

THE FEMALE BODY, ANIMAL IMAGERY, AND AUTHORITARIAN  
DISCOURSE IN THE ANCRENE RIWLE

by

LENORA KAY MARSH, B.A., M.A.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE LITERAL BODY: OUTER RELIGIOUS LIFE AND AUTHORITY.....	34
III. LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE BODIES: INNER RELIGIOUS LIFE, CONTROL OF SENSORY ORGANS, AND GENDER- SPECIFIC RHETORIC.....	79
IV. FIGURATIVE BIRD BODIES: SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION AND CLERICAL AUTHORITY.....	129
V. FIGURATIVE BEAST BODIES: THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND FÉMININE VICE.....	195
VI. CONCLUSION.....	248
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	253

## ABSTRACT

Much recent scholarship has demonstrated that medieval spirituality is characterized by preoccupation with the body at both the literal and figurative levels. Religious literature of the Middle Ages, written for uneducated (lay) audiences, consistently illustrates clerical concern for control and discipline of the physical body in devotional and penitential activities which are considered essential for salvation of the soul. In addition, images of beast and bird bodies--which range from the relatively benign pelican to the wrathful wolf--are often used as rhetorical and mnemonic devices in medieval sermons and religious literature to inspire fear in uneducated audiences and encourage them to engage in appropriate Christian behavior. Most medieval didactic literature--through traditional authoritarian discourse--establishes and reinforces the power of church officials over the lay audiences to which clerical sermons are directed, audiences which are often associated with bodily transgression and resistance to reform.

The subject of this dissertation is the Ancrene Riwe, a well-known medieval didactic work which contains a full repertoire of human and bestial body images used rhetorically to reinforce clerical authority over a lay audience. However, this thirteenth-century Middle English guide was written by an anonymous male cleric to instruct an audience comprised, exclusively, of women religious ( anchoresses) rather than of both men and women. Therefore, gender issues arise in study of the rhetoric and imagery of this work. In the Ancrene Riwe, traditional authoritarian discourse often becomes more recognizable as antifeminist discourse which seems designed

to limit a female anchorite's access to both clerical authority and spiritual expression. The present study devotes more attention than has previously been given to the Riwe author's stylistic use of both real and metaphoric human and animal body images when directing a female audience in spiritual life. Through close reading and rhetorical analysis of numerous passages in the guide, this dissertation re-examines the importance of the body and authority in this work and notes the points at which the discourse of the Ancrene Riwe tends to place restrictions on its audience of medieval women religious.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation supplements existing scholarship on the Ancrene Riwe, the well-known thirteenth-century guide, or rule, written in Middle English by an anonymous male cleric for an audience of three young female recluses. The Ancrene Riwe has received a great deal of critical attention for more than a century. It has often been studied in relation to other thirteenth-century English works, which are now referred to as the Katherine Group and the Wooing Group and are believed to have been written specifically for women religious.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars have attempted to reconstruct its historical and geographical background. Others have concentrated on the language, linguistics, rhetoric, stylistics, and imagery of the guide. In more recent years, feminist readings of the guide have also emerged which devote attention to the Riwe author's attitude toward his female audience and his emphasis on a very material or bodily spirituality. These studies often conflict with one another on the subject of misogyny. The Riwe was originally written for an exclusively female anchoritic audience, and textual evidence in the guide often suggests that the Riwe author is consciously or unconsciously antifeminist. However, the personal respect and affection that the Riwe author expresses toward his audience in his text seem to negate this conclusion. As Anne Savage asserts, it is difficult for modern critics to charge

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<sup>1</sup> Works from the Katherine Group include: Sawles Warde, Hali Meidhad, Seinte Katerine, Seinte Marharete, and Seinte Juliene; works from the Wooing Group include: On Ureisun of ure Louerde, On Lofsong of ure Leidi, On Lofsong of ure Louerde, and De Wohunge of ure Lauerd.

the Riwe author with blatant misogyny; at the same time, as she comments, "his attitudes are still enthroned within a discourse about women which is largely or totally unacceptable to many."<sup>2</sup> A point that further complicates the gender issues raised in examination of the Riwe is that the original guide was copied and adapted for various audiences long after its own time.<sup>3</sup> Later religious writers obviously found it useful--with minor revisions--even for audiences of male religious.<sup>4</sup> The present study takes the position that the Riwe is characterized by antifeminist discourse, but does not necessarily reflect blatant hatred, fear, or distrust of women on the Riwe author's part. Since the author's true intentions cannot be determined with certainty, it seems more productive to demonstrate the way in which the discourse of the Riwe so easily merges with authoritarian discourse in general. Antifeminist and authoritarian discourse are not necessarily synonymous in medieval culture but become so in the Riwe author's rhetoric. Such rhetoric continually reinforces the power of the medieval church and the weakness of the laity regardless of whether the lay audience is secular, religious, male,

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<sup>2</sup> Anne Savage, "The Translation of the Feminine: Untranslatable Dimensions of the Anchoritic Works," The Medieval Translator, vol. 4, ed. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 191.

<sup>3</sup> The latest version of the Riwe presently extant is from the early sixteenth century, which indicates that the manuscript survived long after its original time. See The Ancrene Riwe, trans. M. B. Salu (1955; Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1956), xxiii.

<sup>4</sup> E. J. Dobson, The Origins of Ancrene Wisse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 1, 64. Dobson states that portions of the Riwe "might have been written in the same way for any audience" (1) and explains that at least two copies of the guide were "adapted (if imperfectly) for a male audience" (64).

female, or a combination of these.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the present study primarily examines how the rhetoric of this work--as is evidenced in the author's stylistic use of human and bestial body imagery--establishes and reinforces authority over a lay audience but does not ignore the gender issues which are suggested by the text of the Riwle. Through a combination of historical, cultural, gender, and rhetorical analysis, this dissertation re-examines the importance of the body and authority in this work. I devote attention to the Riwle author's stylistic use of both literal and figurative human body images and of figurative animal bodies when directing a lay religious audience in ascetic practices and spiritual understanding.

### Review of Criticism

#### Scholarship on the Lives of Female Religious in the Middle Ages

In order to accurately and narrowly contextualize study of the Riwle, one must consider as far as is possible the specific situation of female anchorites in thirteenth-century England as opposed to that of anchoresses or women in other types of religious professions in thirteenth-century continental Europe, or even in earlier or later centuries. Much has been written about the lives and experiences of medieval religious women, including anchoresses (on the continent and in England), but detailed studies of anchoritic life in general have rarely devoted extensive discussion

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout this dissertation, when referring to secular audiences, I use the term lay to indicate people who are uneducated in that they do not read or speak Latin. When referring to religious audiences, I use the term--as in lay brothers or lay sisters-- to indicate persons such as monks, nuns, or anchorites who have taken vows and follow religious professions, and may have preaching or teaching duties, but who are distinguishable from priests or higher religious officials in that they do not have ordained authority to administer communion, hear confessions, or perform sacred rites. The term is also used to refer to monks, nuns, or anchorites who may not read or speak Latin.

specifically to the Ancrene Riwe, its author, or the anchoresses for whom this manual is written. And though studies of works written by, for, or about continental religious women in the Middle Ages may suggest that the experiences of English and continental women are very similar--or even that the experiences of all English religious women are similar--it is risky to rely too heavily on such assumptions.

A number of historical, social, and cultural explorations of female religious life and spirituality in both continental Europe and in England inform the present study but at the same time demonstrate the lacunae that exist in Ancrene Riwe scholarship. For example, studies by Jane Tibbets Schulenburg and Penny Schine Gold, offer information on the lives of French nuns before the thirteenth century. Schulenburg's article on the enclosure of medieval religious women from the years 500 through 1100 provides insight into the broad historical setting that precedes the composition of the Riwe. But as Schulenburg herself asserts, her study is not limited to the religious enclosure of women in England, but to "the developments of enclosure in the general area of medieval France, with references [my italics] to Germany and England."<sup>6</sup> In addition, her project is primarily concerned with monastic rather than anchoritic enclosure--that is, with the degree of enclosure expected of nuns living communally in

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<sup>6</sup> Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100)," Medieval Religious Women: Distant Echoes, eds. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, Cistercian Studies Ser. 71 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 52. In this article, Schulenburg primarily discusses the differences between the degree of enclosure which was expected of nuns and that expected of monks and the difficulties that requirements of strict enclosure posed for women religious communities. She also examines reforms which called for even more strict enclosure of nuns during the Carolingian Period than at earlier or later times in history. In general, more strict enclosure within a monastic community was required of women than of men, but this was especially true from about 800 to 1100, the time during which radical reforms occurred.

convents rather than that of anchoresses living individually in small anchorhold cells. The Riwe anchoresses were not nuns but strictly enclosed passive religious. Unlike nuns, who did charitable work and often offered shelter to outsiders within their convents, anchoresses were expected to have little if any interaction with the outside world, and strangers were rarely, if ever, invited into an anchorhold. An anchoress's primary duties were not to aid the poverty-stricken or infirm, but to engage in prayer and contemplation. Therefore, despite the useful information Schulenburg's work offers on the lives of medieval women religious, her conclusions do not directly apply to the Riwe anchoresses.

Similarly, Penny Schine Gold's study of the experiences of twelfth-century women is limited to examination of only religious women in France whose lives may be comparable in some ways to those of the English women in the Riwe audience, but certainly not exactly the same historically, socially, or culturally. In addition, Gold's observations about women religious are based on evidence concerning women in religious communities rather than in anchorholds.<sup>7</sup> Neither Schulenburg nor Gold, however, has devoted discussion to anchoresses living in thirteenth-century England.

On the other hand, Ann K. Warren's work on only English anchorites in the Middle Ages has helped to narrow the historical and social contexts in which the Riwe should be examined. She explains, for instance, that during the Middle Ages there were always more female recluses than male ones in

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<sup>7</sup> See Penny Schine Gold, The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985), 76-115. Gold devotes one chapter of this study to religious life in twelfth-century France. She offers a brief historical survey of French nunneries, discusses how various monastic reforms affected women religious, and provides a detailed account of the organization of France's Fontevrault Abbey, wherein both nuns and monks lived and worked harmoniously for over a century.

England, and that this was especially true in the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Warren also indicates that female anchorites were more common in England than on the continent because England, unlike many European countries, “lacked the urban atmosphere” which would make it possible for women to follow less strictly enclosed religious professions.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as she states, “English women had fewer choices” in religious professions than continental women of the same time period.<sup>10</sup> Though Warren’s study devotes relatively little attention to the Riwe anchoresses, her work offers an accurate historical and social context for analysis of this particular anchoritic guide.

Though anchoritic life has not been her sole concern, Sharon Elkins may also be counted among scholars who have devoted attention specifically to female religious life in England. She has examined the experiences of such women during the twelfth century and has devoted more discussion to the Riwe author, audience, and the guide itself than Warren.<sup>11</sup> Elkins’ work also includes an entire chapter on English eremitic life in which she discusses Eve of Wilton and Christina of Markyate, twelfth-century English anchorites.<sup>12</sup> But neither Eve nor Christina was as strictly enclosed as the anchoresses in the Riwe audience; and both of these women had experiences in cloistered

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<sup>8</sup> Ann K. Warren, Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985), 18-20.

<sup>9</sup> Warren, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Warren, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Sharon K. Elkins, Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988), 156-159; she includes a brief segment in which she discusses the advice that the Riwe offers to the anchoresses for whom it was written.

<sup>12</sup> See Elkins, 19-42.

religious life, which the Riwle anchoresses seem not to have had. Therefore, one must be cautious even when attempting to compare Eve's and Christina's situations and experiences to those of the Riwle audience. A Riwle scholar should also be mindful of the fact that though the lives of Eve and Christina are well-documented, these English anchoresses lived some one hundred years earlier than the Riwle anchoresses. Likewise, though scholars have compared the life (and writings) of Julian of Norwich to the Riwle, it must be remembered that Julian lived some one hundred years after the Riwle anchoresses.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the works of the Katherine Group, the Ancrene Riwle is the only manuscript presently available to modern scholars which offers insight into the experiences of religious women who lived, specifically, in thirteenth-century England. In addition--though a few brief rules written for English and Irish male recluses exist--the Riwle is also the only extant thirteenth-century English regula originally written expressly for a group of female anchorites.<sup>14</sup> Any critical study of the Riwle must be contextualized in such a way that it takes into account the real historical and social experiences of its author and audience in their own time.

A number of extensive studies of history and culture in the religious writings of the Middle Ages, which should certainly be considered in an exploration of the Ancrene Riwle, have been produced by Caroline Walker Bynum. Though Bynum has devoted little attention to the Riwle itself, she

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<sup>13</sup> For information on her life, dates, and writing, see Julian of Norwich, A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich, eds. E. Colledge and James Walsh, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> Warren, Anchorites and Their Patrons, 295-296. According to Warren, rules for thirteenth-century British male anchorites include: "Admonitiones, written by Robert, a priest, for Hugo, an anchorite. . . . Regula reclusorum dubliniensis, the Dublin Rule, written for male anchorites by an anonymous author. . . . Regula reclusorum Walteri reclusi, circa 1280. . . . The Lambeth Rule. . . . written for male lay recluses in English in the thirteenth century."

has offered thorough and insightful illustration and commentary on the cultural significance of both literal and figurative bodies in the writings of male and female religious in the early and high Middle Ages. For example, she has called attention to the fact that medieval churchmen engaged in many debates about whether or not man's earthly body is the same one that will be resurrected after God's final judgment.<sup>15</sup> She has also addressed depictions of the bodies of Christ and the Virgin Mary in medieval art and religious literature.<sup>16</sup> In addition, she has devoted extensive study to the bodily mortification practices--such as fasting and flagellation--that medieval religious women are known to have engaged in in their attempts to imitate Christ's suffering and has suggested that severe mortification practices and mystical visionary experiences were vehicles through which medieval women religious were able to critique or subvert male clerical authority.<sup>17</sup> Bynum has explored how the bodily spirituality of women religious is reflected in works written by women themselves and by their male

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, a summary of such debates in Caroline Walker Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone, 1992), 253-265. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, "Reassemblage and Regurgitation: Ideas of Bodily Resurrection in Early Scholasticism," The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (New York: Columbia U P, 1995), 117-155. Here, Bynum--providing numerous photographs of depictions of bodily resurrection in art and sculpture--discusses at length various medieval views on what type of body resurrected Christians might have in the afterlife. She explains for example, that Peter Lombard has asserted, "A boy who dies immediately after being born will be resurrected in that stature which he would have had if he had lived to the age of thirty, impeded by no defect of body" (126).

<sup>16</sup> See Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages," Fragmentation and Redemption, 79-117; see also Bynum "...And Woman His Humanity"; Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages, Fragmentation and Redemption, 151-179.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," Fragmentation and Redemption, 119-150. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987).

biographers and hagiographers. She has, however, primarily treated the well-documented practices of continental European religious women such as Angela of Foligno and Catherine of Siena. As I mentioned earlier, much less evidence survives to enlighten scholars on the visionary experiences and mortification practices of English religious women. Though Bynum has addressed the visions of Christina of Markyate, and her motivation for following a religious profession, she has had little to say about the Riwle, its author, or its audience.<sup>18</sup> This is understandable since the Riwle itself, written by a man for an audience of women, offers little insight into the bodily mortification activities that its female audience may have actually engaged in, but the work does offer a great deal of information about the practices that its male author suggests are appropriate for his female audience to perform on their bodies.

The Riwle is filled with references to literal and figurative bodies, which reflect the same medieval preoccupation with bodiliness and body imagery which Bynum has so thoroughly addressed. But the intensity with which the Riwle author forbids certain mortification practices, or advises moderation of these, indicates that he may have been one of many thirteenth-century churchmen who advocated moderation of asceticism for laity in general. Textual evidence in the guide also indicates that the Riwle author was probably aware that many women religious in particular used fasting and bodily punishment subversively during his time. Therefore, the present study suggests that the Riwle may also, at least in part, represent one male cleric's reaction to--and perhaps his attempt to counteract or control--the

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<sup>18</sup> For her brief references to Christina and to the Riwle, see, Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 27, 172, 222, 247, 281; see also Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption, 37-38, 137 and Bynum, The Resurrection of the Body, 222, 251 (n 91), 331-34.

severe and subversive ascetic practices of medieval religious women which Bynum has addressed in her copious studies. The Riwle author exercises control over his audience through the use of authoritarian discourse. Therefore, in addition to contextualizing the Riwle historically, socially, and culturally, this dissertation attempts to provide a broad rhetorical context for examination of the discourse of this anchoritic manual.

The Riwle differs from the traditional rule for religious in that it is more lengthy, prescriptive, and authoritarian than most. The Riwle author is influenced by traditional patristic and medieval models for religious guides, but he often deviates from these in significant ways in order to meet the needs of his particular audience. In the present study, I will illustrate such differences by comparing the Riwle to guides written by Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred.<sup>19</sup> My analysis of the Riwle focuses not only on how the author employs literal and figurative human body images, but also on how he uses figurative bird and beast images as rhetorical devices in authoritarian discourse to exercise control over his audience. Therefore, general research on medieval bestiaries and aviaria, which also inform this study, now deserves attention.

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<sup>19</sup> The text of what has come to be called the Rule of St. Augustine appears in the appendices of J. C. Dickinson, The Origins of the Austin Canons and Their Introduction into England (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1950), 273-279; Benedict, The Rule of St. Benedict: In Latin and English with Notes, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981); Aelred of Rievaulx, "A Rule of Life for a Recluse," Treatises and the Pastoral Prayer, trans. Mary Paul MacPherson, Cistercian Fathers Ser. 2 (1971; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 43-102.

### General Scholarship on Animal Imagery in Medieval Religious Writing

The Riwe author's use of animal imagery is influenced by a long tradition. From the patristic period and well into the Middle Ages, religious writers have used bird and beast images to teach spiritual concepts to both religious and secular lay audiences.<sup>20</sup> The Bible is the source of most, but not all, of the bird and beast images that came to be popularly utilized by medieval churchmen to teach spiritual concepts to such audiences. Medieval sermons are also often influenced by ancient scientific writings on the behavior of birds and beasts, and on animal treatises, such as bestiaries and aviaria, which were prevalent before and during the Middle Ages. An ancient work entitled Physiologus is the earliest known popular treatise on animals from which both patristic and medieval writers and preachers drew for instructional exempla and was the primary source of the medieval bestiary. The Riwe author--in addition to using beast and bird images from the Bible--draws from Physiologus, and one or more medieval bestiaries derived from Physiologus, for information on many of the beast images that he employs so abundantly in Part IV of the guide. It is not my intention to provide a survey of all such treatises in the present study. Instead, I will employ useful information from representative texts, which were in existence at the time the Riwe was written, for comparison purposes. Two representative texts on animal imagery, which I will use, are Francis Carmody's translation of Physiologus, the forerunner of the traditional

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<sup>20</sup> This tradition is treated at length in G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (1933, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) and G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1926).

medieval bestiary and T. H. White's translation of The Bestiary, a twelfth-century treatise on beasts.<sup>21</sup> Since numerous versions of Physiologus and the medieval bestiary are extant, I also make use of Florence McCulloch's Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries. Though written more than thirty years ago, McCulloch's work still provides a wealth of comparative information on Physiologus and on bestiaries which were in circulation among religious writers during the Middle Ages. McCulloch has surveyed and examined "the various families of Latin manuscripts" of Physiologus and "the four principal French bestiaries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," which seem to have derived from Physiologus, and noted "similarities and differences" between the descriptions of various animals and the spiritual significance that has been attached to each over time.<sup>22</sup> A more recent study by Ron Baxter adds to McCulloch's work and offers further insight into the purposes for which Physiologus, and the medieval bestiary were used by religious writers.<sup>23</sup> In addition, a recent collection of articles on the medieval bestiary, edited by Willene Clark and Meradith McMunn, aids my examination of the Riwe author's use of animal imagery.<sup>24</sup> The present study is also informed by the insightful commentary of Beryl Rowland on the

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<sup>21</sup> Physiologus: The Very Ancient Book of Beasts, Plants and Stones, trans. Francis J. Carmody (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1953); The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts, trans. T. H. White (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1960).

<sup>22</sup> See Florence McCulloch, Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1962), 8. The French bestiaries she examines include those compiled by Philippe de Thaon, Gervaise, Guillaume le Clerc, and Pierre de Beauvais.

<sup>23</sup> See Ron Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages (London: Courtauld Institute, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> See Willene B. Clark and Meradith McMunn, eds., Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and Its Legacy (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989).

symbolic meanings which have been attached to bird and beast images throughout history.<sup>25</sup> Comparison of the Riwe author's exegesis of animal images with that found in traditional animal treatises suggests that the Riwe author uses his sources for beast imagery selectively, in order to reinforce the power of the clergy and the weakness of the laity, when instructing his audience.

The Riwe author also makes use of patristic and medieval sources on the behavior and exegetical significance of birds, which include (but are not limited to) the works of writers such as Rabanus Maurus, Gregory the Great, and Alexander Neckam. I will use several of these early Christian writings as representative texts for comparison purposes in the present study.

Additionally, I find Willene B. Clark's translation of, and commentary on, the aviarium of Hugh of Fouillooy useful for comparison with the Riwe. Clark dates the composition of Hugh's aviarium between about 1130 and 1149.<sup>26</sup>

Though it cannot be incontestably proven that the Riwe author knew Hugh's aviarium, a number of similarities between the Riwe author's exegesis of bird figures and Hugh's are evident when the two treatises are compared.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, both Hugh and the Riwe author wrote for very similar audiences. According to Clark, Hugh's treatise was originally written

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<sup>25</sup> See Beryl Rowland, Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1973); Beryl Rowland, Birds with Human Souls: A Guide to Bird Symbolism (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1978).

<sup>26</sup> The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouillooy's Aviarium, ed. Willene B. Clark, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 80 (Binghamton: State U of New York, 1992), 9.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the Riwe author's familiarity with another of Hugh's works, De Claustro Animae, suggests that he could have known Hugh's aviarium. Dobson has found direct quotes from this Hugh's De Claustro in the Riwe. See Dobson's discussion in Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 23-24.

specifically for an audience of lay religious men; <sup>28</sup> the Riwe author wrote for an audience of lay religious women. If he was not specifically influenced by Hugh's aviarium, he drew from many of the same sources as Hugh. James F. Maybury has identified a number of sources for bird imagery which the Riwe author and Hugh seem to have had in common, including Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Alexander Neckam.<sup>29</sup> Comparison study of works such as those mentioned above and the Riwe demonstrates that the Riwe author uses exegetical information on birds selectively just as he does information on beasts, a tendency which has the effect of reminding a lay audience of their powerlessness in relation to medieval clergy. In addition, the Riwe author's selective exegesis of bird figures suggests that he places more limitations on a female audience's spiritual expression than Hugh places on a male audience's. For example, Hugh expects monks to preach, or to teach and advise others, and his interpretation of bird images reflects this conviction. But the Riwe author habitually omits references to preaching, teaching, or advising others when addressing an audience of female lay religious, which suggests that his selective use of bird imagery is influenced by the gender of his audience. Having outlined the broad medieval context of this dissertation, I will now review criticism on the Ancrene Riwe itself, which has bearing on the present study.

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<sup>28</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 2.

<sup>29</sup> James F. Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe: Its Method and Its Tradition," Diss. U of Massachusetts, 1969, 2-40. In this portion of his dissertation, Maybury traces numerous sources from which the Riwe author could have drawn for his exegesis of the pelican, nycticorax, sparrow, ostrich, and bird nest images, which occur in Part III of the Riwe. I will discuss these at length in chapter four of the present study.

### General and Rhetorical Scholarship on the Ancrene Riwe

Most early scholars of the Riwe sought to discover the date and place of origin of the manuscript, to identify its author and audience, and to determine which of the extant manuscripts may have been the original. Though a number of manuscripts of the Ancrene Riwe were listed in seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century library catalogues, such as those from the Cotton Library, these received no thorough scrutiny until they came to the attention of James Morton, who published the first modern English translation of the Ancrene Riwe in 1853 and made early attempts to date the work and to identify its author and audience. Despite the concerted efforts of Morton and a number of other scholars—including Hope Emily Allen, Vincent McNabb, R. W. Chambers, J. R. R. Tolkien, and E. J. Dobson—information on the date, author, and audience of the Riwe remains inconclusive. It has been broadly accepted, however—largely based on the significant work of Tolkien and Dobson—that none of the extant manuscripts of the guide is the original, that at least two Middle English versions of the text are believed to have been copied only a few years after the original was composed, and that one of those two manuscripts may well have been revised by the original author himself. Based on comparison of the dialects of Middle English copies of the manuscript, Tolkien indicates that no original version of the Riwe is presently in existence.<sup>30</sup> According to Tolkien and Dobson, the two oldest extant copies of Riwe are the manuscripts entitled Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402 and Cotton Cleopatra C, which are both

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<sup>30</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, "Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meðhad," Essays and Studies, vol. 14 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1929), 109.

written in Middle English. In addition, through extensive study of marginal notations in the Cleopatra version of the Riwe, Dobson has demonstrated that the original author himself probably edited the Cleopatra manuscript. Then, as Dobson explains, the Cleopatra was copied, along with the original author's revisions, by the scribe who composed the Corpus Christi version of the rule. Because of Dobson's convincing argument that the Corpus Christi manuscript is a "fair copy" of the Cleopatra, scholars who write critical studies of the Riwe treat the Corpus Christi text as a primary source in the absence of an original manuscript; but they also frequently use passages from the Nero text, which do not appear in Corpus Christi, to supplement their studies.<sup>31</sup> I see no reason to deviate from this practice in the present study.

In addition to trying to pinpoint the date and to identify the author and audience of the Riwe, scholars have produced modern English versions and source studies of the guide, and some have also devoted attention to rhetoric and stylistics in the Riwe. Geoffrey Shepherd, Robert Ackermann, Roger Dahood, Mary Salu, Bella Millett, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Anne Savage, and Nicholas Watson have produced modern English versions of all or parts of the Riwe, and have made headway in identifying the Riwe author's sources.<sup>32</sup> Also noteworthy is Shepherd's analysis of the Riwe author's debt

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<sup>31</sup> The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe edited from B. M. Cotton MS. Cleopatra C. VI, ed. E. J. Dobson, EETS, ns 267 (London: Oxford UP, 1972), ix.

<sup>32</sup> Translations and source commentary are found in: Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson and Sons, 1959); Ancrene Riwe: Introduction and Part I, eds. Robert Ackerman and Roger Dahood (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984); The Ancrene Riwe, trans. M. B. Salu (1955; Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1956); Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse, eds. and trans. Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1992); Anchortic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works, eds. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist P, 1991).

to other medieval rhetoricians or preachers, found in his modern English translation of Parts VI and VII of the guide.<sup>33</sup> In addition, T. P. Dolan has directed attention to "the stylistic skills" and "astonishing range of rhetorical devices" that the Riwe author demonstrates in Parts II through V of the guide.<sup>34</sup> Dennis Rygiel has produced several analyses of the Riwe author's rhetorical style.<sup>35</sup> The present study, in part, re-examines the rhetoric of the Riwe, devoting attention to the author's use of rhetorical tone and his manner of addressing his audience but also calls attention to the author's stylistic use of beast and bird imagery. Therefore, a review of criticism on animal imagery in the Riwe will also be useful here.

#### Scholarship on Animal Imagery in the Ancrene Riwe

Though an extensive study of imagery in the Riwe-- which treats animal imagery primarily as incidental--has been done by Janet Grayson, few scholars have devoted a great deal of attention specifically to the author's rhetorical use of animal figures in the work.<sup>36</sup> This is surprising since the

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<sup>33</sup> See Shepherd, Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven, lix-lxxiii.

<sup>34</sup> T. P. Dolan, "The Rhetoric of Ancrene Wisse," Langland, The Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 203.

