The Pastoral Solitary: Contemplative Life and the Care of Souls in the Works of Richard Rolle

DPhil thesis

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Abstract

The central argument of this thesis is that Rolle's major works were written and disseminated in the context of Rolle's own pastoral ministry, that they are embedded in traditional literature of pastoral and devotional instruction, and that they can be understood as pragmatic and functional devotional aids, designed to assist readers holistically in their spiritual development.

This thesis is divided into an introduction and four chapters. My introduction examines why scholarship has pervasively seen Rolle as an eccentric, idiosyncratic personality and writer, arguing that this perception is indebted to a conventional conception of eremitic life as a rejection of worldly norms, and is an image which Rolle cultivates rather than something which transparently reflects his personality. I challenge the way that this impression of Rolle has been supported by a characterisation of him as a controversial figure in his lifetime and after his death. More foundationally, I challenge the prevailing scholarly paradigm in which Rolle's writings are read as introspective, personal outpourings. Instead, I suggest that examining the outward-looking, pastoral dimension of Rolle's work offers a new way to reassess his sources, his purposes, his audience, and his self-portrayal.

My first chapter examines the intersection of eremitism and pastoral care. By drawing on medieval depictions and evidence of hermits involved in pastoral care, I argue that Rolle did not need to 'invent' the authority of his spirituality (as Nicholas Watson influentially claimed): despite positioning themselves on the margins of society, hermits conventionally acted as spiritual teachers, and Rolle situates himself in this tradition. I examine manuscript evidence supporting the view that Rolle created books of pastoral care and dispersed them to mentees. Thus I argue that Rolle exercised a pastoral ministry in his lifetime, and his works were written in this context.

My second chapter situates Rolle in conventional scribal practices of medieval pastoral care. It argues that his writing emerges from a stratum of pastoral books which typically reshape and compile existing materials for new readers, especially readers without access to a large library. I show that many of Rolle's shorter texts are copied or translated directly from priestly handbooks. I demonstrate that Rolle's longer pastoral texts represent pastoral compilations of pastoral resources, many of which are unedited and have thus escaped scholarly notice. This shows that Rolle had access to pastoral resources and participated in conventional practices of pastoral care.

My third chapter turns towards Rolle's contemplative writings, contesting the scholarly perception that these are primarily introspective. Instead, I argue that they are designed for spiritual edification and are especially preoccupied with the rudimentary and intermediate aspects of spiritual life, such as penitence and contempt for the world, rather than the contemplative heights with which Rolle is generally associated. Even though Rolle emphasises the rarity and exclusivity of contemplative experience, his writing turns restlessly up and down the spiritual spectrum, at times proclaiming a highly general purpose of stirring readers to repentance and salvation. In this way, his Latin works act as guides to the whole life of perfection and participate in the 'care of souls'.

My fourth chapter turns to Rolle's language of interiority, especially his treatment of the first-person voice. Whereas past scholarship has tended to see the voice of Rolle's texts as the projection of the historical Rolle's own personality and emotion, I argue that he self-consciously adopts a wide range of rhetorical personas to instruct and model devotion for his readers, drawing on an exegetical understanding of Scripture as an encyclopaedia of different voices. While pastoral literature has attracted little attention in literary scholarship given its conventionality and simplicity, Rolle's multi-faceted experimentation with different voices emerges from his pastoral purposes, producing one of the most creative and sophisticated oeuvres of work in the late Middle Ages.

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During the course of my research on Richard Rolle, it has been a great pleasure to visit a wide range of libraries to view their medieval manuscripts. For facilitating these visits, I am grateful to the staff at the Bodleian Library; the British Library; Cambridge University Library; Balliol College; Corpus Christi College, Oxford; Exeter College; Magdalen College; Merton College; New College; St John's College, Oxford; St John's College, Cambridge; Lincoln Cathedral Library; Shrewsbury School; the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland; the Royal Library of Belgium; the National Library of the Czech Republic; and the Library of the Prague Metropolitan Chapter (with particular thanks to Lenka Kluková for accommodating me there). I am also grateful to the Oxford Bibliographic Society for enabling my research in Prague, which I plan to expand on in more detail elsewhere.

I have benefited enormously from the kindness of other scholars working on Rolle, who generously fielded my questions, shared their work, and offered advice; in particular, Andrew Albin, Louise Nelstrop, Ralph Hanna, Michael Van Dussen, Katherine Zieman, and especially Andrew Kraebel, who offered much help and kindness throughout. Thanks are also owed to Hazel Blair, David Rundle and Alicia Smith for answering questions on their areas of expertise at various points. Portions of this thesis were presented as conference papers at the International Congress of Medieval Studies (Western Michigan University, 2018) and Northern Saints (University of Lausanne, 2019), and I am grateful to the organisers of each panel (Andrew Kraebel and Michael Van Dussen for the former; Denis Renevey, Christiania Whitehead, and Hazel Blair for the latter) for providing the opportunity to share my work. In particular, a conversation about 'voice' at the latter conference with Catherine Sanok and Joshua Easterling proved formative of chapter four. My thanks also to Justin Haynes for making me passionate about medieval Latin. Lastly, special thanks should go to Vincent Gillespie for kindly offering to supervise me the first time we met five years ago, for allowing me to benefit from his expansive knowledge and experience, and for offering much encouragement throughout.

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Abbreviations

Bloomfield	Morton W. Bloomfield et al., *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 A.D., including a Section of Incipits of Works on the Pater Noster* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1979)
BodL	Oxford, Bodleian Library
BL	London, British Library
BNF	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France
Cal. Pat. Rolls	*Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 53 vols (London: HMSO, 1891–1916)
CUL	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library
DMLBS	*Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, Online edition (Brepols, 2015)
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*, Online edition (University of Michigan, November 2019), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med> [Accessed 27 May 2021]
MLGB3	*Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2015), <http://mlgb3.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/> [Accessed 27 May 2021]
Newhauser/Bejczy	Richard G. Newhauser and István P. Becjczy, *A Supplement to Morton W. Bloomfield et al. "Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D."* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008)
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Online edition (Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/> [Accessed 27 May 2021]
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*, *OED* Online (Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://www.oed.com> [Accessed 27 May 2021]
PL	*Patrologia Latina cursus completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–65)
Walther	Hans Walther, *Initia carminum ac versuum Medii Aevi posterioris Latinorum: Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der Versanfänge mittellateinischer Dichtungen*, 2nd rev. edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969)

Sigla for Collated Copies of Rolle's *Incendium amoris*

Dd	CUL, Dd.5.65
De	Richard Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ed. Margaret Deanesly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915)
R	BodL, MS Rawlinson A.389

Introduction: Eccentricity and Eremitism



Fig. 1: BodL, MS Laud Misc. 528, f. 2v

An early manuscript collection of Richard Rolle's works depicts him as something of a wild man, with bare feet and shaggy, unkempt hair, a striking contrast to the clean-shaven, tonsured figure who kneels before him (Fig. 1).[1] This vision of the hermit as an eccentric individual calls to mind the accounts preserved in the liturgical *Officium* prepared in anticipation of his canonization, perhaps most famously its story of Rolle's entry into eremitic life by piecing together an improvised hermit's habit from his sister's frock and his father's rain-hood and fleeing into the forest, much to the shock

[1] I am grateful to Andrew Kraebel for pointing out this image to me. Some of the discussion of eremitism and eccentricity in this introduction is adapted from an article submitted to *Speculum* as part of an essay cluster exploring new approaches to Rolle; I am grateful to its organisers, Andrew Kraebel and Andrew Albin, for their input and feedback. Image: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/898ab522-31ea-4ffc-b8c4-4bf8aa6aef16/> [Accessed 27 May 2021]. Copyright © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2018. Creative Commons Licence CC-BY-NC 4.0.

of his sister.[2] This portrait of a personally idiosyncratic individual seems to be corroborated by the emotional, defensive, self-aggrandising personality projected in portions of Rolle's work. By virtue of such accounts, in Rolle's own works and his reception, he has widely come to be seen as an eccentric figure in personality and writing.

Rolle's eccentricity is surprising given his seminal status for late-medieval English literature. The image of an idiosyncratic and disagreeable hermit – spurning society to live alone in his cell, writing volumes of material with no known institutional affiliation or resources to enable him to write and disseminate his work – represents an unexpected beginning for the man who became probably the most widely circulated late-medieval English author. His works survive in over 600 manuscripts, far outstripping any other medieval author whose output includes texts written in Middle English.[3] From the late fourteenth century onwards, just decades after his death, there are witnesses recognising him as an *auctoritas* alongside Gregory and Augustine.[4] His enormous popularity makes him one of the most important case studies for what it meant to be a religious author in late-medieval England.

Besides its depiction of an eccentric individual, the manuscript image above also offers another perspective on Rolle. He is depicted with a book in hand, ministering to a disciple who kneels before him, apparently in prayer to Rolle as a saint. Holding both a book and a sword, Rolle is aligned with the utterly establishment figure of Saint Paul, a saint known not only for his sanctity but for his teaching and instruction through his writings. The kneeling figure, perhaps looking to Rolle as an exemplar, wears the habit of the Dominicans, an order of friars pursuing both contemplative life

[2] *The Officium and Miracula of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by Reginald Woolley (New York, 1919), pp. 23–24.
[3] Ralph Hanna, 'The Oldest Manuscript of Richard Rolle's Writings', *Scriptorium*, 70.1 (2016), 105. An updated catalogue of manuscripts containing Rolle is available in A.I. Doyle and Ralph Hanna, *Hope Allen's "Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle": A Corrected List of Copies* (Turnhout, 2019).
[4] Rolle is cited as an *auctoritas* in the compilation *Cibus anime*, probably written in the 1390s, for which see Vincent Gillespie, 'The *Cibus Anime* Book 3: A Guide for Contemplatives?', *Analecta cartusiana*, 35.3 (1983), 90–119.

and pastoral ministry. This manuscript image depicts Rolle as a pastoral author, and it encapsulates the point of departure for this thesis. It demonstrates that Rolle's apparent eccentricity was perceived (by the makers of this manuscript at least) as commensurate with his status as an authority and teacher. In fact, Rolle's depiction as eccentric here, through bare feet and long hair, reflects a conventional understanding of a hermit's appearance, raising the possibility that Rolle's purported eccentricity owes more to late-medieval conceptions of eremitic sanctity than to Rolle's actual personality and behaviour.[5] Hence, while scholars have paid great attention to the idiosyncratic aspects of Rolle's writing, this image invites us to pay more attention to the other side of his depiction here: as an outward-looking author connected to traditions of sanctity and to the pastoral needs of his readers. Notably, this depiction of Rolle appears not in conjunction with his more overtly pastoral English works, but with his seemingly esoteric and introspective Latin works (several of which are found in this manuscript).[6] Thus, it invites us to consider how seeing Rolle as a primarily pastoral author might generate new ways of understanding how and why he wrote texts throughout his whole career.

The central argument of this thesis is that Rolle's major Latin and English works were written and disseminated in the context of Rolle's own pastoral ministry, that they are embedded in traditional literature of pastoral and devotional instruction, and that they can be understood as pragmatic and functional devotional aids, designed to assist readers holistically in their spiritual

[5] For examples of hermits depicted with long hair, see Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral MS 240, f. 16 (twelfth century; I am grateful to Andrew Kraebel for drawing my attention to this image); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 79, f. 18v (early fifteenth century); reproduced respectively in R.M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge, 1989), plate 34a; E.A. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200–1550: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (Manchester, 2019), pp. 136–37. A late-medieval eremitic rule suggests that hermits may go barefoot; see *The Rule of Celestine*, ed. by Livarius Oliger, 'Regula tres reclusorum et eremitarum angliae saec. XIII–XIV', *Antonianum*, 3.2–3 (1928), ch. 9, p. 315. There is even a report in 1412 of a fraudulent hermit who apparently disguised himself by going about 'barefooted and with long hair'; see *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth Centuries*, ed. & trans. by Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1868), p. 584; reprinted in Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 171–72.

[6] In particular, *Incendium amoris*, *Super Canticum canticorum*, and *Contra amatores mundi*; for a manuscript description, see Ralph Hanna, *Editing Medieval Texts: An Introduction, Using Exemplary Materials Derived from Richard Rolle,* "*Super Canticum*" *4* (Liverpool, 2015), pp. 148–51.

development. While the late-fourteenth and fifteenth century reception of Rolle's work sits at a substantial remove from the time and circumstances in which he was actually writing, this thesis argues that Rolle's portrayal as a pastoral author in the image above does reflect something important about Rolle's own aims in the literary and spiritual environment of his early fourteenth-century context. This thesis questions any impression that Rolle was simply an isolated, solitary individual, at odds with the world around him. Instead, it puts forward a socially connected and outward-looking Rolle, whose pastoral purposes played an important role in the design of his texts, and in how his texts were actually used and understood by readers. Since Rolle's striking and eccentric personality has often been understood as a central factor in his rise to fame, this thesis ultimately suggests that re-envisioning Rolle as an engaged, pastoral writer invites a reappraisal of his formation as a major late-medieval author and of his place in cultural history.[7] By shifting our focus from Rollean idiosyncrasy and self-invention, we can recognise the important function his texts played as a vector of transmission for orthodox and conventional devotional material, and Rolle's role as a compiler of diverse genres and devotional practices for the utility of the reader.

Rolle the Eccentric in Modern Scholarship

The portrait of Rolle as a particularly eccentric individual reflects an underlying paradigm in which Rolle's writing is read as a witness to the personality and state of mind of the historical person Richard Rolle. For example, Gabriel Liegey (one of Rolle's major modern enthusiasts) writes that

> his lyric soul seeks to have itself heard, and therefore it too flows into writing which is poetic in a way that is peculiar to him... time and again at a point in his exposition he seems so moved that he bursts into song, abandoning his prose for verse.[8]

[7] See Nicholas Watson's influential reading of Rolle's career in terms of his self-invention as an authority, in *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, 1991), especially pp. 260–64; and Ralph Hanna, 'The Transmission of Richard Rolle's Latin Works', *The Library*, 14.3 (2013), 329.
[8] Gabriel M. Liegey, 'Richard Rolle's "Carmen prosaicum", An Edition and Commentary', *Medieval Studies*, 19 (1957), 16.

The text in question (Rolle's *Melos amoris*) does not actually contain verse, but Liegey's comments are revealing about the perceived relationship between the voice of Rolle's writing and the historical individual: the emotions projected in Rolle's texts are understood as his own, even reflecting the very essence of the man himself (his 'lyric soul'), which 'bursts' (as if spontaneously and uncontrolled) onto the pages of his writing, disrupting whatever orderliness might be implied in the term 'exposition'. Liegey finds this 'peculiar to him', reinforcing the idea that Rolle's works are stamped by their author's individualism. His words typify a paradigm which has predominated in Rolle scholarship and has sometimes led to the characterisation of Rolle's writings as somewhat disordered effusions of a singularly idiosyncratic and emotional personality.

Modern accounts of Rolle have long understood the personality projected by his writings as a transparent witness to the psychology of the man himself. This is evident in the frequent association made between Rolle's alleged strangeness in his writings and life. As early as 1895, Carl Horstman described Rolle as 'a strange man: strange in his ways, strange in his words and teaching', drawing a clear parallel between the historical Rolle and the personality projected in his writings.[9] In Hope Emily Allen's major 1927 study, she wrote similarly that 'Rolle's life and writings... give the impression of... idiosyncrasy in his character', again reflecting a perception that his writings offer us direct access to Rolle's own inner life: that they 'give us the veritable utterances of a medieval Englishman' who sometimes comes across as a 'self-willed, bitter individualist'.[10] Subsequent scholarship widely referred to both Rolle's personality and writings using language such as 'idiosyncratic' or 'individualistic'.[11]

[9] Carl Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle, An English Father of the Church, And His Followers*, 2 vols (London, 1895–1896), 2:xxiii.
[10] Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle* (London, 1927), pp. 2–3, 8, 7.
[11] For example, 'Rolle is the most markedly individualistic of all [the Middle English Mystics]', W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 252; 'Rolle was also very unconventional', Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge,

More recent monographs on Rolle have reinforced and deepened an understanding of Rolle's self-depiction as transparently autobiographical. Whereas earlier scholarship had at times offered more moderate and sympathetic depictions of him (including depicting him as involved in pastoral ministry, with disciples and companions), Nicholas Watson's seminal *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (1991) powerfully challenged a more moderate reading of Rolle's personality.[12] Watson saw Rolle as a narcissistic figure fixated on establishing his spiritual authority by describing his idiosyncratic spiritual experiences and persuading his readers that they were exemplary. Rolle's perceived eccentricity is integral to Watson's argument, which begins by making the case that Rolle's eremitic practice was particularly unusual and controversial among his contemporaries.[13] Watson then expounds Rolle's works as witnessing a psychodrama of Rolle's development as an authority. On the one hand, Watson develops a more complex interpretative approach than previous scholarship, seeing Rolle's self-depiction as a series of extravagant self-authorising gestures designed to strong-arm the reader into accepting his authority, and thus separating Rolle's self-depiction from the man himself. At the same time, Watson implicitly claims to uncover the man's true motivations and feelings, which he finds revealed across his works (especially in Rolle's most apologetic writing), reflecting an approach which sees such passages as transparent witnesses to the personality of the man himself.[14]

1988), p. 82; 'he is idiosyncratic...', J.P.H. Clark, 'Richard Rolle: A Theological Re-Assessment', *Downside Review*, 101.343 (1983), 120.

[12] Watson, *Invention*. On scholarship portraying a pastoral Rolle, see discussion later in this introduction.

[13] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 40–53.

[14] Watson often presents his interpretation of Rolle's motivations and the subsequent logic of his work using verbs of obligation; for example: '[Rolle] *must* have felt that he was reaching the climax of his career... The crowning stage in the long process of revelation *must* be a celebration of *canor*... he *must* have been supremely confident that he could succeed' (emphasis added; *Invention*, p. 171). Such language is rhetorically powerful, but we should bear in mind that the underlying claims here are largely conjectural.

Denis Renevey's *Language, Self and Love* (2001) reacted against Watson's emphasis on Rolle's eccentricity by placing him within a recognisable tradition.[15] Renevey argued that the tradition of exegesis on the Song of Songs provided medieval authors with a language to examine their inner self and articulate its relationship with God. Whilst dialling down Rolle's perceived singularity in this way, Renevey nonetheless adopts an interpretative approach that parallels Watson's, reading Rolle's writings as witnesses to his personal and psychological development, candidly and introspectively expressed. The portrait of Rolle that emerges is of a similarly striking, passionate, and idiosyncratic figure. For example, Renevey argues from Rolle's work that he was particularly driven by struggles with lust, presented as a 'remarkable and very idiosyncratic characteristic', the extent of which is 'found nowhere else in Western mystical writings'.[16]

The impression of Rolle as a personally idiosyncratic individual and writer has marked much subsequent scholarship, and has had far-reaching implications for the reception of his work (particularly of the Latin texts where this personality predominates). Although recent scholarship has sought to broaden our understanding of Rolle by taking new approaches to his work and reception, he is nonetheless often referred to offhandedly as 'idiosyncratic'.[17] Idiosyncratic is a somewhat loaded term (compare more neutral language like 'distinctive' or even 'innovative'); it is applied less frequently (it seems to me) to the spirituality of other late-medieval religious authors who might have an equal claim to a unique spiritual agenda. This common characterisation of Rolle thus reflects a tradition of scholarship; one which, while longstanding, is worthy of further interrogation.

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[15] Denis Renevey, *Language, Self and Love: Hermeneutics in the Writings of Richard Rolle and the Commentaries on the Song of Songs* (Cardiff, 2001).
[16] Renevey, *Language, Self and Love*, pp. 72, 71.
[17] For example, '*Queering Richard Rolle* celebrates the idiosyncrasy of Richard Rolle and his thought', Christopher Roman, *Queering Richard Rolle: Mystical Theology and the Hermit in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cham, Switzerland, 2017), p. 10; 'Rolle's personal idiosyncratic eremitism and mysticism', Tamás Karáth, *Richard Rolle: The Fifteenth-Century Translations* (Turnhout, 2019), p. 25; 'Rolle's eremitism, idiosyncratic as it is...', Andrew Albin, *Richard Rolle's "Melody of Love": A Study and Translation with Manuscript and Musical Contexts* (Toronto, 2018), p. 72; 'There is much about Rolle that is undoubtedly idiosyncratic', Louise Nelstrop, *On Deification and Sacred Eloquence: Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich* (London, 2020), p. 79; 'Rolle's idiosyncratic ideas of the contemplative life', Andrew Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary and Translation in Later Medieval England: Experiments in Interpretation* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 17.

Furthermore, the impression that Rolle's works can be understood primarily as projections of his own inner emotion and personality – and this being a particularly emotional and erratic personality which Rolle struggles to contain – has sometimes made his texts seem dysfunctional and erratic. Several scholars have understood Rolle's unsystematic, compilatory style as a symptom of his 'untidy mind', a turn of phrase which usefully highlights how Rolle's writing is read as an outward expression of his psychology.[18] Watson concluded his study by acclaiming Rolle's interest for literary scholars, yet also characterised portions of Rolle's work as 'blundering', 'not... intellectually coherent', and 'embarrassing'.[19] A negative reception of Rolle's writing ability has parallels in the reception of his thinking and theology, most famously in David Knowles' claim that Rolle 'fails altogether... to reckon with the higher degrees of the mystical life... As a mystic, Rolle has little or nothing to teach'.[20] Although he addresses Rolle's beliefs rather than his writing style, this comment reflects a perception that Rolle is at odds with and misinterprets canonical contemplative theory – that his thinking was somewhat isolated from mainstream thought.

Most importantly for this thesis, this reading of Rolle as a particularly eccentric personality has sometimes been presented as specifically excluding any outward-looking, pastoral purpose for much of his Latin writing, which has been understood as largely an exercise in self-reflection. This reinforces the impression that the works featuring prominent emotion and autobiography are somewhat dysfunctional, untethered from practical usefulness or a discernible audience. Watson and Renevey both argue for a pastoral turn in Rolle's late works, beginning with *Super lectiones mortuorum* (for Watson) or *Contra amatores mundi* (for Renevey) and extending into his English writings. Both scholars directly suggest that many of Rolle's major Latin works were written with no

[18] Frances M.M. Comper, *The Life of Richard Rolle: Together with an Edition of His English Lyrics* (London, 1928), p. 126. Similarly, E.J.F. Arnould suggests that Rolle's 'prolix and orderless' style is 'attributable to his natural impulsiveness and erratic temperament' in Richard Rolle, *The Melos amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by E.J.F. Arnould (Oxford, 1957), p. xvii; see also p. lxi.
[19] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 127, 134, 135.
[20] David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London, 1961), pp. 53–54.

real audience in mind.[21] Such a view makes the widespread circulation of these texts all the more surprising (and emboldens the suggestion that it can only be explained as stemming from Rolle's powerful charisma and self-invention). The resistance to recognising any functional aspects of Rolle's writing can be seen in one further example: Rita Copeland's earlier discussion of Rolle and the rhetorical levels of style. She argues that Rolle, apparently uniquely among medieval authors, follows a Ciceronian understanding of style in which high style is deemed suitable for high subject matter, as opposed to an Augustinian model in which the choice of style is determined by function. While Copeland's useful conceptual framework has traction in some parts of Rolle's work, its application to the whole is challenged by numerous passages where Rolle discusses material pertaining to the heights of contemplation using straightforward language or discusses basic concepts (such as sin and damnation) in vivid and alliterative prose.[22] Copeland's approach thus witnesses another striking resistance to the idea that Rolle's writing was shaped by any functional, outward-looking purpose, as well as his perception as an outlier in cultural history.

This thesis aims to challenge this impression of Rolle's works as dysfunctional by making a sustained case for Rolle as an outward-looking, pastoral author invested in the holistic spiritual development of his readers. Envisioning Rolle as a pastoral author contributes to Rolle studies not only by contextualising him in traditions of pastoral and devotional writing, but also by cracking open some of the orthodoxies by which past scholars have approached Rolle and his work. Given the pervasiveness of Rolle's characterisation as an eccentric and its far-reaching implications for the

[21] Watson claims that 'Rolle's writing is not primarily didactic at all, but apologetic', sees *Incendium amoris* as the beginning of Rolle turning towards self-aggrandising *apologia*, argues that the works that follow (*Super Psalmum vicesimum*, *Super Canticum canticorum*, *Contra amatores mundi*) become 'even less responsive to his readers' need for practical edification', and says that before *Super lectiones mortuorum* Rolle had taught readers 'only fictionally'; see *Invention*, pp. 54, 123–25, 142, 191. Renevey suggests that only from *Contra amatores mundi* onwards did Rolle begin to address his writing towards an audience more directly; see *Language, Self and Love*, pp. 103–8, 154. For an alternative view, see Albin, *Melody of Love*, pp. 15–20.

[22] In chapter 47 of the *Melos amoris*, Rolle switches to a less alliterative style to argue for the legitimacy of the contemplative solitary (see e.g., *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 144, line 32 to p. 145, line 30); in chapter 30, he gives a meditation on the Passion (which is associated with more rudimentary devotion, as discussed in my introduction to chapter 3 of this thesis) in alliterative prose (*Melos amoris*, ch. 30, p. 91, lines 26–34).

reception of his work, it is important first to address why Rolle has so pervasively been identified as an idiosyncratic individual and writer, and why this thesis takes an alternative view.

Eccentricity and Eremitism

Rolle comes across as an eccentric figure both in his reception (in the *Officium* and manuscript image above) and in his self-portrayal (as an isolated individual at odds with the world, and through his aggressive, apologetic voice). It is easy to take these characterisations as somewhat reliable – that Rolle really was as personally idiosyncratic as he appears – since they come from different sources, are self-declaredly unconventional, and are not altogether flattering (all easily taken as indicators of historicity). However, this section will argue that the very unconventionality conveyed in these depictions is itself conventional, grounded in eremitic tradition. The eremitic vocation involved a strident rejection of the world to pursue heavenly things in solitude.[23] Rolle's depiction as personally idiosyncratic reflects an understanding among his followers that hermits were supposed to be detached from worldly ways of living, and in fact follows a longstanding hagiographic trope in which hermits were often portrayed as personally eccentric to underline their sanctity. Similarly, Rolle's isolationist self-portrayal and the aggressive tone with which he attacks his detractors reflect, at least in part, the way that he understood eremitic life as involving a provocative challenge to and critique of worldly ways of living.[24] In other words, Rolle's reception as a personally

[23] Medieval sources sometimes distinguish two forms of solitary life: the anchorite (confined to one place) and the hermit (who can move around). Both fall under the broader category of eremitic life, and some medieval sources use these terms interchangeably (I will use them as just defined). For discussion, see Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 1–5.

[24] E.A. Jones discusses the relationships between eremitism and secular power in 'O Sely Ankir', in *Medieval Anchorites in Their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 13–34; Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy suggest all the essays in the same volume explore the common thread of anchoritic practice as social critique: see 'Introduction', in *Medieval Anchorites in Their Communities*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge, 2017), p. 8. See also Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 156, 160; Jacques Dalarun, *Robert of Arbrissel: Sex, Sin, and Salvation in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Bruce L. Venarde (Washington, DC, 2006), pp. vii–viii, 31–34.

idiosyncratic individual was in tandem with, rather than in spite of, his perceived sanctity. Rolle's own adoption of an aggressive, assertive voice can be understood as modelling the eremitic conception of sanctity to which he exhorts his reader, making it integral to, rather than in conflict with, his pastoral agenda.

The idea that a hermit was an outlier at odds with the world (a characterisation which easily comes across as personally eccentric) reflects a traditional interpretation of eremitic life, situated in the mainstream of medieval spirituality. The seemingly eccentric manner of life of hermits must be qualified with a recognition that (when undertaken properly) the eremitic ideal represented a model of sanctity which had ancient roots and was widely recognized and respected.[25] Like any society, medieval society was not a homogenous whole: if something is identified as 'eccentric' (or 'queer') in some way, this need not make it wholly separate from the 'normative'.[26] Eremitism was understood to be simultaneously exceptional and exemplary, situated paradoxically both on the margins of society and at the apex of perfect living.[27] The close connections between eremitism and the mythos of eccentricity is perhaps why three major studies of hermits and anchorites have argued directly that medieval hermits were not simply eccentric individuals but were incorporated into the mainstream of medieval religious culture.[28] The fact that all three scholars particularly emphasise this point in monographs produced over the course of a century implies an intransigent tendency in scholarship to characterise hermits as the isolated eccentrics they are often depicted as (seen clearly in scholarship on Rolle), and yet presents a consensus among those who have studied the whole

[25] While some medieval authorities expressed reservations about the risks of eremitic life, others recognise its exemplary status; see E.J.F. Arnould, 'Richard Rolle and a Bishop: A Vindication', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 21 (1937), 69–75; Ralph Hanna, 'Will's Work', in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. by Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 26–29.
[26] This qualifies Christopher Roman's attempt to leverage Rolle (who was, in many ways, highly conservative) as a queer figure; see Roman, *Queering*.
[27] On eremitic life as a model of spiritual perfection, see Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950–1200* (Oxford, 2011), ch. 5.
[28] Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London, 1914), pp. 191–92; Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 1; Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 1.

tradition that the eccentric way of life of the hermit was simultaneously conventional: a rejection of worldliness expressed through provocative words and living.

Before examining how a model of eremitic sanctity shapes aspects of Rolle's voice, we will first examine how the trope of eremitic eccentricity functions in hagiographic traditions which were formative of Rolle's reception in the *Officium* (and perhaps also of his own self-depiction). The idea of the idiosyncratic hermit reflects a conception of eremitic life as a rejection of the world, and the British tradition of hermit hagiographies offers many precedents for Rolle where writers depict their subjects as personally eccentric in order to highlight their sanctity. Such episodes, focused on everyday details of social interaction, clothing, and hygiene, serve as micronarratives of the hermit's exemplary flight from the world. In John of Forde's *vita* of Wulfric of Haselbury (d. 1155, written c. 1185), for example, Wulfric is said to abscond mid-conversation from those seeking spiritual guidance, while an anonymous account of the hermit Robert of Knaresborough (d. c. 1218) relates that Robert refused to rise when King John came seeking counsel.[29] In both cases, the hagiographer draws attention to the fact that this behaviour is offensively abnormal: Wulfric's abruptness 'inhumanior forte carnalibus visus est' ('perhaps seemed crueller to the carnal'), and a bystander says that Robert 'insani capitis est' ('is of an insane mind').[30] Yet, again in both cases, the hagiographer goes on to indicate that the saints' actions are in some way exemplary. John of Forde writes that 'revocabat internus odor et sua illa sacra et secreta voluptas... trahebat' ('an internal fragrance was calling [him] back, and that sacred and secret desire of his was drawing [him]'), portraying Wulfric as motivated by his access to hidden spiritual secrets, setting him apart from others.[31] Robert's hagiographer similarly acclaims him and introduces the whole anecdote as

[29] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury by John, Abbot of Ford*, ed. by M. Bell (Frome, 1933), book 1, ch. 8, p. 21; P. Grosjean, ed., 'Vitae s. Roberti Knaresburgensis', *Analecta bollandiana*, 57 (1939), 'Vita recentior', ch. 20, p. 394. This Latin *Life* of Robert of Knaresborough survives in a single fifteenth-century manuscript; its date is unknown. For the dates given above, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[30] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury*, book 1, ch. 8, p. 21; Grosjean, 'Vitae s. Roberti', 'Vita recentior', ch. 20, p. 394.
[31] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury*, book 1, ch. 8, p. 21.

evidence that he 'pro nichilo celestium respectu reputabat secularia cuncta' ('reputed all worldly things as nothing in respect to heavenly things').[32] The saints' abnormal (even antisocial) behaviour thus reflects their eremitic separation from the world – their lack of interest in social etiquette or earthly political power – which illustrates their sanctity.

Another version of this trope appears in the eccentric clothing and hygiene of St Cuthbert (d. 687; *vita* written c. 721) and Bartholomew of Farne (d. 1193; *vita* written by 1213).[33] Reflecting the ancient precedent of John the Baptist (cf. Matt 3:4), the hermit's adoption of distinctive clothing reflects his lifestyle of asceticism and poverty. Episodes in the *vitae* of Cuthbert and Bartholomew depict their clothing choices as particularly idiosyncratic. Bede tells us that visiting monks would compel Cuthbert to remove his shoes to wash his feet, since he would sometimes wear the same shoes for months on end.[34] Likewise, Bartholomew reportedly did not wash his cloak until it was black from sweat.[35] The same pattern is followed as in the examples of Wulfric and Robert: first, the hagiographers acknowledge that this behaviour is abnormal – here by noting the monks' reactions to Cuthbert, or that someone 'argueret' ('might have blamed') Bartholomew – and then they offer a spiritual justification, showing how this seeming eccentricity bespeaks their sanctity.[36] Bede writes that Cuthbert 'in tantum a cultu sui corporis animum sustulerat, atque ad animae solius cultum contulerat' ('had so far withdrawn his mind from the care of his body and fixed it on the care of his soul alone').[37] Bartholomew's reported words similarly highlight his privileging of the needs of the soul over the body: 'Omnia turpia his corporibus inferre debemus, si ea ad perfectum animae candorem perducere volumus' ('We ought to carry everything filthy on these bodies, if we want to

[32] Grosjean, 'Vitae s. Roberti', 'Vita recentior', ch. 20, p. 393.
[33] For these dates, see *Two "Lives" of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. & trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 8, 16; Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[34] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, in *Two "Lives" of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. & trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), ch. 18, p. 218.
[35] Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomaei Farnensis*, in *Symeonis monachi Opera omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, 2 vols (London, 1882–1885), ch. 9, 1:302.
[36] Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomaei*, ch. 9, 1:302.
[37] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 18, p. 218. Colgrave's translation is given here.

lead them into the perfect whiteness of the soul').[38] Again, both examples show the saints preoccupied with the spiritual at the expense of the bodily, demonstrating the separation from worldly concerns at the heart of eremitic sanctity.

As the major external source for Rolle's life, the *Officium* has been formative in how scholars have understood Rolle's life and personality, but when positioned within this hagiographic tradition, the eccentricity it depicts seems wholly conventional. The *Officium* belabours Rolle's eccentricity. His erratic behaviour is immediately on display in the famous anecdote of Rolle's first eremitic flight, especially in the contrast between the polite language he uses to speak to his sister, requesting that she act 'grate' ('graciously') and addressing her as 'dilecta' ('beloved'), versus the violent language for how he 'detruncauit' ('tore up') her clothes and 'abscidit' ('ripped off') the buttons.[39] His actions seem inexplicable, even cruel – certainly socially abnormal. The narrative closes by following the same pattern as the prior hagiographies. The narrator registers Rolle's abnormality by depicting his 'stupefacta' ('stunned') sister, who shouts, 'frater meus insanit!' ('my brother is mad!'), before the text glosses the narrative as exemplary, saying, 'Sanctus fugit ad solitudinem: / intrat ibi celestem ordinem' ('The saint flees into solitude: / There he enters the celestial order').[40] Later lessons in the *Officium* offer further examples. In parallel with Wulfric and Robert, Rolle is silent at dinner and rises to leave immediately after, prompting John Dalton to explain that 'hoc non esse consuetudinis' ('this was not the custom'), and yet the text describes this resistance to social norms as 'perfectus' ('perfect').[41] As with Cuthbert and Bartholomew's enlightened disregard for the state of their clothing as a mere temporal concern, people remove Rolle's cloak, mend it, and replace it without him noticing, an act presented as evidence of his extraordinary detachment from the world.[42] The

[38] Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomaei*, ch. 9, 1:302.
[39] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 23.
[40] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 24.
[41] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 26. There is also an implicit possibility that Rolle stayed silent to avoid discovery as the missing son of someone known to Dalton.
[42] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 33.

portrayal is clearly shaped by conventional depictions of hermits as saints, is intended to establish Rolle's eremitic sanctity, and thus does not offer a historically reliable witness to Rolle's purportedly eccentric behaviour.

Rolle persistently situates his eremitism as participating within a tradition that includes precedents such as these. I will expand on Rolle's awareness of eremitic traditions in the first chapter of this thesis; here my point is not that Rolle necessarily knew any of these specific precedents directly, but rather that he clearly shares their understanding of eremitic life as taking up the position of the social outlier, misunderstood and rejected. This view still had currency in Rolle's own lifetime; indeed, it can be seen in the notion, found repeatedly throughout Rolle's texts, that choosing the life of a hermit would necessarily lead to being misunderstood and rejected. The first chapter of *Contra amatores mundi* describes a person internally 'raptus a terrenis' ('seized from worldly things') and pursuing contemplation, whom the worldly will think 'insanit' ('is mad'), and who will live 'inter irrisores et scandala, inter reprehensiones et odia' ('amidst mockers and disgraces, amidst criticisms and hatred').[43] In several places, Rolle says that contemplatives who abandon the world will be considered 'stultus' ('foolish') by the worldly.[44] And the warning that hermits will be perceived as acting strangely, even offensively, is not simply limited to contemplatives reaching the heights of mystical rapture. Rolle extends it to solitaries in general, saying in *Melos*, for example, that 'Solitarii... despecti ducuntur; in omnium obprobrium iam abierunt' ('Solitaries are considered despised; they have now departed into the reproach of all'), and that the solitary is 'contemptus a cunctis' ('despised by all').[45] The claim that solitaries were

[43] Richard Rolle, *The Contra amatores mundi of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by Paul F. Theiner (Berkeley, 1968), ch. 1, lines 116, 94, 111–12.
[44] Richard Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, in *Richard Rolle: Unprinted Latin Writings*, ed. by Ralph Hanna (Liverpool, 2019), ch. 1, line 423; Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 52–53; Richard Rolle, *De emendatione vitae: Eine Kritische Ausgabe des Lateinischen Textes von Richard Rolle*, ed. by Rüdiger Spahl (Göttingen, 2009), ch. 12, line 113; Richard Rolle, *The Incendium amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by Margaret Deanesly (Manchester, 1915), ch. 32, p. 238.
[45] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 46, p. 143, lines 21–22; ch. 48, p. 153, lines 34–35.

particularly vulnerable to rejection and opprobrium reflects their separation from society since it places them at odds with the worldly, offering an obvious motive for Rolle to emphasise his isolated and embattled position – which easily makes him appear eccentric.

Rolle's awareness that eremitic life conventionally meant adopting the role of the outsider helps us to understand the aggressive, defensive voice with which he responds to critics. Rather than seeing this voice as a straightforward reflection of Rolle's emotions and self-conception, we can read it as a deliberately hyperbolic dramatization of himself as an isolated hermit at odds with the world. The voice he adopts thus emphasises the eremitic life to which he exhorts his readers, functioning as a kind of 'autohagiography' which echoes aspects of the eremitic saints in the hagiographies we have already seen. By drawing on his conception of eremitic life, Rolle's aggressiveness thus also reflects the hyperbole of the broader *contemptus mundi* tradition of devotional writing, which expresses a stark rejection of the world through evocative, exaggerated language. (It seems notable that scholars of the *contemptus mundi* genre have often found its rhetoric unappealing, in parallel with the reception of Rolle's aggressive tone.[46]) The relations between Rolle's voice and these conventions reinforces that his voice can be read as the product of tradition as much as the product of his distinctive psyche.

A clear example is in chapter 47 of the *Melos amoris*, where Rolle attacks (Pseudo-)Anselm's claim that contemplative life is only possible in the cloister.[47] Throughout this example, the strong language Rolle uses to criticise Anselm emphasises the separateness of solitaries from the world. Rolle writes dismissively that Anselm 'in monte non stetit qui esset superior ut valeret discernere qui

[46] Innocent III, *On the Misery of the Human Condition: De Miseria Humane Conditionis*, ed. by Donald R. Howard, trans. by Margaret Mary Dietz (Indianapolis, 1969), p. xv; Malcolm Moyes, *Richard Rolle's "Expositio super novem lectiones mortuorum": An Introduction and Contribution towards a Critical Edition*, 2 vols (Salzburg, 1988), 1:96; Robert Bultot, 'Le Mépris du monde chez s. Colomban', *Revue Des Sciences Religieuses*, 35.4 (1961), 366–68 (for an attempt to defend the genre).

[47] Arnould offers a reading of this chapter which complements mine in Arnould, 'A Vindication'.

ardenciores existunt' ('did not stand on a high enough mountain to be able to discern who were more ardent'), and he then extends this point to say, more generally, that non-contemplatives 'nostrum nesciunt gaudium' ('do not know our joy'), highlighting Anselm's distance from the perspective of solitaries.[48] Rolle argues that those who are not solitaries cannot access their lofty spiritual insights, and he supports this claim by describing how solitaries eschew earthly music (which for Rolle includes ecclesiastical music) in favour of inner, spiritual music, using verbs of fleeing and separation: 'fugiunt' ('they flee'), 'transvolamus' ('they fly across'), 'cupimus segregari' ('we want to be separated'), 'fugimus' ('we flee').[49] Such language clearly recalls the eremitic flight from the world which is foundational to Rolle's conception of contemplative life. Indeed, this aggressive voice only appears when eremitic life is at stake – compare, for instance, the moderate, penitent tone adopted when Rolle discusses being reproached by four women in *Incendium*, chapter 12 – a collocation that suggests that his rhetorical mode is shaped by this foundational polarity. To put it another way, rather than offering unmediated access to the historical person, Rolle's voice in such cases is mediated by, and developed in response to, his convention-informed conception of eremitic sanctity. His aggressive rejection of Anselm is framed in terms of the rejection of the world at the foundation of what it means to be a hermit, allowing us to see Rolle's use of this voice as participating in his broader aim of expounding and advocating for eremitic life.

Furthermore, there is a clear sense of performativity in chapter 47 of the *Melos*, suggesting that Rolle's divisiveness represents a posture deliberately assumed, with readers in mind, rather than an unmediated outpouring of personal emotion. Such attentiveness to his performance becomes especially clear further along in chapter 47, when he draws a series of distinctions between himself and Anselm, emphasized by a repeated 'contra' ('against'), and prefaced by an overt call for

[48] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 145, lines 20–21; p. 146, line 31.
[49] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 145, line 36; p. 146, lines 30–31, 34, 36.

the reader to be attentive, to 'behold' the confrontation: 'Ecce enim iuvenis zelo iusticie armatus[50] insurgit contra senem, heremita contra episcopum et contra omnes taliter opinantes' ('For behold, the youth armed with the zeal of righteousness rises up against the old man, hermit against bishop, and against all thinking similarly').[51] Again, this series of oppositions reflects the polarising perspective of the contempt for the world, in the context of what seems clearly a consciously performative self-portrayal (given his use of 'Ecce', 'behold'). A similarly dramatic call for the reader's attention appears two chapters earlier in *Melos*, as Rolle imagines a fictitious dialogue between himself and another speaker, beginning with a pointed 'Eya' ('Hey!').[52] These passages suggest that, Rolle's actual personality notwithstanding, the voice we encounter here is adopted, performatively, for rhetorical ends: as an assertive display of eremitic separation from the world.

Rolle's adoption of an aggressive voice can thus be seen not as the unintended overflow of his powerful feelings, but as part of an overarching didactic purpose in the text as a whole and in this section in particular: to communicate an eremitic model of sanctity to the reader. Chapter 47 begins as a postil on Psalm 54:8, 'Ecce, elongavi fugiens, et mansi in solitudine' ('Behold, fleeing I have withdrawn, and I have remained in solitude'), with this initial 'Ecce' already indicating that Rolle's own voice echoes and is modelled on that of the Psalmist, and is thus in some sense expository.[53] E.J.F. Arnould's account of this chapter identifies a scholastic style of argumentation, indicating that Rolle intends to make an argument in support of eremitic life.[54] In the course of his discussion, Rolle makes this overarching purpose clear, saying that he wrote this whole book 'ut, dum legitur, presumentes et superbientes confundantur, qui alciora frustra arguunt iam se arripuisse' ('so that,

[50] Two manuscripts give this reading; the rest give 'animatus', which slightly diminishes the combative imagery, although 'insurgit' remains (which connotes revolt and attack).
[51] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 147, lines 21–23.
[52] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 45, p. 139, line 18.
[53] John Alford argues that Rolle's voice and self-portrayal is modelled on Scriptural precedent in 'Biblical *Imitatio* in the Writings of Richard Rolle', *ELH: English Literary History*, 40.1 (1973), 1–23; 'The Biblical Identity of Richard Rolle', *Fourteenth-Century English Mystics Newsletter*, 2.4 (1976), 21–25.
[54] Arnould, 'A Vindication', pp. 58–61.

when it is read, the presumptuous and proud might be confounded, those who vainly argue that they have already seized higher things').[55] His condemnatory, defensive language thus presents a particular approach to the broader topic of the book, 'de gloria et perfeccione sanctorum' ('on the glory and perfection of the saints'), language which Rolle echoes elsewhere in this chapter.[56] Such a purpose is evangelistic as well as apologetic, as he explains just a few chapters earlier:

> profero propositum ut peccatores peniteant, et perfecti non prospicientes pulchritudinem prosperitatis presentis properent ad palacium perpetui Imperatoris, non stantes cum stolidis in stulticia sed spaciantes in speciem spiritualem...[57]
>
> I proffer this purpose so that sinners might repent, and so that the perfect, not paying attention to the prettiness of present prosperity, might hasten into the palace of the everlasting Emperor, not standing with the stupid in folly, but roaming in spiritual beauty...

This quotation implies that descriptions of the glory of the saints, and especially of saintly solitaries, are meant to inspire readers to spiritual advancement. Rolle's exhortations to the 'perfecti' ('perfect') here again invoke the distinction between the worldly and the spiritual through another harsh condemnation of the worldly (with the phrase 'stolidis in stulticia', 'the stupid in folly'), reinforcing that this aim is achieved through a stress on the separateness of the perfect from the worldly. Thus, the postil verse for chapter 47, which invites the reader to behold the solitary, offers an opportunity for Rolle to both describe and perform an idealised conception of sanctity belonging to the solitary separated from the world, adopting a rhetorical posture which involves rejecting his worldly critics through powerful, polarising language which parallels his argument for the legitimacy of solitary life.

In support of this reading, at least one medieval reader recognized the discussion in chapter 47 of the *Melos* to be at once compelling and traditional. In Oxford, Lincoln College MS Latin 89, this

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[55] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 145, lines 27–29.
[56] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 5, p. 15, line 6. Compare Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 145, line 7; these echoes are pointed out in Albin, *Melody of Love*, p. 289n.1.
[57] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 40, p. 125, lines 22–25.

section of the text is accompanied by marginal notes with two extracts from chapter 14 of the *Incendium amoris* (advocating solitary life), followed by another from Felix's *Vita Guthlaci*, a passage in which a demon attempts to force the hermit-saint Guthlac to leave the wilderness.[58] Guthlac's encounter resonates suggestively with Rolle's polarizing characterization of the solitary embattled by enemies, and the text's placement here suggests that at least one reader found Rolle's aggressive apologies for solitary life consistent with a hagiographic tradition which, as we have seen, glosses the hermit's eccentric lifestyle and worldly detachment as exemplary.

This way of reading Rolle's aggressive voice can be extended to other passages where a similar voice appears. Take, for example, the following extract from the *Melos*:

> Quid arguis, o impie, quem approbat Auctor? Non poteris tu perfide destruere in dolo quem Deus dedicavit... Ut quid erras, invide? Frustra furis, infelix, tabescens in tenebris... Tu tirannide turgens traheris cum tortoribus ad tormentum, quia fabricasti tibi furorem in hora ulcionis...[59]
>
> O impious one, why do you accuse him whom the Author has approved? You will not be able to treacherously destroy in deceit the one whom God has consecrated... Why do you err, envious one? You rage in vain, unhappy, dwindling in darkness... Swelling in tyranny, you will be dragged with torturers to torment, because you fashioned rage for yourself in the hour of vengeance...

Are we justified in reading such a passage as simply a record of Rolle's genuine emotions? The relentlessness of Rolle's alliteration in the *Melos amoris* would presumably have required substantial effort to write, and thus weighs against any characterisation of its emotion as the spontaneous outburst of Rolle's personal feeling, spilling out into his text. In fact, the language here is so extreme, elevating the discussion to Biblical proportions, that it is difficult to imagine this as transparent self-expression. Instead, we can read it (at least in part) as a piece of hyperbolic rhetoric, using a register apiece with the *contemptus mundi* tradition to produce a dramatic evocation of the saint as

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[58] Albin, *Melody of Love*, pp. 358–61; the *Incendium* extracts are unidentified but can be found in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 14, pp. 184, 186. For more on For St. Guthlac, see Henry Mayr-Harting, 'Guthlac [St Guthlac] (674–715), Hermit', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11783>.
[59] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 38, p. 117, lines 24–35.

oppressed and yet triumphant, contrasted directly to his enemies, and thereby achieving Rolle's overriding aim of emphasising the glory of the saints. In fact, while we have seen an example of Rolle attacking monks in chapter 47 using similar language, seemingly categorising (Pseudo-)Anselm among the worldly, it seems unlikely that Rolle genuinely thought anyone who disagreed with him was damned and wicked – in other places he takes a much more moderate line on the legitimacy of other kinds of Christians.[60] Contextualising Rolle's rhetorical extremism in relation to the diverse range of registers and tones he adopts elsewhere thus suggests that there is a degree of performativity and hyperbole at work in his aggressive voice, and that what he says is shaped by a didactic purpose rather than mere candid self-disclosure.

By using eremitic tradition to challenge the ways Rolle has been interpreted as eccentric, I do not mean to suggest that Rolle himself was *necessarily* not personally eccentric (he may well have been), or to replace this account of his personality with an alternative one. My argument must be understood in the negative: I do not make any claims about what Rolle was like. Similarly, I do not mean to suggest, as a more general point, that we can never learn anything about a person's personality from the writing they leave behind. Rolle may well have imitated eremitic models in his actual behaviour, or even adopted an eremitic way of life because the fierce rejection of the world appealed to his temperament.

Rather, my point is that we cannot assume that this was the case, and his writing offers only weak evidence for doing so. One problem with reading Rolle's aggressive, apologetic voice as a

[60] For instance, in the recurrent image of angelic hierarchies, which privileges solitary life whilst recognising the legitimacy of other kinds of Christian; see Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 75–139; Rolle, *Ego dormio*, in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, ed. by S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS OS 293 (1988), lines 16–32; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 50, p. 159, lines 9–19; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 3, p. 153. Rolle's categorisation of monastic detractors as worldly reflects a perception that they are more involved in secular affairs than solitaries, rather than that they are all worldly sinners (as the passages just cited make clear). See also Rolle's more nuanced discussions in Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 118–22; ch. 5, lines 118-22; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 21, p. 204.

reflection of his personality is that it privileges such passages as representing a seam of Rolle's texts that transparently communicates the real Rolle, over and above the diverse tones and registers Rolle uses elsewhere. This approach is particularly clear in Watson's study, which bases its whole psychology of Rolle on this voice, such that Watson has to work hard to interpret other passages, in which Rolle's tone and voice are quite different, as supporting his characterisation of Rolle's voice and motivations. For example, he sees certain didactic passages in Rolle's writing as a 'cover' or 'shelter' for the true apologetic persona which (Watson suggests) Rolle really wanted to achieve.[61] This language of hiddenness highlights that the apologetic voice is not really there at all. Therefore, recognising that even Rolle's aggressive, apologetic voice is shaped by eremitic models and the conventions of the *contemptus mundi* tradition challenges the idea that this voice uniquely replicates the real Rolle, as opposed to the other voices in his work, which must be understood as artificial or conventional. There is no singular Rollean voice which conveys to us the real Rolle. This does not mean accusing Rolle of being disingenuous, or of claiming that Rolle's use of multiple voices necessarily amounted to a fully theorised view of his own first-person voice in terms of multiple artificial personas (although I consider this possibility further in chapter four). We might see it as an example of what linguists refer to as 'code-switching' – that Rolle adopts different roles (or wears different hats) to suit his varied purposes. Therefore, it is reductive to pick one of these hats and say that this wholly equates to the real Rolle. He may well have experienced the emotions he describes (how can we ever know?), but we cannot simply assume that his writing transparently conveys his psychological state. The range of possibilities for what Rolle was actually like in person are probably broader than we have generally recognised.

More foundationally, I aim to challenge the scholarly *modus operandi* whereby Rolle's writings in general are read in relation to his biography and personal feelings. An approach which reads Rolle's works through the lens of his supposed personality has only limited usefulness,

[61] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 87, 90.

especially given the insecure footing on which that account of Rolle's personality is based, and may even cause us to miss the ways in which Rolle's writing can be seen as crafted using conventional registers in order to achieve his didactic purposes. This does not amount to the claim that there is nothing unusual or distinctive about Rolle's writing – the alliterative style of the *Melos amoris* offers a clear counterpoint to such a view. Yet it is surely more reasonable, in view of the sustained effort required to achieve it, to see such a style not as the spontaneous overflow of Rolle's emotional state but as his deliberate stylistic choice. The stylistic idiosyncrasy of the *Melos* thus offers an excellent example of my argument: not that there is nothing eccentric about Rolle's writing style, but that such eccentricities can be seen as self-consciously adopted, in line with a traditional conception of eremitic life as a rejection of norms, the polarising rhetoric of the *contemptus mundi*, and Rolle's aim to perform an idealised model of sanctity. The alliterative style of the *Melos* can thus be seen as another manifestation of the same basic trope of eremitic eccentricity, expressing the 'glory of the saints' through a prose style self-consciously separated from norms. A biographically driven approach sees Rolle's writings as shaped primarily by his personality rather than his purposes. This re-reading of Rollean eccentricity thus clears the way for the central argument of this thesis, allowing us to see how Rolle adopts this and other voices as part of his outward-looking, pastorally minded project.

Rolle and His Critics

Accounts of Rolle as personally eccentric have been bolstered by the suggestion that Rolle's spiritual practice was controversial in his lifetime and after his death. Watson supported his central argument (that Rolle's overriding concern was to establish his authority) with the suggestion that Rolle's eremitic practice was particularly unusual and thus in need of defending.[62] The evidence for

[62] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 40–53.

Rolle's controversial status comes from two places: from Rolle's own reports of charges made against him and from responses to Rolle after his death. The following re-examination of this evidence will argue that, while it does seem likely that Rolle fell out with some former patrons and that he was aware of contemporary anxieties surrounding extra-institutional religious figures such as himself, the strength of evidence that Rolle was an especially controversial figure has been overstated. Since accounts of Rolle's controversial status have often been connected to Rolle's characterisation as particularly disagreeable or embittered, questioning their historical reliability reinforces the importance of being more open-minded about what Rolle was actually like, and of finding ways to read his texts beyond the lens of his biography.

There is good evidence that Rolle did experience some conflicts with people. *Judica me* opens with references to Rolle's falling out with a former patron over something not fully explained, which led him to seek patronage elsewhere.[63] Rolle assumes the reader's prior knowledge of these events and implies previous correspondence, which suggests that this text was originally addressed to a known individual about a specific occurrence in Rolle's life.[64] Other passing references from his writings seem to corroborate such conflicts. In the *Melos amoris*, he mentions that, because of detractors, he was forced to leave homes where he was once loved, and in the *Incendium* he says that his worst detractors were those who had previously been his friends.[65] The specific detail in such examples seems to allude to a situation like that in *Judica me*, and Rolle even implies it happened more than once, saying he was forced out from 'domibus' ('homes') in the plural.[66] In the *Incendium amoris*, Rolle also gives a detailed account of four women who rightly rebuked him for his

[63] Richard Rolle, *An Edition of the "Judica me deus" of Richard Rolle*, ed. by John Philip Daly (Salzburg, 1984), pp. 2–3.
[64] For instance, 'Nam uos scitis et a me sepius audistis me ibi uelle morari'; Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 2, lines 8–9. See also *Judica me*, p. 18, lines 1–3.
[65] 'Insurrexerunt in me iniqui... tribulantes temptaverunt ut... deicerer a domibus in quibus diligebar', Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 39, p. 123, lines 14–17; 'eos pessimos detractores habui, quos prius amicos fidos putaui', Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 15, p. 188.
[66] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 39, p. 123, line 16.

inappropriate actions towards them while he was a hermit, and admits his imprudence (though without conceding intentional wrongdoing).[67] It is tempting to draw the dots between this account and other passages where he defends himself against charges of unchastity among patrons, and thus to conclude that rumours of sexual impropriety followed Rolle. On the other hand, his candid, penitent tone in chapter 12 of the *Incendium* is at odds with his defensiveness elsewhere; it is perhaps unlikely that he was responding to a serious cloud of rumour at the time of writing the *Incendium* given how freely he admits to impropriety here. So, while there is certainly evidence for Rolle having conflicts with others, the allusive nature of this evidence makes it difficult to tell where such events fell on the spectrum between fairly isolated incidents and a longstanding pattern of behaviour, and what exactly was the cause of any disagreement.

More frequent than these passages are those where Rolle aggressively defends himself against charges and attacks his opponents, which play a substantial role in supporting the impression of Rolle as a particularly contested figure. It is here that I suggest the picture of Rolle's controversies may be overstated. Supporting the seeming historicity of these accounts is the fact that Rolle defends himself against quite specific criticisms: of enjoying delicacies served in rich houses, of sexual impropriety, of changing cell excessively, and of idleness, for example.[68] The miscellaneous nature of this assortment may support the impression that this is a catalogue of specific and independent charges made against Rolle, ones which he would have been unlikely to invent, and which therefore corroborate his apparent willingness to live an objectionable manner of life. The somewhat random way Rolle brings such charges up, and then vigorously defends himself, may even (it seems to me) produce an impression of a guilty or overly defensive conscience. However, what is fundamentally at stake behind them all is the legitimacy of extra-monastic religious life, and Rolle

[67] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 12, pp. 178–79.
[68] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 11 (p. 175); ch. 15 (p. 188); ch. 31 (pp. 232–34); Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 34 (p. 106, lines 6–11); ch. 35 (p. 106, lines 15–35; p. 108, lines 4–11); ch. 42 (p. 130, lines 9–16, 19–26; p. 130, line 36 to p. 131, line 5; p. 131, line 22 to p. 131, line 11); ch. 43 (p. 132, lines 14–16; p. 132, lines 21–32).

makes it clear in several places that this is ultimately the challenge he responds to. For example, in *Melos amoris*, chapter 35, Rolle lists several such charges, and then responds not by rebutting the criticisms directly but by defending the legitimacy of living among secular patrons: 'Nam sancti inter seculares sepius, eciam solitarii, sedebant' ('For saints, even solitaries, have often sat among secular people').[69] Rolle's response suggests that these charges all reflect the perceived dangers of pursuing religious life outside of a monastic community, among secular people: the risk that it would lead to unchastity, idleness, and intemperance.[70] This raises the possibility that Rolle was responding to contemporary worries about extra-monastic life in general, rather than that such charges were occasioned by his distinctively scandalous character. In addition, Rolle's discussions of these charges do not represent random interruptions into his work (which might hint at an overly defensive and self-preoccupied mindset), but are apiece with his overriding concern for making the case that contemplative life (and by extension a life of poverty and chastity) is possible outside of a same-sex monastic community.[71]

Furthermore, these charges are not particular to Rolle's own eremitic practice, but reflect standard concerns about extra-institutional spirituality which existed in his contemporary society. As Watson observes, they amount to the charge of being a *gyrovagus* (an idle and corrupt freeloader, taking advantage of people under the guise of eremitic life).[72] The *gyrovagus* is given as one of four kinds of eremitic life in the first chapter of the Benedictine Rule, showing that it was a well-known idea.[73] Rolle mentions it directly in the *Incendium amoris*, demonstrating his familiarity with the

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[69] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 35, p. 108, lines 7–8; for the charges, see p. 106, lines 18–35.
[70] Rolle draws the connection between certain criticisms and his living among secular patrons in several places; for example, he justifies his eating habits by claiming that people need to be sustained by others (*Melos amoris*, ch. 42, p. 130, lines 27–29), and responds specifically to the charge of unchastity caused by living among the worldly (Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 35, p. 106, lines 28–30; ch. 43, p. 132, line 26).
[71] For Rolle making the case that chaste life among the worldly is possible, see Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 34–37; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 132, line 21 to p. 133, line 12; and for Rolle's discussion of friendship between men and women, see Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 39, pp. 263–64.
[72] Watson, *Invention*, p. 49.
[73] *The Rule of St. Benedict: The Abingdon Copy*, ed. by John Chamberlin (Toronto, 1982), ch. 1, p. 21, lines 12–16.

concept, and also seemingly alludes to it when he says in the *Melos* that he was criticised as a 'trutannus' (a 'vagabond' or 'mendicant who feigns poverty').[74] Rolle's repeated defence of his peripatetic lifestyle also implicitly responds to this concept, since the Benedictine Rule mentions that *gyrovagi* travel frequently and are never at rest.[75] Contemporary concerns about unsupervised religious figures are also reflected where Rolle defends the legitimacy of his contemplative experiences in response to the charge that they are inauthentic.[76] Such criticisms reflect contemporary discussions around the *discretio spirituum* (discernment of spirits), which arose in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to deal with visionary claims increasingly made by individuals (like Rolle) who lived outside a safeguarding, authenticating, institutional context.[77] For example, Rolle addresses the charge that his spiritual experiences stemmed from overeating and falling asleep – a conventional category of false visionary dreams discussed by Gregory, which we know Rolle read about, because he translates a discussion of it in *The Form of Living*.[78] Rolle thus situates the charges made against him in relation to the standard concepts of the *gyrovagus* and *discretio spirituum*, showing that they reflect broader contemporary anxieties about extra-monastic religious life, rather than charges unique to his own practice.

The conventionality of these criticisms can be taken in two ways: it may suggest that Rolle was responding to more widespread views about eremitic life (perhaps which he even encountered in writing, like the category of false spiritual dreams, rather than made directly and specifically

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[74] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 14, p. 183; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 39, p. 123, line 16. The definitions are taken from 'trutannus', DMLBS.
[75] Chamberlin, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ch. 1, p. 21, lines 12–16.
[76] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 42, p. 130, lines 14–16, 19–23; p. 131, lines 23–25; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 31, p. 234.
[77] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2003), especially pp. 9–19; Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York, 1999). For a wide-ranging discussion of *discretio spirituum* in Christian history, see Jacques Guillet and others, 'Discernement des esprits', in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité: ascétique et mystique: doctrine et histoire*, ed. by Marcel Viller, 17 vols (Paris, 1937), 3:1222–91.
[78] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 42, p. 130, lines 14–16, 19–23; p. 131, lines 23–25; Rolle, *The Form of Living*, in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, ed. by S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS OS 293 (1988), lines 221–26; for a similar list in Gregory, see Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 194, n. to lines 220–26. The original source is the *Glossa ordinaria* to Daniel (see discussion of Shrewsbury School MS 25 in chapter 1 of this thesis).

against him), or it may support the likelihood that Rolle's contemporaries had concerns about his extra-monastic lifestyle. On the one hand, Rolle tells us he was forced to leave patrons because of the allegation of being a 'trutannus', connecting these charges to a seemingly concrete event in his life.[79] This supports the view that concerns about Rolle's legitimacy did exist among people known personally to Rolle.

On the other hand, there are also reasons for thinking that Rolle may overstate both the strength and the directness of the criticisms made against him. As we have seen, the formative influence of the *contemptus mundi* tradition on Rolle's spirituality means he often adopts an extremely polarising rhetoric, decrying his critics as wicked, worldly aggressors. Rolle's adoption of an aggressive voice may be understood as hyperbole, in which Rolle depicts himself involved in a battle of large-scale proportions, rather than necessarily reflecting the strength of the charges made and Rolle's genuine feelings about them. Furthermore, Rolle's account of himself as an embattled, scorned figure corresponds with the ubiquitous, conventional medieval association of saintliness and persecutions. Rolle indicates this by, when he describes being persecuted, incorporating verses from the Psalms about being attacked by detractors, associating himself with a Biblical conception of sanctity.[80] Again, this conventionality may be taken in two ways: as Rolle interpreting (and perhaps justifying) his own experiences through the lens of Scripture, or as exaggerating his self-portrayal to depict himself in line with a conventional understanding of saintliness. At the very least, the image of the persecuted saint offers a clear motive for Rolle to inflate accounts of his persecutions. Thus, there are good reasons for cautiousness in assuming that Rolle's accounts offer reliable evidence of substantial and sustained criticisms made against him.

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[79] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 39, p. 123, lines 14–17. Rolle perhaps implies that he was criticised in person by monks at Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 4, lines 3–5; ch. 42, p. 131, lines 22–31.

[80] See for example, Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 39, p. 120, lines 4–7, 15–22. For the latter passage, a further biblical quotation is identified in *Le Chant d'amour (Melos amoris)*, ed. by François Vandenbroucke and others, 2 vols (Paris, 1971), 2:66. John Alford discusses Rolle's adoption of Biblical models in describing persecutions in Alford, 'Biblical *Imitatio*', p. 10; Alford, 'Biblical Identity', p. 24.

