THE WOOING OF OUR LORD
and
THE WOOING GROUP PRAYERS

edited and translated by Catherine Innes-Parker

BL, Ms Cotton Titus D. xxxiii, f. 127r, Copyright © British Library
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broadview editions
To Ian, Averil and David, who fill my life with joy.
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List of Abbreviations

AW: Ancene Wisse


Cleopatra: London, BL Cotton Cleopatra C.vi

Corpus (C): Cambridge Corpus Christi College, MS 402

EETS: Early English Text Society


HM: Hali Meidhad

KG: The Katherine Group

Lambeth (L): London, Lambeth Palace MS 487

LUL: *On hysong of ure louterde*

MED: Middle English Dictionary Online: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mcd/ 


Introduction

*Pe wohunge of ure lawerd* (The Wooing of Our Lord) occupies a seminal position in the history of English literature and the development of English devotion. Dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, it is one of a group of texts written in English at a time when the language of literature and the court was Anglo-Norman French, and the language of church and state was Latin. It is the first stand-alone Passion meditation in English, and thus establishes the beginning of what was, by the fifteenth century, the most popular genre in English writing.¹

*Pe wohunge of ure lawerd* (hereafter *Wohunge*) is also a highly skilled composition, combining poetic expression with a profound affective theology. Its first-person female narrator speaks directly to Christ, becoming the voice of the reader whom the text guides through a passionate meditation upon the magnitude of Christ’s love, his sufferings in his Passion, and the response of the individual soul.

*Wohunge* is the longest and most sophisticated of the group of prayers known as the Wooing Group, which also includes four shorter prayers: *On god ureisin of ure lefði* (A Good Prayer to Our Lady, hereafter *UUL*); *On wel swúde god ureisin of God almihty* (A Most Excellent Prayer to God Almighty, hereafter *UGA*); *Pe ureisin of seinte Marie* (A Prayer to Saint Mary, hereafter *OSM*); and *On lossong of ure lawerde* (A Hymn to Our Lord, hereafter *LUL*).² All of these texts are

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¹ A Passion meditation is a text that guides the reader through the contemplation of Christ’s final hours, generally beginning with the last supper or with the agony in the garden, and following Christ through his arrest, trial(s), scourging, mockery, and crucifixion. Later Passion meditations such as the one included in Appendix D often include the deposition from the cross (i.e., the taking down of Christ’s body), the burial, the harrowing of Hell, the resurrection and post-resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene and the disciples. The genre had a long history in Latin and many of the themes and images in *Wohunge* are drawn from the Latin tradition, for a detailed account, see Bestul.

² All of these titles are given in an extant manuscript, with the exception of *On lossong of ure lawerde*, which appears without rubric or title. *On lossong of ure lawerde* is the title given by Morris (p. 2091), and Thompson (p. 10c). I have chosen to use the abbreviations introduced by Millett (Millett II, p. 27), rather than the older abbreviations used by Shepherd (p. 24). Millett’s clearer, more accessible abbreviations will, I hope, become standard with the publication of her edition. Millett did not include *On god ureisin of ure lefði* (A Good Prayer to Our Lady) in the Wooing Group; however, following her lead, I have used the abbreviation UUL.
written in the first person and all contain passionate addresses to the Virgin Mary and to Christ.

The importance of Passion meditation in the late Middle Ages has long been recognized. With the rise of affective piety (often cited as beginning in the early twelfth century with Anselm’s Cur Deus homo and flourishing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, the Victorines and the Franciscans), the focus on the Incarnation and the crucifixion as the decisive moments at which God’s love for humankind is made manifest in the world meant that meditation on the Passion became central to the understanding of the process by which humankind avails itself of the salvation made possible through Christ’s sacrifice. Early Passion meditations such as Wohunge incorporate both the Anselmian prayer and the meditative techniques that had become so influential in the religious milieu of the twelfth century, and the affective devotion to the divine spouse that the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux had popularized among male and female religious. The Wooing Group prayers are also the first instance of effective, meditative texts in the English vernacular, anticipating the popular Franciscan devotion of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The introduction of the genre of Passion meditation into Middle English made this kind of inward, individual devotion available, for the first time, to a large class of readers: the “illiterati,” who were literate in English but un schooled in Latin (generally women religious and the laity). At least three of the Wooing Group texts were originally written for professional religious women, by whom we mean women who were formally committed to the religious life: nuns or anchoresses. Unlike nun, who lived a communal life in a convent, an anchoressa was a solitary, a religious recluse enclosed in a cell attached to a church. Although I include anchoresses amongst professional religious women, they were largely drawn from the ranks of laywomen.

Formally enclosed, but having taken no formal religious vows, the anchoress was on the periphery of institutional religion, occupying a marginal space between religious orders and the laity.

Wohunge, written specifically for an anchoressa, is the latest of a group of texts composed in the West Midlands in the thirteenth century, associated by dialect and manuscript tradition and known as the Ancrene Wisse Group, based on or the longest and most important text of the group, which ties them all together. Like Wohunge, Ancrene Wisse was specifically addressed to anchoresses, and was a source for much of Wohunge’s imagery and tone. Like many texts addressed, in the first instance, to professional religious women, these texts quickly passed into the hands of lay readers and a new form of devotion, once limited to church and monastery, began to spread among the upper classes of lay society.

The Wooing Group thus stands both at the beginning of a new devotional theology and meditative technique, made available in the vernacular for the first time, and at a turning point in the production of English literature. Yet, there is, to date, no edition of these texts that is readily accessible to any but senior scholars, or that is suitable for use in the classroom.

Some of the Wooing Group texts were edited and translated by Richard Morris in 1868. While Morris’s edition lacks a detailed introduction or explanatory notes, it remains the most accessible version of

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1 See “The Anchoritic Audience,” especially pp. 52-57 ff., below.
2 The Ancrene Wisse Group consists of Ancrene Wisse (AW), a guide for anchoresses, the Wooing Group, and the Katherine Group: Halit Melißad (HM), a letter on virginity; sawlis Werde (SW), an allegory of the guarding of the soul; and three saints’ lives, Seine Marjarte (Saint Margaret, SM), Seinte Katereine (Saint Katherine, SK), and Seinte Iule (Saint Juliana, SJ). Written in English at a time when the language of secular literature was French and the language of devotional literature was Latin, these texts are a unique gathering. For the manuscripts in which these texts are found, see the editions noted in the Bibliography. All references to AW and SK and SJ will be taken from d’Ardenne, Seinte Iule, d’Ardenne and Debson, Seinte Katereine. All references to SM, SW and HM are from Millett and Wogan-Browne. Unless otherwise noted, all references to AW will be from Millett’s edition and translation, referred to by part, section, line number (where necessary) and page number; the page numbers to Millett’s edition and translation have been coordinated, so that the page numbers for references to Millett I are, within a few words, identical to the page references in Millett Ancrene Wisse, so I will cite only the edition. An excellent translation of the KG and WG is found in Savage and Watson.
3 See Millett II, pp. ix-xi.
4 Morris’s edition and translation of LLL were reprinted in Sangerson, pp. 196-98.

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Introduction to the Edition

Manuscripts

London, BL MS Cotton Titus D.xviiii (Titus)

De Wohunge of ure lauerd survives only in BL MS Cotton Titus D.xviiii, a manuscript dating from the 1240s.1 Titus is a small manuscript (157 x 120 mm), suitable to be held in the hand for private reading. The manuscript is clearly written with two columns on each page, but it is fairly plain, decorated with red and green paragraphs (?), initials and scrollwork. Wohunge is the second to last text in the manuscript (ff. 127r, col. B-133v, col. a), following Ancrene Wisse, Sawless Worde and Halt Medhod and preceding Seintie Katereine. Sarah McNamer notes that Wohunge is the only text in the manuscript with a rubricated2 title, and a rubricated “Amen” at the end of the text, and argues that this rubrication, along with the red and green scrollwork of the opening initial “I,” “functioned as a finding aid, especially in conjunction with the rare patch of space left blank at the conclusion of the text.”3 Wohunge is also set apart by the fact that it is the only text in the manuscript without paragraphs dividing the text.4

Titus is one of the latest of the Ancrene Wisse manuscripts. It is nevertheless a crucial witness to the growing audience of the anchoritic texts and, of course, Wohunge itself, as the Titus copy of Ancrene Wisse shows evidence of having been altered for a mixed audience that

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1 For a full description of Titus, see Millett I, pp. xxiii-xxiv and the introduction to Maciej. Titus is a composite manuscript, with later texts in a fifteenth-century hand on the first twelve foils (Millett I, p. xxii). I am concerned here only with the thirteenth-century material, which is the context for Wohunge. For a discussion of the arrangement of the texts in Titus, see Savage and Watson, pp. 28-32.

2 Rubrication refers to the use of red ink to make a title or a phrase stand out. A rubricated title, then, is one written in red ink.

3 McNamer, pp. 213-16, note 4. McNamer contrasts this rubrication with the unrubricated initials elsewhere in the manuscript (e.g., f. 141v and 142v). She also notes that some of the folios on which Wohunge is found (f. 131r, ll. 292ff. and ff. 132v-133r, ll. 395 to end) show patterns of wear that “seem to indicate that someone touched them, touched them repeatedly, held and turned those pages often” (p. 25). It is, of course, impossible to tell when or how the wear on these pages occurred, but McNamer makes a cogent argument for a devout medieval reader being the “the person with ink on her hands” (i.e., the one who held the book, effacing letters in the outer margins, p. 25-26).

4 See p. 78 below.
The four shorter prayers of the Wooing Group, *On god ureysun of we lefde*, *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti*; *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie*, and *On lefsong of we lowende*, are found together in BL MS Coton Nero A.xiv, ff. 120v-128r, which is probably slightly earlier than Titus. Like Titus, Nero is a plain manuscript, with divisions in the manuscript marked by coloured initials and paragraphs, mainly red but with some blue. It is, again, small enough to be held in the hand (144 x 107 mm). Nero is the work of two scribes, both working in the 1240s. Scribe A, who copied *Ancene Wisse*, and Scribe B, who added the Wooing Group prayers, an English version of the Creed, and two brief Latin texts. *On god ureysun of we lefde* and *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti* are given a title in the rubrics to the Nero manuscript; *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie* and *On lefsong of we lowende* have no rubric or title. The title for *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie* comes from BL Royal 17 A.xxvii; *On lefsong of we lowende* is the title used by Thompson and Morris.

London, BL Royal 17 A.xxvii (Royal)

A fragment of *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie* is also found in BL Royal 17 A.xxvii, which dates to the second quarter of the thirteenth century (c. 1225-30). Like Titus, Royal is very plain, with green and red initials. Royal contains *Sewkes Warde*, *Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Margarete*, *Seinte Latene*, and *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie*, the last text in the manuscript, which breaks off at the bottom of f. 70v. OSM ends mid-line on the last leaf of a gathering, suggesting that an entire gathering has been lost from the end of the manuscript. It is, of course, impossible to know what else might have been in that final gathering; certainly the rest of *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie* would have taken less than another folio. The presence of this fragment, which differs enough from the text in Nero to suggest a different exemplar, suggests the existence of at least three copies before 1240.  

London, Lambeth Palace MS 487 (Lambeth)

A fragment of *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti* is found in Lambeth Palace MS 487 (1185-1225), ff. 65v-67r. This fragment is more complete than the fragment of *Pe oreysun of seinte Marie* in Royal, breaking off close to the end of the prayer at l. 79. Hanna notes that *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti* is a later addition to the manuscript, and although it is a fragment, "the text ends precisely at the foot of fol. 67 (with the verso blank, as that of fol. 65 was originally)." Even though there was clearly enough space to continue, the text ends in the middle of a phrase, indicating that either the exemplar was incomplete or that the scribe was unable to complete his copy. In either case, the scribe would have required at least one extra folio to complete the text, as the manuscript ends with f. 67, which is the last leaf in a quire of eight. Hanna suggests a date of c. 1240 for the addition in Lambeth. Once again, the version of the text differs sufficiently from the version in Nero to suggest a different exemplar. This, plus the fact that *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti* must, at one point, have circulated with *Wohunge*, suggests that at least three or four copies were circulating by about 1240.

**Choice of Texts**

My primary goal in writing this book was to edit and translate *De wohunge of ure lauerd* and the Wooing Group prayers with which it is associated. The first difficulty I faced was the question of just which texts actually make up the Wooing Group. Most scholars define the Wooing Group as consisting of four texts: *De wohunge of ure lauerd* (*Wohunge*); *On wel swade god ureysun of God almihti* (UGA); *De...*
prayer to suggest the gender or identity of the speaker. So, not all of
the Wooing Group prayers are female voiced—only the ones
addressed directly to Christ. OSM is also closer in date to UUL (also
addressed to the Virgin Mary), indeed, if UUL were to be included
as the earliest of the Wooing Group prayers, OSM would act as a
transitional text between it and the other prayers. The male-voiced UUL is
thus not as out of place, in terms of the gendered voice of its narrator,
as has always been assumed.

While the monastic authorship may suggest a different context, it
does not constitute sufficient reason for omitting UUL from the
Wooing Group as a whole. In fact, Millett has argued for a more
complex institutional context for the entire Ancrane Wisse Group than
has previously been assumed. She contends that

any theory of [Ancrane Wisse’s] origins needs to explain the
production of the Ancrane Wisse Group as a whole: why it appears
when and where it does, why it is influenced by both older native
and contemporary Continental preaching traditions, and why some
of its works address general lay audiences as well as anchoresses.1

Millett argues from manuscript and linguistic evidence that the
Ancrane Wisse Group texts are linked with the dioceses of Hereford,
Warwicke, Coventry and Lichfield. She shows that these dioceses
were governed by bishops who were active in the kind of pastoral
reform mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council, providing a propitious
environment for the composition and dissemination of new kinds

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1 Millett II, p. xxv. Like later texts originally addressed to religious women
(such as Hilton’s Scale of Perfection and Rolle’s Form of Living), Ancrane
Wisse was adopted and adapted by a wider lay audience, moving rapidly from
the narrow context of the anchoret into the broader context of lay devotion
(see Imes-Parker, “Legacy” and “Gender Gap”). Indeed, Hilton, Rolle, Julian
of Norwich, Nicholas Love and other vernacular writers of spiritual guidance
and devotional literature inherit and carry upon the tradition of Ancrane Wisse.

The importance of Ancrane Wisse as a testament to the development of lay
spirituality in England has been the subject of a number of studies: see
Millett, “AW and Books of Hours,” and Gunn, “Beyond the Tomb.” Ancrane
Wisse’s influence on later penitential manuals, treatments of temptation, guidance
literature for nuns and the figure of the Christ Knight have all been commented
on (for details see Millett’s Annotated Bibliography). All of these
studies have noted the historical position of Ancrane Wisse at a pivotal
moment in the development of vernacular theology. It is in this context that
Wohunge must be studied.

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of pastoral literature, although the texts of the Ancrune Wisse Group cannot be identified with any particular religious house.¹

The kind of diocesan context suggested by Millett, overseen by bishops actively involved in pastoral reform, might explain the connection between UUL and the other Wooing Group prayers, particularly OSW. Because the author specifically identifies himself as a monk (ancho 1. 170) it has always been assumed that UUL was written specifically for a monastic audience. Yet the very fact of its composition in the English tongue suggests that it was intended for an audience who could not read Latin, and the largest potential audience for such a text would be lay brothers and women religious. However, Rosemary Woolf argues that the poem was actually written for religious women.² Further, the possibility of a lay patron cannot be dismissed. Although the prayer uses the gendered romance imagery of a male lover addressing his female beloved, it would be accessible to any reader of contemporary romance wishing for a model of devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Equally important, the context of UUL in Nero. UUL is an integral part of the manuscript, and its presence creates the balance between two sets of prayers addressed to Christ and Mary.³ The placement of UUL in Nero between Ancrune Wisse and the female-voiced Wooing Group prayers also suggests that it was considered appropriate for a female audience by a scribe who seems particularly concerned about the pastoral care of religious women.⁴

The integration of the themes of secular love and abject devotion in UUL is expressed in language that will become typical of the Wooing Group. The dispensation of rewards in heaven, the bliss of eternal salvation, and the fear of the torments of hell are all described using the imagery of feudal battle and courtly love, just as Christ’s love for the soul is related in Ancrune Wisse Part 7, in the parable of the Lover-Knight. The individual devotion of the soul is transformed into the service of a lover to his beloved, couched in the language of secular romance, but also reciting the language of the Song of Songs, made so popular in devotional texts by Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux. Even the physical routine of prayer and worship in the monastery (or anchoret) is described in terms of courtly love-service. The intercession for which the speaker pleads is described in the language of healing, protection, and the release from bondage; but the soul’s rescue from sin is granted not as an earnece reward, but as a free gift of grace or mercy.

- On god ureisin of ure lefeti is therefore not only appropriate for inclusion in the Wooing Group, but also provides an important example of the context in which the author of Ancrune Wisse instructs his audience that the Virgin Mary is a model for all women, but particularly for anchoresses. Indeed, as the earliest of the Wooing Group texts, it may well be an important model for the other prayers, which show the influence of UUL or texts like it.¹ As Renevey suggests, it “answers the demands for a complete display of the attributes of the Virgin Mary as model for the anchoritic life,”² as the Virgin is presented as a model not only of chastity and purity but also of devotion and suffering in her sorrow at Christ’s death. As it reflects upon and integrates the kinds of imagery found in the later anchoretic texts, UUL provides a fitting introduction to the texts of the Wooing Group and, historically, to the works of the Ancrune Wisse Group as a whole.³

Literary Form and Style

The four earliest Wooing Group prayers are shorter and simpler than Wohunge, although UGA is a masterpiece of its genre. These are prayers that are finding their way between the old and the new in both language and style. Dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, these prayers come at a time when vernacular devotional literature was in its infancy in England. This was a time of great spiritual upheaval in response to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) when the church was

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1 Millett II, pp. xxvi-xxvii.
2 Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, p. 117.

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¹ In fact, much of the imagery of UUL is also reflected in HM and SW as well as (in a vastly enriched form) AW, especially Part 1.
² “Enclosed Desires,” p. 50. Renevey points out that “On God Ureisin of Ure Lefeti and On Lofsong of Ure Lefeti are interesting instances where the monastic and clerical literary contexts can be adjusted to the specialized anchoritic world, by means of paraphrase, gloss, translation or simply some new MS contextualization of the original pieces” ("Enclosed Desires," p. 51).
³ The tradition of clerics writing prayer and meditations for aristocratic patrons is a long-standing one. In the early twelfth century, Ansho was noted for his writings for aristocratic women, and his works provide interesting models for texts like the Wooing Group. See Anselm, Prayers and Meditations and Vaughan.
paying particular attention to the needs of the laity. Both the church and the literature it produced were undergoing significant change.

As noted above, the poetic form of the prayers has caused some controversy about the inclusion of UUL in the Woeung Group. In part this is because, somewhat ironically, this earliest of the Woeung Group prayers reflects the “weakest” poetic style. While the other prayers hark back to the alliterative poetry of Old English (revived by Layamon in the twelfth century), UUL is written in rhyming couplets, suggesting a French influence. Indeed, the author specifically refers to his composition as a song (l. 171), an English lay (englisca lay, l. 168), placing it firmly in the genre popularized by the twelfth-century author Marie de France in her translations of Breton lays into Anglo-Norman French, and found later in the Middle English Breton lays. Although the Breton lays were secular romance narrative poems, the monk who wrote UUL seems to have deliberately chosen this genre, perhaps to gain favor from an aristocratic patron or simply because it was a popular form. Furthermore, by taking a popular Anglo-Norman poetic form and using it to compose an English prayer, the author establishes English as a suitable language for literary and devotional works. As Allen puts it, “with his ‘englisca lay,’ the narrator is carving out pride of place for English as a literary language worthy to stand alongside Anglo-Norman and Latin in a trilingual early thirteenth-century culture.”

The rest of the Woeung Group, however, is written in the native style of alliterative poetry and prose that still survived amongst the English speakers and writers of the border Marches and Wales. Alliterative poetry is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon literature, which relies on stress and alliteration, rather than rhyme and meter for its poetic lines. Thompson eloquently describes it thus: “Its rhythm results from an ever-varied interweaving of phrases, now string parallel, now less symmetrical, with a musical adjustment of the rise, fall, and flow of sentences, enforced and enriched by alliteration, and generally clarified by the semi-rhetorical punctuation used.”

Thompson roots the alliterative prose of the Katherine Group in the late Old English homiletic tradition, particularly in works such as Wulfstan’s homilies and Ælfric’s Lives. He insists, however, that “writing of this sort is prose, not verse” and that “to read them with the measured movement of verse is to destroy their otherwise natural modulation as prose.” This is certainly true of the Katherine Group.

The prayers of the Woeung Group are, however, altogether different. Thompson insists that they, too, ought to be read as prose. Yet, the example he gives is not from one of the Woeung Group prayers, but from the fourteenth-century A Talking of ye Love of God, which draws upon Wohunge and UGA. Following Margery Morgan, Thompson quotes from the prologue of Taleynge where the author states: Men schal fynen lichtliche pis treys in Cadence. After be bigyminge, 3f hit beo rih poyneted. The punctuation is to provide “cadence,” to allow the style of oral reading envisioned by the author of Taleynge: “esylche

alliterative style seems to reflect the language of its original audience, more than any statement of political allegiance. The purpose of the texts is to make their content available to a broader audience, in a language that they can understand. The alliterative prose of the Katherine Group texts also enhances their suitability for reading aloud, either in private or, in the case of the Saints’ Lives, for public occasions.

2. The author’s effort at imitating the French octosyllabic couplet is not entirely successful, with some lines having either more or fewer syllables.
3. See Burgess, Burgesse and Burby, and Laskaya and Sainbury.
4. In some ways, the use of alliterative poetry in Early Middle English was a form of political statement: Layamon both used the alliterative poetic line and vernacular language in his Brut in part, at least, to assert its status as an English poem about English heritage and kingship. In the fourteenth century, with the flowering of Middle English vernacular literature, there would be an “alliterative revival” that included authors such as the Gawain poet and William Langland, whose Piers Plowman included a sharp reprimand of both political and ecclesiastical abuses. In the Ancrene Wisse Group, however, the use of
and softly. So as men may west in inward feyng, and deplech penkyng, savour fynden."1 But, pace Thompson, the "pointing" or punctuation of the Middle English is not, primarily, syntactic; it is not intended to highlight grammatical phrases, but rather to indicate where the reader should pause for thought or ruminating. This is typical of meditative or contemplative devotional texts. Even in the case of *A Talkynge of be Love of God* the "prose style" is not quite so clear, since as well as alliteration, the text also includes rhyme, suggesting a deliberate attempt at poetry; indeed, Westra suggests that "one often gets the impression that an attempt has been made at producing a rhymed version of *be Wohunge," and draws attention to parallels in Passion lyrics.2

In a recent article Michael Sargent has argued that *A Talkynge of be Love of God* and, through the influence of Anselm of Canterbury, the texts of the Wooing Group, are written in the Isidorian prose style. The main characteristic of the Isidorian style is a repetitive pattern of parallel clauses. The clauses are usually set apart by end-rhyme and/or consonance and, in some cases, alliteration.3

It is certainly true that, with the exception of UUL, in which the line breaks come at the end of each rhyming line, the Wooing Group prayers are written in continuous lines in the manuscripts (as is prose). However, writing poetry without line breaks (even when it is rhymed) is not an uncommon scribal practice, particularly in inexpensive volumes where space is at a premium. Indeed, in Royal, which contains a fragment of OSM, only a few pages previously the scribe has written out a rhymed verse in continuous lines with nothing to indicate that there should be a line break after each rhyming word except the punctuation.4 Thus, the argument that the texts are copied "as prose" in the manuscript(s) is no argument at all, if it can be shown that there is a poetic form to the prayers.

Indeed, if one divides the prayers of the Wooing Group based on their pointing, for the most part the texts do actually fall into alliterative poetic lines. While the syntax is not entirely even, the syntactical "dislocation" to which Thompson refers is distracting when the texts are edited as prose, but is typical of poetic form. It forces the reader to pause and think deeply on the meaning of phrases whose "sentence structure" is not immediately obvious. The "great complexity" Thompson deplores is, in fact, a reflection of the devotional ardour and intellectual depth of the poems themselves. Indeed, it is telling that Savage and Watson edit at least part of every prayer in poetic lines, suggesting that prose is simply inadequate for the expression of the text.2

I have, therefore, edited the prayers as poems, based on the pointing of the texts in the surviving manuscripts. I have followed the punctuation as rigorously as possible in the edition to show how these texts combine the alliterative poetic style of Old English verse with the meditative style of later Middle English devotional works, although I have modernized the punctuation in the translations. The pointing of the Wooing Group prayers allows for the division of the poetic lines into either the alliterative "long line" with a break between half lines to emphasize the alliteration, or the "short line," breaking after each half line; for many reasons, I have used the short line, which tends to emphasize the meditative form of the prayers.3 Like *Talkynge*, these texts are pointed to enhance the reader's devotion; at each pause, the reader is intended to meditate deeply on the word or phrase set apart.

In allowing the pointing of the manuscripts to guide the line divisions

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1 Thompson, p. xxvii. The grammatical units are clearer in translation with modernized punctuation: "easily and softly, so that one might, in inward feeling, and deeply thinking, find most savour [in the reading]."

2 Westra, p. xxiii, op. xxc-xcv. Nevertheless, Westra edits the text as prose.

3 Sargent argues that Anselm of Canterbury popularized the Latin Isidorian style in his prayers and meditations. The dependence of later vernacular works, such as the *Ancene Wise Group* on Anselm has been well studied. While Sargent's argument is fascinating and, indeed, convincing, it is curious that in order to demonstrate Latin Isidorian prose, he finds it necessary to set the lines out with breaks after the parallel clauses and end-rhymes, precisely as one would set out lines of poetry. The example that he gives, before moving on to *A Talkynge of be Love of God* is from the opening lines of *Wohunge* (II. 1-11, II. 1-10 in Thompson). Yet, like Thompson, Sargent sets the first lines of *Wohunge* up as poetic lines in order to make his point. (*What Kind,* pp. 183-89.) This typesetting suggests that the text can (and should) be read as poetry.

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1 The poem is found on f. 10v, in the colophon to *Sawkes Warden*, where the scribe asks that the reader pray for his soul: "Par seinte charite bidde a pat roster for isar hat pees boe be wilt." As continues: "Hwa se hys writis haued ied. Ant Crist him haued swa ispid. Ich bidde par seinte charite. Pet ye bidden ofe for me. A pat rosterer, ant awe marie. Bet ich mote [...] lif har [...] sonehen. Ant we laured wol ionwenen. In mi zablede & in mi elde. Bet ich mote thu criu nis sawle yelden. Amer." (Unfortunately the page is damaged and some words are not recoverable.) It is not the most sophisticated poetry in the world (although it does balance two quatrains surrounding the cento. Line concerning the "Our Father" and the "Ave Maria"), but it is definitely a poem, written "as prose."


3 See *Wohunge*, textual note 3 for an example of how this has affected the layout of the text.
of the texts, the individual style of each prayer is highlighted. For example, OSM, a form of confession, is dominated by short harsh lines, describing the causes of sin; each sin is set apart, demanding that the reader ponder his own participation in that vice in its various forms. By the same token, each act of Christ's incarnation is set apart, inviting the reader to meditate upon how her sin is atoned for by his life and death. Other texts, particularly UGA and Wohunge, alternate between short, impassioned exclamations and long, ponderous lines, emphasizing the emotional response that the prayer is meant to elicit in the reader.1

The Prayers of the Wooing Group

Date and History of Composition

Unlike Ancrere Wise and the rest of the Ancrere Wise Group, the Wooing Group prayers almost certainly circulated first on scrolls or individual leaves.2 Wohunge itself is not long—it comprises only 5½ folios in the Titus manuscript.3 The other prayers, found in Nero, are even shorter: UUL is approximately 2½ folios, UGA is 3½ folios, OSM 3 folios, and LUL 3½ folios. The dating of the manuscripts in which the texts survive, therefore, is even less a guide to the dates at which these prayers were composed than is usual with devotional literature. The manuscripts can certainly tell us the dates by which the prayers must have been composed and circulating (the terminus ad quem). The terminus post quem can only be inferred from other evidence.

The male-voiced On god wesun of are legá is likely the earliest of the Wooing Group prayers to be composed, probably in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. UUL reflects the imagery of twelfth-century courtly romance and exhibits the formal veneration of the cult of the Virgin Mary, an earlier form of devotion than that found in the later Wooing Group prayers.4

Be wesun of seinte Marie is also early. The inclusion of a fragment of OSM in Royal, which is dated to c. 1225-30, indicates that it was probably written before 1225. The fact that Royal does not contain Hali Meethad suggests that it was copied before Hali Meethad was written.5

On losung of are lourde was probably a source for a passage in Hali Meethad, suggesting that it, too, should be dated early, possibly before 1225.6 This would make UUL, OSM, and LUL among the earliest of the Ancrere Wise Group, predating both Hali Meethad and Ancrere Wise itself. These three Wooing Group prayers thus come very early indeed in the process of the production of vernacular devotion in the thirteenth century.

One wel swaode god wesun of God almihiti is more difficult to date. It is unlikely that it belongs to this early stage of production; in tone and content it is closer to Wohunge and probably represents a transitional stage. In fact, UGA was almost certainly a source for Wohunge, which dates from the late 1230s to 1240s (see below). Both Nero and the fragment of UGA added to the end of Lambeth date to the 1240s. There is thus no manuscript evidence that it was composed earlier than the late 1230s. The fact that the two versions of the text differ enough to suggest different exemplars does, however, indicate that by c. 1240 there were at least three or four copies in circulation.7 The inclusion of all four of the Wooing Group prayers in Nero also suggests that by the 1240s they were circulating together and were considered, at least by Nero's Scribe B, to be a coherent group. The fact that Nero does not contain Wohunge may indicate that Wohunge had not come to the attention of Scribe B, either because it had not yet been written, or because it was circulating independently.8 Indeed, we know little of the early circulation of Wohunge, although the use of both UGA and Wohunge in the fourteenth-century A Tale of a Love of God suggests that they must have circulated together, although they do not appear together in any surviving manuscript.9 Yet the fact that UGA

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2. See Millett, Hali Meethad, pp. xx-xxi, see also Savage and Watson, p. 413, note 37.
3. Lambeth, ff. 65v-67r. See Hanna, p. 81. Lambeth itself is dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, or earlier. It also contains the "Lambeth Horomilis," including five of the "Trinity Horomilis" (a collection of sermons found in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 14. 52). Millett notes that "Lambeth is linked to the Ancrere Wise Group both by language and manuscript tradition," and suggests that it was "designed primarily for a listening audience." Millett II, p. xxvi.
4. See Appendix E.

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1 See, for example, UGA II, 42-55 and note 14; UGA II, 180-88 and note 39; and Wohunge II, 189-219 and note 57. Unless otherwise noted, all reference notes in the text are to the explanatory notes.
2 See Savage and Watson, p. 29.
3 Titus is written in double columns; the text of Wohunge begins at the top of col. 2 at f. 127r and ends at the bottom of col. 2, f. 132v, thus taking up 11 columns.
did circulate with *Wohunge* at some point in its history is another indication that the dissemination of these prayers was wider than the surviving manuscript evidence shows.

*De wohunge of ure lauard* was the last of the *Wooing Group* prayers to be written. *Wohunge*’s survival in *Titu* dates it, like UGA, to sometime in the late 1230s or early 1240s. *Wohunge* must, however, be dated later than UGA, since it was used upon UGA for much of its imagery and style; indeed, the similarities between the two texts led Thompson to suggest that they share the same author. Unlike UGA, however, *Wohunge* also draws heavily on *Ancrane Wisse*, particularly on the metaphor of the Lover-Knight in Part 7. It is thus the latest of the *Ancrane Wisse* Group texts.

The prayers of the *Wooing Group* thus “frame” the works of the *Ancrane Wisse* Group, making it possible to see the development of the entire group as part of a long process, the end result of which was a body of literature suitable both for anchoress readers and for the devout layperson. At least three, and probably four, of the *Wooing Group* prayers predate *Ancrane Wisse*; three of them also predate *Halfe Methode* and possibly other texts of the *Ancrane Wisse* Group. Thus, while the texts of the *Ancrane Wisse* Group provide a crucial context for the *Wooing Group*, the earliest of the *Wooing Group* prayers also affect the context of *Ancrane Wisse* and some of the *Katherine* Group texts as well; while Thompson argues that verbal similarities between *Ancrane Wisse* and OSM and UGA suggest that the latter two are dependent upon *Ancrane Wisse*, in fact the direction of influence runs the other way. The author of *Ancrane Wisse* may very well have been familiar with both OSM and UGA; indeed, these and the other two earliest *Wooing Group* prayers may have been included among the prayers that the author refers to as being part of the anchoress’s devotional reading material. The *Ancrane Wisse* author assumes that his audience will have access to various books that will supplement the prayers outlined in Part 1: *versellung of Sawter, redunghe of Enghas, oder of Frencche, halfe meditations* ... (versicles from the Psalter, reading in English or in French, pious meditations). These prayers were part of the gathering together of textual support for the anchoress’s life of their female readers, possibly at the request of the anchoresses themselves, who needed prayers to supplement the Hours they had written out by hand. The *Wooing Group* is a microcosm of this process, showing the progression of a group of individual texts.

**Authorship**

Like the other texts of the *Ancrane Wisse* Group, the *Wooing Group* prayers are anonymous. Some indications of authorship, however, come from internal evidence. Like the monastic author of UUL, it is likely that the authors of the *Wooing Group* prayers were likewise members of a religious community. The narrative device of a female-voiced first-person speaker in LUL, UGA and *Wohunge* suggests that the authors of these texts were also charged with the pastoral care of religious women, whether nuns or anchoresses.

Although it is unlikely that all of the *Wooing Group* prayers were written by the same author, it is clear that the authors knew of each other’s works. At the very least, the author of UGA was familiar with the earlier *Wooing Group* prayers; there are verbal parallels between UGA and the earlier LUL, and similarity of imagery suggests that he also knew OSM and possibly UUL as well. Thus, although the authors remain unknown, it is possible to find connections between them through their texts.

Indeed, the similarities between UGA and *Wohunge* have led Thompson to suggest that UGA was, in fact, either a repetition of *Wohunge* by its own author or an imitation of it by a nun or anchoress who at one time owned *Wohunge*. The fact that UGA was written earlier than and was a source for *Wohunge* does not remove the possibility that they share the same author; in fact, it may strengthen it. In any case, as Renevey points out, “a close authorial relationship exists between the two texts,” and the two texts share much in their language and style.

The question of the authorship of *Wohunge* is particularly thorny.

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2. See Inner-Parker, “Ancrane Wisse and De Wohunge of Ure Lauard.”
4. Thompson, p. xxiv.
5. “Enclosed Desires,” p. 44. Compare, for example, the opening lines of the two texts. As Renevey points out, much of the language and tone of *Wohunge* is repeated in UGA. (continued)
The voice of the author (or perhaps the scribe) is heard in the colophon:  

Pray for me, my dearest sister.  
(I have written this for you.)  
For I have written this for you, words often inspire the heart to think on our Lord.  
And therefore, when you are at leisure, speak to Jesus, and say these words, and imagine that he looks at you, bloody upon the cross, and through his grace he will open your heart to his love, and to pity for his pain.

The phrase *I have written* be (I have written this for you) could refer to either the act of composition or the act of copying the text. It is not uncommon for a scribe or author to ask for the prayers of those who will read the text that he has copied, and scribes will often include their names or initials in such a request. However, Jennifer Brown argues convincingly that the colophon was written by the author and is, in fact, an integral part of the text, reinforcing its purpose and use.

Thompson proposes that the author who addresses her “dearest sister” is a woman, perhaps another anchoress. He argues that the individuality and immediacy of the text and its “passionate elevation” suggest that “it is unlikely that the Wohunge was written vicariously, or that it is chiefly an allegory; and that it is likely that it was written by a gifted woman.” He further proposes that this gifted woman writer would then have given Wohunge to “some dearest sister for the latter’s comfort and edification,” accounting for the colophon at the end of the text. In an attempt to account for a female authorship of both UGA and LUL, Thompson speculates: “Did she then try to repeat herself with less success? Or did one or more sisters with less art, try to imitate her?”

Thompson is less convinced of the authorship of the gender-neutral OSM, stating that it “is less strongly marked by feminine authorship and might have been written, though not necessarily, by a man.”

Thompson’s speculations are in most cases unlikely and in some cases impossible. To begin with, Thompson predicates all of his conjectures on the proposal that Wohunge was the first of the Wooning Group prayers to be written, and that the other prayers were all lesser imitations. However, as seen above, Wohunge post-dates all of the other Wooning Group prayers. Thompson’s conjectures also belie the art and sophistication of the other Wooning Group prayers, which, he represents as merely pale shadows, imitating, but not achieving, the height of their model, Wohunge. It is true that Wohunge is the most accomplished and adept of the Wooning Group prayers, in part because it is the last, drawing upon the devotional world the earlier prayers helped to create. However, this is not to disparage the earlier prayers; they are skilled compositions in their own right.

