

TWO TYPES OF MYSTIC LANGUAGE

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The fourteenth-century England was particularly favoured with a race of highly devoted seekers after God. The earlier tradition of religious faith had lived on into this period and was to persist even into the following, as we see in the great popularity of devotional writings such as the *Ancrene Riwe*, an important source of prose style in mediaeval England. But even while the fame of the *Ancrene Riwe* was at its height, there appeared on the scene Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, 'the second great figure of Middle English prose', as Professor R. W. Chambers calls him.¹⁾ He was a student of Oxford, but whether he was also 'socius' of La Sorbonne has been disputed. The assumption Miss H. E. Allen and Dom Noetinger have made that he was, though based on a former Sorbonne manuscript, has now been proved groundless by Professor E.J.F. Arnould, who has carefully examined the Arsenal manuscripts, in which mention is frequently made of Richardus de Hampole.²⁾ *Magistri Ricardi* of the compilers' source-book, *Liber Prioris*, might refer to any Ricardus Anglici who had sojourned at La Sorbonne from time to time. Besides, *Ricardus Anglici, seu Radulphi de Anglia* in the compilers' notes on the resident students seems to have been wrongly associated with the English name *Rollum*. It is more likely that Richard Rolle lived under the influence of the native mystic tradition which flourished on a Northern soil unfed by the waters of the Continental mysticism.

- 1) R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*. OUP., 1957, p. ci.
- 2) E. J. F. Arnould (ed.), *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. Oxford, 1957, p. 210 f.

Other figures to follow were Julian of Norwich, author of the *Revelations of Divine Love*, notable for the sweetness of temper in which her 'shewings' are described, Walter Hilton, author of *The Scale of Perfection*, a treatise on *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, who is Wyclif's contemporary, and also the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, from which Hilton himself quotes.

To the same anonymous writer are often attributed five short treatises found together in two of the extant manuscripts of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (MS. Harleian 674 and MS. Kk. vi. 26, Cambridge University Library).³⁾ One of these treatises, titled *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, and another, called *A Pistle of Discrecioun of Stirings*, are found only in the two above-named manuscripts, while the other three are also preserved in some other manuscripts. The first of these is introduced by a short prologue, in which the writer tells us how he has Englished it from a Latin translation of the *Mystica Theologia* of Dionysius the Areopagite, in the pseudo-Dionysian tradition. Professor Phyllis Hodgson, editor of these treatises for The Early English Text Society, has shown clearly that 'the first three chapters ... are a close translation of the Latin version of Johannes Sarracenus, and that the last two are based chiefly on the work of Vercellensis,' namely, Thomas Gallus, Abbot of St. Andrew's, Vercelli († 1246), 'one of the most prolific commentators on the works of Dionysius in the Middle Ages, and possibly also the most influential.' The introductory prologue reads:

"Þis wrytyng þat next folowep is þe Ingliche of a book þat Seynte Denys wrote vnto Timothe, þe whiche is clepid in Latyn tonge *Mistica Theologia*. Of þe whiche book, for-þi þat it is mad minde (*i. e.* 'mentioned') in þe 70 chapter of a book wretin before (þe whiche is clepid *Þe Cloude of Vnknowing*) how þat Denis sentence wol cleerli afferme al þat is wretyn in

3) *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson. E.E.T.S., O.S. 218. OUP., 1958, pp.x, xiv, etc.

þat same book: þerfore, in translacioun of it, I haue not onliche folowed þe nakid lettre of þe text, bot for to declare þe hardnes of it, I haue moche folowed þe sentence of þe Abbot of Seinte Victore, a noble & a worþi expositour of þis same book.'

The writer explicitly says here that *The Cloude of Vnknowing* and *Hid Diuinite* are related in thought, being both derived from the Dionysian tradition. The phrase 'a book wretin before' even suggests the identity of the author, though disputed by the critics.

To return to Richard Rolle. It was soon after he left Oxford that he began to meditate on the vanity of the world and decided to devote his life to religious contemplation. The episode of his flight into the life of a hermit, how he made himself a crude hermit's garb out of his sister's dresses and his father's hood and ran away, is well-known. His contemplative life was productive of significant meditative writings of high order, which immediately attracted his contemporary readers' attention and that of the following generations. The Latin works include, among others, *Melos Amoris*, *Officium*, *De Emendatione Peccatoris*, and *Incendium Amoris*. Equally important are his English works. After admitting the difficulty of reading the intricately alliterative *Melos Amoris*, Miss Allen concludes that 'Rolle should be judged by the wise, modest, and often felicitous English works of later life.'⁴

We are not going here into the history of influence that earlier religious works such as *Ancrene Riwle* and *The Wooing of Our Lord*, for example, may have played on the formation of Rolle's English prose, but we aim at a short survey of some of the characteristic features of his expressive style.

The main theme of some of his English writings, *Meditations on the Passion*, *A Song of the Love of Jesus*, *Gastly Gladnesse*, *Ego*

4) English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, ed. by Hope Emily Allen. Oxford, 1931, p. xxv. Also cf. R. M. Wilson, *Three Middle English Mystics. Essays and Studies*, New Series, 1956, 91.

Dormio, The Form of Living, and the rest is the divine love, and his language is deeply emotional, occasionally even physical, as his recurrent tone of 'sweetness, song, and heat' indicates.

A. Language of Richard Rolle

The common features of the relation between the elements of linguistic structure are said to be contiguity and similarity, or in terms borrowed from rhetoric, metonymic and metaphoric. "La métonymie exploite des rapports qui existent réellement dans le monde extérieur et dans notre monde de concepts. La métaphore," continues Albert Henry,⁵⁾ "elle, se fonde sur des relations qui surgissent dans l'intuition même qui lance la métaphore en question. La métaphore fixe des équivalences d'imagination." He further explains: "La métonymie procède de l'observation objective: elle découvre et traduit un lien qui est dans nos représentations des choses." This twofold character of language is expressly stated by R. Jakobson when he says: "The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity."⁶⁾ In the common structural terminology, a message may be perceived as a combination of sentences, words, phonemes, etc., which are selected from all the possible constituents of a code. Combination rests upon the principle of contiguity, and selection upon that of similarity, which varies between synonymy and antonymy in gradual degrees.

The complexities of a writer's language are largely reflections of its structural involvement in the contexture of combination and selection, and also due to the variable relations between different semantic patterns and the non-linguistic reality. A brief survey will

5) Albert Henry, *Métonymie et métaphore*. Paris, 1971, p. 63.

6) Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*. 'S-Gravenhage, 1956, p. 76.

be made in the following pages, first, of the language of Richard Rolle along these lines.

I. Combination.

In *The Form of Living* (abbr. *FL.*), cap. 1, in Miss Allen's edition, we have the usual type of phonological distribution in the word-initial to be found in mediaeval prose: 365 instances of the CV-type word as against 121 instances of the VC-type word in 50 lines respectively. The VC-type words include a large number of particles and pronouns besides a few content-words. The number of the CCV-type words falls far below that of the CV-type words: 26 instances only in 50 lines. The order of dominance of these types of words is, therefore, 1. the CV-type, 2. the VC-type (including the VCC-type), and 3. the CCV-type. The initial consonant clusters in the last type are various. (Capitulum 1 contains 152 lines in all.)

- a. Liquids preceded by plosives, fricatives, or glides.
 br- 4, cr- 7, dr- 3, gr- 4, pr- 7, tr- 2;
 fr- 2, thr- 3; str- 3;
 wr- 5.
 cl- 1, gl- 4; (bl- and pl- are supplied from other parts of *FL.*)
 fl- 3, sl- 2, also scl- from other parts.
- b. Plosives preceded by fricatives. Voiceless.
 sk- 65, sp- 3, st- 8.
- c. Nasals preceded by plosives or fricatives.
 kn- 3; (sm- is supplied from *Meditations on the Passion*, abbr. MP.)
- d. Semivowel /w/ preceded by plosives or fricatives.
 dw- 1, sw- 7; (tw- is supplied from other parts of *FL.*)
- e. Fricative preceded by plosive. Only orthographically.
 ps- (this is supplied from other parts of *FL.*: psalmes.)
 /p/ in *psalm* was already silent in OE. *sealm*.

These consonant clusters occur comparatively less frequently, and even less so in alliteration. In *Ego Dormio* (*ED.*), we read, however,

Als stremes of þe strande; (1. 230),
and also

luf langyng þat in my breste es bredde (1. 333),

but

Jhesu, my dere and my drewry, delyte ert þou to syng (1. 341).

In rhyming, the initial consonant or consonant group seems irrelevant:

my state... stedde 335/ brest... my rest 338.

The general character of Rolle's English is intellectual and expository. In his Prologue to *The English Psalter*, he states explicitly that he is writing in plain language for the ordinary reader: "In þis werk I seke no strange Inglis, bot lightest and comunest and swilke þat es mast like vnto þe Latyn, so þat þai þat knawes noght Latyn, be þe Inglis may cum tille many Latyn wordes." But his mastery of English prose rises far above the common, and his art of style is both studied and effective.

Some words frequently occur together in direct sequence in Rolle. So we have 'lufsum lyf' in: His lufsum lyf was layde ful lowe (*Lyrics*, 43/42), cf. Luf es lyf þat lastes ay, þar it in Criste es feste; (*L.*, 43/1), Lere to luf, if þou wyl lyfe (*L.*, 44/17); and seke þe joy lastand (*FL.*, 85/31), þai gif joy endles for a litell joy of þis lyfe (*FL.*, 86/13—4). These consecutive words often form the components of some basic concepts in Rolle's writings.

More frequently, they are found in concurrence in wider contexts. The simplest and most usual type of concurrence is cumulation of constituents in dyad, triad, or quaternion, in which the semantic relation of synonymy or antonymy may be expressed.

Dyad: þe whilk syght sall be mede and mete (*FL.*, 96/45), in lust and letchery of þis lyfe (*FL.*, 96/52), þe kyng of joy in þe fayrhede and in þe schynyng of his maieste (*FL.*, 96/44—45), Þei knewe it was owtrage and wrong þat þou soffrede, and folwyd þe, wepyng and syschyng sore (*MP.*, 22/91—93), Swete Jhesu, I yeld þe

pankyng and gracis for al þe steppis and pacis þat þou yede toward þyn owne peyne and þyn owen deth (*MP.*, 31/131—3), oure trespas and mysdedes (*MP.*, 32/145—6), (scho) castys thaym owte and puttes thaym awaye (*The Bee and the Stork*, abbr. *BS.*, 54/3—4), owther in prayer or in gode meditacioun (*The Commandment*, abbr. *C.*, 75/78—9), in lufe and charite (*FL.*, 114/190), etc.