Furthermore, even if such criticisms were made directly against Rolle, their conventionality means that we cannot assume that they would have amounted to a pervasive distrust towards Rolle amongst his contemporaries, since we also know that eremitic life was also, in theory, respected. Here it is helpful to distinguish the longstanding eremitic ideal from its particular manifestations in fourteenth-century England. With regard to the former, although some major medieval authorities recognised the risks of solitary life or even thought it was inadvisable, it was nevertheless widely recognised as a life of perfection and sanctity when undertaken properly, and Rolle's advocacy for eremitic life fits within standard discussions of the subject.[81] Criticisms of hermits which had currency in the fourteenth century tended to be directed towards particular manifestations of eremitic life rather than the eremitic ideal itself to which Rolle and others aspired. This tension is seen even in the Benedictine Rule, which condemns *gyrovagi* while recognising the legitimacy of hermits (though suggesting that only the advanced should attempt eremitic life).[82] Manifestations of hermit life in the fourteenth century differed from the ancient and early medieval saints in important ways. Whereas the old hermit saints were typically associated with monastic institutions and devoted entirely to contemplative life, later hermits were often illiterate, performed manual labour (such as building bridges or mending roads) and were mendicant (that is, would go begging for alms).[83] E.A. Jones suggests that this kind of hermit attracted increased scepticism in the second half of the century (after Rolle's death) as the wake of the Black Death brought new tensions around the issues of labour and mendicancy, and that such tensions are reflected in Langland's criticism of hermits, which includes his famous characterisation of them in the line, 'Religion sauȝ rule and resonable obedience'.[84] This quotation reflects another source of suspicion: the lack of clear rule and

[81] Arnould, 'A Vindication', pp. 69–76; Hanna, 'Will's Work', pp. 25–29.
[82] Chamberlin, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ch. 1, p. 20, line 28 to p. 21, line 3.
[83] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 11–12, 106–9.
[84] William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt, 2 vols (London, 1995–2008), B-text, XIII, line 286 (1:530); Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 11–12, 106–11; E.A. Jones, 'Langland and Hermits', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 11 (1997), 67–86. On the issue of obedience, see especially Hanna, 'Will's Work', pp. 25–29.

regulation that existed for hermits (unlike anchorites). Despite these concerns, the value of the eremitic vocation was not forgotten but rather reformed, through various efforts to regulate and define a hermit's life in the fifteenth century.[85]

Rolle may well have been relatively unusual, harking back to an older kind of eremitic life, and his responses to criticisms may reflect the need to distinguish himself from his bridge-building and road-mending peers, and their potential to be associated with idleness and vagrancy. Nonetheless, the typical manifestations of eremitic life in the fourteenth century should not lead to the conclusion that even Rolle's contemporary hermits received pervasive suspicion or were perceived to be wholly disassociated from the eremitic ideal. Continued recognition of the value of solitary life throughout the fourteenth century is evident in the prominent position which anchoritic life continued to occupy; in the commonplace distinction between the active and contemplative lives (which was predicated on the equivalence of contemplative and solitary life); and through the perpetuation of eremitic ideals among monastic orders (such as the Carthusians).[86] Even when Langland criticised contemporary hermits in the late fourteenth century, he nonetheless recognises the legitimacy of real holy hermits, suggesting a continued perception that eremitism could represent a perfect life, even as the particular practices of some hermits fell under suspicion.[87] Documentary evidence suggests that hermits received substantial patronage in the first half of the fourteenth century, which, as Warren argues for anchorites, demonstrates their position in the mainstream of religious life and society.[88] There are also witnesses to hermits proximate to Rolle's

[85] Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 11–12, 132–35.
[86] On anchoritic spirituality during the fourteenth century, see Warren, *Anchorites*; Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff, 2012); Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 15–105. Jones suggests that late-medieval theorising of the active and contemplative life indicates the latter's acceptance in E.A. Jones, 'Hermits and Anchorites in Historical Context', in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, ed. by Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 15–16. On Carthusians and anchoritism, see Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space and the Solitary Life* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 58–61; on monastic orders and eremitic spirituality, see also Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, pp. 94–113.
[87] Langland, *Piers Plowman*, C-text, IX, lines 187, 190, 195–202 (1:337–39).
[88] Warren, *Anchorites*; Jones, 'Langland and Hermits'; Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, pp. 64–78.

lifetime apparently known for their sanctity. For example, in 1346, King Edward III granted a hermitage to a William de Burghton, described as 'inflamed with the fervour of devotion'; and, in 1355, a papal indulgence was granted to a chapel which was receiving large numbers of pilgrims, apparently in association with the hermit who lived there.[89] This shows that Rolle was not unique. Accordingly, in Watson's account of criticisms of Rolle, he makes concessions throughout which recognises that these criticisms (such as of his moderate asceticism and peripatetic lifestyle) would probably not have been especially controversial for a fourteenth-century hermit (ultimately undermining the argument he nevertheless pursues that Rolle's life was particularly unusual).[90]

Given all of this, there are good *a priori* grounds for thinking it plausible that Rolle could have attained the respect of his contemporaries, even if hermits in general came under more suspicion than in previous generations. Indeed, Rolle's widespread posthumous popularity shows that he did find a receptive audience, not just among priests and laypeople, but even amongst the monks and the learned against whom he often set himself in opposition (in turn reinforcing the likelihood that his condemnation of monastic interlocutors would have been understood as hyperbole). The epistolary dispersal of his texts, and the fact that he presumably found patronage to remain as a hermit his whole life, implies that he had successfully built up a social network which sustained and venerated him in his lifetime.[91] Hence, even if these criticisms were made directly against Rolle, they do not necessarily indicate that Rolle was pervasively perceived by his contemporaries as a fringe or marginal figure, and this would be difficult to reconcile with the ministry he apparently undertook.

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[89] *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1345–1348*, p. 92; Jean Kirkwood, 'William de Braose and St Leonard's Hermitage', *Windlesora*, 4 (1985), 24–26; Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 159–60.
[90] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 40–53.
[91] On epistolary dispersal as a model for Rolle's dissemination, see Hanna, 'The Transmission'. The *Officium* suggests Rolle's sanctity was recognised among those who knew him personally since it was written within living memory of him. Watson makes similar points at *Invention*, pp. 50–51.

Moreover, one thing should be clear – we cannot reliably judge the strength of any contemporary controversy against Rolle on the basis of his own ferocious language. In the one instance where we have access to the specific criticism of eremitic life which Rolle responds to (his discussion of Pseudo-Anselm), the original passage turns out to be rather muted in tone and does not directly mention hermits at all.[92] Rolle nonetheless describes the encounter in such dramatic language that Horstman and Allen wrongly thought it referred to an actual event in Rolle's life.[93] The strength of Rolle's language is not a reliable indicator that he was responding to equally vigorous attacks from his opponents. While there are good grounds for thinking that Rolle did incur some such conflicts in his life, we cannot be sure of their strength or pervasiveness, and there are also grounds for thinking that Rolle would have been motivated to depict them in an exaggerated, hyperbolic way. We must also remember that he presents us with just one interpretation of events: for instance, when he says that people criticised him because 'apud opinionem hominum eos viuendo videbar superare' ('according to people's opinion, I appeared to exceed them in my manner of life'), this may simply reflect Rolle's extrapolation of events to explain the psychological motivations of his detractors, which has little historical value.[94] More broadly, we cannot exclude the possibility that Rolle effectively got the wrong end of the stick, interpreting his conflicts with people in terms of contemporary scepticism of eremitic life. To be clear, my purpose here has not been to declare that Rolle certainly received no criticisms in his life, but, more cautiously, that we must be open to the possibility that he was relatively uncontroversial in his own day.

A second source of evidence is supplied by responses to Rolle's work after his death, especially in the *Officium*, the writings of Walter Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, and Thomas Basset's *Defensorium*. These sources have sometimes been used as evidence that Rolle was an especially

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[92] The source is Pseudo-Anselm, *Liber de sancti Anselmi similitudinibus*, ch. 84, PL 159:656; it was identified in Arnould, 'A Vindication', pp. 64–69.
[93] Carl Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*, 2:xxii; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 328, 481–82; for a rebuttal, see Arnould, 'A Vindication'.
[94] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 5, lines 107–8. Hanna's translation is given.

controversial figure.[95] However, in reality, they offer little evidence for any widespread and sustained controversy surrounding Rolle. None of the criticisms they make are in common with those Rolle reports himself (with one exception), making it unlikely that any specific criticisms or scandals which Rolle accrued during his lifetime played an important role in his reputation after his death. They do demonstrate a sustained concern with the central question of the legitimacy of extra-institutional religious life, showing that these anxieties existed into the late fourteenth century while Rolle was becoming more widely known (perhaps intensifying amidst the rise of Wycliffism). At the same time, a closer look at these sources will show that they do not support the view that Rolle's religious teachings themselves were seen as particularly controversial.

The exception just mentioned can be dealt with briefly. Watson puts forward a defence of Rolle's peripatetic lifestyle in the *Officium* as testament to a sustained controversy after his death.[96] However, the *Officium*'s account merely replicates and expands on Rolle's own self-defence in chapter 15 of the *Incendium amoris* (a text we know the compilers of the *Officium* knew because they quote a large extract from it later).[97] So it does not offer an independent witness that Rolle was widely held in suspicion for changing cells frequently.

Walter Hilton and the *Cloud*-author both challenge the legitimacy of sensual religious experiences in passages which Michael Sargent interprets as responses to Rolle, though only

[95] Michael Sargent introduced Hilton, the *Cloud*-author, and Basset as evidence that Rolle was 'demonstrably the most controversial of the fourteenth century English mystics'; see Michael Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism of Richard Rolle', *Analecta cartusiana*, 55.1 (1981), 160. Although this statement seems strong, it leaves open the possibility that Rolle was not actually that controversial (i.e., only marginally more so than other writers, which may only reflect his greater circulation), and Sargent goes on to argue that Hilton and the *Cloud*-author can only be seen as responding to Rolle indirectly at most. Watson has challenged the suggestion that Hilton directly criticised Rolle; see Watson, *Invention*, p. 261. Nonetheless, these authors are presented as critics of Rolle in Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:66; Christiania Whitehead, 'The *Meditaciones* of the Monk of Farne', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VIII*, ed. by E.A. Jones (D.S. Brewer, 2013), p. 138n.63; Karáth, *Fifteenth-Century Translations*, pp. 21–26.

[96] Watson, *Invention*, p. 47.

[97] Compare Woolley, *Officium*, p. 39; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 15, p. 188. The *Officium* quotes ch. 15 at pp. 42–43 (identified as chapter thirteen, which probably stems from a scribal confusion of 3 and 5).

indirectly (that is, perhaps in response to an emergent 'school of Rolle' rather than Rolle himself).[98] Both medieval authors discuss the sensory experiences of heat, sweetness, and song, often taken as the hallmarks of Rolle's spirituality, and strike a cautious note, warning readers against a bodily interpretation of language intended spiritually. Although scholars have often cited these authors as witnessing Rolle's controversial reception, they do not actually offer clear evidence of criticisms of Rolle.[99]

It is clear that both authors were not responding purely to Rolle's writings, but rather to broader tendencies in their contemporary religious culture, especially among the spiritually inexperienced. Hilton advises caution around heat, sweetness, and song in the context of longer lists of spiritual experiences, including visions, apparitions of spirits, seeing light, and all kinds of bodily feelings.[100] None of these figure prominently in Rolle's writings.[101] Also, both authors tells us that the phenomena they address are prevalent among many. Hilton writes, 'For þer are many soules newly turned to God þat han many gostly felynges...', and the *Cloud*-author very similarly says that false spiritual experiences 'haþ diuerse & wonderful variacions, after þe dyuerste of states & þe sotyl condicions of hem þat ben disceyuid'.[102] This suggests a response to diverse and ongoing practices, rather than ideas solely associated with a single prominent figurehead. Unlike Basset, neither names Rolle directly, reinforcing that he is probably not the sole target of criticism here.

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[98] Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism'.
[99] See fn. 95 above.
[100] Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), book 1, ch. 10, lines 200–5; ch. 11, lines 225–31; Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection Book II*, ed. by S.S. Hussey and Michael Sargent, EETS OS 348 (2017), ch. 29, lines 6–10. Since a critical edition only exists for book 2 of Hilton's *Scale*, I quote the editions given here for books 1 and 2 respectively. Sargent edits two versions: the most representative of the whole tradition, and the most widely available version (see discussion in pp. cxxxv–cxli). Since my focus is on Hilton's reception of Rolle, I quote from the first.
[101] Rolle does describe apparitions of deceptive spirits in Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 278–98; Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 161–81. However, there seems little reason to think that medieval readers would have seen such stories as a particularly distinctive feature of Rollean spirituality.
[102] Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection Book II*, ch. 29, lines 5–6; *The Cloud of Unknowing; and, The Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson, EETS OS 218 (1944), ch. 45, p. 86, lines 21–22.

This raises the question of how significant Rolle's writings were in precipitating the broader religious culture to which Hilton and the *Cloud*-author respond, and again here there are reasons for cautiousness in ascribing Rolle a definitive position, although we cannot be certain. This movement of religious enthusiasm must have been significant enough to demand their pastoral responses, and both authors describe these practices as relatively widespread. However, this is a very early period for Rolle to have been a driving force behind a substantial emergent devotional movement. Hilton and the *Cloud*-author were writing in the final decades of the fourteenth century at a time when Rolle's Latin works were only just entering substantial circulation; very few Latin manuscripts survive from before the turn of the century.[103] The case is yet to be made that Rolle had by this point been responsible for precipitating a movement substantial enough that the *Cloud*-author and Hilton needed to respond. Furthermore, Hilton was writing for a female solitary, and the *Cloud*-author was also talking about practices among women, but the phenomena they address are primarily discussed in Rolle's Latin.[104] They thus address a group of people which includes some who could only have encountered Rolle indirectly at the very most, reinforcing that their focus is not on Rolle himself, and making it less likely (though not impossible) that Rolle's Latin would have been widespread enough at this point in time to exert a substantial but indirect influence on vernacular devotional culture.

The alternative is that Hilton and the *Cloud*-author were writing in response to a shared environment of contemplative practices and terminology which also influenced Rolle's writing. Scholarship has often seen Rolle's language of heat, sweetness, and song as idiosyncratic, and Rolle himself supports this picture by introducing them as his own concepts, grounding them in his experiences, and theorising them in distinctive ways. However, this kind of sensory language was widespread in major religious literature, even if not pursued as expansively as in Rolle's writing. Malcolm Moyes argues that aspects of Rolle's contemplative writing, including his sensory language,

[103] Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript', p. 106.
[104] The *Cloud*-author addresses ideas which women encountered orally; see Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 45, p. 85, lines 15–17.

reflect a milieu of Cistercian authors circulating in late-medieval Yorkshire.[105] Such language was also found farther afield in major canonical contemplative texts. It traces back to Bernard's sensory spirituality, and both Bernard and Richard of Victor use sensory language which parallels Rolle in their contemplative writings.[106] The importance of such imagery is reflected in its influence elsewhere. For example, Evelyn Underhill pointed out that Jan van Ruusbroec, Rolle's contemporary, also describes contemplative experience in terms of heat, sweetness, and *jubilus* (a concept Rolle often associates with heavenly song).[107] Ruusbroec was writing decades before the earliest evidence of Continental transmission of Rolle's work, so these parallels probably reflect a shared environment of religious literature rather than direct knowledge of Rolle.[108] Some awareness of this broader context is hinted at in the way Hilton and the *Cloud*-author accept the fire of love and angelic song as legitimate and recognisable concepts (even while qualifying their interpretation), which would seem strange if they were the invention of a single, recent author.[109] In fact, their concerns about

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[105] Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:27–67. Moyes does not discuss parallels in great depth, so only makes passing references to sensory language specifically (e.g., see pp. 35n.50, 65–66); for a discussion which highlights the sensory language of one of these texts (*Dulcis Iesu memoria*) see Wolfgang Riehle, *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England*, trans. by Charity Scott-Stokes (Ithaca, 2014), pp. 32–34; the seminal influence of Cistercian spirituality on late-medieval English contemplative writing is a central argument of Riehle's book.

[106] Such as Bernard's famous statement, 'Iesus mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde iubilus', Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera, Volumes 1–2: Sermones super Cantica*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C.H. Talbot, and H.M. Rochais, 2 vols (Roma, 1957), sermo 15.6 (1:86, lines 18–19). For Richard of St Victor's use of language of heat and sweetness, see Richard of St Victor, *De IV gradibus violentae caritatis*, in *Ives, Épître à séverin sur la charité. — Richard de Saint-Victor, Les quatre degrés de la violente charité*, ed. by Gervais Dumeige (Paris, 1955), pars 6, p. 131, lines 10–27; pars 8, p. 133, lines 16–19; pars 30, p. 157, lines 11–21; pars 31, p. 157, lines 1–4 and p. 159, lines 9–15.

[107] Evelyn Underhill, *Mixed Pasture: Twelve Essays and Addresses* (London, 1933), pp. 182–83; for original, see Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia 7–7A: Vanden XII Beghinen = The Twelve Beguines*, ed. by M.M. Kors, trans. by H. Rolfson (Turnhout, 2000), book 1, lines 418–25 (7A:43). For an example of Rolle defining contemplation in terms of *jubilus* and song, see Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 158–60.

[108] The earliest known transmission of Rolle probably took place in 1395–96; see Michael Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 40–48. No other known evidence of Rolle's circulation on the Continent can be definitively dated to before the fifteenth century; for further studies, see Michael Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27.3 (1976), 231–32; Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism', pp. 169–71, 175; Doyle, A.I., 'Carthusian Participation in the Movement of Works of Richard Rolle Between England and Other Parts of Europe in the 14th and 15th Centuries', *Analecta cartusiana*, 55.2 (1981), 109–20; Monica Hedlund, 'Katillus Thorberni, A Syon Pioneer and His Books', *Birgittiana*, 1 (1996), 67–87; Michael Van Dussen, 'Richard Rolle's Latin Psalter in Central European Manuscripts', *Medium Aevum*, 87.1 (2018), 41–71.

[109] For example, the *Cloud*-author refers to when individuals experience heat and 'þei wene it be þe fiir of loue' (Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 45, p. 86, line 13), and here the definite article implicitly accepts 'the fire of love' as a

sensory spiritual experiences themselves reflect a tradition of discussions and scepticism, including Meister Eckhart (Rolle's contemporary) and the thirteenth-century David of Augsburg, and which goes back to the careful distinction between bodily and spiritual senses made by patristic writers.[110] Hilton and the *Cloud*-author may have known Rolle's work and had it in mind, but it seems likely that, at the most, they would have understood Rolle as reflecting a broader interest in sensory religious experience in late-medieval contemplative writing and practice.

Nonetheless, even if the *Cloud*-author and Hilton did have Rolle prominently in mind while they were writing, these passages offer scant evidence that they considered Rolle's own writing controversial. Both authors direct their concerns to those who are spiritually inexperienced (perhaps in response to an emergent class of unsupervised, extra-monastic contemplatives), and who thus wrongly interpret sensory language as bodily rather than spiritual.[111] The *Cloud*-author's focus is on 'a ȝong disciple' who understands 'þees wordes not goostly, as þei ben ment, bot fleschly & bodily', corresponding with his warning elsewhere against making 'a bodely conseyte of a goostly þing, or elles a goostly conseyte of a bodely þing'.[112] Hilton similarly writes that 'summe aren so symple and wenen bicause that it is callid fier that it schulde be hoot as bodili fier is' and more broadly that 'many men... erren in vnderstondynge of sum wordes þat are seid of God, for þei vnderstonden hem not gostly'.[113] These quotations demonstrate that both authors place the fault with misguided interpretations of sensory language, rather than with the language itself. Indeed, neither author

recognisable concept (see also his recognition that bodily heat is sometimes legitimate in ch. 48, p. 90, line 20 to p. 91, line 9). In a similar way, Hilton writes 'Alle men and women that speken of the fier of love knowe not wel what it is' and 'oure lord comforteth a saule be angels sange', respectively in Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 26, line 670 (and see also his discussion of spiritual fire in ch. 31, lines 774–76); Walter Hilton, *Of Angels' Song*, in *Two Minor Works of Walter Hilton: Eight Chapters on Perfection and Of Angels' Song*, ed. by Fumio Kuriyagawa and Toshiyuki Takamiya (Tokyo, 1980), line 67.

[110] Bernard McGinn, 'The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 1.2 (2001), 157–61, 165–67.

[111] Hilton refers to 'soules newly turned to God', and the *Cloud*-author to a 'ȝong man or a womman, newe set to þe scole of deuocion': see Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection Book II*, ch. 29, p. 188, lines 5–6; Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 45, p. 85, lines 15–16.

[112] Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 45, p. 85, lines 9, 19–20; ch. 65, p. 117, lines 15–16.

[113] Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 26, lines 676–77; Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection Book II*, ch. 33, p. 226, lines 9–10.

rejects bodily sensory experiences entirely. Just as Rolle wrote in *The Form of Living* that bodily song 'hath both good and il' (before swiftly moving on to his main focus, spiritual song), both Hilton and the *Cloud*-author recognise that bodily sensory experiences can be 'boþe good & iuel'.[114] For example, both accept the legitimacy of bodily sensory experiences which stem from a prior internal spiritual experience.[115]

Rolle himself is somewhat ambiguous on whether the fire of love is bodily, describing it as something which seemed at first bodily, but which he ultimately realised occurred in his heart and soul and which was 'ex interiori solummodo' ('from the interior alone') and not 'a carne... et conscupiscencia' ('from the flesh and concupiscence').[116] Although scholars have often offhandedly suggested that the fire of love involved physical heat, it is not clear that this is what Rolle meant, and, even if Rolle did mean this, his primary focus is on the inner experience of fire in the soul and the associated internal feelings of joy and love.[117] His treatment of heavenly song stresses strongly that it is spiritual rather than bodily, like Hilton.[118] In other words, Rolle's teachings are compatible

[114] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, p. 17, line 576; Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 48, p. 92, line 5 (see also p. 91, lines 19–21); Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 10, line 211.
[115] Compare Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 48, p. 90, line 20 to p. 91, line 6; Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 26, lines 673–67. Hilton argues that, although the fire of love may sometimes result in an experience of bodily heat, the fire of love itself is not bodily. Elsewhere, Hilton suggests that sensory religious experiences can be good but are not contemplative: Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 10, lines 200–7.
[116] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, p. 145.
[117] Rolle's statement in the prologue of the *Incendium* (p. 145) that *calor* happened 'uere non imaginarie' (often put forward as evidence that Rolle meant physical heat) does not mean that it was bodily. Rather, he means that he experienced it as a passive recipient (i.e., in contemplation), rather than contriving it through his imagination (i.e., as a mere meditative exercise), and therefore that it was an authentic contemplative experience, as he explains later: 'non est ex simulacione aut imaginariis quod feci suscepcionibus...'; see Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 31, p. 234. (Note: 'suspicionibus' is a variant, found in **R** and other manuscripts, for 'suscepcionibus' in **Dd** and **De**.) Rolle's suggestion in the prologue that he initially thought the fire of love might emanate from a physical source (causing him to touch his chest to check) must be balanced by his ultimate recognition that it took place in his soul. That said, Basset and perhaps the *Cloud*-author and Hilton apparently thought Rolle was talking about physical heat (as discussed here and below). For offhanded references to this heat as physical, see Evelyn Underhill, 'Introduction: The Mysticism of Richard Rolle', in *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life*, by Richard Rolle, ed. by Frances M. M. Comper (London, 1914), p. xv; Clifton Wolters, 'Introduction', in *The Fire of Love*, by Richard Rolle, ed. & trans. by Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 23; Karáth, *Fifteenth-Century Translations*, p. 57.
[118] Rolle suggests that *canor* is spiritual, not bodily, in Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 102–7; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 31, pp. 232–34; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 4, lines 8–12; ch. 45, p. 138, lines 20–22. Compare Hilton, *Of Angels' Song*, lines 67–69. In some places, Rolle does discuss *canor* being vocalised, but only provisionally and sceptically (even stating directly that this is not possible); such passages are probably

with the views of Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, which can at most be seen as modifications or qualifications to Rolle. Of course, Rolle does not clearly warn against misinterpretation of spiritual experiences as bodily, unlike Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, perhaps reflecting the more basic audience of the later authors (in need of precise differentiation) and their more fraught spiritual context (where an increasing number of lay contemplatives posed a greater risk to orthodoxy). But their basic understanding of sensory language is the same. What we have here is not conflict, but consensus.

Thomas Basset's *Defensorium* offers the only direct evidence of controversy directed at Rolle. Thomas Basset was an otherwise unknown hermit who wrote to defend Rolle against charges made against him by a priestly, Carthusian opponent (whose original criticisms do not survive and must be inferred from Basset's text). Basset responds to four objections made by the Carthusian. The first of these is that the fire of love 'in presenti realiter non sentitur' ('is not truly sensed in the present'), perhaps reflecting the same anxieties about sensory religious experience discussed by Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, but in this case certainly applied to Rolle.[119] Here, Basset offers his most extensive defence, arguing for the legitimacy of sensory spiritual experiences by reason, by the authority of Scripture, and by the examples of other contemplative writers.[120] In particular, Basset defends physical heat as legitimate when it is the overflow of a more primary spiritual heat in the soul, which is the view taken by both Hilton and the *Cloud*-author.[121] Similarly, Basset's citation of tradition (including authors like Bridget of Sweden and James of Milan) parallels the way that Hilton and the *Cloud*-author implicitly recognise the legitimacy of the fire of love and angelic song as conventional concepts rather than an individual's invention. Thus, while Basset's *Defensorium* shows that Rolle's sensory language was vulnerable to criticism, Basset demonstrates that it had its

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best understood as thought experiments rather than as claiming that *canor* can be vocalised; see Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 27–37; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 34, p. 244.

[119] Thomas Basset, *Defensorium*, in Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism', lines 52–53.

[120] Basset, *Defensorium*, lines 51–168.

[121] Basset, *Defensorium*, lines 102–5. See fn. 115 above.

defenders, and the continuities between him, Hilton and the *Cloud*-author reinforces how their views can be considered compatible with Rolle's own.

The next three reported criticisms also reflect the concerns of Hilton and the *Cloud*-author surrounding the misinterpretation of religious texts by the inexperienced. These criticisms are that Rolle made men judges of themselves, that (as a result) his writing was the stuff of ruin and deception, and that as many have been deceived by his books as have profited by them.[122] Basset responds to each of these in turn. In response to the first and third, Basset simply attacks his opponent by suggesting that such criticisms reveal him to be scornful, self-contradictory, and judgmental. However, Basset's response to the charge that Rolle made men judges of themselves suggests that the central issue is the legitimacy of extra-institutional advanced religious practice. Basset responds by quoting a passage where Rolle specifies that his teachings are only suitable for advanced contemplatives, deflecting any accusation that Rolle is misleading the inexperienced, and he then argues that a person's inner witness of the Holy Spirit can be sufficient for them to trust in the validity of their spiritual experiences.[123] Rolle makes similar arguments himself, and the idea that advanced contemplatives could self-authenticate is also suggested by the *Cloud*-author.[124] Again, this shows that, while the Carthusian's reaction against Rolle reflects wider contemporary concerns about both sensory and extra-institutional spirituality, Basset's defence also reflects wider contemporary views. Just as the *Cloud*-author and Hilton direct their concerns to the misinterpretation of religious texts and concepts, rather than the texts and concepts themselves, Basset's response acknowledges that there is a risk of Rolle being misinterpreted by 'quibusdam

[122] Basset, *Defensorium*, lines 250–54.
[123] Basset, *Defensorium*, lines 274–96.
[124] Rolle challenges the idea that only the learned can become true contemplatives, emphasising that it is possible to be instructed internally by the Holy Spirit as a solitary, in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 33, p. 240. The *Cloud*-author suggests an individual's spiritual experiences can be 'certefied... wiþ-inne wonderfuly by þe spirite of God, or elles wiþ-outen by counsel of sum discrete fader', Hodgson, *Cloud*, ch. 48, p. 92, lines 11–13. See also, Arnould, 'A Vindication', pp. 75–76.

indoctis' ('certain uneducated people').[125] But, just as the *Cloud*-author and Hilton also accept the legitimacy of sensory spirituality, Basset emphasises that in the right hands Rolle's books are useful.

While Basset shows that there was at least one direct critic of Rolle, the significance of this should not be overstated. The Carthusian's original criticism does not survive except as reported by Basset. Basset's *Defensorium* itself survives in just one manuscript copied by the Swedish Bridgettine monk Katillus Thorberni, most likely during his 1408–1421 expedition to England, and brought back by him to Vadstena; the other texts copied have connections with Northern England, suggesting he found a copy of Basset's text somewhere there.[126] It offers a witness to one critic of Rolle, but just a single witness against the large number of manuscripts which survive from the period and attest to Rolle's spreading reputation, as exemplified by Basset's own defence.

In conclusion, there is little evidence for a sustained controversy surrounding Richard Rolle. There remains some uncertainty over the extent to which Walter Hilton and the *Cloud*-author were responding to Rolle – future research may uncover evidence of how well-known he was in this period (and even of the possibility that he played a role in legitimising later lay contemplative spirituality) – but as Hilton and the *Cloud*-author do not actually criticise Rolle, this is ultimately a moot point. By challenging the idea that Rolle was a particularly contentious individual, I do not mean to restore scholarship to the gushing adulation of Rolle which predominated in the early twentieth century, and which Watson's account aimed (quite rightly) to contest, and nor is it necessary for me to claim that everything in Rolle's writing was orthodox.[127] The point is that, irrespective of whether Rolle deserves a reputation for sanctity, the historical evidence that his

[125] Basset, *Defensorium*, line 337, see also lines 346–48.
[126] Hedlund, 'Katillus Thorberni'. Geoffrey of Byland cites Rolle in defence of Bridget of Sweden, perhaps reflecting Rolle's status as a guarantor for the legitimacy of extra-monastic visionary figures; see Vincent Gillespie, 'The Nearly Man: "Saint" Richard Rolle and His Textual Cult', in *Saints and Cults in Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2015 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2017), p. 165n.30.
[127] Watson makes this clear in *Invention*, pp. 39–40.

saintliness was especially controversial among his contemporaries and in his reception has been overstated, and in fact, the evidence supports the opposite conclusion – that Rolle was widely seen as close to sainthood. Our characterisation of Rolle and his writings cannot rest on the way he has often been depicted – as a particularly fringe religious leader, a personally idiosyncratic and disagreeable personality, embroiled in calumny at every turn and both revered and condemned after his death. We must be open to the possibility at least that he was generally perceived as relatively affable and uncontroversial during his life.

Rolle the Pastor

The characterisation of Rolle as an eccentric individual writing primarily to resolve his own inner struggles has obscured the ways in which his works were designed as tools to aid readers in their spiritual development – in other words, an understanding of Rolle's writing activities as pastoral. As we have seen, the very features which have been taken as evidence of Rolle's idiosyncrasy (his portrayal of himself as an isolated, embattled individual) can be taken as pastorally minded, designed to offer a saintly paradigm for readers. The image with which this introduction began suggests that, for medieval readers, Rolle's status as a pastoral writer was not only commensurate with his depiction as something of a wild man; it was a key aspect of his authority.

Envisioning a pastorally minded Rolle is not new. Early- to mid-twentieth century scholarship took Rolle's pastoral ministry for granted. For example, R.M. Clay described Rolle as an 'evangelist' who ministered 'personally in a persuasive manner, and converted many' and C.E. Whiting claimed that Rolle 'was always ready with spiritual advice for those who sought it'.[128] Neither scholar

[128] Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 161; C.E. Whiting, 'Richard Rolle of Hampole', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 37 (1951), 11.

presents any evidence for this rather romanticised Rolle (presumably extrapolated from the *Officium*), but they do show a perception that Rolle's apparent idiosyncrasy and embitterment was not incommensurate with exercising an outward-looking ministry in his life – indeed, they imply that such a ministry can be assumed.[129] E.J.F. Arnould and D.M. Noetinger offer further examples of early scholars who specifically challenged the perception of Rolle as particularly embittered or eccentric, and Noetinger even believed Rolle was a priest who later became a hermit.[130] Their suggestions were challenged and have not since predominated in scholarship.[131] More recently, scholars have drawn attention to Rolle's pastoral side in passing. Moyes has argued that scholars privileging Rolle's contemplative spirituality have thereby ignored the pragmatic and didactic aspects of his work which imply a pastoral context.[132] Jeremy Catto has suggested that Rolle's fusion of pastoral and contemplative spirituality was one of his major contributions to cultural history.[133] Jonathan Hughes has argued that Rolle ministered to the lay gentry and disseminated his work among them (while there is evidence for posthumous ownership of Rolle's works among such readers, Hughes's account is largely conjectural).[134] And of course, the characterisation of Rolle as an idiosyncratic, introspective writer has largely been applied only to his Latin contemplative works. Other texts (*Judica me*, his English epistles, and late Latin) have long been recognised as belonging to the genre of pastoral literature.[135] When Jones mentions Rolle's pastoral side in a recent essay on hermits and

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[129] For further examples, see Ray C. Petry, 'Social Responsibility and the Late Medieval Mystics', *Church History*, 21 (1952), 10–11; Knowles, *English Mystical Tradition*, p. 53; Richard Rolle, *The Tractatus super Psalmum vicesimum of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by James C. Dolan (Lewiston, 1991), p. viii.

[130] D.M. Noetinger, 'The Biography of Richard Rolle', *The Month*, 147 (1926), 22–30; Arnould, 'A Vindication'.

[131] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 36–40. Watson points out that Noetinger's treatment has been influential for French scholarship on Rolle at p. 303n.12. Noetinger's suggestion that Rolle was a priest was also challenged by Allen in an exchange with George Heseltine; see Hope Emily Allen, 'New Manuscripts of Richard Rolle', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1572, March 17 (1932), 202; George Heseltine, 'Richard Rolle', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1576, April 14 (1932), 271; Hope Emily Allen, 'Richard Rolle', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1589, July 14 (1932), 516.

[132] Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:6–9.

[133] Jeremy Catto, '1349–1412: Culture and History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. by Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge, 2011), p. 113–14.

[134] Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, pp. 85–86, 90–94, 109–11.

[135] Besides the examples below, see Nicholas Watson, 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 547–48; Laquita M. Higgs, 'Richard Rolle and His Concern for "Even Christians"', *Mystics Quarterly*, 14.4 (1988), 177–85 (Higgs also discusses the declared universal audience in the *Incendium*).

pastoral care, he cites these works as examples.[136] Claire McIlroy similarly challenges readings of Rolle centred on his biography and examines how he constructs a pastoral relationship with readers, but only in relation to Rolle's English epistles.[137]

This thesis builds on and differs from this body of scholarship by offering a sustained case for what has previously been assumed, mentioned in passing, or confined to certain portions of Rolle's writing. As well as deepening our understanding of how Rolle's late works relate to pastoral literature, it ranges across Rolle's major Latin writing about contemplative experience, exploring how these texts can be understood as directed towards the spiritual development of readers. In doing so, it examines, more fundamentally, the ways in which contemplative spirituality is always connected in Rolle's writing with more basic, reformative spiritual concerns. By challenging past approaches which have seen Rolle's writing as transparently self-expressive and autobiographical, it argues that aspects of Rolle's writing which have previously been seen primarily from the perspective of the eccentric solipsist, such as his projection of emotion and his autobiography, can be re-examined in terms of Rolle's design that his work should stir and instruct the reader in deeper devotion to God. Recognising this ultimately leads us to a more holistic view of how Rolle's writing was valued by his contemporaries as offering varied didactic and devotional material for his readers' spiritual development.

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[136] E.A. Jones, '"Vae Soli": Solitaries and Pastoral Care', in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 24–25.

[137] Claire Elizabeth McIlroy, *The English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle* (Cambridge, 2004). McIlroy challenges the term 'epistle' (pp. 60–64). While she raises valid points, the epistolary religious treatise is a fairly flexible genre, so 'epistle' need not imply a single inscribed reader or narrow set of conventions (which is what McIlroy takes issue with). I retain 'epistle' to conveniently distinguish Rolle's three major prose texts (*The Form of Living*, *Ego dormio*, *The Commandment*) from his minor English prose. Furthermore, Ralph Hanna argues that the English texts probably were initially spread by epistolary dispersal, and the *Officium* refers to Rolle's writings as 'epistolis suis'; see Ralph Hanna, *The English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Exeter, 2010), pp. xxvi–xxviii; Woolley, *Officium*, p. 30.

But what do I mean by 'pastoral'? The term is usually used to refer to pastoral care of parishioners by parish priests and mendicants, and subsequently 'pastoral literature' refers to the genres of writing that emerged to equip priests and mendicants in their activities. Guides to pastoral care, such as Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, had existed for centuries, but the reforms of Lateran IV in 1215, which mandated improvements in the education of parish priests, represent a turning point which ultimately led to the authorship and dissemination of vast quantities of pastoral writings from the thirteenth century onwards.[138] Priests used such texts to equip them in carrying out the *cura animarum* (care of souls), which involved instructing parishioners on matters pertaining to faith and salvation and administering the sacraments (especially confession, which became a major avenue for teaching parishioners).

One of the major aims of the pastoral reforms of Lateran IV and of the reforms which followed in medieval England was to outline the basic catechetic syllabus – a set of minimum requirements which a layperson should know. But pastoral literature should not be understood purely as 'the basics' which are surpassed once you become more advanced, or simply as derivative of the more primary matters of academic theology; topics such as the creeds, confession, penitence, the rejection of sin, and the cultivation of virtue were the bread and butter of spiritual life for both the illiterate layperson and the monk. A favoured medieval conceit for describing spiritual life was of a linear ascent (through a series of grades or steps), but this was more a convenient mnemonic summary than a statement that spiritual life was rigidly schematic.[139] Spiritual progress in the Middle Ages was simultaneously progressive and recursive: there were hierarchies of sanctity along which

[138] See especially Leonard E. Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 30–43, and for further discussion and reading see my introduction to chapter 2.

[139] This conceit is seen for example in spiritual classics like the *Scala claustralium*, the grades of love as articulated in Bernard's *De diligendo Deo* or Richard of St Victor's *De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis*, and the 'ladder of virtues tradition', for which see Richard Newhauser, *The Treatises on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular* (Turnhout, 1993), pp. 157–65. For discussion of how this treatment should not be taken as rigidly schematic, see my discussion in chapters 2 and 3.

individuals could progress, and spiritual practices were considered more suitable either for the less or more advanced, but even the spiritually advanced still needed to confess sin, fight against temptation, and continue to pursue a virtuous life.[140]

Contemplative spirituality thus represents the upper end of a spectrum of spiritual development, and part of the argument of this thesis is that (for Rolle at least) it is always in dialogue with the more rudimentary aspects of spiritual life, such as the rejection of the world, rejection of sin, and a cultivation of love for God. On the one hand, 'contemplative' refers to the experience of contemplative union with God, which medieval theorists understood as the highest possible spiritual experience.[141] On the other, it refers to the 'contemplative life', as defined against the 'active life', with the latter referring to a person engaged in worldly affairs (including secular affairs, ecclesiastical administration, and pastoral care) whereas the former refers to someone primarily engaged in devotion to God.[142] Despite this dichotomy, the contemplative life did not wholly preclude some engagement in teaching and discipleship (for Rolle at least, as I discuss in chapter 1), and it encompassed a much broader spectrum of devotional practice and spiritual experiences beyond the heights of contemplation. Basic spiritual material and devotional practices provided the essential fuel and foundation for advanced spirituality. Even the most advanced religious person can benefit from going over the basics, and not only that but developing a deeper understanding of the central tenets of faith: some of the most profound writing of the Middle Ages centres not on esoteric ideas, divorced from popular religion, but on central credal concepts such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Passion, salvation, and eschatology, through the practices of prayer and meditation. Classics like Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, as well as texts written in the later Middle

[140] For the idea that the spiritual life is both progressive and recursive, see my discussion in chapter 3.
[141] While Rolle understands contemplation in terms of union, this imagery only emerged from the eleventh century (among theorists who were influential on Rolle), and is less commonly found in patristic writing (which Rolle also was influenced by). See Bernard McGinn, 'Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries', *Church History*, 56.1 (1987), 7–24.
[142] On the active and contemplative lives, see F.J. Steele, *Towards A Spirituality for Lay-Folk: The Active Life in Middle English Religious Literature from the Thirteenth Century to the Fifteenth* (Lewiston, 1995).

Ages originally as pastoral guides for priests, such as Robert Grosseteste's *Templum Dei* and William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis*, attained a substantial monastic readership.[143] This is not to deny that there were also profound differences in the kinds of religious material accessible and deemed relevant to the illiterate layperson versus the academic and monastic elite, both in terms of content and form. For example, Thomas Aquinas makes a distinction between pastoral and academic theology, highlighting that preachers should focus their intention on teaching their parishioners moral and spiritual improvement, rather than obscure theological questions.[144] Similarly, the constraints of time meant that laypeople would naturally need texts offering spiritual programmes adjusted to someone in the active life, such as *Our Daily Work*.[145] Rather, my point is simply to suggest that the topics covered in pastoral literature do not become obsolete for the spiritually advanced. While much *pastoralia* is basic in content and exposition, pastoral care should be understood more holistically than simply enabling people to meet the minimum requirements for salvation, and the content of many pastoral texts focuses on aspects of spiritual life which were foundational for both lay and religious people – for actives and contemplatives.

For these reasons, I use the term 'pastoral' in two senses, one of which is enclosed within the other. In the more focused and specific sense, it refers to the topics of *pastoralia*, texts designed to equip priests with the care of souls, which tend to be focused on the rudimentary aspects of spiritual life. In the broader sense, it refers to the ways in which Rolle's texts were specifically designed to aid readers with their spiritual development more broadly, including in contemplative life but also drawing on materials and traditions relevant to devotional life in general. *Pastoralia* is

[143] See library catalogue entries for Gregory the Great, *De cura pastoralis*; Robert Grosseteste, *Templum domini*; and Willelmus de Pagula, *Oculus sacerdotis* in MLGB3.
[144] See discussion in Alastair Minnis, 'Chaucer's Pardoner and the "Office of Preacher"', in *Intellectuals and Writers in Fourteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge, 1986), p. 91; Alastair Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer's Pardoner and Wife of Bath* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 39.
[145] See also W.A. Pantin, 'Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by Richard William Hunt, J.J.G. Alexander, and Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1976), pp. 398–422.

already an enormously capacious category, and this expanded definition should not be taken as suggesting that we can gloss over the heterogeneity of genres and practices involved. But part of the argument of this thesis is that, as far as Rolle is concerned, basic material was formative and foundational for more advanced spirituality, since basic and advanced material exist on the same continuum of spiritual development. This means that Rolle draws on and intermingles a wide range of different genres of religious and devotional writing, making his work (perhaps somewhat unintentionally) relevant for both the restricted audience of solitaries and an expansive audience of the general Christian. In fact, these two senses of 'pastoral' are implicit in the very term *cura animarum*, which can be translated either as 'cure of souls', suggesting the primary work of bringing someone to salvation (and thus the most basic material), or 'care of souls', suggesting a more holistic approach to spiritual development as a whole, in a continuum which extends up to contemplative spirituality.

Pastoral care encompassed a range of activities, such as preaching, administration of sacraments, and informal spiritual instruction. The first chapter of this thesis considers the possibility that Rolle's activities amounted to something of a pastoral ministry amongst his secular patrons and disciples (focused on informal teaching, so without claiming he had priestly authority to preach or perform sacraments), but there is little evidence for the extent to which Rolle might have taught verbally and in person. Thus, my overall focus is on Rolle's pastoral activity through his writings. While all religious texts may be seen as edifying, and thus as pastoral in a sense, my claim is more specifically that Rolle wrote and disseminated his major works in the context of relationships with known disciples (and even then envisioning a wider potential audience), and that therefore his texts are designed holistically to cater for their spiritual development, often with a particular focus on contemplative and eremitic life.

An important theme in this thesis is the compilatory style of Rolle's writing and the purpose that this plays in his activity as a pastoral author.[146] For all Rolle's own emphasis on his uniqueness, Rolle's writing is fuelled by the conventional and orthodox concerns found in major canonical religious writing, and even when he recounts his spiritual experiences, he does so using the language and parameters offered by the religious traditions available to him. His writing assembles a wide range of genres and registers of devotional literature, and in particular seems to have functioned as an important vector of transmission for advanced contemplative spirituality into new contexts. A series of colophons in some early manuscripts refer to his texts, not as written by Rolle (as many other colophons do) but as 'compilatus' ('compiled') by him.[147] This hints that Rolle was valued not for the pedalling of his own idiosyncratic spirituality but for the way that his works were recognised as gathering and synthesising orthodox and canonical forms of contemplative writing and religious traditions more broadly.

By drawing attention to the ways in which Rolle compiles and synthesises conventional material, I do not mean to suggest that there is nothing distinctive or unusual about his work. My foregoing discussion of idiosyncrasy should not be understood as claiming, against past scholarship, that Rolle's writings are entirely conventional. I have already argued here that Rolle deliberately adopts a trope of eremitic eccentricity in his writing style and self-portrayal. Hence, whatever idiosyncrasy we end up ascribing to Rolle need not be incommensurate with recognising his thoroughgoing indebtedness to tradition and his orthodoxy. In discussing this, we must avoid an overly simplistic approach to tradition and innovation as if a line can be neatly drawn between the two, or as if they operate in a zero-sum game where the more idiosyncratic something is perceived to be, the less traditional it must inevitably be. Innovation can be built from tradition. This thesis

[146] On late-medieval compilations, see *Late Medieval Devotional Compilations in England*, ed. by Marleen Cré, Diana Denissen, and Denis Renevey (Turnhout, 2020); *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. by Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford, 2015).
[147] Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral MS 218, ff. 117, 120.

emphasises the ways in which Rolle's writings are in dialogue with tradition, and, while I do not typically try to adumbrate ways in which Rolle's writing is particularly unique or innovative, this should not imply that I am claiming there is *nothing* unusual about his work or about his reshaping of conventional materials.

Furthermore, by interpreting Rolle's compilatory style as achieving pastoral purposes, I challenge any impression that this style reflects the incoherence of Rolle's thought or that it necessarily made his texts difficult to use (both of which would call into question any pastoral aims). We should certainly not assume that Rolle's thinking was coherent or static over the course of his life, and this thesis will examine instances of apparent dissonance in Rolle's thinking (which in some cases reflect outright contradictions, and in other cases reflect differences of emphasis in line with his contrasting purposes and audiences). At the same time, in many cases Rolle does offer consistent views on certain topics across his works (again, albeit with different emphases). We can especially be justified in finding coherence where we consider a question which Rolle explicitly poses and discusses, or where his treatment of certain themes is clearly within the parameters of the overwhelming consensus of his contemporaries.[148] Hence, this thesis suggests that a careful reading of Rolle in terms of the parameters available to him often leads us to discover a sustained and developed treatment of certain themes across his works, even if he does not always expound his thinking systematically. Furthermore, Rolle's unsystematic writing style need not imply that his writings were unusable (and thus devoid of pastoral usefulness). There are many examples of texts contemporary to Rolle which appear (to modern readers) disordered and lack an overarching crystallising structure. For example, the *Incendium amoris* is a particularly piecemeal text, full of

[148] As an example of these principles in action, it has sometimes been suggested that Rolle believed his own writings to be as authoritative as Scripture (see Watson, *Invention*, p. 158; Albin, *Melody of Love*, p. 124). The *a priori* likelihood of a medieval author making such a controversial claim is low. Rolle does not discuss this claim directly, and the evidence offered (his incorporation of Scripture into his writings, and an implicit association between his writing and heavenly song) does not amount to claiming his texts' equivalency with Scripture. Thus, we can reasonably conclude that Rolle probably did not think his writings held Scriptural authority.

abrupt non-sequiturs, but Aelred's *Speculum caritatis* offers a clear analogue which suggests that this compilatory style was not exceptional.[149] There are even cases of seemingly disorganised texts, such as William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis*, which underwent substantial revisions as scribes attempted to make them more user-friendly (as happened with the *Incendium amoris*), and yet which nonetheless were major pastoral resources.[150] Even the works of major contemplative *auctoritates*, such as Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*, were not actually as streamlined as their schematic ordering of contemplation might suggest.[151] Again, fundamentally what I am suggesting here is quite a simple idea – that we should not expect Rolle's major writings to simply be incoherent and unusable, but that these writings are intelligible, and were valued for their intrinsic interest and devotional utility.

My emphasis on the role that Rolle's assembly and adaptation of existing resources plays in his pastoral purposes also raises some important ways in which my approach differs from previous book-length studies, and helps clarify further how I understand Rolle as a pastoral author. In particular, I do not approach Rolle's career in terms of an overarching metanarrative of authorial development, and thus I do not examine his corpus of writings systematically or chronologically. Examining the formation of Rolle as an author over time is valuable, but one downside is that it risks imposing order on a strikingly heterogenous corpus of writing, treating Rolle's work as if it emerged from a singular overarching purpose or a linear trajectory. While I also adopt a metanarrative of

[149] Aelred even discusses his compilatory mode of composition at Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis*, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera omnia, Volume 1: Opera ascetica*, ed. by A. Hoste and C.H. Talbot (Turnhout, 1971), preface, lines 120–27. See also Aelred Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (London, 1981), p. 26.

[150] The *Oculus sacerdotis* was a cornerstone of fourteenth-century pastoral literature and yet was reworked and adapted repeatedly, which Boyle suggests reflects 'dissatisfaction' with the original structure; see Leonard E. Boyle, 'A Study of the Works Attributed to William of Pagula with Special Reference to the *Oculus Sacerdotis* and *Summa Summarum*', unpublished PhD thesis (The University of Oxford, 1956), 2 vols, 1:372–85. Revisions of the *Incendium amoris* include the creation of the short version, instances where only excerpts are copied, the addition of titles, and its division into two books in some copies, all of which suggest scribal recognition of its piecemeal character.

[151] Bernard's treatment of how God should be loved in the text's first sections includes a lengthy, meditative digression on the 'mala' of Songs 2:5; his treatment of the four grades appears late in the text and the length of his discussion of each is uneven; and the text closes with a letter appended which reiterates the grades and was originally written for a different context.

sorts (seeing Rolle as a pastoral author), it is important to emphasise that the didactic purposes and contexts for which Rolle wrote were multiple. This multiplicity of purposes is implicit in his compilatory style of writing. Rolle adapts material which originates from different and disparate texts (including from his own works), and certain texts seem designed to meet the distinctive needs of different readers at once. His writings are thus contingent on the apparently haphazard resources available to him and, in at least some cases, the *ad hoc* tailoring of his materials to the needs of specific readers he happened to know (without excluding the possibility that Rolle also envisioned a more general audience for the same works).[152] In Rolle's writings, there is often a tension between his synthesising of disparate materials and his apparent willingness to retain a degree of dissonance.[153] My argument for a pastoral Rolle should therefore not be understood as claiming that his writings reflect some singular overarching didactic purpose for his career (although there are didactic agenda which he returns to repeatedly), but as a thread which runs through many of his major works, and which enables us to think about his composition and aims in new ways. This is not to say that Rolle can only be understood as a pastoral author: ongoing work on Rolle's engagement with scholastic exegesis and his reception in university and monastic contexts will offer an important counterpoint to my emphasis on the more basic kinds of pastoral instruction, reinforcing the importance of paying attention to the diversity of Rolle's writing, purposes, and cultural contexts.[154]

My decision not to approach Rolle's corpus systematically or chronologically thus reflects my desire to recognise and grapple with the heterogeneity of Rolle's writing, even as I draw connections across multiple works. The systematic coverage of Rolle's entire corpus in previous studies is valuable, but I do not look at every individual work because I do not wish to suggest that all of them

[152] These points are developed in greater detail in chapter 2.
[153] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 6, pp. 161–62 offers an instance where Rolle apparently leverages such a dissonance, drawing attention to the paradox that he tells the reader both to know God and that God cannot be known. See also Rolle's suggestion that humility involves not leaving communal life, which Deanesly suggests indicates that Rolle is incorporating (and not amending) a passage originating from a different context: Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 9, p. 170n.3.
[154] On Rolle and scholastic Bible commentary, see Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*.

were written as overtly pastoral texts. For example, plausible suggestions have been made that some texts originate as resources Rolle made for his own devotional life.[155] Rolle may even have incorporated materials into his work originally written as a private devotional exercise. So, while approaching Rolle as a pastoral author, I deliberately avoid a systematic treatment which could streamline the multiple purposes and complex mode of composition that may underlie his writing. (I also do not discuss some texts, especially his Psalters and lyrics, purely because the demands of space mean I cannot give the adequate treatment they deserve in relation to my theme here.) Furthermore, I do not approach Rolle's writing chronologically because I am not primarily interested in Rolle's development as an author, and because a non-chronological approach allows me to draw new connections across Rolle's work. One of Watson's most valuable contributions was his establishment of a chronology of Rolle's works, although (as he acknowledges) the strength of evidence for the position of different works varies.[156] Nonetheless, recognising Rolle's compilatory style enables us to see disadvantages in a chronological approach which treats individual works as static witnesses to Rolle's thinking at a given point in time: against this, Rolle may have composed over long periods of time; he may have incorporated materials written previously into new texts; he may have copied (and revised) texts long after their original inception for new readers. While considerations of chronology do come into my discussion, the trajectory of my argument as a whole does not track through Rolle's works from earliest to latest. Several previous studies have approached Rolle chronologically, and it therefore seems that there is value in an alternative treatment.

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[155] Andrew Kraebel will make this case in his forthcoming 'Hermit Libraries: Material Sources and the Making of Rolle's prose', with discussion also in his forthcoming edition of *Super lectiones mortuorum*. See also Ralph Hanna's discussion of *In aliquot capita Iob*, in Richard Rolle, *Uncollected Prose and Verse*, ed. by Ralph Hanna, EETS OS 329 (2007), p. lxv.

[156] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 273–94. I find Watson's chronology broadly convincing where Rolle self-borrows, subject to minor reshuffling (as in Renevey, *Language, Self and Love*, p. 104). I also find Watson's arguments for dating the *Incendium* before 1343 convincing (meaning it is probably not late). I am inclined to agree with Watson (for the reasons he gives on p. 286) that Rolle more likely transformed materials from *Super Canticum* into the alliterative *Melos* than the reverse, as suggested in J.P.H. Clark, 'Richard Rolle as a Biblical Commentator', *The Downside Review*, 104.356 (1986), 174.

Making the case for Rolle as a pastoral author is not simply intended to bring out a new theme or identify new and specific intertexts which have not been covered in extensive detail by past scholars (although it is intended to do this). More importantly, it aims to challenge an older paradigm by which Rolle was approached – from the perspective of his perceived internal emotions and biography. Instead, it wishes to argue for a more multi-faceted and intelligible Rolle than has generally been appreciated. From a literary perspective, it suggests that what is interesting about Rolle's writing is not simply his projection of a singularly self-aggrandising personality, but the ways in which he deploys emotive and personal writings within a broader and deliberate pastoral project, drawing on a diverse and sometimes discordant range of materials. In doing so, it aims to challenge the ways Rolle's works have sometimes been streamlined into a singular metanarrative of self-discovery, and to rediscover instead a messier, more multi-faceted Rolle, a more intelligible and intelligent Rolle than has generally been appreciated. Pursuing the pastoral theme and agenda in Rolle's writing is just one way of achieving this – at the time of writing, a resurgence of interest in Rolle has seen other scholars pursuing new ways of reading Rolle from a variety of other novel or reinvigorated perspectives, for instance emphasising his work as a biblical commentator, examining his fifteenth-century reception, exploring his theology, or approaching him from a theoretical angle.[157] I do not wish to suggest that seeing Rolle as a pastoral author offers an exhaustive treatment of his work. But I do think that recognising a pastoral impulse to Rolle's work offers a fresh perspective to reassess some of the major questions about Rolle's writing – his sources, his purposes, his audience, his self-portrayal – as well as touching on themes of relevance to the broader fields of contemplative spirituality and late-medieval conceptions of authorship.

[157] Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, pp. 91–132; Karáth, *Fifteenth-Century Translations*; Nelstrop, *On Deification*; Roman, *Queering*.

Translations and Editions

Translations

Several principles are adopted for translations of Latin. I do not generally render Rolle's alliterative Latin into alliterative English – this risks distorting the sense and seems unnecessary, since the Latin is right there on the page. The main reason I quote Rolle's Latin is to discuss its meaning rather than to convey its effects. I include substantial translations of Rolle's Latin, and there is not always space to discuss at length the reasons I have chosen to translate in a particular way. In my view, this drawback is outweighed by the benefit of providing the reader with access to substantial quotations from Rolle's Latin first-hand.

All translations are my own except where indicated. Particular mention should go to Andrew Albin's *Melody of Love*, an alliterative translation of the *Melos amoris*.[158] I never quote from this, since it is at a significant remove from Rolle's Latin, but it has been an important guide to the text for me, and hence is acknowledged here.

Editions

The lack of reliable critical editions for some of Rolle's major works presents a significant challenge.[159] This thesis adopts the view that, although discussion of inadequately edited texts must remain provisional, provisional discussion is better for scholarship than a wholesale embargo on

[158] Albin, *Melody of Love*.

[159] Critical editions exist for all of Rolle's English works (except the English Psalter), *Super Apocalypsim*, *Canticum amoris*, *Judica me*, *Emendatio vitae*, *Super Canticum canticorum*, *Super magnificat*, *De vita activa et contemplativa*, and *Super Threnos* (see Bibliography for references). For critiques of Margaret Deanesly and E.J.F. Arnould's editions, see Ralph Hanna, 'Richard Rolle's *Incendium amoris*: A Prospectus for a Future Editor', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 26 (2016), 233–40; Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript', 111.

examining such texts until a critical edition appears, which may not be for some time. For example, all scholars of Rolle are indebted to Allen's extensive research and discussion of texts she read only in manuscript.[160]

Nonetheless, I have taken several measures to mitigate the risks of faulty editions. Perhaps the faultiest is Margaret Deanesly's *Incendium amoris*. Andrew Kraebel is working on an edition and has kindly provided me with his work-in-progress: a collation of several manuscripts. When I quote Deanesly's text, I collate it with the readings of two manuscripts (see Abbreviations for sigla): **Dd** (chosen because Hanna identifies it as the most accurate scribal work, and Kraebel informs me that his initial findings corroborate its authority) and **R** (chosen because Hanna identifies it as another accurate manuscript from a separate branch to **Dd**, and in order to mitigate possible errors in **Dd**).[161] For quotations from *Incendium* in the main text, I footnote substantive variants (i.e. ignoring variants of spelling or word order). Where there are discrepancies, I restore readings shared by **Dd** and **R** against Deanesly (placing them in square brackets), and otherwise exercise my judgment (my decisions are clear from the footnotes). For quotations in footnotes, I note substantive variants in parenthesis without editing the quotation.

Not enough editorial work has been undertaken on the manuscripts of the *Melos amoris* or *Contra amatores mundi* to identify reliable copies. The editors of both texts chose a best-text approach, largely reproducing the readings of a single manuscript (with little justification for its choice). Paul Theiner, editor of *Contra amatores mundi*, included a full collation in the textual notes. I have checked this for all quotations and, while I make no emendations (since no manuscripts are known to be particularly authoritative), I note in footnotes where variant readings would challenge or affect my argument. (In all such cases, the variants occur in a single manuscript and are thus

[160] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*.
[161] Hanna, 'Prospectus', 240–52.

unlikely to be authoritative.) We are in a worse position for *Melos amoris*, since its editor, E.J.F. Arnould, chose to produce only a selection of variants rather than a full collation. The only option here is to hope that he would have recorded any substantive variants, such as those that alter the sense, or variants widely attested against his copy text. Again, for all quotations, I examine the textual notes he provides and footnote instances where variants would affect my interpretation. When quoting these texts, I do not reproduce their square brackets (which indicate departures from their chosen copy texts and are irrelevant given that I have examined all variants anyway) to avoid confusion with my use of square brackets in quotations from *Incendium*.

Super lectiones mortuorum is only available in Malcolm Moyes's best-text edition. A new critical edition by Andrew Kraebel is forthcoming and he has kindly provided me with a copy of his completed Latin text, based on CUL, MS Ii.1.26. My quotations from *Super lectiones mortuorum* thus reference the folio numbers from this manuscript (which will also appear in Kraebel's critical edition), but I quote the text as emended by Kraebel. For ease of reference, I also give references to Moyes's edition in parenthesis. Quotations from other texts without critical editions are discussed in footnotes at the first citation.

My aim is not to recover an authoritative form of these texts, which would be impossible without more extensive collation. Rather, it is simply to reduce the risks of relying on a single, faulty edition by taking variant readings into account.

Texts by other authors extant only in manuscripts are also used in this thesis to identify Rolle's sources and analogues. In this situation, there is little danger in using an unedited text as Rolle would not necessarily have used an authoritative copy. When a source is identified, this is always because there is clear, substantial, shared material between Rolle and the text as I have found it in one copy. Hence, collating with other manuscripts could only increase the shared material

with Rolle. If a second, more authoritative manuscript did not contain some of the shared material, then the likeliest explanation is that Rolle accessed the textual tradition as represented by the first, where there is more overlap. Nonetheless, my quotations from William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* are taken from the manuscript which L.E. Boyle identified as the most reliable (Oxford, New College MS 292), because Pagula's text was written during Rolle's lifetime, and thus Rolle is more likely to have accessed a copy closer to the original.[162] In some cases, I quote from major canonical Latin texts which are only edited in the notoriously faulty *Patrologia Latina* editions. As these texts are not central to my argument, and the work of collating them with reliable copies would be enormous, I have been forced to rely on the *Patrologia Latina* – such is the hazard of being a medievalist.

[162] Boyle, 'A Study'.

Chapter 1: Richard Rolle as a Pastoral Solitary

> ex abundancia caritatis solitus erat se multum familiarem exhibere reclusis et hiis qui spirituali indigebant consolacione et qui turbaciones et uexaciones operacione et malignitate malorum spirituum paciebantur in anima uel in carne contulitque sibi deus graciam singularem subueniendi taliter tribulatis... (The *Officium*)[1]
>
> from the abundance of his love, he had been accustomed to show himself greatly familiar to recluses, and those who were lacking spiritual consolation, and those who were suffering disturbances and torments in the soul or body from the working and malice of evil spirits, and God conferred on him a unique grace of assisting those troubled in such a way...

Who were the recluses, disconsolate disciples, and demon-oppressed people mentioned in this excerpt from the *Officium*? The wealth of information we have about Margaret Kirkby dwarfs the little we know of any of Rolle's other contacts, though it is likely he had other people in his address book.[2] Of his patrons, we know only the Daltons by name, and Rolle seems only to have stayed with them at the start of his conversion to eremitic life.[3] The identities of his first readers survive in hints and whispers: colophons mention a nun at Yedingham, another at Hampole, and a 'William' as recipients of Rolle's texts; a fifteenth-century Continental manuscript records a William Stopes as his amanuensis (whom Hanna has hypothesised was a monk at Meaux Abbey); and Rolle's *Judica me* was written for a friend, probably a priest, of unknown name and provenance.[4]

Nevertheless, after initially portraying Rolle as a typical eccentric solitary, the *Officium* goes on to represent him actively involved in pastoral ministry. The quotation above is emphatic: it highlights the 'abundance' ('abundancia') of Rolle's love, describes him as 'greatly' ('multum')

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[1] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 37.
[2] On Margaret, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 502–11. Whiting has questioned some details of Allen's account in Whiting, 'Rolle', pp. 11–13.
[3] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 449–66.
[4] For the colophons mentioning the Yedingham and Hampole nuns, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 247, 252, 501–2; Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. 26. For the colophon mentioning 'William', see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 230–31. This colophon's authenticity has been contested by Spahl, in my view wrongly; see fn. 170 below. For William Stopes, see Ralph Hanna, 'Richard Rolle's "Valde Intimus Socius": A Search for William Stoups', forthcoming. For the recipient of *Judica me*, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 98–108. See also McIlroy's questioning of the reliability of colophons to Rolle's *Ego dormio* and their relevance to reading the text, in McIlroy, *English Prose*, pp. 60–64.

familiar with his associates, states that pastoral care was customary ('solitus erat') for him, lists multiple categories of people to whom he ministered, expands one of these categories further into those troubled 'in the soul or flesh' ('in anime uel in carne'), and notes his 'unique' ('singularem') gifting for this kind of care. Elsewhere, it portrays him preaching a sermon, teaching associates, exorcising a demon, and caring for Margaret. These references may suggest that Margaret Kirkby's prominence in the *Officium* primarily reflects her significance in the development of Rolle's posthumous cult at Hampole, rather than that his care for her was exceptional.

As we saw in the introduction, scholars have varied on the extent to which they envision Rolle in pastoral ministry, demonstrating that there are important unanswered questions about why and for whom Rolle wrote his works. Were all his works written with specific audiences in mind? Who were his first readers? In what form did Rolle or others initially transmit his works? Some consideration of these questions is crucial to understanding why Rolle thought he was writing, and what he was trying to accomplish in his books. Furthermore, the lack of a clear context for why Rolle wrote, and how he spread his works, relegates them (particularly the Latin) to a murky past: without any known interpersonal context in which to anchor his works, it is easy for Rolle's personality and their seeming eccentricities to become amplified. Untethered from any known audience or context, their utility and the functional demands which they were constructed to fulfil are easily overlooked.

This chapter approaches these issues by exploring the hypothesis that Rolle exercised a sizeable pastoral ministry during his lifetime, and that his works were written in this context. It begins by arguing that for a hermit to take up a position of authority as a teacher, while not inevitable, was by no means unprecedented and fits securely within Rolle's contemporary horizons of expectations. Second, it considers how in his own works Rolle situates himself within a tradition of eremitic saints, and, even as he advocates the contemplative over the active life, nevertheless represents himself as involved in pastoral care both in writing and in person. Third, it considers

evidence for the initial forms in which Rolle disseminated his works and argues that some kind of network of disciples and a reputation as a local holy man, attained in life and sustained after death, is the best way to make sense of Rolle's unexpected rise to fame. Overall, this chapter contests the portrait of Rolle as an eccentric, isolated individual by finding him instead embedded in a community, writing primarily for the spiritual edification of others, and likely recognised even during his lifetime as a pastoral-eremitic authority.

Eremitic Authority in British History

Although eremitic life is predicated upon withdrawal and solitude, scholars have widely acknowledged ways in which it could simultaneously be outward-looking; for example, by offering people a moral exemplar, inspiring repentance, performing intercessions for patrons, and offering counsel to visitors.[5] The aim of this section is to examine the idea that a hermit could be a spiritually authoritative teacher, and to consider the extent to which this view was available in Rolle's lifetime. Given that the typical fourteenth-century hermit was somewhat humbler than his predecessors, my purpose is not to suggest that, as a general rule, fourteenth-century hermits exercised a pastoral ministry, but, more modestly, that it is plausible that a fourteenth-century hermit (especially one with saintly pretensions, like Rolle) and his contemporaries would have understood that exercising a pastoral ministry of some kind was an option available to him. In this way, I re-examine Watson's central thesis: that Rolle, as an extra-institutional figure, was forced to 'invent' his own authority.[6] Rolle at most can be seen as reviving the idea of a spiritually authoritative hermit, rather than inventing it wholesale, and in fact Rolle was not even a unique example of a fourteenth-century

[5] See Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, chs 11–13; Henry Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse', *History*, 60 (1975), 337–53; Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, chs 5–7 (and see pp. 2–9 for a summary of past scholarship addressing this theme).
[6] Watson, *Invention*.

hermit perceived to be an authoritative teacher. In this way, this section lays the groundwork for considering more direct evidence for Rolle's pastoral ministry later in this chapter.

We will begin by examining British hermit hagiographies produced during the medieval period, arguing that these witness a longstanding eremitic tradition which assumes hermits would be involved in pastoral ministry of some kind. The historical reliability of hagiographies is low: as we shall see, passages describing the pastoral ministries of their protagonists are often adapted from older hagiographies, suggesting that this functioned as a conventional *topos* of the hermit saint; in any case, these texts all predate the fourteenth century and cannot tell us about practices current in Rolle's day. Nonetheless, they do valuably demonstrate that there was a longstanding tradition associating the eremitic ideal with spiritual teaching. For evidence of actual practice in Rolle's day, the second half of this section turns to sources from the fourteenth century, examining evidence of hermits involved in pastoral ministry and of the cultural horizons which allowed non-ordained individuals to teach informally. Taken together, this evidence suggests that, while hermit-teachers may not have been especially common, there are good grounds for thinking that a hermit like Rolle could have functioned as a local holy man and spiritual authority without necessarily being considered controversial or unprecedented.