Few scholars have followed Thompson in arguing for female authorship of the Wooning Group texts. It is more likely that any female participation in the production of these prayers would have come in the form of patronage, if the prayers were written for specific women, or even a group of women who had requested material to support their devotional lives.

It is true that at least some of the anchoresses to whom Ancrens Wisse was written were fully literate; in Part I the author refers to the Hours that the anchoress has written down and in Part 8 he explicitly forbids his readers to teach children or to write anything without leave. The text suggests, however, that they are allowed to write and to send or receive letters with the permission of their religious advisor. They also shared and exchanged scrolls and booklets. The author tells his readers, *De weisuns pet ich nabbe buten one inket hooch twirten overal … Leoted written on a scrowe hvet-se 3e ne kenun* (“Copies of the prayers that I have only referred to briefly … are available everywhere. Have any that you do not know by heart copied on to a

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1 Thompson, p. xxii.
2 It is important to remember that literacy in the thirteenth century was not the same as what we consider literacy now. The ability to read was a completely separate skill from the ability to write; most writing was done by trained professional scribes.
3 Millet 1, 1.486, p. 9.
4 Millet 1, 8.25-26, p. 161.
5 Millet 1, 4.58.989-90, p. 94; 4.90.1511-4, p. 107.

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scroll”).

1 This has been taken to suggest that some anchoresses could not write themselves, and indeed this was undoubtedly the case; however, it is also likely that even anchoresses who could both read and write needed to have prayers copied for them, due to lack of access to an exemplar.

2 This kind of literacy and copying is, however, more likely to account for the circulation of the Wooning Group prayers than their composition. The first-person female narrative voice is no argument for female authorship: such “male ventriloquism” is common and, indeed, many texts authored by and for men merged the male authorial or readership voice with the female gendered soul.

3 The authors of these works were highly educated, drawing upon the devotional traditions of Augustinian thought, Anselmian prayer, Cistercian writings and sermon literature, both English and Continental (as did the author of Ancrane Wisse). At least two of the Wooning Group prayers have identifiable Latin sources: OSM is a paraphrase of Method of Rennes’s Oratio ad Sanctam Marian, and UUL has close resemblances to two of the meditations in Stephen of Sawley’s Triplex exerccitium. The likelihood of a female author having both the Latin education and the access to the sources reflected in the texts is not completely outside the realm of possibility, but it is far more likely that all the texts under consideration here were written by educated male clerics for female patrons or women under their care.

The authors were certainly involved in the pastoral care of women, a concern found as early as the writings of Anselm, but which becomes widespread with the rise of vernacular devotion in the thirteenth century. Women were particularly disadvantaged as the universities took over the role of education from monasteries and convents from the late twelfth century on, and much of the vernacular devotional literature written before the fifteenth century was specifically addressed to women, who had no access to a Latin education. Such pastoral concerns became particularly acute after the Fourth Lateran Council, with its emphasis on the instruction of and care for the laity. The intellectual and cultural milieu in which the Wooning Group prayers were written was thus ripe for clerical or monastic authorship of vernacular prayers intended to encourage and support women religious in their devotional lives. The Wooning Group prayers were written in the same environment as Ancrane Wisse and the Katherine Group: a religious community with an interest in providing guidance to a growing anchoritic community within its purview.

Millett has argued convincingly that the author of Ancrane Wisse was a university-trained Dominican friar. Yet the Wooning Group prayers more closely resemble the affective writings of the Franciscans, who were also active in England at the time. Before the establishment of Franciscan and Dominican houses in the West Midlands (1227 for the Franciscans and 1232 for the Dominicans) there were probably individual friars with connections there, through secondment to a bishop’s household, or as private chaplains. The revised version of Ancrane Wisse recommends both Dominican and Franciscan friars as reliable confessors and advisors. And, in fact, two active patrons of the early Franciscans in England had close ties to the area in which the anchoritic texts were written. Loretta, Countess of Leicester, was the daughter of the powerful marcher lord, William de Braose. When William was exiled by King John in 1210, and his wife and oldest son condemned to death, his son Giles (Bishop of Worcester) was also exiled and went to Paris, where he befriended Stephen Langton, the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury. Loretta’s lands were seized and she, already a widow, may have gone into exile with her brother and father in Paris. These connections would put Loretta in a similar intellectual milieu to the author of Ancrane Wisse. After her return to England (1220 or 1221), she was enclosed as an anchoress in Hackington, Kent (near Canterbury) and she became an early patroness of the Francesco-

1 See Millett I, pp. xxiv-xxvii.
2 Millet II, pp. xvi-xxx.
3 See Millett, Ancrane Wisse, pp. xx-xxii.
4 Millett I, 1.13, p. 28.

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1 See Millett I, pp. xxiv-xxvii.
2 Millet II, pp. xvi-xxx.
3 See Millett, Ancrane Wisse, pp. xx-xxii.
4 Millett I, 1.13, p. 28.
sims in England, along with Simon Langton, Archdeacon of Canterbury, and brother of Stephen Langton. Her brother-in-law, Walter de Lacy, Lord of Ludlow and Lord of Meath (married to Margery de Braine) and his father, Hugh de Lacy, were early patrons of the Franciscans in Ireland. It is, then, entirely possible that the Wooling Group texts were written (or at the very least influenced) by Franciscan friars. Indeed, Sarah McNamer has argued convincingly for placing Woolinge in the context of Franciscan devotion. Nevertheless, while the quest to identify the authors of the texts will continue, they remain stubbornly anonymous.

The Wooling Group Prayers and the Development of Affective Devotion

When one considers the Wooling Group prayers in their historical and textual context, they become witnesses of the complexity of early thirteenth-century vernacular spirituality. The order in which the Wooling Group texts were written illustrates a progression in the development of vernacular affective devotion, culminating with Woolinge as the final product of a long and complex process. Not only does this help us to understand the growth of anchoritic spirituality, the Wooling Group also exposes the development of lay vernacular spirituality in the early thirteenth century, as anchoritic sensibility and the needs of anchoritic readers developed and merged with the evolving growth of lay piety.

The four earliest prayers of the Wooling Group show a progression away from a devotion rooted in church and cult towards a more affective and individualized devotion, rooted in meditation on Christ’s Passion and the role of such meditation in the anchoritic life. The texts also reflect a movement away from the depiction of the Virgin Mary as intercessor towards the characterization of Mary as a model—and, indeed, away from devotion primarily focused on the Virgin Mary herself towards devotion to Christ in his Passion, where his mother plays a different role.

The earliest Wooling Group prayer, On god urenus of ure lefdt, is a prayer to the Virgin Mary expressing the speaker’s devotion to his lady in terms of the cult that had arisen around her. The poem is rich in feudal imagery; Mary reigns in heaven over a court composed of angels and her worshippers, whom she rewards with rich gifts. The joys of heaven are described in detail; games, dances and music abound in an idyllic setting of flowers in full bloom and a temperate clime where no harsh weather ever comes.

The poem appeals to the Virgin primarily as an intercessor. In her compassion and mercy, she prays for those who toll on earth, easing their worldly cares as well as rewarding their devotion in heaven. Both as the model of virtue and purity and as Christ’s loving mother, she is well situated to intercede for her devotees: her pure intercession can help her servants turn from sin; her appeal to the five wounds of her beloved son can help heal the wounds of the human soul.

The speaker of the poem presents himself as both lover and servant in terms drawn from the courtly love lyric. He asserts his absolute devotion to and dependence on his lady, offering the service of his love. He labours and sighs for his love, forsaking all that was dear to him and voluntarily entering into the bondage of love. But he also acknowledges the great distance between them, lamenting that his sinfulness is a barrier to his love (a theme that will resonate throughout the Wooling Group prayers). He expresses his love-longing for her in terms of love words and love-sickness that can be healed only by her mercy. In the end, he prays for her intercession on his behalf, hoping that she will be merciful to himself and his brethren, since he has composed and sung this lays in her honour.

On god urenus of ure lefdt thus combines the practice of devotion to Mary with the imagery of courtly love. The poem clearly sets out the basics of the cult of the Virgin, providing a useful summary for a reader who wished for a model of prayer. In form and imagery, it draws upon the romance lyrics that would have been familiar to aristocratic readers of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, suggesting that it may have been intended for a wider audience than a community of monks or lay brothers—perhaps composed for a lay patron(ess) for whom the monk has written a prayer in the same manner as Anselm wrote for aristocratic women in the early twelfth century, or an aristocratic widow who has renounced the world and withdrawn to the solitude of an anchorhold.

Be urenus of seinte Marie is at altogether different kind of poem. Of all the Wooling Group prayers, only OSM is gender-neutral. Perhaps this is fitting, in this poem, that provides a transition between the male-voiced UUL and the female-voiced prayers that followed OSM. Rather than a celebration of the cult of the Virgin Mary, it is a form of confession. The speaker acknowledges his or her sin moving

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2. See also Nicholas Watts, "Afterword: "On Eise,"” p. 196.
4. Some of the material in the following two sections has appeared in a different form in my article, "Reading and Devotional Practice."
5. See Gunn, Anchorite Voice, chapter 12.

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through a formal structure that provides mnemonic devices for cataloguing both the sources and the forms of sin: the three enemies of the soul (the world, the flesh, and the devil); the five bodily wits or senses; and the seven deadly sins.

Having catalogued and confessed his or her sins, the speaker then turns to the Virgin Mary and prays for her intercession. Unlike UUL, in OSM Mary’s ability to intercede on behalf of the soul is not grounded primarily in her status as Queen of Heaven, but in her motherhood. She is the vessel of the Incarnation, the loving mother of the one who suffered and died to redeem humankind. The prayer for intercession thus focuses on the sufferings of Christ’s life and Passion, rather than the joys of the courts of heaven—without, however, the affective force of UGA and Wohange. The focus of the text remains fixed on confession and repentance. Christ’s Passion is the means by which the soul is redeemed; meditation upon it is intended to stress the magnitude of Christ’s gift and inspire feelings of guilt and contrition for sin. It is the Virgin mother who feels compassion for Christ’s sufferings, which forms the basis of the soul’s appeal to her. OSM also firmly roots the speaker’s confession and appeal in the context of the Church and its sacraments, the vehicles through which forgiveness is transmitted to the believer.¹

On losung of ure louerd moves the reader into a more affective, personal devotion. Rather than appealing for intercession through a third party (the Virgin Mary) UUL is a direct address from the soul to Christ. The prayer opens with a brief history of salvation through a rehearsal of Christ’s deeds on earth: his birth, teachings, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension; the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; and the final Judgement. It then moves to the founding of Holy Church as the agent of Christ’s action in the present. Having grounded salvation firmly within the realm of Church and sacrament, UUL then takes the reader through an examination of her own sin rooted in an agonized meditation on Christ’s sufferings in the Passion. While it draws upon the familiar imagery of the battle of the soul with its three deadly foes and the wounds of the five senses, UUL takes the reader far beyond the simple rehearsal of sin found in OSM. This is a passionate and personal meditation upon the great act of suffering love that redeems the individual soul, as Christ takes on the battle through his crucifixion. The prayer ends with the hope of spiritual union with Christ on the cross through penitential imitatio Christi, in a direct appeal to Paul’s words in Galatians 2:20: “ich livet noch ich, / auk crist lived in me” (I live—not I, but Christ liveth in me [IL 69-70]).¹

The language of the poem is steeped with the affective imagery of the Song of Songs, made popular by Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons on the Song of Songs. The speaker acknowledges the great distance between herself and her beloved in a series of contrasts that emphasize her worthlessness and her own lack thereof. But these contrasts also emphasize Christ’s generosity and love: if she forsakes the false counsel of the world, he will give her his wisdom; if she forsakes the false comfort of worldly things, he will give her the comfort of heavenly joy; if she forsakes the love of unworthy things, he will bestow his great love upon her. The final contrast, between the bitterness of the world and the sweetness of Christ’s love, introduces a section that portrays the rewards for making the correct choice in passionate terms of sweetness, fire, and comforting love. Acknowledging that her debt of sin has been paid with the free gift of Christ’s love, the reader cries out: Hovat mote ich mit gesude louerd te pe? (What can I do for you, merciful Lord? [L 173]). In the end, she can only rely upon him, who wills what is best for her and has the power and the love to accomplish it.

If On losung of ure louerd introduces the reader to the passionate world of affective devotion, On wet cwude god wresun of God almohli envelopes her in it. After a passionate opening invocation addressing Christ in the language of love, UGA moves to a consideration of the attributes of Christ that make him beloved: his fair face, upon which the angels gaze in delight; his cosmic brightness, which overshadows the sun; and the fire of his love, which transforms the sinful heart into a bower fit to receive him. The reader is then drawn into a consideration of the choice between worldly and heavenly love, and the necessity of turning from one to the other in a complete transformation of

¹ Vulgate: “vivo autem iam non ego vixit vero in me Christus”; Douay Rheims: “And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.” All future English quotations from the Bible will be from the Douay Rheims translation.

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heart and soul. The difficulty of such a union is expressed in terms of the divine embrace. Christ hangs on the cross with his arms outstretched to embrace the speaker. She wishes to be embraced by him in heaven, and she accepts the embrace of suffering; it is only through sharing his suffering that she can share in his joy.

The transient nature of union with Christ on earth is again expressed in a series of contrasts, as sin creates a barrier between the soul and her beloved. The bitterness of the world is contrasted with the sweetness of Christ’s love, and the estrangement of the soul is countered by his wooring. But UGA does not simply repeat the imagery of LUL; the author reconstructs and enlarges it. For example, the familiar imagery of the five wounds of Christ healing the wounds of the five senses is expanded as Christ’s wounds become wells that provide a healing and cleansing bath for the soul. The final goal of indwelling union with Christ on the cross is, again, expressed in the words of St. Paul.

The speaker also prays to the Virgin Mary to intercede with her son, but while her honor and status as both maiden and mother are acknowledged, the appeal is based on the need of sinners for both Christ’s Incarnation and death, and Mary’s prayers on their behalf. Her power to intercede is expressed in the regal image of Christ standing upon the cross as if on a royal dais, with one arm outstretched toward her and his head bowed in accesion to her will and acknowledgment of her worthiness.

The image of Mary standing beneath the cross moves the speaker from appealing to her as intercessor to remembering her as model. Here, Mary is not a model of virginal purity but of suffering love, as she stands beneath the cross with St. John the Evangelist, exhibiting a degree of sorrow not to be matched in the human heart. As the speaker beholds these three “standings” (Christ on the cross, and Mary and St. John at its foot), her gaze becomes the vehicle of transformation, kindling the fire of love in her heart and driving out the coldness of sin as she recognizes the cross as her only refuge.

I have described the affective movement of the prayer in the affirmative; however, the prayer itself more often expresses both the speaker’s love and desolation in a series of negative rhetorical questions such as in the anguish “why do I not?” These exclamations emphasize that the goal of spiritual indwelling is not only difficult but as yet unachieved. Even if, through prayer and meditation, the reader does find transient moments of blissful union, it can never be fully realized on earth. Nevertheless, the goal of transforming the heart into an abode worthy of Christ is not hopeless, and the reward is not infinitely delayed. Through prayer and meditation, the reader can experience fire of devotion and the sweetness of love, however imperfectly, in the here and now.

On wet swonde god ursisun of God almihiti masterfully combines modes and motifs from the three other prayers: the cult of the Virgin; Mary as intercessor; Mary as model; Passion meditation; and affective devotion to Christ. This combination suggests that the author of UGA knew the other three prayers, or that those motifs were so common as to be pervasive. Verbal echoes in the text tend to confirm that the author knew at least LUL. At the same time, UGA moves beyond the other three prayers in its focus on the Passion and the deeply affective imagery with which the reader meditates upon it, transforming the individual motifs of the other prayers into an integrated Passion meditation and prayer. UGA thus represents the height of affective piety at the time of its writing, to be outdone only by its successor, *Wohunge*.

*Pe Wohunge o fer lawerd* is largely based on the Passion material found in *Ancrere Wisse* Part 7, and incorporates many themes and images from throughout *Ancrere Wisse*. Indeed, *Ancrere Wisse* is such an important source for *Wohunge* that the text cannot be understood without reference to it, as will be seen in the notes to the edition. But *Wohunge* also incorporates a number of themes and images from the earlier Wooing Group prayers: the language of romance; the affective metaphors from the Song of Songs; the battle of the soul; the purchase price of the soul; the Virgin Mary as model; the transformation of the soul through turning inward from the world to Christ; Passion meditation as the mode of transformation; the heart as bower; and the penitential anchoritic life as *initium Christi*. Yet, to limit *Wohunge* to a simple repetition and expansion of these familiar themes is to undervalue the magnitude of the composition as a whole; *Wohunge* is far more than the sum of its parts.

Unlike the other Wooing Group prayers, *Wohunge* is specifically set in the context of the anchorhold. The speaker refers to herself as sealed in a chamber (l. 584), enclosed securely within four walls (l. 399). The imagery of the anchorhold is thus central to the meditation upon the Passion through which the text leads the reader/speaker. As Savage and Watson put it:

> the work’s most important source is the nonliterary one of the anchoresses’ real situation, as they saw it: married to Christ and crucified with him by their enclosure, and needing only to ratify that marriage and transform that crucifixion by passionately assenting to both in ‘their hearts’.

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1 Savage and Watson, p. 246.
Wohunge also draws heavily on the life that the anchoress might have led before withdrawing into the anchorhold. As Renevey shows, "the recluse is forced to confront the most outstanding moments of her secular life against those promised by and mediated upon during the anchoritic life." Indeed, the metaphor of Christ as the beloved spouse is literalized in its opening lines as it is paralleled to a noble, secular marriage. Thus, for example, the dominant theme of the Christ-Knight depends on the contrast with its feudal counterpart. While it draws upon the parable of the Christ-Knight in Ancrene Wisse, Wohunge expands that parable into a full-fledged meditation on Christ's suit-ability as the reader's beloved spouse, the Passion that displays his love so eloquently, and the inevitable response of grateful love the reader must find in her own heart. In so doing, Wohunge combines a very practical assessment of Christ's love-worthiness with the Anselmian pattern of prayer, characterized by the metaphorical withdrawal into the chamber of the heart (here figured by the anchoress's literal withdrawal into the anchorhold) and the Bernardine affective devotion to the heavenly bridegroom. More important, it does so in a vernacular text that makes such devotion available to any literate reader.

It is therefore important to bear in mind that, coming as it does at the end of the complex textual process discussed above, Wohunge's audience is wider and more complex than that of the prayers that precede it. Its first readers would, to be sure, have been anchoresses, but they would not necessarily have been the young and maidenly addressees of Hall Wealden; they may, like Loretta, Countess of Leicester, have been the widows of powerful and influential men, and they may have been seeking refuge as well as seclusion. They would likely have been aristocratic, literate and intelligent women, who had led active, and perhaps powerful, lives in the lay world before retiring to the anchorhold. They would have brought with them the influences, experiences, and some of the accoutrements of the world they had left behind, such as books and devotional images. As the most complex and sophisticated of the Wooing Group prayers, Wohunge is well suited for such an audience.

Wohunge is the most original, and the most important, of the Wooing Group texts, and is rightfully treated as the central text of the group; indeed its survival in Titus among assorted texts of the Ancrene Wisse Group demonstrates that it can stand in its own right outside the context of the other Wooing Group prayers, in a manuscript addressed to a mixed audience. It integrates the language of enclosure, the imagery of romance, the metaphor of the divine spouse and meditation upon Christ's Passion into an original and sophisticated expression of the possibilities of vernacular spirituality. Its artistic and devotional expression matches that of the flowering of vernacular theology in the fourteenth century, although it predates that movement by almost a hundred years.

The Wooing Group texts thus demonstrate a progression in the development of affective devotion in the thirteenth century, culminating with Wohunge as the final product of a long and complicated creative and devotional tradition. The texts reflect a movement away from the Virgin Mary as intercessor towards the Virgin Mary as model—and, indeed, away from devotion to the Virgin Mary herself towards devotion to Christ in his Passion. They also show a progression away from a devotion rooted in church and cult towards a more affective and individualized devotion, rooted in meditation on Christ's Passion.

The Texts of the Nero Manuscript

Although the Wooing Group prayers illustrate the historical development of early thirteenth-century affective devotion, I have not presented the texts in this edition in the order in which they were composed. Rather, following accepted scholarly practice, I have placed Wohunge at the head of the group to which it lends its name, where it belongs by right of its sophistication and originality. Because it survives only in Titus, its relationship with the rest of the Wooing Group is only shown by the kind of internal literary and devotional evidence discussed above.

The four earlier prayers, on the other hand, circulated separately, either on individual leaves, in manuscripts such as Lambeth, or copied at the end of manuscripts such as Royal. Now (or when) these four prayers came to be gathered together is unknown, although as noted above UGA must have circulated with Wohunge at some stage. But it is surely telling that the only complete versions of any of these four prayers are in Nero, where they are united as a coherent group. I have, therefore, presented them in the order in which they appear in Nero, where they are deliberately organized to fulfill a specific pastoral strategy.

I have argued elsewhere that the arrangement of the prayers demonstrates a deliberate response to the developments in vernacular spirituality noted above. Nero's Scribe B creates a specific devotional struc-

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1 Renevey, "Enclosed Desires," p. 43.
2 See Woolf, "Christ the Lover-Knight," and English Religious Lyric, pp. 44-45.
3 See "The Divine Spouse" below, pp. 63-66.
4 See Innes-Parker, "De vohunge of we lauwed," pp. 113-14.
ture that integrates personal devotion into devotion rooted in church and sacrament. By alternating prayers addressed to the Virgin Mary with those addressed to Christ, the manuscript also integrates the role of Virgin as intercessor with her role as a model for the anchoritic life, both in her chaste purity and in her affective response to the Passion. Nero's Scribe B thus provides a model of prayer that, like Ancrere Wisse, acknowledges the importance of interior devotion while at the same time grounding it safely within the structures and traditions of the Church.

The first two texts, UUL and UGA, open the sequence with devotion that is expressed in the personal and affective language of love and desire. The opening two texts of the sequence thus present the goal of the devotional life, union with the beloved, insofar as it can be achieved in this life. UUL presents the necessity of love-service; UGA finds that love in the Passion, and the importance of initiatio Christi.

Nero's Scribe B then moves the reader to OSM, a purely confessional text addressed to the Virgin Mary. With its careful structure and its detailed rehearsal of sin, OSM is an example of a typical form of confession, enabling the reader to prepare for the sacrament of confession to a priest, but also to confess her sin privately to the Virgin and pray for her intercession. Yet, the ordering of the texts also roots the confession in the Passion meditation that precedes it (UGA). The reader of OSM is not trying to win Christ's approval but to regain it, having been taught in UGA the delights of loving union with Christ in his Passion, however transitory its earthly attainment might be. The arrangement of the texts thus reflects the very real transitions between delight and sorrow, the union with Christ in love and the barrier or distance caused by sin, that characterize the spiritual life of the anchoress. OSM presents a specific and necessary moment in the devotional life, not its total experience.

1 It is not clear that it was the scribe who was responsible for the material added to Nero or for its ordering; it could just as well have been a superior who supervised the work or a patron(ess) who asked for it. However, apart from Scribe B the existence of other influences is strictly conjectural and so for simplicity's sake I have ascribed responsibility to him.

2 Similarly, the prayers and devotions in Part I of Ancrere Wisse are dominated by prayers to the Virgin Mary, particularly those in English (i.e., those that the anchoresses would have clearly understood); yet devotion to the Passion is so thoroughly fused with the daily prayers that the two are difficult to separate.

3 The careful consideration of sin in OSM is a shorter and less elaborate form of the detailed instructions for the examination of the soul prior to confession given in Ancrere Wisse Part S, but also therefore easier to remember as a spiritual exercise, especially with the many mnemonic devices in the poem.

That the starkness of OSM is not the necessary end or totality of the devotional life is confirmed as Scribe B continues his sequence of prayers with LUL. LUL combines the confessional mode of OSM with the affective devotion to the Passion of UGA, highlighting the transformation of the soul by which union with Christ in love and death can be accomplished and maintained through contrition and compassion. The constant interplay between sorrow and joy, sin and penance, isolation and union, characterizes the life of the enclosed reader. The texts are therefore set up in a way that will enable her to maintain the cycle of meditation upon her own unworthiness and Christ's great love as she lives out the alternation between estrangement and communion with Christ that is an inevitable consequence of being human. The work of Scribe B preserves the four earliest Wooing Group prayers as a tightly connected unit in a carefully organized sequence. Like Ancrere Wisse itself, the Nero prayers provide both a guide to and pastoral guidance through the trials and rewards of the devout life.

Literary and Devotional Context: The Anchoritic Texts

Wohunge was written in the first instance for an audience of anchoresses, and it is this primary audience that informs and influences the imagery and even the form of the text. As seen above, the manuscript context of the Wooing Group also ties these prayers closely to Ancrere Wisse and some of the Ancrere Wisse Group. These works not only provide a textual context for the Wooing Group, but also reflect its literary and devotional milieu. Ancrere Wisse, in particular, is an important source for Wohunge. Yet, as seen above, the influence moves both ways; UGA may have been a source for Ancrere Wisse and LUL was a source for Hali Meidhad. In order to understand the anchoritic context and imagery of Wohunge and the devotional context of the Wooing Group as a whole, it is therefore necessary to have some acquaintance with the texts of the Ancrere Wisse Group, the spirituality they envision, and the imagery they use to express it.

Ancrere Wisse

It has been generally agreed that Ancrere Wisse was originally written sometime after 1215 (the date of the Fourth Lateran Council) and (based on a passage referring to the friars) revised sometime after

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1 Because the English Creed that completes Scribe B's addition is not part of the Wooing Group, I have not considered it in detail here. However, the Creed provides an affirmation of faith that completes LUL's final affirmation of Christ's power.
1225, when the first Franciscans arrived in England. Millett's analysis, however, moves the original composition forward to sometime after 1221, when the first Dominicans arrived in England. Millett argues that original author was Dominican, university-trained (probably in Paris) and familiar with current trends and texts of pastoral care. He was thus well suited for the task of writing a book of guidance for anchorites.

While it is not the earliest manuscript, the version of Ancrane Wisse in Nore preserves the only surviving copy of an early reference to the original audience of Ancrane Wisse: three sisters who had chosen the anchoritic life “in the bower of [their] youth.” The author states that it is at the request of these sisters that he writes his text, and his affection for his “beloved sisters” is manifest throughout the book. Nevertheless, it is clear that the author was not writing for these three sisters alone. His reassurance that his harsher comments are intended for others who are less adept at the anchoritic life suggests that Ancrane Wisse was not written as a guide for three young, naive anchorites, but that the original three sisters had been anchorites for some time and were well schooled in the enclosed life. Indeed, Savage has argued that Ancrane Wisse is not so much a guide for the three sisters as it is moulded upon them, using their proficiency in the anchoritic life as a model for other anchorites. The author, however, clearly envisioned an even wider audience that included not only other anchorites, but also some members of the laity. Part 5, on Confession, for example, would be appropriate for any devout lay reader.

In any case, Ancrane Wisse was clearly in demand as a guide. Within its author's lifetime, the small group of three anchorites had expanded to “twenty or more,” all living in separate cells, but presumably within walking distance of each other, as the author refers to their maidservants passing between them with messages, or the loan of a book. The author revised his text for this larger community, and the process of revision is, uniquely visible in the manuscript tradition. BL Cotton Cleopatra C vi (Cleopatra), although not the most reliable manuscript, is one of the most fascinating. It has been heavily annotated, in what is almost certainly the hand of the original author. Some of these annotations are simply corrections of mistakes made by a scribe who was unfamiliar with the dialect in which his exemplar was written. But some of them are clearly notes for a revision of the text, and some of the annotations are incorporated into the revised version of Ancrane Wisse in Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 402 (Corpus).

The Corpus revisions reflect the growing audience of Ancrane Wisse, not only its size but also its makeup. The additions to the text indicate that the audience of anchorites has changed, requiring changes particularly to the sections of the “Outer Rule” that guide their day-to-day life. Some of the revisions in Part 8 seem to be intended to lessen the harshness of the anchoritic life. Other changes deal with the practical. In the often-quoted passage instructing the anchorite not to keep any animal except a cat, the prohibition is softened somewhat; she is not to keep any animal butte ye fend ow drive and overt mearise hit reade (“unless you are forced by necessity and your director

1 Millett I, 4.71, pp. 96-97.
2 Dobson, Ancrane Rule, pp. ix-x, and xiii ff. The revision of Ancrane Wisse thus occurred after the copying of the Cleopatra manuscript (which probably dates to the early 1230s); the author's notes may date to as late as the 1240s or 1250s. See Millett II, pp. xiii-xx.
3 The Corpus manuscript was dated by Ker to the first half of the thirteenth century, but that dating has now been revised by Patkes to the 1270s or early 1280s. For a detailed discussion of the dating and authorship of Ancrane Wisse and its manuscripts, see Millett, Ancrane Wisse, pp. xii-xxiv and Millett II, pp. xiii-xxix.
4 For example, when discussing the anchorites' fasting and bloodletting, the author adds that they should fast hower ye beak in heale ant i ful strenge; ah rivle ne treast noth seke ne bloodletene (“when you are healthy and have all your strength, but the rule is not binding on those who are ill, or have been let blood”). Millett I, 8.4.29-30, p. 153. When the author advises that a woman might perhaps wear dresses of balchtoth, the revision adds oh eauer is best je sweate ant i sweate heartes. Me is levere jet ye folien wed an heard word pen an heard here (“but a mild and gentle heart is always best. I would rather have you bear a harsh word well than a harsh heart.” Millett I, 8.18, 137-39, p. 159).
advise you to”).¹ Indeed, many of the additions to the text emphasize reliance on the advice of the anchoress’s director. Some are concerned with the anchoress’s virtue, such as the direction not to allow any man to cut with her without her director’s special permission, although an exception is made for the Dominican and Franciscan friars, who need only the director’s general permission.² Thus, while some of the further elements of the anchoritic life are relaxed, the role of the anchoress’s director is reinforced.

A number of the additions have to do with the anchoress’s comfort. For example, the author counsels the anchoress to wear warm caps with veils over them, amending the text to allow the veil to be either white or black. Similarly, the author later adds that a meoke surpliz ȝe make ten in hit summer wear enhance (“When it is hot in summer you may wear a light over-garment of white linen”).³ He writes that she should do without a wimple if she can (wimples would be warmer), and, in the revised text, if she is willing. Yet he also adds a long passage warning against wimples as adornment or finery, leading to the danger of pride in the anchoress, and sinful thoughts in a man who might gaze at her face, in spite of this harsh denunciation, however, he repeats that his criticism is for those who do not conceal themselves by the wall of the anchorhold and the covering over its windows.⁴ Properly enclosed anchoresses, it seems, can wear wimples for warmth, as long as they do not do so for vanity.

The (relatively) long addition concerning wimples suggests that some of the anchoresses to whom the revised text is addressed were used to wearing wimples and wished to continue to do so. Wimples were not only warm; they were a symbol of wealth and rank—the very things that a woman coming to the anchorhold as a widow would have to renounce. If the annotations to Cleopatra date roughly to the 1240s or early 1250s, the author was considering his revisions just after the composition of Wohunge. I have argued elsewhere that some of the anchoresses to whom Wohunge was addressed might have been widows who had renounced the world for the enclosed life of an anchoress.⁵ The same might be said of the speaker of UGA, who is identified as a woman who has withdrawn from the world. The revisions to Ancrcne Wisse thus reinforce the fact that the audience of Wohunge was likely broader than has previously been assumed.

The anchoritic audience, or those who advised them, clearly saw the need for other vernacular guidance material, and very shortly after its composition, Ancrcne Wisse began to circulate with other texts: the Katherine Group and the Wooing Group. This is consistent with the Ancrcne Wisse author’s original intent, as he urges his audience to read frequently:

Often, leove sestren, ȝe schulen ȝi lesse forde reden mare. Redunenge is god borne. Redunenge teacheth hu ant hewte me bidde, ant beode bryzet lii ete. Amide þe redunenge, hwec þe heorte lieþe, kimeþ up a deuotion þet is wort monie benen. For þi sceal Sein Jerence: Jeronimus: Sones in monnu tuo sacra sit lectio; tenenti tibi librum soppnus suscripit, et cadentem faciam pagina sancta suscipiat.

"Hali redunenge bo ñe cauer i þeme honden; slep ge up þe as þu lokes þron, ant te hali pigne ikepe þi fal ind neb." Swa þu scalt reden zeonliche ant longe.¹

Often, dear sisters, you should pray less in order to read more. Reading is a good way of praying. Reading teaches you how to pray, and for what, and prayer obtains it afterwards. During reading, when it satisfies the heart, a devotion arises that is worth many prayers. That is why St Jerome says: Jerome: Holy reading should always be in your hands; sleep should steal over you as you hold the book, and the holy page should support your drooping head. “Holy reading should always be in your hands; sleep should overcome you as you look at it, and the holy page should support your drooping head.” So you should read assiduously and at length.²

The author of Ancrcne Wisse frequently refers to other books that the anchoresses have available to them in both French and English, including an “English book of St. Margaret” and texts that sound very much like Hali Meðhaid and Savles Ware (both of which the Ancrcne Wisse author draws upon for his own text).³

¹ Millet 1, 4.92.1554-61, p. 159.
² Millet places the translation of the Latin text, quoted by the Ancrcne Wisse author, in italics. The author’s translation is in quotation marks. While his translation here is not far from the original Latin, often the Ancrcne Wisse author translates more freely.
³ The reference to books in French and English is in Millet 1, 26.393-95, p. 18. The author also suggests here that his audience will have access to a psalter and books containing meditations. For the “book of St. Margaret” see Millet 1, 4.55.931-32, p. 93; for the text(s) that resemble HM and SW, (continued)
The incorporation of the texts of the Katherine Group and the Wooling Group into manuscripts containing Ancrene Wisse is the product of a process by which scribes attempted to provide a group of writings to support the anchoretic life and which was attentive to the informal circulation of texts among anchoresses who had them, and to the needs of anchoresses who did not. In some instances, these texts were drawn from an already existing group of oral and/or written sources. In others, the texts may have been composed or adapted specifically for the anchoresses themselves. This is particularly true of Wohunge.

The Katherine Group

It is certain that most, if not all, of the Katherine Group texts were written before Ancrene Wisse. Royal, the earliest of the Ancrene Wisse Group manuscripts (c. 1225-30), contains the three Saints’ Lives and Sawles Warde. All of the Katherine Group texts are found in the slightly later Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 34 (and are its only contents). Sainte Katerine, Halte Meidoth, and Sawles Warde are also found in Titus (1240c), along with Ancrene Wisse and Be wohunge of ure lawerd.

The Saints’ Lives were, in all likelihood, the first to be composed. All three are lives of virgin martyrs, young and beautiful women who had dedicated their lives to their divine spouse, Jesus Christ. They were tempted and tormented by heathen men who wished to take their virginity (either by marriage or by force). Their tormentors were men of power and status, but the young maidens refused to submit to their demands. After performing various formidable feats and/or miracles, the heroines were beheaded, and their souls taken up to heaven; their heathen persecutors were left looking foolish, as most of their followers were dead or converted.

The Lives of St. Margaret and St. Julianne were originally written for a broader audience than the anchoresses for whom Ancrene Wisse was composed, and probably originated in an oral tradition related to public performance (likely in a church on the feast day of the saints they commemorate). St. Julianne, for example, urges alle leavede men be understood ne maken latines ledede liwedde and luste be listede of

"a maiden" ("all the unlearned who cannot understand the Latin language, and hear the life of a maiden"). Similarly, the Life of St. Margaret addresses itself to cile be earen ant herenge habbed, watewen wid pa iwedded, ant te meidekes nomeliche ("all those who have ears to hear, widows with the married, and maidens above all").

St. Katherine was probably composed somewhat later. It has no opening address and is more self-consciously intended as a literary text for a reading audience. The frequent use of the imagery of enclosure and the stress on devotional reading suggests that Saint Katherine may have been written/translated for an ascetic audience. Katherine is a true model for an anchoressa: ne hueede ha nane lithe ploched ne nane softe songs; naide ha nare ronned ne nane buwe-rumes leomin ne lustnyn, ah cuev he helyd on halit wirte ehen oder heorte, ofist bu tugenades ("she did not deligh in any frivolous games or foolish songs. She did not learn or long for any love songs or love stories; but she always had her eyes or her heart on Holy Writ, and most often both together"). But like Margaret and Julianne, Katherine is also ready to fight heathen persecutors to defend her faith and her virginity.

Sawles Warde, or the Custody of the Soul, was likely composed at about the same time as the Life of St. Katherine. It is an allegory of the human soul, enclosed in a castle and defended by the householder, Wit, and his unrelentless wife, Will. The imagery of the enclosed building and the five wits as servants of the soul is similar to the kind of imagery found in Ancrene Wisse, whose author undoubtedly knew Sawles Warde, or its source, De Custodes Interioris Hominis.

Hali Meidoth was almost certainly the last of the Katherine Group texts to be composed, and seems to have been written for a narrower audience than the other Katherine Group texts. Its intended audience was composed of young women who were already dedicated to a life of virginity (either as anchoresses or nuns); the purpose of the text is to confirm and encourage them in their choice of lifestyle, not to proselytize.

