

'In cordis tui scrinio conserua': Richard Methley, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Reading for Affectivity

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For one early sixteenth-century annotator of Margery Kempe's *Boke*, the Carthusian monk Richard Methley (d. 1527/8) was best remembered for following comparable devotional practices to Kempe in his crying, fainting and 'ardowr of lofe'.¹ If such 'extreme' physically manifested mysticism is for some later critics a symptom of Methley's 'naiveté', late medieval interpretations were more positive.² Preserved at Mount Grace, where Methley spent the greater part of his life as a monk, the attempt of the *Boke's* annotator to render Kempe's spiritual and somatic symptoms legitimate by adducing the evidence of Methley, suggests that, for many, his devotional practices were considered to be exemplary.³ The manuscript transmission of his works supports such a hypothesis, and Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 221 is no exception to this: it is a fair copy of two of Methley's works written at the Carthusian monastery of Sheen by the 'highly esteemed' scribe William Darker, and possibly bound by the librarian of its sister house at Syon, Thomas Betson.⁴ The manuscript contains Methley's translations into Latin of the fourteenth-century anonymous English text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the Middle English translation of Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of*

¹ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 97 and 442. For more on the annotator, see Kelly Parsons, 'The Red Ink Annotator of The Book of Margery Kempe and his Lay Audience', in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe and Gower*, ed. by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 2001), pp. 217-238. For bibliographical information on Richard Methley, see James Hogg, 'A Mystical Diary: The *Refectorium Salutis* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse', *Kärthausermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana*, 55:1 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981), pp. 208-238.

² David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948-59), II (1955), p. 224 and James Hogg, 'Mount Grace Charterhouse and Late Medieval English Spirituality', in *Mount Grace Charterhouse and late medieval English spirituality*, by James Hogg. *Die Privilegien des Kartäuserklosters Marienparadies nach der Londoner Handschrift British Library Additional 17096*, herausgegeben von Wilhelm Brauer, *Analecta Carthusiana*, 82:3 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1980) pp. 1-43 (p. 31).

³ See further Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1991), p. 211.

⁴ James Hogg, 'Richard Methley's Latin Translations of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Margaret Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*', in *Stand up to Godwards: Essays in mystical and monastic theology in honour of the Reverend John Clark on his sixty-fifth birthday*, ed. by James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 204 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2002), pp. 73-90 (p. 82). For more on Betson, see Vincent Gillespie's introduction to *Syon Abbey*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie, with *The Libraries of the Carthusians*, ed. by A.I. Doyle, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, 9 (London: British Library, 2001), p. xlvii.

Simple Souls by 'M.N.'. The circumstances of the manuscript's preservation stress the high importance attached to the collection and dissemination of contemporary devotional texts amongst late medieval Carthusians. Yet in the Order's emphasis on solitary study, the possibility of erroneous interpretation was a significant danger; Carthusian reading practice places a heavy responsibility on the translator to render doctrine in a way that is not merely faithful to the text, but also orthodox. Whilst this paper will largely focus on Methley's approach to these demands in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the first of the translations in Pembroke MS 221, the strategy for devotional reading he constructs there is equally relevant for the difficulties involved in the perusal of the manuscript's second text, the potentially heretical *Mirror of Simple Souls*.

Methley held the teaching of the *Cloud*-author in high esteem, producing a very careful translation which is scrupulously attentive to textual accuracy.⁵ Yet in its insistence on the abstract nature of affective devotion, to a certain extent the *Cloud* diverges from Methley's own practice as a mystic. For the *Cloud*-author, the challenge of mystical language is 'to express spiritual things in such a way that the 'bodily words' do not become confused with their spiritual referents'.⁶ If Methley disagreed that the disciple should leave 'outward bodily wittes' (p. 124/2), he was attracted by the key role assigned to God's love in grasping the divine: 'By loue may he be getyn & holden; bot bi þouȝt neiþer' (p. 26/4-5).⁷ Such is love's centrality to Methley's thought, that in his early work, the *Scola Amoris Languidi*, (composed in 1481), he considers its encouragement in others to have a devotional function:

Omnium creaturarum summum studium est amare et amari. ... Hinc est enim quod quia deum diligo actuali deuocione gracias illi ago in secula seculorum, omnes ad amandum deum prouocare studeo.⁸

(The highest study of all creatures is to love and to be loved... Hence it is also that, because I love God with active devotion, I give thanks to him forever by attempting to provoke others to love God'.)⁹

⁵ *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson, EETS, o.s., 218 (London: H. Milford for the Early English Text Society, 1944), p. xxv.