Dyadic phrases are in many cases expressions of antonymic relation between two opposite poles of meaning upon which Rolle's world of belief is constructed: Til men and wymen þat takes þam til actife lyfe (*FL.*, 117/19), Contemplatife lyf hase twa partyes, a lower and a heer (*FL.*, 118/35—6), for persecucioun of gastly enmys and bodily (*The English Psalter*, abbr. *Ps.* 7/4—5), þei flater for aw or for favor (*Ps.*, 10/79), I sal thanke hym with ioy in thoght and dede (*Ps.*, 13/80—81), I slepe, and my hert wakes (*Ego Dormio*, abbr. *ED.*, 70/289), gyftes in body and in saule (*ED.*, 70/304—7), etc.

Triadic ideas are one of the prevalent features in mediaeval theology; and some of them are introduced into Rolle's system of thought: thre wrechednes (*FL.*, 85/2), In thre maners þe devell has power to be in a man (*FL.*, 89/141), The thynges þat clenese us of þat filth er thre (*FL.*, 99/101), Thre degrees of lufe I sal tell þe (*FL.*, 104/1) etc. Miss Allen quotes the Victorine threefold doctrine of Scriptural interpretation, which Rolle has enlarged in a certain way (*op. cit.*, p. 124): "Divine Scripture, with threefold meaning, considers its matter historically, allegorically, and tropologically."

This fact will account for some instances of triadic expression in Rolle, although others may be explained as examples of a mediaeval rhetorical device common in contemporary literature.

Triad: And neuer-þe-latter þai thynk þamself vylest of all, and haldes þam wretchedest, lest, and lawest (*FL.*, 93/14—16), þou sall wyt þat clenese behoves be keped in hert, and in mouth, and in werk (*FL.*, 100/117—8), Inseparabel es þi lufe, when al þi hert and þi thoght and þi myght es swa haly, swa enterely, and swa perfytely festend, sett, and stabeld in Jhesu Cryste, þat þi thoght comes never

of hym, never departyd fra hym, outaken slepyng (*FL.*, 105/18—22), Als so pis boke es distynged in thris fyfty psalmes in þe whilke iij states of Cristens mans religioun ere signifyed; þe first in penaunce, þe toþer in rightwisenes, þe thrid in lovyng of endeles lyf (*Ps.*, 6/48—52), Til ane ympne falles thre thynges, lovyng of God, ioyinge of hert or thought, affectuous ʒernynge of Godes luf (*Ps.*, 6/70—72), Bynd me to þe, swete Jhesu, in byleve, hope, and charite (*MP.*, 30/106—7), In bileve fest me to þe, swet Jhesu, þat never il lore, ne errour, ne heresy turne me fro my beleve (*MP.*, 30/107—31/109), Swet Jhesu, I þanke for al þe shame, anguyshe, and felonyes þat pou suffredest before Anne and Cayphas, Pilate and Herode (*MP.*, 31/136—8), Owre Lorde gyfes nocht to men fayrehede, ritchesse, and delytes for to sette þaire hertes on and dispend þam in synne (*ED.*, 70/300—2), Þe comawndement of God es, þat we lufeoure Lorde in aloure hert, in alloure saule, in aloure thought (*C.*, 73/1—2), Bot al þe delytes of pis world er faynt and fals and fayland in maste nede (*C.*, 75/62—3), Þe fyrst degre (*i. e.* of love) es called insuperabel, þe secunde inseparabel, þe thyrd singuler (*C.*, 74/33—4), understand þat his lufe es proved in thre thynges: in thynkyng, in spekyng, in wirkyng (*C.*, 78/177—79), etc.

These coordinates in a triad will be seen to represent the three different aspects of a particular idea or event, that the writer wishes to impress upon his reader. Sometimes a triad occurs in coupling with a dyad where Rolle intends to enter into a greater depth of thought, as in:

Þat turnyng till Jhesu es nocht els bot turnyng fra all þe covaytise and þe likyng and þe occupacions and bisynes of worldly thynges and of fleschly lust and vayne luf (*FL.*, 94/2—5; where we have the construction $a+b+c$ $((1+1)+(1+1(1+1)))$ in an ever-spreading branch), and graunt me to turne to þe in oft shrift in euche temptacion and tribulacion of my fleische, world, or enmy (*MP.*, 28/31—3), Swet Jhesu, I beseche þe for þy swet mercy, þat pou be my help and comfort in al temptacion, anguysh, or tribulacion

(*MP.*, 29/60—2), etc.

It may be said that dyads and triads are special forms of cumulation generally affected by mediaeval writers as a means of emphasizing some favourite ideas of theirs. This stylistic device of cumulation characterizes many of Rolle's writings.

Wakand þai er umwhile temptyd wyth foule thoghtys, vile lustes, wicked delites, with pryde, ire, envy, despaire, presumpcion, and oþer many (*FL.*, 90/43—5), obstinacion in ill, noy ('reluctance') to do gude, anger to serve God, sorow þat he dyd na mare ill, or þat he dyd nocht þat luste or þat will of his flesche, þe whilk he myght have done, etc. (*FL.*, 97/21—5), Þe synnes of þe hert er þir: ill thocht, ill delyte, assent till synne, desyre of ill, wikked will, ill suspencion, etc. (*FL.*, 97/10—12), For þi mykel mekenesse, þi mercy, þi myȝt (*MP.*, 24/171), for some pulled, some shoven þe, drowen þe, despised þe, skorned þe, tugged þe, and toren þe (*MP.*, 30/76—8), and let me, Lord, love þe ever þe lenger þe bettyre, þe more kunnyngely, þe more besyly, þe more stidfast (*MP.*, 31/126—8), For it (*i.e.* hys name Jhesu) chaces devels, and destroyes temptacions, and puttes away wykked dredes and vices, and clenses þe thocht (*C.*, 81/285—7), etc.

Sometimes it is the interrogative particles that are piled on to bring out the sense of perplexity that haunts human beings:

Another es: uncertente of owre endyng. For we wate never when we sal dye, ne whare we sal dye, ne how we sal dye, ne whider we sal ga when we er dede (*FL.*, 95/22—4).

Different contexts are frequently brought into relation of parallelism through the presence of a recurrent element common to them. Recurrence of a phoneme at the word-initial within a string of phrases has been commonly called alliteration. Recurrence of a word within a string of succeeding phrases is a similar phenomenon at the sentence level.

The use of alliteration in Rolle is often stylistically significant. It serves to link together words related in sense or synonymous, or those forming a semantic unit.

Alliteration: *þat blys þat nevermore blynnes* (*FL.*, 89/4), in sylence and slepe (*FL.*, 113/183), mede and mete (*FL.*, 96/4), agynsaiyng and strife agayne sothfastnes, grotchyng agayns God for any angwys, or noy (*FL.*, 98/37—9), lufe langyng (*FL.*, 107/7), a febyll man and a fleschly (*FL.*, cap. x, 108/4—5), als laumpe lyghtenand oure lyf (*Ps.*, 5/16), And þou es 'heghand my heved' (*Ps.*, 8/32—3), in what tribulacion or temptacioun þat bifalles (*Ps.*, 8/34—5), þat al my love hool be to þe in wille, worde, or werk (*MP.*, 31/122—3; still said in a Catholic prayer today), bright and brynnand in luf (*Ps.*, 12/70), 'þaire tonge'... es scharp swerd slaand saules (*Ps.*, 14/48: et lingua eorum gladius acutus), I sal synge and psalme I sal say (*Ps.*, 15/71), so bolnyd with bofetyng and with betyng, with spytyng, with spowtyng (*MP.*, 21/63—5), þi bonys styrten owte starke (*MP.*, 24/178), and my soule softyd in þat swete bath (*MP.*, 26/231—2), to sen þat selly sy3t (*MP.*, 27/259—60), al sek in synnes (*MP.*, 30/86), mak me grene in my beleve, growyng in grace, beryng fruyt of good workes (*MP.*, 35/245—46), Of al my fayrnes flowre (*ED.*, 71/325), I sytt and syng of luf langyng þat in my breste es bredde (*ED.*, 71/333), þan am I fylde and fedde (*ED.*, 71/336), Jhesu, my myrth and melody (*ED.*, 71/342), Jhesu, my hele and my hony (*ED.*, 71/343), in lovyng and lufyng of God (*FL.*, 106/64), etc. Repetition of words: Jhesu þat is my ioy, make me to rise in ioy of þe songe of þi lovyng, in mirthe of þi lufyng (*Ps.*, 15/79—81), Gyf me of þi sykynges, þat sykest so sore, þat I may syke with þe þat began þat woo (*MP.*, 23/141—2), for þe lufe þat þou lufes Jhesu (*ED.*, 66/180), So fayre in þi fayrehede (*ED.*, 70/315), etc.

Words are repeated more effectively in parallel structures:

If I overcome þaim (*i. e.* gastly enmys and bodily) it es my coroun, if þai overcome me it es my dampnacioun (*Ps.*, 7/7—8), if þe lyst lufe any thyng, lufe Jhesu Criste (*C.*, 75/55), etc.

The fondness for alliteration we have noted here is traditional. The West-Midland 'Wooing Group' is an antecedent for this type of

alliterative, rhythmic prose. *The Wohunge of ure Lauerd* opens in the following way :

Iesu swete iesu.
 mi druð. mi derling. mi drihtin.
 mi healend(.) mi huniter. mi haliwei.
 Swetter is munegunge of þe þen mildeu o muðe.
 Hwa ne mei luue þi luueli leor ?

Phrases like 'þi blisful bleo,' 'þ blisfule blodi bodi,' 'mi derewurðe druð,' 'þi mikle meknesse,' 'þin heali heaued,' 'þa heaðene hundes,' 'scharpe spere,' 'þ welefule wlite'; 'meknesse & mildschipe,' 'wið swepes & wið schurges,' 'i swa strong a swing (=affliction),' 'wunder ouer wundes,' etc. abound in the above-mentioned meditation.

More examples follow of recurrence of key-words in immediate sequence, which occasionally helps to enhance the emotional strength of eloquence :

I wate na better wele / Ðan in my thoght to fele / Ðe lif of his lufyng (Ps., 16 / 8—10), and among oþere I thank þe, Lord, of þat lokyng þat þou lokyd to þi decyple þat þe hadde forsakyn, seynt Petyr (MP., 20 / 31—3), Now may þow se þat wha sa will lufe wysely, hym behoves lufe lastand thyng lastandly, and passand thyng passandly (FL., 113 / 167—9).

