The Wooing Group: Pain, Pleasure and the Anchoritic Body

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The Wooing Group prose lyrics exist within a grand romance narrative of desire and the goal of consummation, a narrative engaging The Song of Songs and its allegorical readings to the thirteenth century along with contemporary secular and religious courtly modes in which love is a force binding persons together, both in marriage and in sexual love outside marriage. The lyrics invoke, in the service of this relationship, the language of sexual passion, self-sacrifice, economic exchange, power and dependence. They owe a narrative debt to medieval versions of the life of Christ, and its participatory readings or imitation,¹ the history of which is addressed by Bella Millett’s chapter in this volume; these lyrics owe their framework of discourse to the affective dimensions of sweetness, heat and suffering as expressed in troubadour and trouvère lyrics as well as those to the Virgin Mary. The dialogue of passion inherited from the Song of Songs scrolls out and curls up at the edges in multigendered, intertextual love-talk throughout the later Middle Ages from Bernard of Clairvaux’s rationalized intellectual commentary on ‘the kisses of his mouth’ to Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd, and, later, to the voluptuous mystical poetry of St John of the Cross, as well as in the vast repertoire of secular love-lyrics and romance. Desire, the promise of fulfilment and ultimate union gained simultaneous currency in religious and secular discourse.

This paper discusses the role of emotion in the life of the anchoress, in particular the engagement of her passions by the Wooing Group texts. Meredith W. Thompson comments that the manuscript pointing of Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd suggests that the terms of endearment are to be
‘lingered over’.\textsuperscript{2} Such a reading posits not simply an affective reading, but, over time, a distillation of affect, drop by drop, to be collected in the soul over a lifetime: emotional experiences which educate the passions. In the imagined presence of the lover, the recluse approaches his wooing and suffering through sensualized reading which underlines a physical conception of affect, rather than a rational abstraction. The intellectual reworking of Augustine’s faculties of the soul by Cistercians like Aelred re-examined and redefined affect itself as two-sided: a natural, involuntary impulse of desire, and affective love rooted in the will; we know that emotion is a bodily response, involving increased heart rate, capillary dilation, hormonal effects, but is also subject to refinement by an act of will.\textsuperscript{3}

Anchoresses are encouraged to think on their sins and weep for them; is there a more specific goal to this arousal in the feminine spirituality of the religious recluse? The anchoritic body is insulated from other people by personal intention and the walls of the anchorhold; it is dead to the world, while still actually alive; within the specialized context of the cell, symbolic death brings it to the threshold of the divine. On the practical side, the recluse cannot exclude the emotional dimension of life, for the sake of her own sanity: a life not engaged with feeling in any way is hardly life at all, inside or outside an anchorhold. Emotional engagement is written into all of the anchoritic texts: attention is drawn again and again to affective response. That the affect is bodily, not simply spiritual, is also recognized in medieval writing generally, along with the assumption that meditation on emotions directed by such readings, and the performance of devotions, open the walls of the body further and further into the dimension of the divine. Damien Bouquet traces the ways in which Augustine’s concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘will’ alter in the course of the Christian Middle Ages as their natures are discussed again and again in relation to one another, and in relation to ‘love’: will is what matters the most of the faculties, because the others follow it. What is a ‘good’ will, if not a will which loves good? ‘… qu’est-ce qu’une volonté bonne sinon une volonté qui aime le bien?’\textsuperscript{4}

Meditation which focused on concrete detail was part of the English religious life, from Anglo-Saxon poetry\textsuperscript{5} to Anselm’s \textit{Prayers and Meditations} and Aelred’s advice to his sister.\textsuperscript{6} The culture of the anchorhold quite naturally refines it in a specialist context, and \textit{þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd} moves meditation into the realms of erotic affect through grief and loss as well as joy and desire. \textit{Ancrene Wisse} advises its readers to manage the outer senses, directing them to turn those faculties inward, encouraging them towards attaining satisfying results: false worldly comforts will be revealed, along with the deceptions of the Devil and the torments of hell; the joys of heaven, the Virgin Mary,
and over them all, him who gives joy to them all and is the crown of them all … ‘Hit is a dearne healewi þat na mon ne cnaweð þat naueð hit ismecchet.’ þis smech and tis cnawunge kimêð of gastelich sihðe. of gastelich herunge. of gastelich speche. þat ha schulen habben þe forgað for godes luue worldliche herunges. eorðliche spechen. fleschliche sihðen.

