[Essays in Medieval Studies 14](#)

"The muthes wit":
Reading, Speaking, and Eating in Ancrene

Wisse Kari Kalve

Since Caroline Walker Bynum published Holy Feast and Holy Fast ten years ago, many scholars of the Middle Ages have examined how bodies played a more complex role for medieval writers than had often been suggested by some vituperatively anti-carnal writings. Sometimes bodies could even provide the means to reach a spiritual connection with Christ, Bynum argued.1 I am convinced that bodies provided spiritual understanding in the Middle Ages—both in theory and in practice—and I am also convinced by those who argue that some bodies were also limited and hurt by the ramifications of medieval rhetoric which argued the superiority of soul to body.2 Ancrene Wisse exhibits this tension over whether the body is a hindrance or a help to the person seeking spiritual growth and, since it is written for an explicitly female audience, puts that tension into a gendered context. I am interested in exploring the connections between the soul and the body in medieval literature in order to analyze the constructions and interactions of subjectivity, bodies, power, and knowledge in the Middle Ages. After looking at the distinctions between inside and outside, soul and body, it becomes clear that the body and the soul cannot be separated in a straightforward manner, either discursively or practically.

Augustine himself, a key instigator of Christian anti-body rhetoric, recognized that the soul and the body were inseparably entwined since the Fall. Augustine, therefore, both drew on the body-soul binary and realized its limitations. Yet a scholarly focus on the binaries of gender and of body and soul has often left medieval scholars stuck arguing that women and bodies were either subversive of or contained by some entity called "the Church." Anchorites are a wonderful example of the limitation of this binary to understanding relations of power: literally contained, anchorites experience some freedom in the mere act of containment.3 The political and metaphorical meanings of "containment" become so complex as to render the binary hopelessly murky and politically useless. By looking at the rich discussion of the senses in Ancrene Wisse, we can see that the binaries are operating, but that they also frequently cannot capture the complexity of the text's analysis of the role bodies play in an anchorite's spiritual growth. Jonathan Dollimore, in his analysis of the concept of perversion in Western thought, has shown that from Augustine on, "perversion" has been defined as simultaneously an external threat and an internal deviation.4 That means that the role of the body in creating evil has never been clearly fixed and that bodies have always been more embattled boundaries than clearly demarcated evil spaces.

In order to shift the ground of the question of the value of bodies in the Middle Ages, I want to begin to explore how the body is figured as a boundary and which spaces it mediates between.5 In Ancrene Wisse, the anchorite's body is often figured as the wall of a castle or of an anchorhold. This wall has windows, and marks the boundary between the inner self—that is, the heart and soul—and the outer world. The body participates in the outer space, but can also serve the inner space, as critics such as Catherine Innes-Parker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne have shown, drawing on Bynum's work.6 The inner world is the more spiritual space. For example, the author reminds his readers that a pure heart is what matters, not external signs of belonging to a religious order:

> from the worlt witen him cleane ant unwemmet. her in is religiun. nawt i the wide hode ne i the blake cape. ne i the hwite rochet ne i the greie cuuel.7
> ("to keep oneself from the world, clean and unstained." Herein is religion, not in the wide hood, nor in the black cape, nor in the white mantle, nor in the grey cowl.)8

The clothing which signifies belonging to a religious order here instead becomes a sign of vanity. The clothes are external trapperies; the clean space is internal; the location of the body is not clear. The space which one guards against the world may include the body, or may be inside the body, but in any case the body is below the signifying clothes. The anchorhold itself, the walls of which can represent anchorites' bodies, creates an ambiguous space when it

is built abutting a church, neither inside nor outside the church building. As I will explain below, Ancrene Wisse portrays the anchoress herself as holding up the church; thus her anchorhold would be a necessary part of the church wall, not just another secular space adjacent to and outside of the church.

Often, in Ancrene Wisse, the body is portrayed as the space which guards the internal space of religion from the sins of the world. Every orifice, including the mouth, becomes a the gateway between inside and outside, between the world and the heart. This essay looks at the gateway of the mouth in order to see how the text's differentiation between the inner, spiritual space and the outer, material space breaks down as it is constructed. As the distinction between the spaces breaks down, even slightly, the sources of goodness, knowledge, and power in an anchoress's life become more difficult to pin down. By examining what happens to discourses about body and soul at the body, the borderline between inner and outer, it becomes clear that spiritual health comes from external influences working together with the anchoress's inherent spirituality.