The scholars have also pointed out the probable Latin influence by which the English rhetorical tradition benefited. We shall turn here to Richard Rolle himself, who in his Latin writings, especially *Melos Amoris*, has shown himself capable of handling the art of alliteration to an extremity of complexity. Thus he writes,

Decidit desolacio et mesticia foris mittitur, dum mens moratur in melodia et migrat in montem mellifluum manantem.

Alliteration in Rolle's Latin prose is more often systematic than unsystematic, as in his English writings. It links together related syntactic elements, which are usually semantically associated.

'Canens et calidus ac iubilans ingenter' is an example in point. 'Canens et calidus' are mystically associated terms in Rolle's religious

experience, of which 'iubilans ingenter' is the result. Similarly: 'Et hec sunt cantica canticorum et gaudia gaudiorum.' Sometimes, however, alliteration works more or less accidentally without any fixed system: "O dulce, delectabile et desiderandum osculum quod tantum confert gaudium, gignit devotos, nutrit ferventes, perficit pios."

Rolle's English prose shares some of this stylistic feature, though it is more or less sparingly used.⁶

II. Selection.

The other aspect of linguistic structure is substitution, which takes place within a syntactic framework. In the context $x \rightarrow y$, the element that may fill the blank is variable. The substitution counters may stand to each other in the meaning relation that varies from synonymy to antonymy. Synonymy in the dyadic context is the simplest case.

Synonyms in pairs: and þan lygge wanand and granand be þe wall (*FL.*, 87 / 85), in lufe and charite (*FL.*, 114 / 190), Þe voyce of haly men, þat covetys and ʒernys þe comyng of Jhesu Crist (*Ps.*, 10 / 4—5), I am in angwys and sorow in my saule of delayinge (*Ps.*, 11 / 27—8), my God and my hele (=deus meus et salutaris meus) (*Ps.* 16 / 2—3), in shrift and penance for my synnys (*MP.*, 28 / 29—30), al þat ferdnesse and angwishe þat þou suffred for us (*MP.*, 29 / 57—8), so þat... we mow repente of oure trespas and mysdedes (*MP.*, 32 / 144—6), al þe holdes and prisons þat þay helden þe in (*MP.*, 33 / 178—9), in overhope and overtrist to myself (*MP.*, 33 / 200—1), a large yift and a plenteuous shedyng of þy love (*MP.*, 34 / 231), in myrth and glew (*L.*, 45 / 44), abown layery lustes and vile covaytes (*Desyre and Delit*, abbr. *DD.*, 58 / 28—9), also with alliteration: of all mekest and mylde (*L.*, 46 / 73), Lufe es a gastly wynne, þat makes men bygge and balde (*L.*, 45 / 51), etc.

Synonyms may also occur in a series, centring upon a single idea: so þat al my hope, trist, comfort, solace, and gladnes be in þe (*MP.*, 31 / 115—6), and yif I fle to any syn of þe world, my fleishe,

or þe fend (*MP.*, 30 / 81—3), Jhesu, my lufe, my swetyng (*ED.*, 72 / 350), etc.

Antonymy is as often the meaning-relation implied in the dyadic context, where antithesis or a dichotomic view of the world is the key-tone.

Þare in es descrived þe medes of gode menne, þe pynes of ille menne (*Ps.*, 6 / 59—60), in euche wel or wo (*MP.*, 31 / 116), lufe gladdes ʒong and alde (*L.*, 45 / 49), etc.

Irony or paradox is a form of meaning framed in a wider context than an antonymic dyad:

bot he hase delyte and covaytes þat he war worthy for to suffer torment and payne for Crystes lufe (*FL.*, 112 / 116—8), Þe fift es, when þe thyng þat es hard in itselfe semes lyght for to do (*FL.*, 115 / 227—8), For als Austyne says, 'Lufreden ('love') es þat bryngs þe thyng þat es farre nerehande, and impossibel til possibel apertly.' (*FL.*, 115 / 228—30), Þe sevent es, delitabilite in sawle when he es in tribulacion, and makes lovyng to God in ilk anger þat he suffers (*FL.*, 115 / 236—8), my hert es redy to suffir angwys for thi luf (*Ps.*, 15 / 73—4), Þow al þi woo be þe leef, ne art þou nouʒt swythe large? (*MP.*, 23 / 139—40), Þe nyght it ('luf') tournes intil þe day, þi travel intyll reste (*L.*, 43 / 3), Jhesu þe nyght turnes to þe day, þe dawyng intil spryng (*L.*, 47 / 42), And oftsithes some haves þar likyng and þair wil in þis worlde, and hell in þe toþer; and some men er in pyne and persecucion and anguysch in þis lyfe, and hase heven to þair mede (*ED.*, 65 / 139—43), etc.

The predominant theme in these examples quoted above is characteristically the irony of love, which makes the impossible possible and turns the night into the day. In two succeeding clauses of similar structure, the meaning is often antithetic, as in the last example. More examples of antithesis may be quoted from Rolle.

Bot oftsythes it befallis þat ay þe mare joy and wonduryng þai haue withouten of þe lovyng of men, ay þe les joy þai have within of þe luf of God (*FL.*, 87 / 96—99), as þe love was makeles, so þe

sorewe was perelees (*MP.*, 22 / 113—4), Wa fra me away war went, and comne war my covaytyng (*L.*, 44 / 23), In fylth þai lat þaim ly, þaire fairhed wil þai tyne (*L.*, 50 / 14), similarly within the phrase structure: Lord, þat lyghted fro hevyn to erth for love of mankynd, fro so heigh to so low, fro so heigh lordship to so low poverté, fro so heigh nobeley to so low meschief, fro so heygh wel to so low wo, fro so heigh blys to so low peyne, fro so heigh myrthe to so low sorow, fro so lykyng a lyf to so peynful deth (*MP.*, 28 / 9—14), and let me love þat þou lovest and hate þat þou hatis (*MP.*, 31 / 128—9), Dede and lyf began to stryf wheþer myght maystre mare (*L.*, 43/43), bot outhire þay lufe þaym over mekill, settand thaire thoghte unryghtwysely on thaym, or þay luf thaym over lytill, yf þay doo noghte all as þey wolde till þam (*BS.*, 55 / 24—7), etc.

Word-meanings are sometimes associative, sometimes dissociative as we learn from the context.

Thus, 'charite' is dissociated from 'covaytise' in Rolle: Alsswa, seven experimentes er, þat a man be in charite. Ðe fyrst es, when al covatise of ertly thyng es slokkend in hym. For whare sa covaityse es, þare es na lufe of Cryste; þan if he have na covaytise, signe es þat he hase lufe (*FL.*, 114 / 212—6); it is associated, on the other hand, with 'burning yearning of heaven': Ðe secunde es, byrnanð ʒernyng of heven (*FL.*, 114 / 216—7).

'Wisdom', again, is associayed with 'poverty' and dissociated from 'coveting': Ðou ert wyse, when þou ert pore, withowten covaytise of þis world (*FL.*, 112 / 139—40), and elsewhere it is defined as denial of worldly things: Wysdom es, forgetyng of ertly thynges, and thynkyng of heven with discrecion in al mens dedes (*FL.*, 116 / 15—6).

Mystic terms that form a salient feature of Rolle's language are groups of such words that fall within common areas of semantic association or dissociation. They frequently occur in pairs or in antithesis.

Ðai gif joy endles for a litell joy of þis lyfe (*FL.*, 85 / 13—4),

þen he (*i. e.* God) gyves hymself till þaime in swetnes and delyte, in byrnyng of lufe, and in joy and melody (*FL.*, 90/29—31), In heven, þe awngels þat er byrnandest in lufe er nerrest God (*FL.*, 16—7), If þou lufe hym mykel, mykel joy and swetnes and byrnyng þou feles in his lufe, þat es þi comforth and strenght nyght and day (*FL.*, 103/20—2), And if þou... forsakes þe solace of þis lyfe, þou sal have for þis sorow þe joy of heven (*FL.*, 113 / 154—7), Ðan þe sang of lovyng ('praising') and of lufe es commen, þan þi thoght turnes intil sang and intil melody (*FL.*, 105 / 45—106 / 46), etc.

The associative chain of love-joy, joy-sweetness-melody (song)-burning holds together the inner texture of Rolle's mystic language, as it expands and develops itself. 'Ðe swetnes of Goddes lufe' has other associations: Swete lufe es, when þi body es chaste and þi thoght clene (*FL.*, 113 / 173—4), Nowe, swet Jhesu, here (*MP.*, 32 / 150), Quikne me, Lord Jhesu Crist, and gyf me grace, þat I may fele som of þe savowre of gostely swetnesse (*MP.*, 25 / 204—5), Jhesu, I besech þe, graunt me swete savoure of mercy in þe holsom resseit of grace (*MP.*, 36 / 302—3), In þi swetnes fyll my hert (*L.*, 41 / 8), etc.

We are told that this sweetness is ghostly, that is, spiritual, but at the same time it is almost a physical savour and it is constantly associated with a physical sense of burning:

Lufe es hatter þen cole, lufe may nane beswyke. / Ðe flawme of lufe, wha myght it thole, if it was ay ilyke? (*L.*, 44/13—4), Ði sawle þan hase he fedde, in swete lufe brennand (*L.*, 53/36), and kyndelde with fyre of Cristes lufe, sa þat þou sal verraly fele þe bernyng of lufe in þi hert ever mare and mare (*ED.*, 69 / 278—80).

Miss Allen refers in her Introduction to this miraculous experience of Rolle's as his full complement of joy, 'heat, sweetness, and song.' And, indeed, everywhere in his writings, his rhapsodic sense of joy bursts out into song and melody, in impassioned, repetitive language. He witnesses in his own words that he was delighted to hear the sound of this heavenly music.

And þam þat lastes in þaire devocioun he rayses þam in to contemplatif lyf and ofte syth in to soun and myrth of heuen (*Ps.*, Prol., 4/7—9), Þe sang þat delites tille hertes and leres þe saule es made a voyce of syngand (*Ps.*, 5 / 28—9), Bryng me to þi lyght, þi melodi to here (*L.*, 53 / 32), Þou be my lufyng ('beloved one'),/ Þat I lufe may syng (*ED.*, 69 / 255—6), If þat my sawle had herd and hent þe sang of þi lovyng ('praise') (*L.*, 44 / 24), If þou wil lufe, þan may þou syng til Cryst in melody (*L.*, 46 / 68),

and *Ego Dormio* ends, with his usual emphasis, in the following ecstatic lines:

And I þi lufe sal syng thorow syght of þi schyngyng

In heven withowten endyng (72 / 362—3).