(and, over them all, him who gives joy to them all and is the crown of them all … ‘it is a secret balsam,’ says St John the Evangelist in the Apocalypse; ‘it is a secret balsam that no one knows who has not tasted it.’ This tasting and this knowing come from spiritual sight, spiritual hearing, from spiritual speech, which those will have who forgo for God’s love worldly hearing, earthly speech, fleshly sights.)

Sensation itself is always a reference point; however imaginatively disembodied, the frame of reference is sensual, because otherwise desire would not be compelling to the flesh in need of redemption.

The spiritual eroticism of the anchoritic life was a necessary function of the human body, and the readings associated with it are tactile, self- and other-directed, a form of consummation by words, or at least foreplay in a mystical courtship and lovemaking. Hundreds of women did not live out their lives in the anchorhold because a medieval patriarchy preferred women in prison;7 whatever a medieval patriarchy wanted, or conspired to do, or succeeded in perpetuating in terms of anti-feminist myth and practice, clearly medieval women had, as post-modern women do, ways to refashion these to their own advantage.

I will be discussing the anchoritic body as a corporeal metatext written by the anchoress, corporeal but not directed by social concerns like material wealth or happiness or reputation. In spite of having only an existing narrative language of social meaning, the anchoress removes herself as far as possible from it: she is not to think of herself as a family member, not to write letters; she goes through a symbolic burial service when she is enclosed in her cell, and is not to emerge. She is not to speak to anyone who comes to the window unless necessary – and it is here, at the physical boundary of the cell, the window to the outside, that the most important qualification occurs: what is necessary is left to her own judgement. She is not under the authority of a male spiritual adviser unless she decides to be. Whatever codes existed for behaviour in the cell, they are, like the Pirates’ Code, ‘more like guidelines than actual rules’.

Refashioning, subverting and simply ignoring anti-feminist discourse which permeates even the praises of women is often barely possible for women outside an anchorhold, even now. But, enclosed and uninterrupted
by this discourse, the recluse could speak ecstatically of the wealth of her
divine lover, the beauty of his skin under his clothes, the loveliness of his
face, having rejected these in worldly terms. It has always bothered me
(and many other feminists) that the female recluse rejects marriage in the
world only to be reclaimed by it in the cell; and yet now in working again
with *Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* I am arriving slowly at a reading of the life
of the anchoress in a different mode, more as I do with the medieval
romance.

Sarah Kay’s definition of romance as ‘the principal form of secular enter-
tainment in the middle ages’ illustrates that it was less a genre than a way of
telling stories, which accounts for its range and its permeation of narratives
in general. A principal way of spending time alone, as well as in company, is
the telling of stories pertaining to oneself, one’s own history, situation and
hopes: the Katherine Group, the Wooing Group, as well as the many exempla-
ry narratives of *Ancrene Wisse*, are part of what I will call ‘an anchoritic
cycle’ – like the Grail cycle – of the quest for the crown of sanctity in death,
with the anchoress as its heroine. The lyrics of the Wooing Group are an
indispensable part of this cycle, a means for the anchoress to incorporate her
life into the right story, to engage again and again emotionally and intellec-
tually on her own direction in the quest. Note that in *The Quest for the Holy
Grail* it is usually a religious recluse who appears to unravel a dream or give
some directions to the knight; it seems that the recluses, not the knights, are
the experts in following one’s way to the end.

The lyrics of the Wooing Group reinterpret the sexual life of the body as
a mystical life, that of a real, female body living on the edge of a dangerous
abyss otherwise conducive to madness. Solitary confinement is one of the
worst tortures inflicted on the helpless, on the abject. Without the mirror of
others to define who a person is, the mind can simply lose track of the self.
But the anchoress who does not lose her mind and her health spends a soli-
tary life in the work of redefining selfhood and otherness, of telling the
story of this quest for meaning with her own female body. She must be able
to use the social function, language, in a larger arena altogether. The lan-
guage of the Wooing Group prayers trace out a devotional circuit in which
the reader is reminded of who she is by the kind of story in which she lives,
and in what strange dimension its language has meaning.