<sup>35</sup> See Dennis Rygiel, "The Allegory of Christ the Lover-Knight in Ancrene Wisse: An Experiment in Stylistic Analysis," Studies in Philology 73 (1976): 343-364; "Structure and Style in Part 7 of Ancrene Wisse," Neophilologische Mitteilungen 81 (1980): 30-35; "Ancrene Wisse and 'Colloquial' Style--A Caveat," Neophilologus 65 (1981): 137-143; "A Holistic Approach to the Style of Ancrene Wisse," Chaucer Review 16 (1982): 270-281; see also Dennis Rygiel, "A Critical Approach to the Style of Ancrene Wisse," diss., Cornell U, 1972.

<sup>36</sup> Janet Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse (Hanover, NH: U P of New England, 1974). Grayson has produced an extensive study of how the imagery of the Riwe unifies the whole work because the figurative and literal images within the text continually support, build upon, grow out of, or recede into one another, making the structure of the work circular rather than linear.

Riwe author utilizes bird and beast imagery more abundantly than other medieval religious writers when teaching spiritual concepts to a lay audience. In addition, as Morton W. Bloomfield has observed, the Riwe author is the first medieval religious writer to use beast images in a systematic catalogue and discussion of the Seven Deadly Sins.<sup>37</sup> The fact that the Riwe author relies so heavily on bird and beast metaphors for instruction of his audience seems significant, yet current scholarship on the guide can only boast of a few published studies on this topic.<sup>38</sup> Noteworthy is James F. Maybury's article on the bird images in Part III of the Riwe in which Maybury identifies some of the probable sources from which the Riwe author drew for exegesis of the pelican, owl, and sparrow figures. He concludes that the author is familiar with a wide variety of sources for bird imagery and that he is adept at using "his great store of knowlege" selectively and imaginatively in order to instruct his audience in "the vital lessons of monastic life."<sup>39</sup> Victor E. Graham has also briefly commented on the Riwe author's use of "the pelican legend" as an example of wrath rather than as a metaphoric representation of Christ, which Graham finds "unusual."<sup>40</sup> Lucinda Rumsey's treatment of the

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<sup>37</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (1952; East Lansing: Michigan State U P, 1967), 148.

<sup>38</sup> Other commentary on beast or bird imagery in the Riwe can be found in dissertations and theses. See for example, James F. Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe: Its method and its tradition." Diss. U of Massachusetts, 1969. See also Mary Agnes Crilly, "Beast Imagery of the Ancrene Riwe," Thesis, St. John's U, 1961 and Grover J. Cronin, "Bestiary Material in the Literature of Religious Instruction of Mediaeval England," Diss. U of Wisconsin, 1940, 102-113.

<sup>39</sup> James F. Maybury, "On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwe, with Some Comment on Sources," American Benedictine Review 28 (1977): 101.

<sup>40</sup> Victor E. Graham, "The Pelican as Image and Symbol," Revue de Littérature Comparée 36 (1962): 241.

scorpion image found in Part IV of the Riwle is also significant. Rumsey finds it surprising that the author should employ the scorpion as a metaphor for lechery when he catalogues the Seven Deadly Sins, stating that it was more common, in the Riwle author's time, for religious writers to associate lechery with such creatures as "the ape, horse, goat, and sow."<sup>41</sup> She explores a number of sources for scorpion exegesis, and explains that this creature was often associated with women who tempt men into sexual lust, which makes it an appropriate symbol for warning men against the dangers of women; but since the Riwle is written for women rather than men, Rumsey observes that the scorpion "seems inappropriate in a text designed for an audience of enclosed anchoresses."<sup>42</sup> The Riwle author does indeed use many of the bird and beast images in the guide selectively, and this dissertation treats the author's use of these in depth through close reading and analysis. Gender issues emerge when such close reading of passages which contain animal imagery is done; therefore, recent feminist scholarship on the Riwle also deserves review here.

### Feminist Scholarship on the Ancrene Riwe

Since the late 1970's, feminist studies of the Riwle--and works from the Katherine Group with which it is often associated--have also begun to appear, and these often conflict with one another on the issue of misogyny. Some feminist scholars have debated whether or not the Riwle's emphasis on a very bodily spirituality for women limits or enables its audience's

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<sup>41</sup> Lucinda Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse," Medium Aevum 61 (1992): 48.

<sup>42</sup> Rumsey, 50.

expression of religious devotion. For example, though Linda Georgianna has noted references in the Riwe which can be considered misogynist, she concludes that the Riwe author is a medieval humanist who is well aware of his audience's very real struggle to achieve spiritual enlightenment and salvation in a material world which does not reflect the peaceful, contemplative atmosphere of the anchoritic cell.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Georgianna believes the Riwe author often undermines medieval clerical authority and allows his audience a great deal of flexibility in decisions about day-to-day activities, such as religious devotions.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, Bernice Kliman has noted that "Pauline ideas about women's inferior intellect and dangerous sexuality can be seen quite clearly" in the Ancrene Riwe.<sup>45</sup> She adds that despite the Riwe author's genuine fondness for his female audience, he does not see the anchoresses as equal to men in intellect, and he fears their sexuality. Therefore, Kliman concludes that the Riwe's "genial and humane author is not a misogynist but a sexist and an anti-feminist."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Frances Beer has asserted that because the Riwe author sees his audience as spiritually and intellectually inferior to men, he attempts to manipulate them into viewing themselves as "morally defective" and "without sufficient

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<sup>43</sup> See especially, Linda Georgianna, The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1981), 2, 3, 6, 7, 127, but she reiterates this idea throughout.

<sup>44</sup> Georgianna, 15-31. Georgianna explains that a number of religious writers—including the Riwe author, Augustine, Peter the Chanter, and Jacques de Vitry—express concern that too much attention to outward rules for life or behavior in a monastic environment may be detrimental to the spiritual understanding that should be gained by members of a religious community. Therefore, such writers often discount the authority of "manmade (17)" rules in favor of the laws of the gospels.

<sup>45</sup> Bernice W. Kliman, "Women in Early English Literature, 'Beowulf' to the 'Ancrene Wisse,'" Nottingham Mediaeval Studies 21 (1977): 43.

<sup>46</sup> Kliman, 38.

reason" to govern their own behavior.<sup>47</sup> She adds, "It is difficult to imagine that his manipulative approach can have done other than reinforce his charges' belief in their baseness and inadequacy."<sup>48</sup> Cheryl Frost has found it paradoxical that the Riwle author exhibits an affectionate concern for the spiritual health of his audience at the same time as he seems to imply that the feminine sex is inferior.<sup>49</sup>

Elizabeth Robertson, in her early studies of the guide, asserts that the Riwle, unlike guides written for male religious ascetics, is characterized by constant references to the concrete and bodily, which indicates that this text is "governed by its male author's view of women as daughters of Eve, inescapably rooted in their bodies."<sup>50</sup> Therefore, as she explains, the Riwle author is fond of using quotidian exempla, related to women's sensory experience with objects in the material world, which constantly "draws the attention of the contemplative back to earth" to real or lived experience.<sup>51</sup> Robertson also discovers a significant pattern in the Riwle author's revision of his sources. He alters passages from such continental authors as Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor by omitting references to "biblical

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<sup>47</sup> Frances Beer, Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages (1992; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 72.

<sup>48</sup> Beer, Women and Mystical Experience, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Cheryl Frost, "The Attitude to Women and the Adaptation to a Feminine Audience in the Ancrene Wisse," Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association 50 (1978): 235.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Robertson, "The Rule of the Body: The Feminine Spirituality of the Ancrene Wisse," Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism, eds. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1989), 109.

<sup>51</sup> Robertson, 113.

commentaries" or other written works and replacing such references with "objects or events taken from the everyday experience of the anchoress."<sup>52</sup> In addition, Robertson observes that the Riwe author's references to Eve continually reinforce the idea of woman's original "sexual guilt."<sup>53</sup> She concludes that the Riwe author's use of imagery implies that woman is "dictated by willful impulse rather than reason" and constantly reminds the anchoress of her "inevitable association with earthly experience because of the embodiment of her soul in female flesh."<sup>54</sup> However, in a later study of the Riwe and works from the Katherine and Wooing Groups, Robertson revises her thesis and asserts that "male Christian writers viewed the uneducated [whether male or female] as they did women--as willful, sensual, rooted in the body, and therefore capable of being taught abstract Christian ideals only through a concrete, pragmatic style."<sup>55</sup> Robertson's evidence that medieval religious writers associate all lay audiences (rather than just female laity) with both the body and the will suggests--as does later research from Caroline Walker Bynum, to which I will turn later--that scholars who have viewed the Riwe as an antifeminist work should rethink their position. Such evidence suggests that what appears to be medieval antifeminist discourse may all too readily converge with the authoritarian discourse of medieval religious writers in general.

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<sup>52</sup> Robertson, "Rule of the Body," 116.

<sup>53</sup> Robertson, 112.

<sup>54</sup> Robertson, 129, 130.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Robertson, Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990), 147.

Some scholars who have written on the Riwle believe that body and flesh are synonymous in medieval religious thought, but others make distinctions between the two.<sup>56</sup> For example, Karma Lochrie has argued that medieval religious women were less associated with the body than the flesh. As Lochrie asserts, both Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, following Pauline reasoning, made distinctions between body and flesh, and believed that “the source of man’s evil [was] in the flesh, rather than in the body.”<sup>57</sup> Further, Lochrie asserts that both Augustine and Bernard use a “gendered analogy” to explain the relationship between the body and the soul.<sup>58</sup> Both associate woman “with the perviousness of the flesh which began with a fissure as the result of the Fall and which has festered into ulcers since,” thereby causing mankind to continue in sin.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, according to Lochrie, “Woman [flesh] occupies the border between body and soul, the fissure through which a constant assault on the body may be conducted” and is “a painful reminder of influx alienating body from soul.”<sup>60</sup> With this Augustinian and Bernardine idea in mind, she suggests that in promoting

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<sup>56</sup> This ongoing debate in modern scholarship seems to have resulted because medieval writers often use the terms body and flesh ambiguously. For example (and I speak only in general terms), one medieval writer might use flesh as a synonym for body, while another might use the term as a synonym for will (that is, the will or desire to commit sin) and assert that the body itself cannot sin without the flesh/will to do so. Yet another writer might refer to flesh—in what modern readers would consider literal terms—as the skin that covers the body. In the present study of the Ancrene Riwe, I do not participate in this debate. To do so would require research far beyond the scope of the present project.

<sup>57</sup> Karma Lochrie, “The Language of Transgression: Body, Flesh, and Word in Mystical Discourse,” Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: State U of New York P, 1991), 19.

<sup>58</sup> Karma Lochrie, Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh, 19, 20.

<sup>59</sup> Lochrie, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Lochrie, 21.

what he considers the "ideal" of strict bodily and sense enclosure for anchoresses, the Riwle author attempts "to counteract the conspiracy of the feminine with the breachability of the flesh."<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Catherine Innes-Parker--seeming to view body and flesh as synonymous in medieval thought--has argued that in the Riwle author's use of female body images, "[e]rotic imagery is combined with images of motherhood and fertility" in such a way that an anchoress--through her meditations on spousal union with Christ and on Christ's enclosure in the virginal womb of Mary--may view her feminine body (or flesh) as redeemed from the material weaknesses associated with it.<sup>62</sup> As Innes-Parker concludes, "Ultimately, female flesh is uniquely transfigured [in the imagery of the Riwle] as it reflects and reenacts the supreme paradox of Christianity, in which that which is weak and shameful is that which redeems the world."<sup>63</sup>

Scholars have also examined the Riwle author's preoccupation with bodiliness in cultural and social contexts. For instance, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has found evidence that the Riwle author's insistence on bodily enclosure is not as radical or passive as some might think.<sup>64</sup> Medieval anchoresses, as a general rule, were expected to be more strictly or radically enclosed than medieval nuns and to follow the most passive and rigorous of all religious professions. For example, anchoresses were discouraged from

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<sup>61</sup> Karma Lochrie, "The Language of Transgression," 124.

<sup>62</sup> Catherine Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction: Images of the Female Body in Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine Group," Comitatus 26 (1995): 34.

<sup>63</sup> Innes-Parker, 52.

<sup>64</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," Framing Medieval Bodies, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester U P, 1994), 34.

the charitable work to remedy poverty and illness, which nuns commonly engaged in, because such work involved physical contact or close interaction with other people and might endanger the anchoress's soul. The primary duties of an anchoress were to avoid interaction with people in the outside world as much as possible and to devote her life to prayer and mortification of her own body. But Wogan-Browne suggests that the strict and passive enclosure of the body which the Riwle author advocates in a written guide for religious recluses, does not necessarily reflect the lived experience of his audience. According to Wogan-Browne, evidence in the Riwle text indicates that the anchoresses in the Riwle audience, despite their apparent strict and passive enclosure, lived in a religious community which was, in more ways than some modern readers might realize, similar to the more social and autonomous environment of nuns following the active enclosed life.<sup>65</sup>

As this review of feminist criticism demonstrates, scholars are often divided on the gender issues that the Riwle presents. Bella Millett--in her recent annotated bibliography of scholarship on the Riwle and the Katherine Group--has observed that such "conflicting readings" of the Riwle "suggest an underlying methodological problem: how far is it possible to map a modern value-system on to works which were produced within a very different cultural framework?"<sup>66</sup> She adds:

The current critical concept of "medieval misogyny" (most explicitly formulated by R. Howard Bloch), with its tacit conflation of general cultural assumptions and personal hostility to women, and of modern and medieval perceptions of anti-

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<sup>65</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," 34-35.

<sup>66</sup> Bella Millett, Ancrene Wisse, The Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature Ser. 2 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), 26.

feminism, seems to have taken over from [the notion of] “courtly love” as an impediment to the understanding of medieval literature; if the [Ancrene Riwe and works from the Katherine Group] are to be evaluated from a feminist point of view, they need first to be placed within the complex historical and cultural context of their own time.<sup>67</sup>

Bloch’s work does indeed suggest a broader definition of medieval antifeminism than may have been considered in the past. Bloch makes an important distinction between social or cultural antifeminism, that is, between actual fear, hatred, or oppression of woman per se, and textual antifeminism, that is, antifeminist discourse wherein woman becomes a metaphor for flesh or embodiment. Bloch writes:

If I present antifeminism as a topic for discussion, it is because I think it is a mode of thought often taken for granted: one that, when acknowledged, is often analyzed superficially, even in the languages of anthropology and psychoanalysis, which tend to naturalize rather than inhibit it; and, finally, one that works most insidiously when occulted. It cannot, in other words, simply be washed away by assuming that it is always already there or by the best moral intentions. On the contrary, a failure to recognize the topic can itself be a source of misogyny by leaving the way open to the kinds of unconscious complicities to which none of us is immune.<sup>68</sup>

Bloch maintains that it is not enough to recognize and expose obvious misogyny in medieval social or cultural settings, or even to recognize and expose this pervasive “mode of thought” in critical studies of medieval literature. One must delve deeper into medieval texts, find the less obvious--and often very subtle and complicitous--antifeminism which resides in the rhetoric of such texts, and “push antifeminist clichés to their limit in order to

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<sup>67</sup> Millett, Ancrene Wisse, The Katherine Group, 26.

<sup>68</sup> R. Howard Bloch, Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991), 1.

unmask their internal incoherences--to deconstruct, in short, whatever will not go away by exposure or by wishing that it were not so.”<sup>69</sup> Bloch does not, however, address the fact that antifeminist discourse is often indistinguishable from any discourse in the Middle Ages, or earlier, which tends to exclude audiences of both male and female laity from clerical authority, or place limitations on the spiritual expression of any lay audience. The present study is informed by Bloch’s theory of misogynous discourse in the Middle Ages, but also explores the points at which antifeminist discourse can be conflated with medieval authoritarian discourse. In addition to considering gender and authority issues raised by the discourse of the Ancrene Riwe, the present study considers this work within more narrow historical, social, cultural, and rhetorical contexts than has been done previously.

### Methodology of the Present Study

This dissertation offers a more in-depth look at the Riwe author’s emphasis on bodiliness, when addressing a lay religious audience, than has been produced in the past. For example, I direct attention to the Riwe author’s meticulous instructions for control and discipline of the physical human body in Parts I and VIII of the guide. These two segments of the Riwe comprise the author’s prescriptions for outer religious life, that is, his directions for how an anchoress should sustain her physical body with food and rest, what physical movements she should make during religious devotions, and how often and how severely she should discipline her flesh with fasting or other mortification practices. The remaining six parts of the guide comprise the Riwe author’s instructions for inner religious life, that is,

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<sup>69</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny, 3.

for spiritual discipline of the soul. Therefore, a reader might expect such instructions for inner spiritual life to include directions for contemplation and meditation, but this is not the case. When offering instructions for inner religious life, the Riwle author continues to emphasize discipline of the physical body and the sense organs, and this emphasis often seems to be connected to the gender of his audience.

In addition to examining the Riwle author's preoccupation with the physical body, this dissertation--through close and thorough reading of representative portions of the work--explores the Riwle author's rhetorical use of figurative bird and beast bodies, and finds more significance in the author's use of such images than has been noted previously. I have observed through such close reading that when the Riwle author interprets the exegetical significance of a number of bird and beast figures for his audience, he does so selectively, and that this selective interpretation has the effect of reinforcing the idea that a reader has or should feel guilt and fear. While this practice is not unusual among medieval religious writers, the Riwle author employs bird and beast images more abundantly than other sermon writers; and his interpretation of these images usually, in one way or another, more persistently reinforces the weakness of his lay audience in relation to the power of male clerical authority.

In Chapter II of this dissertation, I compare Parts I and VIII of the Ancrene Riwle--wherein the author presents instructions for outer religious life--with the rules of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred of Rievaulx. This comparative study demonstrates that the Riwle author offers much more explicit and authoritative instructions for the bodily movements that should

be performed during religious offices than the other three writers. The Riwle author also advocates much stricter moderation and monitoring of bodily mortification practices than his predecessors. These tendencies are puzzling since the Riwle author states in the introduction of the guide that the rules for outer religious life--that is, for physical discipline of the body--are less important than the rules for inner religious life--that is, for spiritual discipline of the soul--which he addresses in the remaining segments of the Riwle. His copious directives for outer religious life suggest that, unlike Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred, the Riwle author views his audience as spiritual novices who require more authoritarian control over their lives and religious practices than other religious audiences; and these instructions also establish the Riwle author's clerical authority over his audience. It is important to demonstrate the author's concern for control of the physical body because this preoccupation with bodiliness strongly influences his instructions for inner religious life, even to the point of undermining the spiritual lessons he attempts to teach. Furthermore, it is important to point out how the Riwle author establishes his own authority because his use of human and beast body images in the remainder of the Riwle continually reinforces this principle.

The next chapter of this dissertation is the first of three chapters which address the Riwle author's instructions for inner rules of religious life in Parts II through VII of the guide. In these segments of the guide, the author offers instructions for how an anchoress should guard her heart, that is, control her will and her fleshly tendencies, in order to achieve the salvation of her soul. Though all six of these segments are part of the inner rule, I

devote extended discussion to only Parts II, III, and IV. These divisions--which comprise about seventy-five percent of the whole guide--contain the author's most vivid references to actual and figurative human bodies and to figurative bestial bodies. In this chapter, I focus on the way in which the Riwle author's continued concern for discipline of the physical body--and especially of the five sense organs--undermines his instructions for inner religious life. Part II is filled with admonitions against lecherous use of the real sense organs rather than with instructions for spiritual sensing or understanding. Here, the Riwle author also begins to employ figurative beast images to illustrate the vileness of such transgressive sensing. In addition, the rhetoric of Part II begins to assume an accusatory tone characteristic of medieval sermons which is traditionally employed to inspire guilt in lay audiences by requiring them to identify with negative human or animal figures. Despite the Riwle author's assertion that Part II of the guide will direct his audience in inner religious life, his instructions for protection of the soul are undermined by his continued emphasis on discipline of the physical body. This tendency may be related to the fact that the author associates all laity, whether male or female, with willfulness and bodiliness, but much of the author's rhetorical use of imagery in Part II implies the guilt of female laity in particular.

The Riwle author's continued preoccupation with transgressions of the physical body is also evident in Part III of the guide, which is the subject of Chapter IV of this dissertation. The Riwle author's implied goal here is to instruct his audience in the spiritual practices of confession, penance, prayer, and vigilance, and he uses bird figures and nest-building imagery to illustrate

the instructions he provides. He also continues to employ beast metaphors to illustrate the vileness of sin. The author's sources for this part of the guide include the works of a number of patristic and medieval writers including Gregory the Great and Alexander Neckam. It is also possible that the Riwle author was familiar with Hugh of Fouilloy's twelfth-century aviary--a treatise on birds--which was originally written to instruct an audience of lay religious men. Close comparison of Hugh's exegesis of bird imagery and the Riwle author's demonstrates significant similarities and differences between the works of the two writers. If Hugh's aviary was not a direct source for the Riwle, Hugh and the Riwle author utilized similar sources for interpretation of bird figures. Such comparison between Hugh's treatise, other sources for bird imagery, and the Riwle demonstrates that the Riwle author uses source information selectively. For example, a number of patristic and medieval religious writers often associate bird figures with Christ or with the preaching and teaching duties of the clergy. In contrast, the Riwle author omits references to Christ and clerical authority when he explains the significance of bird images for his audience in Part III. Instead, the Riwle author frequently associates bird figures with sins of the mouth and with the remedies for such sins, which include confession and prayer. He never suggests that anchoresses should use their mouths, as monks or other clergy do, to preach or teach. In fact, he strictly forbids his audience to do either, which indicates that the Riwle author's selective interpretation of bird images is influenced by the gender of his audience. The bird figures in this section of the Riwle have both positive and negative characteristics; but, once again, as in Part II of the guide, the Riwle author's descriptions of vice are

often more vivid than his descriptions of virtue. His emphasis on sin and control of the physical body continues to undermine the spiritual lessons he attempts to teach. In addition, the Riwle author's choice to omit references to Christ or clerical authority, when explaining the significance of the bird figures, continually reinforces the powerless position of his lay audience and places limitations on their spiritual expression.

Chapter V of the present study focuses on the disturbing beast images--such as the unicorn of wrath, and the scorpion of lechery--that the Riwle author employs to represent the Seven Deadly Sins in Part IV of the guide. Just as the imagery in Part III of the guide is inspired by treatises on the behavior and spiritual significance of birds, Part IV is influenced by Physiologus and the medieval bestiary. The Riwle author is often selective in his use and interpretation of beast images. Though animal figures are frequently employed in medieval sermons in an attempt to frighten lay audiences of both men and women into virtuous behavior, it is significant that the all of the beasts in the author's catalogue of sins are female. His free use of beast images in this segment of the guide--like his selective use of bird images--is, again, often gender-linked. In fact, the Riwle author makes an unmistakable equation between the bestial and the feminine by referring to the sins as the seven "mother" beasts or "hags," and suggesting that his audience visualize these monstrous creatures nursing offspring at their breasts. Also significant here is the author's tendency to present the image of a given beast, but then to describe it, or its offspring, in terms of human, rather than animal characteristics or actions. For example, the Riwle author uses the lion as a metaphor for pride and explains that the lion's eleventh cub

colors its hair and cheeks and plucks its eyebrows. These actions are obviously more easily associated with women than with lions. The Riwle author's use of beast imagery in Part IV implies more than just the inferiority of laity in relation to clergy. It also implies the suspicion with which some medieval religious officials viewed lay religious in anchoritic professions in general, and perhaps the suspicion with which such officials viewed female anchoritic spirituality in particular.

The conclusion of this dissertation provides a summary of the stylistic patterns which have emerged through close reading and analysis of key passages in the Riwle. Despite the fact that authoritarian and antifeminist discourse often converge in this work, I conclude that it is important to distinguish between the two. Authoritarian discourse in the Ancrene Riwe can be viewed as a handy cloak under which to disguise antifeminist discourse, a characteristic which should not be taken for granted or accepted without question in a text which is written for an exclusively female audience.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LITERAL BODY: OUTER RELIGIOUS LIFE AND AUTHORITY

As the author explains in his general introduction to the work, the Ancrene Riwle is divided into eight separate segments. The first and last of these (Parts I and VIII) comprise what the author calls the outer rules for religious life, that is, instructions for how an anchoress should control and discipline her physical body in a religious enclosure. The Riwle author writes that the outer rule governs such bodily activities as “hu eoten. drinken. werien. singen. slepen” (how [one should] eat, drink, dress, sing, sleep) and “feasten wakien. calde ⁊ heard werien. . . [and] swucche oþre heardschipes” (fasting, vigilance, endurance of cold and of rough clothing such as haircloth . . . and such other hardships).<sup>1</sup> The remaining sections of the guide, which the Riwle author calls the inner rule, consist of instructions on how an anchoress may keep her heart pure by avoiding sin, or failing that, by confessing and doing penance for her sins. Though the author states that each individual segment of the guide deals with a different subject, and that there is no mingling, or confusion, of subject matter between parts,<sup>2</sup> the first four and the final segments of the Riwle--that is, approximately seventy-five percent of the entire text--are unified by emphasis on the body in some form.

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<sup>1</sup> The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Ancrene Wisse Edited from MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 402, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS, os 249 (New York: Oxford UP, 1962), 6, 7. Hereafter cited as Corpus Christi. Modern English translations of the Riwle text are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Corpus Christi, 11: “þis boc ich todeale on eahte distinctiuns. . . ⁊ each wið ute monglunge spekeð al bi him seolf of sunderliche þinges. ⁊ þah euchen riht falleð efter oðer. ⁊ is þ leatere eauer iteiæt to þe earre.”

For example, Parts I and VIII center on control and discipline of the real or literal human body. Similarly, Part II provides instruction on control of the literal body's senses; but in this segment of the guide, the figurative human body also becomes important because it is used as metaphor for the soul. In addition, bestial bodies are used in Part II as metaphors for sin or vice. Bird bodies are the dominant figurative images in Part III of the Riwle, and these are used to represent both vice and virtue; and in Part IV of the guide, beast bodies are employed as metaphors for the Seven Deadly Sins. Therefore, real or metaphoric body images pervade the text of the Riwle regardless of whether the author discusses outer or inner religious life.

In this chapter, I will address the Riwle author's concern for control of the actual human body in the first and last segments of the guide as is evidenced in his copious instructions for bodily movements during devotional activities (Part I) and in his numerous admonitions against excessive fasting and other bodily mortification practices (Part VIII). Comparison of the Riwle with guides written by Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred of Rievaulx demonstrates that the Riwle author places much more emphasis than his predecessors on discipline of the physical body during such activities. The Riwle author's instructions for the outer rule of the physical body establish his authority over an audience of female religious novices and places specific limitations on their spiritual expression. This exploration of the Riwle author's interest in the literal human body is essential because his concern for discipline and control of real bodily actions strongly influences--and at times even tends to undermine--his instructions for inner religious life in subsequent sections of the guide. Here, in my examination of Parts I

and VIII, I call attention to the emphasis that the Riwle author places on clerical authority. His rhetorical use of literal and figurative human and bestial body images throughout the guide tends not only to reinforce the power of clergy but also to reinforce the weakness of the laity, and particularly female laity.