It is our common view that the consociation of these synonyms and antonyms rests upon the principle of similarity. What is rhetorically known as metaphor is another instance of this principle. When we say *a* is *p*, and *a* and *p* belong to different semantic areas, we express ourselves in a metaphor. In this metaphorical expression, *a* and *p* are associated in a certain way, through a *tertium quid* of comparison, as the traditional rhetoric would say. This equation presupposes the presence in language of other members, which are dissociated from *a*, of the class of elements to which *p* belongs, *q*, *r*, *s*, etc. One has to choose between the associated member and the dissociated ones, in order to create an appropriate metaphor.

The wealth of figurative imagery in mediaeval literature has been noted by scholars. Professor Robert K. Stone has studied the use of metaphor and simile in two religious writers, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, in his work on *Middle English Prose Style*.⁷⁾ His list of examples of these figures of speech found in the two religious adepts will be a useful supplement to my earlier article on Margery Kempe, where only scant mention is made of this aspect of

7) Robert K. Stone, *Middle English Prose Style*. The Hague, 1970, pp. 65-78.

her language.⁸⁾ A brief examination of Rolle's language, however, will reveal that the author is more sparing in his use of metaphor and simile than might be expected, for he seems to cultivate more factual than figurative language. And this is probably where the secret of his popularity in part lies.

The terms 'light' and 'fire' both occur in metaphoric use in Margery and Richard: The light is cause of our lif (*The Book of Margery Kempe*, lxxxvii), God es lyght and byrnyng (*FL.*, 109 / 12); in the fire of tribulation (*BMK.*, lxxii), þe fyre of hys lufe (*FL.*, 88 / 127).

In Rolle, however, the expression 'þe fyre of hys lufe' or 'þe fyre of luf' seems to tell more of a direct, physical experience than of an imaginary one:

þou sall destroy his trappes, and byrn in þe fyre of luf all þe bandes þat he walde bynd þe with *FL.*, 88 / 133—5).

It may be said that his language is metaphorical in the sense that religious language is generally metaphoric.

lovand and seand þe kyng of joy in þe fayrhede and in þe schyning of his maieste (*FL.*, 96 / 43—5), Verray luf clenses þe saule (*FL.*, 110 / 53), hunger and thyrst, mysen ('discomfort') and anguys for þe lufe of Jhesu Cryste (*FL.*, 113 / 160—2), Devowte luf es, when þou offers þi prayers and þi thogtes til God with gastly joy and byrnand hert in þe hete of þe Haly Gaste. swa þat þe thynk þat þi saule es, als it war, drunken for delyte and solace of þe swetnes of Jhesu (*FL.*, 113 / 177—8), in swetnes of Cristes lufe (*FL.*, 116 / 259—60), bot als sone als þai dye, þai er broght before God, and sese (*pl.*) hym face til face and egh til egh (*FL.*, 119 / 71—3), a parfite man or woman þat has gaderd to geder al þe desires of þaire saule and with þe nayle of luf fested þam in Jhesu Crist (*Ps.*, 10 / 12—5), þe bede of blysse ('the seat of happiness') (*L.*, 44 / 11), etc.

8) Hideo Yamaguchi, 'Study of the *Book of Margery Kempe*,' in *Studies* 18.1, Kobe College, 1971, 1-44.

Note that these terms, *seand, hunger, thyrst, byrnand, hete, swetnes, nayle, clenses* and the rest all 'make an impression by appealing to the senses.'

On the other hand, metaphors, creative or conventional, do occur in Rolle:

þan þe wil thynk þe deed swettar þan hony (*FL.*, 106 / 48—9), byrnand ʒernyng of heven (*FL.*, 114 / 116), þat es noght worth a plowme (*FL.*, 113 / 167).

Instances of simile are not wanting:

als þou war in sylence and slepe and sette in Noe schyppe (*FL.*, 113 / 182—3), Ðan was þy body lyk to hevyn (*MP.*, 34 / 232), And yit, swet Jhesu, þy body is lyk to a medow ful of swete flours and holsom herbes; so is þy body... holsom as herbes to each synful man (*MP.*, 36 / 298—301), In þis degre es lufe stalworth as dede, and hard as hell (*C.*, 74 / 47), In þe fyrst degre (*i. e.* of love) es men likend to þe sternes; in the toþer, till þe mone; in þe thyrd, til þe sonne (*FL.*, 107 / 86—8; quoted from St. Paul), all þe ioy of þis world es bot als a floure of þe feld (*PS.*, 15 / 67).

Sometimes, this figure of speech is expanded into a more complex form of comparison in parallelism:

And as a nette draweth fyshe to þe londe, so, swet Jhesu, brynge me to þy blisse (*MP.*, 35 / 258—9), þy body is lyke a boke writen al with rede ynke; so is þy body al written with rede woundes (*MP.*, 36 / 285—7), For als a man pusonde ('poisoned') of a swet morcell takes venome þat slase his body, sa dose a synful wreche in likyng and luste of hys flesche (*ED.*, 64 / 97—9).

Another variant is seen in the following example: þai have na mare syght of þe lufe of God in þaire sawle þen þe egh of a bak ('bat') has of þe sonne (*C.*, 74 / 24—5).

Comparison is also the favourite form of an allegory as a literary means of conveying a deeper meaning or a moral beneath the literal meaning.

If þou saw a man have precieuse stanes, þat he myght by a

kyngdom wyth, if he gaf þam for an appyl, als a barne wil do, ryghtwysly moght þou say þat he war nocht wyse, bot a grete fole (*FL.*, 112 / 144—9).

What we have learned from these examples is that under the archetype of comparison, the realized patterns of meaning are not always the same, but may vary in different contexts.

III. Oscillations in the system.

Language is subject to variation; it does not remain constant. It is usual to speak of changes in language in the course of time, but instability is equally true of language in its static aspects. On the one hand, some structural views of language have argued with abundant proofs that language is a system of signs and that 'tout se tient' in the system, where every term plays its role under the systemic constraint. It would seem, according to this view, that the mechanism of language requires every alteration in its system to be constant and absolute. But there are other views, which call our attention to the fact that the speech of an individual manifests frequent oscillations in sounds, in word-forms and word-meanings, and in sentence-patterns. Professor V. Mathesius speaks, as early as 1911,⁹⁾ of static oscillation in the speech of an individual, opposed to dynamic changeability in the history of language. His theory of potentiality explains how the quality of a sound is not constant, but variable, how it moves within limits. Word-limits, again, are uncertain, notwithstanding the generally supported arguments for the independence of the word within the sentence. Word-stress is variable; it is not inherent in word-categories, but only potential. Word-order is also relatively free, though there is regularity that governs it, as there is

9) Vilém Mathesius, 'On the Potentiality of the Phenomena of Language'. Originally published in Czech, now translated into English by Professor Josef Vachek and reprinted in *A Prague School Reader in Linguistics* (Indiana University Press, 1964), 1-32.

in the patterns of sentence. Professor Mathesius also refers to semantic oscillation in speech as another of its aspects of potentiality. Variable, for example, is the relation of intellectual and emotional elements in the semantic content of a large part of lexical and other units. A word may denote both of these aspects of meaning. The semantic potentiality of language is, thus, manifested by the relation f — $s_{1,2,3,\dots,n}$ or s — $f_{1,2,3,\dots,n}$. In the field of style, a speaker may prefer either the subjective expression, emphasizing the emotional side of his view, or the objective expression, confining himself to the conceptual side. These realities of language, it must be noted, are an important starting-point in the study of an individual form of speech, rather than language as an objective fact divorced from the actual speaker.

There is a curious union of mediaevalism and modernity in the style of Rolle's language. Many of his words and phrases are archaic, and the modulations of his sentence rhythm are more or less even and unvaried except for occasional ornaments and repetition. But for all his mediaeval mannerisms, he usually speaks with the preciseness and intelligibility of a modern writer. His narrative style is simple and plain, and its sweetness and directness breaks through the strangeness of his spellings, as Professor R. W. Chambers suggests.¹⁰⁾ His constant theme is the mystical love of Christ, but the language in which he tells about his understanding of it is mostly practical and free from obscurity. Miss Allen thinks that the secret of his enduring influence was probably 'a very human, attaching simplicity of emotion,' which he retained through all his years of mystical concentration.¹¹⁾ She continues further: "However esoteric his mystical joy, there was nothing recondite in the method by which it was attained."¹¹⁾ Here is the manner in which he communes with Jesus Christ:

10) R.W. Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. ciii.

11) English Writings of Richard Rolle. Introduction, p. xxxiii.

“Swete Lord Jhesu Cryst, I thanke þe and 3elde þe graces of þat swete prayere and of þat holy orysoun þat þou madest beforne þe holy passyoun for us on þe mownt of Olyvete. Y beseche þe, swete Lord, þat þou here my prayere.” (*MP.*, I.)

The emotive expression and the objective statement frequently alternate in Rolle like the rippling surface of a gliding current.

Þe grucchyng and þe groyng, þe sorwe and þe syschyng, þe rewthe of hys chere I wolde were my deth (*MP.*, 20 / 14—6); A, Lord, þi sorwe, why were it not my deth? (*MP.*, 21 / 54).

Alas, þat I schal lyve and se my gracyous Lord, so soffrenge and so meke, þat nevere trespasyd, so schamely bedy3t! (*MP.*, 20 / 42—4); I se in my soule how reufully þou gost: þi body is so bloody, so rowed so bledderyd (*MP.*, 21 / 59—61). A, Lord, þe pyte þat I now se (*MP.*, 24 / 173).

The compact and the loose construction are also interchangeable. What Miss Allen calls a ‘loose construction’ is found where a coordinate clause is embedded as an afterthought in a subordinate clause:

Þi body is so seek, so febyl and so wery, what with gret fastyng before þat þou were take, and al ny3t wooke withowten ony reste, with betyng, with bofetyng so fer ovurtake, þat al stowpyng þou gost, and grym is þi chere (*MP.*, 21 / 71—5).