Ancrene Wisse teaches two rules to female anchorites: the inner rule and the outer rule. The outer rule—which focuses on bodies and actions—enables the anchoress to keep the inner rule—focusing on the heart, on charity and belief.

> Ye schulen alles weis with alle mighte ant strengthe wel witen the inre [riwle]. ant the uttre for hire sake. the inre is eauer ilich. the uttre is mislich. for euch schal halden the uttre efter that ha mei best. with hire serui the inre. (fol. 1b 13-17)

(You should in all ways with all your might and strength guard well the inner [rule] and the outer for her sake. The inner is always the same, the outer differs; for each should keep the outer according to the way she can best serve the inner using her. [48])

Even as the author divides his concerns into two rules, he shows the two are linked: the outer rule, changing according to the anchorite's context and the needs she perceives in her heart, serves the inner rule. Although the author goes on to analyze the external rule as if the distinction between outer and inner will structure the text, the outer rule never really gets abandoned even as the text moves inward to discuss confession, penance, and love, before backing out to external things again. Linda Georgianna, for example, has argued that even though the text ostensibly divides the two rules, it actually "emphasizes the continuity of internal and external experience."9

The text turns to a discussion of the senses, or the five wits, as a first stage in treating the outer rule. The focus is on examining the senses as the first step in an inward journey of purification—guarding the heart in order to keep it within one's body. Citing St Gregory, the author asserts: "Na thing ne etflid mon sonre then his ahne heorte" (fol. 12b 10-11; "nothing flies out of a person sooner than their own heart" [66]).10 This image of the heart fleeing from the body hints that the wits can let things out from as well as into the body, but when it speaks explicitly about the senses, the text always refers to the danger as letting things into the body:

> Nurth ne kimeth in heorte bute of sum thing that me haueth other isehen other iherd. ismaht other ismeallet. ant utewith i felet. (fol. 23b 25-28)
> (Disturbance only comes into the heart from something that one has either seen or heard, tasted or smelled, or felt outwardly. [82])

This suggests that regulations for the senses are to protect the inner, spiritual self from contamination by the outside world, much as the anchoress protects herself by hanging a black cloth in her window, or by the act of enclosing herself within a cell.

In this essay, I use "senses" and "wits" interchangeably to mean the faculties which perceive stimuli—usually listed as sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch. These five faculties are those which the Ancrene Wisse author has listed as well, but the medieval text calls these "wits." The word wit helps emphasize the importance of these faculties for acquiring knowledge, as the verb wite, from Old English witan, was still commonly used for "to know" and "to learn." In Middle English, the verb wite, from Old English witian, "to guard," was often entangled with the forms and meanings of the verb "to know." So, when the noun wit is used, the reader would probably hear a pun with the verb meaning "guard,"11 as in "fife wittes the witeth the hearte as wakemen hwer se ha beoth treowe" (fol. 4a 2-28; "the five senses which guard the heart like watchmen when they are faithful" [51]). In appointing wits as guardians, therefore, the author of Ancrene Wisse follows what he probably considers to be an etymological lead.

In spite of the fact that the wits are to guard against external dangers, so the danger facing the mouth comes from what the anchoress has tasted—"ismaht"—when the author begins to investigate the senses connected to the mouth, he does

not write about eating and drinking, which is the way the mouth lets in the outside world. Instead he writes about speech, a means of letting the inner self out into the outer world. The author has shown a somewhat similar concern about the anchoress not bringing herself to the attention of the outside world when he wrote about sight, exhorting her neither to look too much at the outer world nor to allow herself to be seen by those outside, particularly men.12 There is a hint that she could cause a man's sin by letting him look at her, as Bathsheba, who revealed herself to David's sight, caused David's sin: "ha dude him sunegin on hire" (fol. 14b 5; "[she] caused him to sin with her" [68]). But this advice is offered at least ostensibly for the anchoress's own protection, so that she will not be led into sin by men who see her and find her attractive.13 It is harder to imagine how the anchoress's speech might lead to her own harm, and this admonition against too much speech—"wanton" speech—seems more a sign of that familiar fear of women's speech, one more way to deny the power of a voice to women.