Nevertheless, Hali Meidoth’s inclusion in Titus suggests that it possible to read the text in a flexible manner, since Titus was likely copied for a mixed audience that included lay readers of both sexes.

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2 Savage and Watson, p. 11.

350 INTRODUCTION
The Anchoritic Audience

The anchorites addressed directly in Ancrence Wisse and Wohange and, by association, in the other Ancrence Wisse Group texts, were exceptional women who had dedicated themselves to a life that was both difficult and exalted. It was an ascetic life devoted to chastity and poverty, to be undertaken only by those who were spiritually adept; but it was also a life that was highly esteemed on account of the spiritual achievements of those who pursued it. It is crucial, then, to understand how the anchoritic life affected the images and ideals found in the texts.

The anchoritic life embodied many paradoxes. It was a difficult life, both physically and spiritually, viewed by St. Benedict as a progression from the communal life. St. Benedict identified anchorites as the chosen few, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first servor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God’s help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.1

The anchorite (or anchoress) was a spiritual athlete, a soldier of Christ entering into heroic combat with the forces of the devil in his or her solitary retreat.2 This notion remained the ideal throughout the Middle Ages, even when the desert retreat became a cell attached to a church. In fact, the anchorite in his or her cell became a highly visible symbol of the most exalted spiritual calling. Anchorites provided those who remained in the world with a model to emulate and, in their asceticism and prayer, upheld the community through intercession. Anchorites were therefore accorded enormous respect in the Middle Ages.3

Although it began as a male profession, anchoritism was a vocation that was more common among women than men throughout the Middle Ages.1 This was particularly true in England during the thirteenth century. There are several reasons for this. One was the increase in lay piety evident throughout Europe in the thirteenth century. Another was that the anchoritic life offered women a vocation with a status unavailable to them in any other form of religious life. Unlike men, women could not become hermits, largely for fear of physical molestation.2 Barred from the priesthood, the only other option open to devout women who wished to pursue a religious vocation was that of a confessed nun. For many, this option was either unattractive or unavailable.

Entry into an anchorhold was also often (although not always) tightly regulated, requiring permission from a bishop, and evidence of both a strong vocation and financial support. Indeed, for many women, the time between their decision to enter the anchorhold and their actual enclosure extended over several years, while they settled their estates and financial affairs. The original three anchoresses to whom Ancrence Wisse was addressed were fortunate in having a wealthy and generous patron who lived close by, but the author refers to other, less fortunate, anchoresses.

For women, then, the anchoritic life was rarely seen as the progression from the communal monastic life described by St. Benedict. Rather, the enclosed cell of the anchoress provided an alternative for the pious laywoman who wished to dedicate her life to God. Neither a young woman nor a widow who desired to withdraw from the secular world and pursue a devout life had many options in the early thirteenth century. Essentially, she was limited to the extremes of the solitude of the anchorhold or the communal life of the convent.3 The anchorhold would have offered the kind of seclusion appropriate for a laywoman

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1 See Warren, pp. 10-22. The period defined by Warren in her discussion is 1100-1359.
2 The distinction between anchorites and hermits is not always clear in medieval writings. In general, however, scholars distinguish between anchorites, who were enclosed in a fixed site and vowed to maintain stability of abode, and hermits, who were free to move wherever they could find a means of making a living, either through performing some service such as maintaining a chapel or a road, or through alms. The vocation of a hermit includes a much broader range of lifestyles and behaviour than anchoritism, which is a narrowly defined vocation under much stricter ecclesiastical control. See Warren, pp. 7-8, 16, 152.
3 The “mixed life” in the early thirteenth century was the life of the active clergy—parish priests, bishops and canons who served the laity in the world, rather than retiring to the monastery. There was no version of (continued)
who wished to retire to a life of devotion but not to take on the formal life and vows of the convent.  

Even for aristocratic women, who could have entered a well-endowed convent, the anchorhold was often preferable. Many anchoresses in the thirteenth century were widows, retiring to the anchorhold after an active life in the world. In many (if not most) cases, they were aristocratic widows, with an income derived from their dowry.  

Like the secular widows who retreated into religious seclusion in convents or hospitals in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, widows in the thirteenth century sometimes withdrew to the anchorhold cell. In the case of anchoresses, however, their dedication to the life of prayer and meditation was characterized by solitude and withdrawal from the world, rather than the exchange of one community (the active, secular world) for another (the life of the convent or hospital). While Millard has argued that enclosure might not always have been by choice, it was often freely chosen and clearly thought out. We know, for example, of two such women who were connected with the region (and thus in which Anchre Wisse and Wohung were written, Amora de Braose Mortimer and her sister, Loretta, Countess of Leicester, discussed above). Loretta’s enclosure may not have been entirely a matter of choice—she was permitted by King John to return from exile in France on the condition that she not remarry—but her choice of an anchorhold over a convent, and in particular, an anchorhold near Cantebury and Simon Langton, with whom she joined in the patronage of the early Franciscans, was likely a matter of her own choosing. In Amora’s case there is no evidence that her reclusion was enforced.  

It must be stressed that there is no direct connection between the de Braose sisters and Anchre Wisse, although Dobson has suggested that the French translation of Anchre Wisse may have been composed in

the first instance for Amora. However, the de Braose sisters do provide an example of the kind of audience for which the anchoritic texts, and Wohung in particular, might have been written—wealthy, aristocratic, highly placed and well-educated women who sought the anchorhold in their widowhood, and whose concerns are reflected in the practicality, imagery, and complexity of Wohung. We also know that one copy of Anchre Wisse belonged to another powerful marcher lady, Matilda de Clare, in the late thirteenth century, showing that pious lay people also found a use for the text. Further, as Renevey suggests, the narrative voice in Wohung effectively transfers the imagery of the secular world onto Christ, and “the pervasiveness of the strategy throughout the text suggests an audience which has just left the secular world for the anchorhold.” It may well be that Wohung was written, at least in part, for aristocratic widows who became enclosed after an active life in the world.

Indeed, the anchorhold may have been attractive precisely because it was not a convent, and therefore its inhabitant was not subject to formal rule and vows of the convent life. In his preface, the author of Anchre Wisse contrasts the anchoresses, whose concern is not with the outer rule but with the inner, with those who belong to religious orders living under a rule. He argues that if an anchoress takes a vow and then breaks it, she sins mortally; on the other hand, if she does not make a vow, she can still live her life as if she had, and keep it in her heart. The author thus urges his readers to make no vows, even concerning his own instructions about the “outer rule” that governs the anchoress’s prayers and devotions (Part I) and practical matters of food, drink, clothing etc. (Part II).

1 See Dobson, Origins, pp. 214-29, 238-50, 299-311.
2 See James-Parker “De wohunge of ure inward,” pp. 100-05.
3 The connection between Matilda de Clare and the Cleopatra manuscript deserves further study, not only because it is one of the few indications of early ownership that survives, but also because Cleopatra is such an important manuscript in tracing the prehistory of the Corpus revision, containing as it does the notes of the original author.
4 “Enclosed Desires,” p. 44.
5 Millard I, Preface 3-7, 13-155, pp. 1-5. The fact that, as the anchoritic community grows, the author compares the anchoresses to a convent, or a “mother house” that inspires the devotion of others, should not be taken to suggest that the anchoritic community ever became literally a convent. The “convent” of anchorholds is only a metaphor, suggesting the anchoresses share a common way of life, encouraging each other, and taking care not to behave in a way that would make them “stand out” from each other. See also Millett, “Can there be such a thing?”

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Nevertheless, as Millett shows, *Ancrene Wisse* betrays its audience’s anxiety about their liminal status, neither lay nor religious, bound by no rule, identified with no order. The author appears to be responding to an important concern raised by his audience, when he advises them:

> ...of newepe oaksd ow of hewt ordre ye beon—as summe doo, [3]e telle me, he sikhē he great ant swolhe he fhe—answerd: of Sen James, he was Godes apostle ant for his maiche holiness. He depe Godes bróder... He seif[3] hewt] is religion, hewch is dit ordre. *Religio mundane et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem* er ext: *visita puerillos et viduas in necessitate tuæ, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo; pet is,* “Cleane religion and [wi]sede [w]en is seen ant helpen [widwenant fedelless children, ant from ye [w]orld [w]hen he clame ant unwonner.” ... Sen lane described religion ant ordire. Be lesterc dale of his sabe limêd to recluse; for pet bef[o] twa dalen, to t wa marne be bond of religiuse.2

If any ignorant person asks you what order you belong to—as you tell me some do, stainning out the gnat and swallowing the fly—answer: of St. James, who was God’s apostle, and called God’s brother because of his great holiness.... He defines religious life and true order. *Pura et immaculata religion before God and the Father is this*; to visit orphans and widows in their need, and to keep yourself unspotted from this world; that is, “Pura et immaculata religion is to visit and help widows and fatherless children, and keep yourself unspotted from this world.” This is how St. James describes religious life and order. The second part of what he says applies to recluses; because there are two parts, corresponding to two different kinds of religious.

As noted above, this anxiety may, in part, be due to the fact that the anchoresses to whom *Ancrene Wisse* is addressed came to the anchorhold directly from the lay world rather than from a convent.3 There was, perhaps, also a certain anxiety on the part of the author that she should not be perceived as composing a “rule” for a new “order,” since after the Fourth Lateran Council the establishment of new orders was forbidden. Indeed, as Warren has pointed out, this may be one reason for the increasing popularity of the anchoritic life in England as the old orders were increasingly reluctant to undertake the responsibility of supervising nuns. But Millett has shown that there was more to the author’s reluctance to call his text the “rule” that his readers had begged him for; in fact, Millett has argued that *Ancrene Wisse* should not be seen as a rule at all, but rather as an “anti-rule.”

The audience of *Wohunge*, in particular, was likely not the young and virginal audience implied by *Heli Meidhod* and assumed by many scholars of *Ancrene Wisse*’s original version. Instead, *Wohunge*’s audience would be more like the broader audience of *Ancrene Wisse*’s revision, which included an entire community of anchoresses who came from various backgrounds. These were, in all likelihood, laywomen who had chosen the anchorhold for a variety of reasons, whether in their youth or as widows. The anchorhold provided a place for devotional reclusion, but widows may also have sought protection from the social and political demands that weighed heavily upon aristocratic women.

### The Anchorhold as Symbol

Images of enclosure dominate *Ancrene Wisse*; even its structure reflects the enclosed life of the anchoress as Parts 1 and 8, dealing with the “outer life,” enclose Parts 2-7, on the “inner life.” Part 1 is dedicated to the anchoress’s daily prayers and devotions. Part 8 deals with the practical matters of daily life: what the anchoress should eat; what she should wear; how often she should receive communion; how she should instruct her servants; whether she should keep a cow (no) or a cat (yes); what kinds of activities are appropriate for her to undertake.

The “inner life” is dealt with in broad categories: the outer senses (Part 2); the inner senses (Part 3); temptation (Part 4); confession (Part 5); penance (Part 6) and love (Part 7). Within these broad categories, however, the author explores a wide variety of themes, drawing on the anchoress’s daily life to create a rich and detailed tapestry of image and metaphor.

The anchoritic cell had many overlapping meanings that affected the symbols and metaphors used to describe it. It was a symbolic

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1. Millett II, pp. xix-xxiv. See below on the imagery of crucifixion for further evidence of the *Ancrene Wisse* author’s use of the liminality of his audience in composing his text and elaborating his metaphors.
3. See above, pp. 53-54.

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1. For an excellent summary of the audience of *Ancrene Wisse* and their relationship to religious orders, see Millett II, pp. xix-xxiv.
3. Millett, “The Genre of Ancrenee Wisse.” See also Millett, “Can there be such a thing?”

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desert, reflecting the desert retreats of the earliest anchorites;\(^1\) it was the mountain of contemplation where the anchorite communed with God.\(^2\) It was also a prison: the undeserved prison of the martyrs assailed by the forces of the devil and the deserved prison of the penitent sinner who must flee from the world in order to atone for sin.\(^3\) It was the wilderness through which the solitary travelled in order to reach the goal of the heavenly city;\(^4\) lost, alone, and beset by temptation, the anchorite struggled within him or herself to find the direction that would lead to God.\(^5\)

The imagery used to describe the anchoritic life thus included images of penance and asceticism, as the anchorite was encouraged to see himself or herself as the weakest of humans, fleeing from the dangers of the world in order to atone for sin.\(^6\) But it also includes images of joy and love, as the anchorite seeks (and finds) her/his divine spouse, anticipating (at least at times) the joy of heavenly union with him. For the anchorhold is also a shelter, nest and bower—the secure and private space in which the anchoress can commune with her beloved.

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1. Millet I, 3.18-20, pp. 50-52; 4.37, p. 64.
5. See also Warner, pp. 8-10.
6. That this attitude applies to both male and female anchorites is evident from a passage in the preface to the ceremony of enclosure found in the early sixteenth-century Sarum Manual: “Let the one who is enclosed learn not to think highly of himself, as though he deserves to be set apart from the mass of mankind; but let him rather believe that it is provided and appointed for his own weakness that he should be set far from the companionship of his neighbours, lest by more frequent sins he should himself perish and do harm to those who dwell with him, and should thus fall into greater damnation. Let him therefore think he is convicted of his sins and committed to solitary confinement as to a prison, and that on account of his own weakness he is unworthy of the fellowship of mankind” (Clay, p. 191). Similarly, in the fourteenth century, Walter Hilton defines the anchorite for whom he writes: “You shall regard yourself in your will, and in your feelings if you can, as unfit to live among men or women or unworthy to serve God in the company of his servants, access to your fellow Christian; lacking both the skill and the strength to perform the good deeds of active life to help your fellow Christians as other men and women do; and therefore as a wretch, cast out and rejected by all men and women, you are shut up in a house alone—so that you should harm neither man nor woman by evil example, since you do not know how to benefit them by good works” (The Scale of Perfection I.16, pp. 88-89).
the flesh, and the devil. The devil's army is composed of the seven deadly sins, and the gateways of sin, through which the wounding darts of the devil may enter, must be closed and defended. The best defence is the bodily integrity of the chaste anchorites. Equally, the wounds inflicted by sin must be healed. The five wounds inflicted upon Christ's body in the Passion heal the wounds inflicted by the five senses, through the suffering of penance and asceticism, in imitation of Christ's suffering.

Hence, enclosure is also described using the more extreme imagery of a living death: the cell that is a penitential prison is also a grave. This concept is reflected not only in the imagery used to describe the anchoritic life, but also in the enclosure ceremony itself. Warren describes the earliest extant enclosure ceremony, dating from the twelfth century. The ceremony begins with a lengthy and symbolic mass:

After the mass the recluse is conducted to his reclusorium while the entourage chants antiphons and psalms drawn from the Office of the Dead; the reclusorium is sanctified with holy water and incense. The officiant then proceeds with the Office of Extreme Unction followed by prayers for the dying. Now the recluse enters the house; the officiant sprinkles him with a little dust to the continued singing of antiphons and psalms; all then withdraw save the priest, who remains with the recluse to tell him to rise and to live by obedience. On the emergence of the officiant the command is given to block up the door of the house.  

The anchorite is symbolically dead to the world, buried in his or her cell or anchorhold. The anchoress's enclosure in her cell is on more than one occasion paralleled with Christ's enclosure in the tomb, in his mother's womb and in the cradle. Frequently, this enclosure is described as cramped and restricted; Mary's womb and the cradle are narrow places, as is the anchoress's cell. The anchoress's life, characterized by hardship and restrictions, both physical and spiritual, is thus described as an imitation of Christ's suffering in the Incarnation. However, Christ's descent into the Virgin's womb is also paralleled with his descent into the anchoress's heart. Through the anchoress's daily meditation on the mass, Christ appears before her in bodily form and descends into the "inti" of her heart, as her body becomes the womb into which the human Christ descends, and in which he is sheltered and nurtured. The anchoress's suffering becomes her "labor," in imitation of Christ's labour on the cross. Through these birth-pangs, she becomes a mother to her own love for Christ and in deed to Christ himself, as she re-enacts the mystery of the Incarnation within her anchorhold: the anchoress's body, fragmented by sin, is reconstructed as the nest, harsh without and soft within, that harbours Christ; the anchor encircled by thorns of her ascetic life in order to protect the delicate saplings within; the garden of the heart, cultivated with the tools of physical suffering and flowering through the practice of virtue; the inn or herbeare that shelters Christ; and the womb that bears and nurtures him.  

**Passion Meditation and Affective Devotion**

The guarding of the anchoress's senses is thus completed as meditation upon the sins of her own senses shifts to meditation upon the sufferings of Christ in his five senses and upon his five wounds that heal the wounds inflicted by the sins of her senses. Through meditation upon Christ's Passion, the anchoress is taught to see her own sufferings as an imitation of Christ's suffering on the cross.

The anchoritic life is, in essence, an *imitatio Christi* that will transform the anchoress's sinful heart into the dwelling place of Christ. This transformation is depicted in the transformation of the imagery used to describe the anchorhold itself. The earthen pot of the anchorhold/grave is compared to the pits dug in the earth of Christ's hands by the nails that fastened them to the cross, in which the anchoress may find refuge. The anchoress's fragmentary body is identified with Christ's body, fragmented through his wounding in the Passion, and reconstructed as the rock into which the anchoress may flee and the castle by which she encamps.

One of the dominant images for the anchoritic life in *Ancrene Wisse* is therefore the crucifixion, a metaphor that combines the extreme asceticism of the prison with the concept of the anchorhold as a grave. The suffering of the penitential and ascetic enclosed life is thus transformed into a vehicle of union with Christ in his Passion. Yet, the same union with Christ in his suffering is also the vehicle to union with Christ in mystical contemplation and mutual indwelling.

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1 Warren, p. 98.
2 Indeed, sometimes an anchoress was literally buried in her cell after her death. A thirteenth-century grave marker was discovered next to the wall of the church in Effley where Anna de Braose Mortimer was enclosed, beneath what looks like a bricked up window, suggesting that this was the location of her cell.

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1 See Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction."
In both *Ancræ Wisse* and *De wohunge of wre lauerd*, the anchoress’s lifestyle is continuously and explicitly expressed as literally hanging on the cross with Christ. Her identification with Christ in his sufferings is a natural extension of her ascetic lifestyle, and her identification with Christ in his death is a clear extension of the motif of enclosure as a metaphorical death. But the explicit stress on the crucifixion specifically identifies the anchoress not just with suffering and death, but with the very moment when Christ is suspended between life and death. The image of the cross itself, raised up from the earth on Calvary and hung in the church above the altar, suspends the crucified body of Christ eternally between life and death, but also between earth and heaven-reaching upward towards eternity, but still rooted by the cross, firmly planted in the earth. This suspension reflects the very location of the anchorhold itself, between the churchyard with its graves, and the church interior, with its promise of eternal life. The anchoress’s body, like the body of Christ, thus occupies a space on the physical and spiritual boundaries between life and death.

The metaphor of crucifixion, then, encompasses a wide range of meanings for the anchoress that, in spite of their potentially negative implications, can provide “spaces” in which the anchoress’s spirituality can cross boundaries and overcome the barriers implied by her gender. The metaphor takes her literal situation, enclosed in a cell whose windows look outward onto a graveyard and inward towards an altar and a cross, and transforms it into a powerful image of the living death that her lifestyle is meant to encompass. The metaphor brings the anchoress into a marginal world, where all of the boundaries imposed by the physical world are blurred. The boundaries between the physical and spiritual, the literal and the metaphorical, are erased as the physical realities of her enclosed life become the vehicle for her spiritual union with Christ. The boundaries between male and female in many ways one of the defining forces behind a text directed at a specifically female audience, are obscured as the anchoress’s feminine body merges with the feminized body of the object, suffering Christ, but also with the masculine body of her crucified lover. The boundary between life and death is eradic.ated, as her enclosed life is identified as a living death. But perhaps the most important boundary, the boundary between present and future, between death and the resurrected life, is challenged as the resurrected Christ descends from heaven and joins with the anchoress in the bowers of her heart, anticipating her own resurrection as she crosses the final boundary between earth and heaven. Meanwhile, hanging with Christ on the cross, raised up towards heaven and yet firmly rooted in the earth, the anchoress occupies a marginal position on the very boundaries that her life both erases and replicates. Paradoxically, it is from this position on the cross that the anchoress is able to bring the heavenly world into her cell, as she is united with Christ in his death and all that it implies.

### The Divine Spouse

In *Ancræ Wisse* Part 7, the crucifixion is presented in the parable of the Royal Woor and the allegory of the Christ-Knight. The parable tells of a king who loved a poor, yet noble, lady from afar. After sending messengers, he came himself, writing love letters with his own blood. The metaphor is explained by a further allegory. The anchoress is the lady, living in an earthen castle, which is at the same time her body and her anchorhold. She is surrounded by enemies, and the mighty king who loves her sends her messengers, gifts and offers of help—all in vain. Finally, he comes himself and fights for her, receiving his death wound in the process. However, by a miracle, he rises from death to life. Would the lady not, the author enquires, be of an evil nature to refuse such love?

The king, of course, is Christ, who came to earth to prove his love. Like a knight, he shows his love through chivalry, entering the lists and having his shield pierced on every side. His shield is his human body, and the *Ancræ Wisse* author gives an extensive explanation of the significance of each part of the shield. The shield/crucifix is set high in the church so that the anchoress can see clearly how it was pierced, and Christ’s side is opened to show her his heart and draw hers to him.

The union with God that the anchoress seeks is thus the union of the lady with her beloved knight. It is described in images that draw upon the affective relationship with the divine lover and spouse so beautifully expressed in Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons on the Song of Songs. The author of *Ancræ Wisse* takes advantage of this gendered imagery and literalizes the metaphor to encompass the real experience of his enclosed female audience. As the author of *Ancræ Wisse* explains, in the enclosed chamber of her anchorhold, the anchoress turns from the world, and shows her face to her beloved, who comes to her only in a secret place.

This intimate union appears to be at much a part of the anchoress’s daily experience as the union with Christ in his crucifixion, which precedes and precipitates it.

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1. For a detailed discussion of the Christ-Knight in *Ancræ Wisse* and *Wohunge*, see Innes-Parker, “The Lady and the King.” For a history of the Christ-Knight in Middle English literature, see Wooll, “Christ the Lover-Knight.”

2. Millet 1, 2.30.641-49, p. 36. This passage reinforces the imagery discussed here, as it concludes: *hæo is Godes chambre* (she is God’s chamber).
The spiritual quest of the anchoress is thus unequivocally the search of a female devotee for a male God, who approaches her in very human terms. The enclosed chamber that she prepares for his coming is the bower in which she greets her beloved and the nest or womb into which she receives her God. The heavenly spouse to whom the anchoress will be joined in heaven also wears her in the anchoret's heart, and comes to the defence of the besieged castle of her soul as her valiant knight. The anchoress who turns her face towards Christ is described as God's chamber, as the body that has been fragmented through sin is made whole, becoming the bower that encloses the pure heart, the "secret place" to which Christ descends in order to embrace his beloved.

The erotic imagery of the mystical union of the anchoress with Christ as his bride and lover dominates the anchoretic life; she throws herself into his embrace as he hangs on the cross, ever present before her eyes in the crucifix upon her wall and above the altar of the church beyond her anchorhold wall. In this embrace, the anchoress's suffering body is redeemed by Christ's suffering body, with which it is identified, and the literal seclusion between the female soul and the male beloved breaks down.

The anchoress's body is reconstructed through this identification with Christ's body, as it becomes the enclosed chamber in which her beloved dwells, and the anchorhold of her heart, ruined by sin, is reconstructed as the bower in which she dwells with Christ. And, while in Ancrene Wisse Parts 6 and 7 the anchoress's union with Christ on the cross is presented as the climax of the anchoretic life and the end to which the whole text has been directed, her union with Christ in the bower of her heart is included from the very beginning, in the opening chapter, which deals with her daily devotions. In a passage that is often cited, yet also often dismissed as inconsistent with the tone of the text as a whole, the anchoress's union with Christ is explicitly tied to her enclosure and enacted in her daily observation of the celebration of the Eucharist in the church her cell borders. The liturgy of the mass merges into the anchoress's contemplation of her enclosure and her experience of union with Christ:

Set quis est locus in me qui uniat in me Deus meus, quo Deus uniat aut maneat in me, Deus qui fecit celum et terram? Itane, Domine, Deus meus, est quicquam in me quod capiat te? Quis michi dabit ut unias in cor meum et inebriatus illud, et unam bonum meum amplectas, te? Qui[d] michi es? Miserere, ut loquar. Angusta est tibi domus anime mee, quo venias ad eam; dilatetur abs te. Ruinosa est; refice eam...

Efter þe measse cos, þwen þe preost sacreð—ber forþecteð æl þe world, þer beðð æt ut of bodi, þer in sperchinde lune bicuppæð over leofson, þe into over brocestes sou is ilih of heouene, and haldeð him heteæste æþet þe hebbe iseotet ow æl þe eauer easkið.  

But what place is there in me where my God can enter, where God may enter and remain in me, God who made heaven and earth? O lord, my God, is there then anything in me which can hold you? Who will grant it to me that you may enter into my heart and intoxicate it, and that I may embrace you, my only good? Take pity on me, so that I may speak. The house of my soul is narrow for you to enter; may it be enlarged by you. It is in ruins; rebuild it...

After the kiss of peace in the Mass, when the priest is taking communion—there forget all the world there be quite out of the body, there in burning love embrace your lover, who has descended from heaven into the chamber of your breast, and hold him tightly until he has granted you everything that you ask.

In this passage we find the consummation of the entire anchoretic life: the narrow, ruined anchorhold—which is at the same time the anchoress's body and her heart, fragmented by sin—is repaired and enlarged by Christ, who through his bodily presence in the Eucharistic bread and wine transforms the anchoress's body and heart into the bower where she is united with her beloved. The anchoress's union with Christ is evoked by this meditation in the context of her daily devotions, rooting the erotic imagery of mystical union in a framework of daily prayer and contemplation.

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1 Similar meditation was also facilitated by images of the Passion, ranging from complex illuminations in Books of Hours, to prayer scrolls and indulgences illustrated with the instruments of the Passion (the arma Christi texts and illuminations), to wall-paintings and stained glass images in the church, which an anchoress could view through the window of her cell. Interestingly, the fifteenth-century manuscript that has bound with the thirteenth-century material in Royal, described above p. 18, note 6, begins with an illuminated copy of the arma Christi poem beginning "the vehicle I honour him and thee," suggesting that whoever bound the two parts together did so deliberately. It is also interesting to note that the Meditation on the Passion edited by Marx that accompanies the Vision of the Passion in Appendix D also focuses on the arma Christi ("British Library MS Harley 1740 and Popular Devotion").
For the anchoress, then, the daily celebration of the Eucharist becomes a focus for the interplay between the literal anchorhold, the anchoress’s body, the womb in which Christ is enclosed, and the metaphorical bowers in which the anchoresses commune with their beloved. Through the reception of Christ’s body into her own in her daily meditation on the Eucharist, the anchoress encloses Him in the physical anchorhold of her female body and the spiritual bower of her heart. Yet, the interaction between the literal and metaphorical suggests a crossing of the boundaries between physical and spiritual, which is reinforced by the fact that erotic union with Christ in the Eucharist occurs whenever the priest says mass (i.e., daily), not only when the anchoress actually receives the Eucharist, which, as we know from Part 6, was less frequent. The power of the Eucharist is based on the physical presence of Christ’s body at the moment of consecration, not the actual reception of the Eucharistic host by the communicant.

The Woong Group Prayers as Support for the Devotional Life

The kind of interior life described above does not come easily or naturally: it relies on a routine of daily prayer and meditation, which must be built into the anchoritic life. Ancrune Wisse provides the anchoress with a daily round of prayers grounded in devotion to the Virgin as well as some meditative material, but it also assumes that the anchoress will have other reading material, including further prayers and meditations. In particular, while devotion to the Passion is interleaved with devotion to the Virgin in the prayers in Part I, the Passion material in Part 7 begins to lead the anchoress into a more complex meditative focus on the love shown through Christ’s crucifixion as the model and end of the anchoritic life. As more women entered into the anchoritic life, the need for vernacular works of devotion to enhance their daily routine of prayer and meditation increased.

The importance of daily meditation in the devotional life is stressed by Savage, who shows that “an actual practice of meditation, a reader’s or listener’s approach to a text and a writer’s shaping of that text with such a reader or listener in mind, is responsible for the meditative dimension in many of the anchoritic works.” She argues that the Ancrune Wisse Group, and the Wooling Group in particular, create “a vernacular habit of imagistic meditation with affective and ascetic bases.” As Reneve, such a “habit” of meditation is based on “continued and prolonged reading, sustained in the mind as an important key to understanding the contemplative life” and leading to an “affective engagement” with the text. Ancrune Wisse encourages such reading, both in its self-referential imagery and in its author’s continual reminders of what he has written in other parts of the book. He tells his readers to “dip into” the text, reading some from here and some from there, more or less, as they have leisure to do so. And, while he insists that reading itself is good prayer, he also provides encouragement for individual prayer, and outlines a regime of daily devotions. Yet, there are no stand-alone prayers or meditations in either Ancrune Wisse or the texts of the Katherine Group. In particular, while Ancrune Wisse continually urges its readers to meditate on Christ’s love displayed in the Passion, there is no clear model for such meditation; the Passion material in Part 7 is an allegory, and the story of Christ’s suffering must be gathered from the rest of the text like the bundle of myrrh that Bonaventure will use half a century later as a metaphor for his Passion meditation, the Lignum Vitae. The prayers of the Wooling Group fill this gap; indeed, as we have seen above, the later prayers develop the first formal Passion meditations in English.

What is distinctively new about the Wooling Group is that it makes the practice of meditation accessible to those outside the monastic context in which it originated. Like Ancrune Wisse, the prayers of the Wooling Group use their readers’ world to structure their self-examination and to imagine the transformation that is the goal of the solitary life. Woolungs, in particular, draws upon the anchoress’s real situation of enclosure to construct her imaginative vision of Christ’s suffering and death. As Savage puts it,

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 partici-

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2 “The Wooling Group,” p. 166. Savage proposes that such a practice is founded in Old English poetry. See also Savage, “The Place of Old English Poetry.”
3 “Enclosed Desires,” p. 47.
4 This is the same kind of reading encouraged in the colophon to Woolungs; see above, p. 32, and below, p. 69.
5 See Innes-Parker, “De passione of our lord: A Middle English Adaptation.”

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part into that world of impossible being and discourse which is her higher life.1

Yet, in spite of the anchoress's withdrawal from the world, the anchoritic texts also use the world that she has forsaken to foster her devotion. Imagery drawn from the secular world makes these texts all the more accessible to the enclosed reader. As Renevey points out, "rather than disposing of the affective data accumulated during the secular life, the narrative voice fosters its transfer onto the person of Christ."2 In other words, rather than denying the reader's life experience, the text applies it to the anchoress's meditation upon the crucified beloved with whom she is united in her cell.

Here, it is useful to pause a moment and look at the structure of Wohunge. The text is clearly divided into two main parts: a meditation on Christ as the perfect spouse (ll. 1-188), and a Passion meditation (ll. 189-431). I have argued elsewhere that the meditation on Christ as the perfect spouse derives, at least in part, from the very practical experience of choosing an earthly spouse, an experience that a widowed anchoress would be particularly familiar with, but for which any medieval woman would "know the rules."3 The text begins with a list of the attributes of an ideal spouse, drawing on a passage from Ancrene Wisse.4 The literalization of the metaphor thus draws upon the anchoress's own experience in the world.5

The practicality of such an approach to devotion provides a "hinge" that allows the Wooing Group texts to move individual prayer and meditation from the communal monastic world to the solitary world of the anchorial society and even into the world of lay piety. As Renevey states, "The texts of the Wooing Group are among the first Middle English works to demonstrate the practicability of mysticism outside the monastery."6

For further discussion, see the Explanatory Notes to the translation of Wohunge below, pp. 15-16, note 5.

The reader of Wohunge, he continues, is "a reader who is in some sense remade by her reading but who is also assumed to retain an unpredictable and individual response to it, the more so if the meditation constantly references that variable thing, worldly experience."7 But this kind of reader is not limited to the anchorial; this kind of reader can be anyone who has access to the text, and can find time to read it on eise.

The texts of the Wooing Group provide a crucial part of the literature that supported the anchoritic life and Wohunge itself is the culmi-
nation of a long process of translation and composition. But *Wohunge* is more than that: along with its immediate predecessor, UGA, it provides, for the first time in the vernacular, a new kind of text, the stand-alone Passion meditation. While the other texts in the Wooing Group (and Ancrene Wisse itself) draw upon Passion meditation for imagery and metaphor, it is *Wohunge* that makes accessible the depth and sophistication that will lead to the kind of affective and contemplative vernacular spirituality that will dominate the next two centuries.

Indeed, as noted above, in all likelihood the Wooing Group prayers developed in a Franciscan context, anticipating the Franciscans’ inestimable contribution to vernacular devotion in England and, indeed, across Europe. In this context, one must consider that *Wohunge* predates the influential writings of Bonaventure by only about thirty years. Rather than looking back to its sources and the past, more than any other text of its time *Pe wohunge of ure lauerd* looks ahead to the future of vernacular spirituality, for lay and religious alike.

**The Wooing Group Prayers as Mystical Texts**

The terms “mystical” and “contemplative” have many overlapping meanings and have been used in many different ways, to the extent that scholars often hesitate to use them at all. Watson’s conclusion that “both the canon of Middle English mystics and the term mysticism itself have largely outlived their usefulness to scholars” is, however, too sweeping. Nevertheless, the question of what makes a work “mystical” remains: must it be visionary, or can the term include works that are more clearly “contemplative,” designed, that is, for contemplative reading rather than simple instruction?

As Michael Sargent has shown, the taxonomy of medieval contemplative or mystical literature is complicated. Sargent proposes a category of “contemplative writings” that share the characteristic that they are all in some way “about” the direct experience of God in this life, a category that sounds very much like “mystical” writing. Yet as Sargent goes on to define the genre of contemplative writings more clearly, he also argues that it should include several subgenres “which differ from one another in the mode of meditation lying at the core of each.” Sargent describes the first two of these as follows: first is the “monastic” ruminative mode that lies at the basis of the monastic tradition of reading, prayer and meditation on the scriptures. The second is the “Franciscan” imaginative mode that lies in the subject’s making her/himself, in her or his mind’s eye, present at the events of the life of Christ, Mary or the saints.

If such works have the capacity to inspire mystical experience or, as Sargent puts it, “a direct experience of God,” then the texts themselves can be called mystical.

The works of the Wooing Group, particularly *Wohunge*, fall into this category, as does Ancrene Wisse in its contemplative sections. Gunn demonstrates that Ancrene Wisse develops a mysticism of descent, an Incarnational spirituality lived out through a life of outward devotion and interior faith and contemplation. *Wohunge* guides its reader in the same kind of Incarnational spirituality, drawing her into a world where Christ descends into her anchoret and heart, where she and her heavenly spouse are one in body and heart through suffering love. The spoken words (for silent reading was not the practice in the thirteenth century) open the inner eye of the imagination; the heart is opened to love and companionship (i.e., both compassion for and experiencing the passion with Christ) as the anchorites is crucified with Christ through her very lifestyle.

*Wohunge* thus demands a careful, ruminative reading; its punctuation demands that specific phrases are lingered over, producing, as Savage cogently puts it, “a distillation of affect, drop by drop, to be collected in the soul over a lifetime.” The refrain also functions as a mnemonic device; as Brown argues, it is a “manna” that, with the allit

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1 “What Kind,” p. 182.
3 Sargent proposes the term mystagogic to describe such writings “attempting to produce in the reader an experience similar to that of the writer” (“What Kind,” p. 183).
4 Ancrene Wisse, p. 177. Although it has been argued that Ancrene Wisse lacks the clear structure of the ascent of the soul through various mystical stages that “ought” to define the mystical text and experience, this interpretation assumes that there is only one model of mysticism, the model of ascent, an intellectual (and male) tradition defined by particular twelfth-century writers and their followers. See, for example, Robertson, p. 72, comparing Ancrene Wisse to Bernard of Clairvaux. For example, meditation on the humanity of Christ is described by Bernard of Clairvaux as a lower form of devotion than contemplation of the divinity. However, the readers of the Wooing Group prayers are constantly reminded that Christ is sol gaudet and solus mons (“true God and true man,” LUL 1.1); contemplation of his humanity must include recognition of his divinity.
creation and repetition found throughout the text, breaks the prayer into pieces that would, over many readings, enable the anchoress to memorize as she meditates. The anchoress becomes lost in the text, which is meant to produce a mystical experience in its reader as it leads her to a place where she is Christ.2

This does not, however, mean that every reader of the Wuxing Group texts is, or was, a mystic; many (perhaps most) would not move beyond the prayerful imagination of Christ’s Passion. The texts, then, are “mystical” in the broadest sense, as they lay out the aim of the anchoritic life—a life of contemplation leading toward a heightened state of consciousness in which union with God can be achieved through the indwelling of Christ in the soul and heart. And, in the end, it is important to consider what the reader, the anchoress, might have understood as both the goal and the purpose of her reading. Wuxing, at least, suggests that anchoritic readers, and at least one of their advisors, saw Passion meditation as a means to a total (if not perpetual, “or mystical experience never is) identification with Christ on the cross. If these prayers had the potential to promote mystical experience, and some anchoresses achieved that potential, then the prayers must be considered both contemplative and, potentially, mystical.