The paradox that saints retreating into the desert are compelled to teach their expertise goes right back to the Desert Fathers. The *Life of Saint Antony* was written by Athanasius and Evagrius's Latin translation became highly influential in the medieval West.[7] According to Antony's *Life*, once he had spent decades in solitude and spiritual warfare against Satan, crowds of people came to visit him in the desert, seeking healing, exorcism, supernatural insight, and teaching.[8] On

[7] William S.J. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 97–98.
[8] Athanasius, *Vita beati Antonii*, trans. by Evagrius, PL 73:125–69; see for instance chs 12, 13, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 42, 43, 50, 53, 55. An English translation of Evagrius's Latin is available in *Early Christian Lives*, ed. & trans. by Carolinne White (London, 1998), pp. 1–70.

more than one occasion, Antony tries to avoid speaking with them, but is in the end compelled (by charity) to minister.[9] Alongside stories of Antony's miracles and prophetic insights, we are given a summary of his teaching:

> Sermo ejus sale conditus [cf. Col 4:6] consolabatur moestos, docebat inscios, concordabat iratos, omnibus suadens nihil amori Christi anteponendum... Nec mora, plura audientium corda ad humanarum rerum contemptum haec ejus suasit oratio, et habitandae eremi istud ejus exordium fuit.[10]
>
> His speech, seasoned with salt, brought comfort to those who grieved, instructed the ignorant, reconciled those who were angry and persuaded everyone that nothing should be valued higher than the love of Christ... His words had the immediate effect of persuading many of those who heard him to reject human things: this marked the beginning of the desert's colonization.[11]

Antony's teaching functioned on two levels: it fulfilled the fundamental evangelistic purpose of drawing all people ('omnibus') to Christ and salvation, and it also impelled others to pursue the more specialised form of eremitic life themselves. Thus Antony, a paradigmatic hermit throughout the Middle Ages, was presented as a spiritual authority on matters pertaining to eremitic life, such as spiritual warfare and renunciation of the world, which also had a wider applicability, assisting all listeners in their pursuit of salvation. His eremitic life thus authorised him as a spiritual instructor. The pattern of his life, in which time spent alone in the desert precedes pastoral ministry, reflects Christ's transition from his temptations in the desert to a ministry of itinerant preaching, and this pattern subsequently echoes across the hermit hagiographies of the Middle Ages.

Drawing on this ancient heritage, the perceived spiritual authority of hermits has a long pedigree in Britain. This is seen in *Lives* of the two great Anglo-Saxon hermits, Cuthbert (c. 635–687) and Guthlac (674–715).[12] Three *Lives* of Saint Cuthbert were written within roughly thirty years of his

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[9] Athanasius, *Vita beati Antonii*, chs 13 (col. 134), 24 (cols 147–48), 53 (col. 164).
[10] Athanasius, *Vita beati Antonii*, ch. 13 (col. 134). See also a further summary of the contents of Antony's teaching in ch. 55 (col. 165).
[11] White, *Early Christian Lives*, p. 19.
[12] David Rollason and R. B. Dobson, 'Cuthbert [St Cuthbert] (c. 635–687), Bishop of Lindisfarne', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6976>; Mayr-Harting, 'Guthlac'.

death in 687: an anonymous prose life, and a metrical and a prose life by Bede.[13] A monk named Felix wrote a *Life* of Saint Guthlac, probably in the 730s.[14] Bede and Felix both portray their subjects as following the model of the Desert Fathers, and, like Antony, the hagiographies of both hermits depict them involved in pastoral ministry.[15] The anonymous *Life* has been seen as underplaying Cuthbert's pastoral ministry in comparison with Bede, but it in fact quotes the extract above describing Antony's pastoral ministry, thus portraying Cuthbert as sharing Antony's spiritual authority.[16] Bede describes crowds of people coming to visit Cuthbert while he was a hermit, seeking healing from sickness, freedom from sin, and consolation for any other imaginable afflictions.[17] Alongside describing Cuthbert's miracles and supernatural knowledge, he also specifies the contents of Cuthbert's teaching:

> Nouerat quippe mestos pia exhortatione refouere, sciebat angustiatis gaudia uitae coelestis ad memoriam reuocare, fragilia saeculi huius et prospera simul et aduersa monstrare, didicerat temptatis multifarias antiqui hostis pandere uersutias, quibus facile caperetur animus, qui uel fraterno uel diuino amore nudatus existeret...[18]
>
> He knew, in fact, how to refresh the sad by his pious exhortation; he could recall to the memory of the afflicted the joys of the heavenly life, and show them how fleeting were both the pleasures and the sorrows of this world; he had learned how to lay bare before tempted men the manifold wiles of the ancient foe, by which the soul that is without brotherly or divine love may easily be entrapped...

This list shows that Bede's account of Cuthbert's ministry was extended and emphatic. Bede also shows that Cuthbert's expertise stems directly from the hallmarks of eremitic life – *contemptus mundi* and spiritual warfare – demonstrating that his eremitism is the source of his authority. In connecting his teaching to salvation, Bede shows that Cuthbert's eremitic expertise had a wider

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[13] Whitehead, '*Meditaciones*', p. 130.
[14] Felix, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. & trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 18–19.
[15] For references to the Desert Fathers, see Felix, *Saint Guthlac*, ch. 24, p. 86; Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 19, p. 222.
[16] Clare Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. by Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 36–42; *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, in *Two* "*Lives*" *of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. & trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), book 3, ch. 7, p. 106.
[17] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 22, pp. 228–30.
[18] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 22, p. 228. Colgrave's translation is given.

applicability. Felix's *Life of Saint Guthlac* borrows a description from Bede of crowds visiting Cuthbert in search of miracles, amplifying it to stress the social and geographical diversity of his visitors and thus showing that Guthlac's ministry had a wide appeal.[19] Throughout Guthlac's *Life*, various people are described coming for 'colloquium' ('conversation'), including a bishop, who is so impressed by 'melle dulciora praecepta sapientiae ipsius' ('the teachings of his wisdom more sweet than honey') that he makes him a priest.[20] While many come for his healings and supernatural knowledge, others come for 'sancti Guthlaci verba doctrinae' ('Saint Guthlac's words of doctrine'), demonstrating his spiritual authority as a teacher.[21]

The connections between these *Lives* thus demonstrate that the idea of the solitary as a spiritual authority already represented a conventional *topos* associated with the eremitic ideal in early-medieval England. After the Conquest, the associations between eremitism, sanctity, and spiritual authority were sustained, and recognition of the sanctity of eremitic life became widespread. This is seen in hagiographies produced during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries: Tom Licence argues that many hagiographies produced during this period confer eremitic attributes on their saints, as if some kind of eremitic life was a 'prerequisite to sainthood', and Licence offers many examples of hagiographers depicting their subjects as hermits.[22]

Between the twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries, at least seven hagiographies were written about hermits and anchorites who lived during this period (some even within their lifetimes).[23] Almost all of them describe their protagonists as engaged in spiritual counsel of various

[19] Felix, *Saint Guthlac*, ch. 45, p. 138.
[20] Felix, *Saint Guthlac*, ch. 47, p. 144 (Colgrave's translation is given above); for references to 'colloquia', see e.g., ch. 37, p. 116; ch. 40, p. 124; ch. 41, p. 130; ch. 43, p. 132; ch. 45, p. 138; ch. 46, p. 142.
[21] Felix, *Saint Guthlac*, ch. 44, p. 136.
[22] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 60–66.
[23] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.

kinds, suggesting a perception during this period that even contemporary hermits could exercise the same kind of ministry as their ancient and Anglo-Saxon predecessors.

Reginald's *Life* of Godric of Finchale (c. 1070–1170) was written in the 1160s or 70s; it was started while Godric was still alive.[24] After explaining Godric's rigorous discipline of silence at certain times of the year, Reginald gives an expansive description of Godric's pastoral ministry which brings together many tropes seen across the other lives (and hence is quoted here in full):

> In ejus colloquio plurimae erat jocundae suavitatis delectatio, quia verba ipsius pauca erant et sapida, et plurimae sapientiae sale condita [cf. Col 4:6]. Unde de vicinis partibus et remotis, plures ad eum confluxere populorum, ut ab illo audire possent verba supernae scientiae et salutis. Multi etiam peccatis oppressi et temptationibus fatigati, saepius, eo instruente, ad viam salutis sunt reducti. Novit quidem multimoda hostis antiqui deliramenta satis evidenter ostendere, et omnes versutiarum illius astutias mira facundiae subtilitate detegendo denudare; atque de his quae ad doctrinam vel disciplinam pertinent, multo subtilius et manifestius edocebat, quam aliquis litteratus et omni clericali eruditione peritus.[25]
>
> In his conversation was the delight of very great and pleasant sweetness, because his words were few and prudent, and seasoned with the salt of very great wisdom. Whence from neighbouring and remote parts, very many people flocked to him, so that they could hear from him words of heavenly knowledge and salvation. Also, with him instructing, many oppressed by sins and wearied by temptations were very often led back to the path of salvation. Indeed, he knew how to reveal clearly enough the manifold delusions of the ancient enemy, and to expose them by disclosing all the tricks of his cunning with an amazing acuity of eloquence; and concerning those things which pertain to doctrine and discipline, he taught to many more precisely and more clearly, as someone literate and skilled with all clerical erudition.

While Godric, like other saints, performs miraculous healings and supernatural knowledge, here the emphasis is firmly on his wise words. As with Guthlac and Cuthbert, the hagiographer emphasises that people came from far and wide, and like Antony and Cuthbert his speech was 'seasoned with salt'.[26] Furthermore, like earlier hermits his wisdom originated from his eremitic expertise in spiritual

[24] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 19–20.
[25] Reginald, *Libellus de vita et miraculis s. Godrici, heremitae de Finchale, auctore Reginaldo monacho Dunelmensi*, ed. by J. Stevenson (London, 1847), ch. 59, p. 138.
[26] The reference to Antony's speech being 'seasoned with salt' (Col 4:6) appears in the quotation given above, which was copied in the anonymous *Life* of Cuthbert: see *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, book 3, ch. 7, p. 106.

warfare and fighting sin, which had wider applicability for the salvation of all. Reginald goes on to refer to people's amazement that 'tam alta mysteriorum arcana' ('such high secrets of mysteries') were revealed to an uneducated person.[27] This suggests that an uneducated person exercising spiritual authority was unusual, but existed as a conceptual shelf onto which other laypeople might in rare cases be put.

Other hagiographies about twelfth and thirteenth century hermits widely testify to the expectation that saintly hermits would be involved in ministry of some kind. A *Life* of Godric of Throckenholt (c. 1060 – c. 1140), written in the late twelfth century, likewise describes many visitors to Godric.[28] The hagiographer implies that Godric's reputation spread by saying that the bishop visited after 'audiens multa bona' ('hearing many good things'), and that people visited the hermitage after Godric's death on account of his great holiness.[29] Like Cuthbert, Bartholomew of Farne (d. 1193; his *Life* was written by 1213) had frequent visitors, who are described as flocking from far and wide to receive his counsel.[30] Like Antony, Bartholomew reportedly attempted to get away from these crowds to pursue solitude, becoming enclosed, yet continued to rebuke and minister to visitors.[31]

Accounts of the pastoral ministries of two anchorites round out this picture: Wulfric of Haselbury (c. 1090 – 1154/5) and Christina of Markyate (c. 1096 – after 1145).[32] John of Forde

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[27] Reginald, *Libellus*, ch. 59, p. 138.
[28] 'The *Life* and *Miracles* of Godric of Throckenholt', ed. & trans. by Tom Licence, *Analecta bollandiana*, 124 (2006), 15–43; for dates see 16–17. A great man and bishop visit him (ch. 9, p. 28; ch. 14, p. 32); family and friends celebrate feast days with him (chs 16–17, p. 34); he has other hermits with him (ch. 18, p. 34); and a woman asks for intercession (ch. 19, p. 36).
[29] Licence, 'Godric', ch. 14, p. 32; ch. 23, p. 38.
[30] Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomaei*, ch. 11, 1:304. For dates, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[31] See, 'multitudine et frequentia perturbatus, metuens ne favor jactantiam induceret, includi proposuit... ab humanis curis et colloquiis sequestraret...', Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomaei*, ch. 11, 1:304, and see further accounts of visitors in chs 13–14, 1:306–7.
[32] For dates and biographies, see H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'Wulfric of Haselbury [St Wulfric of Haselbury] (c. 1090–1154/5)', in ODNB, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11783>; C.H. Talbot and Henry Summerson, 'Christina of Markyate (b. c. 1096, d. after 1145)', in ODNB, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11783>.

(writing c. 1184) is typically Cistercian in his effusive and sensual praise of Wulfric's 'verba spiritualia plena auctoritatis et gratiae' ('spiritual words full of authority and grace'), which he describes as having the fragrance of freshly baked bread, and as 'gratia et virtute potentes' ('potent with grace and virtue').[33] John of Forde depicts Wulfric as preserving his solitary lifestyle by dealing with people's requests 'paucis' ('with few words') and then absconding, even mid-conversation.[34] According to her hagiography (written mid/late twelfth century), Christina of Markyate ministered to her companion Abbot Geoffrey through 'exhortaciones' ('exhortations' or 'sermons'), 'monita' ('warnings'), and 'increpaciones' ('rebukes'), and he sought her advice, treating it as if from 'divino... oraculo' ('a divine oracle').[35] We are also told of people visiting her from far and wide, as with other hermits.[36]

Finally, Robert of Knaresborough (d. 1218) brings us into the thirteenth century.[37] An incomplete *Life* (surviving in a thirteenth-century manuscript) describes visitors coming from far and wide, and, as elsewhere, Robert attempts to avoid them but also builds a house to accommodate guests.[38] This incomplete *Life* does not give an extensive account of the hermit's ministry (which would usually be towards the end, in the missing section), but another *Life* (surviving only in a fifteenth century manuscript, but perhaps composed earlier) describes him as 'severus in corripiendo et blandus in eloquio' ('strict in chastising and pleasant in speech'), counselling visitors to avoid sin and pursue God.[39]

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[33] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury*, book 1, ch. 7, p. 20. This date is given in Cowdrey, 'Wulfric'.
[34] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury*, book 1, ch. 8, p. 21.
[35] *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Recluse*, ed. & trans. by C.H. Talbot, repr. with additional material (Oxford, 1987), p. 138. For this date, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[36] Talbot, *Christina of Markyate*, p. 124.
[37] For this date, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[38] Grosjean, 'Vitae s. Roberti', 'Vitae antiquioris fragmenta', ch. 5, p. 370; ch. 6, p. 372.
[39] Grosjean, 'Vitae s. Roberti', 'Vita recentior', ch. 11, p. 386. Further *Lives* of Robert survive in the same manuscript, and are edited in *The Metrical Life of St. Robert of Knaresborough; Together with the Other Middle English Pieces in British Museum Ms. Egerton 3143*, ed. by Joyce Bazire (London, 1953).

While no more hagiographies about near-contemporary, British hermits were written after these (besides Rolle's *Officium*), the association between eremitic life and spiritual authority was sustained through the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Saints' *Lives* and cults continued to proliferate, most prominently St Cuthbert, whose continued cult in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has been discussed by Christiania Whitehead.[40] The *Nova legenda Anglie*, compiled in the fourteenth century, offers a further instance of a hagiographical text about a twelfth century hermit, Henry of Coquet (d. 1127/8), and describes people coming to visit him 'a remotis partibus' ('from remote parts') to hear him speak about 'abdita... et occulta' ('hidden and secret things'), just like in the other hagiographies.[41] And of course, Rolle's fourteenth-century *Officium* describes a hermit involved in pastoral ministry, suggesting that this trope still had currency in early contexts of Rolle's reception.

These hagiographies demonstrate that the idea of a spiritually authoritative hermit exercising some kind of ministry was by no means unprecedented, and was even assumed by hagiographers over the centuries. However, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the hermits of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have been considered generally humbler than their predecessors.[42] The decline in the spiritual ambition and circumstances of hermits raises the question of whether the perception of hermits as authoritative teachers ever translated into practice in Rolle's day.

Licence suggests that whatever role hermits once had as spiritual teachers was supplanted in the late Middle Ages by priests. He argues that the prominence of hermits in the twelfth century owed to their usefulness to fill the gap left by inadequately trained priests.[43] It thus follows that their

[40] Whitehead, '*Meditaciones*'.
[41] Carl Horstman, *Nova legenda Anglie*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1901), 2:24, lines 22–25. This date is given in Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 20.
[42] See discussion in the introduction to this thesis.
[43] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 151–52.

subsequent decline stemmed from their redundancy as implementers of pastoral care in the wake of the reforms precipitated by the Lateran IV Council of 1215, which demanded improved priestly education.[44] Of course, hermits could become priests and vice versa: in his exploration of the relationships between eremitic life and pastoral care, Jones gives several examples of priests becoming hermits or hermits becoming priests, or even of people being hermits and priests simultaneously. Nonetheless, Jones suggests that hermit-priests were rarer in the late Middle Ages.[45] There are even examples of hermits being prohibited from carrying out the *cura animarum* in the fourteenth century. Two hermits, Thomas de Byreford in 1311 and Henry de Staunton in 1344, were prohibited from carrying out priestly duties, such as preaching, hearing confessions, and administering sacraments.[46] Jones also gives an example of a priest ordained in 1372 on the condition that he renounce his hermit's habit, although he notes another example of someone becoming a priest whilst remaining a hermit in 1417.[47] These examples reinforce the dangers of assuming a smooth continuity between older accounts of eremitic life, as witnessed by earlier hagiographies, and its actual realisation in the fourteenth century.

Is it plausible then that a hermit like Rolle (who was not ordained as far as we know) could have exercised some kind of pastoral ministry? One of the problems with finding evidence about hermits is that they were by definition extra-institutional, meaning that evidence about their lives is less likely to exist than for other classes of medieval life, such as priests or monks. As Jones suggests, eremitic life 'tends to be recorded more often in the breach than the observance'.[48] Nonetheless, examples like the two aforementioned hermits banned from preaching can offer evidence of the broader norms which they contravened. Although the accounts of these two hermits might seem at

[44] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 203–4.
[45] Jones, 'Vae Soli', p. 21.
[46] Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 66–67; Jones, 'Vae Soli', pp. 21–22; Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 160–62, 168–71.
[47] Jones, 'Vae Soli', p. 21–22.
[48] E.A. Jones, 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 64 (1998), 60.

first to suggest that eremitic life and pastoral care were mutually exclusive, they might just as easily suggest the opposite. In both instances, the offense is clear – the hermits had taken on offices that were exclusive to the priesthood (confession, administering sacraments, and preaching). But this fact does not preclude the possibility that they had been involved in a more informal kind of pastoral care, mirroring the depictions in hagiography which often use the term 'colloquium' ('conversation') for such an exchange. In fact, both hermits from the examples above must have had a willing audience in order to hear confessions (which was an important avenue for teaching parishioners in the late-medieval church) and deliver sermons in the first place, suggesting a demand for their services.[49] Their prohibition may in part reflect them overstepping a line, impinging on practices that were strictly sacerdotal, rather than that there was a wholesale ban on anyone other than priests offering spiritual counsel.[50] Indeed, the explosion of pastoral texts across the late Middle Ages, and especially the appearance of translations (which allowed laypeople to read them without priestly mediation) indicate a continued demand for spiritual instruction outside of direct priestly ministry. This challenges Licence's suggestion that demand for pastoral care was quickly saturated by better trained priests. The banning of these two hermits thus offers two cases where hermits found a receptive audience for their teaching, and where the ban is clearly linked to an impingement on sacerdotal duties or (in Staunton's case) with their potentially heretical teaching, rather than with a hermit teaching in general.

Pastoral instruction post-Lateran IV was much broader than the activities for which priests were exclusively authorised. Alongside the official responsibilities of priests, a more informal kind of ministry is implicit in the commonplace distinction between preaching and teaching. Preaching was

[49] The documents condemning them imply they had attained a substantial audience; see *Registrum Radulphi Baldock, Gilberti Segrave, Ricardi Newport et Stephani Gravesend, episcoporum Londoniensium, A.D. 1306–1338*, ed. by R.C. Fowler (London, 1911), pp. 141–42; *The Register of William Melton, Archbishop of York 1317–1340: Volume III*, ed. by Rosalind M.T. Hill (Torquay, 1988), pp. 131–32; translations available at Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 169–71, 160–62. On confession as an avenue for teaching, see Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council'.

[50] Jones similarly writes that Staunton 'clearly crossed a line'; Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, p. 160.

something that required ordination and took place in certain contexts (such as in church), whereas teaching one's neighbour took place in private and was generally encouraged. The distinction is well-known in scholarship from a passage from the compilation *Cibus anime* (probably written in the 1390s) which was translated into Middle English in the widely circulated *Speculum Christiani*.[51] But it also played an important role in debates about preaching which took place during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries: for example, Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent distinguish between public teaching (or preaching) and private teaching in order to argue that, while women should not preach in public, they can teach in private.[52] The concept of private teaching was also implicit in the notion of fraternal correction: the idea that every Christian should correct their neighbour's sins, particularly of their household or subordinates.[53] Fraternal correction was mandated in canon law.[54] Although there were debates about who could teach, where they could teach, and whom they could teach (with authors coming to a variety of conclusions), there was a general recognition that it was permissible and even encouraged for individuals to instruct one another in an informal, private setting. This distinction thus indicates a recognition of an avenue in which the non-ordained could teach and instruct.

Further evidence for a sustained association between eremitism and spiritual authority to teach is offered by fourteenth-century anchoritic writers. While hermits may have been in decline, other forms of eremitic life remained prominent, drawing nevertheless on the same heritage of the

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[51] G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1450* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 4; Helen Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), p. 39.

[52] Minnis, *Fallible Authors*, pp. 193–95; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'When Women Preached: An Introduction to Female Homiletic, Sacramental, and Liturgical Roles in the Later Middle Ages', in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN, 2005), pp. 35–36; Genelle Gertz-Robinson, 'Stepping into the Pulpit?: Women's Preaching in *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *The Examinations of Anne Askew*', in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN, 2005), pp. 462–63.

[53] For an overview of fraternal correction, see Edwin D. Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge, 2010), ch. 1.

[54] *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. by Emil Friedberg, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1979–1981), C. 23, q. 4, c. 35 (1:915–16), C. 23, q. 5, c. 36 (1:940).

Desert Fathers and medieval eremitic tradition. All the authors categorised as fourteenth-century mystics – Julian of Norwich, the *Cloud*-author, Walter Hilton, and Rolle – had claims to some kind of eremitic life, suggesting that medieval readers recognised eremitic sanctity as a claim to authority.[55] Furthermore, Margery Kempe visited Julian of Norwich in pursuit of counsel on the authenticity of her revelations, since Julian 'was expert in swech thyngys and good cownsel cowd yevyn'.[56] In his *Scale of Perfection*, Hilton notes that 'divers worldli men' will come 'ofte tyme' to visit an anchoress, and thus includes a chapter on how she should respond.[57] Hilton describes how people may come with specific topics in mind to discuss, and advises the reader to 'heere him glaadli' and then 'comforte hym goodli and charitabli'.[58] That Hilton saw this as a kind of teaching is implied a few sentences later by how he notes, contrastingly, that an anchoress should not 'teche a preest, but in nede'.[59] Hilton thus assumes the likelihood that an anchoress would be involved in some kind of casual teaching. Hence, the continued prominence of anchoritic teachers in the late fourteenth century thus suggests that there were still associations between the eremitic vocation and spiritual authority. These examples also seem to suggest an expectation that anchorites in particular might have people coming to them for spiritual counsel.

Further evidence is less direct, but nonetheless broadly corroborates the plausibility that late-medieval hermits could be involved in informal pastoral ministry. There is clear evidence of hermits in the early fifteenth century who were perceived as spiritually authoritative. A hermit named Simon Kirton is recorded in 1403, and in 1411 was called upon (among others) to authenticate a spiritual vision, suggesting that he was perceived as authoritative in discernment.[60] Thomas Gascoigne reports the pious exhortations made in public by a hermit named William of

[55] Jones, 'Hermits and Anchorites in Historical Context', pp. 3–4.
[56] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt, annotated edition (Cambridge, 2004), ch. 18, lines 1342–43.
[57] Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 83, lines 2369–70.
[58] Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 83, lines 2395–96.
[59] Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, book 1, ch. 83, lines 2402–3.
[60] Jones, 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', p. 70.

Cornwall in 1434.[61] Although this evidence is decades later than Rolle's death, the paucity of evidence about hermits in general makes it worth mentioning; there is nothing to suggest that these accounts reflect a uniquely fifteenth-century context, and thus they loosely corroborate the survival of the eremitic ideal and its associations with spiritual authority in late-medieval England. As Jones points out, there are records of hermits as founders of hospitals in 1352, 1417, and 1466, offering examples of hermits' involvement in pastoral care (one of which is close to Rolle's lifetime).[62] Lastly, Hughes argues that Rolle and other hermits typically offered spiritual counsel to the lay nobility in Yorkshire during the fourteenth century.[63] While Hughes's account is largely conjectural (and his claim in particular that non-ordained hermits regularly acted as confessors is difficult to believe in view of the cases discussed above, where this was directly prohibited), he does assemble lots of evidence showing the patronage and support for eremitic life among the nobility in Yorkshire, which does suggest the plausibility of his basic claim that lay patrons could receive spiritual counsel from the hermits they supported (as Rolle's *Officium* reports).[64] Given the spiritual authority conferred on hermits by the hagiographic tradition, the continued associations between eremitism and spiritual authority in the fourteenth century, and the fact that bishops and patrons continued to endorse and support them, it makes sense that a hermit might become a local holy man and informal spiritual advisor. It is hard to tell just how typical or atypical this was, but the evidence available offers a good foundation for thinking it might be plausible in Rolle's case, and that Rolle's contemporaries could have recognised his spiritual authority. It is worth noting too that other scholars, although not focusing particularly on the situation in the first half of the fourteenth century as I have done, have similarly considered it likely that hermits and anchorites during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were called upon for informal spiritual counsel.[65]

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[61] Jones, 'The Hermits and Anchorites of Oxfordshire', p. 70.
[62] Jones, 'Vae Soli', p. 22.
[63] Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, pp. 64–78, 85–86, 109–26.
[64] Woolley, *Officium*, pp. 32–33.
[65] Jones, 'Hermits and Anchorites in Historical Context', pp. 14–18; Ralph Hanna, '"So to Interpose a Little Ease": Northern Hermit-Lit', in *Revisiting the Medieval North of England: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. by Anita Auer (Cardiff, 2019), pp. 73–89.

So far, we have looked at pastoral care for a wide audience, as implied by the hagiographic descriptions of diverse swathes of people coming to visit, but there is also evidence for the usefulness of a hermit's expertise in instructing other hermits on the solitary life, reflecting the *Officium*'s claim that Rolle ministered to other hermits. Again, this can be seen in longstanding hagiographic tradition; for example, St Antony began his journey into the desert by seeking out other solitaries in order to learn from them.[66] Christina of Markyate drew on a network of hermits to facilitate her escape from arranged marriage and later lived with a hermit named Roger for mutual encouragement.[67] Robert of Knaresborough lived with another hermit in the first instance, and when this other hermit gave up on the solitary life, Robert sought to learn how to live as a solitary from someone else.[68] Beyond the hagiographies, in 1291, William de Wyntreburn was appointed to join a hermit named Robert in his cell, who had become infirm, in order to care for him, minister to him, and ultimately succeed him.[69] This therefore corroborates the possibility that Rolle's pastoral care extended beyond Margaret, to other recluses and would-be contemplatives.

While this evidence focuses on counselling in person, there is also evidence that it was not atypical for hermits to spiritually support others through making books. Besides the anchoritic authors already discussed, several eremitic rules advocate some kind of manual labour or work as part of a hermit or anchorite's daily life.[70] One even suggests that writing books is a good way for hermits to occupy themselves (*Speculum inclusorum*), and another invites its reader to copy it out and distribute it to other hermits (*Walter's Rule*).[71] Wulfric of Haselbury's *Life* describes him as a

[66] Athanasius, *Vita beati Antonii*, ch. 3, cols 128–29.
[67] Talbot, *Christina of Markyate*, pp. 80–92, 102–4.
[68] Grosjean, 'Vitae s. Roberti', 'Vitae antiquioris fragmenta', chs 4–5, pp. 368–69.
[69] *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1281–1292*, p. 445. For another example, see Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 32–33.
[70] Grimlaicus, *Regula solitariorum*, ch. 39, PL 103:629–31; Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum*, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera omnia, Volume 1: Opera ascetica*, ed. by A. Hoste and C.H. Talbot (Turnhout, 1971), ch. 9, pp. 644–46; *The Rule of Celestine*, ch. 16, p. 318.
[71] *Speculum inclusorum / A Mirror for Recluses: A Late-Medieval Guide for Anchorites and Its Middle English Translation*, ed. by E.A. Jones (Liverpool, 2013), book 3, ch. 3, lines 83–89; *Walter's Rule*, in Livarius Oliger,

bookmaker, copying texts for himself and others.[72] Clay discusses a number of literary hermits who were writers, scribes, book-makers, and book-owners (most of her examples are from the fifteenth century, with a few earlier).[73] This suggests that the outward-looking and reformative role of hermits could be expressed through written texts as well as through conversation.

Rolle may have been a chronological outlier, since he lived so much later than the flourishing of hermits in the twelfth century. But the eremitic vocation still had the potential to attain respect throughout the late Middle Ages. Rolle did not need to invent his authority from scratch but drew it from a tradition. Furthermore, there is evidence of hermits and anchorites involved in some kind of pastoral care during the fourteenth century, suggesting that having some kind of ministry was well within the horizons of expectation for a hermit like Rolle.

Rolle's Treatment of Ancient Saints, the Active Life, and Pastoral Care

Although Rolle may not have directly known the hagiographies already discussed, Rolle does represent himself as participating in a tradition of saints, and particularly of saintly solitaries. In situating himself in this tradition, Rolle maintains the same unspoken tension between solitary contemplation and pastoral care which we have already seen in the earlier saints' lives, on the one hand elevating the solitary and contemplative life over the active life in stark terms, but on the other hand representing himself as having pastoral input in the lives of his associates and readers. These factors suggest that the earlier hagiographies witness a conception of eremitic life to which Rolle

'Regula reclusorum angliae et quaestiones tres de vita solitaria saec. XIII–XIV', *Antonianum*, 9:1–2 (1934), ch. 29, p. 81. On the Middle English translation of the *Speculum inclusorum*, see E.A. Jones, '*A Mirror for Recluses*: A New Manuscript, New Information and Some New Hypotheses', *The Library*, 7th series, 15.4 (2014), 424–31.

[72] John of Forde, *Wulfric of Haselbury*, book 1, ch. 27, p. 45.

[73] Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, ch. 13; Rotha Mary Clay, 'Further Studies on Medieval Recluses', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, 16 (1953), 74–86.

had access in some form, and which thereby could have shaped his understanding that hermits can play a role in informal pastoral care.

Rolle's only reference to hermit saints by name occurs in chapter 13 of the *Incendium amoris*. Amidst an apology for eremitic life, he cites Cuthbert and Maglorius as his exemplars.[74] While Cuthbert was the most famous Northern hermit-saint, the Breton Maglorius seems surprising since he was probably not widely known in Yorkshire, as Margaret Deanesly points out.[75] The unfamiliarity of Maglorius is presumably why Rolle summarizes his life at greater length. Rolle selects this pair to support his broader point that solitary life is superior to ecclesiastical preferment, offering them as examples of saints who gave up episcopal office in favour of solitude. In fact, Rolle is mistaken: Bede reports that Cuthbert gave up his life as a hermit in order to be a bishop, while the *Incendium*'s account of Maglorius omits that, despite pursuing a degree of solitude on the island of Sark, he went on to found a monastery there.[76] Still, his discussion suggests at least some familiarity with the saints' hagiographies, perhaps recalled from memory. Further, since Rolle evidently thought he knew enough hermit saints to be able to pick out a specific subset of examples – those that gave up episcopal positions – it seems likely that he knew more hermit saints beyond these as well. By giving more information on the lesser known Maglorius, he registers that his readers are unlikely to be as familiar with this saint as he is, indicating some awareness of what material was circulating in his contemporary environment. While Maglorius was not a hermit strictly speaking, his *vita* reflects the trope of the teaching hermit discussed in the examples above: it reports him attaining widespread 'fama' ('good reputation') after leaving for the comparative wilderness of Sark, and it relates how, when a famine struck England, he ministered to both the bodily and spiritual needs of many who came to Sark for help by teaching them spiritual things.[77] While Rolle's main aim is to

[74] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 13, p. 181.
[75] Deanesly discusses Maglorius in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, pp. 46–47. For Maglorius' *vita*, see *Vita s. Maglorii episcopi*, *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct. X (1861), 782–91.
[76] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ch. 24, p. 238; *Vita s. Maglorii*, ch. 1, para. 13 (col. 785).
[77] *Vita s. Maglorii*, ch. 2, para. 18 (col. 788).

establish the superiority of contemplative life over ecclesiastical office, his citation of these two saints suggests that he was familiar with their hagiographies (and probably those of other hermit saints), and demonstrates that he saw eremitic life as legitimised by its participation in this tradition.

Rolle's argument that modern people can achieve the same spiritual heights as the ancient saints also represents a claim to saintly tradition. Rolle always argues this in the context of discussing eremitic life, positioning himself as a successor to his saintly predecessors. This theme appears in the *Incendium amoris* and the *Melos amoris*. In chapter 14 of the *Incendium*, Rolle contests those who believe that 'nunc nullos tam sanctos ut prophete uel apostoli fuerunt' ('now there is nobody so holy as the prophets or apostles were'), thus arguing implicitly that solitaries (who are the focus of the chapter) can attain the same sanctity as the ancient prophets and apostles.[78] Similarly in chapter 33, Rolle argues that modern people can be taken up to see God's glory since they 'non [sint][79] inequales' ('are not unequal') to those whom the Holy Spirit inspired in antiquity.[80] Again, the broader discussion is about solitary life, indicating Rolle's belief that solitaries specifically can partake in the advanced sanctity of the ancient saints. In both these examples, Rolle may simply have the Biblical saints in mind (since 'apostles' and 'prophets' typically designate Biblical figures, and the Biblical authors are the most immediate examples of those inspired by the Holy Spirit). However, in the *Melos amoris* it is clear that Rolle also considers the Desert Fathers his predecessors. In chapter 47, Rolle identifies his eremitic-contemplative practice more generally with the 'antiquitus... perfecciores' ('the more perfect of ancient times'), who left monasteries for solitude and for the 'canori contemplacionis' ('song of contemplation').[81] Such a reference indicates a familiarity with the Lives of the Desert Fathers, translations of which were particularly widespread in medieval Yorkshire, as Hanna points out.[82] Here, Rolle also signals that even *canor*, a distinctive

[78] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 14, p. 185.
[79] sint] sunt **De**, sint **DdR**
[80] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 33, p. 240.
[81] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 147, lines 7–9.
[82] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lxx.

hallmark of his spirituality, should be understood as participating within an ancient eremitic tradition.[83] Likewise, in the *Incendium*, he says that his understanding of heat, sweetness, and song emerged from his study of Scripture and, in chapter 15 of the *Incendium*, he cites the example of the 'sanctorum patrum' ('holy fathers') to justify hermits moving around, shortly before relating his first experience of *canor*.[84] Thus, even as Rolle describes his unique personal spiritual experiences, he still suggests that these experiences fit within a tradition of eremitic sanctity.

Rolle does also present his claim to saintly inheritance as unusual in the present. When he argues that modern people can reach the same level of sanctity as the ancients, he speaks as if he contests a commonly held view, saying, for instance, 'Erratis enim, fratres, si putatis...' ('For you are mistaken, brothers, if you think...').[85] In chapter 47 of the *Melos amoris*, after citing the example of the Desert Fathers, Rolle writes, 'Iam nulli exeant: omnes amant solacium hominum' ('Now none depart: all love the solace of men'), presenting himself as if he is the lone inheritor of an ancient tradition.[86] Rolle's depiction of himself as unconventional in claiming this saintly inheritance is reflected in how he describes himself as 'daring' to speak about his experiences: in the opening of the *Melos amoris*, he writes 'Amor utique audacem efficit animum...' ('Love certainly makes the soul bold...'), and 'Urget igitur amoris habundancia ut audeam aperire eloquium...' ('Therefore, the abundance of love urges that I dare to open eloquence...').[87] Rolle dares to speak about love, he tells us, so that nobody can claim:

> quia non dignatur Deus indulcorare homines in hoc mundo nec magnificare modernos in melliphona multitudine sicut solebat sanctos qui antiquitus ambulabant.[88]

[83] Rolle's experiences of heavenly song were notably anticipated by his eremitic predecessor Godric of Finchale; see Monika Otter, 'Godric of Finchale's *Canora Modulatio*: The Auditory and Visionary Worlds of a Twelfth-Century Hermit', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 24 (2013), 127–44.
[84] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 15, p. 188.
[85] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 14, p. 185.
[86] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 147, lines 9–10.
[87] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 3, lines 1, 4–5.
[88] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 3, lines 11–13.

> that God does not deign to sweeten men in this world nor to magnify moderns in the honey-sounding multitude, just as he was accustomed to magnify the saints who used to walk in antiquity.

Again, Rolle implies that he is contesting a commonly held view to the contrary, and his language of daring seems to imply that he considers his claim to an ancient saintly inheritance as bold. He thus depicts himself as unusual among his contemporaries in claiming the lineage of ancient saints.

But we should not take Rolle's depiction of his rarity here at face value. The suggestion that modern saints can reach the spiritual heights of the ancients was by no means unprecedented. Rather, as we have seen, it was a common trope for hagiographers of hermits to associate their saints with the Desert Fathers and with earlier hermit saints. It was not even unprecedented for hermits to be considered saints within their lifetimes. In the introduction to this thesis, we saw the example of Rolle's contemporary, William of St Leonard, Losfield, whose hermitage became a pilgrimage site while he was still living there.[89] Similarly, Wulfric of Haselbury and Godric of Finchale were both treated as saints during their lifetimes, and Godric's *Life* was even begun while he was still alive.[90] Of course, Rolle was unusual in making this claim for himself (although he generally does so implicitly and in passing), and, of course, saints were uncommon anyway. But the idea that a hermit could in theory become a living saint like the ancients was more conventional than even Rolle would have us believe, supporting the possibility that Rolle's contemporaries could have seen him as such.

Rolle's invocation of a tradition of solitary saints raises a further problem with the hypothesis that he was involved in pastoral care: his argument for the superiority of the contemplative over the active life, and his view that these were mutually exclusive. This topic appears sporadically across Rolle's works, but sustained discussion appears in chapter 21 of the *Incendium amoris*, chapter 1 of *Super Canticum canticorum*, chapter 8 of the *Melos amoris* (a

[89] Kirkwood, 'St Leonard's Hermitage'; Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England*, pp. 159–60.
[90] Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, pp. 186–87.

reworking of the material from *Super Canticum*), *De vita activa et contemplativa* (also known as *Super mulierem fortem*), and *The Form of Living*. Throughout these accounts, Rolle strongly claims the superiority of the contemplative over the active life. He makes this point in the most understated manner in *The Form of Living*, where he says that contemplative life 'is in more swetnesse gostly... hit is lestynger and sykerer, restfuller, delitabeller, louelier and more medeful'.[91] Elsewhere, he emphasises the inferiority of the active life more acerbically. For instance, in *Super Canticum canticorum* Rolle writes:

> Parum enim prodest corporalis exercitacio vbi mens a diuinis cogitandis distracta, in fallibilium mundi rerum fantasmatibus non metuit discurrere et oculum cordis ab intencione spiritalis gustus permittit euagere.[92]
>
> For bodily exertion avails little when the mind, distracted from divine thoughts, does not fear to run about in the illusions associated with fallible things of this world and allows the eye of the heart to wander from concentrating on spiritual taste.

Rolle's point is that the devotional practice necessary to achieve contemplation is impossible for those preoccupied by the distractions of worldly affairs. Afterwards comes a strident assertion that active people 'non audeant... uiro uere contemplatiuo in labore maiorem, set nec equalem se ostendere' ('should not dare to display themselves as greater in their labour, indeed not even equal to a truly contemplative man').[93] Rolle's emphasis on the inferiority of secular living extends also to life in monastic community; elsewhere, he writes 'quo congregacioni interesse innitimur, eo ipso a dulcedine superne contemplacionis longius separamur' ('the more we try to engage in a group, the further we are separated from the sweetness of the highest contemplation').[94] In *The Form of Living*, Rolle even includes casual teaching of one's household (as mandated by the episcopal decrees)

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[91] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 837–38, 840–41.
[92] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 140–43. This is Hanna's translation.
[93] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 143–45. This is Hanna's translation.
[94] Rolle, *De vita activa et contemplativa*, in Rolle, *Unprinted Latin*, lines 56–57. This is Hanna's translation. See also Rolle's critique of the idea that perfect life should involve going 'ad congregacionem' in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 13, p. 179.

within the active life.[95] This reinforces Rolle's strong emphasis on the incompatibility of the active and contemplative lives, and the superiority of the latter.

Rolle's view on the two lives was wholly orthodox, but it was not the only option available. As Jones points out, the ideal for Gregory was to pass from the active, to the contemplative, and then to the mixed life.[96] Subsequently, Clare Stancliffe has argued that two traditions existed in the Middle Ages: one which saw the active and the contemplative lives as incompatible, and one in which the contemplative life was not opposed to good works.[97] Similarly, in his study of the active life, Steele suggests that while the lives were usually defined in opposition, there are authors who suggest that some kind of active, pastoral care should follow contemplation.[98]

In a few places, Rolle does directly consider whether contemplative life can be compatible with pastoral ministry, and he concedes that it might be possible. In the *Incendium amoris*, he takes a more measured view of the value of active life, writing that 'Sunt tamen multi actiui meliores aliquibus contemplatiuis. Sed optimi contemplatiui superiores sunt optimis actiuis' ('However there are many actives better than some contemplatives. But the best contemplatives are superior to the best actives').[99] He then suggests that, if somebody could genuinely fulfil the demands of both lives then 'magnus esset ille' ('he would be great'), but he thinks that it is unlikely to be possible: 'Nescio si unquam aliquis mortalis [homo][100] habuit: mihi impossibile uidetur quod utrumque simul fiat' ('I do not know if any mortal man ever had this: it seems to me impossible that each could happen at once').[101] Rolle continues by clarifying that Jesus cannot be emulated in this respect, since he did not have to labour to contemplate God (freeing him up for active engagement with the world), and that

[95] 'to ordeyn hare meyne in þe drede and in þe loue of God', Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 850–51.
[96] Jones, 'Vae Soli', pp. 20–21.
[97] Stancliffe, *Pastor and Solitary*.
[98] Steele, *Active Life*, pp. 61–62, 150–51.
[99] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 21, p. 204.
[100] homo] hoc **De**, homo **DdR**.
[101] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 21, p. 206.

there may be occasions when a contemplative has to take on ecclesiastical roles, but they should ideally go to less advanced contemplatives.

Rolle raises a similar question in the *Melos amoris* and *Emendatio vitae*, where his discussion is briefer but appears open-minded about the possibility of someone being both active and contemplative. In the *Melos amoris*, Rolle says that possessing both lives happens 'raro vel nunquam' ('rarely or never'), and adds that, if someone can do both, 'tanto laudabilior erit' ('he will be so much more laudable'), but this will only happen if he becomes contemplative before becoming a preacher.[102] In *Emendatio vitae*, Rolle takes the idea that such a person would be more laudable further. In the twelfth chapter, Rolle notes that exceptional solitaries who fulfil the active and contemplative life 'in hoc superant, quod ceteris paribus aureolam propter predicationem suam merentur' ('surpass in this: that with other peers they deserve a celestial crown because of their preaching').[103] The 'aureola' (here translated 'celestial crown') was the heavenly reward traditionally thought to be due for virgins, martyrs, and doctors.[104] Although Rolle here (rather surprisingly) seems to suggest that such people attain superiority in this respect for their preaching (surpassing other contemplatives), Rolle nonetheless treats this as exceptional, introducing the sentence with the cautiously-phrased 'Nisi aliqui forte in statu tali sint...' ('Unless perhaps there may be some in such a state...').[105] Thus, he presents the preaching contemplative as an exception to his foregoing claim that contemplatives are superior to actives, though without saying that such a person necessarily can exist.

[102] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 48, p. 154, lines 8, 17–18.
[103] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, lines 110–11. Compare similar discussion at Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 7, lines 109–23.
[104] T. Ortolan, 'Auréole', in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot, and Emile Amann, 15 vols (Paris, 1903), 1:2571–75.
[105] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, line 107.

In any case, Rolle's discussions about the potential for a mixed life are probably best understood as Rolle thinking through the possible exceptions to his argument (as demanded by the example of Christ or the orthodox concept of the 'aureola'), rather than as applying to Rolle himself, as if covertly trying to signal himself to be a pastoral contemplative. In each case, he is talking about someone wholly engaged in the active life – in *Emendatio* he refers to the formal 'predicacionis officium' ('office of preaching') rather than a contemplative who preaches on the side – suggesting a level of pastoral ministry which he typically defines his own practice against.[106] And he always expresses scepticism that it is possible, without ruling it out entirely.

But again, we should not take Rolle's repudiation of the active life at face value. We have already seen that hermit hagiographies regularly depict solitaries involved in pastoral care, and that they only explicitly address this tension in their occasional reluctance to meet visitors (though they always capitulate). Whether Rolle's take on the active life rules out any pastoral ministry hinges on exactly how Rolle understands the two lives. Although Rolle often justifies the superiority of contemplative over active life on the basis that you need to be far from worldly affairs to experience contemplation, in other cases Rolle stresses that what really matters is inner solitude and stillness, and hence that, if someone can achieve this, it is acceptable for them to be around the worldly.[107] His main point seems to be to justify living among secular patrons rather than in a monastery, but such comments suggest that his thinking was more nuanced than his typically strident and polarising rhetoric may suggest. In one case, Rolle directs the reader not to consider his own life among secular people as an example, since it is only possible for the spiritually advanced.[108] This suggests that Rolle's discussions of active and contemplative life may be generally oriented towards what he considered most relevant for his readers, rather than offering a systematic evaluation of the possibilities for advanced contemplatives such as himself to instruct others. Rolle's recognition that

[106] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, line 108.
[107] See, for example, Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 1–49.
[108] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 133, line 26–27.

some contemplatives can travel and live among secular people (as he does) whilst still cultivating the inner solitude and rest needed for contemplative life demonstrates that what ultimately matters is a person's inner state, rather than the absolute application of a set of rules about what contemplatives can and cannot do. Therefore, when Rolle repudiates the active life, he may have primarily had full-time exterior ministry or labour in mind (which most obviously inhibits contemplative life), without absolutely excluding the possibility that some contemplatives could perform some kind of pastoral care, just as spending time with secular people was possible for some.

Supporting this possibility, Rolle actually describes himself engaged in pastoral care in person. In one such instance, defending his living among secular patrons, he describes his pastoral ministry explicitly:

> Comparui communiter inter carnales et familiaris fueram cum divite domorum, iocum cum iuvenculis raro gerebam, loquebar cum feminis de fide Factoris, ludens nonnunquam, sed laudans latenter, ridens cum reliquis... a nullis nimirum eram absconsus qui de amore Auctoris audire amabant... Nam hec est intencio qua sic pergebam, ut omnes addiscerent Auctorem amare vanaque relinquerent et recia ruine, plus Deo quam homini desiderent servire ac sapere celestia contempnereque terrena. Studui ut starent spurciciam spernentes, et protuli percunctans[109] verba virtutis quatinus concupiscerent Christum, non carnem, et virgines viverent a viciis volantes ad vitam, vota Regi rectissime non reprobe reddentes. Profecto plurisque et hoc predicavi ut amico mundano non macularentur...[110]
>
> I have commonly appeared among the carnal and I have been familiar with a man rich of property, I have occasionally made a joke with young people, I have spoken with women about the faith of the Creator, sometimes playing, but privately praising, laughing with the rest... doubtless I was hidden from nobody who loved to hear about the love of the Author... For this is the intention with which I was proceeding in this way: that all might learn to love the Author and abandon vain things and the nets of ruin, that they might love to serve God more than man, and to taste celestial things and condemn worldly things. I have striven that they might stand, spurning filthiness, and, examining them, I have pronounced words of virtue so that they might desire Christ, not the flesh, and that they might live as virgins, flying from vices to life, rendering prayers to the King most rightly, and not basely. And certainly, I have preached this to many more so that they might not be polluted by a worldly friend...

[109] Two manuscripts record 'pro cun(c)tos' for 'percunctans', which seems to make more sense in context and would show Rolle emphasising his broad audience.
[110] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 132, line 21 to p. 133, line 7.

Again, we must be wary of taking this at face value: the context is self-defence, which may have predisposed him to exaggerate or even invent his pastoral intentions.[111] Nonetheless, this quotation reveals that Rolle's conception of solitary life did not absolutely preclude exhorting and ministering to those around him, which is here even presented as a desired outcome of life among the worldly. Rolle's proclaimed purpose here corresponds with the eremitic ideal expressed in the hagiographies of hermits, who inspired people both to repentance and to pursuit of contemplative life. He refers clearly here to rejecting sin – 'viciis' ('vices'), 'lubricum' ('a slippery thing', often used referring to immorality) – as well as spurring people to 'sapere celestia contempnereque terrena' ('to taste heavenly and condemn worldly things'), a distinctly eremitic *topos*, demonstrating an awareness that hermits should act as role models for the general Christian.[112] But in addition, Rolle speaks in this passage of verbal teaching: 'qui... audire amabant' ('who loved to hear'), 'protuli... verba virtutis' ('I have pronounced words of virtue'), 'predicavi' ('I have preached'). Given that in context Rolle is talking about spending time with people, it seems likely that this verbal language is not metaphorical, and that Rolle was open to the possibility that a hermit would exhort his associates (at least in theory). Thus, regardless of whether Rolle is exaggerating his claim that he only spent time with others in order to instruct them, Rolle shows by his defence here that he did not, at this point in his life, see pastoral ministry of this kind to be wholly incompatible with solitary, contemplative life.

In several places, Rolle also alludes in passing to the idea that a contemplative can teach others about the love of God. Rolle's frequent use of the verb *audere* ('to dare') to describe himself sharing his spiritual experiences is balanced by his use of *cogi* ('to be compelled'): he claims that God's love compels him to speak to others about love.[113] (Notably, in her justification for teaching as

[111] Indeed, Rolle elsewhere admits to inappropriate actions towards women while a hermit (*Incendium amoris*, ch. 12, pp. 178–79) which he refutes here (*Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 132, lines 24–35).
[112] For 'lubricum', see Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 132, line 25.
[113] See, for example, Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, line 72; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 4, line 30; Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 118–36.

a woman, Julian of Norwich similarly observes that 'charyte styrres me to telle ȝowe it', raising the possibility that this argument was more generally used to justify a teaching role for someone not typically engaged in such ministry.)[114] In *Contra amatores mundi*, after explaining that he is compelled to speak about his experiences, Rolle adds that instructing others can be beneficial for contemplatives:

> Amantes itaque eciam aliis amorem predicare studuimus, nam et nobis hoc valde utile est, quia tanto ardencius et suavius in amore capimur, quanto libencius hoc quod capere potuimus aliis predicamus.[115]
>
> And so lovers also have striven to preach love to others, for this is also very useful for us, because the more freely we preach to others what we have been able to seize, the more ardently and sweetly we are seized in love.

Rolle here generalises to contemplatives in the plural, as if some kind of teaching role is typical for them. He seems to envision this as something which occurs incidentally, as a result of being stirred by love and which is also beneficial for the contemplative, rather than the engaged ministry of the active life – the verb 'predicare' ('to preach') can be used quite loosely so need not signify priestly preaching.[116] In chapter 48 of the *Melos amoris*, when Rolle considers whether a contemplative can be a preacher, he suggests that they will be unable to perform exterior labour (distinguishing this discussion from passages where he considers a contemplative fully engaged in the active life, such as Christ), and then writes, 'Doceat, exhortetur, suadeat omnes ad charitatem, ut vivant in concordia et castitate, in mansuetudine et paciencia' ('Let him teach, exhort, persuade all towards love, so that they might live in harmony and chastity, in gentleness and patience').[117] In *Super Canticum canticorum*, Rolle says,

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[114] The passage only appears in the short text; see Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, 2 vols (Toronto, 1978), 1:222, lines 43–44. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton shows that this carefully reasoned passage demonstrates Julian's familiarity with typical arguments for and against women preaching, supporting the possibility that love's compulsion was a justification used more widely; see Kerby-Fulton, 'When Women Preached', pp. 34–36. Of course, an alternative possibility is that Julian was influenced by Rolle.

[115] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 137–41.

[116] 'praedicare', DMLBS.

[117] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 48, p. 154, lines 21–23.

> nos qui eciam, iuuante Deo, scripturas sacras intelligere possumus ad legendum et audiendum uerbum Dei et alijs scribendis et docendis nos accingere debemus.[118]
>
> we, who with God's help are able to understand holy scripture, ought to gird ourselves for reading and hearing God's word and writing and teaching it to others.

Here, Rolle is talking about contemplatives, again in the first-person plural, and this quotation thus shows him generalising that contemplatives should be knowledgeable about Scripture and should teach others. In *Super lectiones mortuorum*, Rolle says that all people, including priests, monks, hermits, and other men and women who pursue voluntary poverty, should not only fight their own temptations but should help others do the same.[119] Rolle thus repeatedly suggests that someone who is unable to accomplish a full active ministry due to their absorption in God may, and indeed should, instruct others. Such passages offer hints that Rolle was, in theory at least, more open-minded about the possibility of a contemplative instructing others than his aggressive privileging of the contemplative over the active life might suggest.

Rolle's discussion of himself ministering to secular patrons suggests that such teaching could take place in person. Despite the unreliability of the *Officium*, its narratives of Rolle ministering in person to Margaret Kirkby seem extensive enough that Rolle probably did have this kind of mentor-mentee relationship with her (or at least that this was plausible to its compilers). *Judica me* similarly implies it was addressed to someone known personally to Rolle. This raises the possibility that Rolle's other Latin works were written in the context of a broader pastoral ministry, and that he had a reputation as a spiritual authority beyond his works amongst laypeople and the religious while he was still alive.

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[118] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 11–13. Hanna's translation is given.
[119] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 6, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 168 (ed. Moyes, 2:230, line 19 to 2:231, line 3).

Indeed, in the *Melos amoris*, Rolle explicitly places his own writing in a tradition of holy texts written by saints. In chapter 57, Rolle considers those who do not believe what is written in holy books, addressing first the Bible, and then books by saints, whom he describes as 'expositores' ('expositors') suggesting Biblical exegesis of some kind.[120] Rolle defends the trustworthiness of such books by invoking their authors' sanctity, which is witnessed by the miracles that occur at their tombs.[121] Then, Rolle takes a step further by placing his own writing in that same tradition:

> Preterea, numquid non scribo pro tua salvacione? Tam districtum iudicium sencies tu quantum ego. *Corpus meum castigo et in servitutem redigo, ne aliis predicans reprobus efficiar* [cf. 1 Cor 9:27]. Si ergo timeo, quare non timeres et tu, presertim cum Deo equalis sit cura de omnibus [cf. Wis 6:8]? Aut quid proderit michi si homines dampnentur? Numquid ego dampno malos, vel pocius eorum malicia? Scribimus igitur non ut dampnentur, sed ut magis convertantur et vivant et salventur.[122]
>
> Besides, can it be that I do not write for your salvation? You will feel the same strict judgement as I. *I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, preaching to others, I am made a reprobate*. Therefore, if I fear, why should you not also fear, especially since for God the care of all people is equal? At any rate, what use is it to me if men are damned? Can it be that I damn the wicked, or is it rather their wickedness? Therefore, we write not so that they are damned, but rather so that they may be converted and live and be saved.

Within this passage a slippage occurs in whose writings Rolle is talking about: he begins with 'scribo' ('I write'), referring to his own activity in writing, but by the end of the passage this has become 'scribimus' ('we write'). Who else could the 'we' be here but the saintly writers whom Rolle has just discussed? Lest this seem overly self-aggrandising, enclosed within this claim is Rolle's explicit comparison between himself and the sinner, where he stresses his equality with the sinner: they will be treated equally by God, and are equally at risk of damnation. Nevertheless, in associating himself with saintly authors, whose graves become sites of miracles, Rolle displays an astonishing prescience of the posthumous development of his cult, raising the possibility that he had already begun to gain some reputation as a living saint, or at least aspired towards it. (Rolle claims that miracles are not

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[120] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, line 20.
[121] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, lines 20–25.
[122] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, lines 26–33. The reference to Wis 6:8 was identified by Vandenbroucke et al., who also suggest an allusion to Ezek 18:23, in *Le Chant d'amour*, 2:254.

necessary for saintliness earlier in the *Melos*, in the *Incendium*, and in the Latin Psalter, which may also indicate his saintly aspirations.)[123] He shows that he includes his own writing in a tradition of saintly writers, authorised to teach in some form by their sanctity. The outcome of his texts as given here is to bring readers to salvation, an odd way to characterise the *Melos*, which seems more preoccupied with advanced contemplative spirituality than the more basic *cura animarum* (though we will return to this point in chapter 3). But this aim does align with the claims made by the hermit hagiographies, and with the broader ideal that a hermit's life should inspire people towards repentance. This may mean that the form of Rolle's teaching was simply in the projection of his persona, which was essentially Watson's argument (and Rolle does highlight the value of saintly exemplars).[124] But equally, when he calls these saintly authors 'expositores' ('expositors'), he implies a more didactic form of teaching. Most of Rolle's own writings, of course, are organised around exposition of Scripture in some form.

In conclusion, Rolle draws his own authority from his saintly predecessors, and in doing so draws attention to their usefulness as teachers through their writings. Rolle also represents himself as engaged in pastoral ministry. Thus, Rolle maintains the same tension between solitary, contemplative life and spiritual instruction that is highly typical in depictions of hermits. Furthermore, his apprehension of himself as participating in a saintly heritage implies the possibility that he had some reputation amongst his connections while he was alive, or at least that he sought to cultivate one, and that his works were written in this context. To consider further the question of to whom Rolle wrote his works and why, we must turn to the manuscripts.

[123] See Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 488 (for the Latin Psalter quotation); Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 38, p. 118, line 10; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 3, p. 153.
[124] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 38, p. 118, lines 11–13.

Rolle's First Readers

In 2016, Hanna wrote that Rolle's 'own activity, including the modes by which he (or others?) promulgated his own texts, has remained for too long an unexamined issue'.[125] What role Rolle played in disseminating his texts, to whom he sent them, and in what context, are central questions for considering whether it is plausible that Rolle conceived of himself as writing for spiritual instruction and was engaged in pastoral care in practice.

Manuscript evidence suggests that Rolle's major English and Latin works initially spread by epistolary dispersal. *The Form of Living* was written at some point in 1348-1349 for Margaret Kirkby, a former nun at Hampole who had become a recluse.[126] A metrical prologue in one manuscript claims that the English Psalter was also written for Margaret Kirkby; the logical deduction that Margaret owned a holograph copy is supported by the presence (in the mid-fifteenth century) of one at Hampole, where Margaret retired after Rolle's death.[127] Alongside Margaret Kirkby, CUL, MS Dd.5.64 claims that its copies of *Ego dormio* and *The Commandment* were written for individual nuns at Yedingham and Hampole respectively.[128] This implies a model of epistolary dispersal for the initial transmission of the English works, which Hanna has argued for in his account of their manuscripts: he points out there is little evidence that the epistles travelled as a group at an early stage, suggesting, in turn, that they were dispersed to different readers.[129] In Margaret's case at least, this likely occurred in the context of the face-to-face mentorship documented in the *Officium*. Hanna also argues that a model of epistolary dissemination best explains the initial circulation of Rolle's major Latin works.[130] He suggests that, as with the English works, there was no systematic or

[125] Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript', p. 114.
[126] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 34–36, 502–11.
[127] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 173–74; Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. xxxv.
[128] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 247, 252, 501–2; Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. 26. Hanna finds these colophons authoritative; see Hanna, 'The Transmission', p. 328.
[129] Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, pp. xxvi–xxviii.
[130] Hanna, 'The Transmission'.

centralised dissemination of Rolle's works, and little evidence of the Latin works travelling together as a coherent, recognisable corpus, but rather that collections of Rolle's Latin works had to be assembled piece-by-piece each time. This implies that Rolle's Latin works were dispersed before people decided to compile them, supporting the idea that Rolle made and sent separate copies to known individuals.

Three further pieces of evidence support Rolle's role in disseminating his works and demonstrate that the first scribal copies were made during his lifetime. First is Hanna's discovery of some flyleaves of the *Melos amoris* in BodL, MS Bodley 647 which may date from Rolle's life.[131] By comparing this to later copies, Hanna shows that behind this manuscript were at least two copies which were not holographs and were likely associated with the North of England. This shows that Rolle had at least some early circulation, probably while he was alive. It is also notable that the flyleaves contain additional texts in the side and bottom margin; I have identified the texts in the bottom margin as extracts from the *Legenda aurea*.[132] The hand may well be contemporary with the main text (and must have been added before the pages became flyleaves in the early fifteenth century).[133] The collocation is suggestive, resonating with the reception of Rolle himself as a saint in the early fifteenth century, and perhaps showing that saintly associations were made at a very early period of Rolle's circulation.

A second development has been the emphasis on Rolle as a scribal author, and thus as a maker of books, particularly in Kraebel's recent research.[134] Kraebel has suggested that some of

[131] Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript'.
[132] The extract on ff. i–i^{v} is ch. 46, 'De sancto Gregorio', in Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Tavarnuzze, 1998), 1:302–3; ff. ii–ii^{v} is ch. 120, 'De sancto Augustino' (2:848, 2:851–52); f. iii is ch. 177, 'De sancto Pelagio papa' (2:1281); f. iii^{v} is ch. 34, 'De quadragesima' (1:227–28); ff. iv–iv^{v} is also ch. 46, 'De sancto Gregorio' (1:298, 1:301–2).
[133] Hanna suggests that the scribe may be the same as of the main text; see Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript', p. 109. A notable palaeographical feature are the forked ascenders, which suggest an early dating.
[134] Especially Andrew Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled: Booklet Production, Single-Author Anthologies, and the Making of Bodley 861', *Speculum*, 94.4 (2019), 959–1005.

Rolle's very brief Latin works were added by him as filler in manuscripts and has also found evidence of Rolle substantially redrafting his own works (the Latin Psalter and *Super symbolum Athanasii*).[135] The survival of multiple versions of these texts suggests that Rolle disseminated an earlier version before a redraft, thus probably showing Rolle actively circulating his texts while alive. There are hints that Rolle also copied out texts by other authors as well as composing his own: the frequent appearance of *Novem virtutes* alongside Rolle led Allen to suggest he may have copied it in a compilation.[136] In addition, medieval references to holographs of *Judica me*, *Incendium amoris*, *Melos amoris*, the English Psalter, and possibly the Latin Psalter demonstrate that Rolle produced and distributed copies of his work himself.[137] As we saw in the first section, making books was not abnormal for a hermit.

One further piece of evidence is not itself fresh at all: Henry Kirkstead's catalogue, which certainly contains the earliest record of Rolle, and which was known to Allen in 1927 but seems to have been missed altogether by recent scholarship.[138] Allen knew the catalogue as one written by Boston of Bury in 1410, making it contemporary with the far more comprehensive account of Rolle's canon in MS Bodley 861 and thus not particularly important. But in 1966, Richard Rouse recognised that Boston was a later scribe of an original catalogue by Henry Kirkstead, thus re-dating the catalogue to c. 1360.[139]

The Kirkstead catalogue contains most of Rolle's major works, often under unusual titles and some in multiple copies. The texts with a substantial manuscript footprint which are absent from this

[135] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 977–80; Andrew Kraebel, 'Latin Manuscripts of Richard Rolle at the University of Illinois', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 119.4 (2020), 512–13; Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, pp. 192–202.
[136] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 320.
[137] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', p. 962n.12.
[138] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 418–19.
[139] Richard Rouse, 'Bostonus Buriensis and the Author of the *Catalogus Scriptorum Ecclesie*', *Speculum*, 41.3 (1966), 471–99.

list are Rolle's Latin Psalter, *Super Canticum canticorum*, and *The Form of Living*. The full list is as follows (with Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse's identifications added in brackets):[140]

> *Incendium amoris*
> *Melos amoris*
> *De amore divino* (probably *Contra amatores mundi* but Bale cites *Incendium* by this title)
> *De timore Domini et contemptu mundi* (probably *Contra amatores mundi*)
> *Vehiculum vitae sive xii capitula* (*Emendatio vitae*)
> *Super lectiones de Officio mortuorum*
> *Super psalmum: Domine in virtute* (*Super Psalmum vicesimum*)
> *Super psalterium duntaxat Latin[e] et Angl[ice]* (English Psalter)[141]
> *Super Lamentationes Jeremiae* (*Super Threnos*)
> *Super 4^{tum} librum sententiarum, secundum quosdam* (unidentified)
> *De glorificatione sanctorum* (probably also *Melos amoris*)

Kirkstead drew his catalogue from the library at Bury St Edmund's, but also other libraries nearby, and sometimes indicated in which library he saw each text. In this list, the first six are marked as from Bury St Edmund's whilst the provenance of the rest is not indicated, but Rouse and Rouse suggest that the entire list was probably drawn from the Bury St Edmund's library.[142] Rouse and Rouse also argue that the entries under 'R' were mostly completed by around 1345, well within Rolle's lifetime.[143] This list proves that Rolle's works could be found in a collection, and it is quite likely that this was the case before his death. We might surmise that Kirkstead probably found a manuscript collection of Rolle, since it is unlikely that all these works would have travelled here by entirely separate routes (this would imply a larger-scale dissemination of Rolle than the paucity of early manuscripts reflects). Nevertheless, the presence of multiple titles of works for the same text suggests that Rolle's works did reach Bury St Edmunds by more than one path of transmission, perhaps in multiple collections or separate booklets, since it is unlikely a single manuscript would contain duplicates of multiple texts. These multiple titles also suggest that there was probably not a

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[140] *Henry of Kirkestede,* "*Catalogus de libris autenticis et apocrifis*", ed. by Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse (London, 2004), pp. 446–48.
[141] The original manuscript of Kirkstead's catalogue does not survive; all we have is Thomas Tanner's seventeenth-century transcription. Tanner was not sure about 'duntaxat' here; Rouse and Rouse suggest the original reading was 'dupliciter', p. 447; on the textual history of the *Catalogus*, see pp. clxxiv–ccx.
[142] Rouse and Rouse, *Henry of Kirkestede*, p. cviii–cix.
[143] Rouse and Rouse, *Henry of Kirkestede*, p. lxxxviii.

single institutional centre (like Hampole nunnery) responsible for organised dissemination of Rolle's texts, in which case we might expect a more consistent pattern of circulation.

Despite the importance of the catalogue's witness, we remain at some removes from Rolle himself. The catalogue contains copies of the same work witnessed under multiple titles; this may reflect Rolle's use of distinct titles in different copies of his work, or alternative titles may reflect scribal additions between Rolle and the copies in Bury St Edmunds.[144] Furthermore, it is unlikely that Bury St Edmunds was the original recipient for all the copies in this list: it is conceivable that Rolle sent a collection of his works to Bury St Edmunds or to someone associated with it, but less plausible that he sent the same work twice to the same recipient under different titles. The catalogue also contains a *Super 4^{tum} librum sententiarum* which is difficult to identify with any of Rolle's works or with the kinds of texts which Rolle wrote. So, while this list does not necessarily give an insight into how Rolle packaged his works, it does show that scribal copies were likely being made in his lifetime. It also shows that Rolle must have played an important role in the original dissemination of his works.