What rhetoric has termed a zeugma is the result, in the following example, of amalgamating a coordinate clause with a preceding one where it does not properly belong:

Þe cyte is so noble, þe pupyl is so mychel, þe folke comyth rennyng owte of iche a strete, þanne stondyth up þe folke, and þe reke, þat wonder men may þat þereonne thynke (*MP.*, 21 / 81—22 / 84).

Another instance of syntactic oscillation will be seen where one and the same verb is made to govern both a nexal phrase and a clause-nexus at the same time:

Some þere were of þe comown peple þat sysched sore and grette for þi wo, þat wysten þe so turmentyd and þat it was for envye

(*MP.*, 22 / 86—8; where in the MS, 'is' stands for 'it').

In the following example, a preposition is either tagged on or suppressed after the relative 'þat':

Or if þou have other thoghtes þat þou has mare swetnes in and devocion þan in þase þat I lere þe, þou may thynk [þam]. (*FL.*, 104 / 41—3).

Semantic oscillation is seen in polysemy. The use of words in mystic literature is often based on this principle of polysemy. Rolle's distinction of different degrees of love and other virtues is closely associated with the problem of static oscillation in language. Word-meanings are overlapping and bounded by no definite lines. It is in the nature of mystic terms that they are mutually related in most complex ways and each partakes of the meaning of the other without losing their identity.

Sweetness is either physical or spiritual: So may I no manere þe swetnesse of þe taste (*MP.*, 25 / 196—7); and gyf me grace, þat I may fele som of þe savowre of gostely swetnesse (*MP.*, 25 / 204—5).

Our *delight* is either pure or unclean: Twa thynges makes oure delyte pure. Ane es, tornyng of sensualite to the skylle; for when any es tornede to delite of hys fyve wittes, alsoune unclennes entyrs into his saule (*DD.*, 58 / 31—4).

Ego Dormio dilates upon the three degrees of *love*, *primus*, *secundus*, and *tertius* (þe thirde) (*ED.*, 63 / 85f., 64 / 114f., and 69 / 263 f.), stressing the ten commandments, the forsaking of the world, and the contemplative life. In *The Commandment*, on the other hand, the first degree of love is called *insuperabel*, the second *inseparabel*, and the third *singular* (*C.*, 74 / 31—4), indicating three ascending degrees of perfection towards the love of Jesus Christ.

This threefold definition of *love* is in unison with Rolle's traditional threefold ways of thinking which manifests itself in his general exposition of religious beliefs: the three manners in which 'the devil has power to be in a man,' 'the three things that cleanses us of sinful filth against three manners of sins,' that 'clennes of

mouth kepes thre thynges' (*FL.*), etc. Mention has already been made of the threefold method of mediaeval Scriptural interpretation.

Semantic oscillation is also seen in synonymy. From the onomasiological point of view, a certain group of words provide different, but equivalent names for a single idea.

The idea of *humility* is variously called *mekeness*, *suffering* or *buxomness*: and gife þe til mekenes, suffryng, and buxumnes (*ED.*, 64 / 122—4), and

the pseudonyms for the idea of *evil* are the world, the flesh, and the devil: and yif I fle to any syn of þe world, my fleishe, or þe fend, swet Jhesu, fet me sone home ayeyne as lordes bondman, and dryve me with tribulacion to penance (*MP.*, 30 / 82—4). They are man's enemies (*ED.*, 66 / 190—1).

An additional feature of Rolle's language is formal oscillations in grammar. They are not many, but they sufficiently indicate the fluid state of the speech of an individual writer who lived and thought in a period of transition.

In accounting for the difference of forms in a text, various factors must be taken into consideration: the dialect, the scribe's emendations, the genuineness of the manuscript, and so forth. When all these factors have been duly considered and explained, there may still remain some variability of form in phonology, lexis, and syntax. These formal differences are probably to be regarded as instances of linguistic oscillations allowed for the speech of an individual writer.

Our knowledge of the phonology of Rolle's language is naturally imperfect, but something may be learned about its nature from his occasional spellings.

The vowel of an unstressed syllable is sometimes left unmarked, but sometimes is indicated as weak by the spelling: a mans hert þat verraly es byrnand in þe lufe of God (*ED.*, 63 / 65—6), þat þou lufe Criste verrayly (*ED.*, 67 / 195—6); if þou wil luf Jhesu verraly (*FL.*, 171), And þan þe fire of lufe verrali ligges in þair hert and byrnes þarin (*FL.*, 119 / 65—6), And how I sal lufe God verrayly? (*FL.*, 108

/3); Some þere were of þe comown peple þat sysched sore and grette for þi wo (*MP.*, 22/86—7), when þou ert commen þartill (*FL.*, 95/16—7), where the two texts belong to two different Camb. Univ. MS. divisions; swa mykel (adv.) (*ED.*, 66/183), His godenes es sa mykel (*ED.*, 66/186—7), so wele payde es he (*ED.*, 66/188).

The vowels may interchange in the stressed syllable in some words: al wicked desyres of þe flesch (*ED.*, 65/134), þe worlde, þe devel, and þi flesche (*ED.*, 66/190—1), þe world, my fleishe, or þe fend (*MP.*, 30/82—3), at þe begynnynge of owre werkes (*FL.*, 116/6), bodili warke (*FL.*, 117/2), ne in evel warke (*ED.*, 67/195); in gode lyf (*FL.*, 85/27), Se how gude lufe es (*FL.*, 109/33), where 'gude' is a Northern form; with good wille and sorow of hert (*MP.*, 28/27—8); thurgh þe corrupciouns of þis werld (*Ps.*, 5/34), when I owt of þis world sal wende (*L.*, 40/5), in bisynes of þis worlde (*ED.*, 62/43—4); many yiftis, gostly, bodily, and worldly (*MP.*, 27/1—2), al wordely wele (*MP.* I, 27/272), the former text being based on the Camb. U. MS. and the latter on the Bodleian; and destroy thorow Goddes grace al wicked desyres of þe flesch (*ED.*, 65/133—4), (a synful wreche) destrues his sawle (*ED.*, 64/99—100).

Metathetic forms occur beside the etymological: bryndest hertes (*ED.*, 62/37), It wil ... make þi hert brennand in Cristes lufe (*C.*, 248—49), þat (= 'those who') maste lufed God and byrnandest es in hys lufe (*ED.*, 62/34); þe thrid in lovyngge of endeles lyf (*Ps.* 2, 6/51—2), Þe thrid es (*FL.*, 93/128), þe thyrd (*FL.*, 97/4).

The forms 'kirke' and 'chirche' occur in two different mss.: þe trowth of hali kyrke (*ED.*, 63/88), holy chirche (*MP.*, 35/260), the difference being dialectal, Northern vs. Southern.

The forms 'wymen' and 'women' occur side by side in a Northern text: men and women (*FL.*, 88/131), Haly men and women (*FL.*, 114/194, cf. any man and woman *FL.*, 114/193), in men and wymen (*FL.*, 116/1).

From the spellings we learn that certain consonants alternate, probably in the relation of free variation, as in:

fro hevyn to erth (*MP.*, 28 / 9), with erthly bysines (*FL.*, 93 / 8), na man wate in erth þat þai er in charite (*FL.*, 114 / 190—1); of ertly thoghtes (*FL.*, 115 / 255).

to do necligently (*FL.*, 99 / 87), on brede and on lenkthe (*MP.*, 24 / 162), though the last example may better be explained as sound change in *samdhi*.

The alternance of /w/ and /v/ seems to be in evidence in the following passages: I say þe þat na man wate (*FL.*, 106 / 72), Bot I vate wele (*FL.*, 102 / 214), a similar case of alternance being also recorded as late as Dickens' days, in Cockney speech.

The forms *heest*, *heyest*, and *heghest* seem to point to the presence of the pronunciation with a glide and the glideless pronunciation in the same speaker: sekand þe heghest place in heven (*FL.*, 95 / 7—8), þai begyn in þe heyest degre (*FL.*, 96 / 3), for I walde þat þou mought wynto þe heest (*FL.*, 104 / 1—2).

The following pairs of different forms are due to dialectal differences: fet me sone home ayeyne as lordes bondman (*MP.*, 30 / 83—4), turnynge agayne (*MP.*, 31 / 139—40); synnes ayeyns kynde (*MP.*, 29 / 71), na thyng þat es agaynes þe lufe of Jhesu Crist (*C.*, 73 / 9—10); and yif I fle to any syn (*MP.*, 30 / 81—2), if we covayte to fle þe payne of purgatory (*ED.*, 70 / 305—6), Southern vs. Northern. It will be noted that examples of this kind must be discussed from another point of view than we are here concerned with.

Other kinds of formal oscillations may include morphemic and syntactic variants that are functionally equivalent in similar environments.

The native term 'wanhope' and the French loan-word 'dispaire' are both found in Rolle: gret synnys, as overhope, wanhope, and al maner of synnes ayeyns kynde (*MP.*, 29 / 70—1), Let never my hope be to streite, lest I falle in wanhop, ne to large, lest I trist in overhope (*MP.*, 31 / 117—9), in overhope and overtrist to myself (*MP.*, 33 / 200—1), where if we find only the term 'wanhope', it is because of the presence of other forms in *-hope*, of their systemic constraint upon

the form to be chosen; for the word 'dispaire,' I quote from *O. E. D.*: a 1340 Hampole, *Psalter* cxviii. 156 Of synful men peryss nane þare dispaire.

'Lufreden' and 'lufe' co-occur, the former being the counterpart of 'hateredyn': whethir he be worthi hateredyn or lufe (*FL.*, 114 / 200—1), For als Austyne says, 'Lufreden es þat brynges þe thyng þat es farre nerehande, and impossibel til possibel apertly (*FL.*, 115 / 228—30).

The French term 'secund' replaces the native 'þe toþer' in some passages: (iij states of Cristens mans religioun) þe first in penaunce, þe toþer in rightwisenes (*Ps.*, 6 / 50—1), Ðan enters þou into þe toþer degre of lufe (*ED.*, 64 / 118—9), Ðe fyrst thyng ... Ðe toþer thyng (*FL.*, 97 / 3—4), And mykel mare, þat er in þe secund degre, þan in þe fyrst (*FL.*, 106 / 60—1), Ðe secunde es, byrnand ʒernyng of heven (*FL.*, 114 / 216—7).