This text does demonstrate a particular concern about women's speech. Anchoresses did gain a spiritual authority by renouncing the world, and the text shows a great deal of anxiety over the possibility of the anchoress using that authority in order to preach to a man. The first potential sin of speech is for the anchoress to talk too much to her priest. She should just listen to him and not try to be a teacher herself; she should not "leareth him that is icumen hire forte learen" (fol. 16a 2-3; "teach him who has come to teach her" [72]). In fact, she should preach to no men and should "readeth wummen ane" (fol. 17b 25; "advise only women" [75]). One of the images to help the anchoress imagine the dangers of speech is of a hen who cackles after laying eggs and therefore has her eggs stolen, linking speech specifically with reproductive females (fol. 16a 19; 73). An anchoress gives birth to good deeds, not to children, and speech allows any good she has produced to be stolen. Thus, goodness escapes along with the anchoress's potentially dangerous words, just as the heart can fly out of the body if the senses are not guarded well.

While the admonition against preaching and the imagery of cacklers and chatterers demonstrates a learned distrust of women's speech, the sin of too much speaking is far from exclusively connected with women in medieval England. The identification of eating and talking as both sins of the mouth becomes common in penitentials of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Eating too much, for example, is often seen to lead to speaking too much.14 In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Bernard of Clairvaux and Alan of Lille linked fasting from words with fasting from food.15 Although speaking is not "the muthes wit" (fol. 27b 9), as Ancrene Wisse acknowledges in an aside after the long reflection on speech ("though speech is not a ‘sense' of the mouth; rather, taste is, though both are in the mouth" [86]), it is often presented as a primary sin associated with the mouth or tongue. This author may be drawing on some earlier thirteenth-century penitentials which focus more on speech than on taste, but, as with his discussion of most sins, he adapts it to his audience and to his own interests. I am intrigued by how making speech the primary sin of the mouth connects to the image of senses as watchmen keeping evil out. By talking about speech here, which comes from inside an anchoress, instead of eating, thus changing the location of concern from outside the anchoress to inside—and by explicitly including a concern for how others will think about the anchoress—the author throws into question the distinctions he has set up between the dangerous outside and the pure inside.

I plan to analyze the relationship between inner goodness and knowledge and outer goodness and knowledge in other texts as well, but I start with Ancrene Wisse in part because of its attention to women's speech and the power of women's knowledge, and also because the author is so aware that his attention to speech as a "wit" is slightly odd. He seems to notice the gap between his analysis of the mouth and the explicit guiding principle of the section, that senses are watchmen: speech is not an external influence, so the guardian of the mouth does not need to keep watch merely over what comes in through the mouth. Alexandra Barratt finds that "the concept of ‘sins of the mouth' . . . functions as [Part 2's] submerged but articulating idea."16 I am arguing that this complex "wit" becomes central to the structure of Part 2 partly because the author has realized the mouth's ambiguous position of participating in both reception and transmission—reception of food, transmission of knowledge, and reception and transmission of both good and evil.

Speech itself also connects reception and transmission because it leads to more listening. Ancrene Wisse links speaking and listening; part of the danger of speech is that it leads to greater opportunity and greater desire to listen to others. When the anchoress engages in conversations with people other than her confessor, she exposes herself to hearing speech potentially far more evil than her own would ever be. This is like the danger of looking out her window and being seen by a man who leads her into greater sin than she would have encountered on her own.

Many of the images the author uses to illustrate the danger of speech and the wisdom of silence link eating with speaking, thus emphasizing the bodiliness of each sin and the interconnection of reception and transmission. Silence helps keep charity and righteousness inside the anchoress, nourishing her heart:

> Hope is a swete spice inwith the heorte that sweteth al that bitter that te bodi drinketh. Ah hwa se cheoweth spice. ha schal tunen hire muth. that te swote breath ant te strengthe throf leaue with in nen. Ah heo the openeth hire muth with muche meathelunge. ant breketh silence. ha spit hope al ut. ant te swotnesse phrof mid worltliche wordes. ant leoseth agein the feond gastelich strengthe. (fol. 20a-b 25-2)
> (Hope is a sweet spice in the heart that sweetens all the bitterness that the body drinks. But whoever chews spice must shut her mouth, so that the sweet breath and its virtue stay inside. But she who opens her mouth with much chattering, and breaks silence, she spits out hope and its sweetness entirely with worldly words, and loses spiritual virtue to the enemy. [78])