*The Course of Passion Meditation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*

In the years that followed the composition of the Wuxing Group, many texts that were originally intended for an audience of professional women religious found their way into lay hands. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a raw class of lay readers, literate but without a Latin education, created an increased demand for devotional works in the vernacular. Such texts were immensely popular and clearly filled a deep spiritual need. By the fifteenth century, lay ownership of books of vernacular theology was widespread. The audience for these texts thus came to include two groups, women and laypersons, who were traditionally disempowered, cut off from the textual (and conventionally Latin) dissemination of spiritual ideas and practice. Yet, as my previous research has shown, women were not relegated to the marginal wastelands in their reading; they were, it is increasingly evident, intelligent and sophisticated readers, who were able to develop strategies of reading that enabled them to reconstruct and, to some extent, challenge the often misogynist conventions embedded in works of vernacular theology.1 The evidence suggests that the reading strategies of women readers were, however unconsciously, encouraged and spread as a result of the wider dissemination of vernacular theology as Passion meditation moved from the convent and anchorhold to the manor house. Thus, a potential form of subversion and empowerment that began as a female strategy became a lay practice.

Passion meditation became central to the affective piety of the late Middle Ages, in which “comprehension at an intellectual level [was] succeeded by a deeper level of affective understanding through experience or feeling.”2 By moving religious instruction into private reading and devotion into the private oratory, vernacular devotional texts empowered lay readers to take responsibility for their own salvation, and to develop an individual, private relation with the crucified Christ that could potentially bypass the mediation of church and cleric. Thus, as the readership of vernacular devotional texts expanded, so too did clerical anxiety about the potential uses and abuses of these texts. This anxiety was aroused partly because of the fear of heresy; for example, Archbishop Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409 were, in part, an attempt to control the spread of vernacular literature outside clerical control, largely in response to the threat of Lollardy.3 But the threat to clerical status and authority was not only from heresy. As works of spiritual guidance became more widely available, the focus on the individual in the works of affective devotion had the potential to undermine clerical control of theology and practice. One attempt to reassert clerical control is found in Nicholas Love’s *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (licensed by Arundel), which both

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1. See, for example, “Anchoritic Elements,” “Mi bodi hange wid ji bodi meeld o rom,” “Subversion and Conformity,” “Fragmentation and Reconstruction,” and “Sexual Violence.” Sargent insists that when considering such devotional works, one must also consider the characteristic of *direction... they were written by men, directing women to direct their gaze on particular aspects of the scenes with which they provided them.* Further, Sargent suggests that in medieval visionary literature, the starting point is often Francisian-style prayerful meditation on the events of the lives of Christ and Mary, but at some point the male spiritual director’s control of the woman visionary... cease[s], and... the vision itself takes place ("What Kind," p. 182, emphasis mine). Indeed, I would argue that the first place where the control of the male spiritual director slips is the moment that a woman can read such contemplative works for herself.

2. Ross, pp. 7-8

3. See Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change.”

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*The Wuxing of Our Lord and the Wuxing Group Prayers* 73
responded to Lollard argument and enclosed meditation on the life and Passion of Christ in a sacramental context.

By making religious works available in the vernacular, clerical authors attempted to guide their readers, restricting excess, reducing error, and enjoining devotional practice within the carefully controlled realm of church and sacrament. However, both the content of these texts and the vernacular medium through which it was transmitted were potentially disruptive of this agenda. Swanson demonstrates how vernacular Passion narratives and meditations could work against their authors' purpose, undermining the institutional church and empowering individuals, in particular the gentry, as vernacular works enable them to practice a private spirituality outside the church. One outgrowth of Passion devotion is an increased anti-clericalism—precisely the response feared by those who would restrict the dissemination of vernacular theology. Indeed, Swanson argues that devotion to the Passion was potentially anti-Catholic, undermining central areas of religious activity, including indulgences, charitable activity, devotion to the saints, and, at its most extreme, the whole sacramental system.

With the increased private access to faith made possible by the flourishing of vernacular texts of the fifteenth century (and, later, the spread of printing), spirituality became more personal, less social, and this had an impact not only on the religious lives of readers, but also on their social and political ideas and actions.

Ross also explores the ambiguity of the figure of the crucified Jesus in the art, literature and popular culture of the late Middle Ages. With Duffy, Ross draws attention to the wide range of religious practices and belief in the fifteenth century, and the sophistication of lay piety. While she argues that “the figure of the suffering Jesus functioned to promote a conservative and ecclesiastically based social cohesion (in part through the association of Christ with the sacramental system and with the wider system of good works),” Ross also acknowledges that “the figure of the suffering Christ does function to empower individuals to stand over and against society.” Part of this empowerment comes from the increased emphasis on understanding through experience, itself an outgrowth of the increasing popularity of devotional texts by and about religious women that, like the continental texts studied by Bynum, portray holy women as brokers of spiritual power characterized by extravagance. Ross argues that “while the saying of masses was a common priestly and thus male practice, weeping and praying on behalf of the world in association with the suffering Jesus constitutes an analogous and largely female form of spiritual influence.”

While texts such as Love's Mirror enjoyed wide circulation, much extant Passion literature consists of smaller meditative texts, some of them subtle and sophisticated literary works that have received little scholarly attention. These texts, moreover, are often embedded within manuscripts containing other material, many of which are carefully constructed to provide specific programs of reading for their audiences. Passion meditation thus occurs in a variety of contexts, depending on the purpose of the authors or compilers of the manuscripts, and the responses that they intended to evoke in their readers. The emotional responses evoked by these manuscripts range from guilt, to sorrow, to love; the practical responses range from moral and ethical responses of virtuous or charitable acts, to more complex responses of asceticism, prayer and meditation.

Some examples of such texts are found in the Appendices to this volume. These texts show some of the ways in which Passion meditation evolved over the centuries, as the tension between clerical control of the laity and individual affective devotion grew. As texts like those of the Ancrene Wisse Group moved into the lay world, the concept for the instruction of the laity arising from Lateran IV clashed with the ability of lay readers to interpret and re-enact the Passion in their own hearts, without the control exerted by the kind of spiritual guidance available to the anchorites on a regular basis. A concern to enrobe such meditative texts in the basic tenets of Christianity led to the rise of manuals for pastors, such as Ignorancia Sacriatuni, and works of basic instruction, such as Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God. Yet, some of the same texts that originate in treatises intended to instruct (and therefore control) the laity became detached from their instructional context, and allowed individual readers to interpret them in their own affective and experiential way. Other texts appealed to

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1 Lollard is the name given to the followers of John Wycliffe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, although it is often expanded to include any heretical thought or practice. Lollardy was an important concern in the early fifteenth century, largely because Lollards promoted the translation of the Bible into English, and believed that the individual could communicate with God without the mediation of the church. Thus, any person could interpret the scriptures and God's will for him or herself. The belief that women were equally capable of such in interpretation was a particular concern.

2 See, for example, Hughes, pp. 143-61.

the reader's sense of compassionate grief as each reader became, in his or her mind and heart, a witness to the Passion, which recurred over and over again, each time a reader came to the text. Like the Wooing Group prayers, each of the texts contained in the Appendices addressed specific needs of specific readers. But, like the texts of the 
Adventine Wise Group, they rapidly became detached from their original contexts, opening doors for the imaginative reader to interpret them in his or her own way, encouraging and empowering generations of readers to create their own relationship with the Incarnate Christ in the sacred chambers of their own hearts. In spite of the stress on the role of the clergy in the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, meditative texts encouraged the establishment of a personal relationship with and imitation of the Incarnate Christ. Passion meditation in particular, with its stress on seeing, feeling, knowing and imagining, moved the compassionate understanding of Christ's Passion and the imitation of Christ's life and suffering into the realm of ordinary human experience.

In so doing, these texts contributed to the creation of a literate laity whose piety was based on personal devotion, rather than complex theological speculation or sacramental ritual—a laity that would, eventually, contribute to a challenge of the very institution that produced these texts, not through heresy or revolt, but through the subtle, yet significant, evolution of daily thought and practice. I would argue that, in fact, one of the consequences of the rising lay literacy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a cultural shift. The shift from the communal setting of the convent to the private chamber of the individual lay believer enabled a freedom in prayer that encouraged the focus on the individual already present in Passion meditation, potentially subverting and undermining clerical authority and control.\[1\]

Irritation about this process is seen in texts such as The Chastising of God's Children, as well as Arundel's constitutions and Love's attempt in The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ to refocus Passion meditation on the clerically controlled sacrament of the Eucharist in the early fifteenth century. That these concerns were, at least in part, justified, is suggested by the fact that, by the sixteenth century, with the wider dissemination of vernacular theology both in manuscript form and with the advent of printing, an increasingly educated and self-reflexive laity was ready for the ideas promoted by the Reformation.

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1 See, for example, Duffy.

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**A Note on the Texts: Editorial Practice**

Each of the Wooing Group prayers is extant in its entirety in only one manuscript: *Wohunge* survives only in Titus, and the other prayers are complete only in Nero. This makes the choice of the base manuscripts for the edition clear. Nevertheless, the existence of fragments of two of the Wooing Group texts (OSM and UGA) in other manuscripts is significant, especially since each differs from the Nero copy enough to suggest that their scribes were using different exemplars. This evidence of wider circulation of the texts is both tantalizing and cautionary; it reminds us not to dismiss these prayers as tangential, existing only on the margins of early thirteenth-century devotion.\[1\]

The fragments of OSM and UGA that survive in Royal and Lambeth have much to offer the scholar investigating the history of the circulation of the Wooing Group. In both cases, I have followed Nero, and noted variations in the textual notes, unless a reading from Royal or Lambeth is clearly superior, in which cases I have noted where I have diverged from Nero.

I have silently expanded abbreviations and replaced the letter wyun (p) with "w" in all of the Wooing Group texts. I have, however, made every attempt to reproduce the original pointing (or punctuation) of the texts in the edition, although I have modernized punctuation in the translation.

The Titus scribe uses a small punctuation set. The punctus (which resembles the modern period but can be placed either on the line or above it) is used to indicate a full stop, or a major pause; the punctus elevatus (which looks something like an upside down semicolon) is used to indicate a major medial stop, and the punctus interrogativus marks a question. In my transcription of *Wohunge*: I have used a question mark for the punctus interrogativus, a semi-colon for the punctus elevatus and either a comma or period, depending on the sense, for the punctus.

The Nero scribe uses punctuation slightly differently. The punctus

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\[1\] See Appendix E for a hypothetical *stemma* of the Wooing Group texts. At the time of the copying of Nero, copies of OSM would have included at a minimum Royal (R), the Royal exemplar (\(e_2\)), Nero (N), the Nero exemplar (n), and a "parent" of the Royal and Nero exemplars (\(e_1\), likely not the "original" \(e\)); copies of UGA would have included Lambeth (L), the Lambeth exemplar (\(e_3\)), Nero (N), the Nero exemplar (n) and a "parent" exemplar for the Lambeth and Nero exemplars (\(b_3\), likely not the "original" \(b\).)
is used for a minor pause; a raised punctus (at a midway height in the line) indicates a major pause and is often followed by a capital. The punctus elevatus is used, like the semi-colon, to indicate a major medial pause; it is often used to express cause and effect, or in "if ... then" clauses. The double punctus functions like the colon that it resembles. The scribes also use a punctus interrogativus to indicate a question mark, and a punctus exclamativus to indicate an exclamation mark. In transcribing the works of the Nero manuscript, I have used a comma for the punctus, a period for a raised punctus, a semicolon for the punctus elevatus, a colon for the double punctus and a question mark and exclamation mark for their ME equivalents.\textsuperscript{1}

In both manuscripts, major and minor divisions of the texts are indicated by the size of the capitals. In Nero, the opening capitals are often the only indication that a new text is beginning, although the scribe does add "Amen" at the end of the prayers; otherwise the Wooing Group poems tend to run into each other without break or rubric, although titles are given for UGA and UUL.

Titus is written in double columns; \textit{Wohunge} begins at the top of the second column of f. 127r. The opening of \textit{Wohunge} is indicated both by a rubric and by a large "I" (the first letter of Jesu), the tail of which extends 15 lines down the centre margin, with red and green scrolling. Throughout the text, the refrain is always followed by large capitals (about one and a half lines in size) indicating a major division in the poem; minor divisions are marked in the manuscript by slightly smaller capitals, and the beginnings of sentences are marked by ordinary capitals. I have followed the divisions indicated by the capitals throughout the edition and translation, using a large capital in bold following two blank lines to mark major divisions (for example, after the refrain in \textit{Wohunge}, and using a smaller capital in bold following one blank line where a minor division is indicated (e.g., l. 126).

The capitals in \textit{Wohunge} are the only markers of textual subdivision; there are neither parahs nor blank lines between sections of the text. This is striking; as \textit{Wohunge} is the only text in the Titus manuscript to be completely devoid of decoration except for the opening initial. Indeed, this is further evidence that \textit{Wohunge} is not intended to be read as prose, like the other texts in the manuscript, where textual divisions are all indicated using parahs (\textit{?).

All translations in the appendices are by the author.

\textsuperscript{1} For an illustration of these and other medieval punctuation symbols, see \textit{Punctus}, pp. 301-07.

\textsuperscript{78} A NOTE ON THE TEXTS: EDITORIAL PRACTICE
The Wooing of Our Lord

Here begins the wooing of our Lord. 1

1. J esus, sweet J esus,
2. my dearest,
3. my darling,
4. my lord,
5. my saviour,
6. my honey drop,
7. my healing balm,
8. Sweeter is the memory of you than nectar in the mouth,
9. Who would not love your lovely face?
10. What heart is so hard, that would not melt in the memory of you?
11. Ah, who would not love you, lovely Jesus?
12. For within you alone are gathered all the things that might ever make anyone worthy of another’s love,
13. fairness and a lovely face,
14. flesh white under clothing makes many a man beloved the sooner,
15. and the longer.
16. Some are loved and honoured for gold and possessions, and worldly esteem;
17. some for generosity and liberality, for whom it is dearer to give honourably than to stingily hoard;
18. some for wit and wisdom and worldly prudence;
19. some for might and strength to be celebrated, and boldness in battle to hold their right;
20. some for nobility and high birth;
21. some for virtue
22. and courtesy and blameless habits;
23. Some for honour and mildness and gentleness of heart and deed;
24. and yet above all this, nature makes kindred friends love one another.
25. Now, my dearworthy darling,\(^{11}\)
26. my love,
27. my life,
28. my beloved,
29. my dearest love.
30. my heart's healing balm,
31. my soul's sweetness.
32. You are fair of face,
33. you are all bright,
34. All the life of the angels is to behold your countenance\(^{12}\)
35. for your face is so immeasurably lovely and delectable to look
upon,
36. that if the damned who boil in hell might see it eternally,
37. all that torturing pitch
38. would seem to them but a gentle, warm bath.\(^{13}\)
39. For if it might be so,
40. they would rather forever more boil in torment and forever more
look upon that healing splendour.\(^{14}\)
41. than to be in all bliss and forgo the sight of you.
42. You are so bright and so white,
43. that the sun would be dark if it were compared to your fairest
face.\(^{15}\)
44. So, if I will love any man for fairness,
45. I will love you, my dear life, fairest of mother's sons.\(^{16}\)
46. Ah, Jesus, my sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.\(^{17}\)

47. But now I will choose a love: for possessions, for one may
purchase love for wealth anywhere.\(^{18}\)
48. Yet, is anyone richer than you, my love, who rules in heaven?
49. You are the illustrious Lord who wrought all this world,\(^{19}\)
50. for as the holy prophet David said,\(^{20}\)
51. "The earth is the Lord's
52. and all that fills it, the world and all that dwell therein."\(^{21}\)
53. Heaven with its pleasures and is immeasurable joy,
54. all is yours, my sweet one,
55. and you will give me all if I love you truly.
56. Nor may I give my love to any man for sweeter gain.
57. So I will hold to you, my love, and love you for yourself,
58. and for your love forsake all other things that might draw my
heart and turn it from your love.
59. Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.

60. But what are possessions ard the world's wealth worth
without generosity?
61. And who is more generous than you?
62. For first you made all this world, and placed it under my feet, and
made me lady over all your works that you made on earth.
63. But I ruthlessly undid it through my sins.
64. And still, lest I should forfeit it all, you gave yourself for me
to release me from torment.
65. So if I will love any man for liberality,
66. I will love you, Jesus Christ, most liberal of all.
67. For other generous men give these outward things,
but you, sweet Jesus, gave yourself for me,
so that you did not know how to withhold your own heart's
blood.
68. Never did a lover give a more precious jewel to another?
69. And you, who first gave me all yourself,
70. have called me, my beloved, to give you all my self,
to rule at your right hand, crowned with you.
71. Who, then, is more generous than you?
72. Who is more worthy to be loved for largesse than you, my life's
love?
73. Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.
78. But largesse is of little worth where wisdom is wanting.
79. And if I will love any man for wisdom,
80. is any man wiser than you, who are called wisdom by your
father in heaven?
81. For through you, who are wisdom, he wrought all this world, and
orders it and disposes as is most fitting.
82. Within you, my life’s love, is hidden the hoard of all wisdom, as
the book witnesses.
83. Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.
84. But many a man also makes himself loved and desired
through his strength and bravery.
85. And is any man so brave as you are?
86. No!
87. For you did not fear to fight alone with your own dear body
against all the awful devils of hell, of which if the least loathsome and horrible
might show himself as he is to mankind,
88. all the world would be frightened just to behold him.
89. For no one could see him and remain in their right mind,
90. unless the grace and the strength of Christ emboldened his
heart.
91. You are even greater, with such immeasurable might that with
your precious hand nailed on the cross
92. you bound the dogs of hell, and plundered them of their prey that they had greedily grasped
93. and held fast for Adam’s sin;
94. courageous, celebrated champion, you robbed hell’s house,
95. loosed your prisoners and released them from death’s house,
96. and led them with you to your jewelled bower,
97. abode of every bliss.
98. Therefore, my beloved, it was truly said of you,
99. “The Lord is mighty, strong and brave in battle.”
100. And therefore if I want a stalwart lover,
101. I will love you, Jesus, strongest of all,
105. but bi mæt felne mine starke sawle fan,
106. ant to strengœ of te helpe mi mouchte waenesse,
107. ant hardships of te balde min herte.
108. A ihesu swete ihesu luue þat te luue of þe beo al mi likinge.

109. A noble man, an gentilie an of [col. b] heþ burðe ofte
winnen luue littliche cheape.
110. For ofte moni wass mon on lote hire menset þurh þe luue of
weþmon þat is of heþ burðe.
111. Fenne swete ihesu up o hwat herre mon mai i mi luue sette?
112. Nuuer mai i genti ler mon ochse þen þat art te kinges sune þat
iů world weallæs,
113. ant king ant euere wið þi fader;
114. king, ouer kinges lauerd ouer lauere daes.
115. Ant yote maunt i monhad born þu wes of marie maiden mildest
o mod,
116. kine heavn of burðe;
117. of daudes kiu þe king,
118. of Abrahames strone.
119. Heþere burðe þen þis nis nan under sumne.
120. Luue swete þo þa swete ihesu as te gentileste if þat eauer liuede
on eorðe.
121. alswae for in al þi lif meauer na lease ñe isfunden,
122. mi deere lefímon lastede.
123. ant art corn þe of burðe,    
124. ant of foster alswa,
125. þu þat eauer wynedest i þe hurð of heouene. [f. 129v, col. a]

126. A mi deorowurcde drod swa gentilie ant swa hende,
127. ne þeole me neamer mi luue noluer to sette o karliche þinges,
128. ne carðli þing ne fleschli azaines te ñerne ne luue again þi wille.
129. A ihesu swete ihesu luue þat te luue of þe beo al mi likinge.

105. that your might may fell my soul's fiercest foes,
106. and your strength help my great weakness,
107. and your bravery embolden my heart.
108. Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.

109. But noble men who are gentle and of high birth often win
love at little cost.36
110. For often many a woman surrenders her honour37 for the love of
a man who is of high birth.
111. Then, sweet Jesus, on what higher man may I set my love?
112. Where may I choose a nobler man than you, who are the son of
the king who rules this world,38
113. And king and equal with your father,
114. King of kings, Lord of lords?
115. And moreover, in respect of your humanity,39 you were born of
Mary, the maiden mildest in manner,
116. child of royal birth,
117. kin to David the King,40
118. offspring of Abraham.41
119. There is no higher birth than this under the sun.
120. So I will love you, sweet Jesus, as the noblest person who ever
lived on earth,
121. and also because there was never any blame found in all your
life,
122. my dear, blameless lover,
123. and that came to you from your birth
124. and your fostering as well,42
125. you who ever dwelled in the court of heaven.
126. Ah, my dearest darling, so noble and so gracious,
127. never allow me to set my love on ignoble things,43
128. or yearn for worldly things rather than you, or love fleshly
goods against your will.
129. Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.
Meekness and humility make a man beloved everywhere,
and you, my beloved Jesus, were compared to a lamb for your
great meekness.

For with all the evil and the shame that you suffered,
and with all the woe and the tormenting wounds,

you never so much as opened your mouth to complain;
and even now, with the shame and the evil that the sinful of the
world cause you each day,
you suffer it meekly;
you do not immediately avenge yourself for our guilt.

But you wait long for redress through your mercy.

So, your gentility makes you beloved everywhere,
and therefore it is right that I love you,

and leave all others for you.

For greatly have you shown your mercy towards me.

Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my
pleasure.

But because close relatives love each other,
you clothed yourself with our flesh,44

took flesh of her, man born of woman,
your flesh taken from her flesh without means of a man,45

and with that same flesh fully took human nature, to suffer all
that anyone could suffer.

You did all that humankind does without any sin,
for you had neither sin nor folly.

So, whoever does not love and believe in such a kinsman goes
against nature.

And because there ought to be truer love among siblings,
you became man’s brother, of one father with all those who

purely sing,

“Our Father.”46

But you through nature
and we through grace.47

And you became a man of that same flesh that we bear on earth.

Ah,
159. whom may one love truly, if one does not love one's brother?
160. So whoever does not love you,
161. is the most wretched\(^\text{59}\) of all people.

162. Now, my sweet Jesus,\(^\text{49}\)
163. for your love I have left the kinship of the flesh,\(^\text{50}\)
164. and even my born brethren have rejected me,
165. but I care for nothing while I hold you,
166. for in you alone may I find a perfect kinsman.
167. You are more to me than father,
168. more than mother.
169. Brother,
170. sister,
171. or friend, none count for anything compared to you.
172. Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my pleasure.

173. So, you with your fairness,
174. you with riches,
175. you with generosity,
176. you with wit and wisdom,
177. you with might and strength,
178. you with nobility and grace,
179. you with meekness, and mildness and great gentility,
180. you with kinship,
181. you with all the things which a man may buy love,
182. I have purchased my love.\(^\text{51}\)
183. But over all other things, those hard, cruel hurts make you worthy of my love,
184. those shameful torments you suffered for me,
185. your bitter pain and Passion,
186. your dreadful\(^\text{52}\) death on the cross,
187. rightly claims all my love,
188. challenges all my heart.\(^\text{53}\)
Jesus, my life's love,  
my heart's sweetness.

Three foes fight against me  
and still I sorely fear their strokes,

and I must cunningly guard myself through your grace:  
the world,  
my flesh,  
the devil—

the world to make me a slave;  
My flesh;  
to make me a whore;  
the devil through these two to draw me to hell.

I myself was cowardly, and weak and nearly fallen down,  
and my enemies were cruel,

so wicked and so fierce

that when they saw me so weak and so contemptible and so bowed down before them;  
they more eagerly pursued me,

and they thought to have made me, a wretch,

all their own; and they would in truth have made me so,

if help had not been so near.

They grinned for gladness at each other, as mad wolves that rejoice in their prey.

But through this I understand that you will have me as your lover and spouse,  
that you did not suffer them fully to rejoice in me,

and altogether cast me into shame and sin and thereafter into torment.

But where the affliction was greatest of all,  
so was the aid nearest.

You beheld all this and you clearly saw that I might not stand against their determined deceptions through any wit or strength that was in myself.

But [when] I had nearly yielded entirely to all three of my foes,  
You came to help me,

undertook to fight for me,

and saved me from the sorrow of death's house and the torment of hell.
220. You bid me behold how you fought for me,  
221. that I would not fear the poverty of the world nor the shame of  
222. wicked people's mouths when I am without guilt,  
223. nor sickness of my body,  
224. nor torment of the flesh,  
225. when I beheld how you were poor for me,  
226. how you were reviled and shame for me,  
227. and at last, in painful death hung on the cross.  
228. Jesus, my life's love, you are rich as lord in heaven and in earth,  
229. and yet became poor for me,  
230. destitute and wretched.  
231. Poor you were born of the maiden, your mother,  
232. for then, in the time of your birth, in all the town of Bethlehem  
233. you did not find shelter wherein your child's limbs  
234. might rest.  
235. Nowhere but in a wall-less house in the midst of the street.  
236. Poor, you were wrapped in rags and tattered cloths and coldly  
237. sheltered in a beast's manger.  
238. But as you grew older,  
239. you were even poorer.  
240. In childhood you had the breast for your food,  
241. and your mother ready when you desired her breast  
242. But when you were older,  
243. you, who feed the birds in flight,  
244. the fish in the water,  
245. and the folk on earth,  
246. you suffered many hot hunger-pangs for want of food, as  
247. clerks truly read in the gospel.  
248. And you, who made heaven and earth and all this world,  
249. had nowhere in all this world where you might rest your own  
250. head.  
251. But both young and older you always had the means to cover  
252. your bones.  
253. Yet at the end of your life, when you so grievously hung on the  
254. cross for me,  
255. you had nothing in all this world with which you might cover  
256. and conceal your blissful, bloody body.  
257. And so now, sweet beloved, you yourself were poor,  
258. and freely chose poverty.
250. You loved poverty,
251. you taught poverty.
252. And you have given your endless bliss forever
253. to all who purely and willingly suffer affliction and poverty for your love.
254. Ah, how should I be rich,
255. and you, my love, so poor?
256. Therefore, sweet Jesus Christ, I will be poor for you,
257. as you were for the love of me,
258. in order to be rich with you in your endless bliss,
259. for one must buy joy with poverty and with woe.\(^7\)
260. Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of you be all my pleasure.\(^72\)

261. But poverty with honour is easy to endure.
262. But you, my life, with all your poverty were shamefully humiliated for my love.\(^7\)
263. For how often they said shameful words to you and scornful derision,
264. it would take long to tell it all!
265. But you suffered great shame
266. when you, who never committed sin,
267. were taken as untrue.\(^74\)
268. Brought before sinful men, the heathen hounds, to be judged by them,
269. you, who are judge of the world.
270. There you, the redeemer of humankind, were shamefully judged,
271. and the murderer was released from the judgement of death.
272. For as it is written,
273. they all cried out like mad wolves
274. "Hang, hang the traitor Jesus on the cross!"
275. Hang him on the cross,
276. and release Barabbas to us!"
277. That Barabbas was a thief, who had treacherously killed a man in the town.\(^7\)
278. But you suffered more shame when those sinful men spat in your face.
Ah, Jesus, how might any Christian or heathen suffer more, than that someone should disgrace him by spitting in his beard?26

And you in your glorious beauty, suffered such shame in that lovely face.

And thought it all honour for the love of me, that you might wash my soul with that spittle that so soiled your face, and make it white and splendid, and seemly in your sight.

And therefore you bid me think upon this: *Sicco quoniam propter te sustinus opprobrium operavit confusion faciem meam.*

"Understand," you say, "and think in your heart that for the love of you I suffered shame and insult, and the shameful spitting of unworthy vulgar fools, with which heathen hounds covered my face for you."

As if he said, "do not fear to suffer the shame of the world for my love, even though you are without guilt."

But you suffered the shame of all shame when you were hung between two thieves.

As if to say, "This one is worse than a thief. And therefore he hangs between them as their master."

Ah, Jesus, my life's love, what heart might not break when one thinks of how you, who are the honour of all humankind, the remedy for all rain, suffered such shame to honour humankind.

One often speaks of wonders and marvels that have occurred in many and various ways, but this was the greatest wonder that ever occurred on earth.

Yes, a wonder above wonders, that the celebrated king, crowned in heaven, creator of all created things, to honour his foes would hang between two thieves.

Ah, Jesus, sweet Jesus, because you were reviled for my love, grant that the love of you be all my pleasure.
Poverty and shame would be enough without other torments, 
but you never thought, my life's love, that you might fully buy 
my friendship while your life lasted.

Ah,
you had a costly purchase in me,
never was such an unworthy thing purchased at such cost!
All your life on earth was labour for me, the longer the life, the 
more the labour.

But before your end, you laboured so immeasurably, and so 
sorely that you sweated red blood,
for as Saint Luke says in the gospel,
you were in so strong a labour that the sweat ran like drops of 
blood down to the earth.
But what tongue can tell it,
what heart can think it for sorrow and for pity of all the buffets 
and deadly blows that you suffered,
when you were first seized when Judas Iscariot brought the chil-
dren of hell to take you and bring you before their princes;
how they bound you so cruelly tight that the blood was wrung 
out of your finger nails, as saints believe, and led you, bound, 
in misery and struck you cruelly on your back and shoulders,
and buffeted and beat you before the princes.
Then, before Pilate, bow, naked, you were bound tightly to the 
pillar, that you might in no way flinch from their blows.
There for my love you were beaten with knotted whips so that 
your beautiful body might be utterly torn and rent, 
and all your blissful body streamed in bloody gore.
Then on your head was set a crown of sharp thorns, 
so that with every thorn red blood was wrung out of your holy 
head.
Then still you were buffeted and beaten in the head with the rod, 
the sceptre that was placed in your hand in mockery.

Ah, what shall I do now?
Now my heart will surely shatter,
331. my eyes overflow with water!
332. Ah, now my lover is condemned to die!
333. Ah, now he is led forth to Mount Calvary, to the place of death!
334. Ah, look, he bears his cross upon his bare shoulders,
335. and would that the blows beat upon me as they beat you and
336. thrust you forward quickly to your doom! 90
337. Ah, beloved, how they follow you:
338. your friends! 91 sorrowfully with tears and grief;
339. your foes scornfully, to shame you and gape at you.
340. Ah, now have they brought him there!
341. Ah, now they raise up the cross!
342. They set up the cursed tree! 92
343. Ah, now they strip my love naked!
344. Ah, now they drive him up with whips and scourges!
345. Ah, how can I live for pity, who see for myself my beloved
346. upon the cross,
347. his limbs so utterly stretched out that I may count every bone in
348. his body! 93
349. Ah, how, now that they drive iron nails through your fair hands,
350. into the hard cross through your fairest feet!
351. Ah, now from those hands and feet, so lovely,
352. streams the blood, so piteously! 94
353. Ah, now they offer my love, who says that he thirsts,
354. vinegar—the sourest drink of all—mixed with gall—the bitterest
355. of all things. 95
356. Such a cruel drink! 96 in blood letting, so sour and so bitter,
357. but he does not drink it.
358. Ah, now sweet Jesus,
359. still upon all your misery they add shame and insult,
360. laugh you to scorn there, where you hang on the cross,
361. you, my lovely love, you hang there with outstretched arms on
362. the cross! 97
363. It was grief to the righteous,
364. laughter to the evil ones.
365. And you, at whose might all the world fears and trembles,
366. were laughed to scorn by the world’s wicked folk.
367. Ah, that lovely body, that hangs so pitifully, so bloody, and so
368. cold! 98
369. Ah, how shall I live now, for now my beloved dies for me upon
370. the dear cross?
He hangs down his head and sends forth his soul.
But still they do not think that he is tortured enough,
nor will they leave that pitiful dead body in peace.
They bring forth Longinus with that broad, sharp spear.\textsuperscript{99}
He pierces his side,
cleaves that heart.
And out of that wide wound comes flowing
the blood that bought,
the water that washed the world of strife and of sin.
Ah, sweet Jesus, you open your heart to me, to know it clearly
and to read within it true love letters,\textsuperscript{100}
for there may I openly see how much you loved me.\textsuperscript{101}
Wrong would it be for me to refuse you my heart, since you
have bought heart for heart.

Lady, mother and maiden, you stood here very near, and saw
all this sorrow [heaped] upon your dearest son;\textsuperscript{102}
you were martyred within your motherly heart,
that saw his heart cloven in two with the spear’s point.
But lady, for the joy that you had in his arising on the third day
thereafter,
grant that I may understand your grief and feel in my heart
something of your sorrow and help you to weep,
that I might rejoice with him and with you in my arising on the
judgement day, and be with you in bliss,
that he so bitterly bought me with his blood.\textsuperscript{103}

Jesus, sweet Jesus, in this way you fought for me against the
foes of my soul.\textsuperscript{104}
you claimed me with your body,
and made me, a wretch, your lover and spouse.
You have brought me from the world to the bower of your birth,
enclosed\textsuperscript{105} me in a chamber.
There I may so sweetly kiss you and embrace you
and of your love have spiritual delight.\textsuperscript{106}
Ah, sweet Jesus, my life's love, with your blood you have bought me,
and from the world you have brought me.
But now I may say with the psalmist,
Quid retribuam domino pro omnibus quae retribuisti mihi?\textsuperscript{107}
"Lord, what may I give you, for all you have given me?"
What may I suffer for you, for all you have suffered for me?

But for my sake you are easy to pay.\textsuperscript{108}
A wretched and weak body I bear on earth,
and that, such as it is, I have given and will give to your service.
My body hangs with your body, nailed on the cross,\textsuperscript{109}
enclosed securely\textsuperscript{110} within four walls,
and I will hang with you
and never more come down from my cross until I die.
For then I shall leap from the cross into rest,
from pain to prosperity and to eternal bliss.\textsuperscript{111}
Ah,
Jesus so sweet it is to hang with you!
For when I look upon you who hang beside me,
your great sweetness
ravishes me greatly\textsuperscript{112} from pain.
But sweet Jesus, what might my body be in return for yours,
for if I might give you myself a thousandfold it could never come near to equaling you, who gave yourself for me.
And still I have a frail and unworthy heart,\textsuperscript{113} destitute and poor in all good virtues,\textsuperscript{114} and that, such as it is,
take to you now, beloved life, with true love,
and never suffer me to love any other thing against your will.
For nowhere may I give my love better than to you, Jesus Christ, who bought it so dearly;
there is no one so worthy to be loved as you, sweet Jesus, who have in yourself all things for which a man might be worthy of another's love.\textsuperscript{115}
You who have died for my love are most worthy of my love.
Yet, if I offer to sell my love,
and set as high a price upon it as I could ever want,
still you will have it and with all you have given,\textsuperscript{116}
you will give even more;
and if I truly love you,
you will crown me in heaven with yourself,
to rule, world without end.\textsuperscript{117}
Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, my love,\textsuperscript{118}
my beloved, my life,
my dearest love, who so greatly loves me,\textsuperscript{119}
that you have died for love of me,
and from the world you have brought me,
and your spouse you have made me,
and all your bliss you have promised me,\textsuperscript{120}
grant that the love of you be all my pleasure.

Pray for me, my dear sister.\textsuperscript{121}
I have written this for you, because words often inspire\textsuperscript{122} the heart to think on our Lord.
And therefore, when you are at leisure, speak to Jesus, and say these words,
and imagine that he hangs beside you, bloody upon the cross,\textsuperscript{123}
and through his grace he will open your heart to his love,
and to pity for his pain.

Explanatory Notes

1 Throughout the following notes, I have given references to textual and metaphorical parallels in Ancrume Wisse and the other texts of the Wooing Group. I have placed Wohunge first here because it is universally recognized as the most sophisticated of the group of prayers to which it gives its name. However, it is important for the reader to bear in mind that Wohunge is also the latest of these prayers; thus the following notes consider where Wohunge draws upon its predecessors' use of common ideas and contemplative imagery and metaphor, not the other way around.
2 The healing referred to here is spiritual salvation, and the same word is often used for healing and salvation. Thompson suggests that halwe comes from the Old English halweoræg, meaning "health water." The MED suggests "sacred water" or "holy cup" as alternative meanings for the OE word, and defines halweor as "a sweet healing liquid, used either as potion or potion" or "the aromatic oleoresin of the balm of Gilead." The word thus has biblical overtones of holiness, healing, and salvation as well as the physical reference to healing and sweetness of taste and smell. The parallel between physical and spiritual healing and salvation is also common, and the
appeal to the physical senses is common in the bridal mysticism of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see also UGA, note 37). It is interesting that Wohunce draws upon this appeal, but does not draw upon the imagery of the five senses as gateways for sin, which characterizes Ancremere Wisse: 1.32, p. 67; Part 2, passim) and the other WJ prayers (UGA II. 185-94 and notes 38-39; OSM II. 27-28 and note 10; LUL II. 40-48 and note 12).