⁶ J.A. Burrow, 'Fantasy and Language in *The Cloud of Unknowing*', *Essays in Criticism* 27 (1977), 283-298 (p. 295).

⁷ All references taken from *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Hodgson.

⁸ James Hogg, 'The *Scola Amoris Languidi* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse transcribed from the Trinity College Cambridge MS.O.2.56', *Kärthausermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana* 55:2, (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981), pp. 138-16 (p. 138).

⁹ Translation by Lochrie, *Kempe*, p. 213. All unattributed translations elsewhere are my own.

Due to the importance of such incitement to love, throughout his *Cloud* translation Methley inserts references to an affective language based on the *Song of Songs*, also employed by the thirteenth-century Carthusian, Hugh of Balma in his *Theologica Mystica*.¹⁰ Such insertions form part of an interpretative strategy which encourages the reader to look to God's love for the elucidation of textual difficulties. For Methley, the *Cloud*-author's criticisms regarding the difficulties surrounding the verification of somatic mystical experiences are neutralised through recourse to the very sensations of love from which they arose. Only through love can the faculty of discernment be exercised in ascertaining the veracity of visionary manifestations. Methley's language thus itself encourages this faculty of discernment, one particularly necessary in the context of the unorthodox teaching of Methley's other translation, Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*.

The fidelity of Methley's translation of the *Cloud of Unknowing* encourages the reader to adopt a strategy of attentive, analytical reading in keeping with a Carthusian belief in the interdependence of textual accuracy and didacticism, where Latin translation facilitates 'rigorous theological analysis and wider transmission'.¹¹ In contrast to the other Latin translation of the *Cloud*, where the anonymous translator simply adds to the text, creating 'more of a paraphrase than a strict translation',¹² Methley prefers to replicate the idiosyncrasies of his author within the translation, in order to comment on them in the gloss: 'vbi necesse fueri explanare pro capciosis et opiniosis in fine capitulorum quorundam, que quidem difficilia videntur ad intelligendum' ('Where it was necessary to explain at the end of each chapter that which indeed seemed difficult to understand according to sophistries and opinions').¹³ Perhaps because of his conviction that in modern times understanding theological teaching is very difficult ('difficillime', p. 1/17), Methley follows the syntax of the original closely, even replicating grammatical discrepancies: he translates the *Cloud*'s 'who-so clopeþ

¹⁰ See further Hugh of Balma, *Théologie Mystique*, ed. and trans. by Francis Ruello and Jeanne Barbet, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995-6), especially I, p. 194.

¹¹ Vincent Gillespie, 'Dial M for Mystic: Mystical Texts in the Library of Syon Abbey and the Spirituality of the Syon Brethren', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland and Wales: Exeter Symposium VI*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), pp. 241-268 (p. 245).

¹² James Hogg, 'The Latin Cloud', in *The Perth Charterhouse before 1500*, by W.N.M. Beckett. *An English Carthusian in the Kingdom of Naples: Dom Bernard Sidgreaves*, by James Hogg. *The Latin 'Cloud'*, by James Hogg. *Analecta Cartusiana*, 128 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1988), pp. 91-102 (p. 92).

This translation may also be by a Carthusian: see Sarah M. Horrell, 'Middle English Texts in a Carthusian Commonplace Book', *Medium Ævum* 59 (1990), 214-227 (p. 218).