Shrewsbury School MS 25: Evidence for a Rolle Holograph

Shrewsbury School MS 25 offers further fresh evidence for how Rolle circulated his Latin works. It is a composite of two manuscripts originally separate; the second (hereafter referred to as SS) contains Rolle's Latin Psalter, followed by his *Super orationem dominicam*, *Emendatio vitae*, and some Latin filler.[145] SS represents one of the oldest surviving copies of Rolle's works. Allen and

[144] On Rolle's use of multiple titles, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 113–14.
[145] N.R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, ed. by A.J. Piper, Andrew G. Watson, and Ian Campbell Cunningham, 5 vols (Oxford, 1969), 4:312–13. That the manuscript is a composite is indicated by differences in scribal hands, decorated initials, labelling of quires, and density of annotations.

Rüdiger Spahl both dated it s. xiv^{2}.[146] N.R. Ker and A.I. Doyle reportedly dated it s. xiv^{2} and probably s. xiv$^{3/4}$.[147] Given that Hanna has said virtually no Latin manuscripts date from before c. 1400, this makes it an important early witness.[148] Furthermore, SS witnesses an even older collection of Rolle, since, as Ker points out, its quiring follows that of its exemplar, suggesting its exemplar contained the same collection of texts in the same order.[149] Often, at the end of a quire, the text is cramped or there is a gap, and the new quire starts with a fresh hand, suggesting a mode of production in which a team of scribes took apart an exemplar and distributed its quires amongst themselves to copy (meaning each scribe had to end at the same point in the text). Though the final texts all appear only in the final quire, at least allowing for the possibility that they were tacked on by the SS scribes, this general mode of production makes it more likely that this is a quire-by-quire replica of a very old Rolle collection.

The filler at the end of Shrewsbury School MS 25 has major ramifications for the significance of the hypothetical exemplar. It contains four extracts, the second of which is a list of six different kinds of dreams, taken from the *Glossa ordinaria* on Daniel 2:28.[150] It is introduced as 'In quadam postilla super historias et est in glosa danielis 2' ('in a certain postil on the histories and it is in the *Glossa* of Daniel 2).[151] A description of six different kinds of dreams also appears in Rolle's *The Form of Living*. In her edition of that text, S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson suggested Gregory as its source, since its account roughly corresponds with Rolle's.[152] However, a comparison between these three texts

[146] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 45–46; Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, p. 65.
[147] Clark reports this, citing personal correspondence, in 'Biblical Commentator', p. 166. A date of s. xiv^{2} appears in Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts*, 4:312.
[148] Hanna, 'Oldest Manuscript', p. 106.
[149] Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts*, 4:312–13.
[150] *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 6 vols (Venice, 1603), 4:1513A. This edition of the *Glossa* is cited in this thesis purely on the basis of its availability, and in the absence of clear evidence of what recension Rolle would have used. Its late date is not ideal, but is ultimately unlikely to undermine my discussion, given that I use it primarily to identify sources which Rolle quotes directly. Given that the *Glossa* is a known source for Rolle (see Clark, 'Biblical Commentator', pp. 165–66), it seems reasonable to conclude that, when he shares material with the Venice 1603 *Glossa*, this material was present in a copy which he consulted.
[151] SS, f. 173A.
[152] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 194, n. to lines 220–6.

shows that the passage in *The Form of Living* was in fact translated almost word for word from the *Glossa ordinaria* extract:

> I wil þat þou witte þat þer ben vj maners of dremes. Two ben, neþer holy man ne other may eschape: þey bene if har womb be ouer lere or ouer ful; than many vanitees in dyuers maneres befalleth ham slepynge. The þrid is of illusioun of þe deuyl, oure enemy. The ferth is of thoght before and illusioun folwynge. The fyfte þrogh reuelacioun of þe Holy Goste, þat is done in many maneres. The vj is of thoghtes before þat falleth to Criste or holy chirche, reuelacioun comynge aftre. (Rolle, *The Form of Living*)[153]

> sex modis tangunt animum imagines somniorum. Aliquando namque somnia uentris plenitudine uel inanitate, aliquando uero inlusione, aliquando cogitatione simul et inlusione, aliquando reuelatione, aliquando autem cogitatione simul et reuelatione generantur. (Gregory, *Dialogues*)[154]

> Sic inueni sex sunt genera sompniorum seu [materie][155]. Duo sunt que nemo nec etiam sanctus [euitare][156] potest, ex nimia [ventris][157] inanitate et nimia ingurgitacione. Tertium ex illusionibus inimici. Quartum ex cogitacione premissa et illusione secuta. Quintum per reuelacionum spiriti sancti, qui multis modis sit. Sextum ex [cogitationibus][158] premissis ad christum et ecclesiam pertinentibus reuelacione subsecuta. (SS)[159]

This coincidence means that this chunk of filler is likely to have originated with Rolle. In support, the other extracts also seem like the kind of thing Rolle might have selected: there is an extract from Pseudo-Augustine's *De spiritu et anima* on 'ad amorem Dei excitatio' ('being stirred up to the love of God'), and another extract from the *Glossa ordinaria* on Daniel about hermits being allotted a special place in Daniel's eschatological vision.[160] If Rolle remembered this reference to dreams well enough to turn to it when composing *The Form of Living*, it makes sense that at another point in his life he

[153] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 219–26.
[154] Gregory, *Dialogues*, ed. by Adalbert de Vogüé, 3 vols (Paris, 1978–1980), book 4, ch. 50, lines 3–8 (3:172).
[155] Venice 1603; SS apparently gives an abbreviated 'materiam' with an added '-es'; perhaps a miscopying of 'materies'.
[156] Venice 1603; SS reads 'uincare'.
[157] Absent from SS.
[158] Venice 1603; SS reads 'futuris'.
[159] SS, f. 173, with relevant bracketed variants from the Venice 1603 *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 4:1513A. The translation in *The Form of Living* is mostly closer to the extract in SS, but a few variants are closer to Venice 1603. This suggests that Rolle's copy was somewhere between the two versions, hence my amalgam of them here.
[160] SS, f. 172v–73; Pseudo-Augustine, *Liber de spiritu et anima*, ch. 17, PL 40:792–93 (this title appears in PL but not in SS); *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 4:1581B. The *Glossa* extract is on Dan 7:9, and in SS (f. 173) is attributed to Origen. The fourth extract is another single sentence from the *Glossa* on Dan 3:2.

might have turned to the same extract to fill up the final blank page of a quire, followed by another extract from the same source.

Furthermore, this filler likely wound up in SS because it travelled with the other Rolle texts, suggesting that the SS collection offers a unique insight into a holograph manuscript. Kraebel suggests that filler written by Rolle was transcribed into BodL, MS Bodley 861 as an authentic Rolle text because a scribe found it appended to Rolle's works in an exemplar, and included it because they presumed it to be authorial.[161] However, since the SS filler is clearly marked by headings as non-authorial (naming Augustine, the *Glossa*, and Origen as sources), it is unlikely that a scribe copied it because of any claim to authenticity, or that they took it from a manuscript that did not also contain at least some of the other Rolle texts in SS. Additionally, this manuscript was made decades before Rolle's fame justified the extensive searches for obscure Rolleana behind MS Bodley 861, making it less likely that a scribe would have gone to great lengths to track down texts with any connection to Rolle. Hence, the presence of this filler in SS, mechanically copied from its exemplar, supports the view that SS's exemplar contained a Rolle collection and was close to a holograph.

It is possible that the exemplar of SS was a holograph, although this is difficult to prove. For the exemplar to be a holograph made by Rolle from his own originals, each of the SS texts would have to be at most two removes from Rolle's original: the first remove being the copy made by Rolle (that is, putatively SS's exemplar), and the second being the variants introduced by the SS scribes. Unfortunately, no textual criticism has been done on *Super orationem dominicam*. We are in a marginally better position with the Latin Psalter. Its circulation was first discussed by Clark, who identified two different versions, and more recently by Kraebel, who distinguished these versions as 'original' and 'revised' and suggested that the 'revised' version represents an authorial redraft.[162]

[161] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 977–80.
[162] Clark, 'Biblical Commentator', pp. 166–68; Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, pp. 192–202.

Furthermore, Kraebel suggested that SS is the best witness to the original version, supporting the possibility that SS's exemplar was or was close to a holograph. Finally, we have *Emendatio vitae*, which is the only SS text with a critical edition. In this edition, Spahl places the SS copy at three removes from the original. However, Spahl based his stemma on two major claims, each of which is contestable.[163] Firstly, he claims that interpolations known to be in the SS exemplar copy of *Emendatio vitae* cannot be authorial.[164] But his argument for this is entirely on subjective stylistic grounds which can be discarded, and, as Hanna has suggested, differences in copies elsewhere in Rolle's transmission even support the view that Rolle might have tinkered with his text whilst copying it out.[165] Secondly, Spahl's method led to a bifurcated stemma (that is, with two sets of archetypal variants), and he assumes that the branch not containing SS represented the authorial variants (apparently because he picked CUL, MS Dd.v.64 as his base manuscript, which belongs to the other branch), which places SS at a further remove from the original.[166] But comparing these archetypal variants does not strongly point to one set being correct over the other; in fact, in the only instance where there does seem to be a correct reading out of the two, this is found in the branch to which SS belongs.[167] This means that Spahl's stemma could be reconstrued to place SS at two removes from Rolle's original, as an equally plausible (and in fact slightly preferable) interpretation of the textual evidence.

Additionally, further factors support the view that the texts in SS represent either a copy of a holograph or a cluster of holographs from the same vicinity. Firstly, this manuscript's exemplar would have been too early for it to be likely that its scribes went to great pains to collect its texts

[163] A third supporting claim, that the dedication to William which follows *Emendatio vitae* in SS and its exemplar was a forgery, is discussed below.
[164] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, pp. 153–54.
[165] Hanna, 'The Transmission', p. 328.
[166] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, pp. 87, 125–26.
[167] This variant is 'qua propter necessitatem', which in context is preferable to 'qua propter'. Spahl even acknowledges which set of variants is correct is subjective, though in this instance 'qua propter' makes little sense in context: Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, pp. 125–26.

from disparate places. Kraebel has shown that MS Bodley 861's scribe trekked across Yorkshire in search of copies, and Hanna has suggested that the other large Rolle collections also had to be assembled, but these were all made decades later than SS, at a time when there are more widespread manuscript witnesses to interest in Rolle.[168] Second, if the scribes of SS's exemplar had decided to create a Rolle collection from different places, it is odd that Rolle is not named anywhere in the manuscript, especially given that Rolle is widely named in the earliest manuscripts transmitting collections of his works, suggesting in turn that those were gathered together because of an interest in their author.[169] The absence of Rolle's name in SS may indicate that it was copied as a useful, whole volume rather than because of an interest in Rolle as a well-known author. Third, the only other extant descendant of SS's exemplar for *Emendatio vitae* (BodL, MS Bodley 16) supports its authoritativeness: the scribe of MS Bodley 16 had initially used another exemplar for its copy of *Emendatio vitae*, but then switched to the exemplar of SS midway through, which may reflect a perception that it contained a higher quality text.[170] Fourth, since filler is copied to fill up space rather than primarily because of its inherent interest, its survival is surprising. It probably only survives here because of the replicatory mode of production used to make SS; it is unlikely (but not impossible) that filler would survive had this manuscript stemmed from multiple exemplars, since a different arrangement of quires would unlikely leave the same amount of space to fit the filler. Hence, the survival of this filler suggests a very short textual genealogy between SS and Rolle's original. The simplest explanation would be that the exemplar was a holograph. Fifth, the programme of texts that SS presents closely mirrors that which Rolle likely made for Margaret

[168] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled'; Hanna, 'The Transmission'.

[169] Rolle is named in following early Rolle collections (all dated s. xiv ex. or c. 1400): London, BL, MS Harley 5235 (I); Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd.v.64 (II); Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.1.15; Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral, MS 209; Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral, MS 218 (I); Bloomington, The Library of Indiana University, MS Poole 20; London, BL, MS Harley 2439; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 16; Leicester, Wyggeston Hospital, MS 10D34/15; BNF, MS Lat. 543; BNF, MS Lat. 15700. Rolle is not named in surviving portions of Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd.5.64 (I) or the Merton fragments (Oxford, Merton College, MS E.3.1 and MS 58.c.8, plus Cambridge, Emmanuel College, MS 318.3.14), but both manuscripts are incomplete.

[170] For Spahl's discussion of the relationship between MS Bodley 16 and SS, see Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, pp. 117–18, 149–53.

Kirkby: a Psalter commentary and *The Form of Living* (which resembles *Emendatio vitae*). Given that these were sent to Margaret Kirkby and were probably not widely known as a pair at this early period, the same combination of parallel texts in SS is more likely to stem from Rolle than an early Latin scribe. Finally, there is a personal dedication to a 'William' added at the end of *Emendatio vitae* which only survives in a handful of other copies (in each case traceable back to the exemplar of SS), supporting the likelihood that it was close to a manuscript Rolle made for a known associate. Spahl has argued that the dedication was a forgery, but his reasoning is dubious.[171]

If this manuscript represents a holograph or a cluster of holographs sent to a common individual, then it offers important insights into how Rolle presented his Latin texts to an early reader. Firstly, the authenticity of the filler shows Rolle making books of spiritual instruction in Latin himself, and the dedication to 'William' suggests that this was made for someone known personally to Rolle. This suggests that at least some of Rolle's Latin works were initially transmitted in the context of an existing relationship which Rolle had with a disparate group of mentees. Secondly, this manuscript reveals the kind of pastoral care which Rolle was engaged in. It represents an authorially-sanctioned collection of works, supplying the reader with texts to assist with prayer, both through the Psalms and other Biblical prayers, followed by a brief but wide-ranging guide to the spiritual life, progressing towards contemplation. This suggests that the reader was a would-be contemplative who was nevertheless in need of intermediate spiritual instruction (while *Emendatio vitae* is compressed and does not cover the basic catechetic syllabus, it nonetheless includes more

[171] He argues that its resemblance to the dedication appending *The Form of Living* suggests it was copied by a scribe from there to bolster the perceived authority of SS, and that Rolle would not have referred to *Emendatio* by the title 'forma vivendi' given in the dedication. He concludes that Rolle's signature was forged as a gift for the patron of Hampole. There are many problems here: there is little evidence for *The Form* and *Emendatio vitae* coming into contact at an early period, so it is hard to see why a scribe would think copying a dedication from *The Form* would make the manuscript authoritative; the dedication is formulaic, and could easily have been replicated by Rolle from memory; 'forma vivendi' is a term for a more general kind of text (which Rolle even uses in *Emendatio vitae*, at ch. 4, line 72) rather than a title; and it is hard to believe that a patron of Hampole would have believed a new manuscript was made by Rolle after he was dead (and if he was alive a forgery would be unnecessary). A reference to 'forme of leuyng' as a general term appears in Hodgson, *Cloud*, prologue, p. 3, lines 2–3.

rudimentary discussion, such as its material on conversion and *contemptus mundi*). This is a strikingly similar kind of reader to that implied by Rolle's *Judica me*, a priest who had an interest in contemplative spirituality. Like that reader, it seems possible that the SS texts were initially sent to a priest: the Rolle collection in SS is joined with another originally distinct manuscript containing Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium theologicae veritatis*, a standard theological textbook, suggesting that SS later circulated in a pastoral context.[172] Overall then, SS offers a set of answers to our opening questions of what role Rolle played in circulating his works, to whom he sent them, and in what form. It shows Rolle active in pastoral care by making a book himself, sending his texts to a would-be contemplative at an intermediate level whom he addresses by his first name, and packaging them as a coherent programme containing aids to devotion and pastoral guidance.

Reputation and the Rise of Richard Rolle

Rolle's role in disseminating his texts suggests that his pastoral ministry was instrumental in catalysing his rise to fame. Rolle was involved in pastoral care of a range of readers during his lifetime, perhaps comprising other recluses and Latin-literate readers interested in contemplative spirituality, and, probably later in life, nuns and would-be anchoresses. That his large volume of Latin works was widely dispersed suggests that he had multiple Latinate mentees. These early readers began transmitting Rolle during his lifetime (as the MS Bodley 647 flyleaves and Kirkstead's bibliography suggest). Although we do not have access to any putative holographs of Rolle's contemplative Latin works paralleling what we have, serendipitously, in Shrewsbury School MS 25, the early evidence of Kirkstead and MS Bodley 647 witnesses these contemplative works in

[172] An early fifteenth-century inscription may associate the manuscript with a hospital; before the Dissolution it was probably owned by a monastic or mendicant institution: see Ralph Hanna, 'The Descent of Some Chester Libraries', *The Library*, 7th series, 22.1 (2021), 57–58, 61n.13. The only other witness to SS's exemplar is BodL, MS Bodley 16, which Hanna suggests had a Carthusian provenance, though noting it contains uncommon texts by mendicants: Hanna, 'Prospectus', p. 251n.49.

circulation and in multiple copies, probably within Rolle's lifetime. The model of epistolary dispersal challenges the idea that his works were discovered and disseminated posthumously (in which case we would expect evidence of a single, initial centre of dissemination), suggesting that it is likely that Rolle played a key role in spreading them. Rolle's role as a peripatetic spiritual advisor suggests that his mentees came from different places, and hence his texts were likely dispersed across Yorkshire through personal rather than institutional connections (since institutional ownership would more likely preserve a complete, authoritative canon). Perhaps only Rolle himself knew everyone who had received copies of his texts. Rolle died in 1349, perhaps unexpectedly from the Black Death (which would usually kill within a week). After this, there may have been a lull of a decade or so, during which Rolle's reputation was sustained without his own scribal activity: presumably it continued to spread by word-of-mouth amongst some of his devotees and through new copies, perhaps whilst other copies of his texts were forgotten.

Nonetheless, given that Rolle's dissemination arose from handfuls of scattered manuscripts, the reputation he attained during his lifetime through his interpersonal relationships likely played a role in transmitting him after his death. As we have seen in this chapter, it seems wholly plausible that a fourteenth-century hermit might attain a reputation for sanctity during his life. More surprising is the fact that an extra-institutional author should establish himself in the manuscript record without a scriptorium, and without some single party promulgating an authoritative collection of his works. A key point here is that for Rolle to have accumulated a network of mentees, he must have had a reputation as a local holy man capable of good spiritual guidance. His grassroots, word-of-mouth proliferation suggests that this saintly reputation remained a motivating factor at the inception of his propagation by his initial readers. Surely only this possibility could explain how, by the time the earliest copies appear in the manuscript record, he was already dispersed across Yorkshire and implicitly recognised as an *auctor* by the existence of small collections of his work. The fact that early manuscript colophons identify Rolle as author and the date of his death (which could

only be known externally to the texts) suggests that his circulation was influenced by an awareness of the individual outside of his writings. Furthermore, other witnesses corroborate the view that Rolle's reputation for personal sanctity was central to his early transmission, as seen most obviously in the biographical *Officium*, which draws on sources from outside his texts, presumably from local memory. The *Officium* also offers evidence for knowledge of Rolle amongst the illiterate. For example, it recounts how, when Margaret fell ill, a local 'paterfamilias' ('head of household') knew that Rolle acted as a mentor figure and went straight to him for help, suggesting a local awareness of his reputation.[173] Similarly, the *Miracula* describe laypeople praying to Rolle, which at least suggests that its authors believed it plausible that Rolle's reputation would be known by word-of-mouth (given that all the miracles happen locally, his reputation may have had a fairly limited geographic range).[174] Accounts of Rolle's life were available for someone's researches into Rolle's biography, which ended up as marginalia in the Vienna manuscript: these biographical notes refer to an English doctor as the informant.[175] This evidence all testifies to the likelihood that Rolle's life and character were not just known from what he projected in his works, but were conveyed by those whom he ministered to personally and became instrumental in his early transmission.

* * *

With all this in mind, we can re-examine the account of Rolle's ministry given in the *Officium*. It highlights that Rolle ministered both through his writings and in person:

> Admirande autem et utiles nimis erant huius occupaciones, in sanctis exhortacionibus quibus quam plurimos conuersit ad deum, in scriptis eciam suis mellifluis et tractatibus ac libellis ad edificacionem proximorum compositibus...[176]

[173] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 39.
[174] Woolley, *Officium*, pp. 82–93.
[175] For discussions of the marginalia in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 4483, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 39–43; Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia*, pp. 40–51; Hanna, 'William Stoups'.
[176] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 32.

> However, wonderful and exceedingly useful were his occupations: in his holy exhortations with which he converted as many as possible to God; also in his mellifluous writings and tracts and little books composed to the edification of his neighbours...

Here, the verbal 'exhortationibus' ('exhortations'), placed in contrast to 'scriptis' ('writings'), implies that Rolle ministered in person; this passage also highlights his ministry's utility ('utiles') and says his works were written to edify others. Similarly, following his hermit predecessors, the *Officium* highlights the usefulness of the eremitic teacher in leading others towards salvation, saying that he travelled round so that 'in multis demoratus locis multis proficeret ad salutem' ('dwelling in many places, he might progress many to salvation').[177] It continues that Rolle's travels also allowed him to pursue further solitude, which, as the *Officium* then points out, is in line with eremitic traditions.[178] The *Officium* supports epistolary transmission by referring to Rolle's texts as his 'epistolis' ('epistles'), and highlights that these were written specifically for the care of others: 'ad aliorum profectum et edificacionum' ('to the progress and edification of others').[179] Finally, it applies this to the *Incendium* in particular, claiming that it was written 'ut alii per hoc spem similiter proficiendi in actibus contemplacionis et amoris dei accipiant' ('so that, through this, others might receive the hope of progressing similarly in acts of contemplation and of the love of God'), and thus demonstrating an early readerly perception that even Rolle's contemplative writing can be understood as designed to be useful and edifying for readers.[180]

On the one hand, the conventionality of this account of Rolle's pastoral ministry, which clearly aligns with the hermit hagiographies discussed above, might undermine its claim to historical accuracy. But the evidence of Rolle's own account of his pastoral ministry, in person and in writing, as well as the manuscript evidence for Rolle's role in transmitting himself to readers, corroborate the view that there is some truth to its account. Far from being an eccentric loner, there is a strong case

[177] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 39.
[178] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 39.
[179] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 30.
[180] Woolley, *Officium*, p. 30.

for imagining Rolle as actively engaged in pastoral care of some kind across his career, both in person, through his English epistles, and through his Latin works.

Chapter 2: Richard Rolle as a Reader and Author of *Pastoralia*

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw an explosion of texts written to assist priests with pastoral care. This movement was largely precipitated by the reforms of Lateran IV in 1215 which newly emphasised the need for better priestly education, the role of the confessional as a context for pastoral care, and the importance of adequate instruction of laypeople.[1] In England, these reforms were enacted by a series of episcopal decrees giving regulations for priests to perform their pastoral and sacramental duties and outlining the basic catechetic syllabus in which a priest should instruct his parishioners.[2] Guides to basic spiritual topics such as the virtues and vices had existed for centuries, but these reforms spurred their profusion in greater numbers, leading to the dissemination of a vast variety of texts in all kinds of genres, ultimately feeding into the vernacular religious writing of Western Europe.[3] These texts have been referred to collectively as *pastoralia*.[4]

One of the major genres of *pastoralia* was the pastoral manual, essentially a compendium of all the knowledge a priest needed to carry out his duties. In Britain, these emerged from the episcopal decrees, which outlined the basic requirements for priestly knowledge and even mandated that priests owned a copy of the decrees themselves.[5] From the thirteenth century, some bishops commissioned manuals to circulate with their decrees.[6] Accordingly, many of the most important thirteenth-century pastoral manuals were written by theologians embedded in major ecclesiastical

[1] Boyle, 'A Study', 2:199–209; Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council'.
[2] Vincent Gillespie, 'The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual, with Particular Reference to the *Speculum Christiani* and Some Related Texts', unpublished DPhil thesis (The University of Oxford, 1981), 1:5–31; Judith Shaw, 'The Influence of Canonical and Episcopal Reform on Popular Books of Instruction', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 47–57.
[3] For *pastoralia* in the run-up to Lateran IV, see Leonard E. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period 1179–1215 and the Beginnings of Pastoral Manuals', in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli Papa Alessando III*, ed. by Filippo Liotta (Sienna, 1986), pp. 45–56. For a survey of different kinds of *pastoralia* produced after Lateran IV, see Maureen B.M. Boulton, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Vernacular Pastoralia: An Introduction', in *Literary Echoes of the Fourth Lateran Council in England and France, 1215–1405*, ed. by Maureen B.M. Boulton (Toronto, 2019), pp. 1–45.
[4] A term proposed in Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council', p. 31.
[5] See for example Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:13.
[6] Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:18–22; Shaw, 'Canonical and Episcopal Reforms', pp. 47–48.

or university centres, and hence with lots of resources at their disposal: Thomas of Chobham wrote his *Summa* while a subdean at Salisbury Cathedral; Richard Wetheringsett was chancellor of Cambridge University; Robert Grosseteste was bishop of Lincoln; John Pecham was archbishop of Canterbury.[7]

Alongside these high-grade manuals was a secondary stratum of derivative, briefer manuals, often consisting of compiled extracts from multiple pastoral sources and produced outside of major institutional centres. Vincent Gillespie made this distinction, differentiating the large, sophisticated, penitential reference works from the 'simpler, cruder, humbler manuals' which also circulated amongst the clergy.[8] W.A. Pantin had earlier made a similar distinction between pastoral manuals for parish priests and other texts on the vices and virtues for less advanced clergy and laity.[9] Three important features characterise these texts and the books in which they appear. First, they survive in huge numbers. Second, they are conservative and conventional in content, since they transmit basic orthodox teaching.[10] Third, many of these texts were made to suit the exigencies of a given context, reshaping and rewriting existing materials as appropriate (they have been called 'bespoke' or 'ad hoc' manuals).[11] This conventional material thus circulated in a wide variety of distinctive forms, such that many individual arrangements are extremely rare.

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[7] Joseph Goering, 'Chobham, Thomas of (d. 1233x6), Theologian and Ecclesiastic', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5007>; Joseph Goering, 'Wetheringsett [Wethersett], Richard of [Richard of Leicester] (Fl. c. 1200–c. 1230), Churchman and Theologian', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29148>; R. W. Southern, 'Grosseteste, Robert (c. 1170–1253), Scientist, Theologian, and Bishop of Lincoln', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11665>; Benjamin Thompson, 'Pecham [Peckham], John (c. 1230–1292), Archbishop of Canterbury', in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21745>.

[8] Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:1–2.

[9] Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 189–91.

[10] The conservatism of treatises on the virtues and vices is noted in Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues* p. 156.

[11] See for instance Vincent Gillespie, 'Fatherless Books: Authorship, Attribution, and Orthodoxy in Later Medieval England', in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition*, ed. by Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 159–60; Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 145–73; Connolly, Margaret, 'Books for the "Helpe of Euery Persoone Þat Þenkiþ to Be Saued": Six Devotional Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century London', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 170–81.

These three factors (voluminousness, conventionality, and rarity) have made this whole stratum a difficult and unappealing one for scholars to cover, both pragmatically and in terms of historical interest. Morton Bloomfield's collection of incipits on the vices and virtues represents a notable attempt to sort through this material: its extensiveness highlights the volume and inaccessibility of such texts, most of which remain exclusively in manuscripts.[12]

With these perils in mind, this chapter argues that Rolle's *Emendatio vitae*, *Judica me*, the English epistles, and many of his minor works emerge to varying degrees from this textual stratum of *pastoralia*, produced through a combination of direct copying or translation of pastoral sources, reshaping or paraphrasing material, and original composition. This mode of composition likely reflects the material context of Rolle's limited access to resources outside of a monastic or academic setting, or perhaps simply the convenience of using whatever material was readily available. In this kind of environment, the availability of sources would have been shaped by an element of happenstance – the chance connections and interests of whoever supplied him with texts – a mode of transmission which Ralph Hanna has referred to as 'associationalism'.[13] Working in such a context, Rolle may have encountered the *auctoritates* he quotes through intermediaries, such as *florilegia*, existing treatises, and other pastoral manuals. Most importantly, recognising the indebtedness of Rolle's writing to *pastoralia*, both in content and in composition, places Rolle's writing activity within a contemporary norm of pastoral care. As a child and adolescent of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, Rolle would have known the basic catechetic syllabus. Nonetheless, Rolle's use of sources suggests that his reading interests included matter pertaining specifically to priests, such as regulations for confession and for performing the mass, and Rolle's propagation and authorship of pastoral texts demonstrates his familiarity with their distinctive didactic methods. While previous

[12] Morton W. Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 AD: Including a Section of Incipits of Works on the Pater Noster* (Cambridge, MA, 1979); see also Richard Newhauser and István Bejczy, *A Supplement to Morton W. Bloomfield et al. Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D.* (Turnhout, 2008).
[13] Ralph Hanna, 'The Transmission', 330–31.

scholarship has emphasised the idiosyncratic voice of Rolle's contemplative writings, in his late works Rolle participated in practices of pastoral care that reflect more widespread practices, copying and reshaping existing pastoral manuals into pastoral and devotional texts, and thereby effectively using those manuals to equip his own ministry.

In making this argument, this chapter also contributes towards one of the most vexing issues facing students of Rolle: the question of how Rolle accessed his sources. The pastoral resources discussed here suggest that Rolle had recourse to a priestly library. Parochial libraries only began to emerge in the late fourteenth century, so in Rolle's day a priestly library probably meant anything from a small collection of books owned by a priest or private chaplain down to a single pastoral miscellany.[14] These kinds of miscellanies evolved from the pastoral handbooks which priests were mandated to own, which were compiled together with other texts pertaining to pastoral care or private devotion and ultimately fed into late-medieval devotional compilations and vernacular spiritual writing.[15] A small priestly library broadly fits with the *auctoritates* which Rolle does use: they are largely patristic or pre-thirteenth century, and include standard resources like Gregory's *Moralia*, Lombard's Psalter, and the *Glossa ordinaria*, fitting a small library at some remove from up-to-date intellectual centres of universities or large monasteries. Of course, Rolle's Latin vocabulary demonstrates that he read widely, and his access to certain resources doubtless changed over the course of his life. The absence of *auctoritates* cited by Rolle may reflect his lack of access to them at the time of writing, rather than that he was unfamiliar with their ideas. It is also worth noting that

[14] On parochial and collegiate church libraries, see John Shinners, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', in *A Distinct Voice: Medieval Studies in Honor of Leonard E. Boyle, OP*, ed. by Jacqueline Brown and William P. Stoneman (Notre Dame, IN, 1997), pp. 207–30; introduction to James M.W. Willoughby, *The Libraries of Collegiate Churches* (London, 2013).

[15] On pastoral miscellanies, see A.I. Doyle, 'A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and Early 16th Centuries with Special Consideration to the Part of the Clergy Therein', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 1953), 1:30–56; Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 189–219; Vincent Gillespie, '*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals', in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 3–20; Clarence A. Martin, 'Middle English Manuals of Religious Instruction', in *So Meny People Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. by M. Benskin and M.L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 283–98; Shaw, 'Canonical and Episcopal Reforms'; Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books'.

pastoral texts frequently crossed into monastic and mendicant contexts too, which cannot be excluded as a vector of transmission for Rolle (though these contexts are probably less likely for explicitly priestly material on the Mass, for example).[16] This chapter nonetheless raises the possibility that a priestly library was a typical resource for him, especially at the period in his life when he wrote the texts discussed here.

Rolle's Minor Works

Myriads of short prose treatises were ascribed to Rolle in manuscripts. Such works have occupied a fringe position in Rolle scholarship, perhaps owing to their brevity, conventionality, and infrequent manuscript appearances. After generations of editorial attention, a consensus has emerged that the following can be attributed to Rolle with varying degrees of security: *Super orationem dominicam*, *Super symbolum apostolorum*, *Super symbolum Athanasii*, *Super magnificat*, *De vita activa et contemplativa*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, *Desire and Delight*, *Ghostly Gladness*, and four English *exempla*.[17]

This assortment of scattered short prose appears oddly miscellaneous until we realise that many coincide with sections of a standard pastoral manual. Such manuals quickly acquired a conventional form, comprising fixed sections covering the basic catechetic syllabus, often organised mnemonically into groups of seven: the seven deadly sins, the seven cardinal virtues, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven works of mercy, the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and the seven sacraments. Alongside these, there were often sections on the articles of faith, the creeds, the Ten

[16] See discussion in Doyle, 'A Survey', 1:28–97.
[17] See Carl Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*; Rolle, *Uncollected*. For the inclusion of *Super symbolum Athanasii*, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 312; Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 976–80 (there referred to as *Super quicunque vult*).

Commandments, the two New Testament commandments, and lots of material on confession and penitence. These sections could easily be detached and travel separately. Despite the difficulties in traversing this material (of which just a fraction is edited), most of Rolle's short works are either straightforwardly derivative of a known source or imply unknown sources. Rolle's reshaping of sources and commonplaces suggests his familiarity with the conventions of *pastoralia*. Thus, these short texts offer insights into Rolle's sources disproportionate to their intrinsic interest. They show Rolle working with and reshaping standard pastoral fare for his Latin and vernacular readers, in a manner typical of authors of pastoral manuals. Whereas the high-grade pastoral manuals seem to have been composed more systematically and for a wide audience, Rolle's work reflects the humbler kind of pastoral manuals insofar as it seems to have been shaped by his somewhat haphazard access to resources (adapting whatever material was available), and perhaps in some cases occasioned by the needs of a particular reader (at least in the first instance). In copying explicitly pastoral texts, Rolle was himself enacting a form of pastoral care.

Sections of a Pastoral Manual: Super orationem dominicam *and* The Ten Commandments

Two of Rolle's minor works, *Super orationem dominicam* and *The Ten Commandments*, draw on an obvious pastoral source: William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis*. We know that Rolle had access to it because he copied large sections from it in *Judica me*, mostly verbatim.[18] The *Oculus sacerdotis* was a pastoral manual written by William of Pagula, a priest at the parish church in Winkfield, in the 1320s (during Rolle's lifetime).[19] It is divided into three books, titled the *Pars oculi*, *Dextera pars* and *Sinistra pars*. These address in turn the three main duties of parish priests: hearing confession,

[18] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 101–4; Rolle, *Judica me*, pp. viii–xi.
[19] On the date of the *Oculus sacerdotis*, see L.E. Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and Some Other Works of William of Pagula', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5 (1955), 105–6. This article summarises material treated more extensively in Boyle, 'A Study'.

preaching (and hence the whole catechetic syllabus), and administering the sacraments.[20] The *Oculus sacerdotis* became one of the most popular pastoral manuals, surviving in some 60 manuscripts.[21] By Leonard Boyle's account, William of Pagula was unusually learned for a parish priest, demonstrating an expertise in theology and canon law which suggests access to substantial resources, locating his work closer to the higher end of the spectrum of such texts.[22]

Rolle's *Super orationem dominicam* synthesises material from Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* and the *Glossa ordinaria* to Matthew 6.[23] Its ascription to Rolle is fairly secure, surviving in a number of manuscripts, several of which ascribe it to Rolle.[24] Most of Rolle's *Super orationem dominicam* is quoted verbatim from either Pagula or the *Glossa* (in a fairly even split). Rolle's use of the *Glossa ordinaria* is unsurprising given that he uses it as a source for *Super Threnos* and *Super Apocalypsim*.[25] His use of Pagula's commentary is more notable, since this is the only instance of Rolle using the *Sinistra pars* (demonstrating for the first time that Rolle had access to all three parts of the text). Furthermore, Pagula's commentary in the *Sinistra pars* is not a distinct chapter but appears midway through a chapter on the exposition of the Mass, written to instruct a priest on how to perform the

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[20] John Pecham describes these as the three duties of priests in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, II: A.D. 1205–1313*, ed. by F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), 2:1079 (see the second article); as discussed in William H. Campbell, *The Landscape of Pastoral Care in Thirteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 4–6. For a summary account of the *Oculus*, see Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis*', pp. 83–92.

[21] Boyle lists 51 manuscripts in British and American libraries in Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis*', pp. 109–10. He describes them briefly in Boyle, 'A Study', vol. 2, also giving six manuscripts discovered in Continental libraries. Marc B. Cels adds four further manuscripts in 'Reconciling Mendicant and Secular Confessors in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 38.2 (2012), 235n.61. However, one of these (Oxford, Jesus College, MS 27) is the *Regimen animarum*, a text discussed in Boyle, 'A Study', 2:373–74; Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 203–5.

[22] Boyle, 'A Study', 1:100–3.

[23] For *Super orationem dominicam*, see Bloomfield 8395. The opening of *Super orationem dominicam* has parallels with Pseudo-Bonaventure, 'Expositio orationis dominicae', in *Doctoris seraphici s. Bonaventurae... Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi, 1882–1902), 7:652. Besides the minor addition of 'in tribus' (after 'haec oratio privilegiata est') to parallel Rolle's 'in duobus', these texts share no parallels absent from Pagula, and Rolle's text contains much material present in Pagula but absent from this text. This confirms that Pagula was Rolle's source. The existence of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran text is noted in Doyle and Hanna, *Hope Allen's "Writings"*, p. 13.

[24] For a list of manuscripts see Doyle and Hanna, *Hope Allen*'s "*Writings*", pp. 12–13. For ascriptions, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 155–57.

[25] Clark, 'Biblical Commentator', p. 165.

service. It is perhaps surprising reading material for Rolle given his expressed disapproval for outward church performance elsewhere, and given that Rolle could not have said the Mass himself (not being ordained).[26] It is possible that Rolle stumbled across this Paternoster commentary while flicking through the text (perhaps using a copy where it was rubricated or highlighted in some way), or that he was involved in pastoral ministry to a priestly reader who needed assistance in performing the Mass. Rolle used Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* at a time when there is little evidence that it had attained any substantial circulation, suggesting that his use of it reflects his taking advantage of available material rather than searching out something he knew in advance.[27]

Drawing on these sources, Rolle's commentary explains the rationale and desired effects of each petition. Rolle's commentary on the final three petitions is briefer; before this point, he specifies which virtue and gift of the Holy Spirit is sought in each petition. In this way, Rolle's commentary is characterised by the schematisation of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer typical of pastoral manuals, in which a discussion of the Lord's Prayer conventionally constitutes a chapter. The idea that the seven petitions correspond to specific gifts of the Holy Spirit, beatitudes, and cardinal virtues predates the pastoral manual; for instance, this idea is mentioned in the *Glossa*.[28] However, such schematisations became particularly widespread in pastoral manuals, functioning mnemonically as a memory aid for basic information. This is exemplified in Robert Grosseteste's pastoral manual, the *Templum Dei*, in which tabular summaries align each petition with a specific gift of the Holy Spirit, a cardinal virtue, a beatitude, and so forth. After one such table,

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[26] For Rolle's disapproval of ecclesiastical music, see Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 33, pp. 238–39. Rolle says that he is not ordained in *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 4, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 157v (ed. Moyes, 2:196, lines 2–3).

[27] On the dating of the *Oculus sacerdotis* and its early circulation, see Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis*', pp. 105–6; Boyle, 'A Study', 1:348–410.

[28] *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 5:128E; part of this discussion is quoted (and ascribed to the *Glossa*) in Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, ed. by R.P. Mandonnet and Maria Fabianus Moos, 4 vols (Paris, 1929–1947), d. 34, q. 1, art. 6, sed contra 3 (3:1135), demonstrating that it predates Rolle. For discussion of these sets of sevens, see Vincent Gillespie, 'Thy Will Be Done: *Piers Plowman* and the *Paternoster*', in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 82–83; Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing, 1952), pp. 83–91.

Grosseteste writes, 'In hac tabula est tota cura officii pastoralis' ('In this table is the entire care of the pastoral office').[29] Grosseteste thus presents his table as a compressed reference guide for pastoral care, demonstrating the usefulness of such schematisations as summaries for priestly readers.

Rolle associates the petitions with virtues and gifts in line with this convention, drawing on both Pagula and the *Glossa*, as when he writes, 'Hic spiritus intelligencie petitur... Petitur eciam virtus spei et puritatis mentis' ('Here the spirit of understanding is sought... Also, the virtue of hope and of a pure mind is sought').[30] In one instance, Rolle seems to rephrase a sentence from the *Glossa* to fit with the presentation of gifts and virtues elsewhere in his commentary. On the third petition, the *Glossa* begins: 'Esuries iustitiae vt ad saturitatem pertingat, fulcitur spiritu fortitudinis' ('The hunger for righteousness is supported by the spirit of strength, so that it may reach fullness').[31] In Rolle's text, this becomes a virtue and gift, in a form consistent with those on the other petitions: 'Hic petitur spiritus fortitudinis, et virtus qua iusticia esuritur' ('Here the spirit of strength is sought, and the virtue by which righteousness is hungered for').[32] Of course, Rolle may have had a copy of the *Glossa* which contained this latter wording, but if this reshaping is attributable to Rolle, it would show him attentive to the schematisation of the Lord's Prayer typical of contemporary pastoral manuals. Either way, *Super orationem dominicam* shows Rolle producing a piece of typical *pastoralia* derivative of existing sources. One copy of the text is followed by lists summarising which sacrament, gift of the Holy Spirit, virtue (and so forth) is associated with each petition, reinforcing the conventionality of reading the text in this way: as standard *pastoralia*.[33]

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[29] Robert Grosseteste, *Templum Dei*, ed. by Joseph Goering and F.A.C. Mantello (Toronto, 1984), ch. 6.6, p. 38.
[30] Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury School, MS 25, f. 164. The first sentence here is taken from the *Glossa*; the second adapts Pagula. Compare *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 5:130D. I take my quotations for *Super orationem dominicam* from Shrewsbury School MS 25 given my discussion of its authority above in chapter 1; the same reading (for this quotation and the one later in this paragraph) is also found in the generally reliable BodL, MS Bodley 861, f. 143 (for which, see Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled').
[31] *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 5:130F.
[32] Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury School, MS 25, f. 164v.
[33] Urbana, University of Illinois Library, MS 145, ff. 2v–3v.

The Ten Commandments reshapes the chapter on the decalogue from the *Dextera pars* of the *Oculus sacerdotis*, where it appears amidst Pagula's exposition of the catechetic syllabus. It survives in two manuscripts, only explicitly ascribed to Rolle in one, so its use of the *Oculus sacerdotis* offers further support for an ascription to Rolle (albeit weakly, since the *Oculus sacerdotis* became widespread).[34]

Commentaries on the Ten Commandments were highly conventional in content and represent a typical section in a pastoral manual.[35] Again, Rolle's text shares with Pagula's commentary quite specific material not immediately derivative of the commandments themselves, making his direct use of it highly likely. For example, Rolle's discussion of the first commandment includes a definition of astronomy which directly translates a Latin one found at the same point in Pagula:

> astronomi siue astrologi considerant diem ac horam et punctum natiuitatis hominis sub quo signo natus est et punctum arrepcionis itineris siue vie et per [hec][36] similia dicunt quicquid accidit homini in poster[um][37] que omnia expresse reprobantur per Augustinum, Iohannem et alios sanctos. (William of Pagula, *Oculus sacerdotis*)[38]

> Astronomyenes byhaldes þe daye and þe houre and þe poynte þat man es borne in, and vndyr whylke syngne he es borne, and þe poynte þat he begynnes to be in. And by þire syngnes and oþer þay saye + that sall befall þe man aftyrwarde, bot theyre errowre es reproffede of haly doctours. (Rolle, *The Ten Commandments*)[39]

[34] Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, pp. 68–72, 158–59.
[35] For an attempt to sort through different versions of vernacular decalogue commentaries, see Anthony Martin, 'The Middle English Versions of *The Ten Commandments*, with Special Reference to Rylands English MS 85', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 64.1 (1981), 191–217.
[36] Letters obscured by an erasure, but this reading is corroborated by BodL, MS Rawlinson A. 370, f. 59.
[37] An abbreviation is presumably missing; this reading is supplied from BodL, MS Rawlinson A. 370, f. 59.
[38] Oxford, New College MS 292, f. 46v.
[39] Richard Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 16, lines 8–12.

Further parallels support Rolle's use of Pagula throughout.[40] Much of Rolle's commentary also departs from Pagula, suggesting an alternative source or Rolle's original composition. Several expositions involve breaking a topic into a list of three points, before addressing each in turn: 'In thre maners mane may syn in forswerynge...'; 'The nam of God es takyn in vayne one many maners, with herte and with mouthe, with werke...'; 'This commandement may be takyn in thre maneres...'.[41] None of these are found in Pagula, but they reflect the mnemonic, didactic lists common in *pastoralia*. Since *Judica me* demonstrates that Rolle's text of the *Oculus sacerdotis* was reliable in all the instances there copied, divergences from Pagula's text are most likely of Rolle's making (by original composition or incorporation of another source) rather than from Rolle using an interpolated copy. Whether Rolle copied these passages from another source or invented them himself, they suggest Rolle's access to further *pastoralia* beyond Pagula and his familiarity with the conventions of pastoral texts.

Further evidence of how *The Ten Commandments* is indebted to pastoral manuals is seen in Rolle's exposition of the tenth commandment (not to covet a neighbour's wife or property):

> He lufes God þat kepis thire commandementes for lufe. His neghtebour hym awe to lufe als hymselfe, þat es till þe same gude þat he lufes hymselfe to, nathynge till ill, and þat he lufe his neghtbour saule mare þan his body or any gudez of þe worlde etc.[42]

Though picking up on the reference to one's neighbour in the tenth commandment, this exposition is in fact a summary and brief explanation of the two New Testament commandments (Matt 22:37–40), another typical section of the pastoral manual, and not immediately relevant to this commandment. Rolle's exposition is not closely paralleled by Pagula, but Pagula's exposition of the

[40] A further long parallel, prohibiting false weights and measures, appears under the seventh commandment. Compare also Rolle's 'nowthire with assente ne with werke ne with worde or fauour', 'all maner of wilfull pollusyone', and 'cause of matremoyne' with Pagula's 'consensu, opere, uel verbo seu fauore', 'omnis et voluntaria pollucio quocumque aliter studiose et voluntarie procurata', 'maxime in causis matrimonalibus', respectively at Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 17, lines 53–54, 60, 70–71; Oxford, New College, MS 292, f. 47.
[41] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 16, lines 19–20, 23–25; p. 17, line 34.
[42] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 18, lines 79–83.

Ten Commandments is immediately followed by an extended discussion of the two New Testament commandments. Rolle's insertion of this passage may reflect his awareness of this as a distinctive and relevant unit in the catechetic syllabus (as conveyed for instance by Pagula). This again shows how Rolle's scribal activity was embedded in the conventions of *pastoralia*.

Besides these similarities with pastoral tradition, Rolle's commentary may also contain original material. In the commentary on the third commandment (to keep the Sabbath), he applies the Sabbath as a metaphor for contemplative life, 'als in contemplatyfe men þat departis þaym fra all werldly thynges swa þat þey hally gyfe þaym till God', which 'es perfeccyone'.[43] Speculatively, given Rolle's contemplative interests, this is perhaps the most likely part of the text to be Rolle's original addition, perhaps showing Rolle composing himself as well as translating.

The picture that emerges shows that Rolle's *Ten Commandments* was likely a combination of direct translation, paraphrase, and original composition. Furthermore, passages without parallel in Pagula demonstrate either Rolle's use of another pastoral source, or his familiarity with the didactic methods and catechetic syllabus of pastoral literature more broadly. *The Ten Commandments* thus shows Rolle actively reworking a Latin text in order to instruct vernacular readers on a basic pastoral topic. In copying Pagula, Rolle effectively uses the *Oculus sacerdotis* according to its original purpose: to equip his own pastoral ministry as he ministers directly to a disciple.

[43] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 17, lines 37–40.

A Treatise on the Virtues: The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit is briefer and simpler than *The Ten Commandments* and *Super orationem dominicam*. It survives in three manuscripts.[44] After introducing the seven gifts, it simply comprises a list of definitions for each gift, which appears to be a fairly conventional format for such texts.[45]

By breaking the seven gifts into a list of virtues, *The Seven Gifts* belongs to another genre of *pastoralia*: the treatise on the virtues and vices. This genre was originally monastic, designed to enable meditation and self-examination: Richard Newhauser identifies Evagrius Ponticus as its inventor, and John Cassian and Gregory as making important developments to the concept of the seven deadly sins which would become integral to the catechetic syllabus.[46] Boyle has suggested that Lateran IV led to a more holistic view of personal moral development, leading to a greater interest in the cultivation of virtues for their own sake.[47] The inclusion of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (derived from Isaiah 11:1–2) in the basic catechetic syllabus reflects this broader trend; it also typically constituted a chapter in a pastoral manual.

Though treatises on the virtues were diverse, perhaps the most basic was simply a list of pithy definitions, which could be easily extracted into devotional or pastoral works instructing readers on virtues and vices.[48] Support for a connection between *The Seven Gifts* and this genre (and evidence for Rolle's authorship) comes from a definition for contemplation which Rolle includes in

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[44] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lx.
[45] Margaret Connolly, 'Preaching by Numbers: The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost in Late Middle English Sermons and Works of Religious Instruction', in *Preaching the Word in Manuscript and Print in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Susan Powell*, ed. by Martha W. Driver and Veronica O'Mara (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 85–86.
[46] Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues*, pp. 98–124.
[47] Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council', pp. 35–36.
[48] For an introduction to the genre, see Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues*.

The Seven Gifts, ascribing it to Augustine: 'contemplacyone, þat es Saynt Austyn says, "a gastely dede of fleschely affeccyones thurghe þe ioye of araysede thoghte"'.[49] As Allen pointed out, Rolle used a Latin version in *Emendatio vitae*: 'contemplacio est per sublevate mentis iubilum mors carnalium affeccionum'.[50] This Latin definition appears in Conrad of Hirsau's *De fructibus carnis et spiritus* and the *Speculum virginum* (which share much material with one another) amidst long lists of definitions of various virtues and vices.[51] Their definition are widely found elsewhere, so Rolle could have encountered it in a variety of contexts.[52] Such definitions were particularly useful in *pastoralia*, offering a concise, well-formulated explanation of key terms.

The Seven Gifts may represent a translation of an existing text, or a collection of definitions gathered or perhaps in some cases composed by Rolle. Its existence indicates Rolle's familiarity with the seven gifts as a distinctive topic for pastoral instruction, as evidenced by most pastoral manuals. Furthermore, Rolle also used definitions of prayer, contemplation, and love in *Emendatio vitae* and *The Form of Living*, suggesting further contact with texts transmitting definitions of the virtues and vices; his reuse of them is consistent with the way that such definitions were typically recycled in devotional and pastoral contexts.[53]

[49] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 19, lines 16–18.
[50] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 341; Richard Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, lines 19–20.
[51] See Conrad of Hirsau, *Liber de fructu carnis et spiritus*, PL 176:1004; *Speculum virginum*, ed. by Jutta Seyfarth (Turnhout, 1990), pars 4, lines 214–15.
[52] For instance, definitions found in the *Speculum virginum* are witnessed as incipits in Bloomfield 680, 1271, 2449, 3237, 5913, 6321 (see also Newhauser/Bejczy 680, 5913); compare respectively Seyfarth, *Speculum virginum*, pars 4, lines 188–89, 264–65, 186–87, 224–25, 111, 172.
[53] See Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, lines 4–20; Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 633–51.

Collections of Exempla *and Pastoral Texts*

Rolle's *exempla* constitute another genre prominent in *pastoralia*. Three Latin *exempla* appear integrated at the end of all copies of *Judica* B3, strongly supporting Rolle's authorship of them.[54] Four freestanding English *exempla* appear in the Thornton Manuscript, all explicitly ascribed to Rolle. Two of these appear independently and without ascriptions elsewhere.[55] Hanna leaves a question mark over Rolle's authorship of the English *exempla*.[56] (For ease of reference, I will refer to the Latin *exempla* by the order they appear as L1, L2, and L3, and similarly to the freestanding English as E1, E2, E3, and E4.[57])

Exempla are short, memorable narratives used widely in sermons and didactic texts to illustrate teaching points. Their usefulness led to the circulation of collections of *exempla* as an aid to preaching for use in sermons and treatises. While the four English *exempla* are freestanding, Rolle demonstrates how *exempla* could be used illustratively by embedding a further one in his *Form of Living* (hereafter E5):

> As I fynd of a recluse written, that was a good womman, to þe whiche þe yuel angel oft tymes appered in þe fourme of a good angel, and seid þat he was comen to brynge hir to heuyn. Wherfor sho was right glaad and ioyful, bot neuerþelatre sho told hit to hir shrift-fadyre, and he, as a wise man and quaynt, yave hir þis consail: 'Whan he cometh, bid hym þat he shewe þe oure lady Seynt Marie. When he hath don so, sey "Aue Marie".' Sho did so, and þe fend seyd 'Þou hast no need to se hir; my presens suffiseth to þe', and sho seid jn al maneres sho wold se hir. He saw þat hym behoued oþer do hyr wille, or sho wold dispise hym. Anoon he broght forth þe fairest body of womman þat myght be, and shewed hit to hir, and anon she set hir on hir knees and said 'Aue Maria', and al vansshed awey, and for shame sethen he came neuer aye to hyre.[58]

[54] A few manuscripts contain three further *exempla*, but Daly finds that they were later additions to the text: Rolle, *Judica me*, p. xl.
[55] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lvii–lix.
[56] For example, Hanna's comment that E1 'clearly is at least Rolle-derived' in *English Manuscripts*, pp. xxiii–xxiv (Hanna's discussion treats E3, 'The Bee', as a separate text; see pp. xviii–xix). See also discussion in Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lvii–lix, where Hanna discusses further loose English *exempla* with possible connections to Rolle.
[57] That is, by the order the English *exempla* appear in the Thornton Manuscript and as printed in Rolle, *Uncollected*, pp. 12–14.
[58] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 166–178.

Rolle follows this by highlighting its moral (that it is important to exercise discernment when dealing with spiritual experiences), demonstrating how *exempla* were used to support a point of instruction.[59] Apparently autobiographical anecdotes in *Emendatio vitae* and *Super Canticum canticorum* are presented in a similarly illustrative manner.[60] Likewise, the Latin *exempla* at the end of *Judica me* come with brief concluding morals explaining what can be learnt from them, and all explore *Judica* B3's broader topic of damnation.[61] Hence, alongside apparently writing some freestanding English *exempla*, Rolle also embeds *exempla* in Latin and English in a way which is typical of instructive literature. The illustrative function of *exempla* suggests Rolle's concern to teach effectively by illuminating his points.

With the exception of E3 ('The Bee') and E5, the original sources for all of these *exempla* are named within the text: L1, L3, E1, and E2 are all attributed to Caesarius (in fact, L1 and E1 derive from the same original *exemplum*); L2 is attributed to Peter Damian; and E4 is attributed to Heraclides. However, Rolle did not encounter these *exempla* directly from these sources. All except E3 present abridged versions of their original which trace back to Arnold of Liège's *Alphabetum narrationum*, a large collection of *exempla* alphabetised by theme and written before Rolle's career (Arnold of Liège died in 1309).[62] For example, while scholars have worked hard to wrest Rolle's autobiography from E5 (the *exemplum* in *The Form*), it is in fact a close translation of Arnold of Liège:[63]

> Cuidam recluse malus angelus in specie boni angeli frequenter apparens, tandem dixit ei quod eam uenerat remunerare, propter quod illa gaudens confessori suo dictas apparitiones reuelauit. Qui sicut uir prudens dixit ei: 'Cum ad te uenerit dic ei ut ostendat tibi Dominam

[59] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 178–81.
[60] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 1, lines 65–69; Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 278–97.
[61] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 78, lines 7–11, 21–23; p. 79, lines 21–22.
[62] E1 and L1 share the same source, so for E1/L1, E2, E4, E5, L2, and L3 see respectively Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, ed. by E. Brilli et al., (Turnhout, 2015), nos 208 (pp. 120–21), 206 (p. 119), 16 (p. 14), 477a (pp. 272–73), 292 (p. 169), 304 (p. 175).
[63] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 194n.176; McIlroy, *English Prose*, pp. 161–63.

> nostram, quod cum fecerit dicas "Aue Maria"'. Quod cum illa peteret ab illo et ille diceret: 'Non indigens uidere eam, sufficiat tibi presentia mea', et illa instante, ille corpus formans mulieris pulcherrime ei ostendit. Tunc illa genua flectens dixit 'Aue Maria', et statim phantasma disparuit.[64]

Like L1, L3, E1, and E2, this *exemplum* originates in Caesarius, but Caesarius's version is over twice as long as Arnold's version here.[65] All Rolle's Caesarian *exempla* are similarly closely translated or copied from Arnold (sharing no material with Caesarius which is not found in Arnold).[66] Elisa Brilli suggests that Caesarius was Arnold's direct source, meaning the abridgments are attributable to Arnold, and hence that Rolle's Caesarian *exempla* all descend from Arnold's versions.[67] E4 originated in Heraclides, but also appears in Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*.[68] Again, Brilli suggests that Vincent of Beauvais was one of Arnold's major sources, and a comparison between versions supports the view that Arnold took this *exemplum* from Vincent rather than Heraclides.[69] Where there are differences between versions, E4 follows Arnold over Vincent, suggesting it is likewise descended from Arnold.[70] L2 originated in Peter Damian, and an abridged version appears in Arnold, Vincent, and Hélinand of Froidmont's *Chronicon*.[71] It is likely that Arnold's source was Vincent, that Vincent's source was Hélinand, and that Hélinand's was Peter Damian.[72] Again, Rolle's version is

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[64] Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 477a (pp. 272–73).
[65] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Joseph Strange, 2 vols (Cologne, 1851), 7.26 (2:35–36).
[66] The Caesarian originals for L1/E1, E2, and L3 can be found respectively in Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, 2.15 (1:83–84), 2.10 (1:75–76), 12.19 (2:329).
[67] Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, p. xxxii.
[68] Heraclides, *Liber paradisus*, PL 74:255; Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex, sive, speculum maius: naturale, doctrinale, morale, historiale, Volume 4: Speculum historiale*, reprinted from 1624 Douai edition (Graz, 1965), book 17, ch. 67, p. 678.
[69] Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, pp. xxx–xxxii.
[70] For example, Rolle reads 'And when men askede hire how scho myghte swa lyffe' (*Uncollected*, p. 14, lines 7–8) for Arnold's 'Iterum cum quereretur ab ea qualiter sic posset uiuere' (*Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 16, p. 14), whereas Vincent and Heraclides respectively read 'Qua rursus dicente: Qualites [*sic*, probably *erratum* for 'Qualiter'] potes in tali solitudine contra accidiam vel cogitationes tam iuge habere certamen?' (*Speculum historiale*, book 17, ch. 67, p. 678) and 'Qua dicente rursus: Quemadmodum igitur pati potes, o ancilla Christi, ut neminem prorsus videas, sed in solitudine tali contra acediam vel cogitationes habeas tam juge certamen?' (PL 74:255).
[71] Peter Damian, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. by Kurt Reindel, 4 vols (Munich, 1983–1993), 72 (2:346–47); Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 292 (p. 169); Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, book 25, ch. 63, pp. 1023–24; Hélinand of Froidmont, *Chronicon*, PL 212:973–74.
[72] Brilli argues that Vincent was Arnold's direct source in Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, pp. xxx–xxxii. As the older and longer text, Peter Damian must be the ultimate source. Hélinand's *Chronicon* was a major source for Vincent: see Marinus M. Woesthuis, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Helinand of Froidmont', in

closer to Arnold than any other version, suggesting that all Rolle's *exempla* (except E3) descend ultimately from a single source, the *Alphabetum narrationum*.

However, this does not mean that Rolle took his *exempla* directly from Arnold of Liège. The *Alphabetum narrationum* was relatively well-known, and a copy appears in BL, MS Harley 268 after another collection of *exempla* containing the only known Latin version of Rolle's E3 (discussed below).[73] This places the text close to Rolle, increasing the plausibility that Rolle could have accessed a copy. Nevertheless, *exempla* were also extracted from large collections and used illustratively in treatises which became a means of their subsequent transmission. Rolle introduces E5 in *The Form of Living* by saying 'As I fynd of a recluse written...' which leaves the source ambiguous: 'fynd' may connote stumbling across something or purposeful searching (as through an alphabetised encyclopaedia).[74] The MED includes both definitions, though suggests that 'finden writen' connotes happenstance.[75] This may suggest that Rolle found this *exemplum* incidentally, in the kind of transmissional context outlined in the introduction to this chapter, rather than that he sought it out from a collection.

Evidence that Rolle did not take his *exempla* directly from the *Alphabetum narrationum* is offered by that text itself. It is organised alphabetically by topic. Rolle's Latin *exempla* are unified by the theme of judgment and damnation, but had Rolle thumbed through the *Alphabetum narrationum* he would have found them under the themes of 'Contritio' ('contrition'), 'Ecclesia' ('the Church'), and 'Elemosina' ('almsgiving').[76] Rolle's E5 exemplifies resistance to the devil's temptation in *The Form*, but the reader of the *Alphabetum narrationum* would find it under the topic of 'Maria

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Lector et compilator: Vincent de Beauvais, frère prêcheur, un intellectuel et son milieu au XIIIe siècle, ed. by Serge Lusignan, Monique Paulmier-Foucart, and Marie-Christine Duchenne (Grâne, 1997), pp. 233–47.

[73] For the availability of the *Alphabetum narrationum*, see its library catalogue entries in MLGB3.

[74] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, line 166.

[75] 'finden, n.', senses 5 and 7, *MED*.

[76] Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, nos 208 (pp. 120–21), 292 (p. 169), 304 (p. 175).

Mater Dei' ('Mary, Mother of God').[77] It seems unlikely that Rolle sought to illustrate these points by looking up such keywords. Either he knew the *Alphabetum narrationum* very well, or he took these from another source.

Furthermore, because E1 and L1 translate the same text, they provide an insight into the shared source, showing that it differed from the modern critical edition of the *Alphabetum narrationum*. Though they contain the same text, E1 contains material absent from L1 but present in Arnold of Liège, showing that Rolle returned to a Latin original when translating it.[78] E1 and L1 also share material not found in the *Alphabetum narrationum*: L1's phrase 'et addidit causam' is paralleled by 'for þis enchesone'; both modify the word 'contrition' with 'true' ('ueram' and 'verray'); and both contain equivalents of the phrase 'ideo eterne dampnacioni iudicatus sum' (or, in Middle English, 'wharefore sentence of dampnacyone felle one me and wente agaynes me').[79] These variants were likely present in Rolle's Latin source.[80] Furthermore, this kind of scribal variation is perhaps more likely to be introduced by an author adding clarificatory detail whilst embedding an *exemplum* in a treatise (that is, in the context of original composition), rather than by a scribe copying the *Alphabetum narrationum*. The idea that Rolle extracted these *exempla* from treatises, coming across them by happenstance, rather than composing them himself or taking them directly from an encyclopaedic resource would reflect the kind of scribal reshaping and appropriation of existing *pastoralia* associated with humbler kinds of pastoral manuals.

[77] Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 477a (pp. 272–73).
[78] Noted in Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 169. Rolle's 'And forthy I had na stabyll purpose in gude, na perfite contrycyone' translates Arnold of Liège's 'et ideo firmum non habui propositum in bono nec per consequens perfectam contritionem', but this is absent from L1; compare Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 12, lines 14–15; Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 208 (p. 121); Rolle, *Judica me*, pp. 77–78.
[79] Compare Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 12, lines 8–9, 10 16–17; Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, no. 208 (pp. 120–21); Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 78, lines 1, 3, 6–7.
[80] None of these variants are found in Brilli's critical edition, though she collated just a handful of manuscript witnesses; see Arnold of Liège, *Alphabetum narrationum*, pp. 120–21.

This leaves one remaining *exemplum*, E3 (titled 'The Bee and the Stork' by Allen, though actually about an ostrich rather than a stork).[81] This *exemplum* has received the most interest.[82] Allen and Hanna saw it as likely an original composition (if derivative from a commonplace).[83] However, there is evidence that, like Rolle's other *exempla*, it was also translated directly from Latin. E3 splits into three distinct sections, the first two connected by the image of the bee, and the third introducing the ostrich.[84] Allen noted that a Latin translation of the first of these appears in a collection of *exempla* in BL, MS Harley 268.[85] Comparing both texts reveals several indicators that make it marginally more likely that the Latin was the source for Rolle's English rather than the reverse:[86]

> Apis talis est nature quod numquam uult esse nec sinit cum eis qui nolunt operari. Immo illas abicit et repellit. Item, quando uolat terram capit in pedibus ne a uento leuius extollatur in aera. Item, semper alas mundas custodit. Similiter, iusti propter deum numquam sunt in ocio quin in aliquo labore liberati[87] uel mecanico laborent; immo, ocio arguunt et repellunt. Terram rapiunt quia reputando se terrenes et uiles uento inanis glorie non extolluntur. Alas mundas custodiunt quia duo precepta caritatis nitida consciencia consequantur. (MS Harley 268)[88]

> The bee has thre kyndis. Ane es þat scho es neuer ydill, and scho es noght with thaym þat will noghte wyrke bot castys thaym owte and puttes thaym awaye. Anothire es þat when scho flyes, scho takes erthe in hyr fette þat scho be noghte lyghtly ouerheghede in the ayere of wynde. The thyrde es þat scho kepes clene and bryghte hire wyngez. Thus ryghtwyse men þat lufes God are neuer in ydyllnes, for owthyre þay ere in trauayle, prayand or thynkande or redande or othere gude doande, or withtakand ydill men and schewand thaym worthy to be put fra þe ryste of heuen for þay will noghte trauayle. Here þay take erthe, þat es þay halde þamselfe vile and erthely that thay be noghte blawen with þe wynde of vanyte and of pryde. Thay kepe thaire wynges clene, that es þe twa commandementes of charyte þay fulfill in gud concyens, and thay hafe othyre vertus vnblendyde with þe fylthe of syn and vnclene luste. (Rolle, E3)[89]

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[81] As noted in *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. by Kenneth Sisam (Oxford, 1921), p. 215; Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. xviii.
[82] It is the only English *exemplum* discussed by Allen in *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 269–71. It is the only one edited in Sisam, *Verse and Prose* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 41–42; Hope Emily Allen, *English Writings of Richard Rolle* (Oxford, 1931), pp. 54–56.
[83] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 270; Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 170.
[84] Here I suggest that the sentence beginning 'Arestotill says...' manifestly introduces a new section; see Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 13, line 14.
[85] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 269.
[86] A possibility Allen acknowledges, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 270.
[87] Perhaps an error for 'litterati', so that 'labore litterati vel mecanico' refers to intellectual or manual labour.
[88] At f. 40v.
[89] Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. 13, lines 1–14.

