This [the hope of eternal bliss] makes me walk with such delight in the pleasant gardens of thy Holy Scripture; here I am diligent to gather the sweet flowers of God's word and promises: I devour them by reading, I chew the cud upon them by frequent recollection; I lay them up in memory as a most valuable treasure; and by tasting and feeding upon these delicious descriptions of another world, I take off great part of the bitter and nauseousness of this world. (St Augustine's Meditations)¹

The metaphors applied to Holy Scripture often reflect certain approaches to the text – how it should be read, under what conditions, to what end. During the Middle Ages, images of the Bible as a fructuous landscape (for example, a garden or blooming meadow) were closely identified with the monastic form of reading known as lectio divina. As in the epigraph above, cloistered readers saw themselves as walking through the sacra pagina, ‘tasting’ or murmuring aloud its words, ‘chewing’ or meditating upon their meaning, and then ‘swallowing’ or committing them to memory. All three activities were regarded as inseparable parts of lectio divina. ‘To speak, to think, to remember’, Jean Leclercq emphasizes, ‘are the three necessary phases of the same activity’.² The purpose of lectio divina was affective. It was not to acquire knowledge (unless self-knowledge) but to ‘excite’ penitence and greater love of God.³

How long this style of reading endured is an open question. Ivan Illich sees the mid-twelfth century as a turning point. Increasingly readers were literate in a ‘scholastic’ rather than

¹ Trans. George Stanhope, Pious breathings. Being the Meditations of St Augustine, his treatise of the Love of God, Soliloquies, and Manual (London: Brown, Clarke, 1757), 47 (I have modernized the punctuation).
³ Concerning the aims of lectio divina, see Leclercq, The love of learning, 72. The image of ‘exciting’ the mind and heart is conventional. Cf. Anselm’s Excitatio mentis ad contemplandum deum. On Anselm’s method of reading, G.R. Evans comments: ‘Anselm draws out everything he can from each text so as to “excite” his own mind and those of his readers to contemplation’ – The language and logic of the Bible: the earlier Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 18.
'monastic' way. That is, they approached books more visually than aurally, and they read more for information than for moral wisdom. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Illich notes, 'even the term lectio divina becomes less frequent and disappears entirely from some contexts'. Nevertheless, to speak of 'the demise of the lectio divina', as Illich does, is premature. The lectio divina did not die. It evolved. While monasticism was declining - hurt by the spread of new orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans, by the competition from secular learning, by its own excesses and corruption - a new lay spirituality was emerging that would adapt lectio divina to its own purposes. The practice of meditative reading would be transferred from Latin to vernacular texts, from the Vulgate Bible and its commentaries to writings only partially based on the Bible, including, paradoxically, many of those organized along 'scholastic' lines. Thanks to such developments it is probable that many more readers walked through the garden of Scripture in the later Middle Ages - tasting, chewing, swallowing its fruits after the manner of lectio divina - than at the height of the monastic movement.

The English Psalter of Richard Rolle (c.1300-49) may be taken as an example of the continuing vitality of lectio divina in the later Middle Ages. It is an obvious choice for illustrative purposes. The Psalter, after all, is the monastic text par excellence, the very basis of the Divine Office. Following Benedict's prescription in the Rule, medieval monks recited the Psalter every week in its entirety.

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4 In the vineyard of the text: a commentary to Hugh of St Victor's Didascalicon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 95. It is worth noting that Illich expresses the shift in terms of the imagery associated with each approach: 'They no longer approached the book as a vineyard, a garden, or the landscape for an adventuresome pilgrimage. The book connoted for them much more the treasury, the mine, the storage room - the scrutable text' (95).

5 In the vineyard of the text, 95.

6 For a discussion of the 'gradual decline in the external maintenance of the spiritual ideals of monasticism' between 1200 and 1500, see David Knowles, Christian monasticism (London: World University Library, 1969), 108-23.

7 The Middle English Prick of conscience is an outstanding example. Even more scholastic in organization is Chaucer's Parson's Tale, which the Parson refers to as a 'meditacioun' (The Riverside Chaucer, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 287). I intend to discuss both of these works elsewhere as an extension of the present essay.