¹³ Richard Methley: *Divina Caligo Ignorancie: A Latin Glossed Version of The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by John Clark, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 119:3 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2009), p. 1/20-22. All references in the text are taken from this edition.

a pore man (...) sekir be þei þei do it vnto Criste goostly (p. 107/3-5)', with the appropriate change from singular to plural (p. 76/20-4). At least one of Methley's audience took a similarly passionate interest in textual accuracy: James Grenehalgh, fifteenth-century Carthusian annotator of two other manuscripts of the *Cloud of Unknowing* (amongst other mystical works), also corrected Methley's translation.¹⁴ He makes insertions to clarify the sense, (e.g. p. 72/10n) and alters passages where Methley misinterprets the source text, such as changing 'luxoriosus secreto' to 'luxuriosi'.¹⁵ Such fidelity is part of a wider Carthusian determination to ensure the textual uniformity of books belonging to the Order, reaching its peak with the release of the now lost fifteenth-century work, the *Valde Bonum*, which attempted to eliminate national and regional differences in Latin orthography.¹⁶ Methley himself was enthusiastic about textual correction. At the end of his *Scola Amoris Languidi*, he encourages the monastic reader, 'si necesse sit opus hoc corrigite' (if it is necessary, correct this work).¹⁷ Such corrections and annotations are a means of ensuring a mindful, analytical engagement with the text. Methley repeatedly urges the reader to mark what he says 'diligentissime' ('most diligently', p. 55/8), and how he says it, frequently employing the imperative 'nota, lector' ('note, reader', e.g. p. 39/12-14). His injunctions are taken up by the scribe of Pembroke MS 221, William Darker, who has similarly indicated noteworthy statements in the text, and particularly in Methley's gloss. The long digression in a note to chapter seventeen on the necessity of restraint in the mystic, correcting faults in oneself before those of others, has been marked 'nota bene' ('note well') three times by Darker; once, 'Nota conclusionem' ('note the conclusion'), and once, 'nota hanc mirabilem distinctionem' ('note this marvellous *distinctio*') (p. 35-6n). These annotations were an intrinsic part of a process of diligent reading, as well as a way of fostering such reading in others: the Carthusian Guigo I envisaged copying itself as a peda-

¹⁴ M.G. Sargent, 'The transmission by the English Carthusians of some late medieval spiritual writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 225-40 (p. 238) and *Richard Methley*, ed. by John Clark, pp. iv-vii. But see M.G. Sargent, 'James Grenehalgh as Textual Critic', *Analecta Cartusiana*, 85 (2 vols) (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1984, II. 73-4 for an alternative interpretation.

¹⁵ He notes here that Methley's translation has made the devil, rather than his disciples, the subject of the sentence: 'Loquitur hic de antichristo tantum, et non de complicitibus (p. 75/4n).'

¹⁶ See M.G. Sargent, 'The Problem of Uniformity in Carthusian Book Production from the *Opus Pacis* to the *Tertia Compilatio Statutorum*', in *New Science Out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A.I. Doyle* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), pp. 122-141 (pp. 128-9, 131).

¹⁷ James Hogg, 'The *Scola Amoris Languidi* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse transcribed from the Trinity College Cambridge MS.O.2.56', in *Kärthausermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana* 55:2, (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981), pp. 138-165 (p. 163).

gological process 'quia ore non possumus, manibus predicemus' ('since we may not preach by mouth, we may preach with our hands').¹⁸