Firstly, the English text adds 'The bee has thre kyndis...' to give a structure to the opening; since this lends order to a list, it is more likely to have been added by Rolle than omitted. Secondly, some Latin words have less concise parallels in the English text: compare for instance 'abicit et repellit' with 'castys thaym owte and puttes thaym awaye'. This concise Latin is less likely to derive from the English than the reverse. Thirdly, the English translation partially replicates Latinate syntax, inverting object and verb: compare 'duo precepta caritatis nitida consciencia consequantur' with 'þe twa commandementes of charyte þay fulfill in gud concyens'. Besides the greater likelihood at this period that Latin should get translated into English than the reverse, these factors offer a good cumulative case that the English was probably derived from the Latin. No sources are known for the rest of E3. E3 is distinct from Rolle's other *exempla* (perhaps why it has provoked the most interest) in drawing its illustrations from nature. However, natural textbooks were also a typical source for *exempla*.[90] Given this, and that Rolle's other *exempla* are all translations, the existence of a Latin source for the rest of E3 seems likely. Thus, again, E3 likely shows Rolle producing a piece of *pastoralia* by reshaping existing sources.

Remaining Minor Prose

For reasons of space, the remainder of Rolle's minor prose works will be dealt with only briefly. Rolle wrote a commentary each on the Athanasian Creed, the Apostles' Creed, and the Magnificat. Credal commentaries were common in pastoral manuals; equally, the subjects of these commentaries were major liturgical texts, so they may reflect another genre of *pastoralia*: the paraliturgical commentary (like the commentary on the Mass which Rolle used for *Super orationem dominicam*). In each case, there is evidence that Rolle used some pre-extant Latin text. The source

[90] G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 2nd rev. edn (Oxford, 1961), p. 154.

for *Super symbolum Athanasii* is a set of Latin glosses, which appears in several Psalter manuscripts.[91] No source is known for *Super symbolum apostolorum*, but it shares its opening line with an earlier Pseudo-Augustinian sermon, proving Rolle used some pre-existing source.[92] No Latin source is known for *Super magnificat*, but it has parallels with Rolle's English commentary on the Magnificat (which was appended to his English Psalter).[93] In other cases of parallels between Rolle's Latin and English equivalents, such parallels reflect Rolle returning to an external Latin original, so this offers evidence (albeit very slight) for a Latin source.[94] Hence, these three commentaries all bear traces of the same processes we have already discussed: of Rolle repackaging existing sources to create new texts, perhaps specifically to equip his readers in paraliturgical devotion.

Two minor Rollean prose works remain: *Desire and Delight* and *De vita activa et contemplativa*. Neither reflect an obviously pastoral topic or genre. Their content reflects Rolle's distinctive interests in contemplative spirituality, and so, of all Rolle's minor prose works, they are perhaps the most likely to be his original compositions.[95]

Several texts ascribed to Rolle in manuscripts, but of uncertain or doubtful authenticity, also belong within the category of *pastoralia*.[96] If these texts are by Rolle, their pastoral content is not

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[91] G.D.W. Ommanney, *A Critical Dissertation on the Athanasian Creed: Its Original Language, Date, Authorship, Titles, Text, Reception and Use* (Oxford, 1897), pp. 250–53 (for Rolle's commentary), 218–21 (for its source). For further discussion, including a putative authorial revision drawing on another set of glosses, see Kraebel, 'Illinois', pp. 509–12.

[92] See 'Sermo 240', PL 39:2189–90. Doyle and Hanna list four copies, *Hope Allen's* "*Writings*", p. 13. One of these (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 742) and a further text with the same incipit (Oxford, Pembroke College, MS 43, f. 127v) are dated to the thirteenth century.

[93] Rolle, *Unprinted Latin*, p. 9.

[94] For example, the Latin and English Psalters, L1 and E1, and *Emendatio vitae* and *The Form of Living*. For the Psalters, see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 177–78. The other texts mentioned here are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

[95] Andrew Kraebel argues that the latter originated as improvised filler in 'Modes of Authorship and the Making of Medieval English Literature', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Literary Authorship*, ed. by Ingo Berensmeyer, Gert Buelens, and Marysa Demoor (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 102–6.

[96] For example, *De mandatis*, *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum*, and *De contricione*. See Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 980–81; Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lxvi–lxviii, lxix.

atypical for his short writings; if they are not Rolle, they may reflect a scribal recognition of Rolle as a pastoral author.

Conclusions: Rolle as a Pastoral Compiler

Rolle's minor works thus reflect the scribal activity associated with a humbler stratum of *pastoralia*, in which a scribe reshapes previous resources to make new, if largely derivative, texts, using whatever material was available. They show that Rolle had access to several pastoral sources and was familiar with their didactic conventions. Rolle's reworking of his sources suggests that he took an active interest in pastoral instruction, perhaps tailoring these works for known readers as devotional texts.

Furthermore, these minor texts offer evidence of Rolle's scribal practice as a compiler of *pastoralia*. As very brief texts they are unlikely to have entered circulation independently of other texts by Rolle, and hence probably originally appeared in holograph compilations of his work. Accordingly, Kraebel has suggested that some of Rolle's minor Latin texts (in particular *De vita activa et contemplativa*, *Super magnificat*, and *Super symbolum Athanasii*) could have originally been filler added by Rolle at the end of manuscripts which he made.[97] This could explain their low circulation: perhaps early scribes of Rolle, copying the longer texts for their own interest rather than on the basis of Rolle's name, recognised these shorter texts as unimportant filler and did not copy them, so that these texts only entered circulation later when Rolle's reputation was more widespread, his holographs prized, and scribes (like the scribe of BodL, MS Bodley 861) gathered up every scrap of

[97] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 977–80; Kraebel, 'Modes of Authorship, pp. 102–6.

material connected with him.[98] In the previous chapter, I argued that Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury School MS 25 represents a replica of a Rolle holograph collection, and in this manuscript *Super orationem dominicam* does not seem to have been included as filler but amongst other texts appended to the Psalter, raising a Latin Psalter holograph as an alternative original vector for the Rolle's similarly paraliturgical minor texts (though of course this would not rule out Rolle using them as filler elsewhere). Nonetheless, Kraebel's theory applies equally well to Rolle's short English texts (which are also generally much rarer than the Latin, supporting their incidental status). The Rollean filler at the end of Shrewsbury School MS 25 at least shows that Rolle did add filler to his books, and while this filler is marked as such by its ascriptions, Rolle may have habitually omitted attributions when translating into English, since they would be less relevant to readers who could not engage with Latin *auctoritates* – we have already seen him omitting Pagula's reference to Augustine and John Chrysostom in *The Ten Commandments* in one of the quotations above.

The existence of short texts attributed to Rolle thus reflects his scribal practice as a maker of pastoral books, attaching useful *pastoralia* to copies of his own works, effectively as a compilation. The derivativeness of these texts reflects a pastoral context in which Rolle naturally prioritised their usefulness rather than his own invention. Despite their brevity, their derivativeness of existing texts usefully allows us to locate Rolle's activity within a recognisable stratum of textual transmission, in which scribes reshape available pastoral literature for new readers, and they witness his familiarity with the conventions of pastoral texts.

[98] Kraebel, 'Rolle Reassembled', pp. 979–80.

***Judica me*, *Emendatio vitae*, and the English Epistles**

The process of copying and reshaping pastoral literature on display in Rolle's minor works also underpins the formation of his longer pastoral texts. *Judica me*, *Emendatio vitae*, *The Form of Living*, *Ego dormio*, and *The Commandment* can all be seen as pastoral compilations, drawing on a mixture of specific sources and recycled commonplaces, and arranging their parallel teaching in distinctive structures in order to meet the needs of their audiences. In doing so, Rolle's major pastoral works emerge from the same scribal activity associated with the 'humbler' kind of pastoral manual: they are brief, derivative of existing compendia and priestly resources, and in some cases were made to meet the needs of an individual recipient known personally to Rolle (at least in the first instance).[99] They thus demonstrate Rolle engaging in conventional practices of pastoral care.

A Penitential Handbook: Judica me

Since this chapter argues for affinities between *Judica me* and Rolle's other pastoral works, we must first re-examine its place in Rolle's chronology. Allen and Watson both saw *Judica me* as an early work. However, the criteria they present for an early date are weak, and, if anything, associate *Judica me* with Rolle's later works.

Allen's dating relied on Rolle calling himself a *iuvenis* ('young man') in *Judica me*, which Watson rightly criticised as a reliable indicator of Rolle's actual age, pointing out that the word was used flexibly and figuratively in the Middle Ages.[100] Allen supported her early dating by identifying discussion in *Judica me* with Rolle's conflict with the Daltons (Rolle's first patrons as a hermit).[101]

[99] See the introduction to chapter 1 of this thesis.
[100] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 89; Watson, *Invention*, pp. 274–75.
[101] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 111–12.

Judica me is (uniquely for Rolle's Latin) apparently addressed towards a particular recipient, and opens with several deictic references, as if starting mid-conversation, among which Rolle mentions falling out with a patron.[102] Rolle had multiple patrons, and in *Judica me* he refers to changing cell more than once ('habitacionem mutarem aliquando', 'sometimes I changed dwelling'; 'plura loca uiderim', 'I saw very many places'), hinting that this text was not written shortly after his first change of cell, as Allen thought.[103] There is no viable evidence that *Judica me* refers to the Daltons, or even that Rolle had a conflict with them.[104]

A second reason for an early dating, advanced by both Allen and Watson, is the lack of Rolle's distinctive language of *calor*, *dulcor*, and *canor*.[105] Watson implied that these were wholly absent from *Judica me*.[106] In fact, all three are present: 'ardore caritatis' ('fire of love'), 'celesti suauitate' ('celestial sweetness'), and 'inter angelicos chorus... amoris canticum canere non cessantes' ('among angelic choirs... not ceasing to sing the song of love).[107] Allen noted these allusions to Rolle's sensory terminology, but tried to argue that Rolle knew them only in theory at this point, rather than in practice.[108] Her arguments are speculative. If anything, this criterion associates the work more strongly with *Emendatio vitae* and the English epistles, in which sensory language is likewise understated.

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[102] Rolle, *Judica me*, pp. 2–3.
[103] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 2, lines 4, 7; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 111.
[104] Allen's claim that Rolle fell out with the Daltons is based on weak inferences from *Judica me* and the *Melos amoris*; see Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 111–12, 121, 463. Rolle arguably associates moving around with his early life as a hermit in chapter 15 of the *Incendium*, but he does not give conflict as a reason for doing so in that text. In fact, in the *Incendium* chapter he also talks about returning to past patrons, which he is unlikely to have done with John Dalton since Dalton was engulfed in scandal in 1322 (near the start of Rolle's eremitic life). See Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 15, p. 188; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 449–56.
[105] Watson questions Allen's use of this evidence at *Invention*, pp. 273–74, but uses it himself at p. 276.
[106] Watson, *Invention*, p. 276. Watson perhaps meant that the specific terminology of *calor*, *dulcor* and *canor* is absent, but Rolle does not use these terms exclusively.
[107] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 14, line 21; p. 16, lines 2–3; p. 4, lines 6–7.
[108] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 99–100, 108–9.

Watson's further reasons for an early dating can similarly be discarded. His suggestion that *Judica me*'s argumentation is self-evidently immature is exactly the kind of impressionistic reasoning which he rightly rejected in Allen's arguments.[109] Watson also suggests its derivativeness likely makes it early.[110] This depends, firstly, on an early date for the supposed *juvenilia* which Watson associates with Rolle's derivativeness (their early dating is equally unsubstantiated, making the argument circular), and secondly, on Watson's claim that Rolle's middle works constitute a period of self-consciously original exposition.[111] The evidence Watson assembles for this is inferential, and certainly does not amount to Rolle claiming to embark on a period of exclusively original writing.[112] Furthermore, derivativeness could just as easily associate *Judica me* with Rolle's late pastoral works, which also draw on existing texts. As Allen recognised, the final three of *Judica me*'s four parts (usually labelled A, B1, B2, and B3) derive from William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis*.[113] Here we can provide a new piece of information: Rolle was still using this source when involved in ministry to vernacular readers, since he translated portions of it in his *The Ten Commandments*, strengthening an association with the late works.

The idea that a person's career should pass through distinct phases is weak grounds for dating, especially given an author like Rolle who constantly intermingles different genres within an individual work, so the associations between *Judica me* and the late works do not prove a late date. However, further factors support it. Boyle's dating of one of the constituent books of the *Oculus sacerdotis* (the *Pars oculi*, which Rolle used in *Judica* B2) to the late 1320s disproves Allen's early

[109] Watson, *Invention*, p. 276, compare with his comments on Allen at 273.
[110] Watson, *Invention*, p. 276.
[111] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 276–77.
[112] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 276–77. Watson claims that Rolle's phase of self-consciously original exposition is evident in several works: for *Super Psalmum vicesimum* at p. 317n.3; *Super Canticum canticorum* and *Super lectiones mortuorum* at pp. 199–200; the English Psalter at p. 245; and *Super magnificat* at p. 103.
[113] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 101–4.

dating.[114] Although the *Oculus sacerdotis* went on to become widespread, there is minimal evidence of circulation during the 1330s, and so a late date for *Judica me* is more plausible than an early one.[115] Furthermore (and speculatively), a late date fits a putative shape of Rolle's pastoral ministry. The prominence of more basic pastoral material in *Judica me* and the late works perhaps reflects Rolle's enlarged audience later in life: it is intuitive that as Rolle's reputation grew, his disciples might have expanded from fellow solitaries to include more diverse backgrounds (such as a priest, nuns, and a monk, as various evidence indicates) with an interest in contemplative spirituality.[116]

Re-evaluating the date of *Judica me* is important because it invites re-evaluation of the text itself. Allen and Watson's early dating corresponded with dismissing it as 'amateurish' and 'naive', as both scholars situated the text at an early stage of Rolle's development.[117] Dislodging the association between *Judica me* and a supposedly immature Rolle invites reconsideration of its interest.

Judica shows Rolle producing a compilation by recycling mostly one source, William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis*, with additions and original composition. Of all Rolle's longer pastoral works, *Judica* is the one which most obviously replicates the compositional process described in the previous section, associated with other derivative and basic pastoral manuals, since much of it is copied verbatim.

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[114] Boyle suggests the second and third books were completed between 1320 and 1326 (probably before 1322/3), and the first book after 1326 (and probably before 1328); see Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis*', pp. 105–6.

[115] According to Boyle, *Judica me* is the earliest evidence of the circulation of the *Oculus sacerdotis*; the next earliest evidence he mentions is its adaptation in the *Regimen animarum* in 1343; and the majority of extant manuscripts are dated 1350–1420 (Boyle, 'A Study', 1:348, 373–75, 349–50). My redating of *Judica* notably implies that it may not actually be the earliest evidence for the circulation of the *Oculus*. Boyle also writes that a 1349 bequest of the *Oculus* to a chaplain is 'the earliest known evidence of its attraction for the generality of priests', implying that there are no or few witnesses in the 1330s and 1340s (see 1:349–50).

[116] See the introduction to chapter 1 of this thesis.

[117] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 102; Watson, *Invention*, p. 276.

Rolle's selections from Pagula cover foundational pastoral topics surrounding a central theme of judgment. *Judica* B1 is concerned with the priest's private devotion, B2 is concerned with confession, and B3 with the Last Judgment. The text's penitential theme also appears in Rolle's original composition, *Judica* A, which extensively discusses the Last Judgment, the need to repent, and virtue and vice, fitting within the text's overall topic. As John Daly points out, the unifying theme of judgment is clear, and Rolle seems to signal it at several points in the text, for instance by opening *Judica* A with several Bible verses on judgment and relating its opening anecdotes to the same general theme.[118] The importance of Rolle's organising theme is also reflected in his omissions from Pagula; for instance, he did not copy its extracts from Innocent III's *De miseria humanae conditionis*, which seem obviously to appeal to Rolle's spirituality. Rolle's selections thus turn Pagula's compendium into a more focused penitential handbook, encompassing inner penitence, confessional practice, and the priest's own self-examination.

Rolle's transformation of his raw materials is further seen in how his selections and additions produce a heightened emphasis on the priest's inner and devotional life. While *Judica me* is the only one of Rolle's texts explicitly designed to instruct someone responsible for the *cura animarum* themselves, Rolle distinguishes the material in B1, which was for the priest's own benefit, from the guidance on administering confession for the benefit of others in B2: 'Istis iam dictis ad utilitatem uestram, uidendum est consequenter de multis casibus periculosis in confessionibus...' ('Now, with these things said for your benefit, consequently we must consider the many dangerous cases in confession...').[119] These two aims (supporting the priest's private devotion and public ministry) are in accordance with one another, since performing a thorough self-examination enables that the priest may 'alios de suis culpis iuste reprehenditis' ('justly reprehend others concerning their faults'), as Rolle explains.[120] Nonetheless, the distinction Rolle draws highlights that B1 is primarily preoccupied

[118] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. xi; p. 1, line 1; p. 2, lines 1–2; p. 3, lines 9–10.
[119] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 27, lines 1–2.
[120] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 18, line 23.

with the priest's inner life. Attention to the inner life is also implicit in the presentation of the sermon on the Last Judgment in *Judica* B3. In Pagula's manual, this is given as a model sermon, rather than primarily for the priest's edification, appearing in a chapter which lists occasional preaching matter. In contrast, Rolle omits this framework, launching directly into the sermon itself as if addressed directly to the reader. In copying this, Rolle effectively preaches the sermon himself to the reader, again using the *Oculus sacerdotis* to equip his own pastoral ministry. Rolle thus selects and appropriates material from Pagula to produce a heightened emphasis on the priestly reader's own devotional life, thereby enacting the pastoral care which the *Oculus sacerdotis* was designed to support.

The penitential focus of *Judica me* naturally means that it builds on other pastoral categories. The seven deadly sins, the cardinal virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and so forth functioned as aids to confession, enabling the reader to perform a thorough self-examination. For this reason, Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* encourages the priest to run through lists of sins in order to provoke a full and accurate confession. *Judica* A follows in the same vein, with long lists of exhortations to righteous living. Here is a brief excerpt:

> Non sis uanis deditus lusibus, nec curiose aliquid agas pro acquirendis mundi rebus. Abstine te a uerbis inutilibus et ociosis. Noli audire detrahentem, nec habites cum homino assueto ad litigandum. Nulli dicas obprobrium nec aliquem despicias preter teipsum...[121]
>
> You should not be given to vain pastimes, and you should not diligently do anything to acquire the things of the world. Abstain yourself from useless and idle words. Do not listen to a detractor, nor should you live with a man accustomed to quarrel. You should speak reproach to nobody, nor should you despise anyone before yourself...

Such lists surely functioned penitentially as an aide-memoir to self-examination, encouraging the reader to carry out a thorough accounting of themselves. Again, this passage therefore addresses themes typical in *pastoralia*. Thus, even in *Judica* A, which was Rolle's original composition, he

[121] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 14, lines 8–11.

follows the conventions of penitential literature. Other passages besides those copied from Pagula also draw on standard pastoral topics. Rolle references the two New Testament commandments in a passage of original discussion in *Judica* B1 (he uses a similar move in the opening of *The Commandment*).[122] Apparent additions to Pagula's material include a versification of the Ten Commandments and a longer passage on the four grades of the judged.[123] Versification and numbered lists are typical of the mnemonic techniques of *pastoralia*. Rolle's original composition and additions thus also reinforce his familiarity with the conventions of pastoral literature.

Judica me thus demonstrates how Rolle reshapes Pagula and draws on the pastoral syllabus more broadly in order to accomplish his didactic purpose, producing a penitential manual to equip a priestly reader for his own ministry, with particular attention to the reader's inner life. In doing so, he also uses Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* to equip his own ministry to a priestly reader.

Virtues, Vices, and the Compendium of the Spiritual Life

Emendatio vitae, *The Form of Living*, and *Ego dormio* all present concise but expansive accounts of the spiritual life, in each case arranged as an ascent from the most foundational practices towards contemplation. (Of the English epistles, only *The Commandment* lacks an obvious linear trajectory, moving from the three grades of love to spiritual disciplines, and then to loving Christ in thought, word, and deed.) In doing so, their forms resemble the genres of spiritual compendia and treatises on the virtues and vices. These precedents demonstrate that, though incorporating specialised contemplative materials, Rolle's teaching was shaped by existing pastoral

[122] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 19, lines 14–15; Rolle, *The Commandment*, in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, ed. by S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS OS 293 (1988), lines 1–5 (citing Matt 22:27).
[123] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 44, lines 10–14; p. 74, line 5 to p. 75, line 6. For the verse, see Walther 4527, Bloomfield 1690, Newhauser/Bejczy 1690.

traditions. Furthermore, the differences between these texts also reveal Rolle reshaping the same basic spiritual trajectory into distinct forms to meet the didactic needs of different readers.

The textual forms of *Emendatio vitae* and the English epistles allow Rolle to gather together a wide spectrum of topics pertaining to spiritual life, functioning as summative reference works focused on an individual's spiritual development. In this vein, Watson usefully associates *Emendatio vitae* with large spiritual compendia, such as Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium theologicae veritatis* and Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*.[124] Hugh of Strasbourg's work functioned as a standard, encyclopaedic textbook on theology, whereas Bonaventure's *Breviloquium* offered a systematic exposition of foundational theological concepts. Like Rolle's pastoral works, these texts assembled material pertaining to the full spectrum of the spiritual life. Rolle calls *Judica me* a 'compendium', suggesting that its pastoral purpose was achieved through its assemblage of different aspects of spiritual life, even with the central organising theme of judgment.[125] In line with the compendium format, Rolle's other pastoral texts assemble a wide range of topics. This is evident in the organising structures of *Emendatio vitae* and *Ego dormio*, arranged as a progression through twelve or three stages respectively. *The Form* lacks such a sharply articulated structure, but nonetheless presents an overall trajectory from more foundational material, dealing expansively with temptation and sin, towards contemplative spirituality and the love of God. Its broad scope is indicated by Rolle's ambitious aim to describe 'þe fourme of lyuynge'.[126] This summary approach allows Rolle to bring together wide-ranging material as a kind of compilation, equipping his readers with a guide to the whole spectrum of spirituality, in a way which parallels the much more expansive compendia.

The discrete stages of *Emendatio vitae* and *Ego dormio* recall another distinctly pastoral genre: the treatise on virtues and vices, and (within this broader category) specifically the ladder of

[124] Watson, *Invention*, p. 211.
[125] 'quodam breui compendio', Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 18, line 18.
[126] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, line 894.

virtues tradition. Newhauser cites Bernard's *De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis* and Pseudo-Ambrose's *De scala virtutum* as important exemplars of the genre.[127] The 'ladder' was one among several metaphors that emerged to organise treatises on the vices and virtues: others included a journey, medicine, a tree, a battle, and a beast with multiple heads.[128] 'Virtues' here was understood broadly; treatises could have chapters on topics such as reading and poverty (as *Emendatio vitae* does) alongside more conventional virtues like love and patience.[129] One notable analogue and possible model for Rolle's *Emendatio vitae* is Alcuin's *Liber de vitiis et virtutibus* which, while not arranged as an ascent, shares with *Emendatio vitae* a chapter on the (relatively uncommon) topic of 'conversio' ('conversion'), using the same Biblical *thema*.[130] *Ego dormio* and Bernard's *De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis* reflect another form of the genre, in which a single virtue (in Rolle's case, love) is divided into progressive grades which are defined and expounded in broad terms.[131] Richard of St Victor's *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis*, from which Rolle draws the grades of love he uses in his other English epistles, offers another example which fits within the genre.[132] These different ways of presenting material on spiritual progression illustrate how an overarching organising conceit could function as a convenient mnemonic hook upon which an author could hang his material, arranging it to allow easy access as a reference work. The use of a mnemonic overarching structure is witnessed by many pastoral texts; for instance, Grosseteste's *Templum Dei* is structured according to the components of the bodily and spiritual temple, and the *Speculum vitae* is organised as an extensive commentary on the Lord's Prayer.[133] We have already seen that

[127] Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues*, pp. 157–58.
[128] Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues*, pp. 157–65.
[129] See, for example, Alcuin, *Liber de vitiis et virtutibus*, ch. 5, PL 101:616–17; Ambrosius Autpertus, *Libellus de conflictu vitiorum atque virtutum*, in *Ambrosii Autperti Opera*, ed. by R. Weber, 3 vols (Turnhout, 1975–1979), ch. 16, 3:920–22. In the latter example, poverty is presented as the remedy to the chapter's main topic, greed.
[130] Compare Alcuin, *Liber*, ch. 14, col. 623; Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 1, line 1. Alcuin's text survives alongside Rolle in the important early collection of BNF, MS Lat 15700, placing it within early networks disseminating Rolle's work.
[131] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera, Volume 3: Tractatus et opuscula*, ed. by Jean Leclercq and H.M. Rochais (Rome, 1963), pp. 1–59.
[132] See Allen's discussion of the grades, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 201–3.
[133] For discussion of the structure of each text, see Grosseteste, *Templum Dei*, pp. 9–14; *Speculum vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. by Ralph Hanna, EETS OS 331–32, 2 vols (2008), 1:lxxii.

numbered, mnemonic lists are typical in *pastoralia* and are used by Rolle; the organising structures of *Emendatio vitae* and *Ego dormio* similarly offer a structured and memorable format making the text easy to navigate. In this way, they reflect conventional forms of pastoral instruction.

These texts also reveal how Rolle reconfigures the same basic trajectory to instruct different readers. Despite their markedly different appearance, *Emendatio vitae* and *Judica* A present a remarkably similar account of spiritual progression. They show that Rolle was rehearsing the same basic teaching, guiding readers along markedly parallel trajectories of spiritual development, though weighting this material towards different stages.

Both texts begin with a penitential theme, describing the initial conversion from sin to God. The first chapters of *Emendatio vitae*, on *conuersio* and *contemptus mundi*, highlight the urgency of rejecting the world and turning towards God, which Rolle emphasises with discussion of the Last Judgement. In *Judica* A, after addressing his personal situation, Rolle gives an evocative account of the joys and horror of the Last Judgment, imploring the reader to reject sin and the world and to pursue heavenly things.[134] Thus in both cases Rolle begins his account of spiritual life by describing the foundational rejection of sin and pursuit of God, with reference to the Last Judgement. The next stage is an account of righteous living. In *Judica* A, Rolle exhorts the reader to reject sin, with passing references to the inevitability of tribulations, which form the topic of the (slightly later) fifth and six chapters in *Emendatio vitae*.[135] In *Judica* A, Rolle then transitions to consideration of the more mature spiritual practices by describing three different states of Christian: the average Christian, the false Christian, and the perfect Christian.[136] This introduces the idea of different grades of

[134] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 3, line 14 to p. 10, line 10. In this paragraph, I cite very specific passages of *Judica* A. However, *Judica* is not as rigidly structured as my citations may therefore imply: where one topic or phase ends and the next begins is not always clear, and my aim is only to indicate clearly which broad sections I have in mind.
[135] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 10, line 11 to p. 11, line 9.
[136] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 11, line 9 to p. 12, line 8.

advancement, which is implicit in the structure of *Emendatio vitae*. Rolle uses a similar idea as the opening conceit of *Ego dormio* (and elsewhere), describing the hierarchies of angels to introduce the idea of different stages of spiritual life.[137] This is succeeded in *Judica* by a discussion of voluntary poverty, corresponding with *Emendatio vitae*'s third chapter on poverty, followed by lists of exhortations to avoid sin and live righteously, corresponding with *Emendatio vitae*'s fourth chapter on *institucione vite* ('the ordering of life').[138] The final stage in both texts is to turn towards devotional practices and contemplative life. In *Judica* A, Rolle describes the joy of contemplation, and then offers a handful of sentences on the topics of reading, prayer, and meditation, which constitute three whole chapters in the latter part of *Emendatio vitae*.[139] Rolle closes *Judica* A with further brief references to contemplation and summary.[140] In *Emendatio*, Rolle closes with three chapters addressing contemplative life in more detail (though noting that contemplation is implicit in the practices already described). Overall, then, both texts follow a broadly parallel trajectory from conversion from sin, through righteous living, voluntary poverty and devotional practices, and on to contemplation. They show Rolle rehearsing the same basic account of spiritual life, including key milestones like voluntary poverty and the triad of reading, prayer, and meditation, but tailoring his teaching to different readers by weighting it towards different parts of the spectrum (the earlier part in *Judica* and the later part in *Emendatio*).

Further evidence of the parallels between *Judica* A and *Emendatio vitae* is offered by Rolle's use of the same material in describing voluntary poverty. Both texts cite Matthew 19:21 (on giving away all one's possessions to follow Christ): in *Emendatio*'s case, it appears prominently as the

[137] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 16–32. See also the introduction to this thesis, fn. 60.
[138] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 11, line 26 to p. 15, line 21.
[139] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 15, line 22 to p. 17, line 18, with prayer, meditation, and reading discussed at p. 17, lines 1–5. The flexibility with which Rolle arranges this triad is typical of Rolle's approach to systematisations (as this chapter argues); for further discussion, see Clark, 'Re-Assessment', p. 123; Vincent Gillespie, '*Lukynge in Haly Bukes*: *Lectio* in Some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies', in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 114–18.
[140] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 17, lines 5–18.

thema opening the chapter on poverty, and in *Judica* it introduces sustained discussion of the topic. In both cases, Rolle uses an abridged form of the verse, reinforcing the parallel and thus the sense that Rolle is working with the same basic material.[141] As Rolle develops his discussion in *Judica*, he writes:

> Sicut enim ex una radice multi rami producuntur, sic ex uoluntaria paupertate omnes uirtutes generantur.[142]
>
> For just as from one root many branches are produced, thus from voluntary poverty all virtues are begotten.

Rolle uses a modified form of the same sentence in *Emendatio vitae*.[143] The tree of virtues was a stock image, and Rolle's phrasing is reminiscent of a line from Gregory's *Homiliae in evangelia*.[144] Rolle uses Gregory's *Homiliae* elsewhere, so may have borrowed this phrase directly, or alternatively Rolle's version (which positions poverty as the root of virtues, rather than Gregory's more obvious choice of love) may reflect Rolle's take on a commonplace image.[145] In either case, these parallels show Rolle recycling a common core of teaching, in which voluntary poverty was indicative of the transition away from worldliness and the active life, in this case using the same illustrative image to communicate his point. Voluntary poverty is mentioned at a similar point in *Ego dormio*, setting up the second degree in which the Christian passes beyond the most basic requirements of faith, reflecting its importance as a key milestone for spiritual development.[146] The shared Biblical *thema* and formulation across *Judica* and *Emendatio* show Rolle rehearsing what seems to be a stock teaching in his mind, demonstrating the parallels in purpose and content underpinning both texts.

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[141] Rolle omits the phrase 'et habebis thesaurum in caelo' midway through the verse in both texts.
[142] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 12, lines 16–18.
[143] 'Et sicut ex una radice multi rami oriuntur, sic ex voluntaria paupertate hoc modo assumpta virtutes et boni mores inestimabiles procedunt', Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 3, lines 23–25.
[144] 'Vt enim multi arboris rami ex una radice prodeunt, sic multae uirtutes ex una caritate generantur', Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*, ed. by R. Étaix (Turnhout, 1999), 2.27.1 (p. 229, lines 6–7).
[145] A passage on contemplation in *Super Canticum canticorum* has close parallels with Gregory's text; compare Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 2.34.11 (p. 311, lines 311–15); Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 5, lines 174–81.
[146] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 95–97.

These differences indicate that Rolle's structuring of the same trajectory was a formal device, reflecting the mnemonic schematisations of didactic literature, rather than that Rolle conceived of spiritual life as a rigid progression through the same, fixed steps. The flexibility of this schema is also reflected in how Rolle reshapes it in *The Form of Living* and *Ego dormio*. In *The Form of Living*, Rolle seems to bifurcate the text into its first six chapters (containing instructions about overcoming the Devil's temptations, ascetic discipline, and vices and virtues) and the final five chapters (addressing the love of God and contemplative life).[147] Rolle makes this distinction explicit at the close of chapter six, saying of the first half of the text, 'Now as þou herd how þou may dispose þi lyf, and reul hit to Goddis wille'.[148] These first six chapters broadly correspond to *Emendatio*'s fourth chapter, *de institutione vite* ('on the arrangement of life'). Then, Rolle looks forward to the second half, which will cover the more advanced spirituality of 'contemplatif lif'.[149] Rolle at this point also says that the second half will cover 'þe loue of Ihesu Criste', which is in some way relevant to all levels of Christian life, suggesting that the bifurcation of *The Form* is partly a means to organise congruent topics rather than that the Christian should straightforwardly transition from one half to the other.[150] This is contrasted by a more systematic account in *Ego dormio*, where spiritual ascent is divided into three grades. In this text, the first grade is the most basic, encompassing basic pastoral topics, like keeping the commandments and avoiding sin.[151] As Watson points out, this text focuses less than the *The Form* on rudimentary spirituality, allotting this section fewer than thirty lines.[152] The second degree involves forsaking the world to live in voluntary poverty, corresponding with the movement towards contemplation in *Judica me* and *Emendatio vitae*. The third degree is

[147] Ralph Hanna persuasively contests S.J. Ogilvie-Thomson's view that the chapter divisions in *The Form* were not authorial; see Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. xxviii.
[148] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 485–86.
[149] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, line 487.
[150] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 486–87.
[151] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 68–70.
[152] Watson, *Invention*, p. 227.

contemplative life. In both texts, reshaping this trajectory allows Rolle to emphasise different points on the spectrum of devotional practices.

Thus, *Emendatio vitae*, *The Form of Living*, and *Ego dormio* variously draw on pastoral genres, such as compendia and treatises on the virtues and vices, structuring their summative guides to spiritual life as an ascent towards contemplation. That the same trajectory appears in *Judica* A, the most obviously pastoral text since it appropriates a known pastoral manual, underlines that Rolle found the ascent a useful organising principle when instructing readers in a pastoral context, encompassing basic and advanced spirituality. The differences between Rolle's presentation of this material suggests a teacher altering his materials for different addressees. This is hinted at when Rolle introduces the second half of *The Form* by saying 'I wot wel þat þou desirest to hyre sum special poynt of þe loue of Ihesu Criste...'.[153] The term 'special' may mean individualised, suggesting that the material is tailored to a specific reader; Rolle seems to make a similar point in *Ego dormio*, writing 'To þe I writ þis speciali' (although a single original reader would not preclude Rolle's awareness of the possibility of a broader future readership).[154] The trajectory format allows Rolle to assemble a wide range of topics, relevant to readers at different levels of spiritual development. Thus, like their pastoral precedents, Rolle draws on familiar genre conventions and commonplace topics amongst pastoral literature, and by tailoring the same stock of teaching for different audiences shows a concern for effective and relevant pastoral instruction.

[153] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 486–87.
[154] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, line 33. McIlroy argues that Rolle envisioned a broader potential audience; see McIlroy, *English Prose*.

The Pastoral Compilation

Accordingly, within the formal framework of a progression towards contemplation, *Emendatio vitae* and the English epistles compile actual pre-existing sources by direct quotation, paraphrase, recycling commonplaces, and original composition, in parallel with Rolle's minor works.

This is demonstrated by a shared hypothetical source behind *Emendatio vitae*, *The Form of Living*, and an early fifteenth-century pastoral manual, the *Speculum Christiani*. The parallel passage begins with an introduction which summarises the topics covered:

> My dere frendis y ȝou pray
> .IIII. þinggis bere in ȝoure hertis a wey.
> One is what þing files a man. Another þing is what makis him clene. Þe þrid is what þing kepis him in clennes. Þe .IIII. is what þing drawis him to ordayne his wille to goddis wille. (*Speculum Christiani*)[155]
>
> Wherfore, þat þou be right disposed, both for þi soule and þi body, þou shalt vndrestond foure þynges. The first is what thynge fileth a man. The other, what maketh hym clene. The þrid, what holdeth hym in clennesse. The fourth, what þynge draweth hym for ordeyne his wille al to Goddis wille. (Rolle, *The Form of Living*)[156]

In each text, these four points are then expanded upon in turn, with minor differences in how the material is structured. This material is also shared with *Emendatio vitae* in a compressed form. *Emendatio* lacks an equivalent for the introduction quoted above, but its parallel structure is seen in the following extracts from throughout the discussion:

> Ut homo ad honorem dei et commodum sui ac utilitatem proximi recte dirigatur, quatuor occurrunt dicenda. Primo que sunt, que hominem coinquinant, et sunt tria peccata vel tria

[155] *Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Gustaf Holmstedt, EETS OS 182 (1933), p. 75. The *Speculum Christiani* consists of prose, mostly in Latin, interspersed with English verse. Holmstedt presents two versions of the text using two base manuscripts: BL, MS Harley 6580 represents the sole copy entirely translated into Middle English, and BL, MS Lansdowne 344 represents the closest Latin text to the English translation. Thus, neither is authoritative, and Holmstedt does not identify authoritative manuscripts. Fortunately, this is mitigated by Holmstedt's extensive collation for the passages discussed here, which I consult wherever I quote below. I quote the MS Lansdowne 344 version, since this offers the standard bilingual text. Although much of the *Speculum Christiani*'s prose is in Latin, the passages discussed below are in Middle English in all copies.

[156] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 323–27.

> genera peccatorum, scilicet peccata cogitationis, oris et operis... Secundo que sunt, que mundificant hominem... Tercio que sunt, que mundiciam cordis conservant... Quarto que sunt, que ad conformitatem divine voluntatis nos alliciunt...[157]

In *The Form of Living* and *Speculum Christiani*, the first point (what defiles a man) is expanded with lists of sins of the heart, mouth, of work, and of omission deriving from Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium theologicae veritatis*. In contrast, as the quotation above shows, in *Emendatio* Rolle only cursorily alludes to Hugh of Strasbourg's lists of sins (rewritten as the conventional triad of thought, word, and deed), perhaps reflecting this text's orientation towards a more advanced reader not perceived to need an extensive breakdown. Other points are similarly compressed in *Emendatio* when compared with their equivalents in *The Form* and *Speculum Christiani*, though the basic form and content are unmistakeably the same.[158]

This invites us to consider the possibility of a shared source behind all three texts. While many scholars have noted some of the parallels between these three texts (and Hugh of Strasbourg), none have put all the pieces together.[159] Further analysis supports the view that *The Form* and the *Speculum Christiani* share a lost, intermediary source, as demonstrated by a comparison of their lists of sins to the ultimate source for that passage, Hugh of Strasbourg. Both *The Form* and the *Speculum Christiani* contain items from Hugh of Strasbourg's lists which are omitted from the other, proving that neither could be the source for the other. Rolle is generally much closer to Hugh of Strasbourg than to the *Speculum Christiani*, sharing many terms with Hugh not witnessed by the *Speculum*

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[157] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 4, lines 1–4, 12–13, 19–20, 29–30.

[158] Compare for instance Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 4, lines 27–29; Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 432–38; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, pp. 105, 107. The overall topic is what keeps a man clean; Rolle breaks this down into three sets of three points, addressing cleanness in heart, mouth, and work, whereas the *Speculum Christiani* just lists six things that keep someone clean. The *Speculum Christiani*'s first three points correspond with Rolle's points under cleanness of work, the fourth and fifth correspond with Rolle's discussion under cleanness of heart, and the sixth has no parallel.

[159] Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*, 2:xl n.2; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 404–5; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, pp. 257–65; Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:266–67; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–98; p. 198, n. to lines 399–477; Watson, *Invention*, pp. 278–81.

Christiani.[160] There are fewer cases of the reverse; nonetheless, the *Speculum Christiani* has equivalents for Hugh's 'ira, invidia, odium' (likewise presented in a triad as 'hattrede, wrathe, enuie') and 'dolor quia non fecit plus malum' ('sori þat he dede no more euil') under sins of the heart.[161] Hugh's 'ludus' is perhaps the source for 'iapis or fowle songis' in *Speculum Christiani* since it appears in roughly the same point in the list, shortly after equivalents for 'furtum, rapina, usura, deceptio' ('þefte, raueyne, extorcioun, usurrie, disceyte').[162] These terms are absent from *The Form*. Furthermore, Rolle apparently modifies certain terms by adding extra explanation, such that *Speculum Christiani*'s 'uncouenabil ioy or loue' is closer to Hugh's 'inepta laetitia' than Rolle's 'vncouenable ioy of any worldis vanytee', and similarly, the *Speculum Christiani*'s 'gode dedis peruertinge' is closer to Hugh's 'inuertere facta bona' than Rolle's 'turne good deedes to il for to make ham be holden il þat don ham (we own for to lap oure neghbors dedes in þe best and nat in þe worst)'.[163] There are several other instances of parenthetical explanations like this in Rolle, all of which are absent from Hugh of Strasbourg and the *Speculum Christiani*, further supporting that these were Rolle's additions to a common source.[164] Finally, several terms are witnessed only by Rolle and the *Speculum Christiani*, or appear in a similarly modified form, demonstrating a shared intermediary source between them and Hugh of Strasbourg (rather than that each author returned

[160] Such as 'vndeuocioun' ('indevotio'), 'il dreed' ('timor male humilians'), 'il loue' ('amor male accendens'), 'sorow of þe world' ('seculi tristitia'), 'vntholmodnesse' ('impatientia'), 'perplexite' ('perplexitas'); *The Form of Living*, lines 330, 332, 336; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 (for Hugh). References to Hugh of Strasbourg are taken from Ogilvie-Thomson's notes, since she collated three versions. These terms are not found in the textual variants of the *Speculum Christiani*.

[161] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 198, n. to lines 329–48 (for Hugh); Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 77, line 9; p. 81, line 1. These terms are also absent from Ogilvie-Thomson's manuscript collation for the 'sins of the heart' section (*The Form*, lines 329–48). *Speculum Christiani* also has 'in tastinge' (p. 93, line 3) for Hugh's 'gustu' (p. 197, n. to lines 364–80) with no equivalent in *The Form* as edited, although Ogilvie-Thomson lists 'tastyng' as a variant reading (p. 107, n. to line 375).

[162] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 197, n. to lines 364–80 (for Hugh); Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 91, line 2; p. 89, lines 4–5.

[163] Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 79, line 2; p. 85, line 7; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 and to lines 349–63 (for Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 335–36, 356–58.

[164] Rolle has 'sorowe in har welfare (whethre þai ben enemys or no)' (*The Form of Living*, lines 333–34) where *Speculum Christiani* has 'sori of here wel fare' (Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 77, line 10); Rolle has 'pride of ryche kyn or of gentil (for al we ben like fre bifore Goddis face, bot if our dedes make any bettre or wors þan oþre)' (lines 345–47) for *Speculum Christiani*'s 'pride of here riche kyn or gentil' (p. 79, line 7). Both these parentheses lack parallels in Hugh of Strasbourg.

to a copy of Hugh of Strasbourg).[165] This is also evident in the additional shared material, beyond the lists of sins, which does not come from Hugh of Strasbourg.

Emendatio vitae cannot have been this shared source, since it does not contain Hugh of Strasbourg's lists of sins which are otherwise witnessed by both texts, and hence *Emendatio vitae* was not the source for this part of *The Form of Living* as Watson suggests.[166] This all suggests a common source behind the three texts.

Further evidence locates this shared source amongst the humbler kinds of *pastoralia* which we have discussed in this chapter. Ogilvie-Thomson suggests that the shared source of *The Form* and the *Speculum Christiani* was a vernacular one.[167] Both texts use the Middle English 'receyue' to translate the verb 'omittere' in Hugh of Strasbourg's 'circumstantias aggravantes omittere' (either, 'to omit the aggravating circumstances', or, 'to omit the circumstances which make [sins] seem worse' in confession), a somewhat ambiguous phrase (which was therefore perhaps liable for scribal error or intervention).[168] The term 'receyue' does not make much sense and has a different meaning to 'omittere', so is unlikely to represent two independent translations of this Latin term, suggesting that 'omittere' was not the word used in the shared source. Ogilvie-Thomson suggests that the source originally read 'reteyne' (which conveys the sense of the Latin phrase and could easily be misread as 'receyue'). If 'reteyne' was in the shared source, that source must have been vernacular.

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[165] See Rolle's 'sorowe in har welfare' (*The Form of Living*, lines 333–34) and *Speculum Christiani*'s 'sori of here wel fare' (Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 77, line 10); 'pride of ryche kyn or of gentil' (line 345) and 'pride of here riche kyn or gentil' (p. 79, line 7); 'more synge for preisynge of men þan of God' (lines 362–63) and 'or to synge more for preysinge of men þan of god' (p. 87, lines 3–4); 'þese maketh þe syn moor or lasse' (lines 378–79) and 'for makyth þe synne more or lasse' (p. 93, line 6); there are several further examples. Some of these variants may reflect alternative readings of Hugh of Strasbourg. However, some longer variants suggest emendation for an audience in need of clarificatory detail, increasing the likelihood that they come from a text reshaped for a different audience rather than a heavily interpolated copy of Hugh's *Compendium*.

[166] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 278–81.

[167] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 197, n. to line 377.

[168] *Speculum Christiani* emends to the negative 'receyue not' (perhaps trying to make sense of it): see Ogilvie-Thomson's discussion in Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 197, n. to line 377. Both modern editors also emend the term, reflecting its perceived nonsensicality: see Rolle, *The Form of Living*, line 377; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 93, lines 4–5. For Hugh's original, see Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 197, n. to lines 364–80.

This places a lot of weight on a single reading, and Ogilvie-Thomson's explanation is not watertight.[169] However, *The Form* and *Speculum Christiani* do frequently use the same Middle English terms throughout, supporting the possibility that the source was vernacular. For example, *The Form* reads 'yeue nat entent to his priers, bot rabble on and rek neuer bot that þei ben seide' where the *Speculum Christiani* reads 'nouȝt gyfand tent to oure prayeris but rabiland on þayme & recke nere so þey be seyde necligentli'.[170] The equivalent term in Hugh of Strasbourg offers only a loose parallel.[171] The verbs 'rabble' and 'rek' lack obvious Latin cognates and have several Middle English synonyms, so it would be a striking coincidence for both texts to independently choose the same translation for some unknown Latin original.[172] Across the texts as a whole, such coincidences stack up, although many examples are less clear cut. For example, independent translations of 'amare' as 'louynge' would be fairly unsurprising, whereas it is difficult to quantify the probability that 'peruersa' might be independently translated as 'wikked' on two separate occasions.[173] Any conclusions depend on a somewhat subjective impression of such probabilities; in my view the number of parallels is sufficient to conclude that it is quite likely the shared source was a vernacular one. Further support for this is offered by the fact that most of the prose in the *Speculum Christiani*

[169] An alternative explanation is that Hugh's 'omittere' changed (perhaps via 'amittere') to become 'admittere' ('to admit', in the sense of both receiving into admission and confessing), which fits the Latin context (in the latter sense of 'admittere'), and, in the absence of the Middle English cognate 'admit' (first witnessed in the late-fourteenth century) could have been mechanically translated as 'receyue' (the former sense of 'admittere') on two separate occasions by Rolle and the *Speculum Christiani*. Of course, the variant 'admittere' could just as easily have been translated mechanically as 'receyue' in the shared vernacular source to begin with. Ogilvie-Thomson assumes that the shared source could not contain 'receyue' since it is nonsensical, but this possibility cannot be ruled out given that both Rolle and *Speculum Christiani* do contain 'receyue'. The variant 'admittere' appears in extracts from Hugh of Strasbourg in Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral, MS 229, f. 26v, an early manuscript which also contains Rolle, showing that this reading had medieval circulation proximate to Rolle, thus supporting this as a likely source of 'receyue' in the original source. For the Middle English 'admit', see 'admitten, v.', *MED*.

[170] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 387–88; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 95, lines 3–4.

[171] 'ad rationes [perhaps *erratum* for 'orationes'] dicendas non attendere, orationes debitas omittere', Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 198, n. to lines 381–98.

[172] Both verbs have a Germanic etymology; see 'reck, v.' and 'rabble, v.[1]', *OED*. No quotations given in the *MED* indicate that 'rabble' and 'rek' were a standard idiomatic pairing; see 'rablen, v.' and 'recchen, v.(2)', *MED*.

[173] See Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 198, n. to lines 381–98 (for 'amare' in Hugh) and p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 (for 'peruersa' in Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 382, 330; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani* p. 95, line 2 and p. 77, line 8.

is in Latin rather than English, so it would be odd for its author to coincidentally translate this source from Latin to English like Rolle when he more typically left prose material in Latin.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the source had already undergone some mediation for more basic audiences, supporting the possibility of a vernacular source at some remove from sophisticated Latin pastoral materials designed for priests. Both Rolle and the *Speculum Christiani* share additional explanatory detail not found in the compressed Latin of Hugh of Strasbourg. For example, where Hugh has simply 'cogitatio, delectatio, consensus', Rolle and the *Speculum Christiani* specify in parallel that these terms apply to sin, reading 'il thoghtis, il delites, assent to syn' and 'in foule þouȝtis tariing wilfulli, euil delite, assente in synne' respectively.[174] A further example shows more expansive detail shared by Rolle and the *Speculum Christiani*: Hugh's 'afflictos non consolari' is expanded as 'confortynge nat ham þat beth in sorowe or in sekenesse or in pouerte or in penaunce and in prisone' (Rolle) and 'not comforte þem þat be in sorwe & seknesse, pouerte or in penaunce' (*Speculum Christiani*).[175] This added detail is characteristic of a text written for a more basic reader, in need of extra information, as opposed to the simple but condensed form of Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium* or Rolle's *Emendatio vitae*, designed as a compact reference work and memory aid for a trained priest familiar with these concepts. That this added detail was present in the source supports the view that Rolle drew on a more basic kind of pastoral text for both *The Form of Living* and chapter four of *Emendatio vitae*, perhaps written for a vernacular reader.

[174] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 (for Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 329–30; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 77, lines 7–8. See also translations of Hugh's 'amor placendi, timor displicendi'; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 (for Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 341–42; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 79, lines 3–4.

[175] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 198, n. to lines 381–98 (for Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 396–97; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 99, line 5 to p. 101, line 1. See also translations of Hugh's 'ambitio dignitatum'; Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 196, n. to lines 329–48 (for Hugh); Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 343–44; Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 79, lines 4–5.

Further evidence corroborates the view that *The Form of Living* represents a pastoral manual partly formed by reshaping existing sources. In the course of this study we have already added two additional Latin sources: the *exemplum* from Arnold of Liège (probably encountered via an intermediary), and the *Glossa* to Daniel (discussed in chapter one and discovered alongside other quotations from the *Glossa* to Daniel, suggesting it was taken from there directly). Further passages hint at unknown sources. For instance, Rolle writes the following on abstinence:

> for Seynt Ierom seith þat he maketh of ravyn offrynge þat outrageouslye turmenteth his body in ouer litel mete or sleepe; and Seynte Bernard seith fastynge and wakynge letteth nat goostly goodes bot helpeth, if þei be done with discrecioun...[176]

Ogilvie-Thomson found the Bernadine quotation in William of St Thierry's *Epistola ad fratres de Monte-Dei* (often misattributed to Bernard in the Middle Ages), a text widely circulated enough that Rolle plausibly encountered it directly.[177] Ogilvie-Thomson did not find the original source for Jerome, but noted that the equivalent in Latin appears ascribed to Jerome in Gratian's *Decretum* and Aquinas's *Quaestiones quodlibetales*; she then claims, without references, that Rolle used both these sources elsewhere.[178] This seems unlikely, given that Rolle does not generally quote canon law or academic *auctoritates* as recent as the thirteenth century. The use of an obscure source here along with another quotation on the same topic hints at some florilegial source behind this passage.

Aspects of the text's form also hint at unknown sources. Many passages of *The Form* comprise a numbered list of points, as in 'Foure þynges shal þou haue in þi þoght tyl þou be in perfite loue...', or 'Also vij experimentȝ ben, that a man be in charite...'[179] This mnemonic style is characteristic of pastoral literature. This may reflect Rolle's familiarity with a convention, but equally

[176] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 69–73.
[177] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 193, n. to line 71; for original, see William of St Thierry, *Lettre aux frères du Mont-Dieu (Lettre d'or)*, ed. by Jean Déchanet (Paris, 1975), p. 242, para. 126. For circulation, see library catalogue entries under William of Saint-Thierry, *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, in MLGB3.
[178] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 193, n. to line 69.
[179] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 278, 791.

we have seen that Rolle takes these lists from existing sources in some other cases (such as the list of six dreams from the *Glossa* to Daniel, and the material shared with the *Speculum Christiani*), making it plausible that there could be further sources to discover. Furthermore, *The Form* often contains shifts in its mode of address as if stitching together different sources. This can be seen in its first chapter.[180] It begins, somewhat abruptly, with a list of 'þre wrechednesse' found in 'euery synful man and womman þat is bounden in dedely syn'.[181] After this list has been explained, a first-person voice appears:

> These wrechednes þat I of told ben nat only in worldisshe men and wommen that vsen glotony or lecherie and other oppyn synnes, bot þei ben also in sum men þat semen in penaunce and in good lif.[182]

This shift, from a self-contained didactic list to a piece of signposting in the first-person, could easily arise from Rolle incorporating an existing text into his own work, and then interjecting with his own comment as a bridge to subsequent material. The chapter then treats various loosely connected topics: different ways the devil ensnares people; how the devil promotes excessive asceticism; and how excessive ascetism is vainglorious. Towards the end, the first-person voice reappears, summarising the chapter:

> Thou hast herd nowe a partie how þe deuyl deceyueth with his sutil craftes vnstable and vnwise men and wommen. And if þou wilt do good consaille and folowe holy lernynge as I hope thou wolt, þou shalt destroy his trappes...[183]

After a few further sentences on why God allows Satan's temptations, another somewhat abrupt shift appears, as Rolle begins again with 'In thre maners he hath power to be in a man...', before the chapter ends shortly after.[184] It seems odd to close the chapter with this list, which would fit equally

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[180] The first chapter is lines 1–121; see discussion in Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. xxxvii; Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. xxviii.
[181] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 1–2.
[182] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 18–20.
[183] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 105–8.
[184] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, line 113.

well with the preceding material, rather than concluding it with the chapter summary just quoted. The text thus switches between direct, explanatory address, and impersonal didactic lists, sometimes rather abruptly. *The Form* thus has the feel of a text assembled from originally disparate materials. This of course is highly inferential and subjective: weak evidence on its own. But in the light of other evidence of Rolle drawing on known sources, it seems likely that more of *The Form* was adapted from existing texts, and that this is reflected in its structure.

This compilatory composition holds true not only of the pastoral parts of *Emendatio vitae* and the English epistles, but also, and more obviously, of their contemplative portions. Sources for these passages have been more extensively identified (though it is unclear whether this is because they are more derivative than the rest of the text, or because contemplative literature is less vast and better known to scholars than *pastoralia*). *Emendatio vitae* contains several definitions of contemplation, drawn from various sources.[185] It also quotes material from Rolle's earlier works, and draws on Richard of St Victor's *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis*.[186] *The Form of Living* and *The Commandment* both paraphrase the same material from Richard of St Victor.[187] *The Form* draws a passage on love from Julianus Pomerius's *De vita contemplativa*, which Ogilvie-Thomson suggests he got via Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium*.[188] Watson argues that *The Commandment* represents 'a patchwork of borrowed passages and ideas': more than half translates or adapts existing sources,

[185] Spahl notes that Rolle quotes definitions of contemplation from Julianus Pomerius and Richard of St Victor: Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, notes to lines 15–18.
[186] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 281–86; Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 11, lines 10–25, 30–73, 77–99 (Spahl identifies the sources in footnotes).
[187] For discussion of Rolle's degrees of love and their source, see Margaret Jennings, 'Richard Rolle and the Three Degrees of Love', *Downside Review*, 93.312 (1975), 193–200. For a comparison of this material in *Emendatio* and *The Commandment* (with a reference to the relevant passage in *The Form*), see Watson, *Invention*, pp. 280–81.
[188] Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 201, n. to lines 633–61 (the shared material appears at lines 657–65). A sentence shared by Hugh and Rolle at the same point in the text is found elsewhere in Pomerius's text in *Patrologia Latina*, provisionally supporting Hugh as an intermediary. Compare Hugh of Strasbourg's 'sine qua nullus Deo placuit, cum qua aliquis Deo displicere/peccare non potuit' in Rolle, *Prose and Verse*, p. 201, n. to lines 633–61 with *The Form of Living,* lines 664–65, versus Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*, PL 59:493.

including Hugh of Strasbourg's *Compendium*, Rolle's *Super Canticum canticorum*, and Pseudo-Bernard's *Meditationes piissimae*.[189]

Rolle's use of contemplative sources represents a similar compilatory mode of composition to what we can see in their pastoral portions, though it is notable that these kinds of contemplative writings were by no means ubiquitous amongst *pastoralia*, especially the kinds of humbler materials which Rolle seems to have used. Accordingly, Rolle may not have taken these quotations directly from the original works. For example, Richard of St Victor's *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis* was surprisingly rare in England, so we cannot assume Rolle's easy access to it.[190] *Emendatio vitae*'s long quotation from that text contains an interpolated sentence in the middle which originates instead from Richard of St Victor's *Benjamin major*.[191] This kind of interpolation may have been introduced by an earlier scribe making a compilation from multiple works. Even Rolle's contemplative passages may therefore have been drawn via intermediaries (though Rolle could have been familiar with contemplative literature more broadly to which he did not have continuous access). More work must be done on the availability of contemplative literature in fourteenth-century pastoral contexts; for now, we can note that Rolle's use of contemplative materials parallels his reshaping of *pastoralia*, and may reflect his injection of such texts into a manuscript context in which they were uncommon.

Rolle's use of sources was not limited to direct quotation or translation, but also involved paraphrase (as with his use of Richard of St Victor in *The Form* and *The Commandment*) as well as recycling commonplaces. The existence of standard, ubiquitous triads – such as the world, the flesh, and the devil, or thought, word, and deed – illustrates how pastoral categories could enter a stock of

[189] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 237–38, at 237.
[190] See library catalogue entries in MLGB3 (where it is listed under Bernard of Clairvaux, [*pseud*.] *De caritate*) and discussion in Andrew Kraebel, 'Hermit Libraries: Material Sources and the Making of Rolle's prose', forthcoming.
[191] Compare Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 11, lines 50–52; Richard of St Victor, *Benjamin Major*, PL 196:155.

common knowledge amongst those involved in pastoral care. Mnemonic tags or verses were designed to be memorable and easily extracted.[192] For example, Rolle uses a rhyming definition of prayer in *Emendatio vitae* – 'Est autem oracio pius mentis affectus in deum directus' ('But prayer is the pious affect of the mind directed to God').[193] This definition was widespread, and its easy memorisability may reflect him drawing on his own store of absorbed knowledge, rather than that he copied a specific source at the moment of writing. Hence, while we may not know precise sources for much of the remainder of Rolle's pastoral texts, their contents imply his familiarity with conventional pastoral teaching.

For example, no sources are known for *Ego dormio* (besides for one of its embedded lyrics), but much of its content is highly conventional.[194] As Rolle describes its three degrees of spiritual progression, he invokes pastoral commonplaces throughout, such as the Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, and the world, the flesh, and the devil.[195] Even in the third degree of love, Rolle has recourse to more basic pastoral exhortation against sin: 'if we couait to fle þe peyn of helle and þe peyn of purgatorie, vs bihoueth restreyne vs perfitly fro þe lustes and þe lykynges and fro þe il delites and þe wicked drede of þis lif'.[196] Rolle's discussion of the hierarchies of angels similarly draws on traditions of angelology, represented most prominently in the Middle Ages by Pseudo-Dionysius, although Rolle's hierarchy actually derives from Gregory.[197] Irrespective of exactly where

[192] For discussion of verse in pastoral manuals, see Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:162–73.
[193] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 12, lines 5–6.
[194] On sources of the embedded lyric, see Karáth, *Fifteenth-Century Translations*, p. 58n.62.
[195] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 69, 70, 150–51.
[196] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 260–62.
[197] Rolle describes the celestial hierarchy in Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 16–20; his list follows Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 2.34.7, p. 305, lines 148–51. I have suggested above that Rolle may have known Gregory's *Homiliae in evangelia* (see fn. 145), but Rolle's treatment reflects aspects of the broader tradition (heavily influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius) not found at this point in Gregory, such as the division of the nine into three triads and the analogy made between the celestial hierarchy and different grades of Christian. For discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius's account, his influence, and different medieval accounts of angelic hierarchies, see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York, 1993), pp. 63–68, 74–77; for discussion of Gregory's hierarchy and its difference to others, see Joan M. Petersen, '"Homo Omnino Latinus"? The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great', *Speculum*, 62.3 (1987), 536–42.

Rolle got this hierarchy from, his citation of it indicates that his teaching was drawn from tradition rather than simply his own idiosyncratic views. Given the brevity and tight structure of *Ego dormio*, Rolle's treatment of these pastoral topics may well reflect his original rehearsal of standard teachings. Similarly, sources have not been identified for much of *Emendatio vitae*, but Rolle's teachings are largely conventional and may reflect him summarising standard views as a concise epitome of spiritual life.

The recycling of commonplaces in Rolle's work can be illustrated by one example that appears over several texts. William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* proposes three remedies to the conventional triad found in 1 John 2:16 (the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life): 'contra ista peccata triplex remedium est statutum, scilicet, ieiunium, oracio, et elemosina' ('against these three sins a triple remedy has been established, namely, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving').[198] Subsequently, the same triad appears in *Judica* B2, with some additions (in bold):

> contra ista tria peccata, triplex est remedium statutum, scilicet, oratio **quia peccauit in Deum**, elemosina **quia peccauit in proximum**, et ieiunium **quia peccauit in seipsum**.[199]
>
> a triple remedy has been established against these three sins, namely, prayer, because he sinned against God, almsgiving, because he sinned against neighbour, and fasting, because he sinned against himself.

These additions may have been present in the copy of Pagula which Rolle used as the source of *Judica me*, but more likely represent Rolle's own regurgitation of a commonplace, since the same additions appear in *Emendatio vitae*:

> satisfaccio operis, que habet tres partes, scilicet ieiunium, quia peccavit contra seipsum, oracionem, quia peccavit contra deum, elemosinam, quia peccavit contra proximum.[200]

[198] Oxford, New College, MS 292, f. 7v; Daly gives the same reading in Rolle, *Judica me*, pp. 60–61.
[199] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 61, lines 2–4.
[200] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 4, lines 15–18.

This quotation appears in the chapter which Rolle drew from the unknown source, and subsequently the same triad appears in *The Form of Living* and the *Speculum Christiani* in the abbreviated form:

> The þrid is satisfaccioun, þat hath þre parties, fastynge, prier, and almysdede... (Rolle, *The Form of Living*)[201]
>
> The þridde is satisfaccioun þat is fastinge, preiere & almusdede. (*Speculum Christiani*)[202]

The presence of this triad in Pagula, *Judica me*, *Emendatio vitae*, *The Form of Living*, *Speculum Christiani*, and the unknown source of the three previous texts demonstrates how these texts all recycle pastoral commonplaces such as this, and reinforces how Rolle's texts jointly participate in pastoral instruction using such commonplaces. The additions connect each of these remedies to an object of sinful action, reflecting the schematisations which are extremely common in *pastoralia*. Given that the extended version appears in passages from *Judica me* and *Emendatio vitae* which Rolle took from distinct sources (Pagula versus the shared source of the other three texts), the apparent additions likely reflect not his turning to a common source, but that this teaching stuck in his mind, demonstrating him drawing on a stock of pastoral knowledge.

Thus, *Emendatio vitae* and the English epistles represent pastoral compilations, composed in various modes: direct copying or translation, paraphrase, the assembly of commonplaces, and original composition. Rolle does not simply copy or assemble sources mechanically, but crafts them into a form of his own invention, in all cases but *The Commandment* arranged by an overall conceit of a loosely articulated progression towards contemplation. His selection of sources allows him to nuance and expand on aspects of the same basic stock of teaching, demonstrating his attentiveness to instructing different audiences. Rolle's account of devotional practice in these texts thus emerges from conventional pastoral practices, reshaping existing materials for the purpose of pastoral care.

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[201] Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 407–8.
[202] Holmstedt, *Speculum Christiani*, p. 105, line 3.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rolle's *Judica me*, *Emendatio vitae*, *The Form of Living*, *Ego dormio*, and *The Commandment* all variously draw on pastoral sources and/or pastoral commonplaces in order to instruct their readers. This reshaping of existing sources positions them securely within a recognisable stratum of *pastoralia*, characterised by authors adapting existing material for new and specific circumstances, often with limited access to resources. These texts thus show Rolle participating in a norm of pastoral care.

This reading of Rolle's pastoral works invites us to reconsider previous responses to them. Watson's approach to Rolle's writings emphasises the emotive, personal, and apologetic aspects of Rolle's voice. For example, Watson's analysis of the English works sees them 'primarily as expressions of intimacy', which elevates the personal and emotional aspects of Rolle's writerly voice from the kinds of writing which in reality constitute much of the text: pragmatic and impersonal lists of basic pastoral material, showing a greater emphasis on useful, didactic content than personal feeling.[203] On the other hand, Allen was effusive in her praise for Rolle's English works, contrasting their 'delicate English style' to Rolle's 'bastard Latin, which bores and repels'.[204] Allen's presentation of Rolle (following Horstman) as significant for fathering a new tradition of English literature is implicitly nationalistic, reflected in how she praises the 'peculiar charm' of Rolle's use of 'Anglo-Saxon literary traditions', and how they 'give us the veritable utterances of a medieval Englishman'.[205] In elevating the significance of Rolle's English works here, she understates just how indebted they are to conventional Latin writing, and especially to genres of pastoral literature which were proliferating transnationally across Europe in response to pastoral reforms.

[203] Watson, *Invention*, p. 231.
[204] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 8.
[205] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 8.

Rolle performed pastoral care in these texts not through eccentric and idiosyncratic expositions of his personal experiences, but by ventriloquising the voices and teachings of others. His English works were not simply the beginning of a new tradition of distinctly English literature, but were indebted to Latin *pastoralia*, and provided readers with access to pastoral and contemplative materials previously limited to a Latinate sphere. They witness Rolle's familiarity with and practice of pastoral care, producing writing useful to a wide spectrum of readers by synthesising conventional material. Far from seeing the derivativeness of these works as an embarrassment, the popularity of *Emendatio vitae* and *The Form of Living* demonstrates their effectiveness as didactic and devotional aids, and they reveal his creativity in adapting existing materials within formal structures which were apparently his own invention. The fact that he managed to accomplish this with apparently limited resources only reinforces his achievements as a spiritual instructor.