Thompson points out the similarities of phrasing with *Ancrene Wisse*
which link *Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* also with *On Lofsong of ure Lefdi, On
Ureison of ure Louerde*, the passions of the virgin martyrs and *Soul’s
Keeping*, concluding that the Wooing Group lyrics were likely influenced
by *Ancrene Wisse* and by each other. ‘These recurrent parallels undoubtedly
indicate the emergence of a native tradition with a somewhat conventionalized phraseology, much influenced by Latin writers and by the *Song of Songs*; it is striking that there are no verbal links to Anselm, Bernard or Hugh of St Victor, which reinforces the idea that these works are part of a new vernacular tradition. Likewise the Anglo-Norman literature shows parallels rather than sources. But to use conventional language is not to be merely conventional, except in the most superficial way. To use conventional language to mean something else entirely, something outside the usual linguistic realm of reference; to spend a lifetime doing it in solitary confinement; this discipline arose from the peculiar context of the solitary. Language use in this realm required special skills, developed over time, to provide and direct affective experience into learning.

The betrothal of the Holy Virgin to her God is a cliché – to everyone except herself. To redefine language entirely in her own terms, for her own use, to communicate with someone not present to anyone else, unseen, intangible, could be viewed as a severe form of mental illness. Even the most radical philosopher, deconstructionist or revolutionary relies on quite ordinary worldly means to live, move and have their being – but the anchoress *hardly did at all*. In *Ancrene Wisse* the image of the bird coming to the ground only to eat enough to live, turning round quickly, again and again, to ensure its own safety, is the anchoress seeing to her worldly needs; at one extreme, this is a far cry from the philosopher with a cup of coffee or glass of port, writing or reading a book in a comfortable chair, and even at the other, the frantic academic pounding away at a keyboard to meet a deadline. One major difference, which makes all the difference here, is the situation of the *body in question*: is it engaged in a ceaselessly demanding and dangerous exercise, or is it soothed, comfortably forgotten, or simply a word-making machine for the intellect? Or is it fleeing its relentless predator, the Devil, in the imagined body of a deer, while waking, fasting, praying and meditating confined to a cell? Probably not, unless it is the body of an anchoress.

The role of suffering – human suffering in general, the suffering of Christ, but, in particular the suffering experienced by the anchoress – has focused much of our scholarly discussion. Here I consider the discomforts and pain of the anchoritic life, but also the positive counterbalance to suffering which could be provided by affective meditation – by reading, by spontaneous and unwritten performances of *Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* and texts like it. The effects of time and suffering alone, without affective pleasure, not only degrade a human body, but ravage it. The anchoress chose her physical position outside the social world, something which for those in the
world looks like a kind of self-hatred, a punishment of the sinful body. But we know from Ancrene Wisse that any actual physical punishments were viewed by the author with disapproval; much better, he says, is a sweet and tender heart. How is anyone to sweeten their soul in solitary confinement, even when confinement is willed?

Anchoritic abjection cannot have been experienced in the usual, social way, as being cast out. Her physical surroundings, however empty, must have provided her with the tools to rework almost every aspect of the experience, so that her suffering was positive. The ‘sinful human body’ was itself a site of pain because of its separation from the beloved even in the anchorhold, no further than the threshold of future fulfilment. Her activities there required her to work constantly on revising, through affective experiences, the language of passion that was meaningful outside her situation. Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd testifies to this. Some of the terms of deconstruction are illuminating here: ‘Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness to the other’ and an attempt ‘to discover the non-place or non-lieu which would be [that] “other” of philosophy’. As a philosophical stance, its relevance here is rooted in the idea of ‘the impossible’ as philosophical praxis, of performative waiting. Anchoritic abjection is thus an openness to a new meaning of the body.

Julia Kristeva’s mystical approach to abjection seems, in this context, a plausible discourse of the anchorhold for us to consider:

I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be ‘me’. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be. A possession previous to my advent: a being-there of the symbolic that a father might or might not embody. Significance is indeed inherent in the human body.

The body of the anchoress is not abject because it has been expelled from society, from worldly life, or because it is inherently sinful, but because the anchoress has willed it to be abject as the starting-point of a life with the world at its back, a life on the edge of the divine. The anchorhold is a kind of nowhere, a ‘non-lieu’ in Derrida’s terms, where a new philosophy of the human body is made.

Chantal Chawaf asks, ‘Isn’t it the goal of writing to articulate the body?’ While Chawaf’s question may be taken at face value, it is significant in our understanding of the place of Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd in the ‘anchoritic cycle’ if we focus on her added qualification:

The word has its own organic life and to conserve that life is of the utmost importance. In order to reconnect the book with the body and with pleasure, we must
disintellectualize writing. The corporeality of language stirs up our sensuality, wakes it up, pulls it away from indifferent inertia. Theories deprive us of whirlpools, sparkling and free, which should carry us naturally toward our full blossoming, our rebirth. For me the most important thing to work on is orality.