The Riwle author's preoccupation with the human body is not unusual or surprising in a medieval didactic work. Indeed, a number of scholars have made studies of the significance of bodiliness in both patristic and medieval religious thought. For example, Peter Brown has explored the history of how the body was been viewed and treated in early Eastern and Western Christian thought<sup>3</sup> and Sheila Delany has also addressed the pervasive use of body images in Osbern Bokenham's Legends of Holy Women.<sup>4</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated very thoroughly that most religious writings of the the Middle Ages are characterized by preoccupation with the material body. As she explains, for example, medieval churchmen engaged in numerous debates about bodily resurrection.<sup>5</sup> According to Bynum, some believed bodies would be unnecessary in the afterlife, while others insisted that the soul would feel lost without the body. Some even seem to have feared that resurrected bodies might retain imperfections, such as scars or missing limbs, which may have

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<sup>3</sup> See Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia U P, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> See Sheila Delany, Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England (New York: Oxford U P, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> See the previously-mentioned article by Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," Fragmentation and Redemption, 253-265.

resulted from accidents or mishaps that occurred during earthly existence.<sup>6</sup> But by far, the most noteworthy of Bynum's conclusions is that bodily spirituality is strongly associated with religious women of the Middle Ages. Through studies of biographies, saints' lives, and the writings of medieval women, primarily in continental Europe, she has demonstrated that many devoutly religious women engaged in what may be considered extremely radical mortification practices, including self-starvation and severe bodily punishment, during the time period in which the Riwle was written. These women often used eating or food behaviors to manipulate their social and family environment. Further, many women religious of the Middle Ages used such behaviors not only to imitate Christ's suffering but also to critique, or perhaps even subvert, the authority of religious officials. Through fasting and other very severe ascetic practices, medieval women were often seen as able to transcend religious men in devotion to God, and ultimately in eternal salvation because, through punishing their bodies mercilessly, they were able to more closely align themselves with Christ's very bodily humanity than many male religious.<sup>7</sup> The Riwle author seems to have been aware of these tendencies in religious women since he repeatedly advises control and moderation of bodily mortification practices.

While recent critical works have specifically addressed body imagery in the Riwle itself, these generally fail to consider issues of clerical control and gender as central to medieval religious guides. For example, Catherine Innes-

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<sup>6</sup> See the previously-mentioned chapter by Bynum, "Reassemblage and Regurgitation: Ideas of Bodily Resurrection in Early Scholasticism," in The Resurrection of the Body, 117-155.

<sup>7</sup> See various articles in Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption; see also Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast and Jesus as Mother.

Parker demonstrates that the use of female body imagery in the guide enables the Riwe anchoresses to relate to Christ as both a spouse and a mother.<sup>8</sup>

Though Elizabeth Robertson has not extensively addressed the way in which the Riwe author uses actual images of the female body, she has demonstrated that the author especially associates women with the fleshly and the sensual, and by extension, with bodiliness. Robertson has also observed that the Riwe author frequently reminds his audience of woman's sexual guilt because he believes, along with most medieval religious writers, "that all women, even the most holy--with the sole exception of Mary--inherit Eve's sexual guilt."<sup>9</sup> Such an association of woman with both the body and Eve usually further implies a close association of woman with sin.

Riwe scholars have long been fascinated by the affection and trust that the author seems to have for the three female anchorites in his audience; at the same time, some have felt that this affection is undermined by the Riwe author's excessive admonitions against sin. For example, Gerard Sitwell has observed that the Riwe author devotes a great deal of textual space to sin, confession, and penance, and he argues that this "is in no way necessary" in a guide for anchoresses and might even be considered "unsuitable."<sup>10</sup> Such emphasis on vice does indeed seem to contradict the trust and affection that the Riwe author expresses for his audience at various points in the guide. Many feminist scholars have also seen the Riwe author's preoccupation with sin and woman's sexual guilt in general as evidence that the author displays

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<sup>8</sup> See Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction: Images of the Female Body in Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine Group," Comitatus 26 (1995): 27-54.

<sup>9</sup> Robertson, "The Rule of the Body," 112.

<sup>10</sup> See Gerard Sitwell's introduction in The Ancrene Riwe, ed. M. B. Salu, xix.

an antifeminist attitude toward his audience. Anne Savage, who accurately describes the predicament in which many modern feminist critics find themselves when they read the guide, comments that the Riwle author

write[s] lovingly, respectfully and admiringly, but his attitudes are still enthroned within a discourse about women which is largely or totally unacceptable to many; love, respect and admiration in such a discourse are confusing when we cannot simply reject them as hatred in disguise.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not the Riwle author is misogynist, however, may be less important than the fact that the question of antifeminism is related to an overarching concern in medieval religious literature with the duty of maintaining the structure and power of the church, which always involves instructing and controlling the laity. Viewed in this context, the attitude of the Riwle author toward his audience closely resembles that of any religious writer or preacher toward an unlearned audience, male or female; and such writers often use discourse which is calculated not only to inspire guilt in such audiences but also to reinforce the power of the medieval church and its clerical representatives.

The discourse of the Riwle, however, as Savage has pointed out above, presents special problems for modern readers because it is written for an exclusively female, rather than for a mixed, lay audience. Misogynous discourse and authoritarian discourse seem to merge in this work. It should be recalled, as I stated in the previous chapter, that Robertson's thesis, in her early explorations of the Riwle, was that the author's emphasis on the concrete and the sensual was guided by his association of woman with

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<sup>11</sup> Savage, "The Translation of the Feminine: Untranslatable Dimensions of the Anchoritic Works," 191.

bodiliness and willfulness;<sup>12</sup> but she revises this thesis in later studies of the Riwe and concludes that most medieval religious authorities associated all laity--male or female--with the bodily and the willful.<sup>13</sup> Bynum has also demonstrated this association in several studies.<sup>14</sup> It is doubtful that modern scholars will ever be able to prove, to the satisfaction of all, that the Riwe author had an openly misogynous attitude toward his audience, but it can certainly be demonstrated that the discourse of the Riwe does skillfully establish and continually reinforce medieval clerical authority over the female lay audience for whom the guide was originally written. The present chapter demonstrates that the Riwe author assumes a position of authority in relation to his audience early in the guide, and continually suggests that their access to spiritual expression and understanding is limited and entirely dependent on control of the physical body.

The Riwe audience is made up of female lay religious who have probably had no formal training in religious life before committing themselves to severe solitary enclosure. As Robert Ackerman has suggested, the anchoresses in the Riwe audience were more than likely "enclosed. . . without having passed through a novitiate, and thus they lacked the discipline of the cloister."<sup>15</sup> This circumstance may have been an unusual occurrence in medieval England. Alexandra Barratt indicates that during the

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<sup>12</sup> Robertson, "Rule of the Body," 129-130.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, Early English Devotional Prose, 147.

<sup>14</sup> See especially Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," Fragmentation and Redemption, 119-150 and ". . . And Woman His Humanity: Female Imagery in the Religious Writings of the Later Middle Ages," Fragmentation and Redemption, 151-179.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Ackerman, "The Liturgical Day in Ancrene Riwe," Speculum 53 (1978): 738.

twelfth and thirteenth centuries, anchoresses commonly lived for some time in convents and learned devotional practices as nuns before choosing to become more strictly enclosed solitaries.<sup>16</sup> The detailed instructions for control and discipline of the real body which appear in Parts I and VIII of the guide support the idea that the Riwle anchoresses had no prior experience in the devotional or mortification practices of religious life. The novitiate status of the Riwle audience may be one reason that the author's instructions for treatment of the physical body differ significantly from the instructions of more traditional rule writers such as Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred. But other reasons for the Riwle author's deviations from the traditional rule have been suggested.

Linda Georgianna has asserted the Riwle "bears little resemblance to anything we would recognize as a religious rule and is in fact best understood as an antirule," that is, the opposite of a traditional religious guide<sup>17</sup> She bases this belief on the fact that though many scholars seem to agree the Riwle author was influenced or inspired by the rules of Augustine and Benedict, few direct correspondences can be made between the Riwle and either of the other two guides.<sup>18</sup> E. J. Dobson has observed for example, "it is undeniable that the author of the later work [the Riwle] was influenced by the earlier [Augustine's rule]" since there are unmistakable "parallels" between the two guides<sup>19</sup>; at the same time, Dobson has only been able to locate one

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<sup>16</sup> Alexandra Barratt, "Anchortic Aspects of Ancrene Wisse," Medium AEvum 49 (1980): 33.

<sup>17</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Georgianna, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Dobson, Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 17.

brief quotation from Augustine's work in the Riwle itself.<sup>20</sup> And as Geoffrey Shepherd asserts, the Riwle "owes scarcely anything to the Benedictine Rule."<sup>21</sup> This is somewhat surprising since, according to Georgianna, Benedict's regula was so influential that it became "the archetypical religious rule" which was often adapted and used by "even those religious groups specifically excluded by Benedict from his rule--solitaries and religious groups working in the world."<sup>22</sup> Georgianna suggests that the Riwle author's choice to write a rule--or "antirule"--which has little in common with those of Augustine or Benedict may have been a reaction to existing religious rules which the Riwle author felt placed too much emphasis on "manmade [outer] rules" for religious life because he may have believed such rules tended to "dilute the force of the gospel's singular demand for a personal and individual response to Christ's message of love."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as the author explains in his introduction to the guide, the outer rule of the body is less important and less binding than the inner rule of the heart since rules for external life are invented by man. On the other hand, inner rules which govern the heart--such as charity, meekness, confession, and penance--are established by God and should never vary.<sup>24</sup>

Georgianna asserts that the Riwle author believes a recluse's salvation is dependent upon adherence to God's laws "rather than upon making or

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<sup>20</sup> Dobson, Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 22-23.

<sup>21</sup> Shepherd, Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven, xxix.

<sup>22</sup> Georgiana, The Solitary Self, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Georgianna, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Corpus Christi, 8-9.

keeping arbitrary, external rules,” and that he may even believe such external rules obstruct an anchoress’s attempts to follow the binding inner rule.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Georgianna adds, the Riwle author “follows through on his belief by undermining the authority of his own modest, external rules even before he presents them” and often undermines the authority of most religious men--including bishops, confessors, and lesser clerics--throughout the guide.<sup>26</sup> I will argue here, however, that the Riwle author’s detailed instructions for discipline and control of the physical body and his insistence on strict monitoring and moderation of his audience’s fasting and mortification practices contradicts his assertion that the outer rule for religious life is less important or binding than the inner rule. I further argue that the instructions in Parts I and VIII of the Riwle may, at times, undermine the authority of other religious clerics, but not his own; instead, his instructions often reinforce his authority over his audience.

In the general introduction to the Riwle, the author explains that all religious cannot and should not keep the same outer rule, for

sum is strong sum unstrong. ⁊ mei ful wel beo cwite ⁊ paie godd mid leasse. Sum is clergesse sum nawt. ⁊ moten mare wurchen ⁊ on oðer wise seggen hire bonen. Sum is ald ⁊ eðelich ⁊ is þe leasse dred of. Sum is gung ⁊ luuelich ⁊ is neod betere warde.<sup>27</sup>

(Some [anchoresses] are strong, some not strong, and may full well be excused [from strenuous activities] and serve God with less. Some are learned and some are not, and must work harder in other ways to say their prayers [or perform their devotions]. Some are old and unattractive and less to be dreaded. Some are young and lovely, and have need of more guardianship.)

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<sup>25</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Georgianna, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Corpus Christi, 7.

Here--apart from his designation that some religious are better educated than others--the reasons the author lists for why all religious cannot be expected to follow the same kind of outer rule are related to physical strength, health or other attributes of the body. He also implies that more experienced anchoresses--represented by those who are "old and unattractive and less to be dreaded"--require less guidance from an authority figure than those who are "young and lovely"--and suggests that

for þi schal each ancre habben þe uttre riwle efter hire schriftes read. ⁊ hwet se he bit ⁊ hat hire in obedience þe cnaweð hire manere ⁊ wat hire strengþe. he mei þe uttre riwle changin efter wisdom as he seið þ̅ te inre mahe beo best ihalden.<sup>28</sup>

(For this reason, each anchoress shall keep the outer rule according to her confessor's advice, and do whatsoever he commands her in obedience, he who knows her manner and her strength. He may change the outer rule, according to his wisdom, as he sees how the inner [rule] may best be upheld.)

The author refers to the anchoress's confessor in very general and indirect terms here, but he indicates quite clearly that the anchoress's confessor is a commanding authority and probably knows more of "her manner and her strength" than she does. In addition, he indicates that only the confessor can "change the outer rule, according to his wisdom." However, the Riwle author continues by asserting,

Nan ancre bi mi read ne schal makien profession. þ̅ is bihaten ase heast. bute þ̅reo þ̅inges. þ̅ beoð obedience. chastete. ⁊ stude steaðeluestnesse. . . .for hwa se n̅imeð þ̅ing on hond ⁊ bihat hit godd as heast forte don hit. ha bint hire þ̅erto. ⁊ sunegeð deadliche iþe bruche gef ha hit brekeð willes. gef ha hit ne bihat nawt. ha hit mei do þ̅ah ⁊ leauen hwen ha wel wule. as of mete. of drunch. flesch forgan oðer fisch. alle oþre swucche þ̅inges. of

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<sup>28</sup> Corpus Christi, 8.

werunge. of liggunge. of ures. of oþre beoden. segge swa monie  
oðer o swucche wise. þeos ⁊ þulliche oþre beoð all ifreo wil to  
don oðer to leten hwil me wule ⁊ hwen me wulle but has been  
bihaten.<sup>29</sup>

(By my advice, no anchoress shall make profession of--that is, promise as a solemn vow--any but three things: these are obedience, chastity, and steadfastness of abode. . . .For whosoever undertakes a thing and promises it to God, as a solemn vow to do it, is bound to that vow and sins mortally in the breach of it if she breaks it willingly. If she does not promise it, she may do it or leave it when she wishes as in the case of meat, drink, of foregoing flesh or fish; and all other things such as apparel, rest, hours or other prayers--how many or in what manner to say them--these and various other things can all be done according to free will, to leave them when or while one wishes, except those which have been promised.)

In this passage, which also occurs in the introduction to the guide, the Riwe author subtly establishes his own authority ("by my advice") as the present confessor of the anchorhold in which the Riwe audience is enclosed.

Obviously, the anchoresses are to remember what the Riwe author has said in the preceding passage--about the wisdom and authority of their confessor--and now transfer this authority to the Riwe author himself. Though he rarely refers to himself directly as the Riwe anchoresses' primary authority figure, the author reinforces the authority of the anchoress's confessor, or master, at numerous points throughout the guide.<sup>30</sup> In this introductory passage, the only rules the author considers binding are the first three he mentions--"obedience, chastity, and steadfastness of abode"--which each of the anchoresses would have vowed to God during an initial enclosure

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<sup>29</sup> Corpus Christi, 8.

<sup>30</sup> See Dobson's discussion of the Riwe author's position as master and confessor of the anchorhold in Origins of Ancrone Wisse, 48-50.

ceremony.<sup>31</sup> The remaining rules--regarding when to eat or abstain from food, what to wear, and when to rest or say prayers--the author states, are flexible and based on personal choice. This assertion seems to contradict not only the position of power that the Riwe author has just established for himself but also to discount the value of the external rules for religious life. Therefore, the above passage may be one which has led Georgianna to suggest that the Riwe author undermines his own position because he is suspicious of religious authority and of outer rules in general.

Evidence found elsewhere in the Riwe, however, indicates that while the author may undermine the authority of religious men other than himself, or of religious men who belong to different orders from his own, he does not really undermine his own authority or that of his particular order. At one point in the guide, for example, as Georgianna has observed, the Riwe author--while instructing the anchoresses in how to choose a trustworthy confessor (in the absence of her usual confessor)--admonishes his audience to extend little trust to worldly men and even less to religious men ("worltliche leueð lut. religiuse ȝet leas"), which seems to undermine the authority of all churchmen.<sup>32</sup> However, Georgianna does not acknowledge that to this assertion, the author immediately adds

Vre freres prechurs ⁊ ure freres meonurs beoð of swuch order þ  
al folc mahte wundrin ȝef ei of ham wende ehe towart to wude  
lehe. for þi ed each time þ eani of ham þurh chearite kimeð ow

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<sup>31</sup> This ceremony is described in a number of works; see, for example Elkins, Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England, 35, 43-44, 63-71, 89-90 and Warren, Anchorites and Their Patrons, 56, 76-77, 97-100. To briefly summarize: during the ceremony, the anchorite makes solemn vows to be dead to the world and buried; the rites for the dead are said over her; she enters the anchoritic cell which represents her burial coffin; then the door to the cell is symbolically sealed.

<sup>32</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 24-25.

to learen ⁊ to frouirin i godd. gef he is preost seggeð. ear þen he parti. . . .Ich schriue me to godd almihti ⁊ to þe. . . ⁊ þonke him of his inturn ⁊ bisech him aleast greten þi ⁊ te. and þ ha bidden for þe.<sup>33</sup>

(Our friar preachers and our friar minors are of such an order that all folks would be surprised if any of them turned an eye toward the woody grove.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, each time that any of them, through charity, come to teach you and comfort you in [the name of] God, if he is a priest, say before he parts, "I schrive myself to God almighty and to you". . . .And thank him for his good turn; beseech him to greet this person or another, and [ask] that they pray for you.)

Here, the Riwle author re-establishes any authority that he seems to have previously taken away from himself or clerics who belong to the same order as he. I do not believe he would have included such a passage as this in the guide if it were his intention to undermine his own authority. In addition, if the author considers the outer rules for religious life as insignificant as he implies in the introduction to the Riwle, then I find it very curious that the rules for external religious life, set down in Parts I and VIII, are related in such meticulous detail. Georgianna also believes that the Riwle author considers the outer rule of the body less binding than the inner because the length of Parts I and VIII "is insignificant" in relation to "that of the extensive inner rule [Parts II through VII]."<sup>35</sup> It is indeed true that less textual space is devoted to directives for external life in the Riwle, but the author manages to

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<sup>33</sup> Corpus Christi, 36-37.

<sup>34</sup> This strange phrase is apparently an idiom for questionable or perhaps even lecherous behavior. Savage and Watson have suggested the phrase may be derived from the lyrics of a popular medieval song. See their comments in Anchoritic Spirituality, 351 and 356.

<sup>35</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 22.

fit a significant number of very specific instructions for outer religious life into a only a few pages as exploration of these instructions demonstrates.

In Part I of the Riwe, through descriptions of pious gestures and postures, the author maps out a much more material pathway to spiritual salvation than other rule writers, which demonstrates his interest in controlling the bodily actions of his audience. Comparison of his instructions for the outer rule of the body in Parts I and VIII to those treated in the guides of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred of Rievaulx indicates that the Riwe author is both more specific and more emphatic than the other three writers in directing the physical activities of his audience. Like other religious writers, the Riwe author consulted and borrowed from both Augustine and Benedict when he wrote his guide for religious recluses;<sup>36</sup> and most scholars also believe that the the Riwe author modelled his own guide after Aelred's rule.<sup>37</sup> However, the Riwe author transcends all three of his predecessors in detailed instructions for control and discipline of the body.

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<sup>36</sup> For discussion of the influence of Augustine and Benedict on the Riwe author, see for example, Dobson, Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 12-13 and Shepherd, Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven, xxvii-xxix, xxxv-xxxvii; see also a chapter devoted to comparison of the Riwe to those of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred in Georgiana, The Solitary Self, 8-31. I glean, in general, from reading such comparisons of the Riwe with these three traditional rules--and from my own comparisons of all four guides--that the Riwe author seems to have been influenced by the monastic lifestyle and habits outlined in the Benedictine rule and owes much of his religious philosophy to Augustine, but he draws most heavily and directly from Aelred, probably because Aelred wrote for an enclosed rather than a monastic audience as did the Riwe author himself.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, the discussion of Aelred's influence on the Riwe author in Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions, eds. John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, EETS os 287 (New York: Oxford UP, 1984), xxxviii-xxxix. Ayto and Barratt discuss the influence of Aelred on the Riwe author, finding similarities between exempla in the text of Aelred's rule and the Ancrene Riwe, and similarities in the two authors' basic philosophy about reclusive life. However, see also Hope Emily Allen, "On the Author of the Ancrene Riwe," PMLA 44 (1929): 652-660. Allen, in contrast to other scholars, and desiring to date the Ancrene Riwe earlier than Aelred's rule, has attempted to demonstrate that Aelred was influenced by the Riwe author.

Augustine's regula--unlike Benedict's, which is long and detailed--is very short and concise and, as Georgianna describes it, "lists in briefest possible form (about four hundred words) precepts governing daily prayer, work, silence, and discipline."<sup>38</sup> Instead of treating very specific day-to-day activities, or describing bodily actions to be performed in a religious community, as does the Benedictine rule, Augustine's text emphasizes the Christian philosophy behind a person's choice to become a nun or monk. In fact, Georgianna has suggested that Augustine's treatise, like the Riwe, is also an "antirule" because it

concentrates upon outlining the proper attitudes of members of a religious house toward themselves, each other, and their superior. Obedience to authority is discussed but takes a far inferior place to the necessity of love. . . .Prescriptions in the treatise usually take the form of general, spiritual advice reminiscent of that found in Scripture.<sup>39</sup>

Perusal of Augustine's short rule demonstrates that Augustine does not dwell on descriptions of physical devotional activities, or list specific antiphons to be recited during religious offices, apparently assuming that his audience already knows their responsibilities in these areas. He does not divide a liturgical day into hours and tell his audience what they should be doing at various times of the day or night. He also leaves decisions about daily management of domestic activities to the individual religious community.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Georgianna, 14.

<sup>40</sup> See the text of Augustine's very brief regula in J. C. Dickinson, The Origins of the Austin Canons and Their Introduction to England (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1950), 273-279.

Though Benedict's regula treats daily rituals, devotions, or prayers to be performed at set times of the year in much more depth than Augustine, his directions are still less descriptive, or prescriptive, than those found in the Riwe. For example, Benedict's rule includes such instructions as:

Hiemis tempore suprascripto, in primis versu tertio dicendum: Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum adnuntiabit laudem tuam [ italics included]. Cui subiungendus est tertius psalmus et gloria. Post hunc, psalmum nonagesimum quartum cum antiphona, aut certe decantandum. Inde sequatur ambrosianum, deinde sex psalmi cum antiphonas.

(During the winter season, Vigils begin with the verse: Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise (Ps 50[51]:17). After this has been said three times, the following order is observed: Psalm 3 with "Glory be to the Father"; Psalm 94 with a refrain, or at least chanted; an Ambrosian hymn; then six psalms with refrain.)<sup>41</sup>

In addition to stating the time of year in which specific vigils should be performed by monks, Benedict actually names specific prayers, hymns, or biblical verses that the monks should utter during vigils, even stating the number of times that these should be said, sung, or chanted. While Augustine's rule is mostly inspirational and intellectual in content, Benedict's obviously has characteristics which make it more useful and applicable to daily and yearly life in a religious community as does Aelred's regula, which owes much to the Benedictine rule.

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<sup>41</sup> The Rule of St. Benedict: In Latin and English with Notes, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical P, 1981), 202-203.

Aelred's guide for female recluses, like Benedict's guide for monks, is also practical in nature. Its text is characterized by such passages as:

Itaque a Kalendis novembris usque XL secundum  
aestimationem suam plus media nocte repauset, et sic surgens  
cum qua potest devotione secundum formam Regulae beati  
Benedicti nocturnas vigilias celebret.

Quibus mox succedat oratio quam secundum quod eam  
Spiritus sanctus adiuverit, aut protelare debet aut abbreviare.<sup>42</sup>

(From November the first until Lent therefore the recluse  
should sleep, as near as she can judge it, until after midnight,  
and upon rising recite vigils as prescribed in the Rule of St  
Benedict with as much devotion as possible. Prayer should  
follow and, as the Holy Spirit assists her, she will make it brief or  
prolonged.)<sup>43</sup>

Here, Aelred, like Benedict, designates specific times of the year and day for sleep and recitation of vigils; and though he offers no partial texts or titles for the recitations to be uttered, he does inform his audience that they may find these in Benedict's rule. Therefore, his guide can be said to more closely resemble Benedict's than Augustine's in everyday practicality.

In contrast to Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred, the Riwe author provides more detailed prescriptions for devotional activities in Part I of the guide in such passages as the following:

Hwen ge earst ariseð. blescð ow ⁊ seggeð. In nomine patris  
and fi. ⁊ s.s. Amen. ant biginneð anan. Veni creator spiritus.  
wið up aheuene ehnen ⁊ honden toward heouene buhinde o  
cneon forðward up o þe bedde. ant seggeð swa al þe ymne ut wið

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<sup>42</sup> Latin passages are from Aelred of Rievaulx, La Vie De Recluse, ed. Charles Dumont, Sources Crétiennes 76 (Paris: Les Editions Du Cerf, 1961), 64.

<sup>43</sup> English translations are from Aelred of Rievaulx, "A Rule of Life for a Reduse," Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises and the Pastoral Prayer, trans. Mary Paul MacPherson, Cistercian Fathers Ser. 2 (1971; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 55.

þe verset. Emitte spiritum t [sic]. ⁊ te vreisun. Deus quí corda fidelium. her efter scheoiende ow ⁊ clāðinde ow seggeð. Pater noster. ⁊ Credo.<sup>44</sup>

(When you first arise, bless yourself with the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." And immediately begin "Creator Spirit, come," with your eyes and hands raised upward toward heaven, and bending on your knees forward up to the bed. And say the entire hymn and the versicle, "Send forth Thy Holy Spirit," and the prayer, "O God Who did teach the hearts of those faithful to Thee." Thereafter, while putting on shoes and clothing, say the Paternoster and Credo.)

Though the instructions contained in this passage are similar to those found in the above quotations from Benedict and Aelred, it is noteworthy that--in addition to including the time ("When you first arise") for a devotional activity, and the text, or titles, of the recitations that an anchoress should utter--the Riwe author devotes textual space to describing the specific bodily movements of putting on shoes and clothes. Another, even more descriptive, passage from the Riwe reads:

ananriht ure leafdi uhtsong. ⁊ seggeð o þis wise. gef hit is werc dei. falleð to þer eorðe. gef hit is halidei. buhinde sumdeal duneward seggeð. Pater noster. ⁊ Credo ba stille. Rihteð ow up þrefter and seggeð. Domine labia mea aperies. Makieð on ower muð a creoið wið þe þume. Ed Deus in adiutorium. a large creoið wið þe þume ⁊ wið þe twa fingres. from buue þe forheaued. dun to þe breoste and falleð to þe eorðe. gef hit is wercdei wið gloria patri. oðer buheð duneward gef hit hali dei aþet sicut erat.<sup>45</sup>

(say our Lady's evening service in this way. If it is a work day, fall to the earth; if it is a holy day, bow somewhat downward and say both the Paternoster and Creed, silently. Stand upright

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<sup>44</sup> Corpus Christi, 12.

<sup>45</sup> Corpus Christi, 14.

thereafter and say, "O Lord, open Thou my lips," and make a cross on your mouth with the thumb. At "O God, be our assistance," make a large cross, with the thumb and two fingers from above the forehead down to the breast; and if it is a work day, fall to the earth and say the "Glory to the Father"; or if it is a holy day, bow downward until "as it was in the beginning.")

Here, the author's instructions are thorough and fastidious. He describes how an anchoress should vary her physical movements and recitations during the "Lady's evening service," depending on whether she is performing the office on a "work" or "holy day." The author also designates not only the size of the cross which an anchoress should make with her hand but also the part of her body over which she must make the sign of the cross. He even stipulates whether she should form the cross with only "the thumb" or "with the thumb and two fingers." Further, he includes instructions for modulation of the voice while uttering the "Paternoster and Creed." Very specific directions for control of the body, such as are mentioned in both of the above passages, abound in Part I of the Riwle. How an anchoress conducts her body during devotions is obviously more important to Riwle author than to Augustine or Aelred. Even though Benedict's rule is more prescriptive than Augustine's or Aelred's, when Benedict mentions bodily gestures during devotions, he does so only in passing.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, despite the fact that the Riwle author seems to discount the significance of the outer rule of the body in the introduction to the guide, his instructions for Part I contradict this idea.

Georgianna has suggested that one of the Riwle author's objections to

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<sup>46</sup> See for example Rule of St. Benedict, 216-217. Benedict writes, "Ergo consideremus qualiter oporteat in conspectu divinitatis et angelorum eius esse, et sic stemus ad psallendum ut mens nostra concordet voci nostrae (Let us consider, then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels, and let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices)."

external rules may be “fear that the anchoresses, who are already somewhat overly fastidious in keeping prescriptive rules, will allow attention to the outer rule to subvert their understanding of the inner rule.”<sup>47</sup> If this were indeed the case, then it would have to be concluded from the above-cited, detailed instructions that the Riwle author is himself complicitous in subverting the spiritual understanding of his own audience. If the author knows that his audience is “already. . .overly fastidious” in outer religious life, why does he offer them more rules that can only add to their anxiety about properly keeping an external rule? It is more likely that the Riwle author offers such instructions because his audience is inexperienced in anchoritic life as can be demonstrated in discussion of what seems to be the most logical reason for the Riwle author’s deviations from the more traditional rules of his predecessors.