If Methley deliberately constructs translation and gloss to encourage readers' analytical engagement with the text, the outcome of such analysis is an increased awareness of the affective potential of the *Cloud*. In contrast to Walter Hilton's Latin translator, the Carmelite Thomas Fishlake who 'is not concerned to produce a 'learned' translation which matches all of Hilton's [...] allusions to ecclesiastical writers', Methley takes advantage of the interpretative flexibility afforded by translation to insert theological references, teaching a way of reading grounded in the wider context of affective doctrine.¹⁹ The reader is encouraged to interpret the *Cloud*-author's work in terms of the anagogical mode of scriptural exegesis, the mode which facilitates a 'fusion between the understanding of Scripture and mystical contemplation'.²⁰ Methley consistently stresses this when translating the phrase 'pis piue litil loue put' (p. 131/14); for example, 'hec parua mocio dileccionis anagogica' (p. 94/14-15) and 'hac modica anagogica consurreccione' (p. 90/32-33). Such an emphasis is influenced by Hugh of Balma, who considers that in the anagogical interpretation of Scripture, the mind is directed toward the love of its creator: 'mens ... ad amorem sui Creatoris multipliciter et mirabiliter ... dirigitur'.²¹ Significantly, for Hugh the conversation between the bridegroom and the bride in the *Song of Songs* is representative of this divine 'anagogical art' ('ars anagogica'). The anagogical mode is one which draws the soul, as the spouse 'adhuc a sponso peregrinanti' ('still separated from the bridegroom'), to seek the love of God (p. 194). Hugh writes of the bride's requests that:

Quae petitiones nihil aliud sunt quam ignita desideria et inquietae adfectiones, dilectum ad sui sursumactionem felicius obtinendam ardentius provocantes. (p. 194)

¹⁸ Cited in Vincent Gillespie, 'Cura Pastoralis in Deserto', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 161-182 (p. 172), in which see more on the Carthusian understanding of the *cura animarum*.

¹⁹ John Clark, 'English and Latin in the *Scale of Perfection* – Theological Considerations', in *Spiritualität Heute und Gestern*, ed. by James Hogg (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1982), pp. 167-212 (p. 212). Although he does not seem to have known the other works of the *Cloud*-author, Methley may have been familiar with some writings of the pseudo-Dionysian school; see further *Richard Methley*, ed. Clark, pp. xvii-xxi.

²⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. by Marc Sebanc, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Eerdmans, 2000) I, p. 190.

²¹ Hugh of Balma, *Théologie Mystique*, I, p. 180.

(These requests are nothing other than the inflamed desires and unceasing affections that provoke the beloved more keenly to obtain with greater success the end of being elevated towards Him.)

The utility of such language in increasing the reader's love towards God may provide one reason for Methley's evocation of the Cantic through his translation of the *Cloud*. He most frequently references the Song of Songs 2. 5: 'quia amore languet' ('I am sick of love').²² 'Wip a scharpe darte of longing loue' in chapters 6 and 12 of the *Cloud* becomes 'iaculo acutissimo prelanguidi amoris' (p. 18.21/22) and 'cum acuto telo prelanguidi amoris' (p. 27/22-23). Methley's use of the superlative in the first example may reflect a sense of the Song of Songs' especial power to stimulate the *affectus*. For Richard of St Victor, the inflamed arrow of love ('igneus ille amoris aculeus') pierces the affective power of the soul so completely that it has no more strength to contain or dissimulate the ardour of its desire.²³ Such arrows wound the soul, causing it to languish with what the *Cloud*-author calls a 'longing desire vnto God' (p. 96), and which Methley translates as a 'languens desiderium ad Deum' (p. 49/11). However, Methley's use of the superlative 'acutissimo' also reflects his frequent emphasis on the *Cloud*-author's use of hyperbole. When glossing the *Cloud*'s statement concerning the love of God that: 'se it as cleerly as pou maist bi grace com to for to grope it & feele it in þis liif', he points out that 'Spiritualia non possunt corporaliter palpari. Hoc intellige per yperbolen' ('Spiritual things cannot be felt physically. Understand this through hyperbole', p. 24/20-21). Methley similarly constructs a language based around excess, most notably in his preface, where contemplation becomes a 'scienciam defecatisime et vnificatisime et viuificatisime vnionis et vnionis inter Deum et viatorum animas' ('The most clear and unified and living knowledge of the unification of the union between God and earthly souls', p. 1/13-15). Such hyperbolic language is itself ultimately based on the love of God: Methley notes of the *Cloud*-author that: 'loquitur per yperbolen, id est excessum pre nimia affectione' ('He speaks through hyperbole, that is, exaggeration caused by overwhelming love', p. 62/7-8).²⁴ By focusing in his translation on hyperbole and anagogy, Methley encourages a method of interpretation based on affectivity. This, as much as an atten-

²² All Biblical translations taken from the King James Bible.