The performative, oral dimensions of *Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* and its associated lyrical prose works bring writing into the life of the body through intense affective response. The bad-marriage scenarios of *Hali Meidhad* are designed to exploit the imaginations of celibate women, which will turn at times to the lost world of sex and children, of romantic love and the feminine secular dominion. Some positive balance in these categories is attained in the Wooing Group, both in the love-lyrics to Christ as Bridegroom and those to Mary as Lady. Both secular and celibate modes of narrative inform the lyrics, just as they do the medieval romance and hagiography. Separation from and reunion with the beloved, the loss of status and its recovery, are major themes in the story of the medieval self.

These narratives tell the story of the anchorhold, too: they define the cell and the person within it, the life lived, and the death, as they are recounted or lyricized, as they participate in the arguments, errors of judgement and triumphs of the anchoritic life. While each recluse must keep the world out of the cell as much as possible, avoiding the talkative soap salesman and ensuring that the wandering milk-cow does not require cross-country pursuit, the enclosed imagination must not be allowed to focus on dangerous temptations in such a way as to lose control over them. But it is clearly understood by the writers of anchoritic texts that the imagination of the recluse must be active. Though, of course, prayers such as those suggested in *Ancrene Wisse* will take up time every day, the recluse still has many years of minutes and hours which must be filled. Part of the work of the anchoress must be self-knowledge, and a great part of that knowledge is the refining of desire within the specialized fires of celibacy and seclusion. Desire must be experienced to be understood, and such lyrics fan its flames in order that both the desire and the anchoress’s response to it can be objects of contemplation – or, rather, bodily events of contemplation. While the anchoress is not to lose control over temptation, she is actually encouraged in *Ancrene Wisse* to lose it in contemplative pleasure. During the elevation of the host, she is to pray to see God face to face in heaven, and then, after the kiss of peace,

\[
\text{forþeot} \, \text{al þe world. Þer beoð al ut of bodi Þer isperclinde luue bieluppeð ower leofmon Þe in to ower breostes bur is iliht of heouene. ond haldeð him hetuese aþet he habbe içettet ow al þet Þe eauer easkið.}
\]
(forget all the world, be wholly out of your body, embrace in shining love your lover who has alighted into the bower of your heart from heaven, and hold him as tight as you can until he has granted all you ever ask.)

She is ‘God’s chamber’ and has privileged inward sight of her own sins and the torments of hell, but also sees ‘spiritually’ the Virgin with her maidens, the saints, ‘and, over them all, him who gives joy to them all and is the crown of them all, a sight which has a taste of secret balsam unknown to those who have never tasted it’.

While it could be argued that mystical experience itself is purely metaphysical, it must equally be understood that embodiment of a special kind, an experience queered by articulation, is posited by the language of physical pleasure, the deconstructionist ‘impossible experience’. It seems pointless to argue about this: it is, in whatever way, experience, and it is described as experience which integrates existence in the body with the divine.

The framework of On Ureisun of ure Louerde is set out in the invocation: Jesus is ‘soð god. soð mon’. The divine and the human are fused, for the following experiences of pleasure, which include sweetness, healing, joy, light, softness, loveliness. These are expressed as both exclamation and appeal, before the argument of the meditation, on why Jesus is to be loved over all; the pleasure of the contemplation in what ‘true God/true man’ is defines the origin of desire. Argument comes second, once this ground of pleasure has been established. On wel swuðe God Ureisun and the Be Wohunge of ure Lauerd begin the same way.

On Lofsong of ure Louerde and On Lofsong of ure Lefdi begin in the painful experience of grief and fear over the reader’s sin. Like the approach to contemplation through pleasure, these seem designed to provoke, even inflame, bodily sensation of affect – here negative, but still the opening grounds of the argument. That is, bodily affect – emotional experience of pleasure and pain – is the gateway to contemplation, argument, and ultimately right attention.