It is noteworthy that in Rolle there occur the earlier pronominal forms *he*, *heo*, *f*. and the late forms *scho*, *sche* side by side: os a womman owt of hyreselve hyre handys sche wrong; wepyng and syschyng he armys he caste; ... he fel in dede swowne, ... Ðe sorewe þat he made ... (*MP.*, 22 / 103—6), he or scho, þat es in þis degre (*FL.*, 105 / 38), bot he or scho þat feles it (*FL.*, 106 / 73), For he or scho kan noght lufe (*FL.*, 112 / 122—3), where 'he or heo' would scarcely make sense. The general preference which the Cam. Univ. MS. shows for the form 'scho' is in keeping with the theory that attributes the origin of 'sch-' forms to some sort of liaison with a preceding sibilant in the context, though there has been made some counter-proposal by Professor Stevick.¹²⁾ The form 'sche' made its first appearance in the *Old English Chronicle* (Laud MS.), anno 1140, as commonly known: And te Lundenissce folc hire wolde tæcen. &

12) Hideo Yamaguchi, 'On the Phonological Feature of the Feminine Personal Pronoun *She*,' in *Studies of Sounds* XII, The Phonetic Society of Japan, 1966, pp. 429-39.

scæ fleh. We need not discuss the question further here.

Verbal forms in *-and* and *-ynge* are both found in Rolle, but their difference is strictly functional, the former being participial and the latter gerundial or substantival in most Northern texts: Mykel lufe he schewes, þat never es irk to lufe, bot ay standand, sittand, gangand, or wirkand, es ay his lufe thynkand, and oftsyth þarof es dremand (*ED.*, 61 / 3—6), For ay, whils þi hert es heldand til lufe any bodely thyng, þou may not perfutely be coupuld with God (*ED.*, 61 / 16—7), als dede slas al lyvand thyng in þys worlde (*C.*, 74 / 47—75 / 48); in thynkng of his passyon (*ED.*, 65 / 152), thorow covaytyng of Cristes lufe (*ED.*, 67 / 200—1), in al oure understandyng, withowten erryng (*C.*, 73 / 3—4), and ordane þi prayng and þi wakyng and þi fastyng þat it be in discrecion (*C.*, 75 / 79—80). It is in a Southern text, such as *Meditations on the Passion*, that the forms in *-and* disappear and those in *-ynge* step in in the double function of a present participle and a gerund: Þe cyte is so noble, þe pupyl is so mychel, þe folke comyth rennyng eowt of iche a strete (*MP.*, 21 / 81—22 / 82), wepyng and syschyng hyre armys he caste (*MP.*, 22 / 102—3), ʒef a man ... think hymself owtcastyng and rebukyng and revylyng (*MP.*, 25 / 211—2), and grant me, swete Jhesu, þat my beleve be in mesure, nat to large, belevyng þat shold nat be beleved (*MP.*, 31 / 109—111); How was it þat arwenesse of womman-kynde or maydenhed schamyng ne hadde þe withdrawyn? (*MP.*, 23 / 117—19), þi woundys in þi streynyng reche so wyde (*MP.*, 24 / 173—4), Now, swete Jhesu, graunt me to rede upon þy boke, and somwhate to understand þe swetnes of þat wrytyng, and to have likyng in studious abydyng of þat redyng (*MP.*, 36 / 287—90).

The kind of oscillation found in these texts, therefore, is purely dialectal, but not individual, due to the scribe, but not to the author. The phrases 'with hepyng sorewys' (*MP.*, 22 / 110) and 'brennyng kene' (*MP.*, 22 / 112) are typically Southern in the use of the *-ynge* form.

However, a Northern form occasionally emerges in a Southern

text, as in: so þat gret comforte it schal to me be with lykande thouzt (*MP.* I, 26 / 221—2).

The progressive forms are similarly constructed: It is tokenyng of my deth (*MP.*, 25 / 189); Na wonder gyf I syghand be (*L.*, 47 / 85), For if þow stabil þi lufe, and be byrnande whils þou lyfes here (*ED.*, 62 / 44—5), Þe fyrst es, when al covatise of ertly thyng es slokkend in hym (*FL.*, 213—4), bot if þou be als gode, or better, within in þi sawle, als þou ert semand at þe syght of men (*FL.*, 93 / 2—4).

The infinitive phrase seems to be formed sometimes with the preposition *to* and semetimes with the preposition *at*, but in fact the latter occurs only in a particular turn of expression: Þis I say to kyndel þi hert for to covayte þe felichip of aungels (*ED.*, 62/28—30), perplexite, þat es, dowt what es to do and what noght (*FL.*, 97 / 19—20); Seraphyn es at say 'brynard' (*ED.*, 62 / 35), þe whilk despises all erthly thyng, þat es at say, lufs it noght (*FL.*, 93 / 9—11). The latter phrase is exclusively Northern.

The impersonal construction is gradually being replaced by the personal in this period, so that these constructions are sometimes interchangeable: Me langes, lede me to þi lyght, and festen in þe al my thocht (*L.*, 41 / 7), In þe first degre, men may say: 'I languysch for lufe', or 'Me langes in lufe' (*FL.*, 106 / 33—4); but 'me thynk' and 'us behoves' are isolated turns of expression: and als me thynk þat it may be (*FL.*, 108 / 7—8), us behoves restreyne us perfutely fra þe lust and þe likyng and al þe il delytes and wikked drede of þis worlde (*ED.*, 70 / 306—8).

The split infinitive occurs once in Miss Allen's emended text, but otherwise it seems of rare occurrence: Nowe, swete Jhesu, yeve me grace to have most deynte ('delight') to inwardly loke and þynk upon þat blessed face (*MP.*, 32 / 163—5; *MS.* to þe; also *Univ. Coll. MS.*), and graunt me grace wilfully to go to þy service (*MP.*, 33 / 193—4).

The difference between 'whilk' and 'þe whilk' is functional, for

the form without the article is always an interrogative, while the form preceded by the article denotes a relative connective: Bot sa mykell we sal latyer (=‘less readily’) gyf fayth till any dreame, þat we may not sone wyt whilk es soth, whilk es fals, whilk es oure enmy, whilk es of þe Hali Gaste (*FL.*, 93 / 134—37); þat luste or þat will of his flesche, þe whilk he myght have done (*FL.*, 97 / 23—4), Luf es thyng, thurgh þe whilk God lufes us (*FL.*, 109 / 18—9), of vanitees, þe whilk will comber þam (*FL.*, 119 / 61).

The latitude allowed for word-order within the phrase or the sentence is not very large in the prose of Rolle’s time, but we see that everything is not fixed and settled here.

Some element of a sentence, whatever its grammatical function, may vary from its subordinate position to the front position, as when a word or phrase which bears an emotional stress stands first: Þe grucchyng and þe gronyng, þe sorwe and þe syschyng, þe rewthe of hys chere I wolde were my deth (*MP.*, 20 / 44—6), with anaphora: A, Lord, þi sorwe, why were it not my deth? (*MP.*, 21 / 54), My hert, when sal it brest for lufe? (*FL.*, 107 / 4), also *L.*, 50 / 25. We will speak of stylistic oscillation here, since the transposition depends on the emotional element in speech. Other instances of transposition are what we usually term inversion: His enmy he calles þe devel, or fleshcely custome, þat es heghed oboven hym (*Ps.*, 11 / 36—7), With swyche a processyoun of worldely wondryng was nevere no thef to þe deth lad (*MP.*, 22 / 84—6). Of this kind of inversion examples are many.

Lastly, we have examples to show that the preposition may enjoy a certain degree of freedom in its position in the sentence, as it often does in Rolle’s prose; with a pronoun: and how þou may come til perfectioon, and to lufe hym þat þou hase taken þe til (*FL.*, 119 / 77—8), If it do þe gude, and profit til þe, thank God (*FL.*, 119 / 78—9); with a relative clause: A, Lord, þat peyne þat lyther Jues, so cruel and so kene, at þe mownt of Calvarye withouten ony mercy pynynd þe with! (*MP.*, 24 / 157—59), and bryn in þe fyre of luf all

þe bandes þat he walde bynd þe with (*FL.*, 88 / 133 / 5), If þou saw a man have preciouise stanes, þat he myght by a kyngdom wyth (*FL.*, 112 / 144—6), For in þe self degre þeir prowde devels fel downe fra, er meke men and wymen, Criste Dowves, sett, to have rest and joy withowten ende (*ED.*, 62 / 47—50), with an infinitive phrase: A sparkle of þi passyoun of love and of reuthe kynde in myn herte to quycnen it with (*MP.*, 27 / 267—9); Luf es thyng, thurgh þe whilk God lufes us (*FL.*, 109 / 18—9), in thris fyfty psalmes in þe whilke iij states of Cristens mans religioun ere signyfyed (*Ps.*, 6 / 49—50), In þe whilk luf þat þow wax ay mare and mare es my covaytyng and my amonestyng (*FL.*, 96 / 9—11), etc. In the syndetic relative construction above, the postposition of the preposition is regularly found with the connective *þat* and its pre-position is conditioned by the use of *whilk* in the context.

We have so far surveyed how Rolle's language is built upon the relations of chain and choice between its diverse elements, how he speaks a language of complex consociation, without falling, however, into the fault of over-emphasis or too much liberty. The flowing cadence of his devout language falls constantly upon an unchanging theme of his life, that undying love of God.

Lufe es a lyf, copuland togedyr þe lufand and þe lufed (*FL.*, 109 / 14—5).

Lufe es lyf þat lastes ay, þar it in Cristes es feste (*L.*, 43 / 11).
For me and my lufyng, lufe makes bath be ane (*L.* 45 / 56).

B. The Language of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*.

We seem as if transplanted into an unfamiliar world of shadows when we turn from Rolle to the author of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*. The general tone of language passes from that of assertive confidence to that of obscure uncertainty, though it speaks of the 'sovereign-substantial beam of the godlike darkness', unflinchingly.

From the Prologue we have learned that the writer is translating

into his own words the Latin from the original mystic writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. Its stylistic features as well as the thought behind them are directly transmitted into the English of the translator, imparting the latter some of the original glamour and mystery. The usual texture of religious language is here varied with exotic and often esoteric turns of expression.