Chapter 3: Contemplative Literature and the Care of Souls

> Hujusmodi tamen homini oranti vel meditanti, melius ac tutius... proponitur imago dominicae humanitatis, nativitatis ejus, passionis et resurrectionis; ut infirmus animus, qui non novit cogitare nisi corpora et corporalia, habeat aliquid cui se afficiat; cui, juxta modum suum pietatis intuitu inhaereat. (William of St Thierry, *Epistola ad fratres de Monte-Dei*)[1]
>
> Yet it is better and safer... to put before such a man when he is praying or meditating a representation of our Lord's humanity – of his birth, passion, and resurrection – so that the weak mind which is only able to think of bodies and bodily things may have something to which it can apply itself and cling with devout attention, as befits its degree.[2]

The man in question here is the spiritual beginner, whom William of St Thierry refers to as the 'animal' man, distinguishing him from the 'rational' man (someone making progress) and the 'spiritual' man (the perfect). William's point – that meditations on Christ's humanity are 'tutius' ('safer') for beginners – implies that advanced material is potentially dangerous for inexperienced readers, who could easily misunderstand it and be led into error. Such cautions were common in medieval religious writing.[3]

Two alternative (though not necessarily incompatible) responses to this material are offered by Richard Rolle and Nicholas Love. In the preface to his *Mirror*, Nicholas Love cites William of St Thierry to support his argument that 'symple' readers should read about the more basic spiritual disciplines, and not the 'sadde mete... of hye contemplacion', translating William's 'tutius' by saying that basic materials are 'more sykere' for lower-level readers.[4] Love's *Mirror* is thus framed by his declared focus on the lower end of a spectrum of devotional progress, perhaps partly in response to

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[1] William of St Thierry, *Lettre aux frères du Mont-Dieu (Lettre d'or)*, para. 174, pp. 282–84.
[2] This translation is adapted from William of St Thierry, *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu*, trans. by Theodore Berkeley (Kalamazoo, MI, 1980), p. 69.
[3] For example, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica*, sermo 1.1 (1:3, lines 6–15). Cautions about readers encountering advanced content are associated with several vernacular contemplative texts; see Hodgson, *Cloud*, prologue, p. 1, line 8 to p. 3, line 8; Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, 2:734, see textual variants for line 29; Marguerite Porete, *Le Miroeur des simples ames (Speculum simplicium animarum)*, ed. by Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen (Turnhout, 1986), pp. 404–9. On the latter, see Peter King, 'Marguerite Porete and Godfrey of Fontaines: Detachable Will, Discardable Virtue, Transformative Love', *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, 6 (2018), 168–88.
[4] Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. by Michael Sargent (Exeter, 2004), p. 10, lines 14, 16, 24.

the emergent dangers posed by the Wycliffites and their attempts to facilitate access to advanced spiritual material among relatively inexperienced laypeople.[5] In contrast, Rolle's allusion to William appears in the wide-ranging *Emendatio vitae*, where he mentions the suitability of Passion meditations for basic readers in a passage with several striking verbal reminiscences to the quotation from William of St Thierry above (suggesting he had it in mind).[6] Rolle agrees with William's basic point that certain practices are more suitable for individuals in different stages, which is also implicit in the graded structure integral to his *Emendatio vitae* and English epistles (referred to collectively in this chapter as his late works). Yet these works also show Rolle's willingness to treat the full spectrum, ranging from the contemplative heights to the primary rejection of sin and the world which characterises conversion to religious life. Rolle's vernacular texts in particular witness his willingness to present advanced contemplative material in a text which, by virtue of its basic pastoral content, was apparently prepared for a less advanced reader.[7]

William of St Thierry's comments raise broader questions about the relationship between advanced and basic disciplines, their suitability for different readers, and the dangers of exposing inexperienced readers to advanced content. This chapter's focus is not Rolle's late works, but his Latin writings which offer his most sustained discussion of contemplative life and experience: *Incendium amoris*, *Super Canticum canticorum*, *Melos amoris*, and *Contra amatores mundi* (here referred to for convenience as his 'contemplative texts', though this will require some qualifications

[5] Love does not explicitly address the Wycliffite production of vernacular texts; for Love's response to Wycliffite doctrines, see Love, *Mirror*, pp. xv–xix.

[6] 'Estimo quod hec meditacio utilior est omnibus aliis hiis, qui iam noviter ad Christum convertuntur. Ideo enim *proponitur humanitas christi Ihesu*, in qua homo interim delectetur... quia *rudis et carnalis animus* in contemplacione deitatis non rapitur, nisi spiritualis absumptis *carnalibus* efficiatur impedimentis' (italics show where Rolle makes similar points using similar language, and note in particular the not inevitable choices of *proponere* and *animus* which echo William of St Thierry), Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 8, lines 11–17. Rolle's knowledge of the text is supported by his quotation from it in *The Form of Living*, p. 193, n. to line 71.

[7] However, Rolle may not have anticipated the wide lay audience the English epistles ultimately received. In *The Form of Living* he still maintains the division between the active and contemplative lives which is expressed (albeit more strongly) in his Latin texts (see Rolle, *The Form of Living*, lines 836–93). Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum ecclesie* offers a notable precedent for contemplative material combined with basic *pastoralia* circulating in the vernacular.

later on). Scholars have typically contrasted these to Rolle's late works: where the late works cover a wide spectrum, acting as accessible pastoral guides for the aspiring contemplative, Rolle's contemplative texts have been seen as inaccessible, primarily concerned with the contemplative heights and in particular with Rolle's personal esoteric experiences. For example, Renevey characterises them as 'essentially lofty and personal mystical outpourings' compared to the more accessible *contemptus mundi* themes of the later *Super lectiones mortuorum*.[8] This interpretation reflects an impression that they focus on material pertaining to the most advanced spiritual levels (which Rolle claims to have achieved himself), as opposed to the more compendious approach of the manifestly pastoral late works.

This chapter aims to challenge an overemphasis on the personal and esoteric aspects of Rolle's Latin writing by examining how his treatment of the contemplative heights is often in dialogue with the most basic and foundational renunciation of sin and the world which characterises conversion to religious life. Like many major contemplative *auctoritates*, Rolle treats contemplative union as the endpoint of a broader spectrum of devotional progress, and, in Rolle's case at least, this also extends right down to the primary renunciation of sin and the world.[9] The rudimentary spiritual disciplines of penitence and *contemptus mundi* did not represent the basics which the advanced contemplative could wholly surpass; they were the bread and butter of spiritual life, useful in different ways for people from all spiritual walks, including the aspiring contemplatives Rolle seemingly addresses in his Latin contemplative texts. Nonetheless, the renunciation of worldly things

[8] Denis Renevey, 'Looking for a Context: Rolle, Anchoritic Culture, and the Office of the Dead', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. by Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London, 2008), p. 203.
[9] For example, Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*, Richard of St Victor's *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis*, and William of St Thierry's *Epistola ad fratres Monte Dei*. Rolle knew all of these texts in some form: see the previous chapter on *De quatuor gradibus*, and above for William of St Thierry. For Rolle quoting *De diligendo Deo*, see Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, p. 224, n. to line 135. Other parallels with *De diligendo* include Rolle's adoption of Bernard's influential idea that the highest grade of love is 'modus sine modo': compare *Melos amoris*, ch. 50, p. 159, lines 25–27; Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera, Volume 3: Tractatus et Opuscula*, ed. by J. Leclercq and H.M. Rochais (Roma, 1963), I.1, p. 119, line 19; VI.16, p. 132, lines 15–18.

is particularly suited to those at a lower or intermediate level, who especially need aid in the struggle against sin and temptation, and indeed, Rolle repeatedly highlights the utility of meditating on these themes for such individuals. This challenges an overemphasis on the personal, esoteric aspects of Rolle's work, and invites us to recognise the importance that more pragmatic devotional materials, drawn from standard genres, contribute to the devotional utility and implicit purpose of his writing.

These themes bring us back to the issue of appropriate readership raised by William of St Thierry. While William of St Thierry, along with Nicholas Love and other writers of the late fourteenth century, was focused on the dangers of basic readers encountering advanced material, a prominent anxiety in Rolle's day was the possibility of advanced individuals believing that they had surpassed the need for basic spiritual practices, a view particularly associated with the Heresy of the Free Spirit. As we shall see, Rolle explicitly opposes the view that more basic practices become superfluous for advanced contemplatives, whilst also agreeing with William of St Thierry's suggestion that certain spiritual practices are more pertinent for different spiritual levels. This leads on to a consideration of what kinds of readers Rolle's contemplative texts invite or anticipate. Rolle directly anticipates advanced readers (that is, those in the contemplative life, and in particular beginner or intermediate contemplative readers who are still progressing towards perfection), and directly excludes readers in the active life. However, he simultaneously conceives of his accounts of contemplative life as offering an exemplary model and inspiration to the general Christian.[10] Although Rolle may not have intended any broader readership beyond contemplatives (and there are good reasons for thinking he did not), he adopts an extraordinarily inclusive outlook even in his contemplative writings, exhorting sinners to repent and depicting his texts as useful for an implicitly generalised reader. This may well have been a factor which facilitated his emergence as a (perhaps

[10] In this way, I build on Watson's observations about the implicitly general audience of Rolle's late works, which he extends in passing to Rolle's Latin contemplative texts too: 'The Middle English Mystics', pp. 547–50.

unintentional) figurehead for aspiring contemplatives inside and outside the cloister in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Once again, it also challenges a portrayal of Rolle as predominantly bound up in his own experiences, showing that his writings are always looking towards the experiences and devotional needs of readers other than himself.

Renevey and other scholars are, of course, right to draw attention to the differences between Rolle's Latin texts discussing contemplation and his later works, and the striking role of his autobiographical and emotive accounts in the former. However, when we see Rolle's writings primarily from the perspective of a single individual – Rolle himself – we may miss Rolle's sensitivity to the devotional needs of readers at different spiritual stages (or a reader in motion, progressing through several stages), and the ways in which his texts assemble diverse and wide-ranging materials on the spiritual life. In this way, this chapter will challenge the idea that Rolle's late writings represent a 'pastoral turn', in which he began to properly direct his attention to readers for the first time (as Watson and Renevey argue).[11] Rolle's incorporation of standard devotional genres, his attention to the full spectrum of spiritual life, and his constant signalling of the utility of particular devotional practices for different readers and situations highlight that these Latin texts too can be read as usable, functional aids to devotion, even though their advanced spiritual content and unsystematic, compilatory style distinguishes them from his more overtly pastoral late works. In this sense, the utility of Rolle's Latin texts enables us to see them, like his late works, as devotional aids designed for the spiritual development of readers, participating in a holistic *cura animarum*.

[11] As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, fn. 21.

Penitential Material in the Contemplative Texts: *Contemptus mundi* and Meditations on Damnation

The theme of *contemptus mundi* ('contempt for the world') is central to Rolle's contemplative writing and highlights his attention to penitence and sin.[12] 'Penitence' means not only the repentance of particular instances of sin, but also the continual renunciation of worldly and fleshly things in exchange for heavenly things which characterises the eremitic vocation.[13] Nonetheless, while *contemptus mundi* clearly appealed to the penitential aspects of eremitic life, it was also a hallmark of late-medieval spirituality in general. Here we must distinguish the *contemptus mundi* as a longstanding theme in Christian thought, going back to patristic authors, from the *contemptus mundi* as a distinctive genre of writing, which only became widespread from the late eleventh century.[14] Texts of this genre attacked the wretchedness and instability of worldly things. Donald Howard identified its five main themes as: 'the corruption of the natural order', especially of the body (disease, pain, birth, death); 'the mutability of earthly things' (including feminine inconstancy); 'the vanity of earthly things'; 'the evils of the social order' (including condemnation of the estates and especially of monastic and ecclesiastical failures); and 'punishment or reward in

[12] Studies of the *contemptus mundi* by Donald Howard and Robert Bultot were planned but never completed. Howard's initial research can be found in Donald R. Howard, 'The Contempt of the World: A Study in the Ideology of Latin Christendom with Emphasis on Fourteenth Century English Literature', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Florida, 1954); Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), pp. 68–72; and (most usefully) the introduction to Innocent III, *On the Misery of the Human Condition*. Robert Bultot's planned series of volumes turned into two books and several articles; a good starting point is Robert Bultot, 'Mépris du monde, misère et dignité de l'homme dans la pensée d'Innocent III', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 4 (1961), 441–56; and for the rest, see Bultot, 'Le Mépris du monde chez s. Colomban'; Robert Bultot, *La Doctrine du mépris du monde, en occident, de s. Ambroise à Innocent III, Vol. 4: Le XIe siècle, Part 1: Pierre Damien* (Louvain, 1963); Robert Bultot, *La doctrine du mépris du monde, en occident, de s. Ambroise à Innocent III, Vol. 4: Le XIe siècle, Part 2: Jean de Fécamp, Hermann Contract, Roger de Caen, Anselme de Canterbury* (Louvain, 1964); Robert Bultot, 'La Doctrine du mépris du monde chez Bernard le Clunisien', *Le Moyen âge: Revue d'histoire et de philologie*, 70 (1964), 179–204, 355–76; Robert Bultot, 'La Chartula et l'enseignement du mépris du monde dans les écoles et les universités médiévales', *Studi medievali*, 3rd series, 8.2 (1967), 787–834; Robert Bultot, 'Bonté des créatures et mépris du monde', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 62.3 (1978), 361–94; and Bultot's response to criticisms of his published volumes in 'Mépris du monde et XIe siècle', *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 22.1 (1967), 219–28.

[13] On eremitic life as penitential, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, chs 5–6.

[14] Innocent III, *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, p. xvi.

heaven or hell'.[15] Several examples of the genre commonly travel alongside Rolle's works in early manuscripts, especially the *Speculum peccatoris*, Pseudo-Bernard's *Meditationes piissimae* (which has a few chapters on *contemptus mundi* themes), and Innocent III's *De miseria humanae conditionis*.[16] The latter two works in particular were widespread in the later Middle Ages in all kinds of settings (monastic, clerical, mendicant, academic).[17] An epitome of Innocent III's *De miseria* was incorporated into the *Dextera pars* of William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* (after its treatment of preaching topics), showing the applicability of this theme to pastoral care for the average parishioner. This wide readership demonstrates the genre's importance and its potential usefulness at all levels of spiritual maturity.

Malcolm Moyes suggests that reminiscences in Rolle's work prove he knew Innocent III's *De miseria humanae conditionis*, Pseudo-Bernard's *Meditationes Piissimae*, and the *Speculum peccatoris*.[18] While the widespread availability of these texts makes it *a priori* likely that Rolle knew them, Moyes's evidence is slim.[19] Here we can make some progress. Rolle certainly knew Innocent III's text, at the very least through its abridgement in the *Oculus sacerdotis* (in which its title and author are given).[20] In *Emendatio vitae*, Rolle mentions meditations 'de miseria condicionis humane

[15] Innocent III, *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, pp. xxv–xxvi.
[16] One or more of these texts appears alongside Rolle in BodL, MS Bodley 16; BodL, MS Hatton 26; BL, MS Add. 34763; Leicester, Wyggeston Hospital, MS 10D34/15; Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral, MS 218; BodL, MS Bodley 122; BNF, MS Lat. 15700.
[17] See library catalogue entries for Bernard of Clairvaux, [*pseud*.] *Meditationes piissimae de cognitione humanae conditionis* and Innocent III, *De miseria humanae conditionis* in MLGB3. Library catalogue records of the *Speculum peccatoris* are mostly monastic (see Bernard of Clairvaux, [*pseud.*] *Speculum peccatoris* in MLGB3), but it was nonetheless also widespread: see Bloomfield 4918, Newhauser/Bejczy 4918.
[18] Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:93–94.
[19] Especially the formulaic phrase 'in hac ualle miseriae', noted in *Super lectiones mortuorum* and *Speculum peccatoris* by Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:94n.110, but which also appears in Psalm 83:7 and the widely copied liturgical hymn *Salve regina, mater misericordiae*, for instance. Moyes's other suggestions are stronger but still brief and formulaic. For *Salve regina*, see H.T. Henry, 'Salve Regina', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Charles George Hebermann and others, 18 vols (New York, 1907), 13:409–10.
[20] At least, the original text is named and ascribed to Innocent III in Oxford, New College, MS 292, f. 30; BodL, MS Rawlinson A. 370, f. 41; and BodL, MS Holkham misc. 21, f. 41. Boyle notes that the title (without ascription) is found in Hatfield, Hatfield House, MS 290 and BodL, MS Rawlinson C. 84, and that a slightly different title (also without inscription) is found in BodL, MS Rawlinson A. 361; CUL, MS Gg.4.10; and CUL, MS Ii.2.7; see Boyle, 'A Study', 2:199.

et vilitate illius' ('on the wretchedness of the human condition and its vileness'); he is speaking generally, but given the text's wide circulation it seems likely he had it in mind.[21] *Judica me* supplies evidence of Rolle's knowledge of *Meditationes Piissimae*.[22] Rolle's borrowings from Pagula in *Judica* B3 end with a quotation ascribed to Bernard.[23] Rolle then follows this with a modified quotation from *Meditationes piissimae* (not found at this point in Pagula), which resembles the Bernardine quotation he had just copied.[24] The *Meditationes piissimae* was widely ascribed to Bernard in the Middle Ages. The likeliest explanation is that when Rolle came across the Bernardine quotation in Pagula, he thought he recognised its source as *Meditationes piissimae* (or it simply reminded him of that text), so decided to expand with reference to the original.[25] Having said all that, this evidence all comes from works probably written late in Rolle's career, leaving open the possibility that he may have written the contemplative texts before he got his hands on this reading material.

Rolle's knowledge of the *contemptus mundi* genre as a whole is also clear in his commentaries on Lamentations and Job. Rolle's commentary on Lamentations (*Super Threnos*) expounds it as describing both the Church and the individual soul lamenting their sins. Its rhetoric of ecclesial decline parallels the criticisms of religious abuses common in the *contemptus mundi*

[21] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 8, lines 22.
[22] See also Watson's suggestion that Rolle translated an excerpt into English in *The Commandment*: *Invention*, pp. 237–38.
[23] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 76, lines 11–13.
[24] Compare Rolle's 'Unde dicit Apostolus: *Quod oculus non uidit, nec auris audiuit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, que preparauit Deus diligentibus se* [1 Cor 2:9]. Oculus non uidet quanta sit claritas, nec auris audiuit quanta sit iocunditas, quando uidebimus Deum facie ad faciem, Qui est Lux illuminatorum, Gloria letancium, Requires exercitatorum, et Corona uiuencium' with Pseudo-Bernard's '*Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit* [1 Cor 2:9], quanta claritas, quanta suavitas, et quanta jucunditas maneat nos in illa visione, quando Deum facie ad faciem videbimus; qui est lux illuminatorum, requies exercitatorum, patria redeuntium, vita viventium, corona vincentium' in Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 76, line 13 to p. 77, line 5; Pseudo-Bernard, *Meditationes piisimae*, ch. 1, PL 184:487. The preceding Bernadine quotation in Pagula refers to 'tanta iocunditas et suauitas' in heaven (Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 76, line 11), which is reminiscent of the *Meditationes piissimae* extract. The probable original source for the Pseudo-Bernardine passage is Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera, Volume 5: Sermones 2*, ed. by J. Leclercq and H.M. Rochais (Rome, 1968), 'In festivitate omnium sanctorum', sermo 4, p. 357, lines 15–18.
[25] Given that the borrowings from Pagula end at this point in *Judica* B3, it would be an unlikely coincidence if Rolle's copy of Pagula contained this extract from *Meditationes piissimae* as an unusual interpolation and Rolle broke off at the same point.

tradition, and it is full of evocative descriptions of the soul's penitence. It was not widely circulated, surviving in just five manuscripts.[26]

Rolle wrote three commentaries on the readings from Job in the Office of the Dead which also address *contemptus mundi* themes: *In aliquot capita Iob*, *Lessouns of Dirige*, and *Super lectiones mortuorum*. The Office of the Dead clearly pertained to the *contemptus mundi* of eremitic life: it was drawn upon in some ceremonies of enclosure for anchorites (in service of their broader analogy between enclosure and death), and two extant eremitic rules instruct their readers to use the Office in their devotional programme.[27] But it was also a touchstone of public and private medieval devotion more broadly, regularly appended to Psalters from the thirteenth century onwards.[28] Rolle's *In aliquot capita Iob* consists entirely of extracts from Gregory's *Moralia* on the relevant passages from Job, and Rolle translated it into English as *Lessouns of Dirige*; both texts survive in a single witness.[29] Outstripping these, Rolle's *Super lectiones mortuorum* is an original commentary on the Office of the Dead readings which ranks among Rolle's most widely-read texts.

In aliquot capita Iob and *Lessouns of Dirige* address typical *contemptus mundi* themes, such as the wretchedness and transience of man's life and the 'anguysch and noye and dispysyng of þis worlde'.[30] But stylistically they are closer to the commentary genre than *contemptus mundi* literature (reflecting their source, Gregory's *Moralia*, which predates the emergence of the

[26] Doyle and Hanna, *Hope Allen's "Writings"*, p. 12; for descriptions, see Richard Rolle, *On Lamentations: A Critical Edition with Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Michael Van Dussen (Liverpool, 2020), pp. 74–83.
[27] *The Dublin Rule*, in Oliger, 'Regula tres reclusorum et eremitarum angliae saec. XIII–XIV', *Antonianum*, 3.2–3 (1928), ch. 18, p. 181; *The Rule of Celestine*, ch. 19, p. 319. On eremitic life as penitential, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, chs 5–6. On the Office of the Dead and ceremonies of enclosure, see Renevey, 'Looking for a Context'; E.A. Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 34–49, especially pp. 39–44. On ceremonies of enclosure, see also E.A. Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure: The English *Ordines* for the Enclosing of Anchorites, s. Xii–s. Xvi', *Traditio*, 67 (2012), 145–234.
[28] N. Morgan, 'Books for the Liturgy and Private Prayer', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 2: 1100–1400*, ed. by N. Morgan and R.M. Thomson (Cambridge, 2008), p. 308.
[29] Discussed in Henry Hargreaves, 'Lessouns of *Dirige*: A Rolle Text Discovered', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 91 (1990), 311–19; Rolle, *Uncollected*, p. lxiv–lxvi.
[30] *Lessouns of Dirige*, in Rolle, *Uncollected*, line 33.

contemptus mundi as a distinctive genre). In contrast, *Super lectiones mortuorum* engages expansively with *contemptus mundi* tropes. Alongside its careful Biblical exposition and doctrinal discussion, it also contains evocative and exclamatory denunciations of the rottenness of the flesh, the transience of earthly life, and the pains of hell, positioning it as Rolle's main entry in the *contemptus mundi* tradition. It also appears independently from other Rolleana more frequently than his other works; many of Rolle's medieval readers would have encountered him only through this text, as a penitential author and exegete.[31]

The devotional utility of *contemptus mundi* literature was multi-faceted, reflecting its broad readership. Meditating on such things was meant to provoke rejection of the world, to prompt penitence, and to inspire pursuit of heavenly things. *Contemptus mundi* themes do not necessarily imply a less advanced reader since this material could also be useful to contemplatives. Robert Bultot elaborates on its relevance to contemplatives through his suggestion that kenosis is central to the devotional work of *contemptus mundi*; kenosis being the process of self-emptying which parallels the trajectory of Christ in Philippians 2 (from being humbled unto death to being exalted).[32] *Contemptus mundi* literature was designed to expose visible worldly pleasures and glory in the present as vain and futile in comparison to invisible heavenly glory in the future. In this sense, the *contemptus mundi* can be seen as participating in the apophatic approach towards God associated with the spiritually advanced, consisting in the denial of oneself (or self-emptying) expressed through the renunciation of bodily, material things.[33] All four of Rolle's penitential commentaries

[31] Moyes makes a similar point at *Expositio*, 1:83, 87.
[32] Especially throughout Bultot, 'Innocent III', e.g. at p. 446, though Bultot never actually uses the term 'kenosis'. For more on kenosis, see Nicholas Watson, 'Conception of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God', in *New Medieval Literatures 1*, ed. by Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford, 1997), pp. 85–124.
[33] For a study on apophasis, see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago, 1994).

anticipate a potentially contemplative reader by making references (often in passing) to contemplatives and contemplative experience.[34]

Nonetheless, the *contemptus mundi* was, perhaps more obviously, directed at repudiating the world and its delights as sinful and wicked, something which remained useful to the contemplative but was especially pertinent to the less advanced reader.[35] The multi-faceted usefulness of *contemptus mundi* can be seen in comments made by Gregory in his *Moralia*, and which Rolle selected to translate into English in his *Lessouns of Dirige* (via *In aliquot capita Iob*). Rolle borrows material from one of Gregory's prefaces to make the point that the righteous person can be encouraged by *contemptus mundi* meditation: 'Þo maner of reghtwys men is þat so mykel þo more þem þinke þo lyfe short and fleand, þat þei knawe þo ioy of heuene lastand and stabul'.[36] He also notes that it is useful for fighting sin, again translating Gregory directly: 'when syne temptes þo wille, nede is þat þoȝt beholde how short þo delyte is, so þat wickednes rauysch hym not til endles dede'.[37] These quotations highlights its usefulness for inspiring thoughts of heavenly things and for enabling resistance to sin.

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[34] For example, Rolle, *On Lamentations*, ch. 1, lines 65–69, 76; ch. 2, line 72; ch. 3, lines 96–101; and see also p. 27; *Lessouns of Dirige*, lines 55–57, 73–79, 125–27, 726–28; Richard Rolle, *In aliquot capita Iob*, in *D. Richardi Pampolitani... in Psalterium Dauidicum, atque alia quaedam sacrae Scripturae monumenta...*, ed. by Johann Faber (Cologne, 1536), p. ff. 112v–22v, commentary on Job 7:19 (f. 113), 10:20 (f. 120v); Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, ff. 140v, 146, 173 (ed. Moyes, 2:143, lines 8–10; 2:158, lines 1–2; 2:249, lines 1–11).

[35] Note that in *Ego dormio*, *contemptus mundi* themes are associated with the lowest stage; see Rolle, *Ego dormio*, lines 84–89; compare also Rolle, *The Commandment*, lines 196–213.

[36] *Lessouns of Dirige*, lines 422–23. In *Lessouns*, this line appears as the exposition of Job 14:5; compare 'Mos iustorum est, tanto prudentius praesentem vitam, quam sit fugitiua, cogitare, quanto studiosius nouerunt coelestis patriae aeterna bona perpendere' in Rolle, *In aliquot capita Iob*, fol. 117 (where this line precedes Job 14:5); taken from Gregory, *Moralia*, ed. by Marcus Adriaen, 3 vols (Turnhout, 1979–1985), book 12, preface, lines 1–3 (2:628) (after the preface, this book commences with Job 14:5).

[37] *Lessouns of Dirige*, lines 724–26. Compare 'cum culpa animum tentat [*erratum* for 'temptat'], necesse est vt mens breuitatem suae delectationis aspiciat, ne ad aeternam mortem iniquitas rapiat', in Rolle, *In aliquot capita Iob*, fol. 120v (commentary on Job 10:20); taken from Gregory, *Moralia*, book 9, pars 61, lines 10–12 (1:522).

Furthermore, the *contemptus mundi* genre achieved these aims through affective means, rather than doctrinal or catechetic instruction: scholars have observed that it was characterised primarily by a strong emphasis on evocative, expressive style over theology or instruction.[38] It thus differs in approach from much penitential literature with a catechetic emphasis, which focuses on articulating remedies for every sin. Meditating on the wretchedness and instability of worldly life works by stirring the reader to renounce transient, worldly things and instead turn towards the joys of heaven.

Contra amatores mundi offers an example of standard tropes of the *contemptus mundi* genre being incorporated in a text otherwise concerned with contemplation. In chapter 6, Rolle describes his experience of horror at corpses and death after the passing of a patron, which prompts an extended meditation on *contemptus mundi* themes, such as the wretchedness of human existence ('omnibus nobis congenita[39] miseria est'; 'there is wretchedness for us all from birth'); the transience of worldly pleasures ('omnia terrena vana sunt, fallibilia insolida, et... finienda'; 'all earthly things are vain, deceptive, unstable, and must end'); and the inevitable damnation of sinners ('infelices anime... draconum faucibus degluciendo deputantur'; 'unhappy souls are consigned to the throats of dragons for swallowing').[40] The accumulation of pejorative and evocative language in these examples is paralleled by exclamations which express emotion, and thereby indicate the passage's intended affective impact: 'ecce, mors vitam rapit' ('behold, death seizes life!'); 'O miser homo' ('O wretched man!').[41] The dramatic evocations of worldly transience and futility in *Contra amatores mundi* are also interspersed with direct instruction to the reader, such as: 'igitur pocius

[38] Innocent III, *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, p. xxv; Moyes, *Expositio*, 1:96; Bultot, 'Innocent III', p. 447.
[39] Two manuscripts read 'cognita' for 'congenita', which diminishes the force of the phrase (and thus its associations with *contemptus mundi* literature); with this reading, it merely states that wretchedness is known to us rather than that it characterises our whole existence. Nonetheless, the influence of *contemptus mundi* literature is amply illustrated by the other passages.
[40] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 6, lines 42, 112–13, 55–56.
[41] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 6, lines 40, 111.

age carnem debilitans, et animam divino amore inpinguans' ('therefore act [now] instead, weakening the flesh and anointing the soul in divine love').[42] Instructions like this one throughout highlight the intended devotional impact: that these meditations are supposed to stir the reader to reject worldly things (i.e., the desires of the flesh) and pursue God. The influence of the *contemptus mundi* genre here is clear: this passage contains *contemptus mundi* themes, expresses them according to the typical style of the genre, and encourages the reader to reject sin and pursue God.

Rolle's other contemplative texts do not offer sustained treatment of certain *contemptus mundi* themes prominent in *Super lectiones mortuorum* (such as the rottenness of the flesh and brevity of life), but one theme which belongs (though not exclusively) to *contemptus mundi* literature appears widely: the 'Last Things' of death, Judgement, and hell.[43] Rolle's treatment of this theme is closely connected to the contempt for the world, since his attacks on the worldly are often justified with reference to their future damnation. Though such passages are visionary and eschatological in outlook (and hence arguably pertain to the realm of contemplative spirituality), they also reflect a sustained preoccupation with the rejection of worldliness and sin.

Despite its focus on the intimate register of the Song of Songs, *Super Canticum canticorum* blends together *contemptus mundi* themes with depictions of hell and damnation. Its first modern editor Elizabeth Murray is one of the few to point out Rolle's interest in damnation.[44] This theme appears especially in extended passages from the first and sixth chapters. In the first chapter, Rolle contrasts the present suffering and future exaltation of the elect with the reversal of fortunes in store for the rich and powerful of the world. This leads him into describing Judgment Day,

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[42] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 6, lines 56–57.
[43] Constant J. Mews and Tomas Zahora, 'Remembering Last Things and Regulating Behavior in the Early Fourteenth Century: From the *De consideratione novissimorum* to the *Speculum morale*', *Speculum*, 90.4 (2015), 960–94. For examples of other *contemptus mundi* tropes treated in passing, see Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 34, p. 104, lines 1–12; ch. 37, p. 113, line 37 to p. 114, line 5.
[44] Elizabeth Murray, 'Richard Rolle's Comment on the Canticles', unpublished PhD thesis (Fordham University, 1958), pp. lxxx–lxxxiii.

introduced in a series of staccato phrases: 'Finis mundi apropiat; pene paratus est tuba caniturus; adest finis mundialis malicie' ('The end of the world draws near; the trumpet is nearly ready to be sounded; the end of worldly malice is at hand').[45] Rolle uses a similar formulation in the sixth chapter of *Super Canticum*, 'Ecce namque dies venit, et nimirum non tardabit' ('for behold the day comes, and doubtless will not delay').[46] The use of 'ecce' ('behold') and short staccato phrases (reiterating the same point) recalls the exhortatory qualities of sermons, and hence the affective nature of the *contemptus mundi* genre. In both chapters, many typical *contemptus mundi* themes follow. Rolle calls human life 'punctus et momentanium' ('a point and momentary'), and quotes Wisdom 5:9 to describe how worldly pride and wealth 'transeunt tamquam vmbra' ('pass away like a shadow').[47] In the sixth chapter, dramatic exclamations indicate an affective purpose: 'Ve vobis! O quam miseri estis' ('Woe to you! O... how wretched you are').[48] The relevance of such meditations for fighting sin is indicated by Rolle's exhortation to faithfulness which closes the discussion in chapter 1: 'Quisquis igitur saluus fieri concupiscis, *miserere anime tue* [Sir 30:24]... Euome ergo scelus tuum' ('Therefore, whoever you are who desire to be saved, *have pity on thy own soul*... Therefore spew out your own crime').[49] In the sixth chapter, where Rolle is more clearly focused on transitions through contemplative grades of love, Rolle closes with descriptions of the glory of the elect in heaven, implicitly presenting the foregoing depictions of damnation as inspiring the contemplative towards God by presenting two alternatives. These extended descriptions of damnation demonstrate the multi-faceted usefulness of the *contemptus mundi* genre and again show Rolle drawing attention to such meditations in the contemplative context of *Super Canticum*.

Descriptions of damnation are especially common in the *Melos amoris*: Wolfgang Riehle (one of the few scholars to note them) finds their prevalence surprising in view of the text's

[45] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 279–80. Hanna's translation is given.
[46] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 6, lines 226–27. Compare Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 3, line 13.
[47] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 304, 300–1. Hanna's translations are given.
[48] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 6, line 222. Hanna's translations are given.
[49] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 470–74. Hanna's translation is given.

orientation towards heavenly experience.[50] Yet Rolle's treatment suggests these themes are closely connected. The *Melos* dedicates its fourth and final three chapters to discussion of damnation and Judgement Day. Rolle seems to position these chapters as tangents, but Rolle's treatment of damnation permeates the whole text.[51] The attention to damnation alongside glorification is reflected elsewhere in Rolle's *Super Psalmum vicesimum*: contrary to the traditional Messianic interpretation, Rolle expounds Psalm 20:1-8 in terms of the saint, and the rest as describing the wicked and their future torments.[52] *Super Psalmum vicesimum* thus similarly describes the glory of the saint by contrasting it to the wretchedness of the damned.

In the *Melos*, Rolle frequently exhorts the reader to pay attention to the fate of the damned, and in doing so he usefully highlights that the multi-faceted devotional purposes of these eschatological topics (and of *contemptus mundi* themes more broadly) are at work in his texts. As we shall see, Rolle states directly that meditations on the Last Things can, firstly, inspire the righteous person towards heavenly things; secondly, enable the tempted to reject sinful desires; and, thirdly, compel the sinner towards repentance.

Firstly, Rolle suggests that meditating on damnation helps the righteous reader by inspiring them towards heavenly thoughts. This again reinforces that this material is not only useful as penitential literature. Rolle states this purpose in the first sentence of chapter 16: 'electus ut Eternum adoret ardenter... aspiciat abiectos ab Omnipotente' ('let the elect person observe those cast down by the Omnipotent, so that he might ardently adore the Eternal One').[53] The 'abiectos' ('those cast down') refers back to the descriptions of the damned which closed the preceding

[50] Riehle, *Secret Within*, pp. 130–31.
[51] For Rolle's framing of chapters 4 and 56–58, see Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 5, p. 15, lines 3–9; ch. 56, p. 180, lines 1–18.
[52] Rolle, *Super Psalmum vicesimum*, pp. xxii–xxxi.
[53] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 16, p. 48, lines 9–10. The word 'aspiciat' could be taken as the (weaker) potential subjunctive, 'he might observe', but the exhortatory jussive subjunctive seems more likely in this context.

chapter. The purpose clause here suggests that meditating on the damned specifically enables the elect to love God better.

Other passages help elucidate this further, showing that images of damnation were vindicatory and consoling for the ascete, underlining their future glory by its emphatic contrast with the fate of the wicked.[54] Rolle's descriptions of the Last Judgment often emphasise the reversal of fortunes that takes place, whereby the contemplative's present suffering is transformed into eternal joy, and the worldly rich and powerful will be humbled, impoverished, and tormented. Such visions vindicate the contemplative's penitential life against its worldly critics, and Rolle accordingly places a particular emphasis on the shame of sinners being finally made known to all, saying for instance in chapter 10 that their wickedness 'merito monstrabitur coram multitudine' ('will deservedly be revealed before the multitude') and that 'erubescent... cum Omnipotens opera omnium coram intuentibus palam apperuerit' ('they will blush... when the Omnipotent has uncovered publicly the works of all before onlookers').[55] Rolle states directly that the sinners in question are those that have spurned the elect: 'pauperibus quos spernebant in pulcherimam patriam promotis...' ('once the paupers whom they spurned have been elevated to the most beautiful homeland...'), highlighting that Rolle is imagining the downfall of the righteous person's enemies.[56] The triumphalism of such images becomes even more explicit on a few occasions where Rolle describes how the righteous contemplative will justly rejoice at the eternal torment of sinners (which, as offensive as it may seem, was theologically orthodox and discussed by other medieval authors, as Albin notes).[57] In this way, Rolle presents visions of the Last Judgment and damnation as consolatory for the righteous person in the midst of present asceticism and suffering. The punishment of evil is presented as

[54] For a brief discussion of similar themes in patristic writers, see Élyse Dupras, 'Hell: The Pleasure of the Suffering of Others from Visions of the Afterlife to Religious Theatre', in *Pleasure in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Naama Cohen-Hanegbi and Piroska Nagy (Turnhout, 2018), pp. 250–52.
[55] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 10, p. 29, lines 6–7, 11–12.
[56] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 10, p. 29, lines 13–14.
[57] See Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 58, p. 191, line 20; Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 6, lines 19–24; Albin, *Melody of Love*, p. 336n.8.

comforting: chapter 29, which considers Satan's downfall, closes by quoting 1 Samuel 2:4, 'archus forcium superatus est' ('the bow of the mighty has been conquered'), explaining that this is spoken 'ad consolacionem charorum' ('to the consolation of the beloveds').[58] These examples suggest that the images of Judgment, damnation, exaltation, and the exposure of worldly pleasures as futile were meant to be encouraging, reminding the reader of their reward in heaven to enable them to forego temporary worldly pleasures and undergo ascetic living.

Secondly, as well as inspiring, vindicating, and consoling the righteous reader, meditations on damnation are also positioned as helping them to fight sin and temptation. In chapter 49, Rolle suggests that knowing about the devil's traps is necessary to defeat him, referring to how Christ leads his 'sponsam' ('bride'), so that she 'laqueos Leviathan absconsos invenit; ac... recia ruine tutata transilivit' ('found the hidden snares of Leviathan; and, protected, leapt over his nets of ruin').[59] This passage offers an unusual instance where this discussion is directed specifically towards Christ's bride (Rolle may have had God's beloved contemplatives in mind, though this term could also apply to the general Christian). In other words, this passage acknowledges that even the lover of God still faces temptation and can benefit from material which exposes the devil's traps.

Thirdly, Rolle also describes damnation in order to convert sinners to repentance. He directly and repeatedly states the utility of this material for sinners, showing an awareness that the *contemptus mundi* is meant to inspire rejection of worldly desires. In chapter 17, Rolle writes: 'Memento, mundane, a maculis mundari; recole ruinam quam rodit repulsus...' ('Remember, worldly person, to be cleansed from blemishes, recall the ruin which the spurned person consumes').[60] The word 'ruinam' ('ruin') typically refers to damnation. Similarly, chapter 18 contrasts the contemplative to the damned, and again directly addresses the 'mundane': 'O mundane, maculis

[58] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 29, p. 88, lines 31–32.
[59] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 49, p. 156, lines 3, 6–7.
[60] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 17, p. 51, lines 17–18.

memento molestatus quia mendaces miseri male moriuntur et morsi sunt... in merore' ('O worldly person troubled by blemishes, remember that wretched liars die wickedly and have been consumed in grief').[61] These examples, addressed to the 'mundane' ('worldly person', or more neutrally 'inhabitant of the world') perhaps most likely represent a rhetorical posture designed to encourage ascetic readers (as discussed above), rather than a concrete expectation of sinful, worldly readers, but even in this case Rolle still highlights the reformative utility of *contemptus mundi* themes. Rolle also apparently states more directly that his meditations on damnation are directed towards sinners. In chapter 27, he says that he preaches to sinners that they will be damned.[62] More explicitly, in chapter 57, Rolle discusses the rationale of himself and other holy authors for writing books, asking 'numquid non scribo pro tua salvacione?' ('can it be that I do not write for your salvation?'), and concluding:

> Scribimus igitur non ut dampnentur, sed ut magis convertantur et vivant et salventur. Pronunciantur[63] eis terrores inferni et stricta iudicia Dei ut ea caveant, non ut in illis cadant.[64]
>
> Therefore, we write not so that they are damned, but rather so that they may be converted and live and be saved. The terrors of hell and the constrictive judgments of God are proclaimed to them so that they beware, not so that they fall into them.

Given that Rolle is specifically discussing his purpose in writing holy books, he seems here to envision (however vaguely) a sinful reader in need of repentance (perhaps thinking primarily of false Christians, whom he mentions a few lines later).[65] Irrespective of the extent to which Rolle actually expected his texts to reach such an audience, he shows his awareness of the morally reformative

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[61] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 18, p. 55, lines 21–23.
[62] 'non parcerem predicare peccantibus quia peribunt in perpetuum nisi perfecte penituerit', Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 27, p. 82, lines 20–21. The word 'non' is omitted from four manuscripts (which would reverse the meaning), but it seems necessary for sense (and there are lots of other examples of Rolle claiming to preach to sinners, as discussed below).
[63] Only two manuscripts read 'pronunciantur'; the rest read 'preponuntur' or 'proponuntur'. The latter two terms are more indirect and less closely associated with verbal speech (and thus metonymically with writing), but even if these readings are authoritative it seems clear from context that Rolle is talking about written instruction.
[64] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, lines 26, 32–35.
[65] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, lines 36–37.

usefulness of meditations on the 'terrors of hell'. Across the text, Rolle repeatedly highlights the usefulness of the meditations he presents in the *Melos* for fighting sin, highlighting its particular focus on addressing the problems of sin and temptation which pertain especially to the lower end of the spiritual spectrum.

In conclusion, this section calls for renewed attention to how Rolle addresses a whole range of devotional practices in his contemplative texts besides the heights of contemplative experience. The influence of the *contemptus mundi* over Rolle's writing is not limited to passages where Rolle meditates on specific *contemptus mundi* themes; for instance, it is formative of the acerbic rhetoric with which he denounces his critics (who are usually lumped together with the worldly), and of his fondness for opposites and paradoxes which juxtapose worldly and heavenly perspectives.[66] Nonetheless, Rolle's incorporation of *contemptus mundi* themes and extensive descriptions of damnation and the Last Judgment helps us to see Rolle's attention to the sustained rejection of sin and worldliness that characterises the whole Christian life. Rolle's works encourage a reorientation of desire across the whole spectrum of spiritual life, extending from the highest grade of love down to the more fundamental rejection of sin. This material was consolatory for the ascete and useful for the righteous person to resist temptation, as well as for inspiring the sinner to repentance. If anything, Rolle's framing of this material emphasises its usefulness for the less advanced reader, who is still engaged in the struggle against sin and needs an active reorientation of their desire towards heavenly things through the repeated exposure of worldly things as wretched and futile.

Rolle's attention to a broad spectrum could equally be demonstrated from other themes. The *Incendium amoris* has been absent from the foregoing discussion owing to its lack of

[66] For discussion of Rolle's polarised rhetoric in denouncing his critics, see the introduction to this thesis. For examples of oppositions and paradoxes, see, for example, 'O felix tristicia quam statim sequitur consolatio diuina! O leticia execrabilis cuius finis est dolor infernalis!' (Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 16, lines 3–4), or Rolle's identification of the pauper in Psalm 20 with the 'verus pauper', who 'non pauper, sed rex recte vocetur' (Rolle, *Super Psalmum Vicesimum*, p. 2, line 12).

descriptions of damnation and the Last Judgement (a surprisingly consistent feature in an otherwise unsystematic text). But it is full of material addressing more fundamental matters; Watson observes that the text seems directed to readers at the beginning of spiritual life.[67] Rolle's use of varied and conventional devotional material reinforces the risks of seeing these texts primarily in terms of the inner life of one person, Rolle himself. Besides the ascent to contemplative heights, this section has shown that Rolle's texts are relentlessly preoccupied with the more 'mundane' aspects of the spiritual life, as especially in the struggle against sin, offering devotional material which would suit readers at more basic levels (a point Rolle repeatedly highlights), as well as remaining useful to the more advanced. These were not simply vehicles for Rolle's autobiography and apologetic aims, but usable devotional texts grounded in standard and ubiquitous devotional literature.

Richard Rolle and the Heresy of Free Spirit: The Relevance of Penitential and Devotional Practices for the Advanced Contemplative

So far, we have seen that, while Rolle devotes much attention to the upper echelons of contemplative life which he claims to occupy, his works are also widely attentive to more foundational spiritual practices, including exhortations to reject sin and worldly living. I have suggested that foundational and penitential materials remain potentially useful to the advanced contemplative. This section interrogates this point further, and specifically the question of whether Rolle thought an advanced reader could pass beyond these basic practices. Such a view would further dissociate Rolle's writings from his own introspection by showing that they are designed for readers at a more basic or intermediate level than Rolle himself.

[67] Watson, *Invention*, p. 135. See for instance Rolle's discussion of grades of humility, resembling Hugh of Strasbourg's lists of sins which are typical of *pastoralia* (and discussed in the previous chapter), in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 9, p. 170.

The question of how basic and fundamental devotional practices remained relevant for the advanced contemplative was newly fraught in Rolle's day, due to emerging anxieties about the Heresy of the Free Spirit. The Heresy of the Free Spirit was the label applied retrospectively to perceived tendencies among religious groups and authors from the late thirteenth century onwards (most famously Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*).[68] Two of its defining hallmarks were autotheism and antinomianism.[69] Autotheism, or deification, was the idea that the soul can become so elevated that it becomes one with God, and thus no longer needs the sacraments or spiritual practices by which God's grace is received. Antinomianism was the idea that, correspondingly, the divine soul becomes incapable of sin and can do whatever it likes.[70] It is difficult to know how much Rolle would have known about the Heresy of the Free Spirit. Katherine Kerby-Fulton argues that Continental heresies were more prominent in England than has been recognised, and Louise Nelstrop argues for deification in Rolle's work (though his passing allusions to the subject may not amount to a fully conceived doctrinal position).[71] However, even if Rolle did not know of the heresy directly, it is not anachronistic to consider its parallels within his work: its dangerous ideas can be seen as implicit or latent in orthodox contemplative spirituality (as Eleanor McLaughlin argues), and the condemnation of Porete in terms of the Heresy of the Free Spirit reflects a perception that these ideas were more widespread (for example, in groups such as the beguines and beghards).[72] Given,

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[68] For introductions to the Heresy of the Free Spirit and Porete, see Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1972); Michael Sargent, 'The Annihilation of Marguerite Porete', *Viator*, 28 (1997), 253–79.

[69] Lerner, *Heresy*, p. 1.

[70] The idea that the perfect soul becomes incapable of sin and can abandon spiritual disciplines was condemned in the 1312 *Ad Nostrum* decrees (using language which echoes Porete's *Mirror*), for which, see *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. by Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, 36th edn (Barcelona, 1965), p. 282. For discussion, see Lerner, *Heresy*, pp. 78–84; Sargent, 'Annihilation', pp. 256–60.

[71] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), especially chs 6–7; Nelstrop, *On Deification*. For the reception of Porete's text and ideas in an insular context, see 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, 1996), pp. 19–49.

[72] Eleanor McLaughlin, 'The Heresy of the Free Spirit and Late Medieval Mysticism', *Medievalia et humanistica*, n.s., 4 (1973), 51; Lerner, *Heresy*, ch. 2.

then, that these concepts reflect broader cultural trends in the early fourteenth century, we might reasonably ask whether Rolle's writings broach similar territory.

Two aspects of Rolle's writing might be taken as claiming that devotional practices become superfluous for the advanced contemplative: his rejection of ecclesiastical music (which might imply a rejection of Church worship and sacraments), and his claim that contemplative union can be continuous. The first of these can be dealt with briefly. Rolle is clear that the contemplative flees exterior music not to avoid devotional practices (a tendency which critics of Free Spiritism saw as implicit in their aim to encounter God in passivity), but in order to devote himself to them more fully by offering 'laudes ac preces' ('praises and prayers') to God internally and in solitude.[73] He also clarifies that he does attend Church services to receive the Mass and when 'dies solempnis cogeret' ('a ceremonial day compelled').[74] Rolle only discusses his avoidance of Church services briefly, and so this cannot be taken as claiming to have bypassed the need for sacraments or devotional practices.

Rolle's claim that contemplative union is continuous requires more detailed investigation. Continuous contemplation would potentially obviate the need for sustained devotional practices, such as prayer and meditation, to attain contemplation. Accordingly, scholars have noted its association with the Heresy of the Free Spirit.[75] It went against the view of all major contemplative *auctoritates* that contemplative union was fleeting and transient.[76] For example, in *Sermones super Cantica*, Bernard explains that the transience of contemplative union demands perseverance in

[73] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 31, p. 233.
[74] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 31, p. 233.
[75] Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri, 'The Glosses by "M.N." and Richard Methley to "The Mirror of Simple Souls"', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà*, 5 (1968), 367; McLaughlin, 'Heresy', p. 43; Sargent, 'Annihilation', p. 270. McLaughlin associates continuous contemplative union with Free Spiritism, but rather confusingly suggests it is not found in Porete (against Colledge and Guarnieri and Sargent); she cites in support Porete's discussion of the limitation of contemplative union on earth; however, this does not necessarily preclude its continuousness.
[76] Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of SS. Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, 3rd edn (London, 1967), pp. 47–48, 81–82, 106–8. That said, Nelstrop suggests that some precedent for Rolle's continual contemplative experience can be found in the Desert tradition: see *On Deification*, p. 105.

devotional practices.[77] Similar discussion appears in Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*, which Rolle probably knew, and he also copied discussions of the transience of contemplative union from Gregory's *Moralia* (as Allen points out).[78] Although in the introduction to this thesis I argued that Hilton's *Of Angels' Song* largely qualifies and expounds Rolle's concept of *canor* rather than critiquing it, one point of disagreement is over the continuousness of contemplative union, which Hilton says 'may noght be fulfild perfitely, continuely, haly in þis life, for corrupcioun of þe fleshe, bot anly in þe blis of heuen', reflecting the orthodox view.[79] This reinforces the potential for controversy in claiming that contemplative experience can be continuous, since, as Hilton suggests, it may imply that contemplative union with God can be complete in this life.

Rolle discusses this topic in several places with different emphases. His most moderate discussion appears in *Incendium amoris*, where he expresses some scepticism that the highest grade of contemplative union can be continuous due to the impediments of the flesh.[80] Nevertheless he argues that the fire of love never fully departs (which could be understood as amounting to the idea that it is continuous), although it varies in intensity, since it is inhibited by sleep, idleness, fatigue, worldly solace, and excessive theological disputation. Rolle says of these things, rather confusingly, that:

> Non utique auferunt quod auferri non poterit, quia cor totum inuoluit; [sed][81] propter talia feruor ille felicissimus, ad tempus absens, apparet.[82]
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> They certainly do not steal what cannot be stolen, because it envelops the whole heart; but on account of such things, that most happy heat, from time to time absent, appears.

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[77] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica*, sermo 32.2 (1:227, lines 13–19).
[78] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, X.27, p. 142, lines 13–15; Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 313–14. On Rolle's knowledge of *De diligendo Deo*, see fn. 9 above.
[79] Hilton, *Of Angels' Song*, lines 22–24.
[80] 'Quis enim in corpore mortali estum illum in suo summo gradu... continue existentem diu tolleraret? Deficere denique oporteret pre dulcedine et magnitudine superferuidi affectus', Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, p. 146.
[81] sed] sed **DdR**, et **De**
[82] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, pp. 146.

Here, he seems to say contradictorily that the fire of love cannot be taken away, yet is sometimes absent. His point seems to be that it is diminished in intensity, since he also says that bodily necessities and human emotions 'mitigant et molestant' ('diminish and disturb') the fire of love, whilst suggesting that it remains present in some way.[83] Correspondingly, Rolle suggests that it can be stirred up by acts of devotion, which he presents as the aim of his book.[84]

In *Melos amoris*, *Contra amatores mundi*, and *Super Canticum canticorum*, Rolle argues more forcefully that *canor* (the highest grade of contemplative union) can be experienced continuously by the highest contemplatives. In each of these texts, Rolle highlights that his view directly contradicts tradition, saying in the *Melos*, for example, that,

> hoc est contra quosdam qui breviter dicebant dulcedinem durare et quasi in tactu transeat contemplacio tam chara...[85]
>
> this is against certain people who said that sweetness lasts briefly, and such dear contemplation passes away as if it were in a touch...

This suggests that Rolle knew the position he was adopting was somewhat unorthodox. In the course of making a case for continuous contemplation, Rolle also claims that he is speaking from his own experiences, suggesting that he considers himself to have attained continuous contemplation.[86]

However, in each of these texts, Rolle nonetheless supplies qualifications to the continuousness of contemplative union. Rolle's most extensive discussion of its limitations appears

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[83] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, p. 146.

[84] 'animam meam tanquam frigiditate tenebratam calefacere conor, quam in deuocione defecatam scio incendi... Proinde quia hic uniuersos excito ad amorem... iscius libri titulus Incendium amoris sorciatur', Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, pp. 146–47. (Here, 'terebratam' is found in **Dd** and **R** for 'tenebratam' in **De**; 'defecata' in **Dd** and **R** for 'defecatam' in **De**.)

[85] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 5, p. 16, lines 16–18. In *Super Canticum canticorum*, Rolle contrasts his position on contemplative continuousness with the views which 'plurimi sanctorum' hold; his challenge to a conventional view is implicit in his forceful contrasts 'non raptim, non momentanee, set continue... non raro set continue': Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 46–47, 171–73; see also 106–111. Similar phrases appear in *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 372–74.

[86] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 68–74. Rolle tempers this claim by describing himself as 'inter amatores Christi minimus' here.

in *Contra amatores mundi*, where he argues that full union can only be attained in heaven. He perhaps shows an awareness of contemporary proponents of the opposite view (such as Free Spiritists) when he writes, 'alii sunt qui aliter dicunt; videlicet, quod viderunt clare celestia' ('there are others who say otherwise; namely, that they see heavenly things clearly').[87] Nonetheless, Rolle opposes this position, stating directly that he has not experienced it, and supporting this by quoting Paul in support of the orthodox position.[88] He states directly that full contemplative union is impossible in this life:

> sine dubio non est de aliquo gradu amoris ut quis in hoc presenti seculo raptus sit ad perfectam visionem celestium, cum illa nobis sit reservata in futurum.[89]
>
> without doubt it is not the case concerning any grade of love that someone in this present age may be seized to a perfect celestial vision, since that is reserved for us in the future.

Although he does not offer such detailed discussion in *Melos amoris* and *Super Canticum canticorum*, passing references in these texts suggest a similar view: Rolle says in *Super Canticum* that the lover experiences *canor* 'multo minus incomparabiliter' ('incomparably much less') than in heaven, and similarly makes comments in the *Melos* implying that contemplative vision is limited.[90] Furthermore, Rolle also supplies qualifications to the continuousness of contemplative experience in these texts which acknowledge that it can be inhibited or diminished by the flesh and its necessities, as he says in the *Incendium*.[91] Thus, although he argues for the continuousness of contemplative

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[87] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 244–45.
[88] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 245–58.
[89] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 290–92. Earlier, Rolle makes an exception, saying that perfect vision of God is granted 'nullis sanctorum... in hac vita... nisi ex aliqua spirituali causa, ut aliquis convertatur' (ch. 5, lines 254–56; note that several MSS read 'speciali' for 'spirituali' which would reinforce that this is an exception). Rolle seems to have in mind here a distinct kind of vision discussed in more detail in Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 37, pp. 254–55. In *Incendium*, Rolle explains that this is a vision which takes place outside of the flesh, can happen to sinners (hence the reference to conversion in the aforementioned quotation from *Contra*), and is different from contemplation. Hence, such a vision can be understood as a perfect vision of heavenly things without amounting to a claim that perfect contemplative union in the flesh is possible for the most holy individuals. See also discussion in Nelstrop, *On Deification*, pp. 83–84.
[90] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 189–90; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 13, p. 39, lines 10–11. Hanna's translation is given.
[91] Rolle mentions that the flesh limits contemplative experience in Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 226–27, 385–86. He also suggests that sleep 'solus' limits contemplative experience in *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 389–91, whereas in Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 173–76, Rolle lists sleep

experience more overtly than in the *Incendium*, Rolle consistently acknowledges that full contemplative union is impossible, that it is diminished by the flesh, and hence that it varies in intensity. The difference between his accounts in these texts is thus of emphasis rather than a fundamental shift in his eschatology.

Of course, the limitations placed on contemplative experience do not necessarily imply the need for sustained spiritual practices; Porete similarly suggested that the most advanced stage of contemplation was only achieved in heaven, whilst also implying that practices like prayer can become superfluous while on earth.[92] However, Rolle repeatedly emphasises that the soul remains in a state of desire (or *languor*) for God, even in the highest experience of contemplative union, and Rolle connects this with the need for sustained devotional practice. For example, in *Super Canticum canticorum*, Rolle discusses the paradox that the soul is simultaneously satisfied by the love of God and yet remains in a state of desire – 'amans semper saciabitur et saciatus semper amare desiderabit' ('the loving one will always be fulfilled and, while fulfilled, will always desire to love') – though he does suggest that this will also apply in heaven.[93] In *Contra amatores mundi*, he more clearly links the lack of perfect contemplative vision with continual desire for God, writing that 'desiderio suspiro et *amore langueo* [Songs 2:5], quia non video faciem dei mei' ('I sigh with desire and *I languish with love*, because I do not see the face of my God').[94] He connects this continual desire for God with the need to undertake 'labor magnus' ('great labour') to pursue contemplation.[95] Similar language is used in chapter 55 of the *Melos*, which takes Songs 2:5 ('amore langueo') as its postil verse, and in which Rolle similarly refers to spiritual languor and the labour required for God,

alongside mealtimes and the clamour of men; in *Melos amoris*, ch. 6, p. 17, lines 2–8, Rolle also mentions that worldly clamour inhibits contemplation.

[92] On these points, see respectively Porete, *Miroeur*, ch. 118, lines 204–6 (p. 332); ch. 9, lines 18–22 (p. 32).

[93] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 222–27 (this quotation at 222–23); see also ch. 4, lines 180–82. Hanna's translation is given.

[94] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 375–76.

[95] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 398–99; see also line 388.

implying active spiritual engagement through devotional practice.[96] Although Rolle claims that advanced contemplatives can experience contemplation even whilst among secular people, Rolle is clear that even they need to continually pursue solitude.[97] Rolle's contemplative texts consistently demonstrate that he believed that the fullness of union with God could never be attained on earth, and hence that sustained pursuit of God through the labour of prayer and solitude was necessary. This reinforces the potential usefulness of devotional reading even for advanced contemplatives.

We thus turn to consider the question of whether the advanced soul can pass beyond sin. In Rolle's work, there is no obvious antinomianism (the idea that a soul passes beyond sin, and no longer needs to act virtuously), but Rolle does address the related idea of impeccability (the idea that a soul becomes incapable of sinning, which would obviate the need for basic spiritual practices such as penitence). There are passages where Rolle may appear to suggest that the advanced contemplative undergoes a transformation that positions them, in some form, beyond sin. For example, in *Melos amoris*, Rolle describes how solitary life is penitential and purgative (which is uncontroversial), and then seems to suggest that an advanced solitary will avoid sin: 'Non erit quod erret qui sic adamavit...' ('It will not be the case that he errs who has loved thus...').[98] Rolle uses similar language elsewhere.[99] His claim to have surpassed lust may also be read in this vein; for instance, in *Super Canticum* he says of the highest contemplatives that 'eciam inter feminas possumus viuere et delectacionem femineam in animo nullam sentire' ('we may even live among women and feel no desire for them in our soul').[100] The claim here is strong: not only to have avoided sexual sin but also to experience no internal 'delectacionem' ('desire'), perhaps referring to temptation itself. However, these statements are all made in passing, and may not reflect a fully-

[96] In *Melos amoris*, ch. 55, Rolle describes experiencing 'langour' simultaneously with contemplation (p. 177, lines 16–17); he also refers to contemplative experience as involving labour in the phrase 'languore laborans' (p. 178, line 8, and see also lines 19–21).
[97] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 5, lines 115–41.
[98] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 48, p. 150, line 35; on solitude as reformative, see lines 28–29.
[99] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 37–41.
[100] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 36–37. Hanna's translation is given.

formulated doctrinal assertion. It is not altogether clear whether Rolle specifically means that the contemplative becomes incapable of sin, or (less controversially) that contemplatives live virtuously, without ruling out the theoretical possibility of relapse.

Rolle does address this issue directly in chapter 19 of the *Incendium amoris*, and here he presents a carefully reasoned and orthodox response (my reading here notably disagrees with Watson, who finds this passage intellectually incoherent and self-aggrandising).[101] After posing the question directly, Rolle affirms that impeccability is only possible in heaven:[102]

> Dum autem homo potest peccare, potest et caritatem amittere. Sed non posse peccare, non est in statu uie sed patrie; ergo[103] omnis homo quantumcumque perfectus est in hac uita, adhuc peccare potest eciam mortaliter...[104]
>
> Yet, as long as a man is able to sin, he is also able to lose love. But to be unable to sin is not in the condition of the path but of the homeland; therefore every man, however perfect he is in this life, is still also able to sin mortally...

Rolle does continue by speculating on the possibility that someone could become incapable of sin, but states that he has not experienced this and corroborates this with quotations from Paul (rather like his discussion of full contemplative union in *Contra amatores mundi*), reinforcing his support for a manifestly Biblical position.[105] He closes the discussion by clarifying that,

> unus est gradus perfecti amoris, quem quicumque attigerit, illum deinceps numquam perdit. Aliud est enim[106] posse perdere, aliud semper tenere quod non uult amittere eciam[107] si [posset][108].[109]

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[101] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 132–34.
[102] 'utrum iste status in amore semel habitus aliquando posset amitti, non incongrue queri potest', Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 19, p. 202.
[103] ergo] ergo **DdDe**, igitur **R**
[104] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 19, p. 202.
[105] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 19, p. 202; Watson identifies a second Biblical citation in this passage at *Invention*, p. 133.
[106] est enim] est enim **DdDe**, est Deum **R**
[107] eciam] eciam **DdDe**, et **R**
[108] posset] posset **DdR**, possit **De**
[109] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 19, p. 202.

> there is one grade of perfect love, and whoever attained it, then he never loses it. For it is one thing to be capable of losing something, and another to always hold something because he does not want to lose it, although he can.

This last sentence distinguishes between the idea that someone is capable of sin, and the idea that someone might stop sinning by choice, without becoming incapable (as indicated by the qualification 'eciam si possit', 'although he can'). So, the grade of perfect love described here is not a grade which brings impeccability; rather, the *perfectus* in the highest state of love may succeed in ceasing to sin, but only because they choose to reject sin rather than that they become incapable of it.

A close reading of other passages where Rolle appears to say that the advanced contemplative passes beyond sin shows that they are best understood in the same way: that the contemplative can conquer sin without becoming wholly incapable of it, and thus without ruling out the possibility of relapse. In *Contra amatores mundi*, Rolle addresses the issue of impeccability in relation to the highest grade of love, in which a person's desire is wholly directed on God (drawing on Bernard's grades of love in *De diligendo Deo*).[110] Rolle clarifies that entry into this grade of love does not mean that a person is no longer tempted, nor that they become incapable of sin: sin can be present, but only fleetingly:

> si quid veniale propter nature fragilitatem insit ei, quasi gutta in igne missa subito absumitur, ita et illud peccatum ardore caritatis absorbetur.[111]
>
> if something venial is present to him (because of the fragility of his nature), then just as a drop thrown in fire is suddenly consumed, so also that sin is absorbed by the flame of love.

[110] 'quamvis in carne ambulans, nec posset nec sciret nisi in domino gloriari, nec aliquid velle aut cupere nisi deum et propter deum, ut seipsum omnino non amet nisi propter deum', Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 276–79. Here, Rolle seemingly conflates Bernard's third grade of love, where man 'diligit Deum propter Deum', and the fourth grade, where 'nec seipsum diligat homo nisi propter Deum'; see Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, IX.26, p. 141, line 24; X.27, p. 142, lines 3–4.

[111] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 285–88; see also Rolle's qualification that they can be tempted at lines 279–81.

This image acknowledges that sin may be there, but is quickly quashed. He also uses this image of fire consuming a droplet of water in the *Incendium amoris*, *Melos amoris*, and *Emendatio vitae* to make the same nuanced point: not that a contemplative becomes sinless, but that any sin is quickly annihilated by the fire of love.[112] When the image appears in the *Melos*, it is in the context of a series of chapters considering the *ordo caritatis* ('order of love') which is discussed in texts like Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*.[113] Rolle's denial of impeccability thus offers an important qualification to the highest Bernardine grade of love (where an individual's desire is wholly directed on God), pointing out that this does not mean that they actually become sinless (and in fact, Bernard uses a similar image in his own discussion of the highest grade, which may well have been Rolle's inspiration).[114] In other words, where Rolle addresses this topic in depth, he positions the advanced contemplative as undergoing a transformation of their desires which means that they are better equipped for dealing with temptation and sin, without claiming explicitly that they become incapable of sinning.[115]

Hence, for Rolle, the advanced contemplative still faces temptation and sin, meaning that penitential practices are not wholly redundant. However, Rolle is also clear that the painful process of penitence is most pertinent to contemplative beginners. His claim that the contemplative

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[112] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 22, p. 208; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 51, p. 163, lines 4–10; Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 10, lines 15–18.

[113] These chapters, beginning with chapter 50, take 'ordinavit in me caritatem' (Songs 2:4) as the postil verse, and they discuss different aspects of the *ordo caritatis*. The *ordo caritatis* traces back to patristic writings but was particularly important in twelfth-century scholastic theology and monastic spirituality. By chapter 51, Rolle has already alluded to Bernardine terminology by stating 'nichil amemus nisi Deum et propter Deum' (ch. 50, p. 159, line 3; compare fn. 109 above), reinforcing that Rolle is in dialogue with a Bernardine conception of the grades of love here. Rolle makes similar statements rejecting impeccability (though perhaps more ambiguously) at *Melos amoris*, ch. 19, p. 56, lines 3–6; ch. 23, p. 67, lines 19–24. On the *ordo caritatis*, see Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, (New York, 1994), pp. 149–56; Shawn Madison Krahmer, 'Loving "in God": An Examination of the Hierarchical Aspects of the *Ordo Caritatis* in Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx', *American Benedictine Review*, 50.1 (1999), 74–93.

[114] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, X.28, p. 143, lines 15–22. Bernard has also already qualified his account by explaining the contemplative union is only fleeting in this life, at X.27, p. 142, lines 13–22.

[115] No sustained discussion of impeccability appears in *Super Canticum canticorum*, but Rolle seems to be working with a similar understanding: e.g., he mentions that the contemplative, having expelled vice and fixed their desires wholly on Christ, remains 'in corruptibili carne', exists in a state of continuous longing, and must resist vices, see Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 362–75 (quotation at 365), and compare Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 37, p. 256.

becomes free from sin can be understood in terms of the transformative process by which a contemplative surpasses the penitential and purgative afflictions of asceticism and enters fully into heavenly joy, a process which highlights how the more advanced contemplative has less need for the grief of penitence. In several places, Rolle explains that the advanced contemplative becomes impassible, overcoming the hardship of the early stages of ascesis. For example, in *Super Canticum canticorum*, Rolle claims directly that the advanced contemplative becomes impassible:

> et iam in tam suaui, tam dulci vita meruit excipi quod nulla molestia, nulla miseria, nulla pena, nulla prorsus iniuria valet contristari, vt vero quasi iam impassibilis in animo cernitur, qui quodcunque sibi euenerit, iugiter in Deo gloriatur.[116]
>
> also now, in this so pleasant and sweet life, he has earned an exclusion that no vexation, no misery, no torment, scarcely any injury has power to sadden him, so that in truth he recognises himself as it were now beyond suffering in his soul; whatever has befallen him, he continually rejoices in God.