The texts offer exercises to the solitary, an athletic flexing of affect which is to be constantly directed in the service of constructing her new world in the anchorhold, the new context of the body. Emotional strength must be acquired and maintained, redeveloped after periods of depression or other illness, for example, and rebuilt in new areas of the personality throughout life; the habit of direction of affect requires the rigorous discipline of the vigilant sparrow on the ground. The grand narrative of the love between the anchoress and her betrothed is focused on different dramatic situations, designed to fit her moods of joyous desire and closeness, of grief and separation, of unfulfilled longing and impatience.
Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd is the fullest treatment of the narrative in the collection, beginning in outpourings of joy and tenderness, and, once these are established, reasoned arguments of Christ’s superiority as a lover which return to the refrain of satisfaction,

A iesu mi
  swete iesu leue þat te luue of
  þe beo al mi liking.24

The reader begins with a series of stages created by verbalization – the pleasure of possessing the lover (my dear, my darling, my lord, my saviour, my honey-drop, my balm); pleasure in the contemplation of Jesus’ beauty as lover, with practice imagining what the worldly qualities that cause desire are, then imagining beyond those, culminating in ecstatic outpourings of desire, and pleasure in that desire, then the first refrain. The next pleasure is in the imagining of the means to heaven as love of Jesus for himself alone (‘for þe self luue þeseluen’), which includes

  te eorðe & al þat
  hit fulles werld & al þat trin
  wuneð. Heuene wið þe murh
  ō̆es & ta unimete blisses

(the world and all that lives therein, heaven with its pleasures and its immeasurable joys, ll. 66–8),

and the refrain. There is pleasure in her lover’s generosity, that she should sit on his right hand in heaven, then the refrain; in his wisdom, with an invitation to dig deep to find it (‘Inwiþ þe mi leue lif is hord of alle wisedom hid’ (Within you, my beloved life, is hidden the hoard of all wisdom, ll. 115–16), then the refrain.

Gently the reader is led into a focus on the life of Jesus and the Passion itself, identifying with his poverty, and how he suffered and died. These are expanded in detail in the following lines, gradually increasing the affective temperature through further possibilities for identifying with Christ’s pilgrim state (as, for example, in the Ancrene Wisse Introduction the anchoresses are urged to say they are of the order of St James, should anyone ask), lack of rest, and finally

Ah atte laste
  of þi lif hwen þu for me swa
  rewliche hengedes on rode . ne
hafdes in al þis world hwer wiþ
þat blisfule blodi þu mihtes
hule & huide . & swa nu swete lef-
mon pour þu þe self was . & te
pour þu raðeste cheas . pouer-
te þu luuedes . pouerte þu tah
tes . & þiuen þu haues echeli
che þin endelesse blisse . til aile
þat clenli for þi luue mesaise &
pouerte wilfulliche þolien.25

(Ah, at the end of your life you for me so piteously hung on the cross, you had
nothing in all the world to cover and hide your blissful bloody body, and so sweet
lover you yourself were poor and you preferred to be poor: poverty you loved,
poverty you taught and you have given forever your endless joy, until all who
live purely for your love willingly suffer hardship and poverty.26)

The anchoress’s actual participation in the narrative is reached here. The
benefits of her life are laid out as anti-types of how Jesus lived them in the
same way: he had poverty with shame, not honour; he was wrongfully
accused, judged by ‘hel/le dogges’ (ll. 138–9), hanged between two thieves,
and tortured, not safely enclosed in the cell. This is the apex of the Passion
narrative, the affective centre of both grief and joy for the anchoress: that
her lover suffered, and that he did so for her.

The text demands visualization and possibly even performance here.

Bute hwat tunge mai
hit telle. hwat heorte mai
hit þenche27

is followed by detailed placement of the self within the passion narrated at
times in the present tense, and punctuated by participatory exclamations:

A hwat schal
I nu don? Nu min herte mai to
breke . min ehe flowen a o wa
ter . A nu is mi lefmon demd for
to deien . (ll. 488–92)

(Oh, what must I do now? Now my heart is going to break, my eyes flood over
with water. Oh, now my lover is sentenced to death.28)

As Christ is being led to Calvary, carrying his cross, the participant
exclams
Every moment of scourging, stretching out and nailing, bleeding and gall is here, with an immediacy of suffering which demands the anchoress experience it, affectively if no other way. The Ancrene Wisse author comments on self-imposed pain:

Nest lich nan ne gurde hire wið na cunne gurdles; bute þurh schriftes leaue. ne beore nan ír ne here. ne ilesplies felles. ne ne beate hire þer wið; ne wið scurge ileadet. wið holin ne wið breres. ne biblodgi hire seolf wiðute schriftes leaue. ноhwer ne binelte hire. ne ne beate biuoren . ne na keoruunge ne keorue … Sum wummon inohreaðe wereð þe brech of here wel icnottet. þe streapeles dun to þe vet ilact ful feaste. ah eauver is best þe swete ond te swote heorte.30

(Let no-one belt herself with any kind of belt next to the body, except with her confessor’s leave, nor wear any iron or hair, or hedgehog skins; let her not beat herself with them, nor with a leaded scourge, with holly or briars, nor draw blood from herself without her confessor’s leave; let her not sting herself with nettles anywhere, nor beat herself in front, nor cut herself … A woman will sometimes wear breeches of haircloth very firmly knotted, the legs very tightly laced down to the feet. But always a sweet and tender heart is best.)