The simplest explanation for why the Riwle contains more detailed instructions for devotions than the guides of Augustine, Benedict and Aelred is that it is written for an audience of inexperienced recluses rather than for seasoned cloistered or anchoritic religious. Augustine and Benedict wrote for audiences of nuns or monks who lived in religious communities rather than in individual anchoritic cells. As I stated earlier, there is no evidence that the young women of the Riwle audience ever spent time as nuns in a convent--where they could have been tutored in appropriate bodily movements during devotions--before becoming recluses. The Riwle author’s reasons for being more prescriptive about devotions than Aelred may, at first, seem less simple to discover since he and Aelred both wrote for audiences of enclosed female solitaires. But in view of the fact that Aelred presented a rule to his sister

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<sup>47</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 24.

only after she had been living as a recluse for a number of years and was responsible for guiding younger anchoresses,<sup>48</sup> the Riwe author's reason for deviating from Aelred's rule seems to be approximately the same as his reason for deviating from those of Augustine and Benedict. The element that most logically accounts for the differences in devotional instructions between the Riwe and the guides of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred is the apparent inexperience of the Riwe audience. Therefore, the Riwe author's deviations from tradition, at least in Part I of his guide, could be related to the fact that he viewed his audience as religious novices who needed guidance in even the simplest matters of everyday religious life. The Riwe author's tendency to advise more moderation of fasting and other mortification practices than his predecessors in Part VIII, however, warrants further exploration.

Though Part VIII of the Riwe does not greatly differ from other rules in its directions for meals and rest, and is actually more flexible than other guides in directions for clothing the body, it is different from other guides in its instructions for mortification of the body as penance for sin or in order to avoid sin. Part VIII of the Riwe contains very specific guidelines for the kinds of fasting and disciplinary practices that the Riwe audience can or cannot perform on their bodies, unlike the rules of Augustine and Benedict, which do not describe such practices at length. At the same time, the Riwe also contains strong admonitions against the severe ascetic practices that Aelred advocates for anchorites in his regula. In listing such specific punitive activities and insisting on more strict monitoring and moderation of these

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<sup>48</sup> Walter Daniel, The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx, trans. Maurice Powicke (1950; Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978), 41; Aelred Squire, Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study, Cistercian Studies Ser. 50 (1969; 1973; Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 119. Little is known about Aelred's sister beyond the fact that she was probably older than he, and she seems to have entered strictly enclosed religious life earlier than he.

than the other three writers, the Riwe author deviates from tradition by denying his audience the same degree of freedom--to choose when or how they will mortify their bodies--as his predecessors extend to their audiences. This tendency--like his choice to provide meticulous instructions for bodily movements during devotions in Part I--is probably also related to the inexperience of his audience. However, because of the radical asceticism that was characteristic of many medieval religious (as Bynum has demonstrated) prior to and during the time the Riwe was written, the author's thorough and careful instructions for fasting and mortification practices in Part VIII should be considered in a larger context. I will treat the two main types of mortification, fasting and punishment of the outer body, separately here. A review of what Bynum has had to say about fasting during the Middle Ages will be useful before comparing the Riwe author's instructions on this practice to those of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred.

According to Bynum, up until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, religious people in general kept fairly strict and regular fasts, but religious ascetics and members of certain orders often engaged in especially severe fasting, which began to greatly concern later religious authorities.<sup>49</sup> Bynum observes, for example, that religious writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were often "busy defining exactly who should fast when" and began to emphasize "the need for moderation in observance."<sup>50</sup> As a result, times and days for fasting were shortened, and abstinence from only meat or certain

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<sup>49</sup> See for example, Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 33-48. She describes many incidents of severe fasting by the Desert Fathers and early ascetics as "virtuoso performances (38)," which are characterized by especially prolonged fasting or "heroic austerities (39)," and which were frequent before the thirteenth century.

<sup>50</sup> Bynum, 42.

other foods came to be acceptable as appropriate fasting.<sup>51</sup> The church's choice to advocate more moderate fasting seems to have been a reaction to the excessively severe, or prolonged fasting in which ascetics such as hermits had engaged until this time.<sup>52</sup> As Bynum goes on to suggest, the church's attempt to "enforce minimum observance" was also an attempt "to give such observance a dignified meaning sensitive to the needs of individual lives and temperaments."<sup>53</sup> Realizing that not all people were able to engage in the same degree of fasting, church officials seem to have desired to curb fasting to the point that it did not become a instrument for pride (in those who could endure severe fasting) or for envy (in those who could not endure it). Bynum adds, however, that some monastic orders or individuals, and religious women in particular, chose to reject the moderate fasting that church officials attempted to put forward.<sup>54</sup> The Riwe author's insistence on moderation of his audience's fasting seems to reflect, at least in part, the thirteenth-century clerical concern for giving fasting "dignified meaning" and for making fasting a practice amicable to "individual lives and temperaments." However, I would also suggest that he was aware of the radical fasting practices among medieval religious women and that this knowledge may have had some influence on his instructions for fasting since he writes for an exclusively female audience.

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<sup>51</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 41.

<sup>52</sup> Bynum, 84-85.

<sup>53</sup> Bynum, 47.

<sup>54</sup> Bynum, 47.

Based on her extensive study of eating behaviors in religious women from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, Bynum has argued that medieval women engaged in fasting not only in order to renounce the body but also in order to manipulate or control their family, social, and religious environment. As she explains,

First, women's food behavior--fasting and feeding--was an effective way of manipulating the environment in a world in which food was woman's primary resource. Second, women's radical asceticism was less an internalizing of the church's negative views of flesh and female than a rebellion against the moderation of the high medieval church, which was moving toward a more positive sense of the body. Third, food asceticism, food distribution, and eucharistic devotion did not, to medieval people, mean self-torture; rather they were ways of fusing with a Christ whose suffering saves the world.<sup>55</sup>

She goes on to demonstrate that medieval women often fasted or gave away food in order to manipulate or embarrass their families when they wished to avoid marriages and the dangers of childbirth, renounce the family's wealth, or even avoid the domestic duties traditionally allocated to women.<sup>56</sup> There is no evidence that the anchoresses in the Riwle audience ever engaged in excessive fasting or unusual eating behaviors in order to manipulate others, but the Riwle author at least suggests that abstinence from food is a manipulative act by admonishing his audience not to refuse food or drink out of anger.<sup>57</sup> There is also no evidence that the Riwle anchoresses ever dispensed family food or wealth to the poverty-stricken, in an act of rebellion,

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<sup>55</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 218.

<sup>56</sup> See section subtitled "Food and Family" in Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 220-227.

<sup>57</sup> Corpus Christi, 104. The admonition occurs in the author's discussion of wrath as a deadly sin.

before becoming enclosed; but it should be understood that their anchoritic duties, as the Riwe author defines these, usually preclude such activities. For example, the Riwe anchoresses--unlike other anchorites--are not allowed to have a garden. The author expresses his opposition to an anchoress's gardening when he asserts, "Ant hu schulen þeose chorch anores þe tilieð oðer habbeð rentes isette. don to poure nehbus dearnliche hare ealmesse" (And how shall these church anchoresses who till or have fixed rents do their alms to poor neighbors secretly)?<sup>58</sup> Reclusive life also releases the Riwe audience from the duties and fears of marriage and procreation, and from most of the domestic duties of food preparation and charitable giving of food. The author discourages both domestic and charitable activities, writing that an anchoress must

libben bi ealmesse ase meaðfulliche as ha eauer mai. ⁊ nawt gederin forte geouen. ha nis nawt husewif. ah is a chorch ancre. gef ha mei spearien eani poure schraden. send ham al dearnliche ut of hire wanes.<sup>59</sup>

(live on alms as frugally as ever she may and not gather in order to give [away]. She is not a housewife but a church anchoress. If she may spare any scraps for the poor, she should send them all secretly out of her abode.)

The only traditionally feminine domestic activities that the Riwe author suggests for his audience are sewing and mending; and though an anchoress may sew clothing for the poor, she must have permission from the author

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<sup>58</sup> Corpus Christi, 212. The question implies that if the anchoress can be seen by a neighbor while tilling a garden, she cannot send alms or food to her poor neighbors secretly; they will guess who sent these, and perhaps offer thanks or praise, which might lead to an anchoress to feel pride in her good deed.

<sup>59</sup> Corpus Christi, 212.

himself if she wishes to give any of the clothing away.<sup>60</sup> It is also understood that the Riwe anchoresses have personally renounced any wealth their family may have had. Though the clearly-outlined anchoritic duties of the Riwe audience automatically preclude many of the manipulative food behaviors discussed above, these duties do not necessarily preclude the severe fasting in which many religious women of the Middle Ages engaged in order to question or deny the religious authority traditionally assigned to men at this time.

In addition to using food behaviors to manipulate family or environment, as Bynum has further explained, many medieval religious women used such behaviors as a way of critiquing or subverting male clerical authority. She asserts

Girls and women who fasted hungered for the eucharist and received, along with it, visions and supernatural signs that bestowed power upon them [and] holy women sometimes bypassed the clergy [who might refuse them the eucharist], sometimes exposed their failures, and sometimes frankly usurped their authority.<sup>61</sup>

Bynum adds that some clerics trusted and respected women's visions and critiques of priestly authority, and they even "deliberately used stories of the eucharistic devotion of holy women to shame the clergy for lukewarm piety"; some even thought of women mystics as spiritual or inspirational mothers or preachers to male clerics.<sup>62</sup> But at times during the Middle Ages, church officials also chose to curtail the laity's and religious women's access to the

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<sup>60</sup> Corpus Christi, 215-216.

<sup>61</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 227.

<sup>62</sup> Bynum, 229.

eucharist. As Bynum explains, "medieval theologians and confessors attempted to inculcate awe as well as craving for the eucharist" in lay audiences.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, many justified the infrequency or refusal of communion with the old adage that "[f]amiliarity might breed contempt."<sup>64</sup> Bynum also observes that medieval clergy also gave women "ambiguous advice about frequent communion."<sup>65</sup> Allowing the laity or women mystics only infrequent access to the eucharist, or denying them communion, can be seen as a clerical act of establishing or reinforcing authority over a lay audience. Also implied in the curbing of religious women's access to communion is a negative, or at least ambiguous, reaction--on the part of religious officials--to women's eucharistic visions.

Given the prevalence of religious women's fasting and of their eucharistic visions in the Riwe author's time, it would be difficult to believe that the author was unaware of these behaviors; and his reaction to these tendencies in medieval religious women probably influenced his instructions. For example, in Part VIII, the Riwe author advocates infrequent communion for his audience for the same reason as other medieval clerics do, writing:

Me let leasse of þe þing þ̅ me hauēð ofte. for þi ne schule ge beon  
bute as ure brēðren beoð ihuslet inwið tweolf moneð fiftene  
siðen. . . .agein alle þeose beoð cleanliche i schriuene. ⁊ neomeð  
disceplines. neauer þah of namon bute of ow seoluen. ⁊ forgað  
an dei ower pitance.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 230.

<sup>64</sup> Bynum, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Bynum, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Corpus Christi, 210.

(People think less of the thing that they have often, and for this reason you shall only take communion as often as our [lay] brothers do, fifteen times in twelve months. . . .Before all these [days] be cleanly shriven and take disciplines, though never from any [other] person, but from yourself, and forego your pittance [meal allotment] for one day.)

Here the author, like his religious contemporaries, indicates frequent communion might breed contempt. Elsewhere in the guide, though he makes no specific references to eucharistic visions, the author admonishes his audience, "Na sihðe þ̅ge seoð ne i swefne ne waken. ne telle ge bute dweole. for nis hit bute his gile" (Count any vision that you may see, in dreaming or in waking, as a delusion, for it is nothing but his [the devil's] guile).<sup>67</sup> No evidence in the guide suggests that the anchoresses in the Riwe audience ever had mystical visions, but the author makes it clear that he distrusts these and instructs his audience to do likewise.

As Bynum has also explained, it was a common practice for medieval Christians to fast before receiving communion; but numerous women religious of the time fasted much more radically than the average Christian--even to the point of refusing or being unable to eat normal food--not only as preparation for communion but in imitation of Christ.<sup>68</sup> These women considered fasting synonymous with "identification with Christ's suffering" and with "affective, even erotic, union with Christ's adorable self."<sup>69</sup> Bynum

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<sup>67</sup> Corpus Christi, 116.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 79, wherein she states that based on the case studies of the fasting behavior of both men and women religious which she has examined, "The longest fasts are those of women" and "Women provide both of the cases of fasting until death."

<sup>69</sup> Bynum, 120.

adds that women religious "saw self-starvation and illness as extensions both of Christ's suffering on the cross and of the pains of purgatory."<sup>70</sup> In the number of the religious women's lives that Bynum has addressed, there is also evidence that such women religious also imitated Christ through charitable acts connected with food. They fasted so that others might eat and also fed the poor and infirm--sometimes even by miraculous multiplication or changing of water into ale or wine.<sup>71</sup> The Riwe author's instructions do not suggest that the anchoresses should fast so that others might eat, and it has already been demonstrated that his instructions only vaguely promote such charitable activities as giving away food. In addition, if the Riwe author distrusts and discourages visionary experiences, it seems to follow that he would distrust and discourage the food miracles associated with the eucharistic devotion of medieval religious women. He values fasting primarily as preparation for communion, renunciation of the body, and imitation of Christ's suffering; but the fasting that he advocates is very moderate in comparison to that of the women religious which Bynum has addressed. For example, in preparation for communion, the author advises that for all of the fifteen times per year when the anchoresses may receive the eucharist, they should fast for only one day. In addition, the Riwe author, like many thirteenth-century clerics, defines fasting as no more than foregoing certain kinds of food or eating only one meal a day.<sup>72</sup> At various

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<sup>70</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Bynum, 113-186.

<sup>72</sup> Corpus Christi, 210-211. See also Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 41-47; she explains that in this time period, religious officials rarely advocated going without food entirely.

points throughout the guide, the author describes fasting as renunciation of the body and as imitation of Christ's suffering.<sup>73</sup> However, he also places strong limitations on the severity of fasting that the anchoresses may practice to punish the body and to imitate Christ as a comparison of his instructions on fasting to those of his predecessors demonstrates.

The Riwle, in its prescriptions for fasting, differs from the rules of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred in significant ways. For example, the Riwle author offers many more prescriptions for this practice than Augustine; and while the details of his instructions for fasting are comparable to those of Benedict, the Riwle author's instructions are also more specific and lengthy than Benedict's. The Riwle author's rules for fasting, however, are less detailed than Aelred's, who also writes for a female audience. He also counsels more moderation of fasting than Aelred, which is somewhat surprising since both write for ascetic audiences. In addition, unlike Augustine, Benedict, or Aelred, the Riwle author insists on more strict monitoring of both fasting and other mortification practices than any of the other three rule writers. His insistence on such strict monitoring and moderating of the Riwle anchoresses' ascetic practices indicates that the Riwle author is more interested in establishing control over an audience than his predecessors were.

In the following paragraphs, I will survey traditional recommendations for fasting in the rules of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred and compare these with the recommendations set forth by the Riwle author. The

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<sup>73</sup> See especially the Riwle author's discussion of fasting in Parts II and III of the guide.

Riwe author's instructions for fasting are more detailed than those in Augustine's monastic rule which, once again, offers only the briefest of prescriptions, as in:

Carnem vestram domate ieiuniis et abstinencia escae et potus, quantum valetudo. Quando autem aliquis non potest ieiunare, non tamen extra horam prandii aliquid alimentorum sumat, nisi cum aegrotat.<sup>74</sup>

(Subdue the flesh by fasting and abstinence from food and drink as much as your health permits. However, when someone cannot fast, let him take no food outside the hours for meals unless he is sick.)<sup>75</sup>

Here, Augustine does not even stipulate when or how often a religious should fast; he simply advises that fasts should be based on health or strength.

Benedict, on the other hand, is more specific in his instructions for fasting, stating,

A sancto Pascha usque Pentecosten, ad sextam reficiant fratres et sera cenent. A Pentecosten autem, tota aestate, si labores agrorum non habent monachi aut nimietas aestatis non perturbat, quarta et sexta feria ieiunent usque ad nonam. . . .

(From holy Easter to Pentecost, the brothers eat at noon and take supper in the evening. Beginning with Pentecost and continuing throughout the summer, the monks fast until midafternoon on Wednesday and Friday, unless they are working in the fields or the summer heat is oppressive. . . .)<sup>76</sup>

In this passage, unlike Augustine, Benedict designates specific seasons, days, and times of days for fasting; but he does indicate that how much a monk

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<sup>74</sup> The Latin quotation from Augustine's rule is from Dickinson, Origins of the Austin Canons, 275.

<sup>75</sup> The English translation of Augustine's rule is from The Rule of Saint Augustine, trans. Julian C. Resch (De Pere, WI: St. Norbert Abbey, 1961 ), 21.

<sup>76</sup> Rule of St. Benedict, 240-241.

fasts is dependent on his physical strength by stating that fasting is not expected when a monk must engage in strenuous activities.

The Riwe author seems to follow Benedict's lead in offering more specific instructions than Augustine, but he adds a few details to Benedict's prescriptions. For example, he writes:

ge schulen eoten from easter. aþet te hali rode dei þe leatere þe is in heruest euche dei twien bute þe fridahe. ne i þe aduent ne schule ge nawt eoten hwit bute neode hit makie. þe oþer half ger feasten al. bute sunne dahes ane. hwen ge beoð in heale ⁊ i ful strengðe. ah riwe ne twest nawt seke ne blodletene. ge ne schulen nawt eoten flesch ne seim. bute for mucho secnesse. oþer hwa se is ouer feble. Potage eoteð bliðeliche. ⁊ wunieð ow lutel drunch. nōðeles leoue sustren ower mete and ower drunch hauēð iþuht me ofte leasse þen ich walde. Ne feaste ge na dei to bread ne to weattre. bute ge habben leaue.<sup>77</sup>

(You shall eat twice a day from Easter until the second feast of the Holy Cross, that is in harvest time, except on Fridays. And in Advent, you should not eat white food except when need requires it. The other half of the year, when you are in health and full strength, you should fast always, except on Sundays. But this rule does not bind those who are sick or have had bloodletting. You should not eat flesh or fat except when very ill, or when one is overly feeble. Eat vegetable stew happily and accustom yourselves to little drink. Nevertheless, beloved sisters, your meat and your drink have often, it seems to me, been less than I would wish. Do not fast any day on only bread and water unless you have leave.)

Here, though the times of year for specific kinds of fasting are approximately the same as those Benedict mentions, the Riwe author adds information about the specific foods that his audience should eat or forego during fasts. He is also more specific than Benedict in adding that the anchoresses are not required to fast when they have had "bloodletting"; and since he forbids

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<sup>77</sup> Corpus Christi, 211.

fasting on bread and water “on any day” without his permission, he implies that the anchoresses fast sufficiently if they eat only vegetables and drink little on all fast days.

The Riwe author’s instructions for fasting seem to be influenced not only by Benedict but also Aelred; at the same time, his instructions are less specific than Aelred’s. For example, Aelred advises

In vigiliis tamen sanctorum, et quatuor temporum ieiuniis, omni etiam feria quarta vel pro sexta extra quadragesimam, in cibo quadragesimali ieiunet. In quadragesima vero unum ei quotidie sufficiat pulmentum et nisi infirmitas impedierit, sexta feria in pane et aqua ieiunet.

Ab Exaltatione sanctae Crucis usque ad quadragesimam semel in die hora nona reficiat. In quadragesima vero dicta vespera ieiunium solvat. A Pascha usque ad Pentecosten, exceptis Rogationibus et vigilia Pentecostes, ad sextam prandeat, et ad seram coenet. Quod etiam tota aestate faciat, praeter feriam quartam et sextam, et solemnibus ieiuniis. Diebus autem quibus ieiunat in aestate, liceat ei pro somnio meridiano inter matutinos et primam modicum quietis indulgere corpusculo.<sup>78</sup>

(On vigils of feasts, on Ember Days and on the Wednesdays and Fridays out of Lent [an anchoress] should fast on a Lenten diet. In Lent one meal a day should suffice, and on Fridays, unless ill-health prevent her, she should fast on bread and water. From the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Lent she should have one meal a day after none, while in Lent she should not break her fast until after vespers. From Easter to Pentecost, except for the Rogation Days and the vigil of Pentecost, she should take dinner after sext and supper in the evening; this should be the rule throughout the summer except for the Wednesdays and Fridays and solumn fasts. On these fast days in summer she may, instead of taking a midday sleep, allow herself a short rest between lauds and prime.)<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Aelred, La Vie De Recluse, 76.

<sup>79</sup> Aelred, “Rule of Life,” 60.

In this passage, Aelred offers more details on the times of year when fasting should occur, listing the names of all of these. He also lists specific times of day (none, vespers, sext) for breaking fasts, and even suggests times for taking rest. In addition, he states that a recluse should sometimes fast on only bread and water. Aelred's more detailed instructions for fasting imply that he considers this practice more binding than Augustine, Benedict, or the Riwe author. Indeed, elsewhere in his regula, Aelred devotes considerable discussion to explanation of why the Lenten fast in particular is essential for religious recluses.<sup>80</sup> It is not surprising that Aelred should be more specific in his prescriptions than Augustine or Benedict since he writes for an ascetic audience instead of a cloistered one; ascetic fasting--based as it is on the tradition of the Desert Fathers who engaged in radical fasting--is traditionally more severe than monastic fasting.<sup>81</sup> However, one would expect Aelred's and the Riwe author's instructions to be more similar.

The Riwe author is obviously greatly influenced by Aelred, but unlike his predecessor, he strictly forbids bread and water fasting without special permission, which implies that he considers this practice excessively severe and desires to control his audience's access to such fasting. In addition, he indicates--contrary to his assertion in the introduction of the guide that "in

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<sup>80</sup>Aelred, 57-59. Aelred explains that fasting during Lent is enjoined on all Christians by God and that regular fasting of any kind protects one from temptation, but he is especially insistent that severe fasting is efficacious when one feels tempted to commit an act of lechery.

<sup>81</sup> For insight into the Desert Fathers' attitudes toward the body and their belief in the necessity of severe fasting, see Peter Brown, The Body and Society, 219-224. Brown explains for example, "the most bitter struggle of the desert ascetic was presented not so much as a struggle with his sexuality as with his belly" (218). In other words, even when a religious hermit lived long in the desert and perhaps succeeded in taming all bodily desires (including sexual lust), it was still problematical for him to face the fact that his body required food for sustenance, which tied him to earthly rather than heavenly existence. Therefore, the Desert Fathers seem to have attempted to survive on as little food as was humanly possible.

the case of meat, drink, of foregoing flesh or fish," his audience can exercise free choice--that their fasting practices are subject to his discretion and authority. Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred do not suggest that their audiences ask for special permission from a superior to engage in severe fasting; their rules leave such decisions to the discretion of the individual religious. Therefore, unlike Augustine, Benedict, or Aelred, the Riwle author believes it is important for his audience's fasting practices to be monitored by an authority figure, and this tendency is also reflected in his instructions for other bodily mortification practices. In addition, the Riwle author consistently focuses on controlling his audience's bodily actions by prohibiting some of the more severe ascetic practices that Aelred advocates for recluses.

The Riwle author's instructions for outer body discipline, like his instructions for fasting, also deviate from tradition. For example, unlike Augustine and Benedict, the Riwle author makes strong distinctions between the types of punishments that a religious may inflict on her body as penance for her sins: For example, he lists very specific mortification practices which he considers unacceptable for the anchoresses to perform on their bodies either at all or without his permission when Augustine and Benedict scarcely mention specific practices at all. And though Aelred does recommend a few practices, the Riwle author seems to think those Aelred does list are overly severe. In addition, the Riwle author, unlike his predecessors, insists that the anchoresses consult him before engaging in any but the mildest mortification practices. These tendencies, once again, most obviously reflect the Riwle author's view of his female audience as religious novices, but, like

his instructions for fasting, the Riwe author's prescriptions for outer body mortification should also be considered in a larger context.

In addition to addressing the fasting practices of many medieval religious women at length, Bynum discusses other bodily mortification practices which women religious engaged in to imitate Christ or subvert the authority of male clerics. She explains, for instance:

Thirteenth-century women [religious] joined with the crucifix through physical suffering, both involuntary and voluntary--that is, through illness and through self-mortification. . . . Horrible pain, twisting of the body, bleeding--whether inflicted by God or by oneself--were not an effort to destroy the body, not a punishment of physicality [Bynum's italics], not primarily an effort to shear away a source of lust, not even primarily an identification with the martyrs. . . . Illness and asceticism were rather imitatio Christi, an effort to plumb the depths of Christ's humanity at the moment of his most insistent and terrifying humanness--the moment of his dying.<sup>82</sup>

Bynum explains that because bodily mortification represented such joining with Christ's suffering, many medieval ascetics, and especially women religious, often engaged in very severe disciplinary practices such as "jumping into ovens or icy ponds, driving knives, nails, or nettles into their flesh, whipping or hanging themselves," to name only a few.<sup>83</sup> Such practices were widespread among religious ascetics, and many saints' lives (such as those on which Bynum bases her study), which describe severe bodily mortification, were written down before and during the Riwe author's time. Therefore, he was probably well aware of the excessive punishments which religious women could inflict upon their bodies. Indeed, he counsels

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<sup>82</sup> Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion," Fragmentation and Redemption, 131.

<sup>83</sup> Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice," Fragmentation and Redemption, 185.

moderation and monitoring of mortification practices just as he does fasting in Part VIII of the guide. The author advises his audience to welcome any illnesses that God allows an anchoress to be afflicted with, and bear these with patience in imitation of Christ; and he frequently reminds his audience that they should regularly punish their bodies. At the same time, the Riwe author seems to view some bodily disciplines as excessive and life threatening. Further comparison of the Riwe with the guides of Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred illustrates this point.

As I mentioned previously, the Riwe author-unlike his predecessors--enumerates a number of mortification practices which are especially severe and insists on monitoring his audience's disciplinary practices himself, indicating that he exerts more authoritarian control over his audience than other rule writers. Neither Augustine nor Benedict makes a point of enumerating a wide variety of mortification practices in which a religious may engage. In fact, the rules of Augustine and Benedict devote more discussion to describing the disciplinary measures to be taken, within a convent or monastery, for commission of sin than to describing actual punitive practices. They both also advise that the members of a religious community monitor each other on a daily basis and be alert in detecting the sins of their peers. Augustine, for instance, states that when a nun is found, by her peers, to be remiss in duty or otherwise negligent, she must be accused by two or three witnesses. Then, based on the evidence provided by the witnesses of her transgression, a superior officer of the convent or a priest may convict the nun of vice or sin and enjoin an appropriate discipline for the offending religious to perform as her penance. But the only punitive

activity that Augustine actually names in his rule is abstinence from food and drink.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, Benedict names only fasting, prostration of the body, and flogging as appropriate penance for sin or negligence of duty.<sup>85</sup> In addition, neither Augustine nor Benedict nor Aelred insists that a religious request advice from a superior if she or he wishes, for any reason, to engage in especially severe bodily punishments. Aelred does, however, list a few specific disciplinary activities, naming rolling in nettles and plunging one's body into icy cold water to avoid sin or to do penance for sin.<sup>86</sup>

In contrast, the Riwele author offers a detailed list of bodily punishments in Part VIII of his work, and he stipulates that his audience should consult him before engaging in such practices, writing:

Nest lich nan ne gurde hire wið na cunne gurdles. bute þurh  
schriftes leaue. ne beore nan irn ne hère. ne ilespiles. ne ne  
beate hire þerwið. ne wið scourge ileadet. wið holin ne wið breres.  
ne biblodgi hire seolf. wiðute schriftes leaue. nohwer ne binetli  
here. ne ne bete biuoren. ne na keoruunge ne keorue. ne ne  
neome ed eanes to luðere disceplines. temptatious forte  
acwenchen.<sup>87</sup>

(Let no one gird herself with a belt worn next to the skin except with her confessor's permission. [let no one] wear anything made of iron or hair, or hedgehog skins, or beat herself therewith, or with a leaded scourge. [No one should] draw blood from herself with holly or briars without her confessor's leave. Nowhere [on her body should she] use nettles, nor [should she] beat the front [of her body], or cut her skin, or engage in excessively heavy disciplines in order to quench temptations.)