Here, the anchoress does not let out evil by speaking. Instead, she loses some of her internal virtue; some of her heart flies out from her body.
In some sections of Ancrene Wisse it may seem that the author simply mistrusts women's knowledge and women's speech. When, during the discussion of the dangers of speech, the text breaks into an analysis of the Fall which claims the Fall was caused by Eve's speech, a contemporary reader may decide that the author just does not have any respect for the anchoress's ability to reason and may indeed believe that she, since she is a woman, must indeed contain inherent evil and must be more in danger from her own weakness than from outer temptations and harms. This analysis gains strength when compared to a later passage, in which anchoresses are called to vigilance against temptation and the author evokes an image of a weakened state of reason as a woman. In this strikingly antifeminist exemplum, the author highlights the weakness of women and the foolishness of trusting them:

> Ah the bimeasede ysboset lo hu measeliche he dude. sette a wummon to geteward. that is feble warde. (fol. 74a 23-24)
> (But, the bemused Isboseth, see how bemusedly he behaved, setting a woman, that is, a weak guardian, as a doorkeeper. [147])

Isboseth, who foolishly appointed a woman as a guard, was killed, as will be all those who let their spirit drop its guard. Since a woman can't be trusted as a guard, how much can women readers trust their own, female, reason? The author of Ancrene Wisse never seems to ask this question, and indeed demands again and again that his women readers use their reason. His book assumes that its readers, explicitly female, are capable of making correct choices even in the face of ambiguities the devil creates as snares. Anne Savage and Anne Clark Bartlett both argue that this author loves his female readers yet also participates in a discourse which sometimes espouses hatred of women. In some parts of the text, the author subverts this discourse, as when he draws on courtly language for the story of the lady in the castle.17 This author draws on the discourse that women are weak guardians, yet he expects these women to guard themselves and he takes on the task of helping them to do it.

Ancrene Wisse takes very seriously its observation that outer rules change according to individual circumstances, and because of this it allows for a dialog with its female readers, asking them to interpret according to their particular needs and sometimes even to expand on the ideas the author can only briefly mention. Just as the boundary of the body is traversed by knowledge and by good and evil, so the boundary of this text can be crossed by readers. At one place the anchoress almost becomes a co-author of the text,18 when she is urged to understand more words than are written:

> ye mote makien that wite ye i moni word muche strengthe. thenchen longe therabuten. ant bi that ilke an word under stonden monie the limpeth ther to. for yef ich schulde writen al, hwenne come ich to ende? (fol. 55a 5-9)
> (As you know, you must turn [this book's words] into many very strong words, think about them for a long time, and by these same words understand many others that are implied by them. For if I had to write everything, when would I come to an end? [123])

So she can add to the text as she reads it, and she can also ignore things that do not apply to her, thus, in a sense, deleting them in her own reading. For example, his intended readers probably do not need the penance of mortification of the flesh, but he writes about it in case he reaches a general audience:

> Al that ich habbe iseid of flesches pinsunge: nis nawt for ow mine leoue sustren. the otherhwile tholieth mare

> then ich walde. Ah is for sum that schal rede this inohreathe: the grapeth hire to softe. (fol. 102b 13-16)
> (All that I have said of the mortification of the flesh is not meant for you, my dear sisters, who sometimes suffer more than I would like; but it is for anyone who handles herself too gently who reads this willingly enough. [187])

This author must believe these anchoresses' reason is stronger than Isboseth's watchwoman, since he sees her as able to judge her own needs and to decide how to use outside information to best help herself.19 Her inner self is strong enough to be able to use outer influences wisely. So the anxiety this author betrays by treating women's speech as a particular problem does not reveal criticism of a woman's inner being, her heart. For the most part, in fact, the text does not seem to suggest that the inner, spiritual part of the person is gendered; gender seems only to affect that rule which differs according to a person's condition, the external rule.