3. See Ecclesiastes 49:2 (referring to Joesia): “His remembrance shall be sweet as honey in every mouth, and as music at a banquet of wine.” Thompson notes that this line also echoes the poem “Doce Licet Memoria,” a Latin hymn that inspired the modern hymn “Jesus the very thought of thee.” As Savage and Watson point out, the latter was widely circulated by the time Wohunge was written, and probably suggested other imagery as well. Memory was an integral part of “inwardness” or contemplation, particularly with respect to God’s love shown in Christ’s life and, especially, his Passion. Authors such as Ascheel of Rievaulx encouraged their readers to imagine the events of the Passion as if they were there. Wohunge goes further: through the voice of the first-person female narrator, the reader is there as she remembers the Passion (see II. 329-330), the past becomes present, and memory becomes experience. Brown points out that in this opening passage Wohunge creates an ambiguity between subject and object by reversing the “subject of taste and tasting.” She argues that this is “a seemingly intentional ambiguity on the part of the writer to emphasize the union of reader and Christ and his presence there, in her cell” (pp. 70-71). For the later incorporation of this imagery from the Wohunge Group by the author of A. a. Advisory of De Love, see Bryan, pp. 113-23.

The imagery of sweetness and honey permeates the onomatopoeic texts, along with their opposite, bitterness. In the Old Testament, honey was a symbol of plenty (e.g., the land flowing with milk and honey that God promises to Israel, Exodus 3:8) and of wisdom and enlightenment (1 Kings 14, Isaiah 7:15). In other texts, honey becomes an image of wealth and desire, a treasure to which God and his attributes can be compared (and always surpass). For example, in Psalm 18:11, God’s laws are “more to be desired than gold and more precious stones: and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,” and in Psalm 118:103, the words of God’s law are compared to honey: “How sweet are thy words to my taste! more than honey to my mouth.” Nevertheless, too much honey can be dangerous: “it is not good for a man to eat much honey, so he that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory” (Proverbs 25:21, cp. 25:16). In the Song of Songs (or Canticles) honey becomes a specifically erotic symbol of the sweetness of love and desire: “Thy lips, my spouse, are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments, as the smell of frankincense” (Canticles 4:11, cp. Canticles 5:1). In Ecclesiastes, Wisdom (later a primary attribute of Christ, see II. 60-81 and note 28 below) declares: “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. My memory is unto everlasting generations. They that eat me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink me, shall yet thirst. He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me, shall not sin” (Ecclesiastes 24:26-30).

In Ezekiel, honey is specifically an image of the word of God, which the human soul must absorb: “And he said to me: Son of man, thy belly shall eat, and thy bowels
these, which are intended to be read meditatively. For example, using the long line, the first lines of Wobunye read as follows:

these were these,
mi dru, mi darling, mi ditiin,
mi laain, mi hutter, mi hahwe.

Sweeter is naawunye a po ben mideu o mide;

In the end, I elected to follow the punctuation of the text as closely as possible, breaking lines where the text punctuates for pauses so as to recreate the sense of the medieval practice of reading aloud, emphasizing meditative pauses that a medieval reader would have used. Thus, the opening lines of Wobunye read:

these were these,
mi dru, mi darling,
mi ditiin,
mi hutter,
mi hahwe.

Sweeter is naawunye a pe ben mideu o mide; (1. 1-8)

This practice also has the advantage of emphasizing the places in the text where the author moves from short, almost breathless exclamations to longer, more ponderous utterances, which, as will be seen, marks significant changes in the affective tone of the text. I have, however, modernized the punctuation of the translation. (See also Sargent, "What Kind?" and the discussion of the poetic style of the Wooning Group in the introduction of this edition.)

In spite of the clear double punctus or colon following "summe" in the following lines, I have not put a line break in its place (see note 2). While such a break would indeed emphasize the pause, it would make translation awkward and interfere with the reading of the qualities noted here. The punctuation of the text serves here to indicate emphasis rather than a meditative pause. Some are loved for generosity, some for wit and wisdom, etc. The intention is to imply that while some human sparrow flowers have one or more of these qualities, only Christ has all of them (see 1. 12).

It is possible that Guitre is capitalized for emphasis, as is Mi in 1. 19 below (see explanatory note 5c). However, the Titus scribe does tend to capitalize "G" in the middle of lines (e.g., 1. 245, 1. 291 again capitalizing Guitre, and 1. 322), and so it may be just scribal practice. However, in 1. 291 and 325, the capitalization does emphasize a key point, as it does here.

The Latin here is not, as common in other manuscripts, marked out in any way save by the punctuation. Often in contemporary texts Latin is underlined in red, but here only the constructions are marked by a punctum: thus "o . . . co . . . fa . . . ". The effect of this is to clearly mark the end of the passage and the beginning of the Middle English, although that may not have been the intent.

The manuscript has "me" (stricken out) with "I" added interlinearly; thus "for his me of me." Thompson suggests that the text should perhaps read for fit for me to bote shae, in which case one would expect the "c" of "he" also to be stricken out (which it is not), and "of" to be changed to "for." A more sensible solution is to assume that this is a simple scribal error, and that the original reading is for his love of me. The shall be filled with this book, which I give thee. And I did eat it: and it was sweet as honey in my mouth" (Ezra 3:3). This same image recurs in the New Testament: in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation): "And I went to the angel, saying unto him, that he should give me the book. And he said to me: Take the book, and eat it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. I took the book from the hand of the angel, and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter" (Apocalypse 16:9-10). Here, we see the contrast between sweetness and bitterness that comes to dominate the imagery of the ancharistic texts. In Ancrene Wisse the author explains that the sweetness of love and the presence of God must be bought with the bitterness of penance (AW 6.13, pp. 141-42). In other texts of the Wooning Group, worldly sweetness is compared to honey that is licked off of thorns (UGA II. 66-69), and the sweetness of Christ's love is contrasted with the bitterness of sin or worldly things (UGA II. 149-53).

4 The importance of memory in the inward life dates back to Augustine (for the importance of memory, and memory training, in biblical devotion see Bryan, pp. 123-26). The memory of Christ's deeds includes the contemplation of those deeds and their meaning in the spiritual life of the reading, i.e., both an outward understanding (the memory of the narrative) and an inward understanding (the memory or understanding of its meaning). Thus, Wobunye and UGA, like the many Middle English Passion meditations that follow them, lead the reader through the events of the Passion and their significance, urging the reader to remember, to behold, to understand, and to respond.

5 The author here embarks on a list of things that make a man beloved, or as Millet describes it, the "conditions of eligibility" for a human spouse (Millet, "The Conditions of Eligibility," pp. 26-47). The list draws upon a passage in Ancrene Wisse, 7.11-12.184-92, pp. 49-50, that contains seven attributes (good looks, riches, high birth, wisdom, courtesy, generosity and sweetness and fragrances), the first six of which are paralleled in Wobunye. Wobunye lists nine conditions, but in the later description of how Christ surpasses a human suitor, the sixth and seventh (nobility, or high birth, and virtue) are merged into one. Millet points out that these "conditions of eligibility" are similar to those found in later thirteenth-century Paris sermons, and traces the topos back to the patristic period. She also notes parallels in later twelfth-century romance, specifically in Chrétien de Troyes. She shows that both Ancrene Wisse and Wobunye present Christ's love as differing not only in degree, but also in kind, as heavenly love not only surpasses, but differs from, earthly love.

The ideal "lover" sought in the text thus relegates the imagery of romance and theology. The speaker uses the imagery of the ideal romance here, applying it to the divine spouse whom she seeks in her enclosure. The imagery is heavily influenced by Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs, where affective, erotic imagery is applied to the divine spouse of the soul. The feminine soul (so gendered in Latin) seeks the love of the masculine God/Christ in a way that engages intellect, will, memory, and desire. Yet in the ancharistic texts what is, for Bernard, always and only a metaphor becomes "literalized," as the female speaker embodies the feminine soul. In the past, some have read this as condescending, a reflection of the author's assumption that women were only capable of the lower forms of meditation (see, for example, Bradley, and Robertson, p. 72). However, it can also be argued that the
corresponding passage in A Tale of je Love of God (Westra, p. 44) reads for je 
love of me, suggesting that this was also the original reading in Wohunge. See also 
Thomasin, p. 47, note 412-3.
8 The manuscript capitalizes “Guile.” See note 5 above.
9 The vellum is so rubbed in col. b that it is often difficult to see if there is punctuation 
or not. I have marked places where the punctuation is unclear with an asterisk.
10 Swing is a form of swim.
11 See note 5 above.
12 This is not clearly marked as a break in the manuscript, although the series of short, 
exclamatory sentences clearly begins a new section. I have marked a break in the 
text in order to show the change in tone.
13 The text reads Enow. See note 96.
14 The “P” in Prei is a large, bold, two-line initial, decorated with green scrolling. 
Aside from the first initial, this is the only decoration in the entire text. See note 1, 
above.

metaphor is embraced by female readers precisely because it relates not only 
metaphorically to their spiritual lives and desires, but also realistically and literally 
to the lives of women in the Middle Ages (see Innes-Parker, “Ancrene Wisse and Be 
wohunge of our lauwer”). A young woman entering the anchorhold in her youth (such 
as the original three sisters for whom Ancrene Wisse was written) would be well 
aware that the criterion for a lover (or spouse) listed here would be those that her 
parents would have considered if she were to have married. But, as noted in the 
introduction, many anchoresses were widows who entered the anchorhold after their 
husbands’ death. For these women, the list of “ideal” characteristics would resonate 
(whether in comparison or contrast) with their own experience; some may have even 
considered these traits in choosing husbands for their own daughters. Indeed, 
McNamara sees the first part of Wohunge as reflecting the legal contract of marriage 
(see McNamara, pp. 32-57). McNamara’s argument is more complex than I can repre-
sent here. Nevertheless, it fits neatly into both Millett’s “conditions of eligibility” 
and my own argument that the meditation upon the divine spouse draws upon the 
practical experience of the anchoress, gained while she was still in the world.

The literalization of the metaphor is thus much more than a dumbing down of a 
highly complex contemplative scenario—it speaks directly to the anchoritic reader, 
and draws parallels with (and more importantly) contrasts to her former life in the 
world, which she has abandoned to seek a higher goal. As one of my students com-
mented in an essay, the Wooing Group texts and Wohunge in particular give a sense 
of the anchoresses’ meditations on Christ “as not only their lord and savior, but also 
as a superior substitute for an earthly lover. Through close reading of these pieces, 
the life of an anchoress ... becomes less a life of sacrifice and more a life of intimate 
devotion and privilege” (Quetzroh Tersseh, used by permission).

6 Schroud means garments, or clothing, but also has the connotation of a shroud. 
Christ’s human flesh, which he puts on in the incarnation as a garment, is also his 
shroud on the cross. In OSM II. 87-90, the changing of Christ’s clothing during his 
trial from white (the robe given to him in mockery by Herod, Luke 23:11) to red (or 
purple, the colour of royalty, placed upon him in mockery by Pilate’s soldiers, John 
19:2) is a parallel for the changing of his flesh from unsainted white to bloody red, 
as the blood from his scourgings and his wounds on the cross leave little flesh to be 
seen. See further OSM note 30.

7 Rader implies eagerness as well as haste. The MED suggests that in the phrase te 
rader the term could be translated “the more readily, the more easily; the more 
especially,” as well as “the sooner, the more swiftly.”
8 Menke can mean both honour (as in reputation), or “love or honour shown to a wife 
or mistress” (MED). It can also mean “kindness” or “humaneness.” Its meaning is 
thus different from noblesse; menke implies both honour earned and honour shown 
in acts of love or humanity, reminding the reader both of Christ’s role as the ideal 
lover, and that this role is enacted in his humanity, or Incarnation.
9 Debonairé is a French loanword, from which we get the modern “debonaire.” 
Debonairé can mean gentleness (as in mildness) or gentility (as in courtesy). Other 
possible translations are kindness, mercy, graciousness, modesty, humility. Thus, 
debonairé encompasses the meanings of noblesse (l. 20), and hondelec (l. 22); the 
three words are, in a way, synonyms, but with different overtones and connotations. 
The use of several terms with similar (but not identical) meanings is typical of all-
creative poetry and prose, and illustrates not only the vast vocabulary that the author has to draw upon, but also the versatility of that “word hoard” and its nuances. This verbal versatility also allows the author to build up the nuances of meaning and emphasis in this passage.

10 In Ancrune Wise friendship is the first of the four great worldly loves that Christ’s love surpasses (7.5-6, p. 148).

11 Here the text moves from the list of the attributes of the perfect lover to showing how Christ fulfills and surpasses human virtues.

12 The idea that the angels rejoice to look at Christ’s face is a common one, taken from 1 Peter 1:12 and found in the widely circulated Legenda aurea (c. 1270) of Jacobus de Voragine, a Dominican friar. See Beschi, p. 33. See also OSM II. 134-36; UGA II. 21-26.

13 Once again, here there is a subtle allusion to Ancrune Wise and the four great worldly loves. The third love, between a mother and child, compares Christ to a mother who prepares a healing bath for her child. Christ prepares three healing baths for the soul. Baptism, tears (of contrition for sin), and his own blood, which sanctifies and redeems the soul (AW 7.8, p. 149). These last two “baths” are associated with sorrow and suffering, the pain of sin and repentance, and Christ’s suffering on the cross.

14 Wiseful can mean prosperous, fortunate, happy, beneficent, kindly, or producing welfare (MED). Wise can mean face, or the expression on a face, resplendent beauty (as of Christ), or magnificence (MED). The phrase wiseful wise could thus be translated “kindly face” or “beneficent beauty or magnificence” or any combination of the above. The nuance suggests that the soul can be healed by the resplendent beauty of Christ’s face, which is at the same time kind and merciful, just by looking upon it.

15 Savage and Watson point out the parallel to Luke 23:45, where the sun fails at Christ’s death on the cross (pp. 419-20, note 3). See also UGA II. 27-30.

16 This is the first of a number of lines beginning with a verb followed by isle. See II. 57, 67, 104, 120 and 400.

17 This is the first instance of the refrain that marks the major divisions of the text. Brown points out that this refrain functions as “a mantra to be repeated at intervals throughout the text and to signal a change in the meditative practice” echoing the first line, which becomes a “mnemonic starting-point” (p. 73). She stresses the importance of the repetition of this “mantra” throughout the poem, not only in dividing the prayer into smaller divisions that allow the reader to read and remember without being overwhelmed, but also in “consistently invoking Jesus’ presence in the anchorhold; it does not allow the slippage of the speaker into herself, but rather into Christ” (p. 74). Building on earlier advice for memorization using quiet vocal prayer, she argues that “the sotto voce prayer leads to a kind of private conversation between the speaker and Jesus, reinforcing the dialogic nature of the wooer with the wooed” (pp. 74-75). The mantra, then, divides the prayer into manageable sections, creating a kind of outline to the text, and reinforces both the dialogue between Christ and the speaker, and the merging of the speaker with Christ in contemplation.

18 This is the first reference to the idea of the “purchase price” of love, or the soul, which occurs throughout the text. This mercantile imagery is drawn from Ancrune Wise and is found throughout the text. In Part 6, the anchorress is reminded that
heaven is not bought cheaply, nor is eternal joy bought with little wages (AW 6.8.196-201, pp. 136-37; see below, note 36). In AW 6.7.164-80 the anchorress is reminded that if she shares in Christ's suffering, she will also share in his joy, and it is a poor companion who will not share in the loss as well as the profit (see also UGA II. 122-27). But the author assures her that this is a good bargain. Similarly, UGA asserts that it is a poor merchant who buys a worthless thing (the comfort of the world) at a great price (damnation) yet throws away a precious thing, especially one that is not only offered to him for free (Christ's comfort) but carries a reward with it (salvation, II. 70-75). In Ancrene Wisse the anchorress is also compared to a merchant who carries her treasure secretly so that she is not robbed (AW 3.16.450-56, p. 59) and to a prisoner who must pay an enormous ransom and is grateful for someone who throws a bag of coins at him, even if it is known very hard at his heart (AW 3.4, pp. 50-51). Finally, the anchoress is told that "anyone who lets go of his [Christ's] love for any earthly love cheapens him, and values him far too little ..." (AW 7.19.357-59, p. 153), a teaching that is at the heart of Wehunge. This merchantile imagery emphasizes the sheer cost of human redemption, both in the debt that must be paid to the civil for the human soul, and in Christ's suffering, which the anchoress must imitate as she can (see below, II. 308-12, 389-401, and 4:4-23).

19 Wehunge here is used in the sense of "created" or "fashioned." Thompson prefers the reading weldeh, found in A Tallying of the Love of God. Weldeh, meaning possessors or rules over, would certainly fit with the subject of the sentence, Kid leser, which could also be translated as "renowned rule." However, the translation "illustrious Lord" suggests more than simple rule, and wehunge suggests not only Christ's power over the world but the basis of that power is the world's creator. Kid is the past participle of kiden, which means to make known, to reveal, to exercise (power), to perform, or to acknowledge. Kid can thus mean "acknowledged" or "revealed" (suggesting that Christ is revealed as ruler through his creation of the world) as well as "famous," "illustrious," or "excellent, fine, noble" (MED). See also II. 62-63 below, where Christ's generosity is exemplified by the fact that he has created all the world and placed it under the anchoress' feet, making her ruler over it all.

20 David is never referred to as a prophet in the Old Testament, but he is considered a prophet here because so many of the psalms are interpreted as speaking directly of the Messiah.

21 Psalm 22:1: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world, and all that dwell therein."

22 Psalm 8:5: "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour."

23 As noted above, this passage and much of what follows is based on the section in Ancrene Wisse Part 7, where the author lists all the things that God has done to deserve the reader's love. Here, the author introduces the image of the soul as a lady, raised by God to a position of power, yet threatened by the enemy of sin. See AW 7.2-4, pp. 146-48.

24 Afforesede is intensified with the prefix a, implying "utterly lose everything."

25 Generose means "willingness to give or spend freely; liberality, generosity, munificence." I have used "liberality" to retain the alliteration with "love."

26 Druel is associated with courtly love, and can mean a love token, a jewel or treasure given to a lover, but can also mean the beloved or paramour him or herself. In this
case, both meanings are implied—the love taken is Christ’s blood, but also Christ himself. In Ancrane Wisse, the author speaks of Christ as a healing jewel that the anchoress keeps in the nest of her heart, and advises her that even if she can’t keep this jewel in her heart, she should have its image, the crucifix, in the nest of her anchorhold (AW 3.10-11, p. 54). Ancrane Wisse also speaks of the love-gifts, or morning-gifts that Christ offers his spouse, the soul (AW 1.14, p. 12, 2.33, pp. 37-38). Millett notes that “a morning-gift ... is the gift given by a husband to his wife on the morning after the wedding. The four dons corporis, the wedding-gifts of the resurrected body, were impossibilitas (immunity from suffering), ogilitas (lightness and speed), sublitas (the ability to pass through solid matter) and claritas (beauty and radiance) (Ancrane Wisse, note 1.63, p. 177). For further discussion of the dons as part of the legal contract of a marriage, see McNamer, p. 44.

27 The word beht is usually translated “exalted” “lifed up,” or “raised,” from the verb behten. An alternative translation would thus be: “And you who first gave me all yourself, you have raised me, my beloved, if I give you all myself, to rule at your right hand, crowned with you.” But in the Titus version of Seinte Katerine, behtes is found as the past of behten, to call (from the OE behten: f. 133vb, d’Ardenn, p. 6, 1.52; f. 136rb, d’Ardenn, p. 26, l. 328; f. 144rb, d’Ardenn, p. 100, l. 7-8. The reading “exalted” or “lifed up” makes sense in terms of the second half of the sentence, but “called” makes more sense in terms of the whole, especially since the Titus scribe has already used it in this sense in Seinte Katerine.

28 Proverbs 3:19 “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, hath established the heavens by prudence.” Cf. Psalm 103:24 “How great are thy works, O Lord? thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with thy riches.” See also Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15; Proverbs 8, Wisdom 9:9. Christ is traditionally associated with Wisdom (e.g., Colossians 2.2-3). In the Gospel of John, the story of creation is retold, and the divine Word or Logos is co-creator with God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made” (John 1:1-3).

29 I.e., the Bible, specifically Colossians 2.2-3: “That their hearts may be comforted, being instructed in charity and unto all riches of fulness of understanding, unto the knowledge of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ Jesus: in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

30 The passage that follows presents the crucifixion as a battle, drawing directly on AW 7.2-4, pp. 146-48. The theme is picked up again below, in ll. 189f. It is interesting that although Wohunge relies heavily on romance imagery, and its source in Ancrane Wisse presents Christ as a noble knight, here the warrior Christ is more reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon epic beowulfe, the bold prince of The Dream of the Rood who embraces the cross as he clings upon it. The passage is complete with the beasts of battle, the carrion eaters who threaten the detested warrior with death and destruction, and the brave champion who battles the supernatural foe and releases those who have been taken prisoner. Yet, the noble, brave lover, who brings his beloved to a “jewelled bower” and emboldens her heart is drawn from the imagery of contemporary romance. Wohunge thus represents a transitional literature, not only in language and thought, but also in imagery.
31 In the Lives of Saint Margaret and Saint Julia, the saints are visited by gruesome devils (one in the form of a terrifying dragon) who are sent to terrify them into compliance with sin. Neither saint succumbs, of course. Instead, strengthened by their faith in Christ and love for him, they defeat their demonic foes utterly and completely. Saint Margaret bursts forth from the belly of the dragon who seeks to swallow her, cleaving him in two, and then stomps on his brother, who comes to avenge him, stamping on his neck with her foot and holding him until he confesses all of his strategies for tempting virgins. Saint Juliaan binds her demonic visitor with the chains that have bound her, and drags him out for all to see, finally throwing him in a pit of ordure, as she is "a little tired."

32 The representation of sins (and the devil who leads them as his army) as animals is common. See AV 4, on Temptation.

33 This passage refers to the Harrowing of Hell. According to tradition, Christ was crucified and buried on a Friday and resurrected on Sunday. During the Saturday on which his body lay in the tomb, he descended into Hell, defeated the devil and released all the righteous souls who had been born before his birth, and therefore before salvation was made available to humankind through his death. Among the redeemed were Adam and Eve, the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, etc. The passage also reflects the Christ/Adam contrast and the theme of Christ as a second Adam who, through his obedience to God, redeems the sin brought into the world through Adam's disobedience. The essence of the Incarnation is that human sin can only be redeemed by human flesh; Christ must become human, a sinless second Adam, to redeem humankind, the children of the sinful first Adam. Cp Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15: 22, 45. Symbolically, Christ "puts on" human flesh as his garment, representing the new humanity (see note 44 below).

34 This line recalls the imagery of enclosure that is so central to Ancvsene Wite. As noted in the introduction, the anchorhold that encloses the anchoress's body is paralleled with the body that encloses her heart in a matrix of concentric enclosures reflected in the structure of the book itself, as the Outer Rule (Parts I and 8) encloses the more important Inner Rule (Parts 2-7). The anchorhold is imagined as prison, desert, battlefield, castle, tower and grave, as the anchoress battles sin and temptation and learns to control her inner senses and to turn them away from the world and inward to Christ. Through this process, the tower under siege becomes the tower of hope (symbolized by Mary Magdalene, AV 6.12, pp. 140-41). The anchorhold is transformed into the nest where the jewel of Christ is treasured, the womb in which he is nurtured, and the bower in which he comes to his beloved. It is important that the transformation of the anchorhold relies on the transformation of the anchoress enclosed within it, and the heart enclosed within her body. But it is also important that this transformation, which, for the souls redeemed from hell, takes place after death, is achieved in the anchorhold, through the anchoritic life, in the here and now. Thus, although the anchoress looks forward to the time when her soul is released from the physical prison of her body to join with her beloved in eternal joy (I I. 400-03), she is present with him now, through contemplation and through recollection, in the bower of her anchorhold, enclosed in a chamber wherein she may experience the kisses and embraces of her divine spouse (II. 385-90).

35 Exodus 15:3: "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name."
The idea of winning love biblically cannot be equated with the imagery of Ancere Nine. In Ancere Nine Part 7, Christ offers to purchase the love of the ancestress, which she will not sell for a light price. Here the author plays on the concept of “light leaps” which he has introduced in Part 2, where he describes the heart as a wild beast that, if not carefully guarded, can “leap out” through the window of the eyes. He builds upon this image with the example of Eve, who leapt lightly after the apple and so into sin (AW 2.1 and 2.5, pp. 20-21; see also Kaske, pp. 22-24). The metaphor here refers to the reader both back to the concept of the heart’s “light leaps” into sin, contrasted with redemption, which cannot be bought with “light leaps,” and forward, to the beloved who “leaps” over the mountains, trusting them down and impressing his steps in them through suffering, but leaping over the weak ancestress who cannot bear the pain and shame of sharing Christ’s suffering and are thus marked only by its likeness or shadow (AW 6.14.450-66, p. 143; see also James-Parker, “Light Leaps.” Cervone gives a detailed discussion of the “leaps” of Christ as also being an important metaphor for the Incarnation, as Christ leaps from heaven to earth, via the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Thompson points out that menke can mean “honour” as in reputation, but can also mean “virginity.” The suggestion is that a woman abandons or gives away her spiritual and physical “honour” for a man of high birth, a worldly honour. The verb leter suggests that honour is not merely lost, but cruelly given away (i.e., it is the woman’s fault)—a common assumption in medieval religious literature. Such a woman is contrasted with the ancestress, who will not set a cheap price on her love, and her lover is contrasted with Christ, who has paid the price of his own blood. See also note 8 above—the parallel with the opening lines listing Christ’s merits as one of the qualities of an ideal lover also suggests that the woman who abandons her honour will give up any claim to be loved or honoured by her spouse.

The Middle English, kinges sake not his world wealthes, is ambiguous in its use of the genitive. It could be translated either “son of the king that rules the world,” or “king’s son that rules the world.” However, 1. 113 suggests the former translation.

Literally, manhood. The stress on Christ’s humanity is one of the developments of twelfth-century spirituality that enabled the kind of effective devotion described in Wolfrange.

In the Old Testament, David is presented as the ideal king of Israel. As the poet-king, David is accepted in medieval thought as the author of the Psalms. In the New Testament, he is both the ancestor of Jesus and the one who prefigures him.

Abraham was the first patriarch of Israel, to whom God promised the land of Canaan in return for Abraham’s faith (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham prefigures ideal faith when he shows his willingness to sacrifice of his only son, Isaac. At the moment of sacrifice, God intervenes and saves Isaac’s life, providing a ram instead (Genesis 22:1-14). The sacrifice of Isaac prefigures God’s sacrifice of Christ. His only son, on the cross. Like Isaac, Christ is the beloved son who is sacrificed by his father; like Isaac, Christ carries the wood for his own sacrifice (the cross) up the mountain. Unlike Isaac, however, Christ himself is the sacrificial lamb whose blood is shed to save humankind. In the New Testament, Paul calls those who have faith in Christ Abraham’s descendants (Galatians 3:6-14).

In medieval aristocratic households male children would be fostered to another household at an early age in order to learn the attributes of an aristocrat along with
other boys of a similar age. This practice of fostering noble children is here paralleled with the incarnation, as Christ, who dwell in the court of heaven, is fostered to his human parents, Mary and Joseph. In both his noble birth and his human fostering, Christ is blameless and pure.

43 The primary meaning of karischo (or earlish) is “human,” but it also carries the overtones of “ignoble” or “charlish” (as in Strange and Watson’s translation). Human desire is here seen as ignoble in comparison with spiritual or heavenly desire.

44 The idea of Christ’s human flesh as a garment is common, based on biblical imagery (see Jude 1:23, Ephesians 4:21-25). The image of flesh as a garment is also found in Ancerne Wisse, where the author refers to the anchorens’s human flesh as her “old garment” that she has inherited from Adam, contrast to the “new garment” she will receive from Christ at the resurrection (67.206-10, p. 137; see also Romans 6:6). Paul speaks of taking off the old clothing of Adam’s flesh and putting on the new garment of Christ (1 Corinthians 15: Romans 6:5; Romans 13:14). See also OSM E. 67-90 and note 36, and Grayson.

45 Or without the mediation of, or necessity for, a man (i.e., through the virgin birth).

46 The opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, asserting that God is the father of all humankind.

47 Christ is God’s son through his divine nature. Humankind, however, is descended through nature from Adam, and people can only become children of God through grace. Paul says in Romans 8:14-18, “For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit himself beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” Paul describes the imagery of adoption: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: That he might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying· Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:5-6; cp. 1 John 3:1-2).

48 Unweariest can also mean most immoral, depraved, wicked, unfortunate, miserable, poor, foul, disgusting, or unworthy.

49 This section is clearly marked with a large initial as a new section of the text; however, it is still part of the “attribute” of kinship, and does not follow the refrain. I would suggest that this section is particularly marked because the speaker refers to abandoning the world, not only her kin, and therefore particularly appropriate to an anchoress.

50 Note that this line, leased have i, contrasts with the pattern of itile in the previous lines (see i. 45 and note 16 above). Rather than speaking of what she will do (choose Christ for a lover), the anchoritic speaker speculates here of what she has done—she has
...left the world, and forsaken even her fleshly kin, in order to seek Christ in the seclusion of the anchorhold.

51 In lines 173-82 the speaker summarizes all the attributes that make Christ a perfect lover, those things with which he has purchased her love. In ll. 183f. she turns to Christ's Passion, which, over all else, makes him worthy of her love and claims it for his own. There are thus three levels of soteriology at work here—Christ saves the human soul by purchasing her, by being worthy of her love, and by claiming her as his wife. This begins the first part of the Passion meditation, where Christ's life and death are depicted as a battle against the anchoress's foes.

52 *Dervis* is a multivalent term that can mean "bold, daring, courageous, or valiant" as well as "fierce, dreadful, cruel, or painful" and "difficult." The focus of the Passion meditation is on the cruelty and suffering Christ endures; but the overtones of courage remind the reader of the Christ-Knight, the brave champion who defeated the devil and bound the hounds of hell with one hand tied behind his back (literally, "with your precious hand nailed to the cross"; see l. 94, above.).

53 With the idea that Christ's suffering not only makes him worthy of love, but challenges the heart of the narrator and claims her love, the poem moves from the consideration of the attributes of the ideal lover to the Christ-Knight's battle for the soul in the Passion. This section of the poem, which considers Christ's life as the representation of his battle, serves as a transition into the meditation on the Passion itself.* Weakening draws upon *Ancore Wisse* 's allegory of the Christ-Knight, the earliest known use of the allegory, as it presents Christ as the defender of the soul. It is Christ's suffering in the Passion, above all, that challenges the anchoress to make a response, and gives him the right to lay claim to her heart.

54 The repetition of the phrasing of the opening lines marks this section as a new part of the text, as the speaker turns from the consideration of Christ as the ideal spouse to the Christ-Knight who battles for her soul.

55 The world, the flesh, and the devil are the three traditional enemies of the soul. They will be combated by Christ with the weapons of poverty, shame and torment: his poverty combats the wealth of the world (which the speaker fears will make her a slave); his undeserved shame combats the shame of fleshly sin and desire (which the reader fears will make her a "whore"); and his torment on the cross saves the soul from the torment of hell to which the devil draws her through worldly and fleshly temptation.

56 The use of the punctus elevatus here and the capital "M" mark the flesh as the most dangerous of the anchoress's three enemies.

57 Note that in the description of the attack on the soul by its three enemies, the lines become longer, weightier, as the soul is "boved down" through sin, and through the greater weight of the attack. Christ’s aid, on the other hand, is cast in lighter, shorter lines, contrasted again by the longer lines describing the soul's plight (especially l. 209 and 215), which are interspersed with the shorter lines describing Christ's aid.

58 *Cp. OSM 21-24.* In *Ancore Wisse* the anchoress is warned that if she bows down to the devil, he will leap up and ride her in s/n (AW 4.80, pp. 101-03). In contrast, on the cross Christ bows down his head towards the anchoress and begs for her love (AW 7.1, 250-53, p. 151).

59 Or "the pain of death." *See* Thompson, p. 46, n. 307. The translation "death's house," however, fits best with the anchoritic context of the text. The anchoress who is saved
from “death’s house” (or hell) is enclosed in an anchoryhold that is imaged as both grave and bower. The anchory hold enclosure ceremony included saying the mass for the dead over the anchory hold and sealing the door of the anchory hold, as if it were literally her coffin, and she dead to the world. See AW 2.41.876-85, pp. 42-43; 2.46.10:44-43, pp. 46-47; 6.13, pp. 130-30.

60 Savage and Watson (p. 420, note 9) point out that this passage is based on part of Amesle’s third meditation (Prayers and Meditations, p. 236). Having beheld the soul’s plight, Christ now bids the reader to behold the fight he undertakes to rescue the soul from its enemies. The battle, and the means by which the soul’s enemies are defeated, is described in the following sections: against the three foes of the world, the flesh and the devil, Christ wields the weapons of poverty, shame and, finally, consent and death.

61 As Savage and Watson point out, this passage, which is almost exactly in the centre of the text, introduces the meditation on Christ’s life (and death), joining what they refer to as the two “halves” of Wolunge (p. 420, note 9). I think the structure is more complex—this passage does indeed introduce the meditation on Christ’s suffering, but this theme has already been introduced in lines 183f. as the thing that makes Christ most worthy of love. Lines 189f. introduce the battle between the soul and her three “enemies,” a battle the soul is losing badly until Christ comes to her aid. Now, the narrative switches to the description of Christ’s battle throughout his life and, particularly, in his death, through a meditation on his three “weapons.”

62 This meditation on poverty echoes a similar meditation included in Arcene Wise Part 4 as a remedy against sloth, covetousness and gluttony (AW 4.74-76, pp. 98-99).

63 Note again the alternation of long and short lines, contrasting the suffering of Christ’s poverty and its benefits for the soul.

64 Literally, house room, implying shelter, protection or warmth as well as place or space.

65 Note how the short line between two longer ones provides emphasis here. The “wall-less house in the midst of the street” contrasts the four narrow walls of the anchory hold attached to the church, in which she anchoress dwells, for at least she has four walls. This narrow space is compared to Mary’s womb in which Christ sheltered, his narrow cradle, and his tomb in AW 6.13.417-30. See II. 389-401 below.

66 Note the alteration of ll. 239-42: /Pu pat fisel othah, / fisch fisel, / folc on eorlce foldes.

67 Le., clerics, those who had a theological education and who therefore had access to the Latin Bible.

68 Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58: “And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

69 The tradition that Christ hung naked on the cross reflects the story in the gospels of the seamless tunic that was stripped from his body and for which the soldiers threw dice at the foot of the cross as he suffered and died (John 19:23-25). See also II. 322, 342. Later Passion meditations restore Christ’s “dignity” by giving him a breech clout, e.g., in the mid-fifteenth century translation of Bonaventure’s Lignum Vitae, Part 26, f. 95v (see Innes-Parker, “De passionis of our lord [Part V-VIII”). In the Pseudo-Bonaventura’s Passion meditation, The Privy of the Passion, Mary covers him with her veil (Hodgson [ed.], p. 195).

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70 We can mean worldly wealth and prosperity, or good fortune, joy or comfort. But it can also mean heavenly joy or bliss, the reward of eternal life.

71 See AW 6.7, pp. 116-17 and note 13 above.

72 The refrain occurs again here to mark another major division of the text. Just as it has marked the divisions between the eight attributes that make Christ the ideal spouse, it also marks the divisions between the three "weapons" with which he fights the anchoress's three foes, leading into the Passion meditation proper with the third weapon of the Passion itself.

73 See AW 7.8-10 on shame.

74 Untrue can mean disloyal, inconstant, or unfaithful to a king, lover or spouse. In this context, the meaning "traitor" is implied (as in l. 274), in contrast with the murderer Barabbas who is a true traitor to both God and man (l. 277). Historically, Jesus was tried for political treason (for being called a "king" and thus being disloyal to Caesar). But Christ's "truth" or faithfulness also contrasts both with the infidelity of those who accuse him, and with the soul, beloved of him, who is unfaithful to her divine spouse. The anchoritic reader strives to be "true" to Christ, both as her king, and as her beloved, in the face of her sinfulness, which makes her "untrue."

75 Cp. Matthew 27:16-26, Luke 23:18-21, Mark 15:7-15, John 18:40. Savage and Wetten suggest that the narrative shift here, as the author adds the aside that Barabbas was a thief and a murderer, is for didactic purposes, and that the author "expected the work to reach readers whose knowledge even of the passion narrative was only sketchy, and who might need such reminders." However, since this is the only instance of such a shift to the expository voice, it is just as likely that the line reflects the Biblical text, which also inserts this bit of information. The line also emphasizes the contrast between Christ's innocence and Barabbas' guilt: not only did Christ suffer shame and death without guilt, Barabbas, a murderer, was set free. Barabbas, like the enemies of the soul, represents the threats Christ battles against in his suffering and death.

76 The image of Christ's beautiful face covered with spittle and the shame and indignity of this mockery is found in Eckhart of Schöntal's (d. 1184) Stimulus Amoris and the Legenda Aurea (see Bestul p. 35).