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<sup>84</sup> Dickinson, Origins of the Austin Canons, 275.

<sup>85</sup> Rule of St. Benedict, 220-227, 244-249, 290-293.

<sup>86</sup> Aelred, "Rule of Life," 67.

<sup>87</sup> Corpus Christi, 214.

Clearly, the Riwe author names many more punitive disciplines in this passage than Augustine, Benedict or Aelred. Unlike his forebears, he adamantly insists that the anchoresses request permission from him, their confessor, before engaging in the severe bodily punishments he mentions. Here, in fact, the Riwe author lists no mortification practices which he considers acceptable for his audience to perform without his leave. His deviation from the rules of Augustine and Benedict on this point may represent no more than his desire to set down specific rules for his novice audience, but his deviations from Aelred's rule require more explanation. Therefore, I will discuss these separately.

It should be emphasized once again that the Riwe audience, unlike the audiences of Augustine or Benedict, is not made up of cloistered religious but enclosed anchoresses, who, unlike nuns and monks, cannot readily monitor or be monitored by other anchoresses if each is enclosed in an individual cell. Anchorholds differ from religious communities in that each anchoress is responsible for keeping track of her own transgressions. In addition, unlike community religious who have easy access to confessors or priests in convents to enjoin their penance, an anchoress has only her director or confessor (usually the same person), or an occasional visiting priest, to advise her on appropriate mortification practices. According to Hope Emily Allen, there may even have been occasions during which an anchoress had no access to a confessor or priestly adviser at all. As Allen explains, a number of anchorhouses may have been served by the same director or confessor, which means that a recluse or group of recluses might have been without advice or counsel for periods of time when their director was absent from their

anchorhold because he was fulfilling his responsibilities elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> The Riwle author may have offered his audience a list of specific mortification practices because he knew they would not always have immediate access to his advice. However, since the Riwle author and Aelred both write for ascetic female audiences, the Riwle author's deviations from Aelred's instructions are somewhat surprising and are not accounted for entirely by the fact that his audience is made up of spiritual novices.

As I stated earlier, the mortification practices employed by enclosed religious are traditionally more severe than those employed by cloistered religious; yet the Riwle author counsels much more moderation and monitoring for his anchoritic audience than Aelred does for a similar audience. For example, the previously-cited instructions from the Riwle, the author especially admonishes the anchoresses against bodily disciplines which "draw blood" or "cut [the] skin," or which endanger life. Clearly--though he often borrows from Aelred's guide--the Riwle author is adamantly opposed to the practice of using nettles which Aelred suggests. Aelred advocates further that a recluse who feels especially tempted to sin should engage in more severe fasting, or wakefulness than usual in order to purge the body of sin. He writes that any anchoress who fears too much bodily deprivation will hamper her ability to serve God is only making excuses for sin. He adds:

Nec hoc dico ut discretioni. . .sed vitiorum materias. . .qui saepe falso nomine discretionis palliamus negotium voluptatis. Vera enim discretio est animam carni praeponere, et ubi periclitatur

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<sup>88</sup> See Hope Emily Allen, "On the Author of the Ancren Riwle," 636.

utraque, nec sine huius incommodo illius potest salus consistere, pro illius utilitate istam negligere.<sup>89</sup>

(I do not say this in disparagement of discretion [in mortification practices]. . . .But we must keep within due limits those things which provide material for vice. . . .we often use discretion as a pretext to disguise the pursuit of pleasure. True discretion is to put the soul before the body and where both are threatened and the health of the one can only be obtained at the price of suffering for the other, to neglect the body for the sake of the soul.)<sup>90</sup>

This passage clearly indicates that Aelred considered not only fasting but any mortification practice a more binding responsibility for anchorites than the Riwe author. Given his admonition “to neglect the body for the sake of the soul,” it is clear that Aelred promoted much less moderation of bodily punishments than the Riwe author. In contrast to Aelred, the Riwe author, through his specific directions for moderation and monitoring of bodily disciplines, sometimes even seems to imply that the body is just as important as the soul, which, while confusingly paradoxical, is not unusual in a thirteenth-century religious writer. As Bynum explains, “theological writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries came to treat the relationship between body and soul as much tighter and more integral than it had earlier been understood to be” even though these writers seem to have had difficulty explaining this concept.<sup>91</sup> When one reads discussions about the relationship between the body and soul in the Middle Ages, Bynum explains further, “one is struck less by the polarities and dichotomies than by the

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<sup>89</sup> Aelred, La Vie De Recluse, 97-98.

<sup>90</sup> Aelred, “Rule of Life,” 70.

<sup>91</sup> Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice,” 222.

muddle theologians and natural philosophers made of them, either by inserting entities between body and soul or by obscuring their differences.”<sup>92</sup> She adds, however, that despite such confusion or conflation, “Those who wrote about body [*sic*] in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were in fact concerned to bridge the gap between material and spiritual and to give the body positive significance.”<sup>93</sup> Therefore, like his religious contemporaries, the Riwe author, writing a century later than Aelred, apparently viewed the gap between the body and the soul as narrower than Aelred seems to have believed.

The Riwe author’s justification for placing almost equal value on the health of the body and that of the soul is scattered in various segments of the rule, but it will be useful at this point to cite a few passages from elsewhere in the guide which illustrate his view of how the soul and body are related. In Part III, he writes for example:

Ʒah Ʒe flesch beo ure fa. hit is us iháten Ʒ we halden hit up. wa we moten don hit as hit is wel ofte wurðe. ah nawt fordon mid alle. for hu wac se hit eauer beo. Ʒenne is hit swa icuplet. ⁊ se feste ifeiet to ure deorewurðe gast goes ahne furme. Ʒ we mahten sone sleaen Ʒ an wið Ʒ oðer.<sup>94</sup>

(Though the flesh is our foe, it is commanded that we support it. We must, however, punish it, as it often deserves, but not entirely destroy it. For howsoever weak it may be, it is so coupled, so fastly united with our precious soul, God’s own image, that we might soon slay the one with the other [the body with the soul].)

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<sup>92</sup> Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice,” 223.

<sup>93</sup> Bynum, 223.

<sup>94</sup> Corpus Christi, 73.

Here, the Riwle author implies concern that if an anchoress were to punish her body so severely as to cause her own death, her soul would be lost because she would be considered guilty of suicide; therefore, the Riwle author is careful to explain that the soul's survival is dependent on the body's survival. Again, this apparent paradoxical idea is not unusual in the work of a thirteenth-century writer. As Bynum has observed:

It seems reasonable to suppose that the extraordinary importance given to the body, especially the female body, in thirteenth- to fifteenth-century religion. . . owe[s] something to the fact that theorists in the high Middle Ages did not see body primarily as the enemy of the soul, the container of the soul, or the servant of the soul; rather they saw the person as a psychosomatic unity, as body and soul together.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the fact that the Riwle author does indeed suggest above that the body is the soul's enemy ("Though the flesh is our foe"), he seems, for the most part, to be in agreement with his contemporaries that the soul and body form the psychosomatic whole which is the individual person; and he tries to make this clear to his audience. Elsewhere in the Riwle, the author reminds his audience, "Ʒe sawle ⁊ te licome nis bute a mon. ⁊ ba ham tit a dom" (The soul and the body are nothing less than one person, and both require one judgement).<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the differences between the Riwle author's and Aelred's instructions for bodily mortification appear to be related to not only the Riwle audience's inexperience but to changing attitudes about the body itself in thirteenth---as opposed to twelfth-century--thought.

The Riwle author establishes authority over his audience early on, apparently because of the anchoresses' inexperience. His detailed instructions

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<sup>95</sup> Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice," 222.

<sup>96</sup> Corpus Christi, 96-97.

on bodily gestures and postures during devotions support this assertion. His insistence on strict monitoring and moderation of his audience's fasting and bodily mortification practices also support the idea that the Riwle anchoresses are spiritual novices, whom the author believes need the guidance of a religious authority. But the author's instructions for fasting and mortification may also be influenced by thirteenth-century views of the body and the bodily spirituality of medieval women. The author's emphasis on both the body and clerical authority in Parts I and VIII of the guide indicate that he never forgets he addresses a lay audience, and he never allows his audience to forget that their spiritual salvation is dependent upon control and discipline of the body. He also, however, never forgets that his audience is female as the next chapter of this dissertation will demonstrate. Based on evidence in Parts I and VIII of the guide, the Riwle author's discourse can be accurately described as authoritarian rather than antifeminist because it cannot be proven with certainty from reading these portions of the Riwle that gender issues reside beneath his preoccupation with controlling his female audience's bodily actions. However, the author's focus on control of the physical body continues in his instructions for inner religious life in Parts II through IV of the guide. Gender issues become more prominent in close reading of these segments of the Riwle.

### CHAPTER III

#### LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE BODIES: INNER RELIGIOUS LIFE, CONTROL OF SENSORY ORGANS, AND GENDER-SPECIFIC RHETORIC

Part II of the Ancrene Riwle is the first segment of the author's treatment of what he calls the inner rules for religious life and is often given the modern English title "The Custody of the Senses."<sup>1</sup> Since the Riwle author has stated that Parts II through VII of the guide will instruct his audience in spiritual life--and he seems sufficiently to have addressed physical life and bodily control or discipline in Parts I and VIII--it is somewhat surprising that in Part II of the Riwle he should continue to direct a great deal of attention to the body by instructing his audience in control of their five senses. One expects Part II to be filled with instructions for spiritual contemplation or meditation, but the majority of textual space in this segment is devoted to admonitions against transgressive use of the material senses--or more accurately, the physical sense organs--than to instructions on virtuous use of these. Though the Riwle author offers suggestions for how an anchoress may use her senses appropriately, that is spiritually, these suggestions take second place to his adamant warnings against sinful use of the sensory organs. Furthermore, when the Riwle author does suggest appropriate ways of sensing, he encourages the anchoress to meditate upon a very physical love relationship with Christ her spouse in which she may use all of her five senses as freely as she wishes. In so doing, the Riwle author

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<sup>1</sup> The Ancrene Riwle, ed. M. B. Salu. Salu gives modern English titles to all eight parts of the guide, xxvii.

advocates a very bodily spirituality for his female audience. The present chapter examines how the Riwe author's continued emphasis on control of the physical body tends to obscure the spiritual lessons he states he will present in Part II and how this tendency seems to be influenced by the gender of his audience. The author's constant awareness that his audience is female is evident in his abundant admonitions against lecherous sensing and against the seductive power of the female body. When such admonitions are examined in relation to his brief instructions for appropriate sensing and in relation to his rhetorical strategy and stylistic use of exempla and metaphor, the authoritarian discourse of the Riwe becomes not only traditional religious discourse which attempts to control the behavior of a lay audience in general but also antifeminist discourse that attempts to control a female lay audience in particular.

The Riwe author devotes the majority of textual space--about ninety-five percent--in Part II to warnings against lecherous use of the sense organs. In his general introduction to the rule and again at the beginning of Part II, the Riwe author justifies lengthy treatment of the physical senses by explaining that these are the guardians of an anchoress's heart ("þe witeð þe heorte as wakemen"), which is the dwelling place of her soul. If the senses are used appropriately, he adds, they protect the heart from sin.<sup>2</sup> Also in his general introduction, the author writes that Part II of the guide will be divided into five separate parts, each of which will treat one of the five

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<sup>2</sup> Corpus Christi, 11-12: "ge schulen þurh ower fif wittes witen ower heorte þ ordre ⁊ religiun ⁊ sawle lif is inne." See also, Corpus Christi, 29: "Wið alles cunnes warde dohter seið Salomon wite wel þin heorte. for sawle lif is in hire gef has is wel iloket. þe heorte wardeins beoð þe fif wittes."

senses, and that each will be discussed in a particular order.<sup>3</sup> In the first paragraph of Part II, he lists sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, thereby indicating the order in which he will address the senses.<sup>4</sup> However, as Alexandra Barratt has observed, "Part II [actually] falls into two main parts of unequal length," the first of which treats "not. . .the senses of sight and hearing, but. . . the sins of the eyes, ears, and mouth," the second of which addresses "the senses of taste and smell together."<sup>5</sup> Here, Barratt distinguishes between "the senses" and "the sins [my italics] of the eyes, ears, and mouth," a distinction which the Riwle author rarely makes clear in his treatment of the Five Wits. Barratt observes that the Riwle author's "terminology" for the senses and the sense organs is ambiguous since "the 'limen' [limbs or sense organs] are treated as synonymous with sight, speech and hearing, which are the activities of the eye, mouth and ear but not all, strictly speaking, senses [Barratt's italics]."<sup>6</sup> This conflation of the senses, the sense organs, and the sins of the sense organs suggests that the author is more concerned with enumerating the transgressive acts--as opposed to the material or spiritual perception--that an anchoress can perform with her eyes, mouth, and hands. He is aware, for example, that in addition to tasting, an

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<sup>3</sup> Corpus Christi, 12: "I þis destinctiun aren chapitres fiue. as fif stuchen efter fif wittes. . . . ⁊ spekeþ of euch hwet sunderlepes o rawe."

<sup>4</sup> Corpus Christi, 29. The author indicates that he will discuss the senses in the order in which he first lists them: "Sihþe. . .herunge. . . Smeccunge. . .Smeallunge. ⁊ euch limes felunge (sight. . .hearing. . . taste and each limb's feeling)."

<sup>5</sup> Alexandra Barratt, "The Five Wits and Their Structural Significance in Part II of Ancrene Wisse," Medium AEvum 56 (1987): 13-14. Barratt goes on to question why the Riwle author does not adhere to the structural plan he has set up. She believes one reason he fails to do so is because he is uncertain about how to distinguish between the senses and the actions that the sensory organs may perform in addition to sensory perception.

<sup>6</sup> Barratt, 14.

act of perception with which he is not greatly concerned here, the mouth can be used for speaking, which he considers an especially damning vice in anchoresses. Therefore, while he offers few admonitions against tasting, he offers numerous warnings against excessive or offensive speech. The author also indicates that, in addition to serving as sensory receptors of visual stimuli, the eyes may be used to direct enticing glances at other people, which lead to lecherous acts. Moreover, he is especially preoccupied, during his discussion of the eye sins, with how the sight of the female body may incite lust. Finally, according to this author, though hands are primarily receptors for tactile stimuli, they may also be used to seduce a lover. Part II of the Riwle, by the author's own admission, is designed to instruct anchoresses in virtuous employment of the sense organs; but the author actually offers more warnings against sinful sensing than suggestions for virtuous sensing. In the brief segment wherein he does offer instructions for what he considers appropriate sensing, he illustrates this concept with a very literalized version of the sponsa christi exemplum.

In contrast to his admonitions against lecherous sensing and the lust-inciting power of the female body, the Riwle author's suggestions for appropriate use of sensory organs--which culminate in the sponsa christi motif--comprise only about five percent of Part II. Like other English writers, such as those of the Katherine Group, the Riwle author favors the allegory of the lady and Christ the lover-knight when addressing a female audience. He utilizes this exemplum when admonishing the anchoress to keep both her soul and body pure for union with her heavenly spouse and quotes passages from the Cantic of Canticles to exemplify the love relationship between the

anchoress and Christ. In his exegesis of the Canticles, the Riwle author follows the lead of Bernard of Clairvaux who, a century earlier with his commentary on the Canticles, had attempted to revive the ancient (and primarily gnostic) idea of the figurative marriage of the individual soul to Christ.<sup>7</sup> However, Bernard's interpretation of the Canticles was directed chiefly at a male monastic audience and was strictly allegorical.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Bernard, the Riwle author literalizes the love relationship between the anchoress and Christ by depicting it as though it were an earthly marriage between a real man and woman rather than a union of the soul with God. The Christ-spouse allegory is an important element of female affective piety during the twelfth century and beyond, and writers of devotional literature for women commonly described Christ in material rather than spiritual terms, as a literal spouse of the holy woman. John Bugge explains how this tendency came about, writing,

In . . . Christian gnosis Christ had been, in effect, almost the equivalent of an aeon or an angel, a virgin and virgin-born; the question of his sexuality had simply not been raised. The Gospel of John pictures Christ as the incarnate Word, and the synoptic gospels ignore his maleness. By the twelfth century, however, the Anselmian view of the atonement had removed the obstacle, as it were, to seeing Christ as a man, both human and male. The importance of the sequence of events is that it opened

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<sup>7</sup> John Bugge, Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 59-94. Bugge explains that "the ultimate origin of the sponsa Christi motif must be sought at least in part within pagan gnosticism (59)." However, the motif was also embraced by Christian gnostics, such as Origen (61). Bugge adds that "The Origenist reading [of the motif] seems to have found continuance in the western parts of the Empire " and was popularized in the writings of Rufinus and Jerome (62). But the motif lost popularity "after the less than whole-hearted treatment of it by Ambrose (64)" and was not revived "until an impulse to mystic union in the twelfth century made it again appropriate (64)," at which time the motif was revived by Bernard of Clairvaux in his commentary on the Canticles (92). Then later on, as Bugge asserts, Bernard's use of the sponsa Christi motif was adopted by such writers as the Riwle author and authors of works from the Katherine Group (94, 95, 96-109).

<sup>8</sup> Bugge, Virginitas, 91.

the way to speaking of Christ in the metaphorical terms of human sexual love. The portrayal of Jesus as the rival with other men for the affections of holy women was a unique by-product of the Anselmian atonement.<sup>9</sup>

In early Christianity, the sponsa christi motif represented alternately the marriage of the individual Christian soul to Christ the Word, and the marriage of the Church, a collective of Christian souls, to God.<sup>10</sup> Then in the twelfth century, according to Bugge, Bernard attempted to revive this allegorical tradition in later medieval Christian thought.<sup>11</sup> Bugge adds, however, that by the time Bernard's interpretation of the Canticles reached England, certain factors--notably the influence of the courtly romance tradition--made it "unthinkable [for religious writers in England] to speak of the monk as the 'bride of Christ.'"<sup>12</sup> At this time in English history, Bugge asserts, "it was more often the concept of the soldier, not that of the bride, to which male monasticism turned" to exemplify male religious life.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the term "bride of Christ" came to be almost exclusively applied to religious women and, as Bugge explains, this narrower and more literalized application of the sponsa christi motif is most evident in works from the

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<sup>9</sup> Bugge, Virginitas, 83.

<sup>10</sup> See Bugge's detailed description of the evolution of the motif in Virginitas, 59-67.

<sup>11</sup> See Bugge's segment subtitled "St. Bernard and the Song of Songs" for a more in-depth explanation of Bernard's revival of the spouse of Christ concept, 90-95.

<sup>12</sup> Bugge, 96.

<sup>13</sup> Bugge, 79.

Katherine and Wooing Groups, and in the Ancrene Riwe.<sup>14</sup> Not finding this tendency particularly surprising, Bugge asserts:

Certainly the style of Bernard's work, with its enthusiasm for minute examination of the symbolism of sexual details, its baroque embellishment of one meaning by another, and the general floridity (and one might say abandon) of its tone throughout, seems to have been intended to produce a highly emotional rather than merely reverent reaction.<sup>15</sup>

The Riwe author seems to have found both the Christ-knight allegory and Bernard's commentary on the Cantic of Canticles especially useful for instructing a female audience since women are traditionally associated with emotion rather than with reason. Though his use of the Christ knight allegory is not surprising, it has generated mixed responses from modern scholars.

There is controversy among critics about whether or not the Riwe author's use of the knight image and the sensual language of the Canticles can be said to reflect an antifeminist attitude toward his audience. Some scholars, such as Janet Grayson and Linda Georgianna, remain neutral on this point. Grayson, for example, asserts that the author employs "the conventions and figures of romance" in the guide in order to encourage his audience to give up earthly love in favor of heavenly love which is "infinitely better."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Georgianna asserts that the Riwe author uses the knight and lady exemplum to suggest "that the anchoress manipulate her

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<sup>14</sup> See Bugge's discussion of the influence of Bernard's commentary on the Canticles and Bernard's use of the sponsa christi motif in these Middle English writings for women religious in Bugge, 94- 95 and in his segment subtitled "The Katherine Group and Erotic Spirituality," 96-109.

<sup>15</sup> Bugge, Virginitas, 109.

<sup>16</sup> Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse, 178-179.

human desires for sexual union” with an earthly man and extend “those yearnings beyond this world toward Christ.”<sup>17</sup> While the author’s encouragement of his audience to transfer their sexual urges from mortal men to Christ may be viewed as antifeminist, Georgianna does not suggest this reading of the Riwle.<sup>18</sup> Some scholars, such as Cheryl Frost, express ambivalence in discussions of whether or not the imagery in the Riwle reflects antifeminist attitudes. Frost notes, for example, that the Riwle author is continuously aware “of his readers’ femininity” throughout the guide because “he usually speaks of the human race or of any large group of humans as being made up of both sexes” by repeatedly using the phrase “men and women” throughout the guide.<sup>19</sup> But Frost concludes that misogynous undertones in the Riwle are probably unintentional on the author’s part. Thus, she believes that he employs the allegory of the Christ-knight and the lady because it had a “feminine appeal” at the time he wrote the guide and because he desired to “inspire his readers through an attempted understanding of their emotional nature” as women.<sup>20</sup>

Other critics, however, are less neutral or ambivalent in their readings of the Riwle. For example, Ritamary Bradley believes that the Riwle author, through his use of imagery, presents his female audience with “an

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<sup>17</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 72.

<sup>18</sup> Georgianna, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Frost, “The Attitude to Women and the Adaptation to a Feminine Audience in the Ancrene Wisse,” 247.

<sup>20</sup> Frost, 243.

antifeminist profile" of women.<sup>21</sup> She asserts that the author's employment of the metaphors of the lady and Christ as her lover, knight, or husband, reinforces traditional inferior roles for women--as helpless or in need of the discipline of a domineering husband--in medieval society.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Bradley, Innes-Parker asserts that the allegory of the Christ-knight in the guide does not limit the spiritual expression of the Riwe audience to a traditionally passive female role. She argues instead that the figurative relationship between the anchoress and Christ encourages the anchoresses to actively embrace "a life of suffering and toil in an aggressive search for union with the God who approaches her in human terms."<sup>23</sup>

The broad range of critical readings of the Christ-knight metaphor in the Riwe reflects the ambiguity which surrounds all of the imagery in this work and which makes a study of it especially difficult for twentieth-century scholars. A critic's interpretation of the Riwe author's use of the sponsa christi motif seems to be dependent upon whether or not she or he views the Riwe author's use of this image as a literalized marriage between the anchoress and Christ or an allegorized marriage of the soul or the church with God/Christ as Bernard interprets the motif. For example, Bugge believes that the Riwe author follows Bernard closely and interprets the Christ knight

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<sup>21</sup> Ritamary Bradley, "In the Jaws of the Bear: Journeys of Transformation by Women Mystics," Vox Benedictina 8 (1991): 116; see also Ritamary Bradley, In the Jaws of the Bear: Journeys of Transformation by Women Mystics, Peregrina Papers Series, 3 (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing, 1991), 17.

<sup>22</sup> Bradley, Jaws of the Bear, 19-21.

<sup>23</sup> Catherine Innes-Parker, "The Lady and the King: Ancrene Wisse's Parable of the Royal Wooing Re-examined," English Studies 75 (1994): 522.

exemplum allegorically.<sup>24</sup> Bradley, on the other hand, disagrees with Bugge and finds that the Riwle author uses the text of the Canticles corruptly by emphasizing a very literalized spousal union between the anchoress and Christ.<sup>25</sup> The present chapter demonstrates that the Riwle author's employment of the Christ-knight allegory--which comprises relatively little textual space in comparison to his admonitions against transgressive sensing in Part II--should not be examined in isolation but in relation to the author's use of other imagery throughout Part II and in relation to his overall rhetorical strategy.

The rhetorical structure of Part II is quite complex in comparison to Parts I and VIII. T. P. Dolan has noted, for example, that the latter two portions are characterized by "plain" rhetorical style because few "stylistic devices" such as metaphors or tropes are utilized in these segments.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Dolan observes that Parts II through VII of the guide are characterized by "Grand Style" because the Riwle author "never resists using a Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought, or a Trope, when the occasion demands."<sup>27</sup> Many scholars have noted the influence of classical and Christian rhetoric in the Riwle text. As Dennis Rygiel puts it, the Riwle author's "theory of composition. . . was that of traditional Latin rhetoric as

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<sup>24</sup> Bugge, Virginitas, 137.

<sup>25</sup> See Bradley, laws of the Bear, 24-27.

<sup>26</sup> T. P. Dolan, "The Rhetoric of Ancrene Wisse," Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 212.

<sup>27</sup> Dolan, 204.

modified for Christian preaching.”<sup>28</sup> Dolan adds that the author “shows himself to be a master of rhetoric, inasmuch as he consistently and skilfully [sic] adjusts his style to the tone and quality of the subject-matter.”<sup>29</sup>

When the Riwle author discusses inappropriate sensing in Part II, he often emphasizes its vileness by relating biblical tales about disobedient women or by describing the disgusting habits of bird or beast figures which represent those who sin with their sense organs. It is significant that the exempla which the author uses to illustrate lecherous sin are more often female than male and that the beast images he uses to emphasize the foulness of lustful sensing usually reinforce feminine rather than masculine vice. As Elizabeth Robertson has noted, the author is one of a number of medieval writers who--through exemplum and metaphor--offer female audiences frequent reminders of woman’s sexual guilt as “daughters of Eve” in the guide.<sup>30</sup> The text of Riwle is also characterized by skillful tone modulation and audience address. For instance, in portions of Part II, the Riwle author’s rhetoric is characterized by a benign tone that gradually becomes more accusatory. His arguments against vice build momentum as they progress and finally reach a startling crescendo. Furthermore, the author’s manner of addressing the anchoresses often requires his audience’s involvement in their own instruction. As Rygiel explains, the prose of the Riwle “is a prose

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<sup>28</sup> Dennis Rygiel, “A Holistic Approach to the Style of Ancrene Wisse,” Chaucer Review 16 (1982): 275.

<sup>29</sup> Dolan, 203.

<sup>30</sup> Robertson, “Rule of the Body,” 112.

of involvement, and the stylistic devices used [in the work] contribute decisively to the involving of the reader.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Rygiel, one way that the Riwe author accomplishes this reader or audience involvement is by “control of point of view.”<sup>32</sup> The author’s strategy is to offer a directive and then to state that some people may object to it. Then, as Rygiel explains, the Riwe author puts this hypothetical objector into his text and responds “directly to the imagined person who has raised the objection” by addressing the hypothetical person as “you.”<sup>33</sup> Rygiel adds that this “switch from the generalized sum to the specific tu [Rygiel’s italics] effectively engages the reader” because “it is as if [the reader] himself has been directly addressed.”<sup>34</sup> Such a strategy, Rygiel observes, puts the reader “on the spot” by requiring him to identify with the hypothetical objector.<sup>35</sup> The Riwe author employs this strategy of audience involvement frequently in Part II and elsewhere. I argue here, however, that instead of requiring his female audience to identify with only a general objector, the Riwe author’s discourse often requires the anchoresses to identify specifically with disobedient biblical women and unruly birds or beasts. His rhetoric, like that of most medieval religious texts, seems calculated to inspire guilt in a lay audience but becomes more recognizable as antifeminist discourse in Part II of

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<sup>31</sup> Rygiel, “A Holistic Approach,” 276.

<sup>32</sup> Rygiel, 278.