9 The Rule of Saint Benedict, a commentary by the Right Rev. Dom Paul Delatte, trans. Justin McCann (London: Burns Oates, 1950), 183. Monks often recited the Psalms even more frequently than called for by the Rule; it is reported that Ralph, abbot of Battle (1107-24), recited the entire Psalter every day - David Knowles, The monastic order in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 471.
Although Rolle belonged to no religious order (he was a self-proclaimed hermit), he too meditated constantly upon the Psalter and urged his disciples to do the same. Indeed, his English Psalter made it possible for those with little or no knowledge of Latin to practise *lectio divina* as part of an individualized spiritual regimen. In his prologue Rolle metaphorically situates the work within the tradition of monastic reading. The Psalter, he says, is an *enclosed garden*: ‘In þaime es so mekil fairehede of vnderstandynge and medycyne of wordes þat þis boke es called garth enclosed, wele enseled, paradys fulle of appelles’. Like countless predecessors, Rolle saw the Bible as a rich, variegated landscape of hills and pastures – all contracted in the Psalms to a *hortus conclusus*. This single book ‘es perfeccioun of dyvyne pagine’ and ‘contenes al þat other bookes drawes langely, þat es, þe lare of þe ald testament and of þe new’. This is the traditional monastic view, echoed even today in Paul Delatte’s commentary on the *Rule*: ‘The psalter was created by God Himself to be for ever the authentic formulary of prayer. With its thoughts and in its language God has willed to be praised and honoured. The psalms express the deepest, most varied, and most delicate sentiments of the human heart, and answer all its needs’.

It is generally assumed that Rolle produced the *English Psalter* for the use of a young recluse of East Layton (Yorkshire) named Margaret Kirkeby. What was his intention? Despite the assertions


11 Alien, *English writings of Richard Rolle*, 5. Rolle uses the garden image again in *De Dei misericordia*, if indeed the work is his. Hope Emily Alien summarizes the allegory as follows: ‘A man was ill, an exile and wanderer. He meets a king of merciful countenance, who tells him that he also has known the exile’s disease, but is now cured, and has in his garden the herbs which cured him. The exile is sinful man, the king is David, and the garden is the Psalter’ There follow descriptions of the various ‘herbs’ *Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1927; repr. Kraus, 1966), 162.


14 *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, 183.

of the leading authority on Rolle (Hope Emily Allen), I do not believe that he wrote it 'with the purpose of passing on to an amateur of theology... all that suited her needs in the various interpretations stored in the library of theological specialists'. And despite the impressive fact that the work served as 'the standard English version of the psalms' until the sixteenth century, I do not believe that Rolle's principal end was to produce a vernacular translation of the Psalms. The so-called 'father of English literature' was capable of much better. Neither his translation nor his running commentary is impressive as such. Concerning the former, we read in the Manual of the writings in Middle English, 'Rolle's translation of the Vulgate is extremely literal, often reflecting the syntax of its original so closely as to be nearly incomprehensible'; and of his adaptation of Peter Lombard's commentary, 'Rolle strips away virtually all but the explication of the literal meaning of the text'. But the weaknesses of the translation and commentary, if they are weaknesses, can be explained by reference to a higher purpose. Rolle has outfitted the Psalter expressly to facilitate Margaret's reading of the text along the lines of lectio divina, to help her read as he reads, and toward the same end. His purpose is meditative.

That purpose is manifest both in the substance of the prologue and in the design of the English Psalter as a whole. The prologue begins: 'Grete habundans of gastly conforth and ioy in God comes in the hertes of haime hat says or synges devotly he psalmes in loyynge [i.e., praise] of Jhesu Crist... and kyndelis haire willes with he fire of luf... And ham hat lastes in haire devocioun he rayses ham in to contemplatif lyf and often syth in to soun and myrth of heuen'. This is a scheme that Rolle never tired of repeating. He writes in the Incendiwn.amoris: 'If thou desire to come to the love of God, and be kindled in thy desire for heavenly joys, and be brought to the despising of earthly things, be not negligent in meditating and reading holy scripture', and in The form of living:

16 Allen, English writings, 2.
20 Cf. Rolle's translation of laudem in Psalm 8:3 as 'louynge' (ed. Bramley, 28); and Middle English Dictionary. louen v. (4), 'Often hard to distinguish from loven ... "to praise" (from Old French loueur).
21 Allen, English writings, 4.
22 The fire of love and the mending of life, translated by Richard Misyn and done into modern English by Frances Comper (London: Methuen, 1914), 225.
'Pe lower party [of contemplacion] es meditacion of haly wrytyng, 
bat es Goddes wordes, . . . and also in lovynge of God in psalmes 
and ympnes or in prayers. Pe hegher party of contemplacion es 
behaldyng and sernyng of pe thynges of heven . . . ."23 Rolle's 
concept of meditative reading reflects the classic formulation of 
lectio divina: 'Quaerite legendo et invenietis meditando; pulsate orando 
et aperietur vobis contemplando' ('Seek in reading and you will find 
in meditation; knock in prayer, and it shall be opened to you in 
contemplation').24 This apophthegm, David Knowles observes, was 'taken as axiomatic by all'.25 One sees it everywhere. According to 
the Scala claustralium (translated into Middle English as A ladder of 
foure ronges): 'Thes foure degrees be so bounde togedir, and ich of 
hem seruyth so togedere to other, that the first as lesson & 
meditacion helpith litel or nouste withoute tho that be folwyng as 
prayer & contemplacion'.26 The Cistercian Arnoul of Bohérias 
assures readers of Holy Scripture that they have no need to enter 
an oratory to pray, 'but in reading itself, means will be found for 
prayer and contemplation'.27 John of Fécamp tells us in his 
Confessio theologica that he has gathered his favourite scriptural 
verses into this defloratiuncula (little posy), 'so that I might always 
able to carry about with me a short manual of the word of 
God, from the reading of which I might rekindle the flame of my 
love'.28 How does John proceed? 'The whole process is very 
simple,' says Gerard Sitwell: 'Quiet, meditative reading occupies 
the mind with thoughts about God, the thoughts give rise to acts, 
to affective prayer, and this may become simplified till it merges 
into a prayer which is contemplative'.29 Such analogues – and they could be multiplied endlessly30 – clearly identify Rolle's use 
of Scripture as monastic in character. His reading habits were 
modelled on lectio divina. To make the focal text of that tradition 
similarly accessible to those 'unlettered' in Latin, such as 
Margaret Kirkeby, was the motive behind the creation of the 
English Psalter.

23 Allen, English writings, 18.
24 Knowles, The monastic order in England, 470 n. 1 (italics added). The formula is 
derived from Matthew 7:7, 'Seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you' 
(Douay version).
26 Deonise hid divinite and other treatises on contemplative prayer related to the Cloud of 
27 Leclercq, The love of learning, 73.
29 Spiritual writers, 28.
30 See, for example, Sitwell’s discussion of Peter of Celle’s reading (Spiritual writers, 
34–42); Evans, The language and logic of the Bible, 13–26; The Didascalicon of Hugh St Victor, 
92–3; Mary Carruthers, The book of memory: a study of memory in medieval culture 
Once the purpose of the English Psalter is understood, the logic of its formal characteristics becomes apparent. A brief analysis of Rolle’s treatment of a few verses of Psalm 3 will show how his translation and exposition contribute to the use of the work as a vernacular text for lectio divina.

*Domine quid multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me; multi insurgunt adversum me.* ‘LORD, WHARTILLE ERE PEI MANYFALD PAT ANGRERS ME? MANY RISES OGAYNES ME? ’

‘Lord whartille’, ṭat es, whepher til ṭaire schendeschipe or myne? If I overcome ṭaime it es til my coroun, if ṭai overcome me it es my damnacioun.

‘Multiplyed ere ṭat angers me’, ṭat es, vices and fleschely covaytys agaynes wham ilke a rightwise man feghtes alle his lyve here; il men feghtes noght bot ogaynes God. For til hym ṭai make ṭaime contrarie and acordes ṭaime til synne. ‘Many’, ṭat es, fenedes and ṭe fenedes lyms, ‘rises ogaynes me’ for to put me dowen and bring me oute of charite als ṭei ere.

*Mulli dicunt anime mee, non est salus ipsi in deo eius.* ‘MANY SAYS TIL MY SAULE, DARE ES NA HELE TIL IT IN GOD OF HIM’. Pis saw es of be devel and of many syns ṭat waytes to bringe men in til despayre, als wo say, ‘þou has mekyl synned and it es hard to leve lust of þi flesche and likynge of þe werld. Do forth and lede þi lyf als þe list, for þi God wil noght hele þi saule’. þir ere lighers, and þai say to bigile þe, for Goddes mercy es ay redy til al þat forsakes syn, and þis þe prophet schewys, and says,

*Oculo mea ad dominum clamavi et exaudivit me de monte sancto suo.* ‘WITH MY VOYCE I CRIED TIL OUR’E LORD AND HE ME HERD FRA HIS HALY HILLE’. Voyce of hert, bat es, grete ðernynge of Goddes luf, sounes bfoare Crist. His praier he calles cryinge, for the force of fire of luf es in his saule, þat makis his prayer to thrille heuen. And so he herd hym fro his haly hille, þat es, of his rightwisnes, for it es rightwise byfor God to help hym þat es in angwys for his luf. . . .