²³ Richard of St Victor, *Les Quatre Degres de la Violente Charité*, ed. by G. Dumeige (Paris: Vrin, 1955), p. 31. Methley's readers knew Richard's works: fol. 103^v of Pembroke MS 221 contains an extract from his commentary on Psalm 121, taken from the Paris 1518 edition (*Richard Methley*, ed. Clark, p. iii).

²⁴ Translation from *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. and trans. by James Walsh (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981) p. 204).

tion to textual accuracy, may be a specifically Carthusian way of reading, nurtured by eremitism: recalling the Song of Songs 4. 9 St Bruno, founder of the Order, writes of the desert where men 'can acquire the eye that, because of its clear look, wounds the divine spouse with love' ('Hic oculus ille conquiritur, cujus sereno intuitu vulneratur sponsus amore').²⁵

Yet even whilst attempting to encourage accurate, prayerful interpretation of the text, Methley's emphasis on the physical terminology associated with the Song of Songs itself may be open to misinterpretation. One reason for its employment is the place of *languor* within his own devotional practice. He stresses the 'most hateful' ('odississima') pain of separation from God, creating a distinctive style of prayer: 'Ooo · agh · agh · amore languo · Ihesu gracias ago · dissolui desidero.' ('I languish with love. Thank you Jesus. I desire to be dissolved in death.')²⁶ Such prayer is most reminiscent of Richard Rolle, who in *The Form of Living* likewise expresses mystical experience using the words of the Canticle:

Amore languo. [...] Dyuers men in erth haue dyuers yiftes and graces of God, bot þe special yift of þo þat ledeth solitary lif is for loue of Ihesu Criste.²⁷

However, some considered there was a worrying potential for self-delusion inherent in Rolle's view of an affective devotion based on the physical symptoms of Christ's love, manifested 'in feruore, in canore, et in dulcore' ('in heat, in song, and in sweetness').²⁸ The *Cloud*-author points out that those experiencing *feruor* misunderstand the spiritual nature of the 'fiir of loue' (p. 86/13). Such over-reliance on the corporeal symptoms caused by God's love can lead to an inability to discern his 'goostly' presence (p. 85/19). For an anonymous Carthusian detractor of Rolle, writing to the hermit Thomas Basset around 1400, his version of affective piety was 'the stuff of ruin' ('materia ... ruine') because 'he made men judges of themselves' ('fecit homines iudices sui').²⁹ Methley was particularly concerned with the mystic's ability to determine the veracity of visions accurately, and goes to some effort to rebut such criticisms, outlining a concept of discernment in which the *affectus* played an important part. He

²⁵ Bruno et al., *Lettres des premiers chartreux, Sources Chrétiennes*, 88, 2 vols (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1962), I, p. 70.

²⁶ Methley, *Schola Amoris*, ed. Hogg, p. 139. Pembroke MS 221, fol. 41^v.

²⁷ Richard Rolle: *Prose and Verse*, ed. by S.J. Ogilvie-Thompson, EETS, o.s., 293 (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1988), p. 15.

²⁸ Richard Rolle, *Incendium Amoris*, ed. by Margaret Deanesly (Manchester: Longmans, 1915), p. 38.

²⁹ M.G. Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism of Richard Rolle', in *Karthäusermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana* 55:1 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981), pp. 160-205 (p. 200).

places greater emphasis on *languor* than Rolle, which for him negates all bodily senses ('exsuperant omnes sensus'):³⁰

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

(My life consists of the yearning [languor] of love, sweetness, fervor, and song; less often it consists of sensory fever because my beloved promised me that I would be more frequently in a state of languor, just as Richard of Hampole was more frequently in a state of heat, since I did not read that he was in a state of languor very frequently.)³¹

Whilst leading the mystic away from the outer life and towards prayerful interiority, for Methley the distinguishing characteristic of such *languor* is its basis in love, and it is this which constitutes his response to the problem of accurate discernment: he considered the truth contained within the experience of God's love to be a way of verifying affective phenomena. To teach the reader to interpret according to the hyperbolic and anagogical is to begin to teach the discernment necessary for the visionary.