77 Psalm 68:8: "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face."

78 Note the contrast between l. 290, "as if he said" and l. 293, "as if one were to say," Christ's words are addressed to the anchoress, conveying a personal message of love and reassurance. The impersonal "as if to say" explains the image of Christ hanging between two thieves, and reflects the scornful thoughts of his tormentors.

79 The heavienss of this line parallels the heaviness of the heart that breaks with the burden of knowing that Christ suffered so much shame to redeem humankind.

80 The text returns here to the idea of the purchase price of the soul (see note 18, above). However, the price has gone up, including not only the toil of Christ's life on earth, but his torment and suffering on the cross.

81 See AW 7.18.277-84, p. 252.

82 Luke 22:43-44: "And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." See also OSM II 81, 107; AW
245.973-78, p. 45; 4.95.1647-49, p. 111; 5.7.186-88, p. 136. For references to Christ's bloody sweat in Peter Comestor's Historia scholastica, see Bestul, p. 31.

83 The high priest, Caiaphas, the former high priest, Annas, and the rulers of the Jewish council. For the representation of the Jews in Latin Passion narratives, see Bestul, chapter 3.

84 Cp, OSM II. 111-15. The author is careful to distinguish what can be verified in Scripture and what is only tradition, even if it is the tradition believed by saints. The image of hands so tight that blood runs from the finger-nails is also found in Saint Margaret and Saint Juliana, as a form of mimia Christi. The texts of the Katherine Group are the earliest English texts in which this non-biblical detail is found. However, the image of blood bursting from Christ's nails is also picked up by the poet John of Hexam (d. 1275) in his Passion, which "ocese[s] the events of the Passion into artful and highly wrought poetic language" (Bestul, p. 63). Bestul notes that by the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth century this image has become a commonplace. He suggests that in these later Passion narratives, "knowledge of contemporary methods of torture and experience of the spectacle of tortured victims may have conditioned the representation of the sufferings of Christ." Citing Peters (1985), he notes that tight tying of hands was one of the common forms of torture, used on women and children for lesser offences (see Bestul, p. 155. See also Bestul, "Chaucer's Parson's Tale.")

85 At first glance, this seems to be a very long line without a break, but the alternation between short and long lines is deliberate, with the lines describing Christ's suffering becoming longer and heavier, in contrast to the shorter lines describing the actions of his tormentors that cause this suffering.

86 The text refers here to the scourging ordered by Pilate. By adding detail to Christ's arrest and tormenting by his Jewish detractors, and then moving immediately to the scourging before Pilate, the author reminds the reader that the responsibility for Christ's death lay with both the religious authorities (the Jews) and the secular authorities (the Romans). Later texts will elaborate on the details of Christ's suffering throughout his Passion, and particularly the role of the Jews (see particularly Bestul, Chapters 3 and 5).

87 This passage is translated by Savage and Watson as "your blessed body flowed with one bloody stream" (p. 254). Another possibility would be "streamed with a torrent of blood." These translations emphasize the abundance of blood that the text denotes with the word streamed, but lack the sheer horror of Givre blod. Cp, UGA II. 104-68; OSM II. 105-15; IUL II. 42-44.

88 Lines 313-28 consist mainly of long lines and phrases with few breaks. These long lines are dominated by heavy consonants, matching the heaviness of the words to the heaviness of Christ's torment and the heaviness of the narrator's heart. At line 329, however, the narrator switches to shorter, more breathless lines, expressing emotions of disbelief and panic. It is almost as if the beating and tormenting of Christ passed too slowly to endure, while the last events of his death proceed too quickly for the narrator to grasp. This alteration is only emphasized by the long, heavy line 335, which again describes Christ's beating. Contrast the light, tripping phrases of joy in the opening lines, describing the attributes of the perfect lover. Cp, UGA II. 91-92 and note 22; l. 185 and note 39; OSM I. 75 and note 27.
Here the speaker shifts from past to present as memory/commemoration of the Passion becomes experience through the increasing depth of both the reader’s meditation and her affective response. She also shifts to the first person, as she becomes more “present” at the Passion—she no longer asks “what heart will break,” but exclamations “my heart will surely shatter” in the first of a series of exclamations as she sees her beloved suffering for her love. The present tense is emphasized by the repetition of “now” throughout the following lines, as the anchoress sees the Passion for herself.

Note the shift from “he” to “you” in the middle of this sentence. The direct address to Christ emphasizes the immediacy of the anchoress’s experience of the Passion, as does the shift to the present tense.

Here, as elsewhere, a single letter separates the Middle English frend from fend. Compare II. 389-909, both and bath.

Or tree of condemnation, the tree of the criminal or felon (Savage and Watson “gallows,” p. 255). The “cursed” tree of the cross contrasts with the “cursed” tree of knowledge, the fruit of which Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden. While the tree of Adam brought death into the world, the tree of Christ, the cross, will bring life into the world. The cross is thus transformed from the cursed tree upon which Christ dies into the blessed tree upon which humanity is saved, paralleling the Tree of Life in Eden and foreshadowing the Tree of Life in Apocalypse 22.

Psalm 21:16-20: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws: and thou hast brought me down into the dust of death. For many dogs have compassed me: the counsel of the malignant hath besieged me. They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me. They parted my garments amongst them: and upon my vesture they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help to a distance from me: look towards my defence.” The image of Christ being “stretched out” on the cross is a common one in the Latin tradition, originating in the idea that Christ’s body was stretched so tightly that every bone in his body could be counted. Like many images that would become commonplace, the stretching of Christ’s body is found in Bonaventure: the Lignum Vitae and the Vitae mysticae both contain references to it marked, as is the entire Passion narrative, by extreme pathos (Bestul, pp. 44, 47). In later meditations of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, more gruesome details are added, including the idea that the nail holes on the cross were set too wide, and so Christ’s limbs had to be stretched using ropes in order to reach the holes into which the nails would be driven; see, for example, the Pseudo-Bonaventurian Meditationes vitae Christi (Bestul, p. 59), The York Crucifixion Play, and the Passion Meditation in Harley 1740, f. 15r, col. 1 (Marx 1994), and Appendix D, below, pp. 279-80. Again citing Peters, Bestul notes that the use of the nails or other devices to stretch the limbs was “the most commonly used form of torture in the Middle Ages,” and therefore may have conditioned both the representation of Christ’s sufferings and the readers’ reactions to the text (p. 55). Even in the Wooning Group texts some of the descriptions are pretty grisly; for example, OSM emphasizes the streaming flow of blood, and in 1. 101 describes the nails as dull, increasing the pain of having them driven through Christ’s tender flesh. Yet the arms that are so painfully stretched out on the cross are also stretched out to embrace the anchoress. See II. 356 and note 97 below.
94 Note the contrast between "so lovely" and "so pitifully." As Savage and Watson point out (p. 421, note 13), this depiction of the crucifixion is relatively restrained. Many later Passion meditations include long descriptions of the cross jolting into the hole dug for it, tearing Christ's joints, and even of the cross falling and having to be raised again. See, for example, *A Telling of the Love of God* (Westra, p. 50), and the vision of the Passion in Harley 1740 (with the meditation edited by Marx and the narrative that precedes it, Appendix D), as well as the better known meditations based on Pseudo-Bonaventure such as *The Privity of the Passion* and Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. See Baker, *The Privity of the Passion*, and Sargent, *Nicholas Love*.

95 The bitterness of Christ's Passion is part of the bitterness suffered by the anchoress in her cell, both externally (AW 7.7.11, pp. 136-40) and, more importantly, internally (AW 7.12.13, pp. 140-42). It is compared to the bitterness represented by the three Marys who come to anoint Christ's body in his tomb (AW 6.12, pp. 140-41; cp. AW 4.51, pp. 90-91). In *Ancusarius, Part 7*, vinegar is said to be one of the three things that can quench the "Greek fire" of love for Christ. The sour drink of vinegar given to Christ on the cross is compared to the heart that is sour with envy or hatred. "Understand this saying: when the malicious Jews offered our Lord this sour present on the cross, he said these heart-breaking words, *It is finished*. 'My sufferings', he said, 'were never complete till now'—not because of the vinegar, but because of their envious malice, which was signified by the vinegar that they made him drink" (AW 7.18.273-78, p. 152).

96 The manuscript reads *Ewa*. Thompson notes this as *sua* (two cruel drinks). However, the noun *drink* and pronoun *his* are singular. Savage and Watson translate "a drink of double misery," but this seems too complex—the reading *sua* is simpler and more likely. Indeed, the word may simply be a case of eyeslip for the *sua ... sua* in the end of the clause, in which case it ought to be omitted (a possibility also suggested by the capitalization of *Bala*). However, the emphasis of the repetition of *sua ... sua ... sua* is effective and the word is not crossed out in the manuscript, so I have chosen to keep it.

97 The arms "stretched out" so that Christ's bones may be numbered are now "outstretched" to embrace the speaker. Cp. UGA II 93-98, 240-42; LUL II 117-18; AW 7.17.250-55, p. 151.

98 Brown notes the switch to the third person here, "at the moment of his death in her 'memory' of the passion. It is as if the moment itself is too present, and thus painful, for the speaker to place herself in the intimate dialogue with Christ that she has been having. She needs to distance him from herself and place this scene as if she is the observer, no longer a participant... This sharp change is also part of the mnemonic technique of the poem. It closes the second section of the piece, Jesus' Passion, and the switch is surprising and changes the tone. The moment of Christ's Passion is the pivotal moment in the *Wohunye*, and the writer's switch of person indicates this both explicitly and implicitly to the reader" (Brown, pp. 77-78).

99 Longinus was the Roman soldier who pierced the side of the dead Christ. According to legend, Longinus was blind, and the blood from Christ's side flowed down his lance to his eyes, healing him. He, therefore, often depicted in crucifixion scenes pointing to his eyes. The blood and water that flow from the wound in Christ's side symbolize the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.
100 The scribe abbreviates here, writing wytlyche. Thompson transcribes the word (correctly) as witerlyche. Savage and Watson, however, translate “inwardly” i.e., witerlyche (p. 255). “Inwardly” or “within it” would reflect the contrast of inner and outer in Ancrere Wisse and suggests a further contrast between the “openess” of Christ’s heart (like the “open letters” which the Royal Wvoor sends in AW 7) and the “inward” or private reading of these letters. However, witerlyche, which could be translated as plainly, clearly, truly, completely, fully or utterly, enforces the parallel between the openness of Christ’s heart and the clarity of the reader’s understanding—the love letters that are read in Christ’s heart are truly open, plain and complete, as the anchoress sees “openly” how much he loved her (I. 373). The image of the “open letters” written in Christ’s blood is taken from Ancrere Wisse Part 7, as is much of the imagery in Woloage (see AW 7.2, p. 146; AW 7.4, pp. 47-48). The image of Christ’s body as a book, or love letter, became popular in the fourteenth century (for example, in Rolle’s Passion Meditations, the Middle English Stimulus Anoris and A Book to a Mother). The late-medieval Charters of Christ continue the idea of Christ’s body as parchment written in blood. As Savage and Watson point out, this passage is also an early example of the devotion to the wound in Christ’s side, which became a rich and complex image in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (p. 421, note 15). The allegory of Christ as a king wooing the soul as a bride can be traced back to the earliest Christian thinkers, particularly in the context of the interpretation of the Song of Songs. The allegory was established in devotional writings by Bernard of Clairvaux (Shepherd, p. 55).

101 Compare Ancrere Wisse, where the anchoress is urged “see to his wounds. He must have loved us very much to let such holes be pierced in him to hide us in. Creep into them with your thoughts—are they not all open?—and drench your heart with his precious blood” (AW 4.951628-32, p. 111). The metaphor of Christ’s wounds as a dovecote is found in Bernard, Aelred, and many late-medieval Passion meditations (see Best, pp. 39-40, 47-48, 58-59 and passim).

102 The appeal to the Virgin Mary as a model for both grief and joy is a common motif, found throughout the Wooing Group. This passage emphasizes the sorrow of both Mary and the anchoress for Christ’s suffering, contrasted with the joy of his resurrection, and the joy of the anchoress’s own resurrection on judgement day.

103 Here, Mary acts solely as a model of suffering love, not as an intercessor. This is in direct contrast with, for example, UGA and OSM, where Mary’s place at the foot of the cross is part of the source of her power to intercede with Christ, as in her participation in his birth (see UGA II. 237-39, OSM II. 73-74).

104 In line 220, Christ asks the anchoress to behold how he fought for her. Through the meditation on the Passion, she has now come to a true “beholding” in her spiritual eye. This is an indication of how far the anchoress has come through her meditation. Throughout the following lines, the text echoes earlier ideas, showing the movement of the anchoress’s inner understanding. Compare ll. 384 and 210, II. 385 and 99.

105 Or sealed. As noted in the introduction, the anchorhold was sealed after the enclosure ceremony, during which the office for the dead was said over the anchoress. The imagery of the chaste body as a sealed container was also common in anchoritic and virginity literature.

106 While the “delight” that the anchoress takes in Christ’s kisses and embraces is clearly gasti or spiritual, the emphasis on the body throughout the meditation on
Christ's Passion and the anchoress's response (as well as throughout Ancrene Wisse) should alert the reader to the fact that this metaphor is often "literalized." The anchoretic reader, at least, responds to Christ's bodily suffering with her own bodily enclosure, and the lay reader might read this material as a vindication of bodily suffering. In this light, it is important to remember that the word for body in liche or ilk and that the term thungo also means bodily pleasure or lust. These overtones may, indeed, undercut the term gastli. Similarly, as Millett and Wogan-Browne, citing Shepherd, note, in Part 7, the Ancrene Wisse author "takes over from his twelfth-century Latin sources the idea that 'carnal love' of Christ in his humanity is a legitimate first step towards the love of Christ in his divinity" (Millett and Wogan-Browne, xxxi, pp. Shepherd 126.13-29). And, indeed, there are a number of examples amongst contemporary continental women mystics where spiritual delight has distinctively bodily manifestations. Many of these mystics influenced the later devotion of Margery Kempe, a fifteenth-century hag woman whose devotion was almost entirely manifest in bodily forms: weeping, crying (or roaring), and visions in which she would see, for example, the infant Christ in every baby on the street. See Winton, Introduction.

Psalm 116:12: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things he hath rendered unto me?" Here, with the words of the Psalms, the speaker moves from the consideration of Christ's willingness to love her own response to his love, shown in his Passion. The response is framed in the form of imitatio Christi, as the reader reenacts Christ's crucifixion in her own suffering. Cpr. Psalm 116:13: "I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord." The speaker here would be interpreted as offering to drink from the same cup that Christ did in his death, but also from the eucharistic chalice in the mass. As Thompson points out, these words are also spoken in the mass. In this context, it is important to note the reference to the "mass kiss" in the discussion of the anchoress's devotions in Ancrene Wisse Part 1, where the anchoress is told, "After the mass kiss, when the priest consecrates [the host]—then forget all the world, be entirely out of the body, in burning love embrace your beloved, who has descended from heaven into your breast's bower, and hold him tightly until he has given you all that you ever ask" (AW I.17, p. 13; see also Gunn, "After the Mass, Cross"). Again, the emphasis on the spiritual love between Christ and the soul is put into very bodily terms.

Or "If you need you to be easy to pay," or "it is necessary for me that you are easy to pay," or, as Savage and Watson translate, "you must be easy to pay" (p. 236). As Ramsey points out, the idea of repayment for the gift of Christ's life and death is an important concern of all the WC texts ("Enclosed Desires," p. 59). See also LUL II. 159-63.

Compare Eckbert of Schöneweit's Stimulus Amoris: "Confige illius manus meas, et pedes meos, et totam formati passionis tuae servio tuo inventa" (Fix my hands and feet to it [the cross], and cloth your servant with the whole form of your passion) (cited by Bestul, p. 41).

This phrase has caused difficulty for translators. Speratus vitie means locked inside, imprisoned, confined or restrained. Querfaste is more difficult, and is not found in the MED. Quer can refer to the choir of the church as a place of burial, and cuior can refer to the care of souls or to duty, responsibility. Fast means firmly fixed or secured, or steady. Savage and Watson translate this passage "transfixed within four walls" (p. 256). Other possibilities include "locked securely" or "trans-
verely,” or “spear by soundly and fast.”], have chosen to use “enclosed” because of the overtures of the anchoritic life throughout the texts, which are riddled with the image of the anchoress enclosed securely in the tomb and bower of the anchorhold.

111 See note 36 above.

112 Or frequently, the extreme *sustitio Christi* imaged by the anchoress hanging on the cross beside Christ: in her enclosure can lead to a mystical “ravishing” in contemplation, but this mystical union cannot be sustained on earth—it can only be momentary, a prefiguration of the union she will attain in heaven. The phrase *ravish me* often has many overtones, once again highlighting the interrelation between the spiritual and the physical. *Ravish* can mean snatch (away from danger), rescue, save or release, which reminds the reader of the glorious battle of lines 189-212, from which Christ has rescued her. But it also means ravish (a soul into ecstasy), overpower (someone’s heart) with love, or ravish as in obtain (love) by force. Again, the author draws from *Anczenia Wisse,* in which Christ threatens the reader that if she will not give her love, he will take it by force in what sounds suspiciously like a spiritual rape (AW 7.11, p. 149; 7.15, p. 159).

113 Compare L. 396. The anchoress offers both body and heart to Christ, even though they are inadequate to pay the debt incurred by Christ’s sacrifice, his body and heart.

114 The seven virtues—humility, kindness (or compassion), love, generosity, zeal (to God), temperance and self-control—are the defence against the seven deadly sins—pride, anger, envy, greed, sloth, gluttony and lechery. It is interesting that while other anchoritic texts focus on the sins (for example, *Anczenia Wisse,* especially Part 4, but also OSM), here it is the lack of virtue that causes the speaker’s spiritual poverty.

115 In the following lines, the prayer brings the anchoress full circle, back to the attributes that make Christ worthy of love, and the purchase price of the soul.

116 See *Anczenia Wisse,* 7.14, p. 150.

117 This seemingly odd return to the language of the marketplace jars the modern reader after the heartfelt lines upon which it follows, but *Anczenia Wisse* takes a similar tone. In fact, the narrator here is not only returning to the value of Christ’s love, but also reminding the reader that the reward for her suffering with Christ in love will be to reign with him in heaven (as does the passage appealing to the Virgin Mary, above, II. 375-81). See also AW 7.12-13, pp. 149-50.

118 The expanded refrain here closes the text and the meditation. As Jennifer Brown points out, “the mantra and refrain return here, after an absence during the depiction of Christ’s Passion. It is essential that the meditation return to the beginning because the wooing, and the dialogue surrounding it, will never end. This, too, reinforces the idea of enclosure: the enclosure of the anchorhold and the envelopment of Christ’s love surround the anchoress just as the words of the text do” (p. 80).

119 Note the repetition of the word “me” at the end of each of the following lines. All that Christ has done, he has done for the anchoress, the speaker who prays and meditates guided by the text. But the repetition of “me” also suggests the internalization of the prayer and Christ’s deeds within the heart of the anchoress.

120 See note 27 above on the meaning of *helte,* which is here from *hotele.*

121 Here, the scribe who is copying the text has inserted a request that the reader/recipient pray for him. This is not an unusual thing to find in devotional manuscripts. Yet, as Brown notes, here “the writer steps outside of the meditation...”
and reminds the reader of the purpose of the text and how it should be used.” She thus argues that the colophon is written by the author, and is an integral part of the text itself, reinforcing that the prayer is intended to be spoken aloud, and “acknowledging the powerful force of spoken words and how they both address and conjure Christ in the anchorhold” (pp. 80-81).

122 Quemem can mean please, gratify, serve or coax, but can also mean cajole or flatter. The overtones thus suggest that the words serve the heart (and therefore the reader) both by pleasing the heart, or “putting her in the mood” for prayer, but also by coaxing, enticing or “sweet-talking” the heart into an appropriate response. There is a sense that the words of the meditation can seduce the reader’s heart through the mind, even if the will is resistant.

123 The anchoress is here instructed about the way in which she should read the text and meditate upon it. She is to read it when she is at ease or at leisure, with time to read carefully and deeply (see Watson, “‘On idle’”). She is to speak to Jesus, say the words of the text, and think (imagine) that he hangs beside her in her anchorhold. The prayer enables her to put herself at the foot of the cross, and meditate on the Passion as if she were there. But the meditation offered in Wohinga does even more; it enables the anchoress to see Christ on the cross beside her, as he descends into her anchorhold and into her heart. As Cate Cunn has argued, Ancrma Wisse models a mysticism of descent, rather than the traditional Bernardine mysticism of ascent. Christ descends into the anchorhold of the heart, just as he descended into the anchorhold of Mary’s womb (AW 4.79, pp. 101-02). Just as in the mass, the priest’s words make Christ present in the anchorhold (AW 1.17, p. 13), so too the words of the anchoress’s prayer and meditation bring Christ into the anchorhold of her heart. The spoken words (for silent reading was not the practice in the thirteenth century) open the inner eye of the imagination, opening the heart to love and compassion. As well, the limited reading material to which the anchoress had access meant that these prayers would be read over and over, resulting not only in a reading style characterized by ruminatio but also in the memorization of the prayers (see Brown). As the anchoress meditated, memorized, and ruminated over the words, she would absorb the prayer into her body and mind, taking Christ into her heart. But although the reader can speak, pray and think, only Christ can open hearts, through grace.
On God's assistance of your need
A Good Prayer to Our Lady
A Good Prayer to Our Lady

1. Christ's merciful mother, holy Mary,
2. My life's light, my beloved Lady,
3. To you I bow and bend my knee,
4. And all my heart's blood I offer thee.
5. You are my heart's joy, and my soul's light,
7. I ought to honour you with all my might,
8. And sing you love-songs by day and by night.
9. For you have helped me in awe-inspiring ways,
10. And brought me out of hell to paradise.
11. I thank you for this, my beloved lady,
12. And thank you I will for as long as I live.
13. All Christian men ought to worship you,
14. And sing your praise with exceeding great joy.
15. For you have released them from the devil's hand,
16. And send them with joy to the angels' land.
17. Truly, my sweet lady, we should give you love.
18. Truly we should humble our hearts for your love.
19. You are bright and blessed over all women,
20. And you are good, and well beloved over all men.
21. All maidens are honoured for you alone.
22. For you are their blossom before God's throne.
23. No woman born can compare with you,
24. Nor in heaven's kingdom is there equal to you.
25. High is your throne, above cherubim,
26. Before your dear son, encircled by seraphim.
27. Before you the angels merrily rejoice,
28. Play and make melody and sing with loud voice.
29. They are exceeding glad to be before you,
30. For they are never weary of seeing your beauty.
31. Your splendor no creature may understand
32. For all of God's kingdom is put under your hand.
33. All your friends you make rich kings,
Give them royal robes, jewels and golden rings. 9
You give eternal rest, blissful end sweet,
Where death never comes, nor sorrow nor grief,
Where in blessed joy red and white flowers blow,
Where they never know harm from frost or snow.
There is eternal summer, so none may fade,
Nor is anyone there weak or dismayed.10
Those who honour you on earth there will rest,
If they keep their life clean from all wickedness.
There they will never labour nor toil,
Nor weep nor mourn, nor smell the stench of hell.
There they shall be healed with a golden cup,11
And eternal life poured out as angels' will.12
No heart can think, nor any creature explain,
Nor no mouth utter, nor any tongue ordain,
How much good you prepare within paradise
For those who toil day and night in your service.
All your retinue13 is dressed in white silk and gold14
And crowned with golden crowns untold.
They are red as the rose, white as the lily,15
And they are glad evermore and sing most merrily.
Their crowns are all set with bright gems,
And they do all they please, and nothing prevents them.
Your dear son is their king, and you are their queen.
They are never troubled by wind nor by rain,
For them it is evermore day without night,
Song without sorrow, and peace without strife.
They have heavenly joys without torment or pain,
Eternal life full of harps, joy and play.
Therefore, beloved lady, it seems long to us wretches
Until you take us from this miserable life to yourself.
We may never have full delight
Until we come to you, and your high honour.
Sweet mother of God, soft maiden, and well chosen,
Your equal never was nor ever will be born.
You are mother and maiden, clean of all blame,16
Perfectly high and holy, in angels' rest.17
All the host of angels and all holy things
Say and sing that you are life's wellspring.
And heo sigged alle þet bene woste ðe neuer ore.
He no mon þet de wurde ðe mei nener been woorloren. [f. 122r]
Dyt on miere sole wic yer incusse.
Éier þine leoune sune; leouest alle þinge.
Al is þe heouene ful of þine blisse.
And so is al þet middlecard of þine mildehertessee.
So mouch is þi milce ant þin æmmodnesse.
Ne wa no mon þet de zorne bit of helpe ne mei missen.
Ich mon þet te þe bishô þu ziwist milce ant ore.
Dauh ne de ðalbe swuðe agult ant i dreameu sore.
Doreuore i ch de bidde holte heouene kweze.
Pet tu gi þi wilt is ether mine bene.
Ich de bidde leðiz vor þere gretungne.
Pet Gabriel de trouhte urom uer heouen kinge.
And ok ich de biseche uor ihyu cristes blode.
Pet for uere note was ich sched oðere rode.
Vor de muckle ðeseuwe dat was oðere mode.
Bo þu er de dace him bi uore stode.
Pet tu me makke cleane wiþen ant eke wiþinnen.
So þet me ne sechende none kunnes summe.
Pente þeðe deceul ant alle kunnes dweluhede.
Aulein2 urom me uer alwe wæl hore fulle fulhe.
Mi ðeoue þif urom þine luue ne schal me no þing to dealeu.
Vor ðoðe is al iðng uif ant eðo min heale.
Vor þine luue i swinke ant sike we irome.
Vor þine luue ich han ibringing in io booudome.
Vor þine luue ich uorsonc al þet me leof was.
And gei de al mi sullen, louwe liif iþenicha þu þes.
Pet ich de wrecode sume side hit me reowed sore.
Vor cristes ðif wunden þu gi þem milce ant ore.
Sif þu milce neuest of me þet ich wot wel zeome. [f. 122v]
Pet hie helle pine svelten ich schal and beornen.
Full þu mi issic paut þu stillite were.
Hwæt ich was and hwæt iðde paut þu me vorbera.
Sif þu benecest wrecce inoumen of mine ðeowmesse.
Éwa ich benecest al uorloren paradiese blisse.
Du heocti þet forboren me uor þine godaesse.
And ðu ich hoppe haben fulle uorjuenesse.
Ne weor ich neour uallen in io helle pine.

All affirm that your servants never lack mercy,
And no one who honours you can ever be lost.
Truly you are the soul’s delight,
After your dear Son, most beloved of all.
Heaven is completely full of your bliss.
And so is all middle-earth full of your kindness.
So great is your compassion and your grace,
That none can fail to find your help who devoutly asks.
You give pardon and mercy to all who look to you,
Though they have sinned greatly and sorely troubled you.
Therefore I ask you, heaven’s holy queen.
That, if it is your will, you will hear my pleading.
I ask you, Lady, for that greeing.
That Gabriel brought to you from our heavenly king.18
And also I beg you, for Jesus Christ’s blood,
That was shed on the cross, for all our good;
For the great sorrow that was in your heart,
When you stood before him until his death;
Make me clean without, and ðore, within.19
That I be not shamed by any kind of sin.
Then drive the loathful devil and evil of all kinds.
Far away from me with their foul filth.20
Nothing will part me from your love, love of my life,
For all my life and my salvation depend on you.
I labour and often sigh for your love.21
I am brought into bondage for your love.
I forsook all that was dear to me for your love,
And gave you all myself; love’s life, consider this.
That I sometimes angered you, I sorely regret.
For Christ’s five wounds you gave me mercy and grace;
If you will not show me mercy I know full well.
That I will perish and burn in the torments of Hell.
You saw me clearly, though you were silent;
My sinful deeds, though you forbore.
If you had taken heed of my wickedness,
Surely I would have utterly lost the joy of paradise.
Yet you have borne with me, because of your goodness,
And now I hope for full forgiveness.
I do not believe that I will ever fall in hell’s torment,
For I will come to you as your own servant.
I am yours, and will be now and ever more,
For all my life depends on you and on God's mercy.
My beloved sweet lady, I long for you dearly.
Without your help I will never know joy.
At my death, I ask you that you will come,
And especially then make your love known.
Accept my soul when I leave this life,
And shield me from sorrow and from death in hell.
If you will that I prosper, protect me well,
Surely I never will be blessed, unless through you.
With such wicked sins my soul is wholly bound,
Nothing can heal my wounds as well as you.
In you alone is all my trust, alter your beloved son;
Grant me the gift of my life, for his holy name.
Do not allow my enemies to take hold of me,
Nor draw me into the torment of hell,
Protect me now, so what is best for me may be,
For if I, a wretch, do prosper well, the praise is yours.
None do you forsake for his wickedness,
If he is ready to be healed and asks forgiveness.
You could easily, if you willed, relieve my sorrow,
And provide for me much better than I can say.
You could easily reward my weeping,
All my toil and my pain, and my abject kneeling.
Within me there is nothing fair to look upon,
Nor anything worthy to come before you.
Therefore I ask that you wash and clothe me,
Through your great mercy, spread so very widely.
It is no honour to you if the devil tears me limb from limb—
If you allowed, he would surely be drenched in my blood.
For he would never want you to have honour,
Nor that anyone who honours you should have joy.
You know full well the devil hates me,
And especially because I honour you.
Therefore I pray that you will counsel and defend me,
So that the devil will not destroy me nor falsehood hinder me.
So you do, and so you shall, for your gentle kindness,
You will grant me a portion of heavenly bliss.
151. If I have greatly sinned, I will greatly repent.
152. And do my penance and duly honour you.
153. You desire for me my life and my salvation;
154. Nothing will ever part me from your service.
155. I will bow down before your feet and cry out to you
156. Until I have forgiveness for my misdeeds.
157. My life is yours, my love is yours, my heart's blood is yours,
158. And, my beloved Lady, dare I say you are mine?30
159. You have all honour in heaven and earth,
160. And you have all joy, as befits your worth.
161. In Christ's charity, I beseech you now,
162. Give me your blessing and your love.
163. Help me keep my body pure.31
164. May God almighty grant me for his mercy,
165. That I might see you in your highest bliss.
166. [line missing]32
167. And all my brothers and sisters33 be the better now today,
168. Because I have sung for you this English lay.
169. And I beseech you now, for your holiness,
170. That you bring this monk to your blessedness,
171. Who undertook34 this song for you, my beloved lady,

Explanatory Notes

1 On god wrenton of us lefdei is written in the form of a lai, imitating the popular courtly poetic form that, like so much literature in the later twelfth century, was imported from France. Marie de France's Breton lais were written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, which became the standard for later Middle English lais, such as Sir Orfeo. The monastic author of UUL attempted to imitate this poetic form, but although his couplets rhyme, he seems unable to sustain the octosyllabic line of his model, and many of his lines are uneven. Nevertheless, the use of rhymed and metred lines raises a conundrum for the translator. Should one keep the rhyme and metre of the original, even when it tamper with the meaning, or should one stay to the sense and meaning of the text, without attempting to translate in rhyme? I have chosen a "middle way"—where possible, I have attempted to reflect the poetic form of the original, but for the most part, I have been guided by the sense of the text, rather than its poetic form. However, I have in all cases attempted to retain a poetic flow, perhaps more in common with modern free verse, although I make no claim to poetic talent or inspiration. Indeed, if there is any poetry in this translation it is
thanks to the help of my friend and colleague, poet Brent MacLaine, who gave generously of his time and expertise to fashion these lines.

2. *Leone* implies radiance, or brightness, rather than simple light. In descriptions of God, Christ or the Virgin Mary, it also denotes “spiritual or intellectual enlightenment; light of truth, faith, beatitude, etc.; light of the divine nature, presence, or love” (MED).

3. *Loftsong* means “hymn” or “song of praise,” but of course the sense of “love song” is also present.

4. It is possible, given the author’s pride in writing an Anglo-Norman verse form into English, that *engiene ionde* may be an implicit pun on *Engelonde*. See Introduction, p. 24.

5. *Wel* has a wide variety of meanings: it can mean “surely, faithfully, rightly, sincerely, freely”; with verbs of emotion, it can mean “intimately, devotedly”; with verbs of obligation, it can mean “fully, scrupulously.”

6. Or bend, incline. Note that this is the same verb used of Christ’s bowing his head on the cross towards the Virgin Mary or the Se Hours (see AW 7.17.251-52, p. 151; and UGA II. 240-44), and of Christ’s bending his ear to hear one’s prayer (LUL II. 81-82).

7. Or sway.

8. This line parallels the idea that the angels never weary of seeing Christ’s face. See UGA II. 21-26; OSM II. 134-36; and Wibunge II. 33-34.

9. Allen (unpublished paper) suggests that in this line, the Virgin Mary is characterized “as drivelur, the gift-giving lord of the mend-hall in Old English poetry” (as, for example, in *Beowulf*). However, in the verses that follow, and throughout the poem, she is more often characterized as the grant lady of romance in the language of courtly love. This blend of images from romance and the imagery of the OE heroic epic is found elsewhere in the anchoritic texts—for example, Wibunge combines the courtly lover with images of the beasts of battle, and SK echoes earthly romance for the spiritual battle that is described in heroic terms, yet which leads to her martyrdom and her union with her divine lover.

10. Literally, miserable.

11. This phrase has caused some difficulty. Morris translates it as “presented with golden cups.” *Steoren* can mean to guide, counsel, control (one’s heart) or govern. It can also mean to burn incense, or to treat an illness or a sick person with the smoke or fume of a burning medicinal substance, or to suffuse or perfume with incense (MED cites this line as an example of this meaning). *Chelle* means “a vessel of some kind” from OE *cylfe*, ladle or cupper (MED). Another possible translation would thus be, “there they will be cursed or perfumed with a golden vessel.” Compare the scene in *Ancrene Wisse* 6.11.307-19, pp. 139-40, where the Virgin Mary appears to three sick men, accompanied by two maidens, one carrying an elixir and the other a golden spoon. See also UGA I. 209; and OSM 1.20.

12. The MED, definition 3a, cites this text as an example of *wille* being used in polite formulas. An alternate translation would be “at the bidding or urging of angels.”

13. Royal household or court, or, as here, the Virgin Mary’s retinue in heaven.

14. *Cichlone* is a rich silken fabric woven with gold (MED).

15. This is a comparison drawn from contemporary romance, where red signifies love and white purity. However, it is also common in devotional texts, where red takes on
the added symbolism of blood and sorrow. Christ's flesh on the cross is often
described as white and red. In OSM the image is applied to the mockery of Christ by
Pilate's soldiers, as they clothe him in red is a king, and then restore his own white
robes (see OSM II. 87-90 and note 30).

16 Or innocent of all fault, wrong, sin or defect. Renevey points out that this is a para-
phrase of the hymn Ave Maris Stella from the feast of the assumption ("Enclosed

17 Or peace, i.e., eternal rest and peace.

18 At the Annunciation, Gabriel greets Mary with the words, "Hail, full of grace, the
Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women" and reassures her thus, "Fear not,
Mary, for thou hast found grace with God" (Luke 1:28, 30).

19 This is a standard distinction between cleanliness or purity of body and soul, but it
also echoes the theme of "outer and inner" found throughout the anchoritic texts.

20 Lines 93 and 94 read literally: "Then the sinful devil and all kinds of error / drive
far away from me with their foul filth."

21 Note the change of tone here. As the speaker turns to his own plea, the language
becomes more personal, reflecting the language of secular love lyrics. The idea of
love's benediction conveys a service to love that is suitable for both a monarch and a

22 This reading assumes luna as a form of lune, of a spiritual gift from God, or God's
help or grace. Morris also reads lune as lone, and translates "of my life grant me the
loan" (p. 196, I. 126, with lone meaning pledge, security, or loan), and this would fit
well with the idea that Christ's life is a pledge to ransom the soul from the devil's
debt (as, for example, in AW 3.4, pp. 50-51; 7.6, p. 148). Luna means peace, so an
alternate translation would be "give me my life peace," but lone fits better with the fol-
lowing lines, which contrast the gift of life with condemnation in hell.

23 Or "so that whatever may be, it will be best for me."

24 Or to make amends for it, be cured of it, remedy it.

25 Here, the Virgin Mary is clearly functioning as an intercessor, not a model. She may
lightly" (or easily) relieve all suffering of grief and the speaker through her inter-
cessory power and grant him the reward of heaven. However, when it comes to mod-
ing the road to heaven, UGA suggests that one must follow in Christ's footsteps
through suffering: Ne were noonon to sithen wil estre to be stopenen ("let no one think
to rise to the stars with ease") (UGA I. 135). This theme is taken up in Ancrene Wisse:
"Either these people are fools who think that they can buy eternal bliss on the cheap
(wit littenen), or the holy saints are, who paid so dearly for it" (AW 6.7.200-01, p.
137). Again, the model of those who find the way to heaven is based on the example
of Christ and the saints, who suffered for it. Even David, who ascends lightly
(Hilite) to heaven, does so by means of a ladder whose sides are pain and shame
and whose rungs are virtues, enabling him to climb to heaven and leave all his sins
behind him (AW 6.5.102-13, p. 124). The message of I. 133, then, is that heaven
can be gained lightly or easily, but that the Virgin Mary's powers of intercession
with Christ are so great that even this extremely difficult thing, for which Christ and
the saints toiled so cruelly, is easy for her to grant. (See also Wohunge, note 36.)

