that this gift can be withdrawn in those circumstances. The fact that the *Cloud*-author asks his reader to lay aside this point if he cannot understand it certainly leads Methley to add a gloss on this difficult passage. The *Cloud*-author is anxious here to avoid leading someone into error, which would be spiritually harmful. Fear of falling into heterodoxy aligns this passage with some of the most daring moments offered in Porete's *Mirror*.

Methley's prologue to his *Speculum animarum simplicium*, like the Latin *Cloud* written at the instigation of the Carthusian Dom Thurstan Watson, recognises the difficulties linked to the *Mirror* but warns against deliberately unsympathetic and contemptuous criticism.<sup>51</sup> There is no suggestion by Methley that the treatise could contain heterodox material. Instead, he sends a note of caution to readers insufficiently experienced in the contemplative life by explaining to them not only that the treatise's content is difficult, but that the act of translating from French into Middle English, and now into Latin, complicates matters even more. These difficulties account for Methley's provision of glosses which, unlike M.N. who provided them immediately following the passages, he places at the end of each chapter. Methley completes his prologue with affective outbursts redolent of his autobiographical treatises, such as 'Ooo, agh, agh, amore languet; Jhesu, gracias ago', and invoking 'Deum meum Saluatorem, Jhesum secundum nomen tuum, quo cano cum iubilo, Jhesu, Jhesu, Jhesu, amore languet'. It continues with 'Ooo, agh, agh, Jhesu, Jhesu, Jhesu, mirabilia sunt opera tua in pro te languentibus in amore'.<sup>52</sup>

The following comment at the beginning of chapter 7 exemplifies the general attitude by Methley towards the treatise:

*Hic dicam vobis quomodo, scilicet isti nobiles amatores Dei, sunt plene consummati, purificati, liberi effecti, videlicet sic: Non nos domini. Ibi respicit propriam fragilitatem, ad peccandum pronam, et ideo ait: Non nos domini liberi ab omnibus, scilicet peccatis et virtutum impedimentis, quia nequaquam erit hoc perseueranter, sed ad tempus perbreue in hoc seculo. Sequitur in textu: Sed dilectio ex Deo pro nobis. Ex Deo, id est ex Dei dono, est dilectio; quam quamdiu veraciter et sensibiliter habemus, peccare non possumus ex deliberacione, sed nec venialiter quidem pro tempore vnicionis raptice. Et hec est libertas quam nos per gratiam habere facit dilectio, gracia scilicet preueniens. Et sic liberi pro tanto et pro tempore efficitur.*

[Here I shall tell you how: that is, these noble lovers of God are wholly consumed, purified, liberated, and in this way. *We are not lords*: this regards our own frailty, prone to sin, and it therefore says *We are not lords, free of all*, that is, free of all sins and obstacles to the virtues, for a soul will never constantly be so, but in this life only for very brief intervals. In the text there follows *But Love, from God, for us. From God*: that is to say that Love is of the gift of God, and when we have Love, truly and sensibly, at that time we cannot sin by deliberation, not even venially while that rapturous union lasts. And this is the liberty which Love by grace causes us to have, and this is an antecedent grace, and so it makes us free, to that extent and for that time.]<sup>53</sup>

Methley here scrupulously scrutinises a difficult and daring passage from the *Speculum*, touching upon the temporariness of the moment of union, during which sin,

<sup>51</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, p. 19, l.21.

<sup>52</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, p. 2.17–24.

<sup>53</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, p. 6.15–26; Colledge and Guarnieri, 'The Glosses', p. 374.

including venial sin, cannot take place. During that moment, brought about by what Methley calls ‘preueniens gracia’ given by Love, the soul experiences temporary freedom from sin and obstacles to the virtues. Methley is, however, keener to stress that a soul is in general not free of all sins and obstacles to the virtues, thus toning down the more positive, but more daring, claim made by Porete’s *Mirouer*.