I. Language as a network of consociation.

The general nature of the language of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite* and other related treatises has been characterized by Miss Phyllis Hodgson as essentially logical in an introduction to her edition of these devotional works.¹³⁾ It is written in strictly controlled prose, which appeals more to intellect than to emotion. The truth of this statement cannot be contradicted, in so far as the external structure of language is concerned. The language indicates a perfect mastery of syntax, although a case of anacoluthic construction mars the opening paragraph of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*, which seems to betray its occasional deviations: Of þe whiche book, for-þi þat it is mad minde in þe 70 chapter of a book wretin before ... how þat Denis sentence wol cleerli afferme al þat same book; þerfore, in translacioun of it, I haue not onliche folowed þe nakid lettre of þe text, bot for to declare þe hardness of it, I haue moche folowed þe sentence of þe Abbot of Seinte Victore, a noble & a worþi expositour of þis same book. Miss Hodgson remarks: "Their matter appears deceptively plain to a casual reader because of their lucidity and directness; their style seems apparently simple through mastery of syntax and the unobtrusive use and organic function of figures of rhetoric."¹³⁾ The above quotation (ll. 5—12) already cautions us to beware of the disguised simplicity, underneath which we detect a highly complex prose with its substructures and involved relations. The deceptiveness of plainness does not involve style alone, but it also overshadows the semantic aspect.

13) *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*, ed. by Phillis Hodgson. E.E.T.S., 231, 1955 (1958). p. xlvii.

The quintessence of the mystic thought here insisted on is not simply intellect, but really 'affection', or what Richard Rolle calls *Incendium Amoris*. We read in the prayer preceding Cap. I of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite* the following declaration: And for alle þees þinges ben abouen mynde, þefore wiþ affecyon abouen mynde as I may, I desire to purchase hem vnto me wiþ þis preier (11. 25—7).

Two opposed human faculties, intellect and emotion, are called (1) *mynde* 'mind', 'thought' and (2) *affecyon* 'feeling' in *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*. The relations in which these terms stand to each other will be made known by the ways of placing them in concatenation and also of collocating them with other affiliated terms. Another term related to *mynde* is *wit*, *witte* 'mind, reason, understanding', though with a wider application (*wittes*, pl. 'senses').

We are given a clue to the meaning of the term *mynde* in a synonymic pair: abouen al knowyng & mynde (*DHD.*, 4 / 3); and also in an antonymic collocation: wiþ affecyon abouen mynde (2 / 25—6). The phrase *abouen mynde* is also found in: to be knowing abouen mynde (5 / 24), & abouen mynde (6 / 28). The metaphorical expression *izen of mynde* seems also to refer to its faculty of understanding.

Our *wittes* are physical or spiritual: þi bodely wittes (as heryng, seyng, smelling, taastyng, & touching) (3 / 2), þi goostly wittes, þe whiche ben clepid þin vnderstandable worchinges (3 / 3—4), goostly wittes of natureel philosophy (3 / 28).

Other synonyms *knowyng*, *vnderstongyng*, and *reson* are found in the following collocations: abouen alle substaunces and al manner knowyng (3 / 12), þe propre fourme in þi knowyng (3 / 15—6), (4 / 3), al knowable knowing (5 / 18); þe teermes & þe boundes of mans vnderstondyng (5 / 1—2), abouen alle setting & alle vnderstondyng (8 / 26); reson & vnderstondyng (9 / 11, 12), ne reson, ne vnderstondyng (9 / 27—8), ne ... reson, ne vnderstondyng (9 / 28).

Instances of *affecyon* are few, but it either stands in an antonymic relation to *mynde*, or in collocation with *derknes* 'unknowing';

wiþ affeccyon (2 / 25—6), abouen mynde in affeccoun (3 / 15—6); entren wiþ affeccoun into derknes (4 / 26). *Affeccoun* is said to be 'single': in syngulertee of affeccoun (5 / 15).

In *derknes* we have the key-word by which we may be led to the understanding of what is meant in *Deonise Hyd Diuinite*. We will return to this question later, but here it suffices to quote the collocations in which the term is found.

These collocations sometimes enter into the relation of synonymy, and sometimes of antonymy, but sometimes again stand in the absolute meaning-relation without possible associations elsewhere.

An instance of synonymic consociation occurs in: þe derknes of vnknowing (5 / 17). Both terms are privative.

Other cases are antonymic: entren wiþ affeccoun into derknes (4 / 25), we entren into þe derknes þat is abouen mynde (8 / 13).

Where two usually antonymic terms enter into an immediate relation, we have a figure of irony, which abounds in this treatise: þe souereyn-schinyng derknes of wisest silence (2 / 20—1), for to schine priuely in þe derkyst (2 / 21—2), þis souereyn-schining derknes (5 / 27).

However, *derknes* is essentially an absolute idea in our author: þat souereyn-substancial derknes (7 / 7). This concept is renamed in various ways elsewhere: þat vnknowyng (7 / 5), vnbigonne & euerlastyng Wysdome (2 / 14), þe souereyn-substancial Jhesu (7 / 22). *Souereyn-substancial* renders *supersubstantialem* of *De Mystica Theologia*: et supersubstantialem illam videamus caliginem ab omni lumine in existentibus occultatam.

The irony of darkness is sometimes buttressed by structural parallelism, in which framework the insistence of the idea is more impressively made: ... we foulden alle togeders & done hem away,

þat we mowen clerliche knowe þat vnknowyng,

þe which is wallid aboute from al knowable miȝtes in
alle þees being þinges;

and þat we mowen see þat souereyn-substancial derknes,

priueliche hid fro al liȝt in þees being þinges (7 / 4—8).

One of the more common patterns of expression in this treatise is dyadic. A dyadic formula is usually a medium for expressing synonymic, antonymic, or hyponymic meaning-relations.

fastnyd in knowing & in louyng of þees þinges þat ben knowable and han bigynnyng (3 / 20—2), þe last and þe leest worþi þinges of þees beyng visible þinges, as stockes or stones (3 / 32—3), bot verely and cleerly he apperiþ open (4 / 20), alle deuine liȝtes & alle heuenly sounes & wordes (4 / 24), þe teermes & þe boundes of mans vnderstondyng (5 / 1—2), in a maner þat is inuisible & vngropable (5 / 19), for to knowe hym þat is abouen al seing & al knowing (5 / 27—8), his woodnesses & his dronkennesses (8 / 1), abouen alle setting (‘affirming’) & alle vnderstondyng (8 / 26), moost worþi & moost niȝe vnto hym (8 / 27—8), more niȝ & acordyng vnto hym is liif or goodnes þen is ayer or a stone (8 / 31—2), abouen boþe alle spekyng and alle vnderstondyng (8 / 34—5), ascendyng & begynnyng oure deniinges & oure doinges away (9 / 25—6), þe parfite & þe singuleer cause (10 / 19); þoo þat hauen felyng & lacken reson & vnderstondyng (9 / 10—1).

The triadic pattern is also common as a framework for putting together related terms in a field of meaning: al wordly, fleschly, & kyndely likyng (3 / 14), It behouþ us for to sette (‘attribute’), for to see, & for to afferme ... (4 / 1—2), ouerhid & ouerlappid & ouerleide (6 / 20), bot in oure deniinges we begynnen at þe leest, & stien up to þe moste, and oftsones by þe menes (7 / 2—3), þoo þinges þat ben & leuyn & lackyn felyng (9 / 8—9), and the inevitable Trinity: Faderheed & Sonheed & þe Holi Goostheed (7 / 16—7).

Another common pattern of sentence here is a construction of two paratactic phrases or clauses in antithetic meaning-relation: clene fro al wordly, fleschly, & kyndely likyng in þin affeccoun, and fro al þing þat may be knowen by þe propre fourme in þi knowing (3 / 15—7), bi cleer bodely siȝt of his outward iȝe, or ... by cleer crafte

of ymaginacioun (6 / 4, 6), What is þe skyle ('reason') whi þat in affirmatyue deuinitee we begynne at þe moost worþi þinges, & in þe negatyue deuinitee at þe leest worþi þinges? (8 / 22—4), etc.

The last quoted passage is followed by an exposition of what the writer calls negative divinity, *i. e.* the negative way of comprehending Godhead.

Another pattern is a formless one of simple, but insistent cumulation: how þat he is namyd Good, how Beyng, how Liif, how Wisdome, & how Vertewe, & what oþer þat þei be of þe vnderstandable namynges of God (7 / 26—8: an example of polyonomasia), alle þe names... as whiche ben..., whiche ben..., whiche ben..., whiche ben..., whiche ben..., whiche ben..., whiche ben..., & whiche ben..., (7 / 30—8 / 3), & alle þoo þinges þat fallyn to body, or to bodely þinges — as is schap, fourme, qualitee, quantitee, wiȝt, steedlynes ('local existence'), visibilittee, sensibilittee, & al doying, & suffryng (9 / 13—5), where the physical attributes of matter are enumerated as in a scientific treatise.

We notice that alliteration is only sparingly used in all these patterns of expression, in contrast to what we see in Richard Rolle. *De Mystica Theologia* is likewise free from this phonological device.

The language here is often metaphoric in the usual sense of the word, as when we call such phrases as 'iȝen of þe mynde' and 'þe derknes of vnknowyng' metaphors. Miss Hodgson directs our attention to the remarkable imagery of obstruction in: conielid ('congealed') as it were in a kumbros clog abouten hym (6 / 22—3), hid in þe þik, greet, sounde stok (6 / 23—4), 'not in the Latin, but reminiscent of *The Cloud.*' But metaphor in mystic language is distinguished from literary metaphor in its greater directness and power of pointing at the object of thought. And the more dominant tone on the surface is logicity.

One of the common features of logical prose is its use of expository language, or language of interpretation. This metalingual use of language may be observed in the phrase 'that is to say', or

'þat es at say' of Richard Rolle. Our example from *Deonise Hyd Diuinite* follows: And þan he is assoilid boþe fro þe vnderstondable worching miȝtes of his soule, & fro þe obietes of hem, þat is for to sey, alle þoo þinges in þe whiche þei worchen (5 / 11—4).

Underneath this seeming logicity, however, we find frequently hidden the inner form, paradoxical in nature, as mystic language usually is.

We may return at this point to the above-quoted paradoxical idea of darkness which is shining, the seat of 'vnbigonne & euerlastyng Wysdome', 'þe souereyn Good.' It insisently stresses that the darkness of unknowing (7 / 5), or the 'cloud of unknowing' as it is elsewhere called, is full of light because it is where the unborn and everlasting Wisdom dwells. Because 'alle þe pryue þinges of deuinytee ben kouerid and hid vnder þe souereyn-schinyng derknes of wisest silence, makyng þe souereyn-clerest souereynly for to schine priely in þe derkyst' (2 / 19—22).