Such discernment was especially necessary in the contemplative practice envisaged both by Methley and the *Cloud*-author, in which diabolic temptations occurred frequently. Methley writes in his late treatise on the discernment of spirits, the *Experimentum Veritatis*, that the devil can appear in a great variety of bodily guises ('valde multis modis').³² Sometimes these could appear to be good: St Augustine wrote that demons could be deceptively helpful, speaking truth and disclosing useful knowledge of the future.³³ *Discretio spirituum* was thus an area in which Methley felt his readership needed guidance, especially as

³⁰ 'A Mystical Diary: The *Refectorium Salutis* of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse', ed. by James Hogg, *Karthäusermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana* 55:1, (Salzburg: University of Salzburg), pp. 208-238 (p. 224).

³¹ Methley, *Refectorium Salutis*, ed. Hogg, p. 221. Translated by Lochrie, *Kempe*, p. 216.

³² M.G. Sargent, 'The Self-Verification of Visionary Phenomena: Richard Methley's *Experimentum Veritatis*', in *Karthäusermystik und -Mystiker, Analecta Cartusiana* 55:2 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981), pp. 121-137 (p. 125).

³³ Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 34 (Paris: Migne, 1855-64), p. 465.

the visionary was thought to be 'particularly vulnerable' to the devil's deceits'.³⁴ It led him to clarify the *Cloud*-author's description of Satan, based on his personal experience. When the *Cloud*-author remarks that the devil 'haþ bot o nose-perel, & þat is grete & wyde. & he wil gladly kast it up, þat a man may see in þerate to his brayne vp in his heed' (p. 103/8-10), Methley states:

Si seruis suis sic diabolus semper appareat, tamen alijs, vt frequenter michi apparens, nunquam sic visus est. (p. 74/11-12)

(If to his servants the devil may always thus appear, however when appearing to others, and frequently to me, he has never been seen so.)

He is keen to stress the dangers of the demonic: 'þe fiire of helle wellyng in þeire braynes' (p. 102/14-15) becomes rather 'igne infernali in cerebro suo bulliente', emphasising the boiling heat of hell (p. 73/12-13). Methley's change to the singular 'cerebro' here also stresses the permeability between Satan's brain and that of the contemplative who is falsely judgmental. The *Cloud*-author notes that such contemplatives attribute their stirrings to 'þe fiire of charite & of Goddes loue in þeire hertes' (p. 102/15-16), and Methley's use of the Song of Songs in his translation may reflect his anxiety concerning this false 'fiire of charite'. Rather than rendering Satan's 'nose-þerel' as a 'naris', the standard Latin word, Methley chooses 'foramen' (p. 73/29), evoking the Song of Songs 2. 14, where the dove hides herself 'in foraminis petrae' ('in the clefts of the rock'), interpreted by St Bernard of Clairvaux as the Christian soul, hiding herself in Christ and His wounds.³⁵ Satan, however, represents a false refuge. For Methley, this misinterpretation of the language of love, and of the refuge afforded by the love of God, is caused by a lack of a quality which he considers interdependent with love, discretion: 'Quod fit subito sine discrecione et aduertencia, fit absque caritatis attendencia' ('Those that are made sodenly wiþouten discrecion and auysement are also without mindfulness of love', p. 74/11-12).³⁶ In the *Experimentum Veritatis*, Methley states that the experiences of the contemplative are to be believed 'si sensibilem diuinum amorem habuit' ('If they have sensory divine love').³⁷ Such love verifies itself through complete union of the will with God:

³⁴ Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press, 1999), p. 47.