<sup>33</sup> Rygiel, 278.

<sup>34</sup> Rygiel, 278.

<sup>35</sup> Rygiel, 278.

the guide. Through such discourse, the Riwe author implies that the anchoresses in his audience can never transcend their feminine gender.

In his study of misogynous discourse in the Middle Ages, Howard Bloch has asserted that “[l]ike allegory itself, to which it is peculiarly attracted, antifeminism is both a genre and a topos,” that is, both an attitude toward real women and a discourse which uses man as a metaphor for mind and rationality and woman as a metaphor for sense and irrationality.<sup>36</sup> Bloch writes that such thought and discourse has its roots in the Yahwist creation story from Genesis--in which man was made directly by God, but woman was indirectly created out of man’s rib--and which supports the widely-embraced idea that woman can never fully partake of God’s or man’s spiritual nature.<sup>37</sup> He adds:

Here we behold one of the great topoi of gender in the West at least since Augustine, according to which man is undivided, asexual, pure spirit, while woman remains a divided being whose body does not reflect the reality of the soul. With this consequence: that if man remains fully human because he is the image of God while woman is human only in part, the specifically human comes to signify, is elided to, the side of the masculine. Woman is conceived to be human only in that part of her which is the soul, and which. . . makes her a man.<sup>38</sup>

In the theory of patristic and medieval churchmen, according to Bloch, the souls of men and women are equally worthy of salvation, but in practice, woman, both literally and allegorically, has traditionally been especially associated with the senses, fleshly vice and transgressive speech; therefore,

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<sup>36</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Bloch, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Bloch, 26.

either literally or figuratively, woman is required to deny her own sex in order to be considered equal to man.<sup>39</sup> With the “topoi of gender” which Bloch describes above in mind, it becomes significant that in Part II of the Riwle, the author’s most vivid figurative descriptions of vice, and his most adamant literal admonitions against it, center around sins of the sense organs, the lecherous acts and the destructive speech that have traditionally been associated with woman. It also seems significant that the Riwle author does not encourage his female audience to deny their gender and become men, unlike other religious writers.<sup>40</sup> Instead, he continually reminds the anchoresses, through skillful rhetoric and stylistic use of imagery, that they are female; and he encourages them to relate to Christ as an earthly woman would relate to an earthly husband. These rhetorical and stylistic tendencies imply that the anchoresses in the Riwle audience, even in the afterlife, cannot expect to transcend their gender. Indeed, during the Riwle author’s time, as Bynum has observed, medieval theologians believed the body was synonymous with “personhood” and that at the time of the resurrection “human beings [would] rise in two sexes” because, as these religious men believed, “for reasons they could not fully explain, God’s creation was more perfect in two sexes than in one.”<sup>41</sup> Though it may never be proven with certainty that the Riwle author’s use of imagery in Part II is deliberately

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<sup>39</sup> Bloch Medieval Misogyny, 107.

<sup>40</sup> See for example, Bloch’s discussion of Eastern and Western religious writers’ who seem to have believed that the only way women could achieve true equality with men was by denying their sexuality in Medieval Misogyny, 107-108. Bloch writes, for instance, “Basil of Ancyra urges not only that women avoid members of the opposite sex, but that they walk like men and adopt the tone of voice of a man as well as the ‘unnatural’ brusqueness of a male demeanor” (107).

<sup>41</sup> Bynum, “The Female Body in Religious Practice,” 230.

antifeminist or that it reflects the author's personal feelings about women in general or his audience in particular, his rhetorical use of human and animal imagery in Part II does at least reflect medieval religious discourse in which, as Bloch describes it, antifeminism is a literary topos. When examined along with the abundance of warnings against physical lust and the brevity of suggestions for spiritual love which occur in the Riwle, such discourse does indeed suggest that the Riwle audience's spiritual advancement is limited.

The Riwle author introduces his admonitions against lustful bodily sensing by addressing the sins of the eyes which are divided into two kinds of transgressive seeing, active and passive. The anchoresses are warned that they should not see other people or allow other people to see them. Therefore, they are constantly reminded that they should not be fond of their anchorhold windows; these should be kept small, narrow, and covered with cloth. All physical looking, the Riwle author warns, endangers an anchoress's virginity or purity in some way, and pure maidenhead is very difficult to keep ("þet is mucche þíne well forte halden").<sup>42</sup> The author's treatment of transgressive sight has a relatively gentle and benign tone at first. His discourse reflects consciousness of his audience's youth and innocence and attempts to approach the topic of sin gently, couching admonitions in delicate, indirect terms. But by the time the Riwle author concludes his discussion of sinful sight, his rhetoric takes on a decidedly accusatory tone. In addition, like many sermon writers, the Riwle author offers frequent manufactured speeches, said to be spoken by Eve or a hypothetical anchoress, which pre-empt the validity of any objections his audience may have to his instruction. Further, the author's skillful rhetoric

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<sup>42</sup> Corpus Christi, 30.

often forces his audience to identify with false anchoresses, Eve, or with the beasts which represent people who engage in transgressive looking.

In Part II, the Riwle author's first admonition against eye sins reads :

Ich write muchel for oþre þ̅ nawiht ne rineð ow mine leoue  
sustren. for nabbe ge nawt te nome ne ne schulen habben þ̅urh  
þ̅e grace of godd or totilde ancres. ne of tollinde locunges. ne  
lates þ̅ summe oðerwiles weilawei uncundelich makieð. for  
agein cunde hit is ⁊ unmeað sulli wunder þ̅ te deade dote ⁊ wið  
cwiqe worltman. wede þ̅urh sunne.<sup>43</sup>

(I write much for others that in no way touches you, my beloved sisters. For you do not have the name [reputation]--nor shall you ever through God's grace--of anchoresses who peep out, nor who engage in enticing looks or behavior--as some [anchoresses], alas, sometimes do and make [themselves] unnatural. For it is against nature, and beastly that the dead should dote on the quick of the world and act carelessly [with them] in sin.)

The tone of this passage can be considered delicate or tactful in that it considers the innocence of the Riwle audience. At the same time, the author makes clear that peeking out of windows and engaging in "enticing looks or behavior" is dangerous because it is "unnatural" and "beastly," and that these are activities in which "some" anchoresses do engage. Therefore, the passage also suggests that the innocent anchoresses present should identify, if only momentarily, with the guilty anchoresses who apparently are not present.<sup>44</sup> The author reinforces this idea with a manufactured speech, spoken by a false anchoress, which reads:

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<sup>43</sup> Corpus Christi, 30-31.

<sup>44</sup> If this passage appeared in the original Riwle, which is lost but was written for only three anchoresses, one might question why the author mentions other anchoresses at all. At present, however, there is no way to determine what other anchoresses he may refer to when he states that "some" do engage in lecherous behavior.

Me leoue sire seð sum ⁊ is hit nu se ouer uuel forte to tin utwart?  
 ge hit leoue suster. for uuel þe þer kimeð of. hit is uuel ⁊ ouer  
 uuel to eauer each ancre. nomeliche to the gunge. ⁊ to þe alde  
 for þi þ ha to þe gungre geoueð uuel forbisne.<sup>45</sup>

("My beloved sir," some might say, "And is it really so terribly evil to look outward?" Yes it is, beloved sister, for the evil that comes of it. It is evil and more than evil in any anchoress, but especially for the young, and for the old because they set a bad example for the young.)

Here, the Riwle author invents a hypothetical objection to his argument and indicates that the objection is uttered by an anchoress ("Yes, it is, beloved sister"). Manufactured arguments such as this one occur frequently in medieval sermons or religious discourse. Such a dialogue, to use Bloch's phrase, represents "the ventriloquistic imitation of someone else's voice," a textual strategy which seems designed to negate any argument that the writer anticipates from an audience member; it also represents "a usurpation of [another] person's power."<sup>46</sup> Such a rhetorical strategy requires the same type of audience involvement which Rygiel has discussed.<sup>47</sup> In the above case, the manufactured speech suggests that the Riwle audience should identify with the hypothetical false anchoress who utters the objection. The Riwle author also delicately reminds his audience--who are more than likely young anchoresses rather than old ones--that looking outward is an especially evil behavior in the young.

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<sup>45</sup> Corpus Christi, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Rygiel, 278.

The Riwe author adds emphasis to his initial warning against the dangers of looking by reminding his audience that Eve first sinned with her eyes. He writes:

Eue biheold o þe forboden eappel. ⁊ seh híne feier ⁊ feng to delitin iþe bihaldunge. ⁊ toc hire lust þer toward. ⁊ nom ⁊ et þrof. . . .low hu hali writ spekeð. ⁊ hu inwardliche hit teleð hu sunne bigon. þus eode sunne biuoren ⁊ madeke wei to uuel lust. ⁊ com þe dede þrefter þ al moncun ifeleð. . . .Hwen þu bihaldest te mon. þu art in Eue poínt. þu lokest o þe eappel. . . .Eue þi moder leap efter hire ehnen. . . ⁊ demde al hire ofsprung to leapen al after hire to deað wuð uten ende.<sup>48</sup>

(Eve beheld the forbidden apple and saw it fair and began to delight in beholding it; and she began to feel lust toward it, and took and ate of it. . . .Hear how holy writ speaks and tells how sin began inwardly. Thus sight went before and made way for evil lust; and the deed which all mankind [still] feels came after. . . . When you behold a man, you are in Eve's situation: you look upon the apple. . . .Eve, your mother, leaped after her eyes. . . . and condemned all her offspring to leap after her into death without end.)

Here, the Riwe author utilizes the figure of Eve to illustrate the dangers of transgressive looking. While the author cannot be said to accuse his real audience of such a transgression, he addresses the anchoresses directly, requiring audience involvement and identification with Eve: "you are in Eve's situation" and "you look upon the apple." Eve is "your mother," and the "offspring" which "leap after her" into eternal damnation represent not only sinners in general but also "you" anchoresses. In addition, though the admonition in this passage is indirect and embellished with figurative language, the author makes the point that seeing a man is dangerous, and he suggests that mankind's original sin was lechery, which was initially incited

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<sup>48</sup> Corpus Christi, 31-32.

by Eve's sinful use of her eyes. The Riwe author even goes a step further and suggests, through two more manufactured speeches, spoken by Eve and the false anchoress respectively, that his audience should especially identify with their sinful mother and the false anchoress because they are female. He writes that if anyone had warned Eve not to look at the apple, she would have answered:

Me leoue sire þu hauest woh. hwerof chalengest tu me. þe eappel þ̅ ich loki on is forbode me to eotene ⁊ nawt to bihalden. þus walde Eue inohreaðe habben iondsweret. O mine leoue sustren as eue hauēð monie dehtren þ̅ folhīð hare moder þe ondswerieð o þisse wise. Me wenest tu seið sum þ̅ ich wulle leapen on him þah ich loki on him? godd wat leoue suster mare wunder ilomp.<sup>49</sup>

("My beloved sir, you have it wrong. Why do you challenge me? The apple I look on is forbidden me to eat, not to behold." Thus would Eve readily enough have answered. O my beloved sisters, Eve has many daughters who follow their mother and answer in this way. "But do you think," some say, "that I will leap on him because I look at him?" God knows, beloved sister, stranger things have happened.)

The Riwe author's assertion that "Eve has many daughters who follow their mother [my italics]" in questioning the authority of a moral precept and his example of the false anchoress who does so offers his audience the options of identifying with either Eve, the confrontational daughters, or both. Both are negative female models, and the author reinforces this identification with the following warning:

Habbe þenne much dred each feble wummon hwen þeo þe wes riht ta iwraht wið godes honden. wes þurh a sihðe biswiken ⁊ ibroht in to brad sunne. þet al þe world ouerspreaddē.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Corpus Christi, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Corpus Christi, 32

(Let each feeble woman, then, have much dread when she who was recently wrought by God's hand was, through a look, tempted and brought into that widely-committed sin, which has spread all over the world).

At this point, the Riwe author's admonitions against eye sins begin to take on a more accusatory tone: it is the "feeble woman" in particular who must fear that she may be tempted into sin by "a look" in the same way as Eve her mother has been. Therefore, the author's rhetoric thus far suggests not only the weakness of women but the willfulness of women who, like their confrontational mother, do not heed warnings against transgressive looking.

The Riwe author's references to the beastliness and unnaturalness of sinful looking, his repeated use of variations of the word leap, and his references to Eve's offspring when he refers to transgressive seeing also have significant connotations in Part II of the guide. He has told his audience that "anchoresses who peep out [or] engage in enticing looks or behavior. . . make [themselves] unnatural" and that transgressive looking is "against nature, and beastly." He has also asserted that "Eve leaped after her eyes. . . . and condemned all her offspring to leap after her into death without end," and that the false anchoress objects to warnings against looking by asking, "do you think. . . that I will leap on him because I look at him?" These references reinforce the idea that looking is a foul and bestial act. In fact, at the beginning of Part II, the Riwe author has warned the anchoresses that the heart is a very wild beast which often leaps outward into sin ("þe heorte is a ful wilde beast. ⁊ makeð moni liht lupe"). Here, he has also explained that the heart often escapes through the sense organ of the eye ("ed his ehþurl").<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Corpus Christi, 29.

In comparing Eve and the false anchoress to unnatural beasts, which leap into sin, and which have offspring instead of children, who also leap into sin, the author's rhetoric subtly suggests that his audience identify not only with flawed females but also with wild beasts. While his references to beasts are only vague at this point in Part II, he begins to use beast images more frequently when treating the sins of the other sense organs later in this segment of the guide.

The Riwle author's admonitions against transgressive seeing gradually become more accusatory when he explains why an anchoress should not allow others to see her. The rhetorical style of the guide also continues to require that the Riwle audience identify with negative female figures. When the author explains why it is dangerous for an anchoress to allow others to see her, he relates the biblical tales of Dinah and Bathsheba, women who incited lust in men by allowing the men to look at them. The author explains that in Genesis, the story is told that Dinah

eode ut to bihalden uncūðe wummen. ȝet ne seið hit nawt þet  
 ha biheold wepmen. Ant hwet come wenest tu of þ bihaldunge?  
 ha leas hire meidenhad ⁊ wes imaket hore. þrefter of þet ilke  
 wren trowðen to brokene of hehe patriarches. ⁊ a muchel burh.  
 forbearnd. ant te king ⁊ his sune ⁊ te burhmen isleín. þe  
 wummen ilead forð. hire feader ⁊ hire brēðren se noble princes  
 as ha weren. utlahen imakede. þus eode ut hire sihðe. Al  
 þullich þi hali gast lette writen o boc forte warni wummen of  
 hare fol ehnen. and nim þer of ȝeme þ tis uuel of dyna com nawt  
 of þ ha seh sichen. . þ ha sunegede wið. ah dud of þ ha lette him  
 leggen ehnen on hire.<sup>52</sup>

(went out to look at strange women. Yet it [the Bible] does not  
 say that she beheld men. And what do you think came of that  
 looking? She lost her maidenhead and was made a whore.

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<sup>52</sup> Corpus Christi, 32-33.

Thereafter, because of that same act, agreements of high patriarchs were broken and a great city burned; and the king and his son and the citizens were slain, the women led forth. Her father and her brothers, noble princes that they were, were made outlaws. This is what came of her looking out. All such things [tales] the Holy Ghost had written in a book in order to warn women of their foolish [or foul] eyes; and note well that this evil of Dinah did not occur because she saw Sichern. . .with whom she sinned, but because she allowed him to lay eyes on her.)

Here, the author places a great deal of guilt on Dinah in much the same way as he has earlier placed the sexual guilt of the whole world on Eve. Because Dinah was disobedient, she lost her virginity, and kings, a prince, citizens, and a city were destroyed, and her own father and brothers were exiled. As Robertson has noted, the Riwle author “bases much of his discussion of the anchorhold and its dangers on chapter 10 of De Gradibus,” a work by Bernard of Clairvaux which “discusses the dangers of sin that begins with the eyes.”<sup>53</sup> However, Robertson asserts that Bernard, writing for male religious, uses the Dinah exemplum “to support his theological argument that the first step of pride is curiosity.”<sup>54</sup> She adds that the Riwle author uses the exemplum with a more “concrete and immediate purpose” than Bernard: to warn “the anchoress of the specific danger she faces of losing her virginity as a result of either looking out her window at men, or, alternatively, of allowing men to look at her.”<sup>55</sup> Robertson writes that the Riwle author offers the figure of Dinah only “to provide a negative female model for the anchoress.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Robertson, “Rule of the Body,” 117.

<sup>54</sup> Robertson, 118.

<sup>55</sup> Robertson, 118.

<sup>56</sup> Robertson, 118.

Indeed, the Riwe author makes no references to pride or curiosity in the above passage; instead he reinforces not only the dangers of transgressive looking but of being seen. Though the author's rhetoric does not necessarily imply that the Riwe audience should directly identify with Dinah in this case, it does suggest that the anchoresses might count themselves among women who, having been warned about their "foolish eyes," will not listen to reason.

To reinforce his warning against being seen, the Riwe author presents the exemplum of Bathsheba as another biblical tale which demonstrates why an anchoress should not be seen, writing

Alswa Bersabee þurh þ ha unwreah hire idauðes [sic] sihðe. ha dud him sunegin on hire se hali king as he wes ⁊ godes prophete. Nu kimeð forð a feble mon. halt him þah ahelich gef he haueð a wid hod ⁊ a loke cape ⁊ wule iseon gunge ancras. ⁊ loki nede ase stan hire wlite him liki. þe naueth nawt hire leor forbearnd i þe sunne. ⁊ seið ha mei baldelich iseon hali men. ge swucche as he is for his wide sleuen.<sup>57</sup>

(Likewise, Bathsheba, through unclothing herself in David's sight, caused him to sin with her, holy king that he was and God's prophet. Now comes forth a feeble man, thinking himself above suspicion in his wide hood and locked [closed] cape and desires to see young anchoresses. And he must needs look, as if turned to stone, [and see] how well he likes the beauty of those whose faces have not been burned by the sun. And he tells them they may boldly look upon holy men, yea, such as he is because of his wide sleeves.)

This passage makes a subtle connection between Bathsheba and the "young anchoresses" whom the "feeble" holy man wishes to see; and the Riwe author even suggests that the holy man may especially wish to look at a young anchoress who is beautiful because her skin has "not been burned by

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<sup>57</sup> Corpus Christi, 32-33.

the sun.” As Robertson observes, this passage puts a reader in mind of a point that the Riwe author repeatedly makes in Part II, that women are responsible “for enticing men to rape”; and the exemplum of the holy man reminds the Riwe audience that this is “a danger of which the anchoress must be immediately conscious, for her beauty could entice even a visiting priest.”<sup>58</sup> The Riwe author then states once again that sin came about not because Dinah and Bathsheba looked at men, but because they allowed themselves to be seen by men. Therefore, he reminds his audience that woman is often responsible for man’s sin, adding that the anchoresses in his audience should trust no one who insists on seeing them and that no one should see them without his permission.

Though the Riwe author’s rhetorical tone has not yet become blatantly accusatory, it becomes more so as he nears the end of his argument against eye sins. Having thus far only suggested that the sight of a woman’s body incites lechery in men and that woman is therefore responsible for man’s sin, he goes on to compare the female body to a hunter’s trap, writing:

Uor þi was i hoten a godes hal iþen olde lawe þ put were euer  
iwrien. ⁊ gif eni unwrie put were. ⁊ best feolle þer inne. he hit  
schulde gelden. þ þene put un-wreih. þis is a swuðe dredlich  
word to wummen þ schea-weð hire to wepmones eien. heo is  
bitocned bi þeo. þ unwrieð þene put. þe put is hire veire neb.  
and hire hwhite sweore. and hire liht eie. and hire hond gif heo  
halt forð in his eihsihðe. and get beoð hire word put. buten heo  
beon þe bet biset. and al get þ falleð to hire hwat so hit euer  
beo. þuruh hwat muhte sonre ful luue of aquiki-en. al vre

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<sup>58</sup> Robertson, “Rule of the Body,” 118.

louerd cleopeð put. þes put he hat þ beo euer i lided ⁊ i wrien  
leste eni best ualle þerinne. and drunc-nie ine sunne.<sup>59</sup>

(For this reason it was commanded by God in the old law that a pit should always be covered; and if any pit should be uncovered, and a beast fall into it, he who uncovered the pit must atone [for the beast's fall]. This is a dreadful judgement for a woman who exposes herself to the eyes of men. She is represented by the one who uncovers the pit. The pit is her fair face, and her white neck, and her light eye, and her hand if she holds it forth for his eyes to see. And also her [spoken] word is the pit, if she does not restrain it. And all and sundry that belongs to her, which might bring a sinful love to life, our Lord calls a pit. He commands that this pit be ever lidded, that is, covered, lest any beast fall therein and drown in sin.)<sup>60</sup>

In this passage, the discourse of Part II is much more accusatory in that it adamantly asserts that the female body is the source of lust, emphasizing that woman's "fair face. . . white neck. . . light eye. . . her hand. . . and [spoken] word" are dangerous traps for unwary men, whom he later says are represented by the beasts which fall into the pit. The rhetoric of this passage does not, at this point, require the Riwe audience to directly identify with the woman who leaves the body pit uncovered, but the direct warning to the anchoresses which follows does. The author exclaims:

þu unhelest þesne put þu þ dest eni þing hwar of þet mon is  
fleschsliche ivonded ofðe. þauh þu hit nute nout dred þesne dom  
swuðe. ⁊ gif he is i vonded so þ he sunegie deadliche þuruh þe  
on eni wise. þauh hit ne beo nout wið þe. bute mid wille  
touward te. oþer gif he secheð to fulen o sum oþer þe vondunge

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<sup>59</sup> The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe edited from Cotton MS. Nero A. XIV. E.E.T.S., o.s. 225, ed. Mabel Day (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), 25. This passage does not appear in the Corpus Christi MS. of the Ancrene Riwe.

<sup>60</sup> Here, the Riwe author's analogy may not be entirely apt. His assertion that the pit should "always be covered [my italics]" lest "any beast fall therein [also my italics]" does not address why the pit would have been dug in the first place. He also does not make a distinction between wild beasts which, it would seem, are acceptable for hunters to trap, and domestic beasts which, it would seem, are unacceptable for them to trap.

of ðe þ þuruh þine ded is awakened. beo ao siker of þe dome. þu schalt gelden þ best. vor ðe puttes openunge. ⁊ bute þu schriue þe þerof. ase mon seið þu schalt acorien ðe rode. þ is. acorien his sunne.<sup>61</sup>

(You uncover this pit, you who do anything by which a man is tempted in the flesh because of you, though you may not know it. This judgment is to be greatly dreaded. And if he is tempted such that he commits deadly sin through you in any way--though it be not with you but with a desire toward you--or if he seeks to satisfy in some other way the temptation you incite, which is awakened through your behavior, be certain of the doom. You shall pay for that beast if you open that pit. And if you do not shrive yourself thereof, it is said you shall bear the rod, that is, the burden for his sin.)

This passage represents the startling and accusatory crescendo to which the Riwle author's commentary on sinful sight has been building. The passage is obviously a direct admonition to the anchoresses since some form of the word "you" is used more than a dozen times. Here, the rhetoric also forces the Riwle audience to identify with Dinah, Bathsheba, or any woman who allows men to see her.

The Riwle author's treatment of why an anchoress should not allow herself to be seen by men, then, is not only an admonition against transgressive looking, but also a condemnation of an anchoress's inherent bodiliness. The author even addresses the idea that an anchoress's looking at her own body can be dangerous. Indeed, elsewhere in Part II, he warns his audience against feeling proud or vain about their physical beauty, writing:

Lucifer þurh þ he seh ⁊ biheold on him seolf his ahne feiernesse. leop in to prude. ⁊ bicom of angel eatel ich deouel.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Corpus Christi, 25-26.

<sup>62</sup> Corpus Christi, 31.

(Lucifer, through seeing himself and beholding his own fairness, leaped into pride; and from an angel, [he] became a hideous devil).

This passage only vaguely implies the pride or vanity of a woman who is aware of the beauty of her own body, but as I mentioned earlier, the Riwe author also repeatedly warns the anchoresses to keep their cell windows closed or concealed with cloth so that they will not see or be seen by others. The windows of their anchorhold are to be covered with curtains which are sewn together in the pattern of a white cross over a black background; and the author explains that the white cross should always remind an anchoress:

ge beoð blake ⁊ unwurð to þe world wiðuten. þ̅ te soðe sunne  
hauēð utewið forculet ow. . . .ge beoð unseowlich imaket. . . .þurh  
gleames of his grace.<sup>63</sup>

(you are black and of no worth to the outside world, and that the true sun [of Christ] has burned you outwardly. . . .you are made unattractive. . . .through the gleams of his grace).

Here, the author's admonition against vanity is more obvious: the anchoress must view herself as "of no worth to the outside world" and "unattractive." According to the Riwe author, the black background on the anchorhold curtain is also allegorical. He explains that the color black does less harm to the eyes, is stouter against the wind, and is more difficult to see through ("deð leasse eil to þe ehnen. ⁊ is þiccre agein þe wind ⁊ worse to seon þurh"), which suggests the danger of an anchoress allowing herself to see or be seen by others through her cell window.<sup>64</sup> The author concludes his treatment of eye sins by admonishing:

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<sup>63</sup> Corpus Christi, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Corpus Christi, 30.

Ne leue na mon ancre þe let in monnes ehe to schawin hire  
seoluen. Ouer al þe ge habbeð iwwiten in ower riwle of þinges wið  
uten. þis point þis article of wel to beo bitunde. Ich wulle beo  
best ihalden.<sup>65</sup>

(Let no one trust an anchoress who exposes herself to man's  
eyes. Above all that is written in your rule of outer things, I  
would have you hold best this point, this rule of being  
completely enclosed.)

It is significant that the Riwle author refers to "all that is written in your rule  
of outer things [my italics]" when he has categorized Part II as part of the  
anchoress's inner rule for religious life. Clearly, he is unable to discuss the  
inner rule without referring to the outer rule just as he is unable to discuss  
spiritual union with Christ without referring to its opposite, earthly lechery.  
At this point, since the Riwle author seems to have concluded his treatment  
of transgressive sight, a reader might expect him to balance his argument by  
offering suggestions for how an anchoress may use the sense of sight  
virtuously, but he does not do so. Clearly, the author is more concerned with  
enumerating the evils of earthly sight than the virtues of heavenly sight.  
This pattern continues in his discussion of lecherous use of the mouth.

The Riwle author's treatment of the mouth sins, like that of the eye  
sins, has two subdivisions. In the first, the anchoresses are admonished  
against actively using transgressive speech; in the second, they are warned  
against passively listening to such speech. Though the author's rhetorical  
tone is less accusatory in his treatment of the mouth sins than in that of the  
eye sins, his discourse is embellished with beast figures which reinforce the  
vileness of evil speech and sometimes suggests that the anchoress should  
identify with such bestial images. The author's admonitions against the

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<sup>65</sup> Corpus Christi, 34.

mouth sins that an anchoress should not commit center around the silence that an anchoress is expected to keep in the presence of a confessor except when confessing her sins aloud. The Riwe author writes that the anchoress should:

hercnið hise wordes ⁊ haldeð ow al stille. þ̅ hwen he parteð from ow. þ̅ he ne cunne ower god. ne ower uuel nowðer. ne ne cunne ow nowðer lastin ne preisin. Sum is se wel ilearet oðer se wis iwordet. þ̅ ha walde he wiste hit þ̅ sit ⁊ spekeð toward hire. ⁊ g̅elt him word agein word. ⁊ forwurdeð meistre þ̅ schulde beon ancre. ⁊ leareð him þ̅ is icumen hire forte learen.<sup>66</sup>

(Listen to his [the confessor's] words and keep completely silent so that when he departs from you he knows neither good nor evil of you, and knows not whether to blame or praise you. Some [anchoresses] are so well learned or wise in words that they desire he who sits and speaks with them to know it, and matches him word for word. And she who should be an anchoress attempts to become like a master and teach he who has come to instruct her.)