As virginal devotion evolves, Mary's role as intercessor becomes based more
on her sorrow, which is a model for the reader's compassion, and less on her status
as Queen of Heaven. This appears as a parallel development to the increased empha-

A GOOD PRAYER TO OUR LADY 165
sis on Christ’s Passion, which was referred to briefly in ll. 87-90, but later becomes the focus of prayerful meditation.

26 Or repay. This line is consistent with the secular love lyrics, which suggest that love-longing, weeping and sighing in the service of the beloved can be rewarded by a single look or act of love. This contrasts the later idea that the believer, as the object of Christ’s love, must repay Christ for his great gift of love on the cross, which ransoms the soul from hell. For example, UGA II. 125-25 attest that anyone who would be Christ’s companion must suffer at the loss as well as the gain, following in Christ’s footsteps of suffering. LUL asserts that grace is a gift, not a payment; yet still, the gift must be repaid in some way (ll. 156-58). The theme is expanded in Wolhunoe, with the imagery of the marketplace that is used throughout. Finally, the speaker cries out: *Ah me bichuod fet tu beo endo to paio* (But for my sake you are [or must be] easy to pay [l. 395]). Yet the repayment is as great as the cost of the gift; in a profoundly beautiful yet anguished passage, the anchoress gives her body and heart to Christ, even though they are inadequate to pay the debt incurred by Christ’s sacrifice of his body and heart (ll. 396-401).

27 I.e., kneeling in penitence and prayer (cp. l. 3 and l. 155). Renevey points out that here the poem acknowledges the practicality of devotion, as the imagery of kneeling and bowing is merged with imagery of toi and labour. As Renevey states, this “imagery is directly derived from devotional practices to the Virgin Mary, turned from practical experience into telling poetry, coloured by secular love motifs... Secular love attitudes translate fittingly the characteristic determination and total involvement of ascetic practices” (“Enclosed Desires,” pp. 50-51).

28 Here, the devil would become stained with the blood of the sinner after rending him limb from limb. This image (which Mary and Christ would not allow) is contrasted with Christ’s willing sacrifice on the cross, where he is thoroughly covered in his own blood in order to save the sinner from the devil’s hands.

29 The devil is said to have a particular hatred for virgins and for the Virgin Mary in particular, because they withstand his temptations and keep themselves pure in body and soul. In Seinte Margarete, after defeating a demonic visitor to her cell, Margaret holds the demon down by placing her foot on his neck, in a dramatic reversal of Genesis 3:15. She then stamps on his neck until he admits his hatred of virgins and the ways in which he tempts them.

30 The speaker hesitates, and almost seems to shrink from the boldness that dares to call the Virgin Mary his own, even as he does so. Similarly, in UGA I. 52, the speaker hesitates at daring to call Christ her beloved, and yet nevertheless asserts that he is. In Antenez Wisse, the author asserts that love not only makes Christ ours, it masters him, and makes the sinful reader into his lover and his mistress: *Srech Be luzie to luzie Crist, Fw heven hir ivwenen. Rit hir wio as muhche luzie as Fw hauent sum mon soncheenre, he is fin to don wio al pet tu witenst.... Swa overswede he luzie pet he makek hire his evening. Jet Ich dear segge mare: he makek hire his maistre, and deo al pet ha bat as jeh noste need.... Hwet wiltu tu mone? Lue is his camerbrel, his conseiler, his spae, jo he ne mel mawt heuwe wid, als teled at pet he penchek.* (“Reach out with your love to Jesus Christ, and you have won him. Touch him with as much love as you have once felt for some human being, and he is yours to do anything you like with... He loves love so much that he makes her his equal. I am bold enough to say even more: he makes her his master, and does
everything she commands as if he were forced to... What more do you want? Love is his chamberlain, his counselor, his spouse, from whom he can keep no secrets." AW 7.19.333-35, 339-41, 356-58, pp. 153-54).
31 Or keep my body in cleanness. Another translation might be 'protect my bodily purity.' See also note 19 above.
32 The missing line leaves a gap in the sense, as the following line (L. 166 in the manuscript, but here L. 167) seems to be the completion, not the beginning, of a sentence. In L. 167, the author turns to his friends, and the benefits that his prayers, and specifically his composition of this 'lay' will bestow upon them (and him). Morris does not note the missing line, and finishes with an uneven 171 lines (p. 198).
33 Or brethren, siblings, kinsmen, friends. In a monastic context, brethren would be most appropriate. In the context of the Nero manuscript, where the text occurs with other texts specifically written for a female audience, I have chosen "brothers and sisters" to suggest a gender-neutral term that would include female readers and the anchoress context of the texts, where the "brothers and sisters" would be religious brothers or sisters, rather than blood kin.
34 From 'fonden, to look for, seek (persons, things); to try, attempt, assay, endeavour, strive or undertake; or to concern or busy oneself (about something) (MED).
On wel swude god ureisun of God almihti
A Most Excellent Prayer to God Almighty
On we swede god ureisun of God almihth

1. Jesus true God,
2. true God's son.
3. Jesus true God,
4. true man,
5. and truly born of a maiden.
6. Jesus my holy love.
7. My sure sweetness.
8. Jesus my heart,
9. my soul's salvation.
10. Sweet Jesus my beloved,
11. my life,
12. my light,
13. my healing balm,
14. my honey-drop.
15. You are all that I hope for.
16. Jesus, my comfort,
17. my delight,
18. my happy heart's joy.
19. Jesus, not only are you so soft,
20. and so sweet,
21. you are also so worthy of love,
22. so gracious,
23. and so lovely,
24. that the angels ever gaze upon you,
25. and never have their fill
26. of looking at you.
27. Jesus, all fair,
28. in comparison with whom the sun is only a shadow,
29. as one who loses her light,
30. and is ashamed of her darkness compared with your bright face,
31. you who give light to her
32. and all that have light,
33. enlighten my dark heart; 
34. give my hower brightness,
35. and brighten my soul that is sooty, 
36. and make her worthy to be your sweet dwelling.
37. Inflame me with the blaze
38. of your burning love.
39. Let me be your lover,
40. and teach me to love you, living Lord.
41. Woe is me that I am so estranged from you!
42. But as you have turned me from the world in body,
43. turn me also in my heart,
44. and turn me entirely to you.
45. with true love
46. and with belief,
47. so that I may have no dealings,
48. nor fellowship,
49. nor speech,
50. nor intimacy with the world; 
51. for I know, my beloved—
52. dare I call you so?—
53. that fleshly and spiritual love,
54. earthly and heavenly love,
55. can in no way lie together in one heart.
56. Whoever has long lacked spiritual comfort
57. or heavenly joy,
58. it is for this reason,
59. that they have,
60. or long for,
61. comfort on earth,
62. that is fickle
63. and false,
64. any mingled with misery
65. and with bitterness.
66. Truly, there is no joy in any outward thing
67. that is not too bitterly bought;
68. whose honey is not licked off thorns. 
69. But is he not a foolish merchant
who buys a worthless thing at great price,
and rejects a precious thing
that someone offers him for nothing,
and promises him a reward
just for taking it?20
My Jesus, life's Lord,
you offer your comfort
without even being asked,
and then promise us, if we will take it,
heavenly joys?
And we turn away from it,
and buy the world's solace
with many a grief,
and pain,
and the comfort of man's speech?21
Ah!
Jesus, Lord,
your pardon!
Why do I have any pleasure in any other thing
than in you—
Why do I love anything but you alone?
Why do I not behold how you stretched yourself out for me on
the cross?22
Why do I not throw myself between those same arms, spread
out so very wide
and opened as a mother does her arms,
to embrace her beloved child?23
Yes, truly,
and you, precious Lord, cry out inwardly to us and to your
darlings,
with that same spreading [of your arms]24
as a mother to her child,
"Who is my love?
Who is my life?
Who lays himself here between [my arms]?
Who wants to be embraced?"25
Ah Jesus, your mercy,
and your great compassion!
Why am I not in your arms, so stretched out
and spread so wide on the cross?
And does anyone believe he can be embraced between your blissful arms in heaven,

unless he first throws himself here,

between your pitiful arms on the cross?

No, truly, no—

let no one ever believe it!

Through this low embrace

one must come to the high;

whoever will embrace you there so,

just as you are there, lord of love,

must first embrace you here,

just as you made yourself here,

a wretch,

for us wretches.

That is to say,

whoever would have a portion with you in your bliss,

must share with you

in your suffering on earth.

He is no true companion who will not share in the loss

as well as in the gain;[27]

he must bear his part according to his ability.

Whoever would be your companion,

living lord,

must follow in your footsteps,

through suffering,

and through sorrow,[28]

to the home of happiness

and everlasting delight.[29]

Let no one think to rise to the stars with ease.

Ah sweet Jesus!

Why do I not embrace you with arms of love so fast

that nothing can wrench my heart away from you?30

Why do I not kiss you sweetly in spirit,

with sweet memory of your good deeds?31

Why is all that pleases my flesh not bitter to me?

Why is not every worldly thing worthless to me compared to the great delight of your sweetness?

Why do I not feel you in my heart, as sweet as you are?

Why are you so estranged from me?

Why can I not woo you...
wið swete luce wordes alre12 þinge sweetest.
147. ant alre þinge licchifest ant luce wurdest?
148. wei wei.
149. þe bitternesse of alle mine atte sumen is þe leutunge.
150. Mine sumen boð wol bi tweeoonen me,
151. ant þe.
152. Mine sumen womed me;
153. al þis swotnesse.
154. Mine sumen habed grimliche iwursed me.
155. ant aucied me toward þe laweliche loured;
156. ant þat is lutel wunder.
157. forso ich ham wið hore horie fenliche ifuled;
158. þat ich ne mei;
159. ne ne der hustun Godd;
160. come biHNas viShide.

161. A:
162. iesu þin ore.
163. hwat deih þeame þi blod isched ope rode.
164. hwat deih þeame þe large broc of þine softe side.

165. þe streams þet striden13 adun of þine deorewurde wert,
166. aut of þine cæde lorden.
167. nes hit forto waschen sumifite soulen?
168. Nes hit forto [f. 125v] saluen salce me sumen?
169. hwoa is þeome unwaschen,
170. þet aucod þis haumende wet inviwid his heorte?
171. hwoa þet14 been unsalued,
172. þet haucod so miliu salue,
173. ase oþe ase heor to haued ireone biluce?
174. Min heounliche leche,
175. þet makedest us of þi scolfe so miliu medicine,
176. ibiscoed beo þu euer;
177. ase min trust is þer to;
178. bit beo mi lechage,15
179. hit beo mi bote.
180. gil min wrec is muchel;

181. with sweet love words, you who are of all things sweetest,
182. and of all things dearest and worthiest of love?32
183. Alas, alas!
184. The bitterness of my poisonous sins is the obstracle.
185. My sins are a wall between me
186. and you.33
187. My sins deny me
188. all this sweetness.
189. My sins have grievously inured me,
190. and set me against you, beloved lord;
191. and that is little wonder,
192. for I am so vilely fouled with their filth
193. that I cannot,
194. and dare, not, beloved God,34
195. come into your sight.

196. Ah!
197. Jesus, your mercy!
198. To what avail, then, was your blood shed on the cross?
199. To what avail, then, was the abundant stream from your tender
200. side,
201. the streams that poured down from your precious feet,
202. and your blessed hands?
203. Is it not to wash sinful souls?
204. Is it not to save those who are sick with sin?35
205. Who, then, is unwashed,
206. who has36 this healing drink within his heart?
207. Who needs to be unsaved?
208. who has so mighty a salve,
209. whenever he has true faith in it?
210. My heavenly healer,
211. who made for us so mighty a medicine of your own self,
212. blessed be you forever!
213. As my trust is in it,
214. it is my healing,
215. it is my remedy.
216. If my affliction is great,
its might
is greater:
as surely as a drop of your precious blood
might wash away the sin of all people,
just as surely, Lord of life, those same five wells springing
from your blessed body and flowing down in streams of
blood
wash my five wits
of all bloody sins:
of all that I have sinfully seen with my eyes,
and heard with my ears,
spoken with my mouth,
or tasted and smelled with my nose,
wrongly felt with any limb,
as I did with my flesh.
May your wounds heal the wounds of my soul,
your death,
deaden in me the pleasures of the flesh
and bodily desires,
and make me live for you, that I might say with Saint Paul, who says,
"I live—not I,
but Christ lives in me."
That is to say,
I do not live in the life that I lived,
but Christ lives in me,
through his indwelling grace,
that brings me to life.
Blessed is he, Jesus, who can boldly say this to you!
to save the sinful,
Jesus Christ became your son;
and for our sake you, a maiden, were made
God's mother.
You would never be where you are,
blessed over all,
if there were no sinners.
Therefore the sinful ought
to call to you boldly,\textsuperscript{47}
for whom you have your blessedness
and your great eminence.
Maiden
and mother.
Maiden,
whose?
Mother and daughter, you are his who wrought and rules\textsuperscript{48}
all that is created,
his who has neither end
nor beginning,
who is always the same,
without diminishing,
who always remains,
without changing.
You have great honour to be the mother of such a son with the
wholeness of maidenhood,
and to have him so at your command\textsuperscript{49}
that he wants your will to prevail above all.
To show us this,
he stretches forth his right arm
as he stands on the cross,
and bows down toward you
his precious head,\textsuperscript{50}
as though he said,
"Mother, all that you will,
so I will."
Ah, sweet lady.
Why, lady, why
have I not ever before my heart's eyes
those same three standing together?\textsuperscript{51}
Your son was stretched out and fastened on the cross,
...
253. feets and hands driven through
254. with blunt nails,
255. his side bloody;
256. and you standing there, lady;
257. and Saint John the Evangelist on the other side, weeping with sorrowful sighs?
258. Why do I not always gaze upon this in my heart,
259. and think that it was for me,
260. and for other sinners, to rescue [us] from hell,
261. and give us heavenly joy?
262. This thought would surely kindle such true love in me; 52
263. The heart would never be so cold,
264. that sin could ever again enter in
265. where this burning was; 53
266. Ah, Jesus, where shall I flee when the devil hunts me, except to your cross?

Explanatory Notes
1 The three prayers that follow UUL in the N manuscript are all written as if they were prose, just as Wolhange is in Titus. Like Wolhange, they are not rhymed and metered, and are generally thought of as alliterative prose. However, the alliterative pattern of these texts shares many characteristics with Old English alliterative poetry, although they do not always fall into a clear pattern of lines and half lines. I have chosen to represent them as poetry, as I have done with Wolhange. As with Wolhange, I have used the scribe’s punctuation as a guide for where line breaks should occur; the texts are carefully punctuated to emphasize places where the reader ought to stop and consider the meaning of each phrase or line, and by using line breaks the modern reader can get a far clearer sense of such pauses. As the reader moves through the text, meditating on each line (or punctuated unit), the individual units will build into longer units of thought, recreating the building of the sentences on the page. The object of the text is not clarity of syntax, but intensity of meditation and feeling. The reader meditates on small units that are explicitly comprehensible and contain food for much thought in each phrase or clause, and as each unit is added to the next, the whole develops into a meditation that is comprehended on an inward, heartfelt level of devotion, rather than the outward, cerebral level that would require greater clarity of grammar and syntax. The complexity of grammar thus reflects the complexity of the meditative process, which relies not only on an outward meaning that can be quickly grasped by the intellect, but on an inner affective and intuitive meaning that can only be arrived at through the long journey (or pilgrimage) of the devout heart.
Like Wobange, for which it is almost certainly a source, UGA begins with a passionate, almost breathless, recitation of Christ's attributes and perfection, characterized by short, elliptical phrases.

2 Or radiance, the light of divine nature or of love, but also spiritual or mental illumination.

3 A sweet healing liquid, used as a draught or a lotion. See Wobange, notes 2 and 3.

4 Wold can mean worldly wealth and prosperity, or good fortune, joy or comfort. But it can also mean heavenly joy or bliss, the reward of eternal life. See Wobange II. 239 and 403.

5 Or beloved.


7 N reads schined from schine, to shine or reflect light, which would render the line "reflects your bright face because of her own darkness." L, however, reads sconep, from sconen, to feel shame or to be ashamed. Thus, Morris translates: "and becometh ashamed of her darkness before thy bright face." (p. 184). The reading in N could be seen as consistent with the following line, "You who give her light ..." but the context of the sun's darkness as a source of shame as compared with Christ's gift of light fits better with the theme of the passage as a whole. This translation also fits the biblical parallel of Luke 23:44, where the sun darkens at the moment of Christ's death on the cross. See Wobange II. 42-43.

8 Akhe (slightest) can mean illuminate in the sense of giving both physical and spiritual light. It can also have the sense of "best slight" or "enkindle. It is likely that the word is intended to carry all of these meanings, as spiritual illumination becomes the blaze of love in I. 37.

9 Or chamber. The chamber of the heart is a common image, drawn from Anselm's prayers and meditations, in which he adv decet his readers to withdraw into the chamber of the heart for prayer. The image is combined with the imagery of the Song of Songs in Bernard (and elsewhere) to evoke the private space where Christ can meet intimately with his beloved, romantic love literature, in which the lover is a private space where lovers can meet. L reads je bar, "your bower," explicitly identifying the heart of the speaker as Christ's bower or dwelling place. The image of the heart as Christ's bower is combined with the imagery of the anchorhold as an enclosed space in Ancrene Wisse. See the similar use of "bower" in Wobange II. 99-100 and note 24; II. 385-88 and notes 105 and 106.

10 L., foul or filthy with sin.

11 Or, as in Morris, enlightening (p. 184). The idea of love as a burning blaze is also found in Ancrene Wisse, especially Part 7.17-18, pp. 151-52.

12 L reads are for liomliche twent ne was from ye world, which Morris translates as "as thou bodily hast departed, separate me from the world." (p. 84). I have retained the reading in N, as it reflects the theme of "inner" and "outer" that permeates the anchoritic texts, as well as the body/heart matrix of enclosure—physical enclosure of the body is completed by the spiritual enclosure of the heart. This dual nature of enclosure was not only important for the original anchoritic readers of the text, it is also one of the features that made these texts accessible to lay readers. As in Anselm's Prayers and Meditations, many of them written for lay readers, the life of
the soul can be nurtured even when the body is not physically enclosed, simply by 
retreating into the chamber of the heart.

13 I begin a new sentence here, andleave out “yet”—thus, “I have no company nor 
fellowship, nor speech nor intimacy with the world, for I know, my beloved...” This 
reading changes the role of the speaker, making him more active, more assertive— 
she here asserts that her withdrawal from the world is a fact, rather than asking 
Christ to make it so. I have retained the reading in N to maintain the prayerful 
beseeching for Christ’s aid from II. 41-55 since the more assertive reading in L 
believes the desperate entreaty of I. 41. Once again, the text emphasizes that the mere
fact of physical enclosure cannot guarantee inwardness, unless the heart is also 
enclosed.

14 The short lines in this passage force the reader to pause and consider each of
the things that she wishes to have (true love and belief) and those things that draw her
away from Christ’s love (dealings, fellowship, speech, and intimacy with the world).
This is typical of the Nero scribe’s use of punctuation to highlight the meditative
nature of the prayers. This practice is particularly evident in OSM.

15 See UUL II. 158 and note 30.

16 Rerovey discusses the meaning of “belden,” which literally means to share a 
marriage bed, but here is used figuratively to mean “to dwell harmoniously (in one’s
breast).” He points out that the double meaning here is exploited to suggest the
“twelfth-century use of the imagery of the Song of Songs to express the mystical
unio” of the soul with Christ. However, he argues that the vocabulary of mystical 
union is here used to express the moral, inner state required for such a union, not the
state of the ecstatic mystical experience itself (“Enclosed Desires,” p. 48). For the
contrast between earthly love and heavenly love, see also AW 2.32-33, pp. 36-38; 
2.35-36, pp. 39-41.

17 Cp. AW 6.13.407-11, p. 142: No manese hire sum het ha ne mei habben na svet-
nessae of God ne svetnessae wichen. Ne wundri ha hire nayhult, paf ha nis Marie; 
for ha hit not bussen niw bitternessae wichen. Nawi wil ech bitternessae—for sum-
great frumward Godd, as ech wurdlich sir het nis for sawe hale. (“Now someone
may complain that she cannot feel any inward fragrance or sweetness from God. She
should not be at all surprised, if she is not Mary [whose name means bitterness];
because she must buy it with external bitterness. Not with every bitterness—because
some lead away from God, such as every worldly grief that is not for the soul’s sal-
vation.”) See also Wahlung, note 3.

18 Morris translates (after L, et): “the honey that one eats therein is licked off thorns” 
(p. 84). However, tete, or nipple, can also mean “a source of spiritual nourishment or
guidance; also, a source of encouragement: in sin; (b) a source of fruitfulness; drie
tete, barrenness; (c) erotic love; an object of erotic attraction” (MED). This would
imply a translation more like “whose nourishing honey is not licked off thorns” but
with the implication that the “nourishment” may seem like spiritual guidance, but is
actually a source of encouragement to sin. There may also be a sense that the “erotic
attraction” of the world is nothing compared to the erotic attraction of the divine
spouse, to whom this prayer is addressed. I have therefore chosen the simplest
translation, although the reader should bear the ambiguity of the word tete in mind.

19 See UUL II. 150-32.
20 See Wohurge, note 18. It is interesting that Wohurge focuses more on the purchase price of the soul, whereas UGA focuses more on Christ's free offer of salvation, which the human soul rejects to purchase worldly things at a biter cost.

21 Note the careful structuring of these rhetorical questions, contrasting Christ's free offer and humankind's turning away; Christ's comfort and the comfort of the world and human speech, heavenly joys and earthly pains, with the promise of heavenly bliss at the center.

22 Behold carries the sense of careful observation, or contemplation, understanding—i.e., spiritual sight that leads to spiritual insight. The sudden shift from short, simple phrases/lines to the longer, sophisticated cries of II. 92 and 93 emphasizes the change from the general meditative content of the previous section (which contrasts Christ's love with the world and with human sin) to the more emotional and affective meditation on Christ's Passion and suffering which enhances the speaker's spiritual insight and illuminates the extent of Christ's love. The image of Christ being "stretched out" on the cross is a common one in the Latin tradition, originating in the idea that Christ's body was stretched so tightly that every bone in his body could be counted (see Wohurge I. 345 and note 93).

23 The image of Christ as a loving mother is also found in AW 4.47.743-51, p. 88 and AW 7.8. p. 149. See Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction," and "Subversion and Conformity."

24 Literally "you, precious Lord, spiritually to us and to your darlings / with that same spreading cry out." Saew also has the implication of "to ask (for one's heart's desire)" (MED).

25 Morris translates the pronoun here as "each one," thus: "Each is beloved; each is dear; each places himself in thy arms; each will be embraced." However, the NAB has punctuated these lines as questions, as does Thompson.

26 L. 10 be þer þe wate bi-cluppe, þe bare wic: As fe art bare lourd of leome. Morris: "He who will embrace thee there, even such as thou art there, Lord of light...."

27 In AW 6.7.164-80, p. 136 the anchorites is reminded that she shares in Christ's suffering, she will also share in his joy, and it is a poor companion who will not share in the less as well as the profit. But the author assures her that this is a good bargain.


29 Morris, following L., translates "He must pay equal scot who will be thy fellow. O loving Lord! He must follow thy steps through sore (trials) and sorrow to the abode of bliss and of eternal joy."

30 Note that earlier rhetorical questions (II. 70-80, 100-03) were exclamatory. Here the questions become more meditative, and the lines are slower, heavier, as the anchorites moves through her meditation on her sins and Christ's Passion.

31 See Wohurge II. 387-88 and note 106. Wohurge also emphasizes the sweet memory of Christ's deeds (see II. 8-11 and note 4).

32 For all her love-lusting, the soul cannot woo Christ—Christ must woo the soul, and the soul can only respond to his love.

33 The wall that sin creates between Christ and the reader is more impermeable than any physical wall. The wall of the anchorhold can protect the anchorhold only to the degree that she controls her outer senses and does not let her heart stray to the outside world (a problem dealt with in detail in Ancrene Wisse Part 2). The devil and

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his army can breach the wall of the lady’s castle/anchorhold/body in the parable of
the Christ Knight in Ancrune Wisse 7, unless Christ rescues her. Nevertheless, the
anchorress is given a list of remedies for temptation, including prayer, faith, and
reading, among others (AW 4.52, p. 91). Indeed, the Ancrune Wisse author gives his
anchorress a “summary of pious meditations in a rhyme,” and tells her that “Each one
of these saying would need a long time to be properly developed; but if I hurry
forward, you should dwell on them all the longer” (AW 4.53.886-87, p. 91). Christ’s
body, on the other hand, is compared to a tower or castle that the devil cannot per-
mane (AW 4.78.1233-41, p. 100). The anchoress is urged to camp beside the tower
of strength that is Christ’s crucified body, which hangs in the church on the other
side of the wall of the anchorhold. Ever the stone wall between the anchoresses and
the altar of the church is permeable; it cannot separate her from his body hanging on
the cross above it: “You still have that same blood, that same glorious body that
came from the Virgin and died on the cross, beside you night and day. There is only
a wall between; and every day he comes out and reveals himself to you physically
and bodily in the Mass ... he reveals himself to you in this way as if he were saying,
‘Look, here I am; what do you want? Tell me what you would like. What do you
need? Make your complaint about it”’ (AW 4.79.1224-31, p. 100). It is only sin that
can create an impermeable wall, a wall that only Christ can tear down, through his
mercy and his death.

34 Cp. UUL I. 158 and note 30.
35 The idea of Christ’s blood as a bath that makes souls clean from sin, or heals the
sickness of sin, is common. See AW 7.8, p. 149; AW 6.8-9, pp. 137-38.
36 The following lines are multivalent: usted could be from ouem, to have, but also to
acknowledge, cherish; or from ouen, to reverence.
37 Or unhealed: spiritually unhealthy, or spiritually sick. The concept of spiritual salva-
tion as the health of the soul is a common one, and Christ is the soul’s healer. The
idea derives from the conventional image of Christ as a healer or physician. On
earth, he healed bodies, but risen, he heals souls.
38 The five wounds of Christ, in his hands, his feet, and his side, are often deployed as
wells, streaming with the blood that heals the soul.
39 It is tempting to divide this line to match the lines prior to it (L. punctuates between
sprungen /usted but not between blode /weaschin fy/wittes, making this line parallel
to the previous ones). However, there is no punctuation in the text, and the N
scribe is very careful about indicating pauses through punctuation. The shift from
the short line to the long line in L. 185 emphasizes the contrast between the single drop
of blood needed to wash away the sins of the world (ll. 183-84) and the copious
flow of blood from Christ’s wounds that he gave to heal the sins of the speaker’s five
senses. The immediate shift back to the short lines of ll. 186-87 not only highlights
the parallel between Christ’s five wounds and the five wits or senses, but also high-
lights the “bloody sins” that must be healed with Christ’s blood. These lines thus
serve to accentuate the enormity of Christ’s sacrifice, and the speaker’s need for such
a great healing. The healing of the sins of the five senses through the five wounds of
Christ is a common theme. The five wits are the five bodily senses: sight, hearing,
smell, taste, and touch, associated with the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and hands (or the
entire body). The sins of the five wits thus include speech as well as taste, and all
physical desire, as well as simply touch, and are outlined in ll. 188f. The theme of

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the five wits is common in Ancroft Wisse and the other Woolung Group prayers; yet interestingly, "Wohunge" does not refer to it at all. Perhaps this is because "Wohunge" is meant for a reader who has moved beyond the need to be reminded about controlling the outer senses, and is ready to focus on inward meditation.

40 Literally, "mis-seen with [my] eyes."

41 The punctuation, which separates "your death" from both phrases prior to and following it, makes Christ's death the transition between sin and healing, spiritual death and spiritual life. However, it also means that "your death" serves a double function: referring back to the line above, Christ's wounds heal the speaker's sins, which are Christ's death (i.e., cause of Christ's death); looking forward to the next line, Christ's death deadens the speaker's sinful bodily desires.

42 Galatians 2.20.

43 Literally, well was he born. "Wel-boren generally means "of gentle birth." Savage and Watson translate: "Happy are they."

44 The "boldness" of this statement contrasts with I. 52 where the speaker asks if he dare call Christ her beloved, and I. 159, where she dares not come into his presence. It is through the meditation on Christ's healing blood, shed in the Passion, that she gains the confidence to call upon him boldly, or, at least to see the possibility of doing so once her sins have been healed. In I. 222, she similarly asserts that the sinful ought to call boldly to the Virgin Mary. The mercy and love of Christ and the Virgin Mary make the reader bold to call upon them for help (or at least to claim that believers ought to have such boldness). However, the speakers in the Woolung Group texts often question their own daring in approaching Christ or Mary in an intimate and loving way (cp. UUL l. 158 and note 30). This is in keeping with the idea that the soul cannot woo Christ, but must wait to be wooed (see II. 145-47 and note 32 above), but is also part of the speaker's awareness of the vast difference in status between herself and Christ, between himself (in UUL) and Mary.

45 The direct address shifts here from Christ to the Virgin Mary, a shift that is signalled in the text by the punctuation. Note the similar shift in Wohunge II. 375-81.

46 Cp. UUL l. 45 and note 11, I. 124; OSMI. 20

47 Morris translates: "If sinful men were not as those own sinful ones to address thee boldly." However, the line as translated here reminds the reader of the contrast between Eve and Mary. If not for Eve, sin would not have entered the world; if not for sin, there would have been no need for Christ to redeem the world, and therefore no need for the Virgin birth. As a result of Eve's fall, Mary is blessed and exalted.

48 I. reads maiden moder Maiden and hwe moder. His hwas dohter for art. Morris translates, "Virgin mother! And maiden! And whose mother (art thou)? His whose daughter thou art."

49 Or, at your will, freely, under your control. Morris: subject to thee.

50 Cp. Wohunge I. 356 and note 97 and AW 7.17.250-53, p. 151, where Christ's arms stretched out on the cross are a gesture of love, a love that binds him to the will of his beloved, the anchorless, as he bows down his head to ask for a kiss. Cp. also UUL II. 116-23.

51 Literally, "those same three standings." Morris translates stondehenge as "sufferings," referring to Christ's three sufferings: his pain on the cross, beholding the pain of his mother, and beholding the grief of St. John, the only one of his disciples to remain with him. Two of these sufferings are included here; the reader also asks to behold
the third, Christ’s suffering as he stands (I. 242) on the cross. The line thus literally refers to the three “standings” as the speaker asks to see in her heart the three people “standing” at the cross: Christ upon it, and the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist beneath it. In contemporary depictions of the crucifixion, Christ is often portrayed with his feet on a kind of pedestal, with Mary and St. John standing on either side of the cross.

52 See I. 33 and note 8, I. 38 and note 11, above.

53 Cp. AW 7.16, pp. 150-51, where the archeress is told that Christ’s purpose in his wooing is to enkindle his love in his beloved’s heart. But here, the cold heart is not the worst; rather, the lukewarm heart that does not love him with a burning fire is worse than the cold heart that can still be enkindled with his love.
De oreisun of seinte Marie
A Prayer to Saint Mary
Swete lefde scicte marie meiden ower alle meidnes,
het bere det blisful heyn,²
het areddes³ al moncun up.
het was adun adallen,
preru adames stune,
ant det þuruh his hol passion wert þene deouel adun.
ant heriedo helie,
ic on sori sunfule þing,
Sidde þin ore,
det tu beo mi mordl ægéines mine soule foon.
det beo me ne muwen bitellen,
aun were me,
ant help me milsfulme meiden;
in alle mine neoden.
Mine wickenwines habéd biset me oen cuche half abuten;
ant secéed mine soule deade;
iube men and ceoten,⁴
heo habéd monie wunden on me ifestined;⁵
þor æowelled mine soule,
sorc þu beo mi leche,
ic habed ofte ibuwen to alle mine þrede i foon.
to þe fæord,
ant to þe woorl,
ant to mine flasches sunne.
ic iowe me gulti,⁶
ant creie þo lefde merci,
fer ich habed iuined þetes of alle mine fif wittes,
to sunfule upheawes,
mes i lokid,
mis [i]berened,⁷
mis ifeled,
mis ispoken,
mis [mis]⁸ 首饰 wore smelles,⁹
prude ant wihange of pris;

1. Sweet lady, holy Mary, maiden over all maidens,
2. who bore that blessed babe,
3. who delivered² all mankind,
4. who were fallen down
5. through Adam's sin;
6. and who, through his holy Passion, threw the devil down,³
7. and harrowed hell—⁴
8. I, a sorry, sinful thing,
9. ask for your mercy,
10. that you would be my advocate⁵ against my soul's enemies,
11. that they might not accuse her;⁶
12. rather, defend me,
13. and help me, merciful maiden,
14. in all my needs.
15. My enemies have surrounded me on every side,
16. and seek my soul's death;⁷
17. wicked men and devils,
18. have inflicted many wounds on me⁸
19. that kill my soul,
20. unless you are my healer.
21. I have often bowed down to all my three enemies:⁹
22. to the devil,
23. and to the world,
24. and to the sins of my flesh.
25. I acknowledge myself guilty,
26. and cry to you, lady, for mercy,
27. for I have made gates of all my five wits¹⁰
28. for sinful vices:
29. looked wrongly,¹¹
30. heard wrongly,
31. felt wrongly,
32. spoken wrongly,¹²
33. wrongly loved sweet smells.
34. Pride and the desire for praise¹³

A Prayer to Saint Mary¹
have sorely wounded me;
also anger,
and envy,
lying,
swearing falsely,
inadequately holding to truth
cursing,
backbiting,
and flattery,
sometimes.
I have unjustly possessed things which belong to another.
and unfairly given wrongly
and taken wrongly,
and often wrongly withheld;
to evil,
eager,
and slow,
to good,
negligent,
and idle;
sometimes too playful,
other times too dejected.
I have sinned both in eating
and in drinking,
and fouled myself with flesh’s filth.
Thus, I am loathsome hurt in body
and in soul,
with all kinds of sins;
for though the deed was not in the body,
the will was in the heart.
All this I acknowledge to you, sweet lady, holy Mary,
highest of all saints.
Intercede for me and defend me,
for I am worthy of torment.
Beseech, for me, from your blessed son:
pity,
and mercy,
and grace;
for he may not refuse you,
the maiden who bore him, anything that you ask. 24
I pray you and beseech you and entreat, if I may. 25
by his taking flesh in your blessed body; 26
by his birth;
by his holy fasting in the wilderness;
by the hard hurts and the shameful torments that he willingly
suffered for us sinners; 27
by his deadly fear; 28
and by his bloody sweat; 29
by his blessed prayers alone on the hill;
by his capture
and binding;
by his being led forth;
by all that he was condemned to;
by the changing of his clothes,
now red,
now white,
in mockery of him; 30
by his being scorned,
and spat upon,
and buffeted,
and blindfolded;
by the crowning with thorns;
by the sceptre made of a reed; 31
in scorn of him;
by his own cross
on his soft shoulders,
such a hard burden; 32
by the dull nails; 33
by the grievous wounds;
by the holy cross;
by the opening in his side; 34
By his bloody stream, that flowed many times; 35
in his circumcision;
in his bloody sweating;
in his painful crowning with thorns;
first in one hand and then in his other; 36
and at last in the piercing of his side, as well as other grievous
wounds.
Also, as saints believe, 37

74. the maiden who bore him, anything that you ask.
75. I pray you and beseech you and entreat, if I may.
76. by his taking flesh in your blessed body.
77. by his birth;
78. by his holy fasting in the wilderness;
79. by the hard hurts and the shameful torments that he willingly
suffered for us sinners;
80. by his deadly fear;
81. and by his bloody sweat;
82. by his blessed prayers alone on the hill;
83. by his capture
and binding;
84. by his being led forth;
85. by all that he was condemned to;
86. by the changing of his clothes,
87. now red,
88. now white,
89. in mockery of him;
90. by his being scorned,
91. and spat upon,
92. and buffeted,
93. and blindfolded;
94. by the crowning with thorns;
95. by the sceptre made of a reed;
96. in scorn of him;
97. by his own cross
on his soft shoulders,
such a hard burden;
98. by the dull nails;
99. by the grievous wounds;
100. by the holy cross;
101. by the opening in his side;
102. By his bloody stream, that flowed many times:
in his circumcision;
in his bloody sweating;
in his painful crowning with thorns;
first in one hand and then in his other;
and at last in the piercing of his side, as well as other grievous
wounds.
Also, as saints believe,
Textual Notes

1. OSM follows directly after UGA, without rubric or title. A fragment of this text is also found in BL MS Royal 17.A.xxvii (hereafter R) along with several texts from the Katherine Group: Sawles Warde, Seinte Katerine, Seinte Margarete, and Seinte

112. that other bloody stream,
113. that was in his first
114. taking in the tight binding,
115. so that the blood was wrung out of his blessed nails.
116. I entreat you that you beseech him by his shame;
117. by his suffering;
118. by his death on the cross;
119. by all he said, did, and suffered on earth;
120. by the holy sacrament of his flesh and blood that the priest consecrates;
121. through the grace of baptism;
122. through all the other sacraments
123. that holy church follows and uses—
124. through all [these], I beseech you, God's precious mother, that their might may help me,
125. and their strength prevail
126. where my offering fails,
127. for my belief is that through them I will be redeemed.
128. Jesus, your son and God's son,
129. gave himself to us completely, and all that he spoke and did and suffered on earth is ours.
130. May his suffering on the cross and his death destroy my sins,
131. and his arising raise me up in holiness of life,
132. and his ascension cause me to rise in high and holy virtues,
133. always from high to higher, until I see in Sion, the high tower of heaven,
134. that Lord of light
135. whom the angels ever behold,
136. and the longer [they behold him], the more they desire it,
137. for in that blessed song is all that anyone seeks.
138. Lady through your intercession to your blessed Son, grant my prayer.