³⁵ St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera Omnia*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 83 (Paris: Migne, 1854), cols. 1070-74.

³⁶ C.f. *Cloud*, ed. Hodgson, p. 103/17-9.

³⁷ Sargent, 'Self-Verification', p. 127.

Scio ipso deo gracias experimento esse verum. Deus amatores suos non potest defraudare desiderijs suis quia vnus sunt semper voluntatis.³⁸

(I know by God himself that his graces are true in experience. God cannot deceive his lovers by his desires because they are always of one will.)

Rather than attempting to counter the charge of the subjectivity of visionary phenomena, Methley instead retreats into an intimacy yet more radical: that between the lover and the beloved. In such discernment through love, although the soul and God are of one will, crucially, they remain separate. The discretion that Methley seeks to evoke through his employment of loving language both is a means of avoiding heresy in its union with God's will, and itself an emblem of such avoidance in its acknowledgement of the ultimate separation of the soul from God.

However, Methley remains anxious to impress upon the reader his awareness of the heretical possibilities inherent in the dissolution of the soul. At the end of the preface to the *Cloud*, he states concerning mystical unification that:

Est autem vnicio actiue ex parte Dei, passiuue ex parte anime, in purissima coniuncione vt possibile est viatori. Vnio autem est illorum duorum copulacio, quorum vtrumque manet in sua substancia. et hoc contra heresim Begardorum. (p. 2/8-11)

(But it is in active union on the part of God, passive on the part of the soul, in the most pure union that is possible for an earthly being. But one union is of the two of them, each of which remains in his substance, and this against the heresy of the Begards.)

The discretion that allows the soul to remain separate from God whilst being one with His will is of particular importance in the second translation that makes up Pembroke MS 221, Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*; it nurtures a style of affective reading which allows love to discern the devout intention within Porete's unorthodoxy. For Nicholas Watson, Methley's treatment of the *Mirror* demonstrates that he was 'fascinated, but wholly unalarmed by the text'.³⁹ Yet Methley's specific mention of the Begard heresy, cited above, makes

³⁸ Sargent, 'Self-Verification', p. 135.

³⁹ Nicholas Watson, 'Melting into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Version of Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer des simples âmes anienties*', in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: Brewer), pp. 19-49 (p. 49).

this lack of concern an unlikely scenario. It is true that both Methley and M.N., the Middle English translator of the *Mirror* from whom Methley worked, hardly seem to be troubled by potential Wycliffite interpretations: Methley remarks of Porete's image of the host being used as mortar that it is simply used as a comparison.⁴⁰ However, his glosses show a significant concern with Free Spiritism, and particularly the heresy of the annihilation of the soul in God. He notes of the Soul who has become nothing that:

In nichilum est redacta, non secundum essenciam, sed secundum intelligenciam sueve reputacionis. (Pembroke MS 221, fol. 46^r)

(She is reduced to nothing, not in essence, but in her understanding or esteem of herself.)⁴¹

Apart from the Free Spirit doctrines certain Lollards admitted to harbouring, the contents of the bulls published against the heresy circulated widely in England in standard canon law collections.⁴² If Methley was not aware of them, later readers certainly were: one sixteenth-century hand on fol. 40^v of Pembroke MS 221 directs readers to the Clementine disposition, *Ad nostrum*. Whilst the *Cloud*-author mentions those 'Antecriste discyple' (p. 105/1) who use the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as an excuse to set aside the law of the Church (p. 104), Methley or his readership could also have learnt about Free Spiritism from the works of Walter Hilton, or the English *Chastising of God's Children*, which contains a translation of John Ruysbroec's attack on the heresy.⁴³ Intriguingly, on fol. 41^r, William Darker notes that 'iste liber aliter intitulum Russbroec qui fuit prior de ordine cartusiensi, et hunc libellum primo composuit' ('this book is alterna-

⁴⁰ Pembroke MS 221, fol. 51^r.