On several occasions Methley’s glosses refer to the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, in continuity with the work on the *Cloud* that he completed before his translation and glosses of Porete’s *Mirouer*. As Clark states:

R.M.’s glosses are distinguished from those of M.N. by their many explicit Scriptural references, including, as in his glossed Latin version of the *Cloud*, many quotations from St. Paul and from the Wisdom books of the Bible. Again in keeping with the work which he had just completed on the *Cloud*, his glosses have many recollections of Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Mystica Theologia*. It is to Pseudo-Dionysius that he repeatedly appeals in his efforts to give a favourable interpretation to *The Mirror*’s dubious statements.<sup>54</sup>

One more gloss by Methley, compared to that of M.N., should suffice to show the Pseudo-Dionysian impulse that elucidates his understanding of some difficult passages in Porete’s *Mirouer*.

The following passage as found in M.N.’s translation addresses the question of the simple soul’s state after having taken leave of the virtues. Methley would have faced this passage with M.N.’s gloss, as below:

This soule, seiþ loue, ne reckeþ of schame, ne of worschip, ne of pouert, ne richesse, ne of eese, ne of disese, ne of loue, ne of hate, ne of helle, ne of paradise.

O loue, for God, seiþ reson, what is þis to seiþe þat 3e haue seid?

What is þis to seiþe? seiþ loue. Woot þei and noon opir to whom God haþ 3oue þe vndirstandinge, for no scripture techiþ it, ne mannes witt may not comprehende it ne trauel of creature ne desert may not areche it. But it is a 3ifte 3ouen of þe riht hiþe, in whom þis creature is lost bi plente of knowynge, and bicom nouzt in hir vndirstondinge.

M. O, þese wordis semen ful straunge to þe rederis, þat seiþ þe soule is lost in þe riht hiþe bi plente of knowinge, and bicom nouzt in hir vndirstandinge. And not oonli þese wordis, but also many mo opir wordis þat ben writen bifore and affir, semen fable or errour, or hard to vndirstande. But for þe loue of God, 3e reders, demep not to soone, for I am siker þat who so rediþ ouer þis booke bi good avisement twies or þries and be disposid to þo same felynges, þei schulen vndirstonde it wel ynow<sup>3</sup>. And þou3 þei be not disposid to þo felynges, 3itt hem schal þenke þat it is al wel yseid. But who so takeþ þe nakid wordis of scriptures and leueþ þe sentence, he may li3tli erre. N<sup>55</sup>

This passage by M.N., the anonymous Middle English translator and glossator, renders faithfully the same passage from the French original. It follows the important moment when the soul bids farewell to the virtues. As a result of the privileged state it finds itself in, it no longer takes into account qualities such as shame, worship, and other significant and theologically loaded concepts. The paradox resides in the fact that the soul, having become nothing in her understanding, is ravished into a state

<sup>54</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, vol. 2, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> See M. Marilyn Doiron, ‘*The Mirror of Simple Soules*’: *An Edition and Commentary* (Ph. D. dissertation, Fordham University, New York, 1964), pp. 16–17.

of complete understanding. The gloss by M.N., rather than offering explanation, advises against a hasty judgement and invites the reader to revisit the passage again, with a cautionary remark against a literal understanding of the language.

Methley's faithful translation is followed by two glosses that address head-on the passage's theological subtleties. Following the sentence beginning 'What is þis to seie? seip loue. Woot ...', which Methley renders as 'Quid sit istud dictu, ait dileccio, hii sciunt', he offers the following:

Nulla id docet Scriptura, cum sit eciam suo modo supra experienciam docere illud; sed tamen tam Scriptura Bible quam deuotorum in Christo contemplatiuorum de hoc circumstancialiter multum loquuntur. Vnde scias quod duobus modis predicta intelliguntur. Siue scilicet cum ebria est anima super se eleuata, siue cum in tantum sibi complacet de diuina disposicione, quod si Deus vellet, nec seipsam inferno denegaret. Et tamen non potest consentire se a Deo perire, quamdiu in hac sensacione poterit se inuenire. Exponitur inferius eadem distincione ibi, *O dileccio, ait racio*.