The Riwe author considers the speech he describes in this passage a display of pride or vanity which, at best, makes an anchoress look foolish in the eyes of others and, at worst, makes her seem rebellious. Eve spoke boldly to the devil-serpent, the author explains, and it led to her destruction; and he reinforces the inappropriateness of such vain speech with the bestial figure of the cackling hen, writing:

ge mine leoue sustren folhið ure leafdi. ⁊ nawt te cakele eue. for þ̅i ancre hwet se ha beo. hu muchel se ha eauer cunne. halde hire stille. nabbe ha nawt henne cunde. þ̅ hen hwen ha hauēð ileid. ne con bute cakelin. ah hwet biget ha þ̅rof? kimeð þ̅ kaue ananriht ⁊ reauēð hire hire eairen. ⁊ fret of þ̅ schulde forð bringe cwiwe briddes. Al riht alswa þ̅ caue deouel bereð awei from

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<sup>66</sup> Corpus Christi, 35.

cakelinde ancras ⁊ forswolheð al þe god þ̅ ha isteronet habbeð. þ̅ schulde as briddes beoren ham up towart heouene. gef hit nere icakelet.<sup>67</sup>

(You my beloved sisters follow our lady and not the cackling Eve. For any anchoress, whomsoever she may be, however so much as she can, [should] keep silence, and not have the nature of the hen. The hen, when she has laid, cannot keep from cackling. And what is the result of this? The crow comes immediately and robs her of her eggs, and destroys all that which should bring forth live birds. In the same way, the crow, the devil, bears away from the cackling anchoress, and swallows up, all the good that she has accomplished, that should, like birds, bear her up toward heaven, if it had never been cackled.)

Here, the Riwe author once again makes a figurative connection between Eve and an unruly beast. By further explaining that an anchoress becomes the equivalent of the cackling hen if she behaves like Eve and boasts of her good works, he requires this audience to identify with the negative images of both Eve and the boastful hen. Here, it should be noted in passing that whereas the Riwe author often takes license with his sources for bird and beast images selectively (as I will demonstrate in the next two chapters of this dissertation), in his interpretation of the hen, he follows tradition fairly closely. As Beryl Rowland has explained, "To some early writers the hen with her little chickens symbolized the weak but loving and protecting mother," and according to "theologians such as St. Augustine, Garner, and Rabanus Maurus. . .this hen was the intelligence or wisdom of God which led the elect to salvation."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the Riwe author's use of the hen figure here suggests that despite their intelligence or commitment to religious life,

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<sup>67</sup> Corpus Christi, 35-36.

<sup>68</sup> Rowland, Birds with Human Souls, 77.

the Riwe audience should not behave like the weak mother hen by boasting of their spiritual understanding. The author goes on to explain that during confession, it is acceptable for an anchoress to ask a priest for advice and for remedies against temptation, explaining that Mary--the model the anchoress should follow--spoke to the angel Gabriel in this way and thus learned things that she did not know.

Though the Riwe author emphasizes throughout Part II and elsewhere that frequent confession is essential for an anchoress, he also demonstrates concern that an anchoress's contact with a priest during confession can invite transgressive speech which leads to lust. He warns his audience, for example, that all religious men are not equally trustworthy and that some holy men may be driven by lecherous desire to speak to young anchoresses. He further advises that a third party, a witness or perhaps a chaperone, be present at an anchoress's confession, if only to watch as she speaks to a priest. He explains that he does not suggest this because he distrusts the anchoresses in his audience, yet he warns:

· Me leueð þe uuele sone. ⁊ te unwreaste bliðeliche liheð o þe gode. Sum unseli hauēð hwen ha seide ha schraf hire. ischriuen hire all towundre. for þi ahen þe gode habben eauer witnesse. for twa acheisuns nomeliche. þe an is þ̅ te ondfule ne mahe lihen on ham. swa þ̅ te witnesse ne pruuie ham false. þe oþer is forte geouen þe oþre forbisne. ⁊ reauī þe uuele ancre þe ilke unseli gile þ̅ ich of seide.<sup>69</sup>

(Evil is more readily believed [than truth], and the wicked happily lie about the good. Some despicable person, when she has said her own confession, has schriuen herself strangely. Because of this, the good should always have a witness for two reasons in particular. The one is that the envious may not tell lies about them in such a way that the witness cannot prove

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<sup>69</sup> Corpus Christi, 37.

them false. The other is to provide a good example to others and deprive the evil anchoress of the unhappy deception of which I spoke [earlier].)

In this passage the Riwe author is tentative and vague in explaining why an anchoress's confession should be witnessed by a third party. He has earlier implied that the third person, or witness, does not necessarily have to hear an anchoress's confession but only be present to see that she is confessing. It would seem, however, that a witness would only be able to prove an anchoress's confession is true or false if she or he actually heard it along with the priest. Here, the author also suggests that an evil anchoress might make a false confession by implicating an innocent anchoress in sin. Though the passage does not accuse the Riwe audience directly (it offers them the option to identify with the "good" anchoress), it implies the author's suspicion that confession can provide an opportunity for transgressive speech.

The Riwe author's warnings against sins of the mouth indicate that he is very concerned about controlling his audience's confession, which could be related to the fact that his audience is inexperienced in religious life or the fact that they are female, but some of his warnings are definitely gender-linked. He expressly forbids his audience to preach, advise, or scold men, writing:

Ne preachi ge to na mon. ne mon ne easke ow cunsail ne ne  
telle ow. readeð wummen ane. Seint pawel forbeot wummen to  
preachin. . . .Na wepmon ne chastie ge. ne edwiten his him  
unþeaw bute he beo þe ouer cuðre. Halie alde ancras hit mahe  
don summes weis. ah hit nis nawt siker þing. ne ne limpeð  
nawt to gunge. Hit is hare meoster þe beoð ouer oþre iset ⁊  
habbeð ham to witene as hali chirche larewes.<sup>70</sup>

(Do not preach to any man or let any man ask your counsel or speak to you. Advise only women. Saint Paul forbids women to

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<sup>70</sup> Corpus Christi, 38-39.

preach. . . .Do not chastise any man or blame him for his vices except if he is overly familiar with you. Holy old anchoresses may do so in some way but it is not a sure thing, nor is it appropriate for the young. It is left to those masters who are set over others and have to guard them [such] as holy church teachers.)

Here, as is traditional among most patristic and medieval religious writers, the Riwe author states that women should not preach because of their gender and uses Paul's authority to support this admonition. The same gender-linked idea, however, also seems to guide the warning that anchoresses--especially young ones--should not advise or criticize men. The author goes on to at least subtly suggest that such transgressive scolding of men represents a sin of speech that can incite lust, writing, "þurh swuch chastiment haueð sum ancre arearet bitweonen hire and hire preost. oðer a falsinde luue oðera much weorre" (Through such chastisement, an anchoress has brought about a false love, or much quarreling, between herself and her priest).<sup>71</sup> By including an admonition against chiding priests, the Riwe author implies that an anchoress's scolding might be interpreted as either flirtation or rebellion. Having offered these admonitions against transgressive uses of the mouth, the Riwe author turns briefly to a beast image in order to emphasize that the tongue should be controlled, writing:

Bridel nis nawt ane i þe horses muð. ah sit sum up o þe ehnen. ⁊  
geað abute þe earen for all þreo is mucche neod þ ha beon ibridlet.  
Ah i þe muð sit tet urn. ⁊ o te lihte tunge. for þear is meast  
neod hald hwen þe tunge is o rune ⁊ ifole to eornen.<sup>72</sup>

(The bridle is not only on the horse's mouth, but sits somewhat up on the eyes [as well], and goes about the ears, for all three

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<sup>71</sup> Corpus Christi, 39.

<sup>72</sup> Corpus Christi, 40.

have need to be bridled. But in the mouth is where the iron is positioned, on the light tongue; for there is most need to hold the tongue once it has begun to gallop.)

In addition to emphasizing the need to “bridle” the mouth in this passage, the Riwle author connects transgressive use of the mouth to a beast image which, in medieval exegesis, is often associated with the sin of lechery. As Rowland has explained, “the body of the horse is the repository of sex and as such is often equated with woman,” and traditional “proverbial expressions” often warn “a man to keep a tight rein on both his wife and his horse.” In addition, Rowland writes, “From medieval times writers of treatises on husbandry repeated equine properties of woman,” asserting that she should be a be wide in the hips and easy to leap upon.<sup>73</sup> The rhetoric of the above passage does not require the Riwle anchoresses to identify with the horse, and it is possible that they themselves would not have automatically linked the horse figure to lechery. But the Riwle author himself was probably well aware of the horse’s connection to lust, and throughout Part II he has repeatedly expressed his concern with the specific sin of lechery. Here, as he has elsewhere in Part II, the author employs beast images such as the hen and the horse, and he continues to use beast figures in this way throughout the remainder of Part II and elsewhere in the guide.

In the second division of his treatment of evil speech, the Riwle author primarily admonishes his audience against listening to sinful talk, but he also implies that listening to transgressive speech is as evil as engaging in it. He explains that anchoresses should stop their ears against poisonous, foul, and

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<sup>73</sup> Rowland, Animals With Human Faces, 105.

idle speech (“attri. ful. ⁊ idel”), adding that idle speech, such as gossip, is useless, but is the least of the three evils.<sup>74</sup> He further asserts:

hu þenne schal me gelde reisun of þe wurse?. . . þ is of attri  
⁊ of ful speche? nawt ane þ hit spekeð. ah þ hit hercneð. ful  
speche is of leccherie. ⁊ of oðre fulðen. . . . þeose beoð alle  
ischarapeded ut of ancre riwle. þe swuch fulðe spit up in eani  
ancre earen. me schulde dutten his mud. nawt wið scharpe  
sneateres. ah wið hearde fustes.<sup>75</sup>

(How then shall one give account for the worst [mouth sins]? . . . That is of poisonous and of foul speech? Not only those who speak it, but those who hear it. Foul speech is of lechery, and of other filth. . . . These should all be scraped out of an anchoress’s rule. Those who spit such filth into an anchoress’s ear should have their mouths stopped, not with sharp words, but with hard fists.)

Despite his exclamation in this passage that those who fill anchoresses ears with filthy language should be punished “with hard fists,” the Riwe author also implies that an anchoress who listens to such speech must share the guilt of those who speak foully. He then describes the kinds of transgressive speech that he considers most detestable, backbiting and flattery. He employs serpents and carrion birds as figures to represent these mouth sins. Backbiters are depicted as serpents, who strike and inject venom into their victims with their tongues, and vicious ravens, who peck out the eyes of their victims or tear living flesh with their sharp beaks. The mouths of such evil speakers are forever vomiting out foul words, their tongues forever spitting poison into unwary ears, or their beaks forever dismembering soft flesh. Further, these creatures uncover the privy hole of the devil’s toilet so that the stench of evil

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<sup>74</sup> Corpus Christi, 43.

<sup>75</sup> Corpus Christi, 44.

speech spreads over the whole world.<sup>76</sup> Here, the evil stench that pervades the world seems to be related to the type of forbidden knowledge that the snake is said to have offered to Eve by perhaps whispering in her ear like a backbiter or flatterer. In ancient and medieval religious thought, as Rowland reminds us, the snake was often associated with the devil.<sup>77</sup> The raven, though not especially associated with Satan, was also a negative image in ancient and medieval literature. According to Rowland, “the Church Fathers all assumed the raven to be a shameless defector” turning away from God. She adds that “[t]he raven feeding on corpses was the evil man enjoying the fleshpots.”<sup>78</sup> In his employment of the serpent and raven as figurative representations of backbiters and flatterers, the Riwele author once again uses beast images to reinforce the foulness of sin.

In addition to employing serpents and ravens to emphasize the foulness of transgressive speech in Part II, the author uses the magpie as a figure for the gossip in the following warning:

Me seið up on ancren þæt euch meast hauēð an ald cwene to feden  
hire earen. A meaðelilt þæt meaðeleð hire alle þæt talen of þæt lond.  
a rikelot þæt cakeleð al þæt ha sið æt hereð. swa þæt me seið i bisahe.  
From mulne æt from chepinge. from smiððe æt from ancre hus me  
tidinge brindeð. Wat crist þæt is a sari sahe. þæt ancre hus þæt

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<sup>76</sup> Corpus Christi, 44-46.

<sup>77</sup> Rowland, Animals with Human Faces, 144. It should be noted, however, that as Rowland and others acknowledge, the snake also had more positive characteristics in religious thought. I will describe these in detail in a later chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>78</sup> Rowland, Birds with Human Souls, 143-148. It should be noted, however, that like the snake, the raven had positive characteristics in bird lore and legend. For example, Rowland states, “The bird’s dietary habits, according to bestiarists, constituted the allegorical saving of souls: confession and penance were the ravens which” pecked sin out of the souls of those who had fallen into vice (146).

schulde beon anlukest stude of alle. schal beon ifeiet to þe ilke  
þreo studen. þ meast is in of chaffle.<sup>79</sup>

(It is said of anchoresses that almost every one has some old woman to feed her ears, a prating gossip, who prattles to her all the tales of the land, a magpie that cackles all that she sees and hears. So now there is a common saying: 'from mill and from market, from smith and from anchor house, men bring tidings.' Christ knows this is a sorry saying, that an anchorhold-- which should be the most solitary place of all--should be compared to these three places where there is the most idle talk.)

The Riwe author has said that gossip is the least dangerous of the three types of evil. Yet he equates even the relatively harmless, gossipy old woman with a carrion bird, the magpie, which is usually considered a negative figure during the Middle Ages. As Rowland explains, "The predominant trait which contributed to the [magpie's] evil reputation appears to have been its ability to talk."<sup>80</sup> Therefore, this bird easily came to be associated with both women and gossip, especially in the thirteenth century (the time during which the Riwe was written).<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, according to Rowland, the magpie was associated with woman's vanity, pride, argumentativeness, vindictiveness, and her desire "for personal profit."<sup>82</sup> The above passage represents the culmination of the Riwe author's treatment of the kind of speech that an anchoress should not hear, and once again, the author offers no suggestions for how an anchoress may use her ears spiritually. He saves these for a later segment of Part II to which I will return presently. In

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<sup>79</sup> Corpus Christi, 48.

<sup>80</sup> Rowland, Birds with Human Souls, 102.

<sup>81</sup> Rowland, 103.

<sup>82</sup> Rowland, 103.

addition to his treatment of how the eyes, mouth, and to a lesser extent, the ears, can be used transgressively, the author addresses sinful touching.

Though the Riwe author mentions the hands only briefly when he compares a woman's body to a dangerous pit, and he has much less to say about transgressive touching than about transgressive seeing or speaking, he does offer some very direct admonitions against inappropriate touching in Part II. For example, at one point he admonishes, "Hwen se ge moten to eani mon eawiht biteachen. þe hond ne cume nawt ut. ne ower ut ne his in. Ant gef hit mot cumen in. ne rine nowðer oðer" (Whenever you must give something to any man, the hand should not come out, nor yours out nor his in. And if his must come in, neither [ anchoress nor man] should touch the other).<sup>83</sup> The Riwe author explains elsewhere that the stinking whore of lechery ("lecherie þeo stinckinde hore") wars against the lady of chastity ("lefdi of chastete"), with three kinds of weapons: the arrows of the eyes ("scute of eien"); the spears of wounding words ("spere of wundinde word"); and the sword of deadly touching ("sweorde of deadliche hondlunge"). And he illustrates how lechery uses these weapons:

erest heo scheot þe earewen of þi liht eien. þ fleoð lihtliche uorð.  
 ase earewe þ is iwiþered. ⁊ stikeð iþe heorte. þer efter heo schekeð  
 spere. ⁊ nehlecheð up on hire. ⁊ mid schekin-de word giueð  
 speres wunden. sweordes dunt is adun-riht. þ is hondlunge.  
 vor sweord smit of neih. ⁊ gifð deaþes dunt. ⁊ tis is soð weilawe  
 ful neih idon mid ham þ kumeð so neih to gederes þ ouþer oþer  
 hondlie. oþer ouhwar i vele oþer.<sup>84</sup>

(First she [lechery] shoots the arrows of the light eyes, which fly lightly forth as a feathered arrow and stick in the heart. After

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<sup>83</sup> Corpus Christi, 34.

<sup>84</sup> Nero, 26; this passage does not appear in the Corpus Christi manuscript.

that she shakes a spear and attacks her [the lady of chastity], and with moving words gives the spear's wound. The sword's blow is final, that is handling. For the sword smites from nearby and gives the death wound. And this, alas, [is dealt to] those who come so near together that one handles the other or in any way touches the other.)

Despite the fact that the Riwe author does not devote as much textual space to describing the sins of touch as he does to those of sight or speech, he repeatedly emphasizes that touch is the most dangerous sense because it is

in alle þe oþre. ⁊ gont al þe licome. ⁊ for þi hit is need to habben best warde. Vre lauerd wiste hit wel. ⁊ for þi he walde meast i þæt wit þolien al forte frourin us gef we þolieð wa þrin. ⁊ forte wenden us frommard te licunge þæt flesches lust easkēð. nomeliche i felunge mare þen in oþre. Vre lauerd i þis wit nefde nawt in a stude. ah hefde get inwið his seli sawle.<sup>85</sup>

(in all the other [senses] and throughout all the limbs, and for this reason needs to be best guarded. Our Lord knew this well, and therefore he chose to suffer most in that sense, all to comfort us if we suffer pain therein, and to turn us away from the pleasures for which lusts of the flesh ask--namely in feeling more than in the others. Our Lord endured pain, not only in one place [part of the body], but also within his blessed soul.)

Here, the Riwe author indicates that if Christ was willing to "suffer most" through bodily pain, an anchoress should follow his example. Certainly, the author's constant reminders, throughout the guide, that an anchoress must punish her physical body through fasting or mortification practices reinforce this idea. To the above admonition, the author adds:

þVS [sic] wes iesu crist þe almihti godd in alle his fif wittes derfliche ipinet. ⁊ nomelich i þis leaste. þæt is ifelunge for his flesch wes alcwic as is þe tendre ehe. ant ge witen þis wit. þæt is flesches felunge ouer alle þe oþre. Godes honden weren ineilet o rode. þurh þe ilke neiles ich halsi ow ancres. . . Haldeð ower

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<sup>85</sup> Corpus Christi, 60.

honden inwið ower þurles. Hondlunge oðer ei felunge bitweone mon ⁊ ancre. is þing swa uncumelich. ⁊ dede se scheomelich ⁊ so naket sunne. ⁊ to al þe world se eatelich ⁊ se muche scandle. þ̅ nis na need to speoken ne writen þer togeínes. for al wið ute writunge þ̅ ful [sic] is to etscene.<sup>86</sup>

(Thus was Jesus Christ, the almighty God, forced to feel pain in all his five wits, and especially this last, that is feeling, for his flesh was as alive as the tender eye; and you guard this sense, that is the flesh's feeling, over all the others. God's hands were nailed on the cross. By those same nails, I adjure you anchoressess. . . .keep your hands inside your windows. Handling or any touching between a man and an anchoress is a thing so unnatural, a deed so shameful, and such naked sin, and to all the world so hateful and scandalous, that there is no need to speak or write about this vice. For without writing [about it] its filth is all too apparent.)

In this passage, the Riwe author implies that the only thing an anchoress's hands should feel are pain as did Christ's nailed hands, which suggests a way of using her hands spiritually. However, his reference to Christ's hands leads him, quite abruptly, back to the literal warning that an anchoress should keep her hands inside her windows; and he reinforces this admonition by describing transgressive touching "between a man and an anchoress" as "unnatural. . . shameful. . . naked. . . hateful and scandalous." Such strong admonitory words as these undermine the author's spiritual message, to follow Christ's example by suffering through the sense of touch.

The Riwe author concludes Part II with two more assertions that emphasize the dangers of touching, the first of which reads:

Godd hit wat as me were muche deale leouere þ̅ ich  
isehe ow alle þ̅reo mine leoue sustren wummen me leouest  
hongin on a gibet. forte wiðbuhe sunne. þ̅en ich sehe an of ow  
geouen anlepi cos eani mon on eorðe swa ase ich meane. Ich am  
stille of þ̅ mare. nawt ane monglin honden. ah putten hond

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<sup>86</sup> Corpus Christi, 62.

utward bute hit beo for nede. is wohunge efter grome. ⁊  
tollunge of his eorre.<sup>87</sup>

(God knows that I would, a great deal, rather see all three of you, my beloved sisters--women most dear to me--hang on a gibbet to avoid sin, than see you give even one kiss to any man on earth in the way I mean. I am silent about the greater impropriety of not only mingling hands, but putting hands outward, except out of necessity. This is courting [God's] anger and inviting his ire.)

Here, the author once again addresses his audience directly and again requires them to identify with any who might kiss or touch a man. As he has in the previous passage, the Riwe author implies that an anchoress should be willing to suffer with Christ by hanging "on a gibbet." But this hint that suffering is the only acceptable behavior for an anchoress gets lost in his literal admonition against the "impropriety of. . .mingling hands." The Riwe author offers one final admonition against sins of touch, writing:

bihalden hire ahne hwite honden. deð hearm moni ancre.  
þe hauēð ham to feire as þeo þe beoð for idlet. ha schulden  
schrapien euche dei þe eorðe up of hare put þ̅ ha schulien rotien  
in. Godd hit wat þ̅ put deð mucche god moni ancre. . . .þeo þe  
hauēð eauer hire deað as biuoren hire ehen þ̅ te put munegeð.  
gef þ̅ ha þencheð wel o þe dom of domesdei. . . .lihtliche nule ha  
nawt folhi flesches licunge efter willes lust. ne drahen in toward  
hire nan heued sunne wi hire fif wittes.<sup>88</sup>

(Beholding her own white hands, does harm to many an anchoress whose hands are too fair because of idleness. She should scrape up, each day, the earth of the pit in which she must rot. God knows that pit does much good for many anchoresses. . . .She who always has her death, as if it is before her eyes, is mindful of that pit if she thinks well on the judgment of Doomsday. . . .[and] will not lightly follow after flesh's pleasures, or the desires of the will, or draw toward herself any deadly sins with her five wits.)

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<sup>87</sup> Corpus Christi, 62.

<sup>88</sup> Corpus Christi, 62.

Here, the author's message that an anchoress uses her hands correctly when engaged in activities which are directly related to the salvation of her soul (such as digging her own grave) is clearer as is his suggestion that she employs her eyes appropriately if she constantly visualizes her own death and God's final judgment of her sins. However, such clear directives as these are the exception not the rule in Part II. As I have demonstrated thus far, the Riwle author's admonitions against transgressive use of the senses are usually much more lengthy and memorable than his instructions for spiritual and virtuous use of these. It should be remembered that the author's treatment of sins of the sense organs comprise more than ninety-five percent of Part II; and the majority of the sensory transgressions he describes are related to the evils of lechery, that is, sexual union between two earthly lovers. In the brief section of Part II wherein the Riwle author instructs his audience in virtuous use of the sense organs, he contrasts this sensual earthly love relationship to its opposite, a conjugal union of the anchoress with Christ. The author, following the lead of Bernard of Clairvaux, uses passages from the Cantic of Canticles to describe this union in very sensual terms, but literalizes the relationship between Christ and the anchoress. Unlike Bernard, the Riwle author does not emphasize that the union between Christ and the anchoress should be interpreted as an allegorical representation of the soul's union with God.

When the Riwle audience is instructed in virtuous use of the senses, the literal female body which has received so much attention in Part II appears to become a metaphoric figure for the soul which joins with Christ in spiritual marriage; but, in effect, the figurative image of the bride of Christ

seems more accurately to represent not the soul of the anchoress but the anchoress herself. The author converts the female body from a literal object of desire for earthly men to a figurative object of desire for Christ, the knight who comes to claim the anchoress as his bride in the afterlife. At the beginning of his treatment of virtuous use of the sense organs, the Riwe author asserts, "Vnderstond ancre hwas spuse þu art ⁊ hu he is gelus of alle þine lates" (Understand, anchoress, whose spouse you are and how he is jealous of all your behavior).<sup>89</sup> Here, the author makes no mention of the soul but implies that the anchoress and Christ have a very literal spousal relationship. He adds that God/Christ:

cleopēð þe his schawere. swa his þ̅ nan oþres. for þi he seið in canticis. . . Schaw þi neb to me he seið ⁊ to nan oðer. bihald me gef þu wult habbe briht sihðe wið þine heorte ehnen. bihald inward þer ich am ⁊ ne sech þu me nawt wið ute þin heorte. Ich am wohere scheomeful. ne nule ich nohwer bicluppe mi leof mon bute i stude dearne. O þulli wise ure lauerd spekeð to his spuse.<sup>90</sup>

(calls you [the anchoress] His mirror, His only and no other. Therefore, He says in the Canticles. . . "Show your face to me," He says, "and to no other. Look upon me if you would have bright sight with your heart's eyes. Look inward where I am, and seek me not without your heart. I am a shy lover, nor will I embrace my lover anywhere but in a secret place." In this way our Lord speaks to his spouse.)

Here, the Riwe author illustrates that an anchoress should use her eyes to see spiritually only by looking inward, into her heart instead of allowing her heart to leap out through her eyes into lust for earthly lovers. She can be seen

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<sup>89</sup> Corpus Christi, 48.

<sup>90</sup> Corpus Christi, 48.

spiritually only by showing her face to God “and to no other,” that is, no earthly lover. The words of the Christ-spouse in the above passage depict him in very literal, even erotic terms: “I am a shy lover, nor will I embrace my lover anywhere but in a secret place.” Christ is also depicted as a jealous, mortal lover who would not have another see his spouse’s face. Once again, the Riwe author makes no reference to the soul which the figurative body traditionally represents.

The author also discusses how an anchoress should employ her ears and mouth virtuously, using as an illustration another passage from the Canticles. He writes that the lady in the Canticles speaks to her heavenly spouse in this manner, “Ich ihere mi leof spoken. he cleopēð me ich mot gan” (I hear my love speaking. He calls me and I must go). To this, the author adds the admonition that the anchoress should “gan ananriht to ower deore leofmon. ⁊ meanēð ow to his earen þe luueliche” (go immediately to your dear lover, and say your love plaint in his ear).<sup>91</sup> In addition, the Riwe author explains how Christ will speak to his anchoress bride:

Aris up. hihe þe heonewart. ⁊ cum to me mi leofmon. Mi culure. mi feire. ⁊ mi schene spuse. Schaw to me þi leoue neb. ⁊ ti lufsume leor. went te from oþre. . . Sing i mine earen. for þi þ tu ne wilnest bute to seo mi wlite. ne speoke bute to me. þi steuene is me swete. ⁊ ti wlite schene.<sup>92</sup>

(Arise up, hie you hither, and come to me my beloved, my dove, my fair, my beautiful spouse. Show to me your beloved face, your lovely countenance. Shun others. . . Sing in my ears, because you desire to see only my countenance, to speak only to me. Your voice is, to me, sweet, and your countenance fair.)

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<sup>91</sup> Corpus Christi, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Corpus Christi, 52.

This passage once again depicts the jealous Christ-spouse, who will hear his lover's voice only if she saves her words and songs for him alone; and the anchoress's heavenly lover is attracted, like a mortal lover, to her fairness and beauty, her "lovely countenance." The Riwe author further explains that an anchoress should use her mouth both to ask for kisses from her spouse and to kiss him. Again quoting from the Canticles, he writes that Christ will expect his anchoress spouse to ask him for

cosses. as mi leofmon þæt se ð to me i þæt luue boc. . . .Cusse me mi leofmon wið þæt coss of his muð muðene swetest. þæt coss leoue sustren is a swetnesse ⁊ and delit of heorte swa unimete swete. þæt euc worldes sauur is bitter þæt togeines. Ah ure lauerd wið þæt coss ne cussað na sawle. þæt luueð ei þæt ing buten him ⁊ te ilke þæt inges for him þæt helpað him to habben.<sup>93</sup>

("kisses as my beloved [does] who says to me in the love book. . . 'Kiss me my beloved with the kiss of [your] mouth, sweetest of mouths.'" This kiss, beloved sisters, is a sweetness and a delight of heart so incomparably delectable that any of the world's savories is bitter in comparison. But our Lord, with this kiss, kisses no soul that loves anything but him, and those things that, for his sake, help to possess him.)