This claim reflects a kenotic trajectory: saints, having undergone the pains of asceticism, can begin to experience the second part of the parabola, heavenly exaltation, whilst still on earth. He claims impassibility for the advanced contemplative in several other places.[117]

Accordingly, Rolle says that some spiritual practices are more suited to those who are less spiritually advanced. His focus in discussions of impassibility is on the transformation from ascetic pain to heavenly bliss, and the penitential practices are a part of the ascetic pains which the advanced largely surpass. For example, in *Contra amatores mundi*, he suggests that the tears of penitence pertain to the lower levels, whereas the more advanced have progressed to a state of impassibility and no longer need tears.[118] Similarly, in *Emendatio vitae* Rolle states that different meditations are more relevant for people at different levels, for example, that meditations on the Passion are 'utilior... omnibus aliis hiis, qui iam noviter ad Christum convertuntur' ('more useful than

[116] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 7, lines 193–96. Hanna's translation is given.
[117] Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 15, line 22 to p. 16, line 6; Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 11, lines 72–73; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 4, p. 156.
[118] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 19–20, 25–27, 37–38.

all others for those who are now newly converted to Christ'), whereas meditation by resounding with praises to God is best for the more advanced.[119] We should not take Rolle's allotting of spiritual practices to different stages in the kind of overly rigid way which Rolle generally avoids – to claim that a certain practice was more useful for a certain stage does not exclude its usefulness to those at other stages; all benefit from going over the basics, and penitential literature had multiple uses, both combatting sin and inspiring heavenly thoughts. Nevertheless, these passages do suggest that, in calling for conversion, writing about penitence, and offering written meditations, Rolle may well have particularly had the needs of beginner or intermediate would-be contemplatives in mind, rather than directing his work at the most advanced. He expends much energy transmitting material oriented towards the lower parts of the spiritual spectrum which he claims he has largely surpassed, and he highlights the usefulness of this material for prompting sinners to repent. This reinforces the importance of looking outside of Rolle's own interiority and purported spiritual state when examining how these works function as devotional texts.

In conclusion, the account I have given here largely affirms Rolle's reputation for orthodoxy. He most closely skirts heterodoxy in his claims that contemplative union is continuous. However, he falls short of affirming impeccability and the possibility of full contemplative union on earth, arguing directly against them. Although his discussions sometimes have a different emphasis, the evidence suggests he held these views fairly consistently, which makes sense given that they reflect the orthodox positions of his contemporary society. His discussions of these topic demonstrate that he was aware that these were important and potentially controversial questions worth addressing directly (despite his generally unsystematic writing).

Rolle did not see the advanced contemplative as passing beyond the need for the fundamental spiritual practices of rejecting the world and experiencing penitence, nor did he see the

[119] Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 8, lines 11–12, 24–27.

advanced contemplative as no longer needing sustained prayer and meditation. However, he does see the advanced contemplative as undergoing a transformation in the reorientation of their desires towards God, such that temptation is easily consumed by their love for God, and their devotions become internal rather than using others' written words. While Rolle does not exclude the possibility that the advanced contemplative may experience a relapse or struggle with temptation, he sees this as abnormal, and portrays the contemplative life as characterised by only fleeting struggles with temptation which can be consumed by the fire of love and as entering a state of impassibility, no longer troubled by worldly vexations and necessities. Rolle's understanding of contemplation may well have been inconsistent with his practice: he may well have claimed that the contemplative surpasses the need for penitence or active *contemptus mundi*, but nevertheless practised them repeatedly himself. But his conception of contemplation as passing through different stages still implies that his decision to write certain kinds of devotional genres, especially penitential themes, reflects his orientation towards a reader at an earlier stage of spiritual development than the one he identified himself with. This supports the argument of this chapter – that these are not simply devotional monologues but texts directed towards the spiritual needs of different readers. They incorporate Rolle's experiences, but they also extensively address fundamentals which Rolle claims to have largely surpassed.

Rolle's Implied Reader(s)

The final section of this chapter considers the implications of all of this for the implied audience of Rolle's contemplative texts. In reader response theory, the 'implied reader' of a text is a concept distinct from the author's 'intended reader' or any 'actual reader'. Walter Ong argues that the 'implied reader' of a text is always a fiction constructed within the text and is a role which the

reader is enjoined to adopt in the process of reading.[120] Similarly, Wolfgang Iser defines the 'implied reader' as consisting of a 'textual structure' (the aspects of a text which prefigure how a given reader should respond), and 'structured act' (the realisation of this role through the act of reading).[121] The concept of the 'implied reader' thus offers scholars a way to talk about how texts seem to imply, anticipate, or invite particular kinds of readers and responses, irrespective of the historical circumstances of their intended or achieved audiences. Furthermore, as a textual phenomenon, the 'implied reader' of a text cannot be identified as an empirical fact but is open to interpretation (like any other aspect of a text's meaning), which is to say that a text may seem to imply multiple and different kinds of readers to varying extents at different points.

Considering the 'implied reader' is important on the basis that the way texts implicitly acknowledge and shape a readerly presence is significant in how we interpret them and understand their meaning. However, while the 'implied reader' is a valid object of investigation in its own right, it can nonetheless also shed light on the historical issues of intended and actual readers. It seems reasonable to suggest that authors do often have an intended readership in mind (whether a specific individual, a range of people, or a readership only vaguely and hypothetically imagined), and that their 'intended reader' will be reflected in the design of the text (such that it is pitched at a particular level and assumes certain knowledge, for instance).[122] An author's intentions can also be corroborated with other evidence, such as biographical information, historical context, or evidence of their role in dissemination (and such evidence may even be available to contemporary readers, and can thus also be understood as part of how they might understand a text's 'implied reader'). Likewise, it seems reasonable to assume that a text's 'implied reader' will enable or resist the participation of actual readers (as when writers instruct less advanced readers not to read their

[120] Walter J. Ong, 'The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction', *PMLA*, 90.1 (1975), 9–21.
[121] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD, 1978), pp. 27–38.
[122] A major argument of Claire McIlroy is that while Rolle's English Epistles may have been written for specific individuals, Rolle also envisions a broader audience; see McIlroy, *English Prose*.

text), and thus that the 'implied reader' of a text is probably a contributing factor to the actual readership a text ultimately attains. In other words, while the 'implied reader' can be understood as a textual phenomenon which is part of a text's meaning irrespective of how it was actually read, it can also offer evidence for the historical issues of how an author designed his texts and intended them to be used, and for why actual readers ended up reading and circulating the text.

Various reader response theorists elaborate on the criteria we might use to decide what kind of reader is implied. Stanley Fish's 'informed reader' and Jonathan Culler's 'competent reader' emphasise the knowledge (for example, of language, genre, or literary techniques) which texts implicitly expect of their readers, and which limits who can interpret them adequately.[123] Iser emphasises the active engagement of the reader, suggesting that a text's implied reader is someone with the capacity to respond to what the text aims to achieve.[124] This chapter has effectively already discussed these factors in relation to Rolle's writings. It has suggested that Rolle's contemplative writings seem largely pitched at beginner or intermediate contemplatives. They seem to assume contemplative aspirations, and a readership which have not reached the more advanced stages of contemplative life where they would no longer require extensive treatment of more basic disciplines (such as written meditations in general).[125] However, we have also seen that Rolle highlights the devotional impact of his material for sinners, associating it with the basic rejection of worldliness which characterises conversion to Christian life.

This section explores this multi-faceted implied audience further, first by focusing on places where Rolle more directly identifies his readership, for example through direct address or self-

[123] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), pp. 48–49; Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, Routledge Classics edn (London, 2002), pp. 131–52.
[124] Iser, *Act of Reading*, pp. 27–38.
[125] Rolle associates the use of written meditations, as opposed to one's own inner meditations, with the lower stages of spiritual life, in *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 8, lines 53–59.

reflection on to whom he writes, and then considering the broader potential readership his texts imply. The theme of epistolary dispersal, which implies a single original reader, has been prominent in this thesis as a means to explain aspects of the construction and dissemination of Rolle's work. However, this model need not preclude Rolle's recognition of a broader potential audience – in fact, in his most obviously epistolary text, *Judica me*, he directly anticipates the likelihood of future readers beyond the initial recipient.[126] So, this section focuses on the kind of reader Rolle's texts imply, rather than historical evidence of specific addressees (which is mostly lacking). It argues that Rolle most explicitly directs each of his contemplative texts towards an audience of aspiring contemplatives, which he understood to exclude the majority of Christians. Yet at the same time, in all of these texts he also speaks in extraordinarily inclusive terms, mapping the trajectory of the aspiring contemplative onto that of the general Christian, and explaining that he writes for the salvation of all. Rolle does not expand in any practical ways on how his ministry could impact the general Christian and it seems unlikely he expected sinners and the worldly to be a primary audience – his exhortations to sinners to repent could be understood as a rhetorical device (to stir the contemplative reader to devotion), or he may have had in mind the hypocritical and worldly amongst the religious as possible readers (a category of people which he notes exists and is prominent in the New Testament).[127] One way to explain this broad-minded outlook is simply that it reflects Rolle's conception of the eremitic vocation – as something exceptional and advanced, yet also an exemplar for the general Christian – and that Rolle's sense of this purpose was translated as his occasional adoption of a surprisingly inclusive perspective. An examination of Rolle's 'implied reader' thus invites us to be open-minded about the potential usefulness of his contemplative texts

[126] 'dum cuicumque hunc libellum... ostenditis', 'si nobis [perhaps *erratum* for 'uobis'] uel aliis legentibus dignum uideatur', Rolle, *Judica me*, p. 18, lines 5–6, 16–17. See also 'þou, or another þat redeth þis' (*Ego dormio*, line 218), noted in Andrew Albin, 'The Sound of Rollean Lyric', in *What Kind of a Thing Is the Middle English Lyric?*, ed. by Cristina Maria Cervone and Nicholas Watson, forthcoming. Claire McIlroy argues at length for an implicitly broad audience for Rolle's English epistles, in McIlroy, *English Prose*.

[127] See, for example, Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, lines 36–38; Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 95–107. The possibility of false Christians also fits with another theme found in Rolle's writing – that it is impossible to tell someone's sanctity on the basis of their outward works – as at Rolle, *De emendatione vitae*, ch. 8, lines 41–53.

for readers at all levels, anticipating the broad readership Rolle's contemplative materials did eventually achieve.[128] Such a perspective contributes to the broader argument of this chapter by reinforcing that Rolle's texts are not solely preoccupied with esoteric spiritual experiences accessible only to an extreme minority, but situate contemplative concerns within a broader *cura animarum* of spiritual development.

The most obvious audience of Rolle's texts is aspiring contemplatives, and Rolle's intention in his Latin contemplative texts seems to have been to address these readers in particular, as becomes clear in a few places. For example, a passage from *Super Canticum canticorum* shows Rolle implicitly excluding the general Christian from his readership. In a discussion of the active versus contemplative life, Rolle offers the following advice on how to relate to those in the active life:

> quia seculares uiri et femine diuine dileccionis non experti sunt gaudium, valde caute est eis respondendum, ne quando dum mala celant et merita iactitant, bonum quod fecerunt foras effundant.[129]
>
> because secular men and women have not experienced the joy of divine love, it must be responded to them very cautiously, lest at some time, when they conceal their evils and boast their merits, they pour away the good which they have done.[130]

Here, Rolle highlights the importance of showing discretion in responding to secular people's claims of superiority, pointing out that they may not understand that a contemplative can be holier than them without obvious external signs of piety, and thus that teaching them this may prompt misguided boasting in response. This notably recalls the concerns expressed by medieval authors, like William of St Thierry, about basic readers encountering advanced spiritual claims. Rolle continues to distinguish himself and his reader from secular people using the first-person plural by

[128] In this way, I build on McIlroy's discussion of Rolle's awareness of a broad potential audience in his English Epistles; see McIlroy, *English Prose*.
[129] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 169–72.
[130] I differ substantially from Hanna's translation here. Hanna takes 'seculares' as 'worldly'; i.e., sinners. Given the context (discussing the active versus contemplative life), it makes more sense to think Rolle is referring to Christians in the active life.

saying: 'ignorant quam amena et meritoria sit illa quam gustamus eterna suauitas' ('they do not know how pleasant and praiseworthy that eternal pleasure that we taste may be').[131] This first-person plural, encompassing his readership, assumes that the reader is a contemplative (which here may include monks, since in context Rolle is talking about actives who criticise those 'in solitudine uel in claustro'; 'in solitude or in the cloister').[132] In this way, Rolle directly excludes those in the active life from his readership, noting that the claims he makes in his texts might be dangerous for them.

Rolle reflects further on his use of 'we' in *Contra amatores mundi*, explaining clearly that his first-person voice does not express the perspective of the general Christian but is suitable only for contemplative readers. As in the example just given, this clarification reflects the perceived dangers of less advanced readers being exposed to the teachings Rolle expounds. At the end of a longer passage using the first-person plural (the final phrase of which is given below), Rolle directly states that this 'we' is restricted:

> eo ipso nobis mors desiderabilior est, quo eterne vite dulcedinem veracius presentimus. Sed caveat sibi lector quia hec verba communiter in persona omnium non dicuntur, qui Christiano nomine censentur,[133] sed in illorum persona qui sic sine ficcione et sine presumpcione de se senciunt qualiter in hoc volumine scripta legunt.[134]
>
> the more truly we perceive beforehand the sweetness of eternal life, the more desirable death is to us. But let the reader take care for himself because these words are not spoken generally in the persona of all who are designated by the name Christian, but in the persona of those who thus, without pretence and without presumption, sense concerning themselves just as they read the things written in this volume.

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[131] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 172–73. Hanna's translation is given.
[132] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 168–69.
[133] For this clause, one manuscript reads 'qui vano Christiano nomine censentur', and another reads 'qui Christiano nomine non censentur', in both cases adjusting so that Rolle is distinguishing himself from false Christians or non-Christians, rather than from different kinds of Christians. These readings are unlikely to be authoritative, since they both survive in a single manuscript (and not one of the three which Theiner thought were authoritative), but represent an interesting example of scribes making Rolle's discussion more inclusive (against the point which I suggest he is trying to make).
[134] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 85–90.

In this passage, Rolle clarifies that this 'we' encompasses the reader who follows the contemplative life he describes, as opposed to the general Christian (though implicitly recognising that other readers might get their hands onto his book). Rolle then says that it is his tendency to write from the perspective of the advanced contemplative in most of his books:

> Nam in plerisque opusculis meis sic soleo facere, nequando aliis alta scribens de me ipso videar desperare.[135]
>
> For I am accustomed to act in this way in the majority of my little works, so that, while writing about high things for others, I never seem to despair with regard to my own self.

Rolle's words here are partly self-justifying, claiming his place in a group of elite contemplatives. However, they also suggest that Rolle's primary intended reader was someone pursuing the contemplative life. Across his contemplative texts, Rolle repeatedly positions contemplative life as a minority pursuit, with even fewer reaching the higher grades; Rolle's emphasis on the rarity of contemplatives in the *Melos amoris* and *Incendium amoris* reinforces their implicitly restricted audience.[136]

That being said, given Rolle's conception of contemplative life as a progression through stages, the contemplative reader he addresses was not necessarily the most advanced. In the previous section we saw that passing beyond earthly pain and trial is an important milestone in Rolle's conception of spiritual life, yet his texts treat the whole spectrum of contemplative spirituality, from the rejection of worldly sinful things up to the heights, suggesting a broad audience of contemplatives. Given the restrictedness of the contemplative heights, and the holiness of the person who attains them, it makes sense to think that Rolle's contemplative texts are primarily aimed at beginner or intermediate contemplatives still in need of instruction, rather than the most

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[135] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 90–92. One manuscript reads 'desiderare' for 'desperare', which makes little sense.

[136] For examples of Rolle treating contemplative life as a minority pursuit in the *Melos amoris* and *Incendium amoris*, see Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 8, p. 23, lines 12–13; ch. 21, p. 62, lines 25–26; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 2, p. 151.

advanced. Rolle's schematic accounts of the progressive stages of contemplative experience seem to expect a reader who is progressing through the grades, rather than one who has mastered the heights. At points, Rolle specifically addresses the needs of those at the beginning of contemplative life; for instance in the *Incendium*, Rolle writes that 'in primis annis [conuersionis][137] nemo ad summam deuocionem pertingit' ('nobody reaches the summit of devotion in the first years of their conversion').[138] In *Contra*, whilst defending himself against the charge of arrogance for describing high contemplation, he argues that he is writing 'propter... lectorum utilitatem' ('for the utility of readers'), and that, while 'lector in se hec omnia non senciat' ('the reader may not sense all these things in himself'), he will enter contemplative heights if he perseveres: 'hec et maiora forsitan post modicum audebunt enarrare' ('they will perhaps dare to describe these and greater things after a short time').[139] It is also notable that Rolle situates most of his autobiographical anecdotes as having occurred at the beginning of his contemplative life (mentioning this in *Super Canticum* even when not obviously relevant), as if to appeal to contemplative beginners.[140]

This evidence points towards beginner or intermediate contemplatives as a primary audience for each of his contemplative texts. However, Rolle also conceives his pastoral ministry as appealing to a much broader audience. In the first chapter of this thesis, we considered an extract from chapter 43 of the *Melos amoris*, where Rolle explains his pastoral ministry while living among secular people:

> Nam hec est intencio qua sic pergebam, ut omnes addiscerent Auctorem amare vanaque relinquerent et recia ruine, plus Deo quam homini desiderent servire ac sapere celestia contempnereque terrena.[141]

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[137] conuersionis] conuersionis **DdR**, *om*. **De**
[138] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 2, p. 151.
[139] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 5, lines 404–5, 407–8, 406–7.
[140] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 280–81; Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 15, pp. 187–90; Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 32, p. 98, line 19 to p. 99, line 22; ch. 34, p. 105, line 25 to p. 106, line 11. Albin suggests an audience of contemplative beginners for the *Melos* given Rolle's interest in youth (noting that this may mean literal or spiritual adolescence): see *Melody of Love*, p. 17.
[141] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 43, p. 132, line 34 to p. 133, line 2.

> For this is the intention with which I was proceeding in this way: that all might learn to love the Author and abandon vain things and the nets of ruin, that they might love to serve God more than man, and to taste celestial things and condemn worldly things.

Rolle here claims a twofold purpose for his ministry while living among secular people: inspiring the rejection of sin, and spurring people towards heavenly things. Whether or not Rolle gives an accurate account here of any actual pastoral activity, this quotation shows Rolle claiming to influence 'omnes' ('all'), rather than a minority of Christians. As we noted in the first chapter, Rolle's proclaimed mission here reflects the eremitic vocation: to pursue an elite form of religious life through extreme ascetic living, yet in doing so to act as a model of spiritual perfection for all.[142] While contemplative life is restricted to a minority, it figures the more general trajectory of the elect towards heavenly glory; contemplatives simply experience more of heavenly things in advance than the general elect, and hence Rolle describes himself calling all to travel along the same essential path as himself.

In the passage above, Rolle was referring to his ministry in person while among secular people, but the *Melos amoris* also recurrently claims the same twofold purpose for itself – spurring people away from sin and towards contemplative life – and applies this to the general Christian. Despite (or perhaps because of) its status as probably Rolle's most difficult text, the *Melos amoris* recurrently declares why Rolle wrote it. Rolle's virtuoso apologies for eremitic life are certainly an important part of his purpose in writing, as announced in his prologue and sporadically throughout.[143] But elsewhere, Rolle's declared aims are more outward-looking, and reflect the same twofold purpose of spurring people away from sin and towards contemplative life. For example, in chapter 40, Rolle writes:

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[142] On hermits and anchorites as a model of perfection, see Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, ch. 5.
[143] For example, Rolle highlights his intent to confound critics in Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 47, p. 145, lines 26–29. An apologetic purpose is emphasised by Watson, *Invention*, pp. 171–92.

> profero propositum ut peccatores peniteant, et perfecti non prospicientes pulchritudinem prosperitatis presentis properent ad palacium perpetui Imperatoris...[144]
>
> I proffer this purpose so that sinners might repent, and so that the perfect, not paying attention to the prettiness of present prosperity, might hasten into the palace of the everlasting Emperor...

Here we see the same twofold remit which Rolle associated with his pastoral ministry among secular people, apparently addressing a broad spectrum of people which includes both contemplatives and sinners. This also fits with the metacommentary Rolle offers on meditating on damnation, as we saw earlier in this chapter, which is directed towards inspiring the righteous towards heavenly things and sinners towards repentance. Elsewhere, Rolle announces a universal outlook more directly, claiming, 'audeo annunciare hoc habitantibus in hiis infimis emisperiis, ut omnes interim ardenti affectu anhelent' ('I dare to announce this to those living in these lowest hemispheres, so that all meanwhile gasp with ardent feeling').[145] His use of 'audeo annunciare' ('I dare to announce') recalls the language of daring from the prologue of the *Melos*, suggesting that Rolle is speaking in this quotation of the act of writing the *Melos* itself, and his words here imagine an almost universal audience.[146] I do not wish to suggest here that Rolle necessarily intended this implied universal readership to be realised in any concrete way; his decision to write in Latin is one clear indicator that his readership was limited to those in religious institutions rather than the general layperson, making this proclaimed audience a fiction. Nonetheless, Rolle repeatedly frames his devotional material as if it has a universal outlook, perhaps influenced by a conception that his eremitic vocation was exemplary and should spur all to reject sin and pursue heavenly things.

Accordingly, alongside the exclusivity of Rolle's conception of contemplative life, Rolle's *Incendium amoris* and *Super Canticum canticorum* also adopt an extraordinary inclusivity in their outlook. The most famous example of this is in the prologue to the *Incendium amoris*:

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[144] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 40, p. 125, lines 22–24.
[145] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 27, p. 80, lines 5–6.
[146] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 3, lines 1, 4.

> Istum ergo librum offero intuendum, non philosophis, non mundi sapientibus, non magnis theologicis infinitis quescionibus implicatis, sed rudibus et indoctis, magis Deum[147] diligere quam multa scire conantibus.[148]
>
> Therefore, I offer this book to be regarded, not to philosophers, not to the wise of the world, not to those embroiled in infinite theological questions, but to the inexperienced and untaught, those trying to love God more than to know many things.

Rolle's restriction of his audience to the simple here likely reflects an announcement of his approach (i.e. that it is primarily emotive rather than doctrinal) rather than his actual intention that the educated should not read his book, since moments later he announces a universal outlook: 'hic uniuersos excito ad amorem' ('here I stir all to love').[149] Here 'uniuersos' is an unusual word to refer to everyone; 'omnes' or 'cuncta' are more common, and 'uniuersos' is even more emphatic than these in its totality. Rolle's rebuff of the learned also reflects the common recognition in medieval religious writing that learning is, in and of itself, insufficient for godliness, since, as Paul writes, 'scientia inflat, caritas vero aedificat' ('knowledge puffs up, but charity builds up') (1 Cor 8:1). Rolle discusses this theme in more detail in chapter five where he concludes by saying that an old woman may know more of God than an academic theologian.[150] Hence, the fictionality of this proclaimed universal readership is implicit in its conventionality: Gillespie notes that proclamations that a work was addressed to the simple are very widespread in sophisticated pastoral *summae*, which he suggests is 'usually little more than a modesty *topos*'.[151] Nonetheless, such a passage suggests that Rolle conceives of and represents his devotional material as exhorting people in general to the love of God, even if this was not realised in practice in any direct and immediate way.

Super Canticum canticorum similarly couches its discussion of the soul praying the Song of Songs in highly generalised terms. Its opening imagines a disembodied voice speaking in the sphere

[147] Deum] Deum **DeR**, diu **Dd**
[148] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, prologue, p. 147.
[149] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, p. 147.
[150] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 5, p. 160.
[151] Gillespie, 'The Literary Form', 1:88.

of the earth: 'Suspirantis anime delicijs eternorum vox in orbe terrarum clare intonat, *Osculetur me* [Songs 1:1]' ('the voice of the soul sighing for the delights of eternal things thunders clearly in the sphere of the earth, *Let him kiss me*').[152] The image of the sphere is one of enclosure, in contrast to the image of the 'incircumscripti luminis' ('boundless light') of heaven, but it is also expansive, as expressed by Hanna's translation of 'through the whole world'.[153] As the passage continues, Rolle is clearly speaking about the soul pursuing contemplation, and yet he retains a broad scope:

> omnis in Christo dilecta anima toto desiderio indefesse in Illum nititur, cuius decore rapta tam suauiter indulcoratur. Amplectitur igitur sponsas suas, que omnes vna sunt sponsa, et mellifluo amoris osculo omnes et singulas saciat eternisque amplexibus confortat...[154]
>
> And every soul loved by Christ strives toward Him continually with all its desire, so that it is seized by His elegance and sweetened so very pleasantly. Therefore he embraces his brides, all of whom are a single bride, and He comforts them all with the honey-flowing kiss of his love and with eternal embraces, so that it may fulfil each of them...

This passage is full of universalising language: 'omnis' ('every'), 'singulas' ('each of them'), and the corporate image of the bride of Christ. Even when later in the chapter Rolle speaks in the first-person to describe wandering in earthly exile (which we might easily connect with his own peripatetic lifestyle), he generalises this as the status of 'Omnis... electus' ('every elect').[155] In this same chapter, Rolle distinguishes the contemplative from the active life, yet these passages also show him talking about devotional experience in inclusive terms. This shows that the eremitic, contemplative life was understood as figuring the universal ascent to God, reflecting the eremitic aim of acting as a distilled model of perfect living for all the elect. The second half of the text opens at the cosmic scale with a recounting of the Fall, the hopelessness of man, the Incarnation, the unique redemptive power of Christ, and the path that Christ makes open to God, demonstrating that an expansive outlook is sustained.[156] When the Bible verse under examination appears it is spoken

[152] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 3–4.
[153] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, line 7.
[154] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, lines 16–20. Hanna's translation is given.
[155] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, line 61. Hanna's translation is given.
[156] On the text's division into two parts, see Rolle, *Unprinted Latin*, pp. 4–5.

not by the individual soul but by the Church: 'igitur ecclesia, intuens et tante benignitatis misericordiam admirans, cum immenso gaudio dicit, *Oleum effusum nomen tuumm* [Songs 1:3]' ('Therefore the church, contemplating Him and wondering at the mercy of such goodness, says with immense joy, *Thy name is as oil poured out*').[157] This again typifies how Rolle's discussion of contemplative life is often pitched in surprisingly inclusive and corporate terms, even though elsewhere in the same texts Rolle takes pains to argue for the exclusivity of the upper echelons of contemplative life to solitaries. The broad remit of the fourth chapter of *Super Canticum* is reflected in its being the only chapter of *Super Canticum* translated into Middle English, showing that it did ultimately reach the broader readership Rolle inscribes.

Rolle's broad outlook is also reflected in how he claims to write for salvation. As we have seen, Rolle says this directly in the *Melos amoris*: 'numquid non scribo pro tua salvacione?' ('can it be that I do not write for your salvation?').[158] Salvation here could be broadly conceived, encompassing not just an initial *conuersio* to faith, but the continual process of sanctification, and in this sense contemplative instruction could be construed as contributing to the contemplative's salvation. But in context, Rolle is clear that the aims of himself and other holy writers are more foundational: 'Scribimus igitur non ut dampnentur, sed ut magis convertantur et vivant et salventur' ('Therefore, we write not so that they are damned, but rather so that they may be converted and live and be saved').[159] Again, irrespective of whether Rolle expected his books to fall into the hands of those in need of conversion, this passage demonstrates Rolle conceiving of his writing ministry as participating in the more general *cura animarum*.

A major theme of this chapter has been the multi-faceted usefulness of different devotional material to a variety of readers: we have seen that Rolle highlights that meditations on the

[157] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 19–21. Hanna's translation is given.
[158] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, line 26.
[159] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 57, p. 184, lines 33–34.

contemptus mundi can be useful for sinners and contemplatives in different ways. Recognising the broad outlook of Rolle's contemplative writing also invites us to consider the potential usefulness of advanced contemplative writing for non-contemplatives. Rolle's writing seems to have been shaped by his perception that the glory of the saints can act as an inspiration to the general Christian to reject sinful things and pursue heavenly things. His texts therefore in some cases envision the possibility that contemplative writing could be edifying even for non-contemplatives. Chapter 54 of the *Melos amoris* takes one of Rolle's favoured verses 'amore langueo' ('I languish with love') (Songs 2:5) as its postil verse, and in the course of the chapter Rolle imagines the elect speaking this verse to sinners: 'istis iniquis in mundanis desideriis deviantibus dicant: *Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo*' ('Let them say to these iniquitous people erring in worldly desires: *Support me with flowers, surround me with apples, because I languish with love*').[160] In the next sentence, Rolle repeats the phrase 'amore langueo', and then immediately exhorts the sinner to repent:

> Ergo revertimini ad veritatis cogitacionem[161], despicite vana mundi gaudia, nolite coinquinare carnem vestram; desiderio celestis glorie conemini vos incendere...[162]
>
> Therefore, be turned back to thinking on truth, despise the vain joys of the world, do not pollute your flesh; may you try to burn in the desire of celestial glory...

Thus, Rolle associates the verse 'amore langueo' with exhortations to repent of sin and pursue heavenly things. Rolle's use of the postil verse as an invitation to repentance imagines the possibility that the text's treatment of the glory of the saints might prompt the sinner to turn to God, again reflecting the possibility that contemplative literature could be edifying for non-contemplatives.

Rolle even considers this more directly in the *Incendium*, acknowledging that the advanced contemplative experiences he describes are only attainable for a minority, but then situating his

[160] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 54, p. 175, lines 35–36.
[161] Where Arnould's base manuscript reads 'cogitacionem', all other manuscripts read 'cognitionem'.
[162] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 54, p. 175, line 39 to p. 176, line 3.

exposition of God's love in terms of the more general progress away from sin and towards heavenly things. In chapter 40, he writes:

> Admiror aliquando de meipso quod locutus sum de excellencia amatorum Dei, quasi quicunque uellet, ad hanc ualeret ascendere; cum non sit uolentis neque currentis, sed Christi diligentis eleuantis et assumentis... et aliquid tamen de ineffabili dicere compellebar, ut audientes uel legentes studeant imitari, inuenientes quod omnis amor pulcherrime et amabilissime rei mundane comparatus diuino amori, dolor et miseria est.[163]
>
> Sometimes I marvel at myself that I have spoken about the excellence of the lovers of God, as if whoever wants can ascend to this; since it is not for whoever wants or runs, but for whoever loves, elevates, and takes on Christ... And yet I was compelled to say something about the ineffable, so that hearers or readers strive to imitate, finding that all love of the most beautiful and lovely worldly thing, compared to divine love, is grief and misery.

Rolle's questioning of why he speaks about such things implicitly acknowledges that not all who want or seek the high contemplative experiences he describes will be able to reach them. Nonetheless, he still invites readers to imitate his life, reflecting an exemplary model of his vocation, and suggests that this will enable the more general rejection of the world and pursuit of heaven. Rolle thus seems to imply that his contemplative texts can inspire someone to reject worldly things and pursue heavenly things, even if they do not enter the fullness of contemplative experience.

In conclusion, Rolle's contemplative texts seem to be primarily addressed at beginner or intermediate contemplatives, yet at the same time Rolle conceives of the vocation of the contemplative as spurring all Christians towards God, and this is reflected in the extraordinarily generous terms with which he frames his teaching. The multi-faceted implied readership of Rolle's writings may have facilitated the broad appeal of his contemplative texts, enabling them ultimately to reach an audience, such as those in the mixed life, whom Rolle seems to have resisted. It should be noted that Rolle does not particularly envision a universalised readership in *Contra amatores mundi* when compared to the other texts, and so arguably *Contra* does focus more specifically on

[163] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 40, p. 268.

the contemplative reader.[164] Nonetheless, while Rolle shows some concerns with the spiritually inexperienced misunderstanding the advanced claims he makes in his writings, his other Latin contemplative texts widely imagine an expansive outlook for his teachings. This reinforces that we should not view these texts simply as expressing one individual's psychodrama, but as drawing attention to their usefulness for a broad implicit readership.

* * *

This chapter has argued that there can be no question that Rolle's works were directed towards a readership as guides to contemplative life. Rolle certainly drew on his autobiography, such that his works might be seen as introspective. However, he also addresses a fuller spectrum of spirituality, and shows a sensitivity to readers at multiple stages. In the previous chapter, we examined Rolle's assembly of disparate pastoral materials in his late works; in his Latin contemplative works we can see him similarly assembling a wide range of devotional genres. Furthermore, in Rolle's own understanding of contemplative experience, the advanced contemplative learns to overcome sin and no longer needs the extensive engagement with penitential practice that characterises the earlier stages of spiritual life. Rolle does dedicate much space in his writings to examining these themes, and similarly suggests that other materials he offers

[164] Here, I follow Frank Shon's suggestion that 'there is no question, in the *Contra*, of Rolle seriously attempting to woo a wider, more popular audience'; see 'The Teleological Element in Richard Rolle's *Contra amatores mundi*', *The Modern Language Review*, 101.1 (2006), 1. However, I would moderate the strength of Shon's statement. As discussed above, *Contra* contains one of the most strident claims that it is only written for contemplatives; it contains neither *Incendium*'s claim to stir all to love, nor *Super Canticum*'s universalising language, nor *Melos*'s direct claim to be written for sinners and salvation. It does, however, contain extensive *contemptus mundi* themes and exhortations to the worldly to repent, as in the other texts; for the latter, see Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 6, lines 111–40, 249–55, 269–78. This by no means implies that Rolle intended a general readership, but it does potentially open the text up to other readers besides the contemplatives Rolle addresses.

(such as Passion meditations and written prayers) are more useful for basic readers. In other words, Rolle's writing seems to be addressed to someone he perceives as less spiritually advanced than himself – which is intuitive if he was writing in the first instance for disciples known personally to him.

The inclusive approach of the texts under discussion invites us to reassess the usefulness of the term 'contemplative texts' which I suggested at the start of this chapter (to conveniently distinguish them from Rolle's late works). The term 'contemplative literature' has emerged in scholarship as a replacement for the old-fashioned and anachronistic term 'mysticism'; however, what 'contemplative literature' itself means is not altogether clear.[165] (Does it mean whatever literature contemplatives read, or literature about contemplation? Is its focus contemplative life in general or the experience of contemplation itself in particular? Are accounts of contemplation written only for contemplative readers?) Furthermore, it may imply that texts discussing contemplation constitute a medieval genre in which contemplative spirituality was the primary focus. This may suit a range of texts which appeared in the later Middle Ages (such as accounts of the grades of contemplation, or visionary texts organised around the revelations of an individual), but it does not fit the major patristic and medieval contemplative *auctoritates*, who most typically treat contemplation in passing in the context of longer works, or situate it as the endpoint of a fuller spectrum of spiritual life.

This chapter has shown that Rolle's writings are not reducible to his attempts to articulate his experiences of contemplative union, nor even are they wholly dedicated to discussing contemplation. Rather, Rolle's approach is much more wide-ranging and his implied audience is multi-faceted, suggesting the need to qualify the term 'contemplative literature'. As we have seen in

[165] For a useful example of distinctions drawn between 'contemplation', 'contemplative life', and 'contemplative experience', see Vincent Gillespie, 'Preface', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. by Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge, 2011), p. x.

this chapter, the reading material of contemplatives might include more basic meditative materials (such as penitential writing), and equally Rolle also alludes to the potential benefits of hearing about the glory of the highest saints for the general Christian. While Rolle adopts the view expressed by William of St Thierry, Nicholas Love, and other authors that certain devotional practices are more suitable for different levels, his writings also invite us to be sensitive to the ways in which the boundaries between contemplative and other kinds of religious writing could become porous – particularly at the time Rolle was writing, when contemplative material began to circulate in the vernacular and outside of traditional monastic centres. Where some other authors preferred to focus on specific parts of the spiritual spectrum, Rolle's wide-ranging approach made his works multi-functional, offering readers a range of devotional disciplines for their spiritual development. In this way, Rolle's contemplative writing can be understood as participating in the *cura animarum*.

Chapter 4: Voice and Autobiography in Rolle's Pastoral Project

A major contribution of medieval religious literature to cultural history is its cultivation of ways to represent interiority. Historians seeking to challenge the longstanding narrative that individual subjectivity only truly emerged during the Renaissance have often looked for a language of interiority in eremitic, penitential, and contemplative writings from the Middle Ages.[1] Linda Georgianna's study of *Ancrene Wisse* is an early example which highlights the intense focus on the individual implicit in solitary life and in eremitic writing.[2] More recently, Laura Ashe traces the development of interiority in medieval England through changing ideas about penitence, focusing on hagiographical, theological, and eremitic texts.[3] The Cistercian tradition saw the emergence of distinctive sensory language to describe the inner experience of contemplative union, and prominent contemplative literature from the later Middle Ages is organised around revelations of and to an individual.[4]

Rolle's interest to literary scholars thus lies not only in his popularity and influence but in aspects of his writing which centre on the representation of interiority.[5] When past scholarship has examined ideas of selfhood and subjectivity in Rolle's work, the centre of attention has usually been Rolle himself, with Rolle's first-person voice understood in terms of his inner struggles and his

[1] For examples of scholarship supporting this narrative and critiques drawing on a range of medieval genres, see Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, WI, 1991), pp. 7–12; David Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the "History of the Subject"', in *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. by David Aers (Detroit, 1992), pp. 177–202.

[2] Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the "Ancrene Wisse"* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).

[3] Laura Ashe, *The Oxford English Literary History. Volume 1, 1000–1350: Conquest and Transformation* (Oxford, 2017), ch. 3.

[4] Most obviously Julian of Norwich's *Revelations* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*, but also a range of other texts circulating in fifteenth-century England focused on the revelations of individuals (such as Bridget of Sweden, Mechtild of Hackeborn, Catherine of Siena, and Elizabeth of Hungary); for a survey, see Barry Windeatt, '1412–1534: Texts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. by Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 195–224. On the spiritual senses, see Gordon Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2002); McGinn, 'The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism'; McGinn, 'Late Medieval Mystics'.

[5] For example, Denis Renevey introduces his monograph as a contribution to the study of selfhood, in *Language, Self and Love*, p. 1.

projection of a striking and unique personality. This chapter offers an alternative view of Rolle's use of the first-person by focusing on the ways in which Rolle assumes voices differentiated from his own. Rolle's writing clearly belongs within a tradition of medieval visionary sources centred on the revelations of an individual. But his work can also be understood from the perspective of traditions of religious writing which were far more widespread, in which the first-person was used as a guide and a model to be appropriated by the reader (as in liturgical prayer and especially in the Psalter, which recent research has highlighted as offering medieval readers a major resource for the articulation of interiority).[6] Rolle's exegesis of Scripture demonstrates that he understood the first-person as a pedagogic tool to model affective, devotional postures and prayers for various kinds of people. Outside of the context of biblical commentary, Rolle's use of the first-person reflects this understanding: he imagines the interior life of saints and sinners through fictionalised first-person voices, and in a similar way shapes and presents his own voice as a model for the reader.

This re-reading of Rolle's first-person challenges the ways in which scholars have generally interpreted Rolle's voice as centred on the historical individual himself, collapsing any distinction between textual performance and authorial biography. Of course, Rolle's writings do identify the speaking 'I' of the text with the historical individual Richard Rolle in various ways. However, this voice is not a transparent, unmediated reflection of Rolle's personality: it is shaped by an understanding of the first-person as a pedagogic instrument. Where previous scholars have found Rolle's voice to be self-focused and exclusionary, the present study finds a much more inclusive and outward-looking first-person speaker. Besides his overt autobiography, Rolle's more typical use of the first-person treats it as a rhetorical device to offer models and scripts for the reader. Accordingly, even the autobiographical aspects of Rolle's works are mediated by Rolle's adoption of

[6] Tamara Atkin and Francis Leneghan, eds, *The Psalms and Medieval English Literature: From the Conversion to the Reformation* (Cambridge, 2017), chs 10–13.

conventional personas, shaped by saintly tropes, as he self-fictionalises and curates his anecdotes to address the spiritual needs of an implicitly heterogenous readership.

This chapter therefore argues that Rolle's cultivation of a language of interiority emerges from his pastoral purposes, not in spite of them. Rolle's use of voice is interesting not for his monologic projection of his own individualistic personality, but for the diversity of voices which he imagines, and this diversity reflects the outward-looking nature of his texts, designed to benefit readers at different spiritual states. This chapter thus also develops a major theme of this thesis: Rolle's synthesising and compilatory authorial activity, which we have seen him using to create usable and wide-ranging, if eclectic, devotional aids for readers. In this chapter, we will see how Rolle leverages this multi-faceted, compilatory style by bringing together a heterogenous range of voices for readers in different situations, grounding these voices in the polyvocality of Scripture itself. The result is that we can see more clearly how Rolle's texts function as usable devotional aids, which are deeply (and perhaps surprisingly) invested in the voices and prayers of their readers.

Defining Voice

Before embarking, it is worth pausing to consider the term 'voice', which will be used throughout the following discussion. The term 'voice' recalls an old-fashioned, formalist school of literary scholarship, where it was used to identify a distinctive style or tone of writing. Terms like 'style' and 'tone' are themselves somewhat vague and subjective, and hence I do not intend the term 'voice' in this sense.

My use of the term 'voice' stems from the recent work of David Lawton.[7] Lawton explains that by 'voice' he means what other scholars have discussed as 'textual subjectivity': the ways in which texts produce interiority, for instance through deictic pronouns ('I', 'you', 'this', 'that').[8] Lawton proposes 'voice' as a preferable term on the basis that it highlights 'the human agency of words'.[9] Although the word 'human' perhaps unhelpfully collapses the distinction between the subjectivity expressed in a written text and its historical author, what Lawton means (as I understand it) is to highlight how, in medieval texts, textual subjectivity is often understood in terms of a given speaker or speakers (including non-human speakers, such as the soul). Accordingly, the term 'voice' sets up Lawton's concept of 'public interiorities', which he defines as 'the production of interiority by quotation', referring to how medieval authors regularly express interiority through words which are understood as the words of others.[10]

Despite these definitions, Lawton's work could be criticised for going on to use 'voice' in a much more expansive way. The term 'voice' is used as an abstract noun to designate a concept: that textual interiority can usefully be understood in relation to a given speaker or speakers. However, Lawton also uses the term as a count noun applied to specific voices in a text. When he does so he implicitly claims to be able to distinguish different voices operating in a passage, and this becomes more problematic. The problem is that in many cases the ascription to a given speaker is implicit or debateable, and may misleadingly imply that medieval authors always thought of passages using conventional language in terms of adopting a given voice. For example, portions of a medieval text which resemble the writings of Paul may not represent a self-conscious adoption of a Pauline voice; it may simply reflect the general osmosis of Biblical language through medieval culture, intermingled amongst other influences. Discussions of Rolle's imitation of Scripture by John Alford and Annie

[7] David Lawton, *Voice in Later Medieval English Literature: Public Interiorities* (Oxford, 2017).
[8] Lawton, *Voice*, p. 1n.1; compare A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford, 2005), p. 5.
[9] Lawton, *Voice*, p. 1.
[10] Lawton, *Voice*, pp. 9–10.

Sutherland face similar problems: it is not always clear whether we should see resemblances between Rolle's writing and Scripture as direct imitation of a Biblical 'voice' or as the general unconscious influence of Biblical language on medieval religious writing.[11] This is not an insurmountable problem: Sutherland's solution is to focus on instances where Rolle's use of biblical language is connected with a very clear citation of a relevant passage. It seems indisputable that medieval writers did model their writing on Scripture and other authorities in various ways, but identifying specific passages as spoken in a specified 'voice' sometimes risks blurring the lines between general influence and deliberate imitation of a speaker. For this reason, the principle adopted in this chapter is to avoid using the term 'voice' to designate merely a resemblance between a medieval text and a precedent, since this is not sufficient in and of itself to establish that we are looking at a deliberate imitation of that precedent, understood as spoken by a different speaker. In other words, it is important to distinguish 'voice' from 'idiolect': the idea that a speaker can be inferred purely from distinctive linguistic properties of their writing, and that any passage mirroring these properties can be understood as their 'voice'. This is simply the old-fashioned formalist view of 'voice' in another guise.

I use the term 'voice' to refer to what other scholars call textual subjectivity, because what I am specifically interested is the ways in which this subjectivity is attributed to a speaker in Rolle's works, and the ways in which the text foregrounds identified speakers (however putative or generalised) as an important framework of interpretation. Such passages are referred to as spoken in a given 'voice' because (I argue) the text presents them in relation to a given speaker or speakers, with the qualification that this is not always clear cut and may be open to interpretation. I begin by focusing on places where the speaker of a given passage is identified explicitly, but later on suggest that the understanding of the text that this entails – that its words can be adopted by others in

[11] Alford, 'Biblical *Imitatio*'; Annie Sutherland, 'Biblical Text and Spiritual Experience in the English Epistles of Richard Rolle', *The Review of English Studies*, 56.227 (2005), 695–711.

various ways – has implications for the shaping of the first-person as identified with Rolle himself. With this in mind, I move onto examining how Rolle's understanding of the first-person arises from his biblical exegesis, and will develop a theoretical approach to voice later in the chapter.

Voice and Exegesis in Rolle's *Super lectiones mortuorum*

The idea of praying using the words of Scripture and of others was deeply engrained in medieval devotional life. The Psalter, the readings from Job in the Office of the Dead, and the Song of Songs were major resources for private prayer.[12] Medieval monks were accustomed to assuming the role of the bride of the Song of Songs, understanding and expressing their relationship with God through a distinctly female voice, and thus praying with a voice differentiated from their own.[13] This in turn yielded a tradition of texts which offered original prayers and meditations for readers to adopt, such as Anselm's *Orationes et meditationes*. The Psalms, themselves a major resource for private prayer, were also formative for medieval religious lyrics which offer a first-person voice for readers to adopt.[14]

The reception and imitation of Scriptural first-person voices was not limited to simply adopting those voices or taking them as an exemplar. The idea that Biblical voices speak for us today

[12] Annie Sutherland notes that the Song of Songs and the Office of the Dead were commonly appended to Psalters in manuscripts: Annie Sutherland, *English Psalms in the Middle Ages, 1300–1450* (Oxford, 2015), p. 14.
[13] Renevey, *Language, Self and Love*, for example pp. 46–59; Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford, 1979), ch. 3.
[14] For the influence of the Psalms on medieval poetry and poetic theory, see Michael P. Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song: The Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1995), ch. 4; Vincent Gillespie, 'The Songs of the Threshold: *Enargeia* and the Psalter', in *The Psalms and Medieval English Literature: From the Conversion to the Reformation*, ed. by Tamara Atkin and Francis Leneghan (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 271–97. On Psalms and first-person texts as resources for prayer, see David Lawton, 'Psalms as Public Interiorities: Eleanor Hull's Voices', in *The Psalms and Medieval English Literature: From the Conversion to the Reformation*, ed. by Tamara Atkin and Francis Leneghan (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 298–317; Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp. 11–14; Rachel Fulton, 'Praying with Anselm at Admont: A Meditation on Practice', *Speculum*, 81.3 (2006), 700–33.

is implicit in the allegorical interpretation of Scripture: the moral sense of Scripture implies that first-person Biblical passages can be taken as the voice of sinners and righteous people in the present. But in addition, the typological and anagogical senses suggest that Scriptural passages can also be taken as the voice of Christ, or of dead saints or reprobates. Biblical passages interpreted as the cries of the damned are clearly not presented as a voice the reader is supposed to adopt. Rather, first-person passages can be understood as teaching or warning the reader by affectively rendering the inner state of various speakers (as well as offering scripts for the reader in some cases). The Biblical books with the most sustained first-person speakers are primarily written in verse and were understood as songs, hymns, or laments. A defining feature of song is that it involves the expression of emotion. Nicolette Zeeman has argued that it was medieval religious settings that first began to theorise song as a means to express emotion.[15] Hence, first-person Biblical voices can act as emotive, cautionary warnings against damnable practices through imagining the laments of the damned, or as modelling the inner emotional and devotional attitude of the righteous which we are supposed to assume in relation to God.

However, not every verse of such biblical books is written in the first-person (which becomes especially clear in the verse-by-verse approach of medieval commentaries since this has the effect of isolating propositional statements), and hence even in the context of devotion their use is not reducible to offering scripts or postures for the reader to adopt or avoid. For example, scholars have recognised the Psalms as the powerhouse of medieval prayer, but it is worth keeping in mind that some portions do not have a prominent first-person voice and were expounded for doctrine. In his prologue to the English Psalter, Rolle observes that the Psalter 'contenys all that other bokes draghes langly, that is, the lare of the ald testament & of the new'.[16] Notably, in Psalm 20 the primary object of attention is not the first-person speaker but the king the Psalm describes;

[15] Nicolette Zeeman, 'The Theory of Passionate Song', in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honour of Jill Mann*, ed. by Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 231–51.
[16] Richard Rolle, *The Psalter: Or Psalms of David and Certain Canticles*, ed. by H.R. Bramley (Oxford, 1884), p. 4.

accordingly, Rolle's *Super Psalmum vicesimum* expounds Psalm 20 as a discussion of sanctity rather than as a prayer for the reader to adopt. This is not to exclude the possibility of using such texts as prayer – as in *Ancrene Wisse's* expansive definition 'Redunge is god bone' ('reading is good prayer') – rather, it is to point out that the emphasis on the first-person is just one aspect of these materials.[17]

That being said, the first-person played an essential, and arguably central, role in Rolle's own engagement with Scripture in his commentaries. Rolle's understanding of Scripture as a compendium of first-person voices is implicit in a passing comment he makes in *Super Threnos*. He expounds Lamentations 4:21 by saying 'In Scripturis enim nichil aliud est quam lamentaciones penitencium, carmina perfectorum, et ve dampnandorum' ('For in the Scriptures there is nothing else other than the laments of the penitent, the songs of the perfect, and the woes of the damned').[18] This was not Rolle's original point; he took it directly from the discussion of Lamentations 4:22 in his source, the *Glossa ordinaria*.[19] It derives ultimately from Ezekiel 2:9 in which Ezekiel has a vision of a book, unfurled before him to reveal 'lamentationes, et carmen, et vae' ('lamentations, and song, and woes'). A quotation from Rupert of Deutz applying this to the whole Bible appears in (some copies of) the *Glossa ordinaria* to Ezekiel 2:9.[20] This claim should probably be taken as hyperbole (since much of the Bible manifestly cannot be interpreted as songs or laments), but its appearance in the *Glossa ordinaria* suggests that it was conventional to see Scripture as a

[17] *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, ed. by Bella Millett, EETS OS 325–26, 2 vols (2005), 4.91, lines 1554–55 (1:109).
[18] Rolle, *On Lamentations*, ch. 4, lines 125–27.
[19] 'in scripturis sanctis nihil aliud est quam lamentationes, que frequentande sunt in hoc seculo, et carmen, quod angelis cantabimus in celo, et ve, quod filii Edom ululabunt in inferno', *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps (Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81)*, 4 vols (Turnhout, 1992), 3:212A (section beginning 'Notandum immo maxime'). This edition was based on the recension of the *Glossa* on Lamentations which Rolle used; see Rolle, *On Lamentations*, p. 13n.34.
[20] *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 4:1096D; compare Rupert of Deutz, *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius*, ed. by Rhabanus Maurus Haacke, 4 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971–1972), book 30 'In Hiezechielem I', lines 919–25 (3:1666). Rupert of Deutz writes 'Quid alius totus liber, quid, inquam, aliud omnis sacra Scriptura continet?' (as edited by Haacke, lines 923–25), which clearly resembles the formulation Rolle takes from the *Glossa* to Lam 4:22. The quotation from Rupert of Deutz does not appear in the version of the *Glossa* printed by Adolph Rusch in 1480–81; see *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria (Rusch)*, 3:228.

collection of first-person voices or songs, and thus that it was edifying to engage with the perspectives and voices of people in different spiritual states.

Reading the Bible in terms of different speakers is particularly relevant to Rolle because all of his biblical commentaries (except *Super Apocalypsim*) discuss Biblical books or passages written (entirely or primarily) in the first-person: Psalms, the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Job, the Magnificat, the Lord's Prayer, and the Old Testament Canticles.[21] Andrew Kraebel suggests that Rolle's Psalters are unusual for their emphasis on devotional practice alongside scholastic exegesis, making them particularly attentive to the use of Scripture as a model for prayer and hence as a model for the first-person voice.[22] These factors thus situate Rolle in a tradition of medieval authors who engage with the idea of voice.

Furthermore, we can tell that Rolle thought of the Scriptural first-person in terms of different speakers because throughout his writings he constantly ascribes Biblical passages to speakers. For example, he ascribes passages to the 'Uox languentis anime amore eterno' ('voice of the soul languishing in eternal love'), the 'Anima... celestibus desideriis dedita' ('soul devoted to celestial desires'), the 'Suspirantis anime delicijs eternorum vox' ('The voice of a soul sighing for the delights of eternal things'), or the 'doloribus dampnatus' ('one damned in griefs').[23] In *Super lectiones mortuorum*, verses are ascribed to general archetypes, such as the damned, the souls in purgatory, the penitent, and the saved; but also more specific types of individuals, such as Mary Magdalene, corrupt priests, and the ancient fathers in limbo.[24]

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[21] *Super mulierem fortem*, categorised as a commentary by Allen and Watson, is excluded from this list as it is more a sermon or treatise than a commentary (as both acknowledge). See Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, pp. 160–61; Watson, *Invention*, pp. 104–5.
[22] Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, pp. 91–103.
[23] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 26, pp. 216, 218; Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 1, line 3 (Hanna's translation is given); Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 25, p. 73, line 32.
[24] See respectively Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 144v (ed. Moyes, 2:154, lines 9–10), f. 176 (2:260, line 18), f. 152 (2:177, line 1), f. 155 (2:186, line 20 to 2:187, line 2), f. 175v (2:258, lines 1–2), ff. 173v–74 (2:251, line 10 to 2:252, line 1), ff. 165v–66 (2:222, lines 13–16).

Super lectiones mortuorum shows how Rolle's understanding of voice in Scripture shapes his own use of the first-person. Throughout this text he interprets certain Bible verses as spoken by a given speaker and then he adopts the voice of the speaker in his own original writing, explicitly presenting his commentary as an expansion of the Bible verse and as spoken in the same voice. Rolle typically does this through paraphrase, a conventional technique for expounding Biblical texts. In fact, paraphrase and expansion (or amplification) are among the most basic forms of exegesis. In its simplest form, an interlinear gloss involves substituting a Biblical lemma for a synonym to clarify the meaning of difficult or unusual words, and thus represents a kind of paraphrase. In Gregory's *Moralia* (a text Rolle knew), amplified paraphrases are used exegetically to clarify the meaning of the biblical text.[25] For instance, Gregory writes,

> ***Indica mihi cur me ita iudices*** [Job 10:2]. Ac si aperte diceretur: quia flagellando me iudicas, ostende quod ad iudicium per flagella securum reddas...[26]
>
> ***Show me why you judge me so***. As if it were said plainly: because you judge me with scourging, show that through scourges you restore me to a safe judgement...

Here, Gregory's paraphrase supplies extra information, specifying the kind of punishment – 'flagella' ('scourgings'), commonly used to refer to divine penitential punishment – and its purpose (restoration to security), thus showing us what he understands as the meaning of the verse. Gregory's paraphrases are sometimes more extended than the short passage quoted above, and are often used to express literally what Gregory argues the verse says allegorically. Phrases like Gregory's 'Ac si aperte diceretur' ('As if it were said plainly') or 'quasi diceret' ('as if he said') are standard ways to introduce paraphrase in patristic and scholastic Biblical commentaries, as Kraebel makes clear.[27] They were also used to introduce paraphrases of verses in the third-person too, so

[25] For Rolle's knowledge of the *Moralia*, see Hargreaves, 'Lessouns'; Rolle, *Uncollected*, pp. lxiv–lxv.
[26] Gregory, *Moralia*, book 9, pars 45, lines 32–34 (1:505).
[27] Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, p. 6. For discussion of the Middle English equivalent (which developed as a distinct idiom meaning 'that is to say' or 'as it were'), including some discussion of the original Latin usage, see Saara Nevanlinna, 'Background and History of the Parenthetic *As Who Say/Saith* in Old and Middle English

such phrases need not imply a special attention to the idea of 'voice' (despite using the verb 'dicere', 'to say'). Equally, in many cases it seems clear that when commentators identify a Biblical voice, they had devotional reading in mind.[28] Gregory's use of paraphrase thus reflects a standard exegetical practice.

Rolle's *Super lectiones mortuorum* paraphrases the Biblical passages in ways which go beyond the exegetical methods used in the example above by Gregory. Alford has drawn attention to the importance of paraphrase (he uses the term 'substitution') and amplification for Rolle's Biblical commentaries, noting that these strategies are also found across Rolle's other writings.[29] Rolle's formally conventional Biblical commentaries (the Latin and English Psalters, *Super Threnos*, *Super Apocalypsim*) stick closely to the Biblical text, and thereby only offer relatively brief paraphrases which clarify the text's meaning and sometimes imitate its emotional posture.[30] In *Super lectiones mortuorum*, Rolle expands on the Biblical text at greater length in his own words, allowing him to express the emotional state implicit in the verse in a more sustained way using overtly rhetorical strategies (such as exclamation and anaphora). In this way, Rolle reads Scripture as modelling the inner posture of various classes of people in relation to God, often with a particular emphasis on emotion, and he also thereby models the process by which a reader can use Scripture as the basis for their own prayer.

Literature', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 75.4 (1974), 568–601; Saara Nevanlinna, '*As Who Say/Saith* Revisited: Form and Function', *Florilegium*, 11 (1992), 61–81.

[28] See sporadic references in Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, ch. 1.

[29] Alford, 'Biblical *Imitatio*', pp. 10–16.

[30] Although these commentaries largely follow the conventions of Biblical commentary, Michael Van Dussen finds Rolle's use of voice in *Super Threnos* unconventional in how he shifts between different speakers while expounding, without always distinguishing them clearly: see Rolle, *On Lamentations*, pp. 15–19.

These different kinds of paraphrase can be observed in Rolle's exposition of Job 10:3 in *Super lectiones mortuorum*. Rolle introduces the verse by identifying its speaker as the 'pauperem' ('pauper').[31] He begins his exposition with a brief paraphrase to clarify the verse's meaning:

> ***Numquid bonum tibi videtur si calumpnieris me et opprimas me, opus manuum tuarum, et consilium impiorum adiuves?*** [Job 10:3] Quasi diceret: Tibi, qui solus bonus es, non uidetur bonum calumpniari et opprimere pauperem et adiuuare consilium impiorum, diuitum scilicet iudicum terrenorum, quibus (quia mali sunt) bonum uidetur opprimere iniuste pauperem...[32]
>
> ***Surely it does not seem good to you if you accuse me and oppress me, the work of your hands, and help the counsel of the wicked?*** As if he said: It does not seem good to you, who alone are good, to accuse and oppress the pauper and to help the counsel of the wicked, namely, of wealthy, earthly judges, to whom, because they are evil, it seems good to oppress the pauper unjustly...

Here, Rolle offers us an amplification of the Biblical text, quoting much of the verse verbatim and clarifying its meaning with inserted glosses. Rolle continues with a much longer expansion on this verse, this time apparently giving us a prayer as spoken by the pauper:

> Non igitur calumpniaris et opprimis me, pauperem opus manuum tuarum, quia fateor id quod sum tui gracia sum, a te habeo quicquid boni habeo... Igitur pauperem diuicias huius seculi contempnentem, desideria carnis calcantem, eterne glorie anelantem, opus manuum tuarum se cognoscentem, non opprimas, non despicias... O Domine, *inclina aurem tuam et exaudi me* [Psalm 16:6]...[33]
>
> Therefore, you do not accuse and oppress me, a pauper, the work of your hands, because I confess that what I am I am by your grace, anything good I have I have from you... Therefore, may you not oppress, may you not despise a pauper disdaining the riches of this world, trampling the desires of the flesh, gasping for eternal glory, recognising himself as a work of your hands... O Lord, *incline your ear and hear me*....

This passage shows Rolle repeatedly turning to the Biblical passage as he expands it into a longer, original prayer. Rolle's use of a series of asyndetic clauses and additional emotive language –

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[31] 'pauperem Deus libenter suscipit qui... quod sequitur tute loquitur: *Numquid bonum tibi videtur* [Job 10:3]...', Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 148 (ed. Moyes, 2:165, lines 10–13).
[32] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, ff. 148–48v (ed. Moyes, 2:165, line 20 to 2:166, line 12).
[33] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 148v (ed. Moyes, 2:165, line 20 to 2:166, line 12).

'despicias' ('despise'), 'anelantem' ('gasping') – suggests an attempt to translate the Bible verse into an emotionally-charged form. The final 'O Domine' ('O Lord') reinforces that this is a posture of prayer, and Rolle's repetition of the phrase 'pauperem opus manuum tuarum' ('a pauper, the work of your hands') from the Bible verse maintains that the speaker is the pauper identified as speaking in Job 10:3. These factors suggest that in this paraphrase Rolle aims to convey the inner state of the verse's speaker and their posture towards God, rather than simply clarifying the sense. Rolle's commentary on Job 10:3 thus demonstrates Rolle paraphrasing in two different ways: first, a rewording of the Biblical text with inserted glosses to clarify its meaning (like the examples from Gregory discussed above); and second, an expanded paraphrase which emulates the posture of prayer represented by Job 10:3. Rolle adopts the voice of the pauper, but he also treats it as a voice distinct from his own by subsequently switching into the third-person: 'Et intellige quod dicit se pauperem...' ('And understand that he calls himself a pauper...').[34] Rolle's exegesis shows him not simply paraphrasing to clarify the meaning, but assuming the role of the speaker and speaking as them, adopting the emotional state which is inferred in the verse.

In many cases, Rolle adopts the posture of the Biblical speaker to offer a model prayer, and thereby also to model the process by which a reader can base their own prayers on Scripture. This is particularly clear in Rolle's exposition of Job 10:2, 'Noli me condemnare' ('do not condemn me'). As in the example above, Rolle begins with some exegesis to clarify the meaning of the verse, here treating the speaker of the Bible verse in the third person: 'Et nota quod non dicit, "Non condempnabis me", sed "Noli me condempnare"...' ('And note that he does not say, "You will not condemn me", but "Do not condemn me"...').[35] After his explanation, Rolle then reintroduces the Bible verse as an emotively-charged utterance by saying 'timens de tremendo examine, in uocem prorumpit petens, *Noli me condempnare*' ('fearing the terrible judgment, he bursts out in his voice,

[34] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 148v (ed. Moyes, 2:166, line 17).
[35] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 147 (ed. Moyes, 2:161, line 6).

begging, *Do not condemn me*').[36] What follows is an extended paraphrase with Job 10:2 threaded throughout, and which is spoken in the first-person and addressed to God as a prayer.[37] Rolle introduces this paraphrase with 'Quasi diceret' ('as if he said'), showing that it is the Biblical speaker (the righteous person) who is speaking here, and he closes his paraphrase by once again stepping out of the first-person voice, identifying these as words to be spoken by the righteous person: 'Congruunt hec uerba iusto' ('These words are suitable for the righteous person').[38] It is not altogether clear which 'uerba' ('words') Rolle means precisely – whether the words of the Bible verse, or his own expanded version. Nonetheless, Rolle's ascription of this verse to the righteous person, and his use of a mode of exegesis which involves identifying the verse as an emotionally charged cry, and expanding it as his own prayer, suggests that Rolle aims to model a particular kind of engagement with the Bible for his readers. Elsewhere, Rolle directly exhorts the reader to pray the verse which he expands in his own words:

> Sed bonum est, fratres, humiles esse, miseriam uestram recogitare, dicentes cum beato Iob, ***in pulverem reduces me*** [Job 10:9]. Necesse est michi mori et in puluerem reduci, quia *omnes morimur et quasi aque dilabimur in terram* [2 Sam 14:14]. Sed, O bone Domine, cum morior et reducor in cinerem, animam digneris accipere...[39]
>
> But brothers, it is good to be humble, to reflect on your wretchedness, saying with blessed Job, ***you have returned me to dust***. For it is necessary for me to die and be returned to dust, because *we all die and are poured out on the earth like water*. But, O good Lord, when I die and am returned to ash, may you deign to receive my soul...

Rolle's direct invitation to the reader to pray with Job is followed by Rolle's own prayer which picks up on the same theme, thereby modelling the process he has just instructed the reader to follow. Evidence to support the claim that Rolle's paraphrases actually were taken as model prayers is

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[36] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 147 (ed. Moyes, 2:161, lines 9–10). I translate 'petens' as 'begging' here because this fits the emotive language Rolle uses elsewhere in this phrase, but it should be noted that it can also be translated more mutedly, e.g., 'seeking' or 'asking'.
[37] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 147 (ed. Moyes, 2:161, line 11 to 2:162, line 7).
[38] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 2, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 147 (ed. Moyes, 2:162, line 8).
[39] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 3, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 154 (ed. Moyes, 2:182, line 17 to 2:183, line 1).

offered by a compilation of Rolle's prayers in CUL, MS Kk.6.20.[40] It consists of prayers extracted from Rolle's writings, including from *Super lectiones mortuorum*, and it appears in a series of meditative texts, suggesting that it was meant for devotional use, and thus it demonstrates at least one reader using Rolle's commentary as a source of model prayers.

Rolle's paraphrases are not only useful as model prayers. They also reveal the inner attitude and emotive posture which an individual is supposed to assume (or avoid) in relation to God. It is clear that Rolle's understanding of the first-person in Scripture is not limited to model prayers when he interprets the Bible verse as spoken in the words of the damned (certainly not a voice to imitate). Other passages, spoken in the voice of the penitent or righteous person, can also be understood beyond the function of model prayers: they display an inner devotional state towards which the reader can aspire. For example, Rolle expands on Job 13:27 in an emotionally-charged way:

> non solum ***observasti omnes semitas meas***, sed ***et vestigia pedum meorum considerasti*** [Job 13:27]... Nichil est quod te latet, omnia secreta mea bene nosti, semitas meas obseruas et uestigia consideras. Quid faciam? Ubi fugiam? Si male egero, ue michi est, dolor undique, angustia ubique, supra me iudex condempnans, intra me consciencia mordens, iuxta me mundus accusans, subtus me infernus absorbens...[41]
>
> ***you have*** not only ***observed all my paths***, but ***also you have considered the steps of my feet***... There is nothing that lies hidden from you, you have known well all my secrets, you observe my paths and you consider my steps. What can I do? Where can I go? If I act badly, there is woe to me, grief on all sides, affliction everywhere, a condemning judge over me, a biting conscience within me, an accusing world beside me, an enveloping hell beneath me...