Although the five wits must be carefully guarded, they all can also be used for good input from the world. Not all external influences are evil. The eyes, for example, can be used to read Ancrene Wisse. The mouth can be used for good speech such as confession or reading holy works aloud or saying prayers. The mouth must also eat and drink, though rather abstemiously. But here, just as the author urges his readers not to overuse mortification of the flesh, he also urges them not to be so abstemious as to weaken their bodies:

> leoue sustren ower mete ant ower drunch haueth ithuht me ofte leasse then ich walde. Ne feaste ye na dei to bread ne to weattre. bute ye habben leaue. (fol. 111b 17-20)
> (Dear sisters, your food and drink have often seemed less to me than I would want you to have. Do not fast on bread and water any day unless you have leave. [199])

The author plainly says that the flesh is an enemy of anchoresses, "ure fa" he says, but God has commanded that humans keep their bodies well: "haldne hit up" (fol. 38a 6-7; "though our flesh is our enemy, we are commanded to uphold it" [100]). And even though the flesh and the world are unreliable and dangerous, anchoresses must use their sense and external knowledge to come to understand God's love and to know the path to spiritual intimacy with Christ. As Georgianna says, "Paradoxically, the knowledge that leads to God is identical with the knowledge that leads to sin—knowledge of the world and the flesh."20 I do not find these forms identical except insofar as they both depend on knowledge of the world, since how knowledge is used is part of the context which defines the knowledge. But Ancrene Wisse does imply that one must know the world to know goodness; one must use one's wits. This author exhorts his readers to read, to confess, to pray, to look at the host raised in communion, to eat, and he also helps them to use worldly images in order better to understand spiritual concepts.21 He even talks about worldly love such as the love between body and soul to help the anchoress imagine the far greater love "iesu crist haueth to his deore leofmon" (fol. 106b 4-5; "Jesus Christ has for his dear beloved" [192]).

The anchoress's senses, therefore, interact with the world; they do not just passively receive it or just block it out. Each anchoress is expected to actively moderate the relationship between inside and outside. She should block out sensory pleasures and other distractions, and she should let in teachings and helpful metaphors. She should primarily keep her thoughts within herself, though very occasionally she may give advice or rebukes, but she can also serve as a physical example to others, through her very enclosure. Her anchorhold becomes the visible sign of her inner, hidden, pure heart. The text's major focus is inside the anchorhold, on the anchoresses' personal, spiritual health. Reading the text with attention to distinctions between inner and outer caused me to see the author's deep respect for the inner goodness of anchoresses. Yes, they are prone to sin, and in particularly female ways, but that sin tests a spiritual self depicted throughout the text as profoundly beautiful. While the anchoress should focus on preserving that inner beauty, the author also reminds her several times that her personal struggles benefit the outer world. Anchoresses become "cwic bone" (fol. 45b 24; "living prayers" [111]) through whom many people are saved. Anchoresses also help to hold up Holy Church, defined by the text as Christian people (fol. 39a 1; 101). By focusing on her inner strength the anchoress becomes an external support.

When the anchoresses' bodies become an external support for the Church, they merge with the church building, as I suggested above. Even though churches in the twelfth century marked "entrance points" as "dangerous intersections of inner and outer, described in terms of bodily metaphors,"22 church buildings themselves somewhat break down a clear distinction between inside and outside. An anchorhold clinging to the side like both a barnacle and an anchor helps demonstrate that ambiguity. When you enter a medieval church, there are smaller and smaller spaces inside, several

ways to progress still inward, including looking into architectural spaces depicted in images such as stained glass windows. Also, since churches were often in the process of being rebuilt—either made larger, or repaired from fire or collapse—the space of many churches at this period was not static. So the architectural metaphors which help to define the body are themselves less fixed than they seem now, when the churches which remain seem permanent and separate from worldly life.23

This text maintains its criticism of the flesh, but its careful distinction between the inner and the outer life breaks up into a much more elaborate relationship between inside and outside. Bodies, therefore, do not separate inner knowledge and goodness from outer knowledge and goodness; instead they connect and help mediate between inside and outside, just as the manuscript that contains the text of Ancrene Wisse connects the reading anchoress with the writing author.