Rolle continues in this vein through all 150 Psalms. What drives such single-minded exposition are the affective goals of lectio divina – the progression, described in verse 3, ‘fra erthly luf in[to] contemplacioun and luf of heven’. The textual apparatus cooperates. Rolle’s translation and commentary are designed to encourage the specific methods of lectio divina. As Margaret enters this enclosed garden, teeming with the fruits of God’s word, she is actually led by the shape of the work itself to ‘devour them by reading’, to ‘chew the cud upon them by frequent recollection’, to ‘lay them up in memory as a most valuable treasure’.

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31 Alien, *English writings*, 7–9. I have distinguished Rolle’s translation typographically by means of small capital letters.
Structurally Rolle’s Psalter incorporates the alternating rhythm of lectio et meditatio, the ‘devouring’ and ‘chewing’ of God’s word. The Latin text is the basis of the lectio. Monastic lectio, as noted in the beginning, involves an audible movement of the lips. For this reason medieval sources often refer to monasteries as ‘the dwelling places of mumblers and munchers’. Rolle expects Margaret also to pronounce the words of the Psalms aloud, for, as he says in the prologue, ‘gastly conforth and ioy in God comes in þe hertes of þaime þat says or synges devoutly þe psalmes’. By ‘þe psalmes’ is meant the Vulgate text. Even the reader with little or no knowledge of Latin can vocalize the syllables so as to ‘taste’ God’s word. The translation is not intended to be a substitute for lectio. Rolle has provided it, he explains, ‘so þat þai þat knawes noght Latyn, be þe Inglis may cum tille many Latyn wordes’. This explanation recalls the interlinear glosses found in older Psalters, such as the Lambeth Psalter, where suspended beneath each word of the Latin text is its equivalent in Old English (indeed, these glossed Psalters may have provided the inspiration for the English Psalter). Rolle’s translation is only a little less rigid than these glosses. His attempt to preserve as far as possible a corresponding word order has often produced syntactic structures that are, as the Manual says, ‘nearly incomprehensible’. What is a reader to make of the translation of verse 2, above, as ‘Jare es na hele til it in God of him’? Or of similar word-for-word constructions such as the following from Psalms 7:4 and 140:7?

Si reddidi retribuentibus michi mala: decidam merito ad inimicis meis inanis.
If I seldid til yeldand til me illes; down fall I thurgh my desert, of myn enmys, ydel.

Quoniam adhuc & oracio mea in beneplacitis eorum: absorpti sunt vincti petre iudices eorum.
Forwhi 3it and my prayere in thaire welewillyngis: swelighid ere ioynyd til the stane the iuges of thaim.

Rolle’s unidiomatic rendering of exaltans caput meum in the excerpt from Psalm 3 (verse 3) as ‘heghand my heved’ typifies his literal

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32 Illich, In the vineyard of the text, 54.
33 Leclercq, The love of learning, 16; see also 72-3. The continuing practice of ‘vocalized reading’ into the seventeenth century is noted by Margaret Aston, Lollards and reformers: images and literacy in late medieval religion (London: Hambledon, 1984), 194-5.
34 There are thirteen extant Psalters with interlinear glosses in Old English. For a survey of these, see Minnie Cate Morrell, A manual of Old English biblical materials (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1965), 45-153. Allen observes that such interlinear glosses ‘may have first suggested to Rolle the literary use of English’ (English writings, 1).
36 The Psalter, 470.
treatment of Latin participles. Just as literal is his treatment of implied linking verbs. Thus Beatus vir (Psalm 1:1) appears simply as 'Blisful man', and omnis homo mendax (Psalm 115:2) as 'ilke man leghere'.