⁴¹ Translated by Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri, 'The Glosses by 'MN' and Richard Methley to 'The Mirror of Simple Souls'', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà*, 5 (1968), 357-382 (p. 379).

⁴² For the proceedings of such a trial, see Anne Hudson, *The Lollards and their Books* (London and Rochester: Hambledon Press, 1985), pp. 120-123 and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 263.

⁴³ See further J.P.H. Clark, 'Walter Hilton', in *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. by Eric College and Joyce Bazire (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), pp. 247-249. See also Marleen Cre, 'The Chastising of God's Children and The Mirror of Simple Souls in MS Bodley 505' in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. by Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 122-135 for a fifteenth-century Carthusian manuscript in which the *Chastising* is found alongside M.N.'s translation of the *Mirror*.

tively called Russhbroke, who was prior of the Carthusian Order, and he first composed this little book').⁴⁴ If Methley shared Darker's opinion concerning the text's authorship, either he was not aware of the refutation of Porete's teaching in the *Chastising*, or possibly saw no danger in translating another work of a respected member of the Order. Yet his closing statement shows a consciousness that the *Mirror* could be open to misinterpretation, hoping that: 'qui hunc legerint librum nec vnum male intelligant verbum' ('those who read this book do not take one word badly').⁴⁵

If Methley believed the *Mirror*, as well as the *Cloud*, to be a work by a Carthusian author, this may explain his view of the essentially pious nature of the text. Together, the two works form a commentary on the possibilities for understanding the union of the soul with God in the light of a specifically Carthusian version of discretion centered on love. At least one reader envisaged the works as mutually complementary: on fol. 60^v one annotation on the nature of time in the *Mirror* refers the reader back to chapter 4 of the *Cloud*. An interpretative continuum is formed between the texts by Methley's consistent stress on the analogical and hyperbolic.⁴⁶ Commenting on another passage where Porete insists on the dissolution of the soul in God, he warns readers to beware of understanding the text literally at this point:

Sed cum hec anima sit vnus spiritus cum deo per dileccionis vnionem et vnionem, vocat se id quod ipse propter illam vnionem per vehemenciam, potius quam per attendenciam, loquens yperbolice. (Pembroke MS 221, fol. 71^v)

(But when this Soul is one spirit with God by the union of love, and calls herself that which he is, she is speaking in hyperboles, because of that union, in her vehemence rather than in her consideration.)⁴⁷

If M.N.'s approach to glossing the *Mirror* attempts to teach 'a style of 'safe reading' that will protect the reader's orthodoxy throughout the book', Methley's own glosses to both the *Mirror* and the *Cloud* are similarly concerned with the interpretative techniques that allow the Carthusian reader to develop the faculty of discernment more through the *affectus* than through intellectual analysis.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ On reasons for this belief, see M.G. Sargent, 'Le Mirouer des simples âmes' and the English Mystical Tradition', in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter: Symposion Kloster Engelberg 1984*, ed. by Kurt Ruh (Stuttgart: Metzlersche, 1986), pp. 443-485 (p. 461).

⁴⁵ Pembroke MS 221, fol. 99^r.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Pembroke MS 221, fols. 47^r, 53^r, 56^v and 60^v.

⁴⁷ Translation from 'Glosses', ed. Colledge and Guarnieri, p. 379.

Commenting on the image of the 'cloude of vnknowyng' (p. 23/23), and the 'lackyng of knowyng' (p. 23/20) necessary for its contemplation, Methley outlines a strategy for reading which makes no attempt to reconcile varying mystical traditions:

Omnem scienciam tuam si bona est, in cordis tui scrinio conserua,
nichil penitus exercens in actu mentali tempore huius exercicij.
(p. 17/4-6)

(All your knowledge if it is good, keep in the book box of your heart,
hardly ever using it in mental action during the time of this exercise.)

Rather than specifying prescriptive techniques for contemplation, instead the true contribution of Methley may be to teach a style of *lectio* based in a love which transforms reading itself into a 'devotional performance'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, p. 295.

⁴⁹ Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 58.