That is, while the anchoress may sometimes engage in these exercises, her usual physical discomfort is at a low level though constant, and her greatest suffering is affective: the sense of her sin as a cause of Christ’s agony, to which he submits through love for her. And this is also the source of pleasure, something which keeps her heart sweet and tender: that her lover believes her worthy of him.

On this sweeter side in Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd, the remedy for suffering through Christ’s passion is renewed pleasure: the prayer-refrain,

\[
\text{A Iesu mi} \\
\text{swete iesu leue þat te luue of} \\
\text{þe beo al mi liking}^{32}
\]

(Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that love of you be all my pleasure),

brings all sections of the meditation back to the sensation of sweetness. Pleasure as closure makes sense of pain here, as it does later to Julian when she finds in the course of her apparent dying that she would rather gaze at Jesus on the Cross than look up to heaven to God, because her understand-
ing of that suffering as she gazes is heaven while she lives.\textsuperscript{34} Performative reading over the course of a lifetime, and meditation on insights gained through exploration of all the possible pains and pleasures of choosing Christ as a lover, draw the anchoritic participant into that world of impossible being and discourse which is her higher life. While the intellectual debates and redemptions of the Cistercians laid the ground for the importance of affect, which we see in Aelred’s \textit{De Institutione Inclusarum}, its lived experience in the anchorhold appears to have provided the rewards.

\textbf{Notes}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Benedicta Ward, ‘Inward feeling and deep thinking’: the Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm revisited’, \textit{Anselm Studies}, 1 (1983), 177.
\item ‘… [Q]u’est-ce qu’une volonté bonne sinon une volonté qui aime le bien?’, Boquet, p. 90.
\item See, for example, the remark an elderly cleric makes to Margery Kempe: ‘I wold þu wer closyd in an hows of ston, þat þer schuld no man speke wiþ þe.’ \textit{The Book of Margery Kempe}, ed. Barry Windeatt (New York: Penguin, 2000), ll. 870–1.
\item Thompson, p. xix.
\item Ibid., pp. xix–xx.
\item ‘Those birds fly well who have little flesh and many feathers, as the pelican has. The ostrich, on account of its heavy flesh, and other birds like it, try to look as if they are flying and beat their wings; but their feet are constantly dragged to the earth. It is just the same with the fleshly anchoress, who lives in fleshly desires and
\end{enumerate}
follows her ease. The heaviness of her flesh and fleshly vices deprive her of her flight.’ Savage and Watson, p. 97.

13 *Eauer is best þe swete ond te swote heorte. * Ancrene Wisse, p. 214, l. 17.


15 Ibid., p. 124.

16 Ibid., p. 112. Derrida writes: ‘I would say that deconstruction loses nothing from admitting that it is impossible; also that those who would rush to delight in that admission lose nothing from having to wait. For a deconstructive operation possibility would rather be a danger, the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible practices. The interest of deconstruction, of such force and desire as it may have, is a certain experience of the impossible’ (p. 36). He continues: ‘deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail; its writing is not only performative, it produces rules – other conventions – for new performativities and never installs itself in the theoretical assurance of a simple opposition between performative and constative. Its process involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming [venir] in event, advent, invention’ (p. 337).


19 Ibid., p. 177.

20 Ancrene Wisse, p. 21, ll. 18–23, Savage and Watson, p. 59.

21 Savage and Watson, pp. 82–3; see also p. 86, in which the kisses of his mouth are ‘a sweetness and a delight of the heart so immeasurably sweet that every taste of the world is bitter compared with it’.

22 On Ureisun of ure Louerde, l. 1.

23 Similar to and perhaps building upon the spirituality of these earlier anchoritic works, Julian of Norwich’s experiences in the body led to contemplation and then writing something akin to that new philosophy of the body Derrida mentions, p. 170 above.

24 Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd, ll. 55–7.

25 Ibid., ll. 345–57.

26 Savage and Watson, pp. 252–3.

27 Ibid., p. 279.

28 Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd, ll. 458–60.

29 Ibid., ll. 488–91.

30 Ancrene Wisse, p. 214, ll. 2–17.


32 Pe Wohunge of ure Lauerd, ll. 55–7.

33 Savage and Watson, p. 248.