Again, Rolle's use of rhetorical questions, proclamations of hell, and the accumulation of parallel clauses reflect an attempt to convey emotion, and thereby to communicate the emotional import of the Biblical text, rather than simply clarifying the meaning of the text. Such examples show Rolle not just expounding doctrine from the Biblical text, but also adopting the posture of its speaker and expanding it in his own words. Furthermore, this voice does not directly offer praise or petition to

[40] See Richard Rolle, *Emendatio vitae; Orationes ad honorem nominis Ihesu*, ed. by Nicholas Watson (Toronto, 1995); Moyes, *Expositio*, 2:106–7.
[41] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 4, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 159v (ed. Moyes, 2:202, lines 6–15).

God, distinguishing it from the paraphrases which clearly function as model prayers. Therefore, we might see this passage as providing an insight into the perspective of the righteous person who speaks this verse, and hence as a model for the posture and attitude the reader should take up.

Rolle's engagement with Scripture in *Super lectiones mortuorum* thus demonstrates that he understands the first-person as a pedagogic tool to model devotional postures and actual prayers for the reader. Rolle interprets the first-person voices of Scripture in terms of the voices of different speakers (most commonly classes of people, such as the righteous or the penitent, rather than specific individuals). In this way, Rolle shows himself adept at emulating different voices, and signals to us that he is doing so, in some cases explicitly marking them as a voice wholly distinct from his own (such as the damned). This multivocality emerges from a pastoral purpose: to model devotional engagement with the Scriptural text, which is itself understood as spoken in multiple voices.

Theorising Voice

The examples from *Super lectiones mortuorum* demonstrate that the Bible, and subsequently Rolle's own writing, can be understood in terms of different speakers or voices, and that Rolle's commentary explicitly invites us to think in these terms. This raises complex issues concerning how we are to understand who is speaking in a given passage of writing, such as whether the text's overarching narrator is understood as the author, whether this overarching narrator displaces or is displaced by the voice it adopts, and how to understand passages where multiple speakers seem to be present at once or are only vaguely distinguished. This section examines these questions by situating Rolle's first-person in relation to current prevailing scholarly paradigms for thinking about the first-person in medieval texts, aiming to develop a more robust theoretical framework which will allow us to talk about how 'voice' operates in Rolle's texts.

The first question is how we are to understand the identity of the text's narrator – whether it should be understood as Rolle (in some way) or as an impersonal narrator. Sebastian Sobecki's recent monograph *Last Words* defends the approach taken by much scholarship on Rolle – that, in the absence of an explicitly identified persona, the speaking 'I' of the text is to be identified with the author.[42] Sobecki situates his study as a response to tendencies in scholarship engendered by seminal critical theory on intentionalism; specifically, he challenges the view that a first-person narrator operates as a fictionalised persona entirely separate from the author and therefore does not reveal the author's genuine feelings or intentions.[43] He suggests that this is not how medieval authors expected their works to be received, and that by default they use the first-person expecting it to be identified with themselves, meaning that it was a historical norm for readers to interpret texts as spoken by their authors (however vaguely these authors were known) rather than some distinct character. In instances where poets tell us they are adopting a different voice (Sobecki's example is when Gower tells us he adopts the voice of the Lover, and Rolle's adoption of named voices could equally be another example), there is still a readerly understanding that it is the author who is putting on that voice.[44] Indeed, the fact that they tell us they are adopting a different voice indicates that the default assumption is that the text's speaker is the poet or author.

As a critique of a hermeneutic which wholly severs the text from its author, these points are useful. The suggestion that the speaker of Rolle's texts has nothing to do with the author himself goes against the historical context in which we know Rolle was read, the genre in which he was

[42] Sebastian Sobecki, *Last Words: The Public Self and the Social Author in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2019).
[43] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London, 1977), pp. 142–48; W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54.3 (1946), 468–88; see discussion in Sobecki, *Last Words*, pp. 1–4.
[44] Sobecki, *Last Words*, pp. 12–14.

writing, and the presentation of the narratorial voice in the texts themselves.[45] Sobecki focuses on late-medieval vernacular poets, so may not be applied directly to Rolle, as an author writing in a Latinate sphere with different models of authorship available. Nonetheless, both the texts themselves and the circumstances of their dissemination suggest that the speaking 'I' of the text can be identified with Rolle himself. Evidence of Rolle's transmission suggests that he initially disseminated his own texts by epistolary dispersal to readers known personally to him (like the coterie circulation of vernacular poets discussed by Sobecki). Rolle would surely have expected these readers to identify the speaker with himself. Furthermore, Rolle's use of the first-person to assert the legitimacy of his spirituality and practice only makes sense if this first-person is identified with himself. For example, if we recognise certain aspects of Rolle's text as the performance of a conventional posture of the saint (such as the way that he describes his persecutions by quoting verses from the Psalms, or adopts the stereotypical posture of the eccentric hermit), this posture must nonetheless be identified with Rolle himself for it to actually convey his sanctity, rather than being a wholly separate persona or character. Some of Rolle's texts also contain marks that attest to the author's identity – biographical details, in some cases signatures of various kinds.[46] For example, *Super lectiones* contains a passage where Rolle writes 'Sum utique solitarius intencione et heremite propositum arripui' ('I am certainly a solitary by intention and I have adopted the way of life of a hermit'), as well as talking about his persecutions and giving the titles of other texts he has written

[45] This observation need not contradict critical theory on intentionalism. The intentional fallacy is the mistaken belief that the meaning of a text is reducible to authorial intent, and that this authorial intent can be absolutely known. This need not preclude the legitimacy of examining why authors wrote in particular ways and what they wanted to achieve, both of which are valid objects of historical investigation (and, like other historical issues, cannot be known absolutely). Similarly, the intentional fallacy need not negate the way that authors may genuinely aim to represent their views and perspectives in writing, and the way that it was normal for readers to understand texts in this way (even if the text's meaning is not reducible to this). Hence, the target of Sobecki's criticism is not theories of intentionality but the culture of scepticism they have (perhaps unwittingly) engendered, in which literary scholars place an overemphasis on the distance between text and author (as if authors and reader typically conceive of a text's narrators as invented characters or personas), especially in reaction against older scholarship which made claims about authorial intent with insufficient evidence.

[46] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 151–52; Rolle, *Canticum amoris*, ed. by Gabriel M. Liegey, 'The "Canticum amoris" of Richard Rolle', *Traditio*, 12 (1956), 369–91, line 156.

(including the *Melos amoris*).[47] Of course, some works contain more extensive autobiography than others, and Rolle does not discuss his life systematically in any of his works (and in some offers no real autobiographical information at all), suggesting that he did not generally aim to impress a fully realised portrait of himself onto the reader. Nonetheless, autobiographical references in each of his major works foreground the idea that it is Rolle himself (however he is understood) speaking, and present this as an important frame of reference for understanding the text. Even in texts which convey little information about an author's biography, Sobecki's point is simply that medieval readers would have typically understood it as the product of an author, who is the one speaking, rather than the voice of an invented character (unless the text is especially framed in this way). Hence, it is important for us to recognise that Rolle's texts largely present him as the author and agent behind the work, and that the idea of an author is an important framework of interpretation for reading them (even if their meaning is not reducible to this framework), whether we approach his writings from the perspective of Rolle's intentions, the content of his texts, or the typical expectations of medieval readers. In practical terms, this means that when Rolle mentions that he is a hermit, we should not assume that medieval readers would have considered this to be a fiction wholly separate from the author, for example.

That being said, identifying the text's speaker with Rolle does not mean that it should be understood as a faithful and consistent representation of the author. A.C Spearing's critique of scholars who interpret the narrators of medieval poems as coherent characters will help to flesh this out.[48] Spearing argues against the attribution of the speaking 'I' of the text to a coherent individual, arguing instead that the narrative voice of poetry is often composite and does not act as a consistently characterised persona. This approach works well with poems which announce no

[47] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 4, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 157v (ed. Moyes, 2:196, line 5 to 2:197, line 1).
[48] Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity*; A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Autographies: The "I" of the Text* (Notre Dame, IN, 2012).

coherent narrator – Spearing shows that the narrator in such examples is not a character, such that he can argue that there is effectively no narrator, and even that this constitutes a medieval supergenre of 'autography'.[49]

Spearing's approach works less well with homodiegetic narrators of poems. He makes the important point that these narrators are not consistently characterised, since they are shaped by poetic convention and are sometimes interrupted by apparent authorial interjection, and rightly challenges scholars who expect the narrator to act like a consistent character throughout the poem. However, this need not lead to his conclusion that we can no longer meaningfully talk about these poems as having narrators. There is only a semantic difference between Spearing's claim (that there is no narrator) and the (less radical) claim that the narrators of these poems are not coherent, and are shaped as much by poetic convention as by characterisation; in short, that they are not real people. We might, for example, make the same point about the other characters in a text – they are not products of a 'unitary consciousness' (a point Spearing makes about the narrators), but are themselves literary devices, and thus do not always act like real people and may be inconsistently characterised.[50] The idea that the narrator is a character remains an important frame of reference for interpretation, foregrounded by the text, even if not ultimately applied consistently. Even when the voice of the apparent author intrudes, disrupting the speech of the homodiegetic narrator (as occurs in *Winner and Waster*) this does not obviate recognition of the text's presentation of a narrator: the fourth wall can only be broken if it is there to begin with.[51]

This is an issue of semantics which does not seriously undermine Spearing's reading, but becomes more important when we apply his theories of narratology and textual subjectivity to non-narrative texts such as most didactic religious writing – it provides the useful qualification that the

[49] On autography, see Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*.
[50] For this phrase, see e.g., Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity*, p. 158.
[51] For this example, see Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*, pp. 26–27.

voice of Rolle's texts might not be coherent, and might not closely resemble his actual speech and personality. Therefore, when I say that Rolle speaks, I mean purely that the text presents Rolle as the agent behind the words. Even when he quotes someone or adopts another voice, this always occurs in a broader context in which the first-person is understood as identified with the author. To put it another way, the speaker is identified with Rolle, but it is not identical to Rolle as a historical individual; the text is not a transcript of Rolle's internal thoughts and feelings but is shaped, for example, by textual conventions and the distinctive language and registers Rolle uses.

Recognising that these texts invite us to identify their first-person voice with Rolle himself does not preclude the presence of other speakers: that Rolle speaks using the voices of others. In some cases, Rolle does so by direct citation of the words of another (for example, in quoting Scripture). In other cases, Rolle ascribes a passage of first-person speech to a fictionalised speaker. In both these examples, Rolle assumes a voice that is differentiated from his own, insofar as it is ascribed to a distinctive individual (such as Christ) or class of speakers (such as 'the penitent').

Rolle's adoption of different voices complicates our understanding of how the first-person is to be identified with Rolle. Scholarship has often addressed the question of how these different voices relate to one another with a zero-sum game approach, answering the question of 'who is speaking' with an assumption that a single voice must be identified or privileged over any other voices that might lay claim to a text.[52] For example, Sobecki's study responds to scholars who have assumed that, if the voice of a text is shown to be fictionalised in some way, this means it must be wholly severed from the author. In turn, Sobecki's response arguably takes the opposite extreme, downplaying the ways in which an author might fictionalise their own voice, without this amounting to a fully conceived character separate from the author. Lawton's concept of 'public interiorities'

[52] An example from Rolle scholarship is where Denis Renevey refers (in passing) to Rolle having 'displaced' the Biblical personae he adopts: see 'Looking for a Context', p. 192.

usefully highlights an alternative view.[53] Lawton's key insight is not simply that medieval authors quote one another, but that this occurs in order to express interiority: the individual speaking as themselves through the words of others. This insight challenges the hermeneutic of suspicion which (for Sobecki and Spearing) arises when an author is perceived to be speaking through a persona: the way that scholars interpret a text's narrator as disingenuous or unreliable, amounting to a persona wholly separate from its author.[54] In contrast, the idea that someone can genuinely express themselves through the words of others is integral to medieval liturgy and devotion.[55] For example, a male postulant can adopt the gendered voice of the bride from the Song of Songs, essentially performing her role, but this does not mean that this performance is insincere. The Bible often describes people expressing grief through tearing their clothes, wearing sackcloth, and covering themselves in ashes – a conventionalised performance, but not a deceptive one. In a similar way, medieval people used the conventionalised first-person of a distinctive speaker to express something of their own inner life. To put it another way, many medieval lyrics and prayers contain highly generalised speakers, but their speakers do not have to be entirely generic for the reader to nevertheless inhabit them, using for their own prayer a voice which is somewhat particularised to another speaker. My point is not that, whenever Rolle adopts a given voice, it always expresses his own feelings, but rather that, when he adopts a given voice, it is not *necessarily* a voice totally differentiated from himself.

The idea that a given voice can be understood in terms of multiple speakers is reflected on a material level by the idea of the 'scribal author'. Sobecki sets up his argument – that the speaking voice of the text is to be identified with the author – on the basis of his understanding of the

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[53] Lawton, *Voice*.

[54] For summary discussion of this 'hermeneutic of suspicion', see especially Spearing, *Medieval Autographies*, pp. 4–5, 14–16.

[55] Rachel Fulton-Brown discusses the use of pre-written prayers and liturgy in similar terms, arguing that when scholars find such texts inflexible and inert, the problem is not with the texts themselves but with the way scholars read them. See Fulton, 'Praying with Anselm', e.g. at 732.

material text, since (he suggests) manuscript transmission always fragments and attenuates the relation between the author and each successive copy.[56] In doing so, he follows D.F. McKenzie's influential challenge to the denial of intentionalism by W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, likewise on the basis of the material text.[57] Yet medieval scribal practices can alternatively be understood as offering an analogy to our discussion of voice. The concept of a 'scribal author' emphasises how, by copying existing texts (we might say by revocalising them), scribes exercised agency over them.[58] While many medieval scribes sought to get hold of authoritative texts (reflecting Sobecki's point that transmission involves attenuation from the author), citational practices also indicate that, in the medieval mindset, for a scribe to appropriate, reshape, and incorporate an existing text did not *necessarily* constitute a strident self-assertion of that scribe's agency over the original author, displacing the original author's authority by absorbing their words into the scribe's own. It could just as easily (and surely more commonly) represent a perpetuation of that original author's authority. Medieval scribal practices involve multiple agents at work shaping a text, and these agents were not necessarily perceived as being in competition with one another; again, it is not a zero-sum game. Although in the case of scribal authorship, medieval manuscripts perhaps most typically efface the agency of the scribe in deference to the *auctoritas*, this example usefully shows that when a speaker adopts a given voice, they do not necessarily displace or absorb the original, even while exercising their own agency. In the same way, a text may conceive of its words in relation to multiple speakers at once, and the boundaries of what constitutes a speaker's voice may be open-ended. Just as *auctoritas* is not wholly determined by the intrinsic properties of a text (and therefore is not necessarily challenged by the text's alteration) but is conferred on the text by its reception, the ascription of written text to different and multiple speakers is not an intrinsic property of a text (in the sense that an idiolect is), but a way or habit of reading, and one which in Rolle's case the text

[56] Sobecki, *Last Words*, p. 3.
[57] D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge, 1999), ch. 1.
[58] Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, OH, 2012).

foregrounds.[59] When we recognise a given voice in a text, we are not saying that the words are associated with this voice through some intrinsic linguistic quality, but rather that the text puts this voice forward as the speaker (or that reading in terms of a given speaker is an interpretative option which would have been available to medieval readers). In this way, multiple speakers can operate in a text at once, without any speaker *necessarily* being privileged over another.

Adopting these voices is possible because, in being adopted, they become 'public'; that is, they are presented or recognised as available to others. Allegorising the Song of Songs means that the voice of the bride is presented as a model for readers to adopt, and thus rendered 'public'. Even when Rolle speaks as Christ, this operates as a devotional trope which is available to medieval writers rather than a record of the speech of an actual individual at a specific time:

> Clamat ad te Christus in cruce... "O homo qui es humus, te erigis in altum! En ego Excelsus perforor in plagis et sponte supplicium subii quod cernis, pro culpa quam commisisti... Cerne me morientem et restringe te peccantem..."[60]
>
> Christ cries to you on the cross... "O man, you who are earth, you raise yourself into the heights! Behold, I, the exalted one, am pierced in wounds, and of my own accord I have undergone the suffering which you see for the sins which you have committed... See me dying and restrain yourself from sinning..."

This is not like Margery Kempe's reported speech of Christ actually speaking to her specifically. Rather, this is a fictionalised version of Christ, imagined speaking directly from the cross to a general listener. Just because this voice is a fiction does not mean it is deceptive – the words are valid because they express something of Christ's genuine attitude or suffering, acting as an imaginative meditation and a tool for Rolle to implore the reader to respond (as in the imperatives at the end of the quotation). Imagining the voice of Christ speaking from the cross was a common trope in medieval religious writing (such as in lyrics and, later, in the Mystery cycles), so Rolle's adoption of

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[59] See discussion on similar themes in Vincent Gillespie, 'Authorship', in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. by Marion Turner (Chichester, 2013), pp. 137–54.
[60] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 32, p. 96, lines 21–25; p. 97, lines 10–11.

this fictionalised voice is uncontroversial, facilitated by a contemporary recognition that the voice of Christ can be adopted in this way, making it in this sense 'public'.[61]

The idea of a 'public interiority' is typified by the kinds of voices Rolle more frequently invokes, which are not of specific individuals but of archetypes or categories of people, such as the righteous, the damned, and the penitent. The fact that these voices are archetypes rather than individuals means that they are presented as available for a whole category of people to speak, and in this sense can also be understood as 'public'. These archetypes do not necessarily operate with an absolute, fixed relationship to actual readers (who themselves may fall into multiple categories at different times). An actual reader can develop over time from primarily praying penitentially to adopting the voice of the righteous, and Rolle inscribes this in his writings by suggesting that certain verses can only be prayed by more advanced readers, in doing so envisioning a reader progressing through time and passing onto more advanced voices (just as he presents progressive lyrics in *Ego dormio*).[62] Similarly, we should avoid reading Rolle's ascription of certain passages to a general archetype in an overly prescriptive way, since he in some cases ascribes passages to multiple, incompatible voices, showing that the interpretation of passages in terms of a given speaker is open to interpretation.[63] Again, in this sense, 'voice' is a way of reading rather than an intrinsic property of a text, and is therefore open to interpretation. In some cases, Rolle suggests that certain words are only appropriate for certain speakers, limiting the range of possible interpretations; in other cases, Rolle's ascription of a certain text to a specific archetype (for example, a poor person) does not necessarily preclude its potential utility for another speaker or class of speakers.

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[61] Pamela King, *Medieval Literature 1300–1500* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 114–15; J.W. Robinson, 'The Late Medieval Cult of Jesus and the Mystery Plays', *PMLA*, 80.5 (1965), 508–14.
[62] For examples, see fn. 80 below.
[63] In *Super lectiones mortuorum*, Rolle identifies Job 7:20b as spoken by the reprobate, the repentant sinner, or the hermit: see discussion at the end of this section.

Because of this interpretative openness, the adoption of a distinctive voice does not in and of itself carry a claim about how closely this assumed voice is to be identified with the historical Rolle. He sometimes adopts a voice explicitly differentiated from his own subjective position, as when he gives us a passage spoken in the voice of the damned or of Christ. Examples such as these are particularly useful for showing that Rolle is taking up a fictionalised persona wholly differentiated from himself. In other cases, the assumed speaker is more closely identified with Rolle. For example, Rolle occasionally presents us with the words of a category of people to which he belongs, such as the pauper (that is, someone who has pursued voluntary poverty). In such cases, we can still recognise that this represents the adoption of a generalised persona – as a kind of performance – without claiming that Rolle is doing so disingenuously, since his words apply to himself as well as others. We can recognise that the voices Rolle adopts are differentiated from his own purely by virtue of being ascribed to a named speaker or archetype: this does not necessarily entail that such a voice should either be considered wholly identified with Rolle or entirely separate from him. This makes biographically-centred readings of Rolle rather complicated – besides the rare instances where Rolle adopts a speaker that is clearly wholly distinct from himself (such as of the damned or of Christ), we cannot tell with certainty the extent to which Rolle's speakers are expressive of his own emotions and feelings. What we can say with certainty is that we cannot *assume* that they are, especially given the strong possibility that other factors are at play, such as the mediation of his voice through conventional genres or saintly personas, or the shaping of his first-person voice as a model for the reader.

We can see the layering of speakers at work in one further example from *Super lectiones mortuorum*, which usefully highlights the problems with insisting on an overly rigid separation between an adopted voice and the narratorial voice identified with Rolle himself. In this example, Rolle shows that a voice can simultaneously be identified as himself and as speaking in a more general archetype. Rolle identifies Job 7:20b first as spoken by reprobates, and in the course of so

doing, he exhorts the sinner to repent. Rolle then gives a prayer which is spoken by the sinner and which incorporates Job 7:20b:

> O bone Iesu, remitte quod peccaui, ut leuis fiam ad uolandum in contemplacionem... Nam propter peccata mea ***factus sum michimetipsi gravis*** [Job 7:20]. Grauis utique quia me ipsum nequeo portare, *quoniam iniquitates mee supergresse sunt caput meum* [Psalm 37:5]...[64]
>
> O good Jesus, forgive that I have sinned, so that I may become light in order to fly into contemplation.... For because of my sins ***I have become burdensome to myself***. Certainly burdensome because I cannot carry my own self, *since my iniquities have surpassed my head*...

By incorporating Job 7:20, Rolle presents this as an expansion of the Biblical voice, which has now been understood first as the voice of the reprobate, and second as the voice of the sinner in repentance. Rolle's expansion has thus been offered as a model prayer for sinners. As Rolle continues, the speaking voice is more closely particularised to the solitary (and hence Rolle's own voice):

> Interim utique *consistunt aduersum me castra* forcium, et *prelium aduersus me exsurgit* [cf. Psalm 26:3], atque qui me dum seculum amassem laudabant iam aduersum me heremum amantem iurant. *Similis factus sum pellicano solitudinis* [Psalm 101:7] et elidor temptacionibus, *et* ***factus sum michimetipsi gravis*** [Job 7:20].[65]
>
> Meanwhile, certainly *the camps* of the powerful *stand against me*, and *a battle rises up against me*, and those who praised me when I loved the world now conspire against me as a loving hermit. *I have become like a pelican of solitude*, and I am crushed with temptations, ***and I have become burdensome to myself***.

This passage still adopts the penitential posture of Job 7:20b, citing the verse again and referring to the pelican (a conventional image for the solitary and penitent).[66] Yet this voice is also applied more specifically to Rolle, with apparent autobiographical references to wilderness, persecutions, and

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[64] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 143v (ed. Moyes, 2:151, lines 16–20).
[65] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 144 (ed. Moyes, 2:152, lines 8–11).
[66] The pelican was thought to live in solitude and to feed its children from its own blood, and thus is used as an image for confession (among other things) in Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 3.1 (1:48, lines 5–18); see also V.E. Graham, 'The Pelican as Image and Symbol', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 36.2 (1962), 235–43; Lucienne Portier, *Le Pélican: Histoire d'un symbole* (Paris, 1984), especially pp. 45–51.

solitude. The eremitic vocation revolved around the adoption of a penitential way of life, so it makes sense that Rolle would adopt this voice in his role as a hermit. This passage thus shows Rolle apparently speaking as himself whilst simultaneously adopting a voice identified with the Scriptural verse, modelling the way in which the voice of another can be assumed, and presenting his words as simultaneously participating in a 'public' penitential voice (since he invites his reader to adopt this voice too). One way to read this would be to assume that Rolle had solitaries in mind as his target audience, who would be able to adopt these words directly as hermits themselves. But there is little else in the text that seems specifically targeted at hermits, and we know that many non-hermits read the text.[67] Another way to read this passage is as a voice which, while particularised to Rolle's eremitic identity, can nonetheless also be adopted by individuals in the broader category of sinners. This is wholly in line with the idea of adopting a distinctive Biblical voice as the basis for one's own prayer (even if it is particularised to an individual, like Mary in the Magnificat). Again, examples like this challenge the quantitative logic of a zero-sum game approach to voice, as if we can segment parts of the text as belonging to different speakers (here, Rolle versus the penitent); instead, it shows that the boundaries between voices are often blurred; that we can understand an author as speaking using the words of others, and that reading such passages in terms of multiple speakers is something which the text foregrounds.

This has implications for how we understand passages not ascribed to a given speaker. Even when Rolle does not ascribe his words to a named speaker, the text is nevertheless shaped by a similar understanding of the first-person – that it can model a voice that can be adopted by others. Spearing points out that even the homodiegetic narrator of *Pearl* does not represent a consistently characterised character but is shaped by literary convention; for example, while the poem presents the narrator as fallible (such as through his conversations with the Pearl-maiden), this does not mean we should distrust the narrator's evocations of the beautiful landscape as if the poet also

[67] On manuscript contexts of *Super lectiones mortuorum*, see Moyes, 1:68–90.

intended them to be flawed.[68] In a similar way, while Rolle's texts present himself as the speaker, this speaker too is shaped by textual conventions, by the adoption of different registers and genres, and by Rolle's outward-looking pastoral purposes; it is not a consistently characterised representation of Rolle's emotional state, and nor is it a fully-realised, invented character. In a context in which authors regularly adopted the voices of others, the use of the first-person does not presuppose a coherent, singular, individuated speaker; it is not a straightforward representation of a real person. Rolle is not necessarily speaking transparently as himself, but this does not mean we should not identify the speaker with him at all; rather it is a self-fictionalised, curated form of autobiography for the purposes of instructing readers. Recognising this allows us to see Rolle's use of the first-person as a pastoral tool, analogous to the fictionalised voices which Rolle takes up from Scripture. Sobecki argues for a distinction between portions of a text where an author adopts a persona, and portions where they speak as themselves; yet even where a text presents an author as speaking for himself or herself, this voice is also a semi-fictionalised one.[69]

Rolle's Use of Voice

In the examples above from *Super lectiones mortuorum*, passages where Rolle adopts a given voice are modelled on Scripture, and the identity of the speaker is derived from Rolle's interpretation of the verse. In this section, we will consider how Rolle also adopts voices in passages of his original writing; that is, outside of the context of biblical commentary where a direct source for the voice is cited. As in his paraphrases of Scripture, Rolle uses first-person voices to model prayers and devotional postures, and hence draws on his exegetical model in which the first-person functions as a pedagogic tool. This in turn enables us to realise that even in places where Rolle's

[68] This example is discussed in Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity*, pp. 157–61.
[69] Sobecki, *Last Words*, pp. 12–14.

first-person speaker is not ascribed to a named individual and where biographical details identify this speaker with himself (as signalled, for instance, when he mentions that he is a hermit), he does so in a way which invites the reader to inhabit his speaking voice, positioning it as a model for the reader to appropriate, and this expectation shapes the first-person in tangible ways. This, in turn, also challenges the view that this first-person voice is a transparent representation of the historical Rolle.

In various places in his original writings, Rolle speaks in direct speech and tells us that he is speaking as an archetype. In some cases, the voice that Rolle adopts is entirely differentiated from his own, which reinforces that this represents Rolle assuming a fictional persona (rather than offering his own words as being also applicable to an archetype). Rolle also tells us that he adopts such voices for the purpose of spiritual instruction. For example, in the *Melos amoris*, Rolle gives us two laments spoken by carnal lovers in hell. Here is a brief excerpt where we can see the carnal lovers speaking in the first-person plural:

> nunc vere invenimus quia non est oblitus omnium Auctor in torridis tormentis punire peccatores. Ve quod amavimus amicam in mundo! Ab hac amarissimum habemus horrorem.[70]
>
> now truly we have found that the Author of all has not forgotten to punish sinners in scorching torments. Alas that we loved a girlfriend in the world! From this we have most bitter horror.

Rolle clearly frames the didactic purpose of this direct speech by addressing his readers, saying 'Ecce lamentum et labor lubricorum! Ne et tu labaris...' ('Behold the lament and labour of the lascivious, so that you do not also fall...') and 'Iterum asculta planctum pravorum quia peccaverunt; penas perpende, devita dampnatos in doloribus dicentes...' ('Again hear the wailing of the depraved because they sinned; think about their punishments, shun the damned, saying in distress...').[71] In these quotations, he implores the reader to learn from the words spoken by the carnal lovers in

[70] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 36, p. 111, lines 28–31.
[71] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 36, p. 112, lines 4, 6–8.

order to avoid their fate. Unlike in his biblical commentaries, these examples are not presented as expansions of particular verses (although he does incorporate some relevant Bible verses of lament towards the end of the direct speech, showing that their words are commensurate with Biblical laments). Rather, this passage shows that, in his original writing, Rolle imitates the ways in which he perceived Scripture to instruct readers using first-person voices: exhorting readers to reject sin and modelling sanctity and repentance.

Similarly, as in *Super lectiones mortuorum*, Rolle uses the first-person to model particular postures of devotional engagement and of prayer, especially (though not exclusively) for those in various stages of contemplative life. Prayers are found ubiquitously throughout his writing. In chapter 16 of the *Incendium amoris*, Rolle introduces a prayer as suitable for a specified person and situation:

> Deuotus pauper cum angitur pre defectu, si uelit orare potest et dicere: "Domine Deus meus, Ihesu Christe, miserere mei et inspicere digneris grave iugum quod impositum est super corpus meum, unde et animam meam deprimere non tardat. [Deficit][72] enim caro mea in erumpnis huius uite..."[73]
>
> The devout pauper, when he is distressed on account of failure, if he wants he can pray and say: "Lord my God, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and deign to consider the heavy yoke, which has been placed over my head, wherefore it also does not delay to depress my soul. For my flesh fails in the anguish of this life..."

Here, Rolle specifies that this prayer is useful for the poor person (meaning the voluntary poor, such as a contemplative hermit) in a particular situation. Rolle's recognition of the usefulness of this prayer for this reader is typically open-ended – he says the poor person can use this prayer 'si uelit' ('if he wants'), and the word 'potest' ('he can') suggests that this is just one option available. So, this should not be taken as an overly schematic account which restricts this prayer exclusively to this person, but as something that may be useful to such a reader. Rolle is not recounting a prayer that is

[72] deficit] deficit **DdR**, defecit **De**
[73] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 16, p. 191.

exclusively his, but adopting a specific devotional posture as an aid to the reader. The specificity of the postulant and situation given for this prayer is unusual in Rolle's works, but Rolle does frequently offer prayers spoken in the voice of the soul, or the bride of Christ, which again shows Rolle assuming a fictionalised posture (since souls do not speak), and presenting his prayers as suitable to be spoken by a more generalised archetype. Therefore, in the many instances where Rolle's writings turn to prayer without specifying a suitable postulant, it seems reasonable to suggest that they can also be read in this open-ended way (as available to different speakers), and that Rolle was presenting these as model prayers for the reader. Again, the compilation of Rollean prayers in CUL, MS Kk.6.20 supports this view, showing that Rolle's prayers were extracted and used as devotional texts. This does not mean that these prayers should be considered as the adoption of a persona wholly separate from Rolle (indeed it makes sense to think he would have drawn on his own experiences, as well as traditional precedents, in constructing these voices), but rather that they are presented as archetypical prayers, suitable to be adopted by a range of speakers and thus not exclusively individuated to Rolle himself.

In addition, Rolle sometimes adopts a first-person voice which is *not* presented as a prayer, but as modelling a posture of devotion. In chapter 26 of the *Incendium*, Rolle ascribes the direct speech he gives us to an archetype (the context is explaining the importance of humility):

> quis uerus amator sit[74], dicat intra se: "Omnes me excellunt in contemptu mundi et odio peccati... Cum tantorum dignam uitam considero apud memetipsum quasi in nichilum redactus, inter omnes infimus succumbo."[75]
>
> he who is a true lover says within himself: "All have surpassed me in contempt of the world and hatred of sin... When I consider the worthy life of such people in comparison with myself, I yield as the lowest among all, as if reduced to nothing."

[74] sit] sit **DdDe**, sic **R**
[75] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 26, p. 217.

This prayer is not explicitly directed towards God; rather, it is fictionalised direct speech (spoken 'intra se', 'within himself') which models a posture of humility. This offers a clear example of Rolle using a generalised first-person voice to instruct his readers, effectively showing them what humility might look like. Later in the chapter, Rolle adopts the voice of the bride from the Song of Songs in a similar way:

> eciam in hoc presenti os sponsi suauissimum et osculum eius dulcissimum exposcit, clamans: "Omnia terrena mihi fastidio sunt: amorem dilecti sencio... Amor me facit audacem, ipsum quem diligo inuocare, qui me confortando et implendo *osculetur osculo oris sui* [Songs 1:1]. Quanto enim magis a terrenis cogitacionibus eleuor, tanto amplius concupita dulcedine fruor..."[76]
>
> also in this present moment, the mouth of the spouse demands his sweetest and most dulcet kiss, crying: "All worldly things are in contempt for me: I sense the love of the beloved... Love makes me bold, to call upon him whom I love, who *may kiss with the kiss of his mouth* by comforting and satisfying me. For the more I am lifted from worldly thoughts, the more fully I enjoy the desired sweetness..."

Here, Rolle introduces a passage of direct speech using terms which allude to Songs 1:1, and the subsequent incorporation of Songs 1:1 into the direct speech suggests that this voice is modelled on its speaker, the bride. However, despite introducing this as spoken to the lover, Rolle does not present this as a prayer, since it includes propositional statements about the speaker's sanctity (such as stating her contempt for worldly things). Instead, it represents a voice assumed to model a posture of devotion to the reader, in line with how we have seen Rolle using the first-person voice in *Super lectiones*. In addition, the speaker is grammatically feminine: the past participle 'elongata' ('stretched') agrees with the subject and is conjugated in the feminine.[77] The subject Rolle introduces as speaking is the 'os' ('mouth'), which is neuter, so Rolle may have the soul in mind (which he commonly uses as a speaker and later implies has spoken here), or perhaps he is simply adopting the role of the female speaker of the Song of Songs.[78] Indeed, the grammatically feminine speaker of the Song of Songs facilitated its standard allegorical interpretation as the grammatically

[76] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 26, p. 218.
[77] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 26, p. 218.
[78] Rolle implicitly ascribes the words to the 'electe anime': Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 26, p. 218.

feminine 'anima' ('soul') in the medieval commentary tradition, as Jean Leclercq points out.[79] The feminine speaker reflects that this is a fictionalised voice: a verbalisation of an inner attitude rather than a representation of the speech of any particular individual (including Rolle himself), and apparently drawn from the conventional idiom of the Song of Songs, even though the context is not overt biblical exegesis. It is striking that Rolle uses a similar phrase here as the opening of the *Melos amoris* – 'Amor utique audacem efficit animum' ('Love certainly makes the mind bold').[80] The opening of the *Melos* is typically taken as a statement of authorial intent and autobiography, but this quotation suggests that that text was similarly shaped by an understanding of its own voice as assuming the posture of the Song of Songs, and thereby assuming a more 'public' model of sanctity than one purely defined as Rolle's own – as in the example above from *Incendium*, to model a posture of sanctity rather than an explicit prayer.

Rolle's versatility in adopting distinctive voices is particularly clear in *Ego dormio* because it envisions a reader progressing through several stages of spiritual development. For the second and third stages, Rolle incorporates a first-person lyric which is suitable for readers at those stages, suggesting that certain texts are reserved for more advanced readers, and thus that Rolle deliberately adopts voices suitable for distinct spiritual levels. Here and elsewhere, Rolle presents certain prayers of Scripture in a similar way. For instance, he writes in *Ego dormio* that only after attaining contemplative life 'may þou say *I slepe and my hert waketh*' (its titular verse, Songs 5:2), and in *Super Canticum canticorum* that certain Bible verses can only be prayed 'merito' ('rightly') at particular stages of spiritual progress.[81] Using Bible verses as waypoints of spiritual development was not Rolle's idiosyncratic idea; Bernard's *De diligendo Deo* and Richard of St Victor's *De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis* similarly suggest that certain verses can only be prayed once a particular

[79] Leclercq, *Monks and Love*, pp. 31–32.
[80] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 1, p. 3, line 1.
[81] Rolle, *Ego dormio*, line 235; Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, line 169, 262; ch. 5, line 17; ch. 7, lines 18–21, 33–34.

grade has been attained.[82] Rolle's embedded lyrics thus emulate an understanding of Scripture as a compendium of first-person voices for people of different spiritual states. This is effectively the equivalent of Bonaventure's discussion of the *multiplex modi* as applied to the first-person: the idea that Scripture uses different styles or modes to address the spiritual needs of a wide range of readers.[83] Appearing within the same text, these lyrics imagine a potential reader developing through time, and by associating them with different stages of spiritual development Rolle effectively adopts the voice of distinctive speakers.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Rolle's contemplative writings address an implicitly heterogenous readership, discussing matter pertaining to multiple spiritual stages through which the reader is exhorted to progress. Insofar as Rolle uses first-person voices to tackle a wide range of topics, this reinforces that Rolle's first person is not reducible to the singular voice of Rolle himself, but is manifestly heterogenous and oriented towards the didactic exigencies of readers in different spiritual states. In many cases, voices which are associated with the lower spiritual stages do not represent postures which are wholly abandoned by those in the later stages (such as penitence or meditations on the Passion), but there is one clear instance of Rolle suggesting that a certain voice is only relevant to the lower stages in *Super lectiones mortuorum*. The opening verse of the sixth reading from the Office of the Dead reads, 'Quis mihi hoc tribuat, ut in inferno protegas me' ('Who may grant this to me, that you protect me in hell?') (Job 14:13). Rolle firsts suggests that this is spoken in the voice of the patriarchs, and then suggests that alternatively it may be spoken by the Christian of moderate goodness who will go to purgatory. Then, Rolle assigns the whole of lectio six to this person, at the exclusion of more perfect Christians:

[82] For example, Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, XV.40, p. 153, lines 15–17; Richard of St Victor, *De IV gradibus*, ch. 28, p. 155, lines 21–24.
[83] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 126–29.

> Loquamur ergo in persona illorum qui imperfecti sunt et ab hac luce capti ad purgatorium descendunt. Nam et uidetur hec leccio legi pro ipsis et non pro aliis quando in exequiis mortuorum legitur...[84]
>
> Therefore, let us speak in the persona of those who are imperfect and descend to purgatory, seized from this light. For also this reading seems to be read for them and not for others when it is read in the Office of the Dead...

The first-person 'Loquamur' ('let us speak') is probably best understood as an authorial 'we' (indicating that Rolle is about to adopt the voice in his role as an expositor) rather than an attempt to enjoin all his readers in speaking with him, since he subsequently says that the voice in question is restricted. Rolle goes on to expand the verse with brief glosses in the first-person to clarify its sense. This clearly demonstrates that Rolle's understanding of Scripture meant that it would be appropriate for him to adopt a range of different voices, including those which do not reflect his own spiritual state, in order to instruct an implicitly heterogenous audience.

Of course, in the majority of cases Rolle does not ascribe his first-person voice to a specified speaker, and his frequent incorporation of autobiographical details suggests that his words should be more closely identified with himself. Yet even in these cases, Rolle fictionalises his voice by assuming different postures and roles, and his writing is shaped in tangible ways by an anticipation of its appropriation by the reader. Renevey's study shows how extensively Rolle's voice is modelled on the Song of Songs.[85] We might understand this as showing how Rolle assumes a 'public' model of sanctity (represented by the Song of Songs, which is not displaced or absorbed into Rolle's voice but remains present in the text), modelling how it can be adopted by others, rather than speaking in a voice defined solely as Rolle's own. One very clear instance of Rolle's willingness to dramatize himself appears in the *Melos amoris*, where he imagines an exchange with another speaker who asks Rolle to share his experiences; the whole conversation is given in direct speech.[86] This is not

[84] Rolle, *Super lectiones mortuorum*, lectio 6, in CUL, MS Ii.1.26, f. 166v (ed. Moyes, 2:225, lines 7–9).
[85] Renevey, *Language, Self and Love*.
[86] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 45, p. 139, lines 18–32.

presented as a record of an actual conversation, but is clearly a literary device designed to communicate Rolle's concerns about speaking of his spiritual experiences. This passage thus demonstrates Rolle's willingness to fictionalise his own voice.

An unusual moment of self-reflection on his use of the first-person appears in *Contra amatores mundi*. This passage was quoted in the previous chapter and is worth revisiting. In the following passage, Rolle describes his use of the first-person as speaking in a 'persona', the same term which he uses to identify the speakers inferred from Scripture:

> caveat sibi lector quia hec verba communiter in persona omnium non dicuntur, qui Christiano nomine censentur, sed in illorum persona qui sic sine ficcione et sine presumpcione de se senciunt qualiter in hoc volumine scripta legunt...[87]
>
> let the reader take care for himself because these words are not spoken generally in the persona of all who are designated by the name Christian, but in the persona of those who thus, without pretence and without presumption, sense concerning themselves just as they read the things written in this volume...

He goes on to say that he is accustomed to write this way in all his books, applying this comment to his writing in general. The term 'persona' can be translated in a broad sense as 'person', but the phrase 'in persona' suggests a narrower definition: the idea of speaking 'in a persona' was a standard concept in Biblical exegesis, and was used in Biblical commentaries to refer to the ways that the Psalmist can be seen as adopting different voices, as we have seen in Rolle's own commentaries.[88] Thus, Rolle's use of the phrase apparently reflects his application of the concept of speaking in a 'persona' to his own writing. Given the obviously autobiographical nature of his work, this probably should not be understood as claiming to write in a persona wholly separate from himself, but simply that he expected his first-person voice to be read in a similar way to the voices in

[87] Rolle, *Contra amatores mundi*, ch. 4, lines 86–90.
[88] See discussion in Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, pp. 31, 33–34.

Scripture – as an archetypical speaker which can be adopted and adapted by others.[89] This fits the point he is making in this passage – that his voice is relevant to the contemplative, but should not be taken on by those who are not suitably advanced.

Another particularly clear instance of Rolle thinking of his voice in terms of archetypical speakers appears in chapter 20 of the *Melos amoris.* After describing the torments due for the damned, Rolle says 'predico, portatus in persona penitentis' ('I preach, carried in the persona of the penitent').[90] Here, Rolle's use of the term 'persona' again suggests an awareness that his words are suitable for a particular class of people – here, the penitent (another archetypical speaker Rolle commonly finds in Scripture) – thus suggesting that meditating on the fate of the damned is particularly suitable for penitential readers.[91] Furthermore, the term 'portatus' ('carried') shows Rolle using language that resembles the language that I have been using throughout this chapter (of Rolle 'adopting' or 'assuming' a given voice), conveying a temporary identification between his voice and a more general archetype. This again shows a self-consciousness in Rolle's use of the first-person: an awareness that his words are not simply his own but can be ascribed to a more general category of person, and that his adoption of this persona is shaped by an outward-looking didactic purpose.

Even when Rolle offers prayers which appear autobiographical, they are presented as suitable for a wider readership. Chapter 35 of the *Incendium amoris* begins as a prayer ('O Ihesu', 'O Jesus') where a first-person voice says 'cum iubilacione ardeo' ('I burn with jubilation') experiencing the 'estus amoris' ('heat of love'), which is closely associated with Rolle's autobiography from the

[89] Gerda Heydemann finds a similar understanding of Biblical personae in Cassiodorus: see 'The Orator as Exegete: Cassiodorus as a Reader of the Psalms', in *Reading the Bible in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jinty Nelson and Damien Kempf (London, 2015), p. 25–26.
[90] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 20, p. 60, lines 32–33.
[91] See also where Rolle says 'pensandum peccatoribus predico', in Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 20, p. 60, line 32.

book's first chapter.[92] However, Rolle later steps out of this first-person voice: 'Hec et huiusmodi alloquia... eructantur ex incendio amoris... excellens est in caritate, cuius cor huiusmodi amoris carmina decantauit' ('These and addresses of this kind erupt from the fire of love... he is excellent in love whose heart has sung songs of this kind of love').[93] Where Watson's interpretation of Rolle would treat this as an example of Rolle highlighting the superiority of his experiences, the broader context of first-person prayers which we have adumbrated in this chapter suggests that it can also be read as a script presented to the reader, and thus one which is open-ended. In teaching about the fire of love, Rolle is clearly inviting the reader to aspire to the same high level, so it makes sense that the devotional tools he offers would reflect his own experience. In doing so, this passage offers a clear instance where a first-person voice associated with Rolle's biography is also packaged as an exemplar for readers to follow. Rolle is also not overly prescriptive on how his readers pray, suggesting that other 'huiusmodi alloquia' ('addresses of this kind') are suitable. This again shows that Rolle means to model a type of prayer, rather than proscribing the reader to follow his experiences or voice exactly.

Even when Rolle apparently speaks as himself (for instance by inserting autobiographical details), his voice is shaped by an understanding that it models a particular devotional posture, and can in turn be taken up by others. The instances where Rolle gives us a concrete anecdote from his life are relatively unusual; more commonly Rolle's use of the first-person is departicularised (making it easy for a reader to appropriate), switches between first-person singular and plural (as if to encompass his readership), is intermixed with passages which directly exhort the reader towards the kind of devotion he is modelling, and takes place in a continuous present tense (also facilitating its adoption by a reader). All these factors reflect an understanding that Rolle shapes his first-person voice in order to model different aspects of the inner devotional life to which he instructs his

[92] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 35, p. 245.
[93] Rolle, *Incendium amoris*, ch. 35, p. 247.

readers. For example, in chapter 16 of the *Melos amoris*, we read a typical account of contemplative experience in the first-person:

> Gaudium gusto in gracia grandescens; consolamen non cupio nisi quod concepi, concalui continue Conditorem querens et calore coactus curro in cantum. Assumor aspectui ut epuler in altis et habeam ordinem orando opimum cum sono suavi sophie celestis. Dulcedo divina devastat dolorem...[94]
>
> Growing in grace, I taste joy; I want no consolation except what I have received, I have become warm, seeking the Creator continually, and driven by heat I run in song. I am taken up for a vision so that I may feast in the heights and may have a splendid order in praying, with the sweet sound of celestial wisdom. Divine sweetness ravages grief...

This passage, which typifies how Rolle most commonly describes contemplative experience, is clearly not an account of a specific event in his life (like his accounts of receiving *calor* and *canor*). It is largely written in a generalised present tense, referring to a habitual devotional posture rather than a specific event. We can take this as Rolle reflecting on his own experience of contemplative union, but this generalised approach can also be taken as a model offered to the reader to stir them towards contemplative life. First-person passages like these are often surrounded by third-person instruction and direct exhortation to seek similar experiences, which supports the idea that they are meant to be read as a model, just like Rolle's use of the first-person in *Super lectiones*.

The different ways in which Rolle's pastoral purpose shapes his first-person voice can be seen working together in the fourth chapter of *Super Canticum canticorum*. Rolle opens the chapter writing in a voice that speaks, inclusively, on behalf of the whole human race: 'O bone Ihesu... salvas dampnatum genus humanum... Vnctus ad nos venisti...' ('Oh good Jesus... you save the damned human race... You came to us anointed...').[95] Rolle's inclusive outlook here indicates a desire to incorporate the reader into his first-person voice: to speak for all Christians, rather than to shoehorn them into his experiences. Further along, the speaker shifts the focus to himself, using language of

[94] Rolle, *Melos amoris*, ch. 16, p. 49, lines 29–33.
[95] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 51–53.

canor and *dulcor*: 'Est autem nomen Ihesu in mente mea cantus iubieus,[96] in aure mea sonus celicus, in ore meo dulcor mellifluus' ('Yet the name Jesus is a jubilee-song in my mind, a heavenly sound in my ear, a mellifluous sweetness in my mouth').[97] Of course, such phrases clearly invoke Rolle's spiritual experiences, but their autobiographical content is neither explicit nor developed. If autobiographical, this *persona* primarily serves as a model to which the reader should aspire, since Rolle goes on to offer an exhortation: 'Hoc nomen Ihesu in memoria iugiter memento tenere' ('Remember to hold this name Jesus continually in your memory').[98] Rolle has been writing in a voice, in other words, which his readers should aspire to adopt, and which, perhaps, by reading his text, they can at least begin to practice for themselves.[99] In fact, Rolle is loosely citing Bernard – 'Iesus mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde iubilus' ('Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joyful song in my heart') – reinforcing that, while Rolle's spirituality draws on his own experiences, it is expressed using the words of others, and, in the same way, is available to be adopted by subsequent readers.[100] Later in the chapter, Rolle gives an account of spiritual life which resembles the trajectory he outlines in his pastoral writings (discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis). This may well reflect Rolle's own life, but the passage lacks individualising detail:

> Circuiui per diuiciarum cupidinem, et non inueni Ihesum. Ambulaui per deliciarum voraginem, et non inueni Ihesum. Cucurri per carnis lasciuiam, et non inueni Ihesum... circuiui per paupertatem et inueni Ihesum, pauperem in mundo natum... Ambulaui per asperorum tolleranciam et inueni Ihesum itinere fatigatum...[101]
>
> I rambled about through the desire for riches, and I did not find Jesus. I walked through the whirlpool of delights, and I did not find Jesus. I ran through the lust of the flesh, and I did not find Jesus... I rambled through poverty, and I found Jesus, born a poor man in this world... I walked through the endurance of harsh things, and I found Jesus, tired from his journey...

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[96] Perhaps *erratum* for 'iubileus'.
[97] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 122–23. This translation is adapted from Hanna's.
[98] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, line 158.
[99] See A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity*, ch. 6 (though Spearing focuses on wholly depersonalized first-person voices); Lawton, 'Psalms as Public Interiorities'.
[100] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica*, sermo 15.6 (1:86, lines 18–19). I am grateful to Andrew Albin for pointing out this allusion to me. Rolle also alludes to Bernard's formulation in *The Form of Living*, lines 613–14.
[101] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 204–14. Hanna's translation is given.

This passage is wide-ranging in its remit and anaphoric in style; it reads as an exposition of the life of perfection designed to stir the reader to live accordingly, in parallel with a passage in *The Commandment* where Rolle uses the image of various Biblical characters seeking Jesus (Mary, the shepherds, the three kings) to instruct the reader on where and how Jesus can be found.[102] In *Super Canticum*, Rolle concludes his description of seeking Jesus with a moral, explaining that, 'Ihesus non inuenitur in diuitibus set in pauperibus, non in deliciosis set in penitentibus...' ('Jesus is not to be found among rich men, but among poor; not among those who delight, but among the penitent...').[103] This reinforces that Rolle deploys his first-person voice in the same manner as how he read the first-person voices of Scripture – as modelling a particular kind of devotional engagement with God. Finally, the more explicitly autobiographical anecdote which follows at the end of the chapter fits in with this outward-looking didactic purpose: it is offered not as overt self-assertion, but as an *exemplum* which illustrates the value of devotion to the Holy Name, and which is secondary to the preceding discussion which it illustrates. In this way, Rolle draws on his own voice not only to assert himself or to highlight his unique experiences, but in a much more open-minded and generalizing way to illustrate and model the kind of devotion to which he exhorts his readers.

Finally, when Rolle does give us overt narrative autobiography, it is striking that these are often situated at the beginning of his life, when he was just starting out in contemplative life (something he points out even when not directly relevant), suggesting that these episodes are geared towards contemplative beginners (which I suggested in the previous chapter is a primary audience of Rolle's writing).[104] The stated ineffability of advanced spiritual experiences also shows that Rolle was aware of a remove between his teachings and his interiority. This suggests that, even as Rolle reflects on his own experiences, he also curates them for the purpose of instructing others, at times describing or even speaking from the perspective most relevant to his audience. These

[102] Rolle, *The Commandment*, lines 86–101.
[103] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 219–20. Hanna's translation is given.
[104] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 4, lines 280–81.

examples all show Rolle using the first-person not purely as a means to communicate his autobiography but as a didactic tool, and that this intended function retrospectively shaped his autobiography in tangible ways, challenging the idea that it is a straightforward representation of his inner life. Even Rolle's most autobiographical accounts can be understood as *exempla*, models, or sources of inspiration put forward for the devotional reader.

Rolle's first-person voice can thus be seen not only as describing his personal experiences in a voice that is uniquely his, but as composed from a texture of different voices. Although earlier I argued that we need to be cautious in suggesting that certain passages can be understood as Rolle's adoption of specific voices where none is explicitly indicated, some instances of influence are pervasive enough to be uncontroversial, such as the way that Rolle's voice is modelled on the Song of Songs. This may be understood not as Rolle speaking in a voice which is entirely his own, but as assuming a 'public' model of sanctity, demonstrating how it can also be adopted by others. Crucially, it is recognising the pastoral purpose of Rolle's writing – to offer models of prayer and devotion for readers – which unlocks this more outward-looking account of Rollean voice.

* * *

This discussion of Rolle's use of the first-person challenges the way that scholars have typically approached the relationship between the speaker of Rolle's texts and the historical figure himself. Scholarship has typically seen Rolle's works as projecting his actual personality, and as a reflection of Rolle's inner working and self-examination. However, the foregoing discussion has highlighted ways in which this voice is fictionalised and adapted to meet the needs of others.

I do not mean to suggest that an individual's personality never leaves traces in their writings and that we can never infer what someone might have been like on the basis of their works. I would venture to suggest that historians have often placed too much weight on the written voice as evidence for a person's personality: I suppose I am not alone in having often made the discovery that, upon meeting someone in person whom I had previously only known through their writing, the person is rather different to the image I had formed in my mind from their written words. That said, it also seems to me that a major driving force behind historical research is the idea that we can understand something of what another individual or culture from the past was like – how they felt and how they understood the world – and that this is an intrinsically valuable thing. When it comes to our contemporaries, we can recognise that we may not fully know what it is like to inhabit someone's mind without concluding that empathy is impossible, and in a similar way, however incomplete or flawed our knowledge of medieval people is, to deny that we can learn about their experiences and personalities on the basis of the things that they say runs counter to what (it seems to me) is a major and ethical impulse behind historical study.

Rather, my point is specific to Rolle. The idea that Rolle's works transparently reflect his personality is predicated on the assumption that Rolle is always speaking directly as himself, that his personality is projected unconsciously through his works, and that his writing is driven by an almost obsessive determination to establish his own spirituality. This chapter has argued for a far more self-conscious and open-ended use of the first-person. While our focus has been on the ascription of passages to first-person speakers, the idea that Rolle's self-portrayal is, to some extent, a fiction can be extended to other aspects of his writing too. In particular, the introduction to this thesis argued that the aggressive, apologetic strand of Rolle's writing can be understood in a similar way – not as a transparent representation of Rolle's own emotions, but as a conventionalised voice (of the stereotypically eccentric hermit) adopted performatively as a display of a particular kind of sanctity. As I have argued in this chapter, this performance need not be seen as disingenuous: Rolle may well

have adopted this posture in his life as well as in his writing. However, recognising that it is a performance allows us to see the ways in which Rolle's voice is far more heterogenous than is usually recognised. In many places, we do not get this apologetic voice at all; Rolle speaks variously as the theologian, the pastor, or the lover. The idea that the apologetic voice represents the true Rolle implies that there is a seam of Rolle's texts which somehow gives us access to an unmediated, transparent reflection of Rolle's voice, with all other voices dismissed as disingenuous personas which he adopts. But recognising that there is a conventionality and performativity to this apologetic voice too challenges the idea that it should be privileged above all other aspects of Rolle's writing as representative of his personality.

The suggestion that the speaking voice of a text is not transparently identifiable with its author is not new to literary criticism. This chapter has sought to show that it is not alien to Rolle's thinking either. The possibility that Rolle's autobiographic mode gives us access to his psychological depths is understandably appealing: medieval autobiography is relatively unusual, and its use attracts a special fascination for modern readers, seeking, as Allen put it, to hear 'the veritable utterances of a medieval Englishman, speaking with the human directness and intelligibility of a modern.'[105] But this interest has ironically flattened Rolle's work, assimilating it within a singular and interestingly idiosyncratic personality. By recognizing that this personality is shaped by conventions, we can uncover Rolle's diverse and deliberate experimentation with the first-person, designed to achieve his pastoral aims. Instead of seeing Rolle's works as dominated by a single, monologic personality, this invites us to recognise the multi-faceted texture of his written voice. For all Rolle's insistence on the importance of solitude and isolation from the world, it is this very insistence which connects him to exegetical tradition, and it is his multi-faceted experimentations with dramatizing his own story and his adoption of different personas which connects him to the voices of others.

[105] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 8.

Conclusion

> Quia nisi in diuinis doctrinis delectari satagimus, proculdubio suauitatem eterne dulcedinis veraciter non suspiramus. Hoc manifestum est quando quidem et laicus quam cito diuino amore se tactum senserit, ad audiendum et loquendum de Deo, secularibus curis postpositis, vehementer inardescit. Quanto et magis nos qui eciam, iuuante Deo, scripturas sacras intelligere possumus ad legendum et audiendum uerbum Dei ac alijs scribendis et docendis nos accingere debemus.[1]
>
> For unless we busy ourselves to be delighted in divine teachings, without doubt we do not truly sigh for the pleasure of eternal sweetness. This is clear when someone, even a lay person, just as soon as he has felt himself touched with divine love, burns violently to hear and speak about God, having put behind him worldly concerns. How much more we, who with God's help are able to understand holy scripture, ought to gird ourselves for reading and hearing God's word and writing and teaching it to others.

We might detect here a hint of Rolle as he has sometimes been portrayed in past scholarship: determined to describe contemplative union in terms of his personal experiences (here of fire and sweetness), opinionated and convinced of his spiritual superiority. Yet this quotation also reveals another side to Rolle. He acknowledges the importance of seeking divine teachings, reflecting how his own writings draw upon standard and orthodox materials. He expresses an openness to lay experience of God, using the language of burning (which is commonly associated with contemplative life in his writings), and depicting a layperson eager to reject worldly things and proclaim divine love. And lastly, he emphasises the importance of writing and teaching others, here presented as an obligation, and one which applies not simply to those that have had advanced, esoteric spiritual experiences, but to those who are knowledgeable about Scripture.

Rolle's words here present an aspect of his writing which this thesis has sought to emphasise. It has challenged the past scholarly paradigm in which Rolle's writings are read primarily against the singularly eccentric personality they at times project, which has been seen as representative of the historical individual. It has offered a sustained examination of ways in which Rolle can be understood as a pastoral author, arguing that his major works were most likely written

[1] Rolle, *Super Canticum canticorum*, ch. 2, lines 6–11. Hanna's translation is given.

and disseminated in the context of Rolle's pastoral ministry, that Rolle's work was grounded in a familiarity with standard pastoral texts and practices, that even the most contemplative portions of his writings can be seen as participating in a more holistic *cura animarum*, and finally that his presentation of first-person voices, including his own autobiographical one, is situated in practices of devotional reading.

In doing so it has challenged the perception of Rolle as an isolated author, showing him connected to a community of disciples in dissemination, sensitive to their various spiritual needs, and anticipating their voices in prayer. It has also challenged the perception of Rolle's works as monologic, organised around Rolle's own singular personality and paradigmatic spiritual life, and instead emphasised their compilatory and thus communal construction, blending together a wide range of existing genres. It has also sought to demystify Rolle's contemplative spirituality, challenging any perception of these works as esoteric ramblings of an idiosyncratic visionary, and arguing instead that they fit within a horizon of norms for pragmatic and functional devotional aids.

The huge quantity of surviving books conveying evidence of Rolle's reception make it difficult to consider in depth the implications of this thesis's arguments for the formation of Rolle as an author. Yet surely challenging the perceptions of his works as esoteric outpourings which became mystifyingly popular, and instead recognising Rolle as a pastoral author, whose works were designed with the spiritual development of readers in mind and mediate a wide range of conventional devotional genres, must contribute to the ongoing reassessment of Rolle's formation as perhaps the prime late-medieval contemplative *auctoritas* in England.

* * *

The idea that Rolle occupied an influential position in cultural history, or was a milestone in the evolution of cultural trends that would define late-medieval spirituality, is certainly one way of recognising that his writing is important, calibrating that importance with influence and cultural connectedness as its metric. But what if Rolle's works had reached us in a single manuscript and there were no signs that he exerted any substantial influence on later writers? Would they still be legitimate objects of substantial scholarly interest, purely on their own terms as pieces of writing?

The question I am essentially posing is whether Rolle's works are interesting from an aesthetic, literary perspective. Although such a question is theoretically problematic and somewhat anachronistic, since what we recognise as literary is contingent on modern assumptions and tastes which change even from one generation of scholarship to the next, some ascription of literary interest to Rolle's writings seems implicit in their justification as objects of study, especially since much scholarship on Rolle, even that which stresses his interest in terms of spirituality and late-medieval history, originates under the auspices of departments of English Literature. While such departments are often broad-minded, it is not atypical for literary scholars to make offhanded or implicit comments about the perceived literary value of objects of study. Even when they do not, it seems reasonable to speculate that many literary scholars' interests are motivated by opinions about the perceived aesthetic interest of the works that they read. Watson ended his study of Rolle by comparing him to Dante and Petrarch, implicitly assigning interest to him as a literary author and validating him as an object of study.[2]

It is not an entirely anachronistic question either, unless we are to suggest that the quality of Rolle's writings (however defined) played no role in his reception, or that whatever qualities medieval readers valued in texts would be wholly unrecognisable to modern readers. As Andrew Kraebel pointed out recently, Richard Ullerston describes Rolle as making his points 'eleganter'

[2] Watson, *Invention*, pp. 264–70.

('elegantly') and 'luculenter' ('brilliantly'), offering an unusual medieval recognition of aesthetic qualities in Rolle's writing.[3]

That said, determining how we can assess literary interest, both in terms of Rolle's contemporaries and modern tastes, is complex. The history of Rolle scholarship offers many a cautionary tale in the dangers of making any comments about the aesthetic value of a text. The legacy of Hope Emily Allen, and her continued usefulness, lies primarily in her extraordinarily industrious account of Rolle's circulation in manuscripts and of references to his works, whereas her judgments about his aesthetic interest in many cases seem comically subjective; for instance, she praised Rolle's 'delicate English style that makes us regret his loss the more', but was less favourable about his earlier works, reportedly written in 'a bastard Latin, which bores and repels'.[4] The *Melos amoris* is perhaps the clearest example in Rolle's corpus of an abrupt about-turn in fortunes. Although it was lambasted by earlier scholars, in the last few years it has undergone a reappraisal as one of Rolle's most extraordinary contributions to late-medieval religious writing.[5]

It is easy to take pot-shots at impressionistic opinions about the aesthetic interest of certain medieval texts, especially regarding religious treatises which were not written primarily to entertain, but such observations also perform a valuable service for scholarship, since they can jolt readers out of any preconception that certain kinds of texts are *de facto* uninteresting, especially those genres like Biblical commentaries which are particularly far removed from modern reading tastes (from mine at least) and which need to be read quite extensively to recognise what is unconventional or innovative.

[3] Kraebel, *Biblical Commentary*, p. 125.
[4] Allen, *Writings Ascribed*, p. 8.
[5] Riehle, *The Secret Within*, pp. 101, 121–34; Albin, *Melody of Love*. For previous (and in some cases incredibly offensive) criticisms of the *Melos*, see Albin, *Melody of Love*, p. 21.

Rather than attempting to justify any broad claim that Rolle's works should be considered interesting from an aesthetic or literary perspective, I wish to close this thesis by connecting its overarching argument with an area which, it seems to me, could benefit from an intervention of this kind. There is a tradition of literary scholarship which sees the pragmatic and the pastoral as the anathema of the literary. Perhaps this partly reflects the continued legacy of New Criticism, in which the purest literature was held to be that which can be stripped from its context, untethered from the illocutionary forces and authorial intentions that would delimit and restrict its meanings. Or perhaps it reflects a perception that any prescriptive or didactic agenda inevitably gets in the way of free expression. Nonetheless, that a dichotomy between the pastoral and the literary is perceived in some quarters is implicit in the following recent quotation from David Lawton:

> There is nothing more totalizing than pastoral rhetoric. It sets out to be the one and only voice to be heard by the expedient of silencing all others. It conveys the discourse of canon law rigidly applied in surveillance of the individual conscience; it has no more room than modern fundamentalisms for cultural diversity, for difference, for heterodoxy of thought or conduct, and, as they do, it seeks to exercise its prescriptive power everywhere, not only in the most private spaces but even inside its subjects' minds. Poetic fiction of Chaucer's kind, by contrast, explores multiplicity... pastoral discourse plays the role in Chaucer's work and culture that Stalinism played in Bakhtin's. Both are culturally and politically oppressive to the writer's play of voices.[6]

Lawton's opposition between pastoral rhetoric and Chaucerian poetry pits the pastoral against the literary, and this is both an aesthetic issue (insofar as he implicitly values the 'multiplicity' of 'poetic fiction') and an ethical one: Lawton sees the monologic voice of pastoral literature to be intrinsically oppressive of cultural difference. I do not wish to downplay the concerns Lawton expresses about religious intolerance in the Middle Ages. However, it does seem to me that there is the potential for a more complex narrative here.

In stressing the pastoral side of Rolle's writings in all their multi-facetedness, complexity, and cultural situatedness, one of the aims of this thesis has been to draw out qualities in his writing

[6] Lawton, *Voice*, p. 178.

which are typically valued as literary and interesting – their polyvocality, their soaring and sensory accounts of contemplative experience, and their hyperbolic dramatizations of saints and sinners – and to suggest that these aspects of Rolle's writings emerge from his pastoral aims, rather than in spite of them.

This is also not an entirely anachronistic point. Scholarship has long drawn attention to the pragmatic purpose of affective spirituality, which is full of dramatic and imaginative metaphorical language, and was designed to be useful and usable to medieval devotees.[7] Some sense of writing being aesthetically interesting was not alien from the pastoral tradition either, as represented by the widespread genre of the *ars praedicandi* ('the art of preaching'). While of course we must be wary of any conflation of this term 'ars' with the modern conception of 'art', such a phrase surely implied some recognition of the craftsmanship and skill required to write sermons, and positions the activity of doing so alongside other disciplines characterised by medieval writers as *artes*.

Moreover, this thesis has implicitly argued for the interest of the swathes of *pastoralia* which survive and whose depths remain largely unexplored. It has suggested that Lawton's perspective is rather limited. While much of the material is basic, repetitive, and conventional, this whole stratum of literature is far from being monologic or oppressive. It offers an insight into the bread and butter of medieval faith in motion, in material which was constantly being reshaped and repurposed for new audiences, and over which scribes exercised agency in compiling and adjusting material in creative ways. It offers insights into how the average Christian engaged with God. In Bonaventure's understanding, the *multiplex modi* (many modes or genres) of Scripture reflect the way it must address the spiritual needs of a diverse readership. In the same way, pastoral literature represents an almost incomprehensibly diverse assembly of different voices and perspectives,

[7] In relation to Rolle, see especially Vincent Gillespie, 'Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity', in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 243–76.

designed to accomplish the salvific work of spiritual development in every individual. Rolle's own writings witness the way in which this diversity can be leveraged in producing writings that are complex and interesting, reaching to the heights of contemplation, whilst also fulfilling pragmatic functions in the service of drawing people closer to God – that primary and fundamental aim of medieval devotional life.

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