Notes

1. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987).
2. In this essay, I try to use "the body" or "body" to refer to a discursive concept and to use "bodies" or "one's body" to refer to humans' material substance. The two constantly create and interrupt each other, yet I find it useful to attempt the distinction, partly so that "bodies" don't get lost in "the body" and so that the discursive power of "the body" is not trivialized.
3. See, for example, Anne K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons* (Berkeley, 1985).
4. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford, 1991).
5. Jocelyn Price (later Jocelyn Wogan-Browne), "'Inner' and 'Outer': Conceptualizing the Body in Ancrene Wisse and Aelred's De Institutione Inclusarum," in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 192-208, is also engaged in the project to explore the complexity of the "articulation" of the "territory" that is the body (207). In this excellent essay Price does not focus on the role of the senses in articulating that shifting territory.
6. Catherine Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction: Images of the Female Body in Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine Group," *Comitatus* 26 (1995), 27-52; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester, 1994), pp. 24-42.
7. All quotations are from The English Text of the *Ancrene Riwle*: *Ancrene Wisse, Edited from MS. Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS o.s. 249 (London, 1962). I have modernized spelling and expanded abbreviations. This citation is from fol. 3b 17-19. Future citations will be identified by folio and line number parenthetically. I have silently expanded contractions and used modern spellings to replace the Middle English letters thorn, yogh, and eth.
8. Translations are from Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York, 1991), here p. 50. I will cite this excellent translation parenthetically throughout this essay.
9. Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), pp. 141-42.
10. See Eric Jager, "The Book of the Heart: Reading and Writing the Medieval Subject," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 1-26, for an analysis of the ambiguous meaning of the word "heart" in the Middle Ages. It embraced both physical and spiritual

meanings, as the physical, intellectual, and moral center of humans (5). Paradoxically, the Ancrene Wisse author would also like the anchoress to fly away from the world and the flesh like a bird, soaring in contemplation (fol. 38b 100). This suggests that the heart ought occasionally to leave the flesh, but that the flesh itself does not constitute the person.

11. The Corpus text tends to use wakeman or weard as nouns for "guard."

12. An excellent analysis could also be done of the way the eyes create and cross boundaries of inner and outer in *Ancrene Wisse*, and thus help create subjectivity. Sarah Stanbury has analyzed gazes on Christ and in the *Clerk's Tale* to begin to think about how the Middle Ages used the gaze and thought about subjectivity differently from the late twentieth century in "Regimes of the Visual in Premodern England: Gaze, Body, and Chaucer's Clerk's Tale," *New Literary History* 28 (1997), 261-89. Stanbury (p. 279) cites Kathleen Biddick's description of Christ's body in the Middle Ages, that ultimate representation of bodies, as "a fluid body that troubled any container": Biddick, "Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 389-418, at 410.

13. Anne Clark Bartlett also refers to this Bathsheba incident as an example of the misogynist elements of Ancrene Wisse. She asserts, and I agree, that contemporary critics should not explain these elements away; misogyny is present in this text, but it is less strong than the love that the author shows to his readers. See Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca, 1995), 71.

14. See, for example, R. F. Yeager, "Aspects of Gluttony in Chaucer and Gower," *Studies in Philology* 81 (1984), 42-55.

15. See Michael Camille, "Mouths and Meaning: Towards an Anti-Iconography of Medieval Art," in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), p. 49. He is drawing on Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, pp. 43-44.

16. Alexandra Barratt, "The Five Wits and Their Structural Significance in Part II of Ancrene Wisse," *Medium Aevum* 56 (1987), 12-24, at 22.

17. Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, pp. 69-70; Anne Savage, "The Translation of the Feminine: Untranslatable Dimensions of the Anchoritic Works," in *The Medieval Translator* 4, ed. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Exeter, 1994), pp. 181-99. For a different view, that Ancrene Wisse's author betrays his lack of respect for his women readers through his textual strategies, particularly his attention to earthly metaphors, see Elizabeth Robertson, "The Rule of the Body: The Feminine Spirituality of the Ancrene Wisse," in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright, and Joan Bechtold, (New York, 1990), pp. 109-34.

18. Anne Savage, "The Translation of the Feminine," p. 182, writes that she "include[s] the audience as an honorary author . . . since the writer addresses them personally"; this move has been made by the author of Ancrene Wisse as well.

19. See Jocelyn Price, "'Inner' and 'Outer,'" p. 205, for a careful explication of these lines and the image which follows, showing that the penance these women practice is depicted as protecting them from outside forces of evil, rather than torturing their own bodies.

20. Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, p. 7.

21. Among others, Elizabeth Robertson, in "An Anchorhold of Her Own: Female Anchoritic Literature in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Equally in God's Image*, ed. Bolton Holloway et al., pp. 170-83, at 176, demonstrates how the text uses worldly experiences to teach the anchoresses.

22. Camille, "Mouths and Meaning," p. 48.

23. Castles and cities also have what seems like a clearly marked outside, but then multiple inner spaces. Deborah S. Ellis has analyzed the instability of the purported safety of the internal space of a home in relationship to the *Clerk's Tale* in "Domestic Treachery in the Clerk's Tale," in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit, 1987), pp. 99-113.