Rolle's aim seems to be a translation that is not only syntactically and grammatically parallel but also, in the case of individual words, morphologically identical. The translation of susceptor as 'uptaker' in verse 3 of the excerpt is typical of Rolle's treatment of Latin prefixes. Ab- will nearly always come into English as 'oway' (Psalm 1:1, Beatus vir qui non abijt, 'Blisful man the whilk oway 3ed noght'); circum- as 'um-' (Psalm 3:6, circumdantis me, 'vmgifand me'); ex- as 'out-' (Psalm 5:12, expelle eos, 'out pute thaim'); in- as 'in-' (Psalm 137:4, inuocauero te, 'I incall the'); super- as 'on-' or 'ouer-' (Psalm 57:8, supercididit ignis, 'onfll fire'; Psalm 118:114, supersperaui, 'I ouyrhopid'). Occasionally Rolle's treatment of prefixes is so literal that the Latin must be used to gloss the English, as in his translation of the opening phrase of Psalm 8:3, Ex ore infancium & lactencium (Douai: 'Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings') as 'Of the mouthe of noght spekand and sowkand'. The reading is etymologically exact (infans, 'one not speaking or not yet able to speak, hence a young child'), but to make any sense of it a reader would need at least a minimal knowledge of Latin. Only in his commentary on the verse, where Rolle combines the general and etymological senses of the word, is the meaning evident: 'of the mouthe of barnes that spekis noght 3it'.

Clearly Rolle's English version of the Psalter cannot be read, and probably was not intended to be read, as a stand-alone translation. Repeatedly one is forced back to the original text. Reading of this sort is not a linear process but a constant up-and-down movement, a stitching together of Latin and English. This oscillation between text and gloss is characteristic of lectio divina. Beryl Smalley offers a revealing account of such 'holy reading' in the choir itself: 'We hear of a monk of exemplary piety who always carried a glossed Psalter, so as to study the glosses while chanting the Psalms. If he came to a phrase that he did not understand, his eyes would at once turn to the glosses. Plainsong was slow enough

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37 Cf. the Douai translation, 'the lifter up of my head'. Other examples include Psalm 8:3 (ed. Bramley, 28) and Psalm 146:6 (ed. Bramley, 48).
38 Bramley, The Psalter, 5, 40/4.
39 These examples appear in Bramley's edition of the English Psalter on the following pages: 5, 14, 20, 461, 206, +27.
40 Bramley, The Psalter, 28.
at this period to allow of meditation on the words as they were chanted'. 42 This story from Peter the Venerable's *De miraculis* illustrates how a glossed Psalter, such as Rolle's, might lend itself to the alternating rhythm of *lectio et meditatio*. While the lips form the words, the eyes dart simultaneously to the gloss. As the reader is led back and forth to reflect on the sounds, shapes, and meanings of the holy words, *lectio* shades into *meditatio*.

Peter's story also suggests that meditation is essentially a form of exegesis. The process begins at the most basic, grammatical level. 44 For example, Rolle's translation of *infancium* in Psalm 8:3 (*Ex ore infancium & lactencium perfecisti laudem*) as 'of noght speakand' might set in motion a chain of questions about the meaning of the verse. How is it possible for God to perfect praise out of the mouths of those 'noght spekand'? Can praise be rendered in other ways than by speaking? For example, by deeds? Are deeds, then, a more 'perfect' form of praise? *Meditatio* is a process of associated thoughts, like these, generated by the specific language of a text. As Hugh of St Victor says, 'Meditation takes its start from reading . . ., drawing together now these, now those causes of things, or now, penetrating into profundities, leaving nothing doubtful, nothing obscure'. 45 The direction pointed by Rolle's commentary on Psalm 8:3 is (in exegetical terms) 'moral', in keeping with Margaret's spiritual vocation: those 'noght spekand' are the babes of Christ 'that kan noght speke the wisdom of this warld'. 46 But the direction taken might just as easily have been 'historical' or 'allegorical'. Indeed, my example of the chain of questions raised by the etymological sense of *infamium* assumes liturgical form in the Mass of Holy Innocents, where the opening prayer, based on Psalm 8:3, commemorates the martyred Innocents who showed forth their praise *non loquendo sed moriendo* ('not by speaking but by dying'). 47

The modulation of moral and historical interpretations is an especially revealing feature of the commentary portion of the *English Psalter*. It is hardly accurate to say, as *A manual of the