[No scripture teaches this, although it may in its own way also teach it beyond experience; but nevertheless, both the Biblical writings and those of the devout contemplatives in Christ speak a great deal about this in detail. Whence you may know that what has been said is meant in two ways. Indeed, either it refers to when the soul is intoxicated and has been exalted above itself, or when it is pleased with God's ordering to such an extent that, if God willed it, it would not refuse to be in hell. And yet it cannot consent to fall away from God, as long as it finds itself in this sensation. It is explained below with the same distinction there, *O Love, says Reason*.]<sup>56</sup>

Methley discusses a state that is difficult for anyone to understand if one has not experienced it himself. Using the bridal mysticism of the Song of Songs to discuss what he calls inebriation (*inebria*), he supports Porete's point by affirming that in such an altered state the soul indeed has no recollection or use of the virtues. It continues by declaring that, when enjoying such a divine state, it is so absorbed in the divine will that it would do anything, even going into hell, were it required by the divine will. This part of the gloss, however, concludes by cautiously denying the unification of the soul into God, which a theologically trained Carthusian monk such as Methley would know to be a heretical claim.

Methley continues with the following sentence, beginning with 'But it is a gifte ...' (Methley: 'Sed donum est ...'), which receives the resulting gloss:

A Summo donator Deo, a quo est omne datum optimum et omne donum perfectum. Duobus modis dicitur aliquid perdi: vel quio omnino perijt, vel quia non inuenitur, quamuis vbi sit scitur. Sic anima hec tam pura, defecata, Deo incognoscibiliter vnita, pro tempore quam modico a cognicione non inuenitur, non tamen perit, sed Deo intime vnitur. Hoc est quod Dionisius ad Timotheum ait: Consurge ignote ad ipsius vnionem, qui est super omnem substanciam et cognicionem.

[From God the Supreme Giver, from whom comes every good and perfect gift. A thing is said to be lost in two ways: either because it has completely perished, or because it is not found, although its location is known. Thus a soul so pure, spiritually cleansed, united to God in an unknowable manner, for a brief time cannot be

<sup>56</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, vol. 1, p. 12.

found by knowledge, however it does not perish, but is intimately united to God. This is what Dionysius says to Timothy: Arise in an unknown manner to union with him who is above all substance and knowledge.]<sup>57</sup>

Methley recognises the perfection of the divine gift offered to the soul in its state of unknowing, but also insists on its temporariness. He is intent on specifying how the soul does not die into God, that is that it does not lose its own substance even if the brief experience of union is experienced insubstantially and without recourse to the soul's cognitive capacities.

### Conclusion

A more detailed comparative study of the glosses by M.N. and Methley on their own translations of the French *Mirouer* should corroborate some of the points highlighted in this paper. It should be done in parallel to additional comparative investigations of Methley's glosses of his *Speculum* with those of his *Divina caligo* in Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 221. The latter manuscript offers the opportunity to look at a late medieval understanding of two ambitious mystical texts that could be read sequentially. Manuscript annotations provide evidence that several late medieval readers understood these two texts to provide complementary information on the most ambitious aspects of the contemplative tradition, more particularly the contentious phenomenon of union.

The glosses by Methley point to a voice that wishes to tackle the difficult material that it proposes for its readership. It is a voice that is careful to point out that both the *Cloud* and the *Mirouer* offer insights into an ambitious contemplative system that deals mainly with the unitive way, a state that the rational faculty and post-lapsarian language are incapable of explicating. Although one text was never suspected of holding heretical beliefs, while the author of the second was burnt at the stake as a relapsed heretic, the encounter between the *Cloud* and the *Mirouer* in their Latin garb in Pembroke 221 reveals an equal and respectful treatment by Methley for texts believed to be written by two Carthusian fellow monks, one anonymous, the other one, Methley thought, Jan van Ruusbroec, prior of the Charterhouse in Paris, called *Vallis Viridis*.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Methley, *Speculum*, vol 1, p. 12.

<sup>58</sup> For the confusion of the Paris Charterhouse called *Valle Viridis* and Groendal (called *Viridivalle*) where Jan van Ruusbroec was an Augustinian canon, see Sargent, 'Annihilation', p. 262.