Explanatory Notes

I have used the title from the rubric in R, since there is no rubric or title in Nero. Also following Royal, Savage and Watson (1991) used the title "An Orison to St. Mary" for their translation of this text. Thompson, however, edits pe orisyn of
literate. OSM begins right after Seinte Juliene, about halfway down the page of f. 70r with the rubric her cunces fone ovalum of seinte Mari[e]. The text of OSM in R begins with a four-line initial “S” in red, which is larger than the scribe, who left room for a three-line initial, had anticipated. The initial is simpler than others in the text, being all in red, with no green decoration as with others in the manuscript. This may be because it is a prayer, and the rubricator felt that it should not be over-embellished, similar to Prunje, which is the only text in Tm that does not have decorated initials or paraphe throughout the text. OSM ends at the bottom of f. 70v, which is the last leaf of a gathering. The original manuscript has been bound with another manuscript of a later date, which lacks its opening leaves (or, possibly, gathering).

OSM ends mid-line, which suggests that the scribe was not merely filling a leaf at the end of a manuscript (as it seems was the case with the copy of UGA in 1; see p. 186, note 1). Instead, it is likely that an entire gathering has been lost, along with the original end leaves. It is, of course, impossible to know what else might have been in that final gathering; certainly the rest of OSM would have taken less than another folio, suggesting that the gathering did contain other texts. The existence of the copy of OSM in R suggests that the Wooling Group texts had a far wider circulation than has previously been thought. The texts of OSM in R and N are different enough to suggest different exemplars, indeed, they are different lengths and punctuated very differently. This means that at least two copies of OSM were circulating prior to the copying of N. Similarly, the two copies of UGA suggest different exemplars, and therefore the existence of at least two copies of UGA prior to the copying of N (see Appendix E).

I have edited the text from N, although the readings in R are sometimes superior. I have noted where I have diverged from N and followed R, and where R offers a significantly different reading. However, R is sufficiently different that I have also added a transcription and translation of the text in Appendix A.

2 R reads pa here pat bythe bee: you have blessed this child.
3 R reads arede and omits all and ap; thus arede man cam.
4 R omits ll. 15-17, perhaps through scribal error due to eyelip.
5 R reads a me neman fleuray, emphasizing the sinfulness relevant to the speaker.
6 R reads schulde, meaning owing penance, or a debt of sin to God.
7 N reads was abornew. R reads mis perchei.
8 From R, N omits mis.
9 R reads mis likle srochelawelles. N reads ilowen sweyes moltes [sic] (ilowed is inserted above the line).
10 R mis.
11 R. N reads Godd (i.e., slow to God). R reads spuc to swiel, am slow to god, emphasizing the parallel by using parallel structure. The parallel with doing evil makes god “good,” the more sensible reading. However, sloth, the sin treated in these lines, is combating evil towards God (as well as zeal to do good), and the reading in N is not necessarily an error.
12 Lines 40-56 are a good example of the Nero scribe’s use of the punctus elatus to indicate contrast—in this case, contrast between different (and sometimes opposite) aspects of sin.

seinte Marie separately from the text found in Nero, which he calls Of long song of un lefili (following Morris), giving the impression that they are separate texts when in fact they are versions of the same text.

OSM is a free translation of Oratorio ad sanctum Mariam, a Latin verse prayer by Marbod of Rennes (c. 1025-1133, see Millett, Ancrane Wisse, p. x). The opening words of the Oratorio are quoted in Ancrane Wisse Part I, as if the anchorites to whom it was addressed would have been familiar with the prayer (Millett, Ancrane Wisse, n. 128, p. 18; AW I.24.349, p. 16).

Unlike UUL, which is a celebration of Mary’s attributes and her protection of sinners, OSM is a form of confession combined with the affective meditation on the passion that characterizes the other Wooling Group texts. The tone of the prayer is thus entirely different; OSM is less celebratory and more pungent as the speaker contemplates the wide gulf between her sinful self and Mary’s purity. Its poetic nature relies less on alliteration than on parallelism and exclamation. The scribe has peppered the prayer with punctuation that indicates where the reader/speaker should pause and think about the words on the page. For example, in the list of the sins of the five senses, each form of sin is set apart with a punctus, encouraging the reader to think about how he or she might have mis-spoken, mis-felt, etc. The confession uses broad categories of sin that the speaker/reader can use to examine her own sins: three enemies of the soul (the world, the flesh and the devil); the five bodily sins or senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting); and the seven deadly sins (pride, envy, wrath, greed, sloth, gluttony, lechery). Some of these are expanded upon; for example, the sin of the mouth include not only taste, but also several kinds of speech. The seven deadly sins are often contrasted with seven virtues: humility, kindness (or compassion), love, generosity, zeal (to God), temperance and self-control (see, for example, II. 49-52, where under the sin of sloth the speaker includes being both too quick to evil and too slow to good, confessing not only sins of commission, but also the sin of omission that is here described as a lack of zeal). These common categories serve as mnemonic devices, organizing the prayer in such a way that the speaker/reader can easily remember the kinds of sins she must confess, and apply the general categories to her own specific sins. This categorization of sin is also found in Ancrane Wisse Part 5 (on Confession) and is typical of the penitential manuals that began to proliferate after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 decreed that each Christian should attend confession at least once per year. Indeed, OSM is probably the earliest vernacular text composed for the use of the individual reader (rather than for preachers or confessors); this suggests that it was intended not for the general lay reader, but for an enclosed reader, such as an anchorite, in order for her to confess her sins when a confessor was not available, or to prepare for confessed that a confess would hear.

2 Morris translates “raised up” from R, which reads arede, from the verb rerede. Arradeth means to deliver, or save (souls); rerede means to raise up. Morris’s reading would emphasize both the contrast between humankind fallen through Adam’s sin and raised through Christ’s death, and the contrast between the devil who is thrown down through Christ’s death and humankind, who is raised up. The reading “deliver” is consistent with the following lines concerning the defence of the soul. Either reading is good; it is possible that the ambiguity is deliberate.
3 The metaphor of the struggle against sin as a wrestling match resonates throughout Ancrene Wisse. The image of the devil as a skillful wrestler for souls is part of the imagery describing the spiritual struggle undertaken by the anchoress, merging with the spiritual battle the anchoress wages against the devil in her anchorhouse, which is both castle and wilderness. By depicting the Incarnation as a wrestling match between Christ and the devil, the anchorite texts image the body both as the site of temptation and the site of the anchoress's resistance to temptation and sin through her imitation of Christ. The anchoress must wrestle with temptation as she fights the world, her own fleshly desires, and the devil. This wrestling or struggling against temptation is one of the three bitterestises represented by the three Maries (AW 6.12, pp. 140-41; cp. AW 4.51, pp. 90-91). In the Bible, the three Maries are identified in Mark 16:1. The second Mary is the mother of James (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Jacob) and John, the sons of Zebedee, two of Jesus' disciples. The author plays on the name "Jacob" to refer to the Old Testament patriarch Jacob, son of Isaac and Rebecca, who wrestled with an angel (Genesis 32:24). The author adapts the biblical text, as the anchoress (figured by Mary, not Jacob) becomes the wrestler.

The story of Jacob and the angel underlies other imagery in Ancrene Wisse as well. When Jacob wrestled with the angel his thigh was put out of joint. The hip, or thigh, is a euphemism for sexuality, and is associated in Ancrene Wisse with lechery. So, for example, in AW 4.37, p. 166, the devil catches on the hip those with whom he wrestles and throws them with a hip-throw into lechery. But, like the clever wrestler who takes note of what throw his opponent does not know, "Our Lord thought, as he watched all this, 'I will use a throw on you that you never knew, and can never know, the throw of humility, which is the falling throw,' and fell from heaven to earth and stretched himself out on the earth in such a way that the devil thought that he was entirely earthy, and was tricked by that throw..." (AW 4.87, p. 166). This parallels the idea that the Incarnation is a trick with which the Son of God deceives the devil into thinking that by his death he is defeated. For the image of the wrestling match with the devil in the Lives of the virgin martyrs whom the anchoress is encouraged to emulate, see St. Katherine, p. 106 (Savage and Watson, p. 279), and the physical battles of St. Julianus and St. Margaret with their respective demons (St. Margaret, pp. 62-64 [Savage and Watson, pp. 296-97]; St. Julianus, pp. 33-47 [Savage and Watson, pp. 313-16]).

4 Cp. Wohunge II, 94-100.

5 Specifically, a female advocate, from notings, pleading, advocacy (cp. SK, p. 397). Morris translates "my pleader." Note the difference in tone between OSM and UUL, especially UUL II. 107-20, where the speaker begs for Mary's help.

6 Retellens is a multivalent term that can mean accuse or speak against, but also deude or lay claim to. Note that the soul is gendered female, after the Latin alma, even when the speaker is male, as in UUL, although here the speaker is female.

7 Cp. Wohunge II, 191-209.

8 Ifxen: literally, of vices, to become fixed or established. A literal translation would be "wicked men and devils have fixed many wounds of vice upon me..." Morris translates, "Wicked men and devils have pierced me with many wounds that kill my soul...", which emphasizes the parallel between the wounds of sin and the wounds of Christ, whose body is pierced with nits and a spear.
9 See Wycliffe, 1. 204 and note 58. The world, the flesh and the devil are the three traditional enemies of the soul. This passage begins the speaker's confession. Bestul notes the importance of the cultural effect of the Fourth Lateran Council, with its requirement of annual confession for all Christians. This, combined with "the twelfth-century concern about the conscience and the cultivation of the interior life" leads to the merging of detailed descriptions of Christ's suffering in the Passion with a confessional mode that emphasizes "verbal self-reveling." Bestul notes that "this exposure of the self in language is most closely connected to the discourse of mysticism" (p. 161).

10 For the five wits or senses, see UGA, 1. 185-93 and note 38. The metaphor of the five senses as gates or windows through which sin can enter is part of the expanded metaphor in Sawles Worde where Wit and his unruly wife Will must guard the castle of the Soul. In order to guard the castle wisely, Wit (or Reason) must control Will, and she in turn must control her servants, the five senses. Ancren Wisse particularly stresses the idea that the five senses are gateways or windows that must be guarded carefully against the entrance of sin, just as the windows of the anchorhold must be guarded against the intrusions of the world (Part 2).

11 Or sinfully. Literally, mislooked, etc. Morris translates "looked amiss, hearkened amiss, felt amiss, spoken amiss, loved sweet smells."

12 Note that here speech, not taste, becomes the sin of the mouth/tongue. In UGA both are included (1. 190-91), although taste is associated with the nose and smell. Here, there is a subtle distinction between the five senses (the sense of the mouth is taste) and the five wits (of which one produces speech).

13 Pride is the chief of the seven deadly sins, and thus comes first. Gluttony and Lecherie are the most dangerous sins of the flesh, and are thus tackled at the end of the list.

14 "Oude" can also mean malice, resentment, or spite. Here, however, it comes as part of a list encompassing the seven deadly sins, and so envy is the best translation. The connotation of spite or malice is, however, appropriate, as envy is combined with anger to produce the sins of the mouth (i.e., evil speech).

15 Sunne tide could belong to either the line before, as I have punctuated, or the following line, i.e., "Sometimes I have unjustly possessed things...." The punctuation in Nero is not clear, and there is no capital to guide its interpretation. However, R has no punctuation between filkelsenge and sunne tide and follows sunne tide with a punctus, suggesting that it belongs to the list of the sins of the mouth associated with anger and envy, rather than the sins associated with greed that follow.

16 Here the speaker moves to the sin of greed.

17 Also quick or ready.

18 The sin here is sloth or idleness, which also includes (and leads to) the sin of despair (see 1. 56). R reads, spec to usel, not slow to god, which indeed reflects the sense of the lines more clearly, although as noted, godd in N is probably a superior reading to R's god (textual note 11).

19 I.e., gluttony.

20 I.e., lecherie.

21 Here the speaker acknowledges that it is the intent of the heart, rather than the action of the body, that defines sin. The author of Ancren Wisse also stresses this point, warning against many sins that an anchorress would likely not have the opportunity.
to perform, but might have the desire to do so. Although this is partly due to the fact that the _Ancrene Rwis_ author envisions a wider audience for his work (particularly in the chapter on Confession), it is also part of the emphasis on purity of heart, which cannot be attained without purity of body, but which is not determined by physical purity or enclosure alone. Purity of heart and intent is the prerequisite for the love of Christ, which is the goal and climax of the devout life, as described in the opening of _Ancrene Rwis_ Part 7. Such virtue is acquired by the battle with the seven deadly sins through the tools of hardship and penance, which the _Ancrene Rwis_ author describes as tools with which the anchoressa cultivates her heart (AW 7.1, pp. 144–45). The debate about the nature of sin in deed and/or intent was heated in the twelfth century, addressed by, among others, such noted figures as Bernard of Clairvaux, Abbot of Jumièges, and Peter Abelard.

22 Ultimately, the torment of hell, but as the _Ancrene Rwis_ author notes, the suffering caused by sin can also manifest itself in suffering in the world. More importantly, penance for sin often involves suffering, particularly in the ascetic life of an anchoressa (see particularly AW Part 6).

23 Or "beseech your blessed son to give me..." or as Morris translates, "to show me" (see l. 138 and note 43). Here, the speaker turns from an examination of her own sin to the remedy for sin in Christ's incarnation, made possible through the Virgin's motherhood, and his Passion, witnessed by his loving mother, who suffered along with him.


25 See CSM Textual Note 18.

26 The prayer moves here from listing the speaker's sins to the foundations of her prayer in Christ's life and works, beginning with the Incarnation. Thompson glosses _flesch fæng_ as "conception"; _fæng_ is from _fængen_, _fon_ to take, seize, or catch. Literally, the Incarnation is Christ's becoming flesh as he takes on human body. The point here moves into a list of the main events in Christ's life and, especially, his Passion, death, and resurrection, all of which contribute to the salvation of the human soul. In Christ's Incarnation, he takes on Adam's flesh, or human nature, with all its sufferings, in order to save it from Adam's sin. As in the list of sins above, the short phrases, each separated by a punctus, encourage the reader to meditate upon each event that is portrayed here, evoking love, compassion, and gratitude for the great love shown by Christ in each stage of his life. Note that while all of these images and events can be found in Wolunge, Wolunge tends to focus on the anchoressa's response to the Passion. OSM, on the other hand, focuses on the Passion itself. The prayer presents a coherent narrative, walking the reader through the events of the Passion and encouraging her to think through and meditate on those events and the fact of her own sin as the cause of Christ's suffering. Meditation upon Christ's suffering love and the reader's sin is encapsulated, evoking guilt, gratitude, grief, and love.

27 As in UGA and Wolunge, the shift from shorter lines to one long line, and then back to shorter lines, emphasizes the moment depicted in the long line of l. 79, as the reader moves into the description of Christ's suffering in the Passion. But it also summarizes Christ's whole life as continuous suffering for sinners. At the same time, the longer line reminds the reader that, in contrast to her own sinfulness (described in such detail just above), Christ was wholly sinless, and willingly suffered pain and
death in order to redeem the sinner from the torment of hell. See UGA II. 47-50 and note 14; Wolhunge II. 313-23 and note 88; II. 191-219 and note 57.

28 Or horror, terror, agony, suffering. Morris translates: "his mortal agony," stressing that Christ felt the same suffering and fear that any mortal man would. Contemporary Latin Passion texts explain that, although in his Godhead Christ could feel no fear, his manhood was fully susceptible to all the suffering (mental and physical) that any human could feel (see Besdul, pp. 151-52 and chapter 2). This line begins a series of lines on Christ's prayer on the Mount of Olives, traditionally known as "the agony in the garden," which immediately precedes his betrayal and arrest. The passage also reflects the idea that although Christ's physical torments were extreme, it was his mental suffering that was the greatest (see Shepherd, p. 66; also Wolhunge I. 350 and note 95; and AW 2.45, pp. 44-46).

29 See Wolhunge I. 316, and note 82.

30 This line refers to the mocking of Christ, when Pilate's soldiers stripped him of his white robe and clothed him in red, mocking him as "King of the Jews," crowning him with thorns and putting a reed in his hand as a mock sceptre (see II. 95-96 above, and Wolhunge I. 328). After this mocking, they restored his own garments to him. However, it also recalls the stripping off of his clothing, both before his scourging and at the crucifixion itself, when his white garments were replaced by the red "garment" of his torn and bloody flesh and the blood that then stained his white robe (see Besdul, pp. 29, 31 and 45). The idea of human flesh as a garment is common (see Wolhunge I. 145 and note 44, and Grayson). Later meditations expand on this image, contrasting Christ's white body and red wounds. Some even go so far as to describe the tearing off of his bloody garment at the crucifixion, narrating that the blood was so thick and stuck so fast to his clothing that when his robe was removed, chunks of flesh were torn off with it, further emphasizing his garment of white and red flesh (see Besdul, pp. 50, 55, 59). For the colours red and white, see UUL where red and white recall images of romance and love (UUL II. 37, 53, and note 15).

31 Note the play on the word rode, used both for the reed sceptre (usually rode or, as in Wolhunge I. 328, rode) placed in Christ's hand in mockery and the cross (rode) upon which Christ is crucified (I. 98).

32 I have translated druggenge as a scourge, meaning the bearing of a heavy burden (as Christ bore the heavy cross upon his shoulders). An alternate reading (as in Morris) is "dragging so hard," reading druggenge as the participle of drawen to tug or pull at. Savage and Watson translate "laboring so hard." Whichever translation is chosen, this line emphasizes the physical pain of the hard cross on Christ's soft (and, by this time, heavily scourged) shoulders. For the idea that Christ's skin is more sensitive than ordinary flesh, see AW 2.45, pp. 44-46 and Besdul, p. 33 and note 25.

33 Medieval Passion narratives tend to emphasize the dullness of the nails, which simply increased the difficulty (and the pain) of driving them through Christ's hands and feet. See UGA II. 253-54 and AW 4.95.1638, p. 111; see also Besdul, p. 55.

34 The wound in Christ's side is the focus of much late-medieval devotion, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; see Bynum, Wonderful Blood, pp. 3, 6, 13-15. But even in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the side wound is seen as an "opening" that provides refuge for the soul and a way in to Christ's heart, as well as evidence of his love (cp. Wolhunge II. 367-73 and note 101). In Ancene Mirre Part 4, the author speaks of Christ's five wounds as clefts in a rock into
which the soul may creep, like a dove. Indeed, he urges the reader, "drench yourself with his precious blood" (AW 4.95.1631, p. 111). For the copious flow of blood, cp. UGA E. 164-65.

35 The listing of Christ’s bleedings is another form of devotion that grows in popularity through the late Middle Ages, fostered in part by the Franciscan affective devotion that spread throughout England through the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. By the fifteenth century, texts containing formulae for counting the number of Christ’s wounds, images of the bleeding Christ or of the individual wounds (including dismembered hands and feet), and indulgences based on the recital of Avea or Pater Nosters in the same number as Christ’s wounds abounded. The bleedings are sometimes numbered as five, sometimes as seven. Here they include six bleedings: Christ’s circumcision, his sweating blood while praying in the garden before his arrest; the crowning with thorns; the wounds in his hands (and feet) from being nailed to the cross; the wound in his side; and the tradition that when he was arrested the bonds were so tight that blood flowed from his fingernails. A seventh bleeding, missing from this list, is Christ’s scourging at the pillar. For the numbering of Christ’s wounds see Bestul, pp. 32 and 43; Bynum, Wonderful Blood, p. 3.

36 The wounding of Christ’s hands seems to stand in for both the wounds in the hands and the feet, as representative of Christ’s being fastened to the cross. See note 35 above.

37 The five bleedings listed above are taken from the gospels; the next is from legend, and so is separated by the assertion “as saints believe.” For the image of Christ’s bleeding fingernails, see Wohlgem., Sp. 329 and note 84.

38 The Eucharist. Here the prayer turns from Christ’s deeds on earth to the sacraments that commemorate them, particularly the Eucharist and Baptism, symbolized by the blood and water that flowed from the wound in his side. Once again, this serves both as a mnemonic device and a focus for the reader’s meditation. Having meditated on the sufferings of Christ, his five wounds that heal the wounds of the soul and six bleedings, the reader meditates on the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood. The seven sacraments form a final mnemonic list (here shortened to two and a reference to "all the other sacraments" of the church), which leads the reader to meditate upon the function of the Holy Church in representing Christ’s presence on earth. It is interesting that the sacrament of confession is not mentioned, even though this prayer is a form of confession; the prayer does not, however, assume the presence of a priest/ confessor.

39 Note again the long line in the midst of shorter lines, emphasizing both the completeness of Christ’s gift and life, and the fact that this gift makes all he did and said ours; the gift of all his works and deeds makes the salvation so bought ours.

40 Note the parallel with l. 19: just as sin can kill/destroy the soul, Christ’s suffering and death on the cross kills/destroys sin. The fact that these lines occur at the beginning and end of the prayer creates a kind of frame, structuring the poem between the death of the soul, caused by sin, and the death of sin, achieved by Christ’s own death.

41 Hail Mélóhad refers to maidenhood, or virginity, as the tower of Zion. The association of the bliss of heaven with the sight of Christ or the Virgin, and with a sweet song (whether of angels, virgins, martyrs, or simply all saved souls) is common. In Ancene Wisse, Mary Magdalene is interpreted as both bitterness (from Mary,
meaning bitter) and hope (from Magdalen, meaning height of the tower—see AW 6:12, pp. 140-41).

42 See Wotan 1.34 and note 12.

43 Thompson and Morris suggest that tōde is an error for cōde, and thus Morris translates: "through thy intercession make known my petition to thy blessed Son."

However, tōde is a form of tōde, to grant, concede, or reward. In this case, even if it is Christ who ultimately grants the speaker's prayer, that prayer comes to Christ through the Virgin's intercession, and she is thus the instrument of its fulfilment.

44 Again, the text moves directly into the next prayer, LUL, without title or rubric. It is as if the Virgin Mary's intercession empowers the speaker/reader's own prayer, enabling the following prayer, addressed directly to Christ, her son.
On lofsong of ure louverde
A Hymn to Our Lord
A Hymn to Our Lord

1. Jesus Christ, God's son, true God and true man, born of the
blessed maiden, Mary,
who is maiden and mother without match,2
I, of all sinners, am most failed with sin, as I fear.
I pray and beseech you, with inward heart,
through your incarnation in a maiden's body by the Holy
Ghost;3
and through your birth without a breach of her body;
through all that you taught
and suffered for sinners on earth;
through your five wounds,
and the blessed flood that flowed from them;
through the iron nails and the crown of thorns;
and through the torment and the shame and your precious death
on the cross;
and through the same cross hallowed by your precious limbs,
on which you meekly stretched yourself out;4
and your mother's lamenting and St. John's sorrow when you
proclaimed them son and mother;5
for pity of your pain;
and through your joyful arising from death on the third day;
and through your glorious ascension into heaven;
through the grace and the gift of the Holy Ghost,
that on Whitsunday6 you sent to your precious disciples,
and poured out on those who truly loved and believed in you;
and through your dreadful7 coming at Doomsday to judge both
the living and the dead;
and through your holy flesh and your blessed blood, consecrated
on the altar;
through the power of baptism;
through all the other sacraments
that holy church believes in;
through your great grace and mercy, that is greater than all that
is named,8 except for the grace of the Holy Ghost,
who is equal with you and with your blessed father,
29. God, full of all goodness,
30. have mercy on me and hear my prayers.
31. Through the holy prayers of your mild mother, and St. John the evangelist,
32. and all your saints,
33. forgive me for my sins that are horrible and hideous in the sight of your eye.
34. Lord, I see them with great fear of your sight.9
35. do not look at them, lest you avenge them upon me in the fury of your wrath.
36. Lord, your apostle says thus:
37. If we condemned ourselves, we would not be condemned elsewhere.10
38. Kind, merciful God, I judge myself to you,
39. according to your mercy, which is greater than all my wickedness.
40. As surely as a drop of your precious blood that you shed on the cross
41. were enough to wash the sin of all people,
42. may the powerful streams and that river that flowed from your wounds
43. to heal humankind,
44. cleanse and wash my sinful soul;
45. through your five wounds laid open on the cross,11
46. driven through with nails and sorrowfully filled up,
47. heal me, sorely wounded
48. with deadly sins through my five wits;12
49. and open them,13 heavenly king, toward heavenly things,
50. and turn to the world your noble cross, upon which you spread yourself.
51. Be my shield and my defender on every side,14
52. against the devil's darts which he, the deceiver, shoots at me from every side.
53. May your passion quench the passion of sins that dwells within me.15
54. your torments preserve me from the torments of hell,
55. and your precious death from that death that never dies;
56. so that your death will decen the deadly desires of my body,
57. and the laws of my limbs.
May the world be dead to me,
and I to the world. 16
Through your arising, Lord, to life
without death,
raise me from the death of the soul,
and give me life in you; 17
that I might love nothing in this world but you, living Lord,
and whatever is good, for your sake;
that I might be dead to the world,
and ever live to you;
that I might say with St. Paul, who says,
"I live—not I;
but Christ liveth in me." 18
Lord, your mercy, although I have climbed high with this same
prayer,
who lie so low,
and have so much sorrow in my heart for earthly losses.
Gracious God, your mercy
For through this I die, who have just spoken 19 of such things,
and yet commit deadly sin. 20
High healing God, 21 help me,
and heal my heart of these things. 22
Beloved Lord, Jesus Christ, look toward me as I bow low,
and cry 23 to you about the things that afflict me most vexingly,
after my sins. 24
High Saviour, bend down to me,
and incline [your ear] to my prayers. 25
In myself I have neither wisdom nor honour, and am without
counsel;
I do not have what I need to lead my life in this world, and am
helpless;
I have a mind troubled in many ways and a heart sick with
sorrow, 26
and have no one to comfort me.
Precious Lord, as you are the counsellor of the perplexed, 27
counsel me, who am helpless and confused, 28
how I should conduct myself, and live on earth in maidenhood 29
and in purity of both soul
and body.
As you are the helper of the needy,
behold, high Lord, how human help fails me;
Let me be the reader for your help, so that I will trust and
hope in you alone, without end.
If I had done so before, I know for a truth it would have been
better for me than it is.
For while I trusted in people, you said,
"hold with them," and left me all alone with those that I
trusted in;
and they have failed me, heavenly Lord,
I believe for my good;
I praise you and thank you,
you have taken them away from me.
For you saw
that hope in them deceived me and you wanted me to hope and
trust in you alone.
To show me how this hope in your help alone will be better for
me
than [trust in] others was before,
you have deprived me of human aid;
for you would give me yours.
Blessed are you, who thus turn loss to gain;
surely all my woe on earth will lead me to joy,
if I love God with true belief.
Lord, I believe it, and I love, and will love you more, Lord,
through this affliction than [I did] before in all my prosperity.
For I know truly that it would have completely deceived me,
if not for the help of your grace.
Lord, I beseech you with inward heart, do not give me too much
or too little,
for through either many people frequently sin;
but grant that I might truly say with the maiden who says these
words about you:
"My beloved’s left arm holds up my head,” she says,
"and his right arm shall embrace me closely.
Let me be your beloved, and say as she says:
"Love, with your left arm,
that is, with your worldly gifts “hold up my head,” that I might
not through too much need fall into the filth of sin;
and “love, with your right arm.”

that is, in heaven with endless joys “embrace me closely.”

Thenceforth, sweet, gentle Lord, whatever it be that I will ask or desire, I pray you

that I might receive in obedience both need and prosperity as it pleases you.

Though by myself I do not have all that I need, nor does it come as soon as I would wish,

I will not despair of you, but am entirely certain that you will take from me what would do me harm,

and give me what I need, sweet, merciful Lord;

nevertheless, you are the one who sees all things, who waits for his time.

Now I have lost all human comfort, I know that you will send me the Holy Ghost to strengthen me,

and counsel me, and help me, and comfort me better than all those that I trusted in could do,

for thus the psalmist, David, says in the Psalter,

“The world has abandoned me,

and God has taken me in.”

Again, elsewhere he says,

“Have your delight in God, and he will give you the prayers of your heart.

Reveal to him the way that you wish to go,

and he will accomplish it.”

You know what I desire, all powerful God,

but in that, as in all else,

let your will always be done;

for you will soon enough do better by me than what I desire.

And I humbly beseech you, Lord, not through anything I deserve from you,

but through this hope,

and in this trust in your great mercy,

that you be my counsel now,

my help and my strength.

And I will love you now,

instead of those that I previously loved and trusted and hoped in,

for now I understand how true it is, what Saint Augustine says in his book:

“Wretched is the person who is tied with love to any earthly thing,
S
sweet soft Jesus, bless these who love you and your
love, yet without your gift no one can love you.

Lord, with the fire of the Holy Ghost,
set my heart ablaze and burn in all that is wretched in it.
and find it so horridly
that no one may love unless he abandons the constancy of your
love, the longer the more to
me deadly and the more to
give me the will and strength and understanding to abandon
every evil and to do good,
and so do by me,
and do by me,
and so do by me.
and so do by me.
180.  as you may,
181.  and can,
182.  and will.
183.  Merciful Lord, have mercy on me and on all Christian men.
184.  Amen.

Explanatory Notes

1 Like OSM, this prayer begins with no rubric or title, running directly on from the previous prayer. It is almost as if, having confessed her sins to the more accessible Virgin Mary, the anchoress is ready to move directly into an impassioned prayer to Christ. The only indication that it is a new text is the large initial that opens the prayer. It is found only in Nero, and the only title it has been given is that used by Morris and Thompson, which I have followed. Unlike UGA and OSM, the syntax of the lines is very complicated and makes sense only as poetry; a modernized prose version would have to break many of the sentences up and rearrange clauses and phrases. As in the other prayers, punctuation is used more to indicate units of thought than syntax—the punctuation indicates where the reader should pause and meditate on the phrase set apart. Except in places where the scribe has clearly omitted punctuation that is required for sense (either for a line break or syntax), I have retained the long phrases and placed line breaks where the scribe has placed his punctuation marks, in order to preserve the long and heavy "feel" of the whole, while recording the smaller units of thought that were intended to be meditated upon.

I have, however, modernized the punctuation of the translation.

2 Mala can mean equal or mate (Morris translates it as "mate," emphasizing Mary’s virginity). I have chosen "match" as it carries the same double meaning.

3 As in OSM, the prayer begins with a confession of sin, and a prayer for mercy and grace. The speaker rehearses all of the reasons that she might beg for mercy, beginning with Christ’s life, works, and Passion. The poem moves through Christ’s Incarnation, his deeds and words, his suffering, the five wounds and the instruments of the Passion, the resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the final judgement (almost a rehearsal of the major feast days of the Church calendar, as well as salvation history). It then moves to the Church as Christ’s representative, the sacraments (like OSM, stressing Baptism and Eucharist), and the intercession of the saints, particularly the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist, who stood at the foot of the cross. Again, the prayer uses the mnemonic list as a means of preparing (or making) a formal confession, and at the same time functioning as an inward confession to Christ, whom a priest can only represent.

4 See Wohunge I. 345 and note 93.
5 Cp. UGA II. 256-57.
6 Whitusunday is Pentecost. See Acts 2.
7 From essen, to terrify, or put in awe.
8 I.e., everything. In Genesis, naming is part of the creation of the world, as God names day, night, land, firmament, etc., in Genesis I. Naming is also part of the for-
nation of identity—what a thing is named determines what it is. To name something implies holding power over it; thus Adam names the animals in Genesis 2:19-20.

9 Or, of your power, authority, wrath; insight, understanding. The ambiguity is probably intended—the following line combines sight (do not look upon them), vengeance and wrath.

10 1 Corinthians 11:31: “But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

11 Cp. UGA II. 183-87.

12 For the five wits or senses, see UGA I. 186 and note 39; OSM I. 27 and note 10. In Ancrum Wise the five outer wits or senses are contrasted with the five inner wits or senses, which ought to be turned inward, to behold God within the heart, and upward, towards heaven, rather than outward towards the world, as the five outer senses are.

13 I.e., the five wits.

14 For the cross as a shield, see AW 4.95 1644-64, pp. 111-12; 7.4, pp. 147-48. Here, the cross is turned outward to defend the soul from the three traditional enemies of the world, the devil and the flesh.

15 Note the play on the word “passion.”

16 Galatians 2:20. See also AW 6.4, pp. 133-34.

17 Cp. Romans 7:5, 6, 23.

18 Galatians 2:20. See UGA II. 198-205 and note 42.

19 Spec is the past subjunctive of spekan; thus a possible translation is “who could ever have spoken.”

20 “et ... et” carries the sense of “first ... and then” so a possible translation might be “who first could speak of such things and then commit deadly sin.” Morris: “for hereby I die, who erewhile spake of such things, and (yet) sin deadly.” Savage and Watson: “For I, who have just spoken of such things and yet sin morally, die when I do it.” (p. 326).


22 i.e., of sin and death, but perhaps also of presumption.

23 Mourn can mean grieve, bewail, complain, or lament. It can also mean remember, call to mind, meditate, or consider. The dual function of the verb reflects the dual function of the prayer itself, in which the reader remembers and meditates upon her own sin, and grieves for that sin and the suffering it has caused.

24 Morris: “next to my sins.”

25 Morris: “bow thyself to me, and incline (thine ear) to my prayers.” Savage and Watson: “bow to me and bend to my prayers.” Cp. UGA II. 243-47, where Christ bows his head to Mary’s will. See also Woburne I. 356 and note 97 and AW 7.7.259-53, p. 151, where Christ’s arms stretched out on the cross are a gesture of love, a love that binds him to the will of his beloved, the archeress, as he bows down his head to ask for a kiss.

26 Morris: “I am in many wise disgust in mind and heart, sick with sorrow.”

27 Or those who lack counsel, the foolish, the wicked.

28 Literally, without counsel, uncertain.

29 The primary meaning of melihoth is virginity or celibacy, but it is also used to denote a lifestyle characterized by both purity of body and mind; indeed, the author of Ancrum Wise insists that purity of body is nothing without purity of heart, which is the goal of the anchoritic life (AW 7.1, pp. 145-46). This line also attests to the
female voice of the speaker, suggesting a reader who is vowed to virginity or celibacy, such as a nun or anchorite.

30. Or: "let me be eager for your help." Morris: "let me receive thy help the more readily."

31. Or depend on them, remain with them.

32. Morris: "and let me wholly rest by those that I trusted upon."

33. Morris: "...I believe for my good. I honour and thank thee that thou hast deprived me of them...." The syntax here is unclear: an alternative would be, "I believe that you have taken them away from me for my good, and I thank and praise you. For you saw...."

34. Song of Songs 2:6: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me", and Song of Songs 8:4.

35. Or unfold me completely. This ambiguity reinforces the dual sense that the reader will be both enveloped in the embrace of Christ and surrounded by heavenly bliss, or joy. Cp. UGA II, 240-44.

36. Morris: "entirely"; Thompson: "on hand."

37. Morris: "Though I have not entirely all that I want, nor conest thou to me as soon as I desired it, I do not mistrust thee...."

38. Or abandoned. See Wohange II, 162-7: The loss or abandonment of the world, including human company, is an essential part of the anchorite life.

39. Psalm 26:10: "For my father and my mother have left me: but the Lord hath taken me up."

40. Psalm 36:4-5: "Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the request of thy heart. Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it."


42. Augustine, Confessions IV.iv.11 and IV.ix.14.

43. See Wohange I, 1, and note 3.

44. The scribe has put a punctus after balsam; if one were to follow this punctuation, these lines would read: "set my heart on fire, and burn up all that is wretched within it, and feed it so henceforth...." It is possible that the scribe intended to highlight the importance of the inward life and the necessity of cleansing the inner senses and heart. However, grammatically, it makes more sense to punctuate after per tine.


46. See UGA II, 37-38 and note 11. See also Anchora Wiss. 7.17-18, pp. 151-52.

47. Morris: "to work well."

48. Or not from our works.

49. Or smart, grimace. Cp. Wohange I, 209.


51. Savage and Watson translate, "you have power, knowledge and will to...."

52. With the line breaks/punctuation, the parallel between wish, "will," as an auxiliary verb indicating future time and wish as the transitive verb "to will [something]" is highlighted, emphasizing the causal and inevitable connection between God's will and action.