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42 *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 45.
43 Carruthers argues that *lectio* is vocal, *meditatio* silent (*The book of memory*, 170–4).
44 As Leclercq notes, 'In the monastery, the *lectio divina*, which begins with grammar, terminates in compunction, in desire of heaven' (*The love of learning*, 72).
45 *The Didascalicon* of Hugh of St Victor, 92–3. Cf. Leclercq, 'To meditate is to attach oneself closely to the sentence being recited and weigh all its words in order to sound the depths of their full meaning' (*The love of learning*, 73).
writings in Middle English does. that 'Rolle strips away virtually all but the explication of the literal meaning of the text'. Where possible he focuses on the moral or 'tropological’ interpretation, that is, on the drama of the individual soul. This approach is characteristic of lectio divina. As Gerard Sitwell observes, concerning Peter of Celle's instructions in his treatise Of mortification and reading:

The real nature of the spiritual reading of the cloisters is disclosed when he tells us that all the questions raised by it are to be reduced to one, the relationship of ourselves to God – in other words the texts are all to be applied to the individual soul. If the psalmist is surrounded by his enemies, it is my soul which is beset with evil tendencies, the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land is the journey of my soul from the bondage of sin to the freedom of heaven. The application of the texts in this way will bring about an intimacy with God, and, equally important, a knowledge of ourselves. 48

Here we see the guiding principle of Rolle’s commentary. In the excerpt from Psalm 3, above, it is clear from the start that the Psalms' enemies are also ‘my’ enemies. The speaker, says Rolle, is ‘Je voyce of Cristenmans saule’, complaining of the ‘vices and fleschly covaytys agaynes wham ilke a rightwise man feghtes alle his lyve here’. 49 The voices of speaker and reader merge. As Margaret murmurs the words of the Psalmist, multi insurgunt adversum me, she is to make them her own by ‘recollecting’ her personal experiences: the multi rise up ‘for to put me dowen and bring me oute of charite’. This ‘me’ is not simply an extension of the Psalmist’s voice into the commentary. Consider, for the sake of contrast, Rolle’s handling of verse 4. The Psalmist says, ‘With my voyce I cried til oure Lord’, but the first-person pronoun here is not carried over into the interpretation. This is not ‘Je voyce of Christenmans saule’. It is the voice specially of one ‘in angwys for his luf’ of God – the ‘fire of luf es in his saule’, the words are ‘his praiers’. Throughout the commentary Rolle carefully regulates his use of pronouns in this way to fit his disciple’s level of spiritual development. Margaret was a beginner. She could not yet say, from personal experience, ‘With my voyce I cried til oure Lord’, if this is the ‘Voyce of hert, bat es, grete 3ernynge of Goddes luf”; nor yet, ‘As the hert 3ernys till the welles of waters, swa my saule 3ernys til


49 Rolle’s interpretation represents only one of several possibilities. Augustine reads the voice here as that of Christ, i.e., allegorically. See his Expositions on the Book of Psalms, in A select library of Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church, 1st series, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 4-8.
the, god', if these words belong specially to 'perfit men, that ere brennand with the flaumme of godis luf, and passis in till contemplatife life'. Rolle himself, who claims to have felt this 'fire of luf' and to have passed into a contemplative state, probably uttered them as if they were his own.

This principle of interpretative decorum, which assigns the 'voices' throughout the exposition, explains the different approaches of Rolle's English Psalter and his Latin Psalter. Hope Emily Alien concludes, after a thorough study of their contents, that the difference between the two is not language alone: 'With the change of language there came a change of public, and the audience to which he addressed his vernacular version would naturally require a different choice among the four-fold interpretations which the medieval mind recognized as possible in Scriptural commentary, from that required by the Latin version'. Because it is addressed to a more advanced audience (spiritually as well as intellectually), Rolle's Latin Psalter places greater emphasis than his English Psalter on the moral interpretation. This pattern is repeated in Rolle's Latin and English versions of other works. According to Alien, Rolle's two commentaries on the Magnificat differ in fundamental purpose. The English piece interprets the texts in the person of the Virgin Mary, and thus gives what is perhaps to be designated as the 'historical' interpretation. The Latin, on the other hand, makes the piece into a drama of the individual soul, and thus gives what should perhaps be called the 'moral' interpretation.