This 'godliche derknes' is only reached when one relinquishes oneself and everything worldly and is freed from all that hampers and fetters one: þou schalt be drawn up abouen mynde in affeccioun to þe souereyn-substancial beme of þe godliche derknes, alle þinges þus done away (3 / 16—8), *De Mystica Theologia*: Etenim excessu tui ipsius et omnium irretentibili et absoluto, munde ad supersubstantialem divinarum tenebrarum radium, cuncta auferens et a cunctis absolutus sursumageris. The English writer makes it clear here that this spiritual ascent is made 'abouen mynde in affeccioun', that is, through an act of love. This interpretation reflects the same point of view expounded in what is generally known as *Beniamyn*: And riȝt as Rachel & Lya weren boþe wyues to Jacob, riȝt so mans soule þorow liȝt [of] knowyng in þe reson & swetnes of loue in þe affeccioun; by Rachel is vnderstonden reson; by Lya is vnderstondden affeccioun (12 / 9—13). Only, the emphasis is laid on 'affeccioun', rather than 'mynde' in the former writer.

In another passage, after urging you to affirm as well as deny all

the existing things in the first cause, 'in him þat is abouen al knowyng & mynde', the writer cautions you not to suppose that this denial and that affirmation are the opposites: (It behouþ us) not for to haue it in opinyon þat þees deniinges of þees being þinges ben contrary to þe first affermynges of hem, bot fastliche for to holde in sizt of byleue him for to be abouen alle doyng away of þees beyng or beable þinges, þe whiche in himself is abouen alle (4 / 7—10), *De Mystica Theologia*: (Oportet enim) et non negationes oppositas opinari esse affirmationibus, sed multo prius ipsam super priuationes esse, quae est super omnem et ablationem et positionem. The absolute being is said to be above 'privations', *doyng away* of all the existing or exist-ible beings, and above *affermynge* of them all.

The writer pursues his theme further in a strain of paradox: (Bartholomew says) þat Cristes deuinitee, it is boþe moche and it is leest; and þe Gospel is brode and moche, & eftsones he seiþ it is streite & lital (4 / 13—5), In þis souereyn-schining derknes we prey to be done up, &, bi nouzt seeyng & vnknowyng, for to see & for to knowe hym þat is abouen al seing & al knowyng in þis same not se & not knowe (5 / 27—9), we foulden alle (*i. e.* beyng þinges) togeders & done hem away, þat we mowen cleerliche knowe þat vnknowyng (7 / 4—5).

A striking fact that comes to our notice about the language used here is that the language of paradox is as often as not couched in that of negation, as some of our quotations already show.

II. The Language of Negation.

As we have already seen, our key-word *derknes* is typically privative, the concept of which E. Leisi introduced as long ago as 1953.¹⁴⁾ It is synonymous with *vnknowyng* (5 / 17): þe derknes of vnknowyng, þe whiche derknes is vereliche hid. It is 'þe derknes þat is abouen mynde', where 'we schul not onliche fynde þe schortyng of

14) Ernst Leisi, *Der Wortinhalt*. Heidelberg, 1953, p.37.

wordes, bot as it were a madnes & a parfite vnresonabilitee of alle þat we seyn' (8 / 13—5). But it is at the same time the 'derknes, where verely he ('Christ') is (4 / 25)', and where Moses entered 'for to fele in experience þe presence of hym þat is abouen alle þinges' (5/19—20). It is this very same theme that *The Cloud of Unknowing* harps on. *Derknes* is thus symbolic of the shortage of words, of 'a þing þat is vnspekable'. The language which speaks of this darkness must necessarily be a language of negation for shortness of words, as was precisely said.

Man makes 'an ymage of his nakyd, vnmaad, & vnbigonne kynde' (6 / 12—3).

It is said: þat he is neiþer soule, ne aungel, ne he haþ fantasie, ne opinion, ne resoun, ne vnderstondyng; ne he is reson, ne vnderstonding; ne he is seyde, ne vnderstonden (9 / 25—9), he is no nombre, no ordre, ne greetnes, ne litylnes, ne euenheed, ne licnes, ne vnlicnes; ne he stondeþ, ne he moueþ, ne he holdeþ no sylence, ne he spekiþ (9 / 30—10 / 1). This manner of speaking is modeled exactly after the negative language of the Latin *De Mystica Theologia*: dicimus quod omnium causa neque est anima, neque mens; neque habet phantasiam inferiorem aut superiorem, neque rationem, neque intellectum; neque est ratio, neque intellectus; neque dicitur, neque intelligitur. / neque est numerus, neque ordo, neque magnitudo, neque parvitas, neque aequalitas, neque similitudo, neque dissimilitudo; neque stat, neque movetur. And it goes on interminably in the same mood.

we sey þat he haþ no vertewe, ne he is vertewe, ne liȝt, ne he leuiþ, ne he is liif, ne he is substance, ne eelde, ne tyme, ... ne he is spirit after þat we vnderstonde spirit; ... ne he is anyþing of not-beyng þinges, ne anyþing of beyng þinges; ... (10 / 3—10 ff.); *De Mystica Theologia*: et in summis negationes terminemus, neque virtutem habet, neque est virtus, neque lumen, neque vivit, neque vita est; neque substantia est, neque aevum, neque tempus; ... neque spiritus secundum quod nos intelligimus spiritum, ... Sed neque Deus

est aliquid non existentium, aut aliquid existentium;...

In the last line quoted, negation is antithetic and paradoxical, as also it is in the following lines: (the sovereign being is) wiþinne alle creatures, not inclusid; wiþouten alle creatures, not schit out; abouen alle creatures, not borne up; bineþe alle creatures, not put doun; behynde alle creatures, not put bak; before alle creatures, not dreuen forþ (6 / 14—6).

This persistent form of recurrent negation immediately reminds us of the same pattern of negation of thought and language in some Oriental religious literature, particularly Indian. Two familiar names easily suggest themselves in this respect: the sutra generally attributed to Vimalakirti with its philosophy of Absolute Equality and the *Bhagavadgītā*, the sacred song incorporated within the epic of the *Mahābhārata*.

In fact, there is only a faint trace of this negative language in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, where negation is no more than a simple denial when the writer speaks of things negatively at all. Instances are very few even here: & do þat in þee is to forȝete alle þe creat[u]res þat euer God maad & þe werkes of hem, so þat þi þouȝt ne þi desire be not directe ne streche to any of hem, neiþer in general ne in special. Bot lat hem be, & take no kepe ('heed') to hem (16 / 6—9).¹⁴⁾ According to the author of this book, man stands between the two poles of knowledge, a cloud of unknowing and a cloud of forgetting: Þee þinkeþ, þarauenture, þat þou arte ful fer fro God, forþi þat þis cloude of vnknowing is bitwix þee & þi God; bot sekirly, & it be wel conseued, þou arte wel ferþer fro hym when þou hast no cloude of forȝetyng bitwix þee & alle þe creatures þat euer ben maad (24 / 4—8).¹⁵⁾

More congenial is the negative way of thinking to the old Indian philosophy, with its logic of reconciling being with non-being. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa, the highest god of Brahmanism, reveals to

15) *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Phillis Hodgson. E.E.T.S., O.S. 218, 1944.

Arjuna, prince of the Bharatas, the secrets of the ways of entering into the world of the Absolute, initiating him in the knowledge of the Most High. The term 'aum' stands for this inexpressible Absolute, the unmanifested eternal being, from which all the manifested beings are derived (*Bh.*, VIII. 18. 1).¹⁶ This unmanifested being is also called the Imperishable.

21. avyakto 'ksara ity uktas.

(This Unmanifested is called the Imperishable.)

The imperishable father of the world speaks to Arjuna in these words:

IX. 19. 3—4 amṛtam ca 'va mṛtyuś ca
sad asac cā 'ham arjuna

(I am immortality and also death,

I am being as well as non-being, O Arjuna.)

The Blessed Lord also promises freedom from all sins to

X. 3. 1—2 yo mām ajam anādim̄ ca
vetti lokamaheśvaram

(He who knows Me, the unborn, without beginning,
also the mighty lord of the worlds)

Arjuna, in turn, addresses the Lord in various terms, which assert the multiple attributes of this perfect being, much as Richard Rolle does: arjuna uvāca

X. 12 param̄ brahma param̄ dhāma
pavitram paramam̄ bhavān
puruṣam̄ śāśvataṁ divyam
ādidevam̄ ajam̄ vibhum̄

(Thou art the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Abode
and the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal, Divine
Person, the First of the gods, the Unborn, the
All-pervading.)

16) The Bhagavadgita. With an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes by S. Radhakrishnan. London, 1953.

The śrībhagavān himself speaks elsewhere in a language of assertion, reminiscent of the *Revelations* :

X. 20. 3—4 aham ādiś ca madhyaṃ ca
bhūtānām anta eva ca.

(I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of beings.)

With regard to cumulative negation in Indian philosophy or literature, K. Kunjunnī Raja says: "In the ordinary sense of the word the Absolute is beyond definition When Brahman is described as Intelligence, Bliss, etc., It is described by means of a name, form or action superimposed on It. If we want to describe Its true nature free from the difference due to the limiting adjuncts, it is an impossibility. The only way is by negation, 'Not this, not this'. However, it is possible for words to suggest meanings and ideas beyond the range of their expressive power."¹⁷⁾

It is in order to supply this 'schortyng of wordes' (*DHD.*, 8 / 14) that they have resorted to the language of negation. It strives to attain to the knowledge of þe souereyn-schinyng heiȝt (*DHD.*, 2 / 18), of the transcendency of 'þe moost hiȝe heiȝt abouen alle, boȝe setting & doying away'. Even negation in itself is not the last resort in this attempt. The author of *Deonise Hyd Diuinite* concludes: "And his not-vnderstandable ouerpassyng is vn-vnderstandably abouen alle affermyng and deniinge" (10 / 21—23).

It is strange to think how this negative principle still manifests itself in the modern God-forsaken world, where, as Georg Lukács observes,¹⁸⁾ this our quietly decaying life would become aware of a lack of substance in itself only when men fall prey to the power of the demon and overreach themselves in some unreasonable ways. In these godless times, the writer's irony is that he does not go beyond

17) K. Kunjunnī Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*. Madras, 1963. pp. 253-4.

18) Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*. Tr. by Anna Bostock. MIT Press, 1971.

“a portrayal of the kindly and malicious workings of the demons, a refusal to comprehend more than the mere fact of these workings; and in it,” Lukács continues, “there is the deep certainty, expressible only by form-giving, that through not-desiring-to-know and not-being-able-to-know he has truly encountered, glimpsed and grasped the ultimate, true substance, the present, non-existent God.”

28 August, 1972.