Why Rolle should have varied the interpretative levels in his commentaries on the Magnificat is not clear - unless, like his Psalters, they are actually meditative texts aimed at different audiences. In fact, the relation of these texts to the Psalter is crucial to an understanding of their nature. Most manuscripts of the English Psalter contain the Magnificat along with the six Canticles of the Old Testament. These seven pieces follow Psalm 150 'without

50 Bramley, The Psalter, 153 (Psalm 41:4).
51 Rolle devotes an entire treatise, his Incendium amoris, to the ecstasy of this love. The experience is central to his mysticism, and Hope Emily Alien repeatedly cites the image of fire or heat (calor) as a touchstone of authenticity in establishing the hermit's canon (Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, 84–92, 108–10, et seq.). Rolle's use of Scripture in this way is not in itself inappropriate. As Robert of Bridlington emphasizes, echoing Augustine, the words of Scripture belong to those who live them (Robert of Bridlington's Dialogue, 13a).
52 Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, 178. Alien rejects Horstman's assumption that the English Psalter is a translation of his Latin one.
53 Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, 192.
a break'. 55 Dorothy Everett draws the following inference:
'Evidently they were intended to be read with the Psalter ... . Rolle
was apparently accustomed to think of the Canticles in connection
with the Psalter, for he includes the six from the Old Testament (i.e.
all those in his English Psalter except the Magnificat) in his Latin
Psalter also'. 56 Hope Emily Allen has nothing to add to Everett's
'thorough account' of the matter. 57 But the account is far from
thorough.

If Rolle was 'accustomed to think of the Canticles in
connection with the Psalter', as Everett says, it is only because
churchmen everywhere were accustomed to do the same. Liturgical
Psalters normally include these Canticles. 58 Like Rolle's two Psalters,
they also show the Canticles following immediately after Psalm 150
(often without a break), and sometimes they are glossed throughout
as well. 59 The Old English Psalters, already mentioned as
precedents for Rolle's glosses, are no exception. 60 These 'extended
Psalters' were meant for use as service books. They include the
Canticles because these were, like the Psalms, a regular part of the
Divine Office. The six Old Testament Canticles in Rolle's English
Psalter plus the Cantus trium puerum (from Daniel 3:52-90) made
up the 'ferial Canticles', recited (one for each day of the week) at
Lauds. 61 The Magnificat, known as 'the last Canticle of the Old
and the first of the New Testament', is substituted for the Cantus trium
puerum in some Psalters as it is in Rolle's English Psalter. 62

There can be no doubt, then, that Rolle's English Psalter,
including the Canticles, was modelled after the liturgical Psalter.
The essential difference is that his English Psalter was designed not
for public worship but for private devotion. In keeping with this
purpose, Rolle presents the Canticles just as he did the Psalms—
Latin text, English translation, and exposition — and, again, he

55 Dorothy Everett, 'The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole',
Modern Language Review, 17 (1922), 223.
56 'The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle', 224.
57 Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, 170.
58 For example, all but a few of the Psalters catalogued in the first two volumes of N.R.
followed by the Canticles. See in volume 1 pages 240, 255, 265, 295, 302, 429; in volume 2
pages 32, 58, 104, 182, 189, 207, 218, 231, 250, 344, 384, 414, 415, 799, 815, 853, 875, and
906.
59 E.g., Ker, Medieval manuscripts, vol. 2, 58, 250.
60 Morrell, A manual of Old English biblical materials, 47-8.
61 For a general study, see James Mearns, The Canticles of the Christian Church
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).
535. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) was recited immediately before the prayer of the daily
Office (ibid.). A glance at the contents of the Psalters listed in Ker (above, note 58) will show
the considerable variation in the selection of Canticles used. Everett discusses this variation
in Rolle manuscripts in 'The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle', 223-7.
modulates the 'voice' according to the spiritual level of the reader, presumably Margaret Kirkeby. In his exposition of the first Canticle Isaiah's voice is fused with hers: 'Til the louyng of the I sall shrife my synnys . . .'; but in his exposition of the last, the Magnificat, the emphasis is all on Mary, on 'hur gladnes', on 'hir ioy', for 'before all in pryuelege of brennand luf, sho louyd god . . . kyndild with the fyre of the holy gost'. In time, perhaps, Margaret would attain the experience of such love herself, turning Mary's ecstasy into 'my gladnes' and 'my ioy'.

The English Psalter stands as a monumental argument against 'the demise of the lectio divina'. It not only opened a path for vernacular readers into the enclosed garden of the Psalms, but it also led them by the design of its translation and exposition toward a meditative form of reading. In his subsequent epistle to Margaret (The form of living) Rolle describes for her the process of lectio divina, whereby the 'meditacion of haly wrytyng' may lift a reader to the actual 'behaldyng and sernyng of þe thynges of heven'. Would Rolle have tempted her with the promise if he did not think he had provided the means for its fulfillment?

63 Bramley, The Psalter, 523-4.
64 Allen, English writing, 118.