Here, the images which the Riwe author uses to describe this spiritual union continue to be sensual. Christ's kiss is "delectable. . .any of the world's savories is bitter in comparison." The kiss an anchoress might be tempted to give to or receive from an earthly lover pales in comparison to kisses exchanged between the anchoress and Christ. In this passage, the author finally refers to the soul that joins with Christ, but the reference seems to become lost in the literalized love vision between the anchoress and Christ that the author has created thus far. Furthermore, if the Riwe author does indeed view his audience as spiritual novices, it seems puzzling that he does

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<sup>93</sup> Corpus Christi, 55.

not take more care to explain that the love relationship he describes between Christ and the anchoress is an allegory for the union of the soul with God and not a literal marriage of the anchoress with Christ. As Bugge has observed, even though Bernard describes “the spiritual union [of the soul and Christ] in the passionate language of sexual intercourse” and “the contemplative life of the soul as a kind of erotic ecstasy,” Bernard makes clear in his text that this union should “be read only as allegory.”<sup>94</sup>

In the Riwle passages currently under discussion, the author literalizes the relationship between God/Christ and his spouse without sufficiently explaining that the female lover represents the soul rather than a real anchoress. The brevity of his description of the union of the anchoress and Christ, and his failure to emphasize its allegorical significance--taken along with the Riwle author’s overwhelming admonitions against sexual relationships between anchoresses and mortal men--suggests that the anchoress’s spiritualized female body serves the same purpose as her earthly body, to attract a jealous, possessive, and shy heavenly lover. Therefore, it is not suprising that some modern scholars believe the Riwle author’s rhetoric suggests that his female audience can never transcend their gender. Bradley has concluded, for example, that the Riwle author uses passages from the Canticles manipulatively “to instruct his women hearers in their worthlessness and in their need to hide their feminine beauty” from mortal men, but that he never employs the Canticles to instruct them in “a liberating love” which would allow them to transcend their earthly status as the inferiors of men.<sup>95</sup> The Riwle author’s prolific and constant reminders that

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<sup>94</sup> Bugge, Virginitas, 93.

<sup>95</sup> Bradley, “In the Jaws of the Bear,” 138, 140; Bradley, Laws of the Bear, 24, 25.

an anchoress should control her physical senses in Part II, along with his literalized employment of the Canticles, indicate that despite his implied intention to instruct his audience in spiritual sensing--that is in inner religious life--he is still preoccupied with control of the actual female body.

After the Riwe author offers the brief suggestions above for correct employment of the sense organs, he returns to further admonitions against transgressive sensing, and another animal image, this time the goat, to emphasize the vileness of sinners who use their bodily organs to indulge in lustful pleasures. If the anchoress does not approach her spouse in the way that the woman in the Canticles does, the author explains, Christ her spouse will speak to her in this way:

gef þu ne cnawest te seolf he seið ure lauerd. neomeð nu gode  
geme. þ is gef þu nast hwas spuse þu art. þ tu are cwen of  
heouene. . . gef þu þis hauest forgeten ⁊ telest her to lutel. wend  
ut ⁊ ga he seið. hwider? ut of þis hehschipe. of þis muchele  
menske ⁊ folhe heorde of geat he seið. hwet beoð herode of geat?  
þ beoð flesches lustes þe stinkeð ase geat doð biuoren ure lauerd.  
. . . þeose fif wittes. he cleopeð tichnes. for alswa as of a ticchen þ  
hauēð swete flesh. kimeð a stinkinde gat oðer a ful bucke. al  
riht alswa of a gung swete locunge. oðer of a swote herunge.  
oðer of a softe felunge. waxeð a stincinde lust ⁊ a ful sunne.<sup>96</sup>

("If you know not yourself," he says, our Lord. Take good heed now. That is, "if you have forgotten whose spouse you are, that you are queen of heaven, . . . and count this of little value, go out, go. Where?--out of this high station, this great honor, and follow the herds of goats," he says. What are the herds of goats? That is the lusts of the flesh which stink like a goat does before our Lord. . . . These five wits, he [Christ] calls kids. For just as a kid that has sweet flesh becomes a stinking goat or a foul buck, a young sweet looking, or a sweet hearing, or a soft feeling can grow into a stinking lust and a foul sin.) )

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<sup>96</sup> Corpus Christi, 53-54.

The rhetoric of this passage abruptly forces the Riwle audience to visualize a very different kind of fantasy, and once again beast images are employed to emphasize the foulness of “lusts of the flesh.” Here, the Riwle author uses the goat figure, which, like the horse, is often associated with lechery.<sup>97</sup> He adds:

Hald te i þi chambre. ne fed tu nawt wið uten þine gate tichnes.  
ah hald wið innen þin hercnunge. þi speche ant ti sihðe. ⁊ tun  
feaste hare geten. muð. ⁊ ehe. ⁊ eare. for nawt ha beoð bilokene  
inwið wah oðer wal þe þes geten openið. bute agein godes sonde.  
⁊ líueneð of sawle. . . .Ouer alle þing þenne. . . .mine leoue  
sustren witeð ower heorte. þe heorte is wel iloket. gef muð. ⁊  
ehe. ⁊ eare. wisliche beon ilokene. for heo is ich seide þer. beoð  
þe heorte wardeins. ant gef þe wardeins wendeð ut. þe ham bið  
biwist uuele.<sup>98</sup>

(Keep to your chamber, and do not feed your kids outside your gate. But hold within your hearing, your speech, and your sight, and close fast their gates, mouth, eye, and ear. For she is not locked within enclosure or wall if she opens these gates except to God’s messenger or to sustenance of the soul. . . .Over all things then. . . my beloved sisters, guard your heart. The heart is well-locked if the mouth, the eye, and the ear are well locked within. For these, as I said elsewhere, are the heart’s wardens; and if the wardens go out, the home is badly protected.)

Such admonitions as this and the above passages once again direct audience attention away from what the Riwle author has previously said about how an anchoress may use her senses appropriately as a bride of Christ.

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<sup>97</sup> Rowland, Animals with Human Faces, 80-86. Rowland explains that for medieval bestiarists, the goat often “signified the incontinent [or lecherous]” (85). However, the bestiarists also distinguish “between the lascivious he-goat. . . and the mountain goat” the latter of which is “a symbol of Christ” (86).

<sup>98</sup> Corpus Christi, 55.

Throughout Part II, the author emphasize the dangers of sinful bodily sensing over the rewards of virtuous spiritual sensing, and his rhetorical strategies and stylistic use of exempla and metaphor continually reinforce the idea of feminine sexual guilt. Though his stated goal for Part II and the other segments on inner religious rule is to instruct his audience in spiritual practices and thought, the author's spiritual lessons are, more often than not, undermined by his persistent admonitions for controlling the physical body. Medieval clergy generally associated most lay audiences with bodiliness and willfulness and considered it their duty to control their audiences' sinful impulses through authoritarian rhetoric. Such rhetoric often requires an audience to identify with hypothetical sinners which question the validity of religious precepts. The Riwle author, however, goes a step further and frequently requires his female audience to identify specifically not only with disobedient female characters from the Bible but with unreasonable beasts. These tendencies indicate that the Riwle author's discourse is strongly influenced by his audience's gender. The honing of discourse to suit the needs of a particular audience--whether male or female--is to be expected and is laudable in a skillful rhetorician such as the Riwle author. But when his profuse warnings against lecherous sensing and his emphasis on the part the female body plays in inciting lechery are examined along with his use of rhetorical tone, audience address, and imagery, it can be demonstrated that the discourse of Part II continuously suggests that the Riwle audience cannot expect to transcend their gender even in the afterlife. The Riwle author may well be a medieval religious writer who believes that on earth and in Heaven (where Paul asserts that souls are neither male nor female), "God's creation

[is] more perfect in two sexes than in one.”<sup>99</sup> Therefore, instead of emphasizing the weakness of lay audiences in general in Part II, the Riwe author especially reinforces the weakness of female lay religious through his use of rhetoric and imagery.

In Part III of the guide, this tendency to emphasize the power of the clergy and the weakness of the laity continues, but in this next segment of the inner rule for anchoritic life, the author uses animal imagery--and bird figures in particular--more abundantly than he has in Part II. Birds in flight are said to represent the anchoress who is engaged in appropriate spiritual activities such as confession and prayer. However, once again, the Riwe author's spiritual lessons are often obscured by his descriptions of vice. Furthermore, his instructions and his use of bird imagery seem to be guided by the fact that his audience is made up of female rather than male religious.

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<sup>99</sup> Bynum, 230.

CHAPTER IV  
FIGURATIVE BIRD AND BEAST BODIES: SPIRITUAL  
EXPRESSION AND CLERICAL AUTHORITY

In Part III of the Riwle, "The Regulation of the Inward Feelings," the author's implied goal is to instruct his audience in the efficacy of confession, penance, prayer, vigilance, and bodily mortification, spiritual practices which are said to tame the harmful inner feelings of the heart. In this segment of the rule, however, the author continues to be greatly concerned with control and discipline of the body when attempting to instruct his audience in the spiritual activities listed above. For example, despite the fact that he seems to have sufficiently described the various sins of the mouth in Part II, the author continues to admonish his audience against these and to offer remedies for such vices in Part III. Two activities in particular--confession and prayer--are said to redeem the transgressive mouth when it expresses anger or engages in boastful or idle talk. Additionally, the Riwle author reinforces the anchoress's need to do penance for sin by mortifying her flesh with bodily punishments, such as the wearing of haircloth, which he says tames an anchoress's tendency to express negative inner feelings or emotions; and penance in the form of fasting is said to tame an anchoress's tendency to be hypocritical or to indulge her body's appetites in excessive food or physical comforts. In Part III, the author also reinforces the idea that sin originates in an anchoress's heart, which, in addition to leaping into lechery, often leaps into wrath, pride, gluttony, avarice, and hypocrisy in rebellion against

reclusive life and practices. According to the Riwle author, regulation of such harmful inner feelings, desires, and emotions, is entirely dependent upon the discipline and control of the physical body.

The Riwle author utilizes bird and nest-building imagery to illustrate the spiritual practices his audience should learn from reading Part III. For example, he employs the pelican as a metaphor for confession and for spiritual leanness, that is, leanness which results from disciplining the body by fasting or renouncing worldly comforts. The sparrow is a figural representation of vigilance and prayerfulness, and the way a bird builds its nest is a metaphor for punitive disciplines such as fasting and self flagellation. As the author explains, an anchoress's heart is the place where she should build a love nest for her heavenly spouse, which should be hard and protective on the outside, and soft and yielding within. Hardness is represented by bodily punishments which are said to keep her heart mild, gentle, and receptive to God/Christ. To a lesser extent, through bird metaphors, the Riwle author promotes spiritual contemplation and the concealment of an anchoress's good works. For example, the night bird, or owl, which hunts for its food at night, and consumes it while in flight, represents the acceptable anchoritic habits of contemplation and performance of secret good deeds, that is, works for which the anchoress should expect no recognition or reward.

The bird figures in Part III, however, also represent negative anchoritic characteristics, and the Riwle author often uses additional animal metaphors, which emphasize the vileness of such vices just as he has done in Part II. For example, the pelican which represents confession is also a metaphor for

wrath. But this relatively benign image does not seem to satisfy the author when he wishes to emphasize the foulness of wrath because alongside the angry pelican, the author presents the image of a she-wolf howling in anger. Though the dominant, or controlling, metaphors of Part III are indeed bird images, the author employs more frightening animal figures, as he has in Part II, in order to emphasize the dangers, or foulness, of a particular sin. It should be noted at the outset, however, that the Riwle author uses most of the bird and beast figures in Part III selectively, perhaps even manipulatively, in order to appeal to his lay religious audience. That is, he chooses carefully from sources such as the Bible, Physiologus, medieval bestiaries, and treatises on birds when he assigns characteristics to these creatures and interprets the significance of bird and beast images for his audience, and even adds interpretive elements of his own.

The pelican, for instance, appears only briefly in the Bible; therefore, the author draws primarily from such accounts of the pelican as are found in Physiologus, bestiaries, and other sources. Significantly, however, most sources for pelican exegesis claim that the pelican is a figural representation of Christ suffering the abuse of sinners who have forgotten Him. Instead of mentioning Christ's suffering in his interpretation of the pelican, however, and encouraging his audience to follow Christ's example by suffering abuse themselves, the author informs his audience that the pelican has a tendency to be wrathful and sin with its mouth, like a transgressive anchoress. The author's omission of references to Christ seem to deny his audience an opportunity to identify with Christ. Instead, his rhetoric requires them to identify with the sinners who abuse Christ with their sinning mouths.

Through such selective interpretation, the Riwle author consciously or unconsciously places limitations on his audience's spiritual expression. He also places limits on their religious roles by emphasizing through his use of rhetoric and imagery that anchoresses have no access to clerical authority. For example, in addition omitting references to Christ, the Riwle author habitually omits references from sources which associate birds with preachers or teachers, thereby reinforcing the idea that such religious roles are not open to women religious.

The Riwle author's discourse and his selective interpretation of bird metaphors in Part III seems to be guided, at least in part, by the gender of his audience. In discussion of the significance of various bird images, the author tends to emphasize the dangers of mouth sins, which are more traditionally associated with women than with men. This dissertation chapter continues to examine the Riwle author's authoritarian rhetoric and his emphasis on control of the physical body. But it also devotes more attention than the previous chapter to his use of bird and beast figures. Whereas the author has used such images almost incidentally in Part II, he begins to use these more liberally in Part III of the guide. In addition, because the Riwle author employs such figures freely to suit his didactic purpose, the present chapter requires much more in-depth comparison (than the previous chapter) of the Riwle author's exegesis of animal figures to that of traditional sources for bird and beast metaphors. Therefore, an overview of representative sources with which I will compare the Riwle will be useful.

Critics have found it a difficult task to determine all of the sources which the Riwle author may have used for bird and beast imagery in his

anchoritic guide; therefore, source identification is at present an ongoing and incomplete process among Riwle scholars. Since the author himself does not consistently state where his exegetical information comes from by naming specific works or authors, much guesswork is required in determining his sources for creature imagery in Part III. Here, I must repeat that the present project is not intended as a study of all of the sources which may have influenced or inspired the Riwle author; it is a comparative study of the Riwle and representative texts in which I point out similarities and differences between the Riwle author's use of animal figures and that of earlier religious writers with the goal of demonstrating that this author seems to use source information selectively because he writes for an exclusively female anchoritic audience. This chapter will examine descriptions of birds that occur in the Bible, patristic and medieval religious literature, Physiologus, and in the traditional medieval bestiary and aviary for comparison purposes. Though most religious writers probably consulted the Bible first in their search for exegetical material on birds and beasts, Physiologus, as I stated previously, is one of the most commonly-used sources for exegesis of animal exempla among early religious writers, whose works the Riwle author would have known.<sup>1</sup> Physiologus and the Etymologies of Isidore of Seville are also the primary models for the medieval bestiaries and, by extension, the medieval aviaria, with which the Riwle author may have

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<sup>1</sup> See Florence McCulloch, Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries, 20. She has noted, for example, that "toward the end of the fourth century there are definite parallel passages in the Physiologus and the Hexameron of Ambrose," and has added that at least one scholar "would push familiarity with the text back to Justin Martyr in the first half of the second century" (20).

been familiar.<sup>2</sup> Similarities and differences can be quite readily noted between the Riwle, Physiologus, and a typical medieval bestiary, but neither of these sources contains as many bird images as the medieval aviary. And since the present chapter devotes particular attention to the Riwle author's exegesis of bird images (here, only one pertinent beast image, the wolf, is included), a medieval aviary is especially useful for comparison purposes. Therefore, I have chosen Hugh of Fouillo's twelfth-century treatise on birds as one representative text.

Scholars such as James Maybury, Anne Savage, and Nicholas Watson have noted similarities between the aviary of Hugh of Fouillo (Hugh of Folieto) and the Riwle.<sup>3</sup> Hugh's aviary, though not a monastic rule *per se*, was originally written to instruct audiences of lay religious men (monks) in spiritual discipline and understanding. As Willene Clark explains, "Hugh defines his little treatise expressly as a teaching text directed to very specific monastic pupils, the lay brothers."<sup>4</sup> She adds that Hugh's treatise "also addresses the teachers of lay-brothers, those who would have translated its

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<sup>2</sup> For detailed accounts of the way in which bestiaries evolved from both Physiologus and Isidore's work, see for example McCulloch, Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries, 22-44 and Ron Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 83-143. See also Willene B. Clark, Medieval Book of Birds, 4-5. Clark summarizes the evolution which McCulloch and Baxter describe and further asserts that the traditional bestiary "served as structural model, occasional textual source, and overall inspiration for" Hugh of Fouillo's twelfth-century aviary.

<sup>3</sup> Anchoritic Spirituality, eds. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, 44, 443, 460-461. Savage and Watson count Hugh's writings among those the Riwle author may have read (44) and among "works which. . . have not been shown to be sources but may be (443)." See also Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 10-13, 19-20, 26-37. Maybury discusses similarities between Hugh's and the Riwle author's exegesis of the pelican, nycticorax, sparrow, and ostrich and notes that both writers are influenced by earlier religious writers such as St. Eucher, St. Paul of Nola, and Gregory the Great.

<sup>4</sup> The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouillo's Aviary, trans. Willene B. Clark, 2. Clark also believes that Hugh's work is the forerunner of most if not all medieval avia.

lessons for their often illiterate pupils in whatever the local vernacular.”<sup>5</sup> According to Clark, Hugh was an Augustinian prior at the time he wrote the work, “sometime between 1132 and 1152,” and he originally wrote the aviary at the request of a lay brother who was apparently a close friend.<sup>6</sup> Hugh’s work presents a bird figure, describes its characteristics, and interprets the bird’s symbolic significance for an audience. The aviary was also illustrated with pictures of various birds. In his prologue to the aviary, Hugh explains that he chose to illustrate the work in order “to enlighten the minds of the simple folk, so that what the intellect of the simple folk could scarcely comprehend with the mind’s eye, it might at least discern with the physical eye”; he adds, however, that he desired not only to offer an actual picture of each bird figure “but also to outline it verbally, so that. . .[those] whom the simplicity of the picture would not please, at least the moral teaching of the text might do so.”<sup>7</sup> As Clark has noted, the aviary was intended to teach simple lessons and “to avoid the complexities of theological discourse.”<sup>8</sup> The lessons mostly have to do with the “religious transformation” of its audience and with both “the contemplative and the active aspects of monastic life.”<sup>9</sup>

There are similarities between Hugh and the Riwle author himself which make Hugh’s aviary an attractive text for comparison with the

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<sup>5</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, i, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 119.

<sup>8</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 16.

Riwle, but there are also differences between these two writers and their audiences that at least partially account for the differences between how the Riwle author and Hugh interpret the significance of bird figures. Most scholars, for example, believe the Riwle author, like Hugh, belonged to an Augustinian religious house.<sup>10</sup> Like Hugh, the Riwle author was also responsible for the spiritual instruction of a lay religious audience. The Riwle author even writes--as Hugh does--for lay religious who have specifically requested that he write a guide for them. In addition, the Riwle, which seems to address an audience of religious novices, "avoid[s] the complexities of theological discourse" in much the same way as Hugh's aviarium. Furthermore, the Riwle author's vivid descriptions of some of the bird figures in Part III indicate that he attempts, as Hugh does, to paint a verbal picture of these for his audience. Hugh's audience is monastic and male, however, rather than anchoritic and female. Textual evidence in Part III of the Riwle indicates that the author may have found some exegetical material on birds, which are included Hugh's aviarium and earlier sources, inappropriate for an audience of enclosed women whose religious roles are different from those of monks. Again, one of the chief differences is that the Riwle author, unlike Hugh and earlier Christian writers, consistently omits references to bird figures which associate birds with preachers or teachers. This tendency--as I will presently demonstrate--seems to be related to the fact that, traditionally, medieval anchoresses, unlike monks (or even nuns), were forbidden to teach or advise others.

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Barratt, however, has demonstrated that despite the general association of the Riwle author with the Augustinian order, there are a number of similarities between the Riwle author's instruction and that of the Carthusian religious order. See Alexandra Barratt, "Anchoritic Aspects of Ancrene Wisse," Medium AEvum 49 (1980): 32-56.

It is certainly possible, if the Riwle was written between 1215 and 1230, that a copy of Hugh's aviary might have reached the hands of the Riwle author. It is known, as I stated earlier, that he quotes directly from another of Hugh's works, De Claustro Animae.<sup>11</sup> If the Riwle author did not know Hugh's aviary, however, he seems to have borrowed from some of the same sources as Hugh.<sup>12</sup> The Riwle author may have also drawn from the works of his own near-contemporaries. For example, Maybury has found similarities between the exegesis of bird imagery in the Riwle and Alexander Neckam's De Naturis Rerum and has noted that Neckam's work "may well be thought to have been the immediate source of the description [of bird figures] in the Riwle."<sup>13</sup> It might further be suggested that Neckam's text could have been influenced by Hugh's aviary. Neckam's writing career probably did not begin before 1180, almost fifty years after the earliest date that Clark has suggested for the composition of Hugh's aviary (1132).<sup>14</sup> In addition, Neckam studied and taught at the University of Paris, which would have put him in closer geographical proximity than the Riwle author to the place where Hugh's bird treatise was published.<sup>15</sup> If Hugh's aviary had not

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<sup>11</sup> Dobson, Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 23.

<sup>12</sup> James Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle: Its Method and Its Tradition," diss. U of Massachusetts, 1969, 10-13, 19-20, 26-37.

<sup>13</sup> James Maybury, "On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwle, with Some Comment on Sources," American Benedictine Review 28 (1977): 97.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Neckam, De Naturis Rerum in Rerum Britannicum Medii Aevi Scriptores, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Longman, 1893), x. This source will hereafter be cited as Neckam, De Naturis Rerum.

<sup>15</sup> Riwle scholars have not been able to determine with certainty that the Riwle author ever visited or studied in Paris, but he is certainly influenced by medieval religious writers who have definite connections with the University of Paris. See Dobson's discussion in Origins of Ancrene Wisse, 144-146, 170, 315-317.

reached England in time for the Riwle author to use it as a source, he may well have unknowingly incorporated information from Neckam's work, which could have been borrowed from Hugh's aviary. Therefore, the present study also notes similarities and differences between the Riwle and Neckam's De Naturis Rerum. To a lesser extent, I compare the Riwle author's exegesis of bird images to that of patristic writers which include (but certainly cannot be limited to) Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. For example, Jerome's commentaries on Job, Psalms, and Matthew, Augustine's Narrations on Psalms, and Gregory's Moralities on Job all contain some references to or exegesis of bird figures. I devote less attention to these sources, however, because an admirable study of these sources for bird, beast, and nature images in the Riwle--to which I have referred above--has already been produced by James Maybury. The Riwle author draws from so many unidentified sources that the scope of the present study must necessarily be limited primarily to comparison of the Riwle with earlier works with which it has the most obvious parallels.

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Riwle author's selective use of sources falls into definite patterns. I will show that this writer frequently employs bird and beast figures when he admonishes his audience against mouth sins. Furthermore, I demonstrate that his selective use of such figures often implies that his female audience's access to clerical authority and spiritual expression is limited. Though several scholars have devoted some study to bird and beast images in the Riwle, few have called attention to how strategically the Riwle author employs sources for such images. For instance, Janet Grayson has noted that all of the animal metaphors and exempla in the

Riwle seem to be intended to expose the absurdity of human vice.<sup>16</sup> She adds, "There is hardly an animal in the Rule [sic] who does not typify weakness of some kind or mortal sin."<sup>17</sup> Grayson's exploration of imagery in the guide, however, does not examine bird or beast images in great depth. Though the animal images in the Riwle do usually represent "weakness" as Grayson has noted, the bird figures in the work often have both positive and negative characteristics assigned to them. As Linda Georgianna has observed, the Riwle author emphasizes in Part III that "birds belong to two worlds at once [her italics]," the spiritual and the material, like the Riwle anchoresses themselves.<sup>18</sup> Georgianna concludes that the author assigns both negative (material) and positive (spiritual) characteristics to bird figures because he is a medieval humanist who is aware of both his audience's spiritual goals and their struggle to renounce the material world.<sup>19</sup> He realizes, for example, that despite an anchoress's enclosure and apparent isolation from secular life, she lives in a very material world which she must work diligently to renounce in order to achieve her spiritual goals.<sup>20</sup> Like Grayson, however, Georgianna does not address the possibility that the Riwle author uses bird and beast imagery in manipulative ways. In addition, neither Grayson nor Georgianna has devoted special attention to comparison of the Riwle and traditional sources for animal imagery.

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<sup>16</sup> Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Grayson, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Georgianna, 56-57.

<sup>20</sup> Georgianna, 54-57.

Though Victor Graham has produced a brief source study of pelican imagery in Christian exegesis, he does not discuss the use of the pelican in the Ancrene Riwe at great length. Graham asserts that the Riwe author's use of the pelican as a figure for wrath, rather than as a figure for Christ, is "unusual," but he does not question or analyze the Riwe author's choice to employ the pelican in this manner.<sup>21</sup> James Maybury, on the other hand--as I mentioned previously--has devoted a great deal of time to exploration of the Riwe author's sources for creature imagery and has noted that the author uses source information on bird images freely in Part III. Maybury has observed, for example, that the author draws from the Bible and a number of other sources when he explains the spiritual significance of animal exempla for his audience, choosing only such elements as seem to suit his immediate didactic purpose.<sup>22</sup> However, despite his acknowledgment that the Riwe author takes some license in his use of bird images, Maybury has asserted that the Riwe author is simply very imaginative and creative in his use of sources.<sup>23</sup> He has not suggested (as I do here) that the Riwe author's selectivity is related to his audience's gender or to the roles that female religious were allowed play in relation to male religious during the Middle Ages. None of the above-mentioned scholars have concluded that the Riwe author's selective use of bird and beast imagery reinforces limitations on his audience's spiritual expression or religious roles. The present study--through

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<sup>21</sup> Victor E. Graham, "The Pelican as Image and Symbol," Revue de Littérature Comparée 36 (1962): 241.

<sup>22</sup> Maybury, "On the Structure and Significance of Part III," 95-101; see also Maybury's dissertation, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe."

<sup>23</sup> Maybury, 101.

close reading of passages from the text of the Riwe and that of his possible sources—demonstrates that this author employs animal imagery more selectively than has previously been thought.

The Riwe author clearly indicates that bird images will be the dominant focus in Part III. Early on, he introduces the controlling metaphor of this segment of the guide, writing:

Treowe ancras beoð briddes icleopede. for ha leauēð þe eorðe.  
that is þe luue of alle worltliche þinges. and þurh ġirunge of  
heorte to heouenliche þinges. fleoð uppart toward heouene.<sup>24</sup>

(True anchoresses are called birds, for they leave the earth—that is, the love of all earthly things—and through yearning of heart for heavenly things, fly upward toward heaven.)

Here, he explains that an anchoress's concerns should be entirely spiritual and raise her up to heavenly grace like the wings of a bird. But further along he adds:

treowe ancras beoð ariht briddes of heouene. þe fleoð on heh ⁊  
sittēð singin de murie o þe grene bohes. . . .Brid tah oðer hwile  
forte sechen his mete for þe fleshes neode lihteð to þer eorðe. ah  
hwil hit sit on eorðe. hit nis neauer siker. ah biwent him ofte ⁊  
bilokeð him aa. ġeornliche abuten. alswa þe gode ancre. ne fleo  
ha neauer se hehe. ha mot lihten oðerhwiles dun to þer eorðe.  
of hire bodi. Eoten, drinken. slepen. wurchen. speoken. héren  
of þ hire neodeð to of eorðliche þinges. ah þenne as þe brid dēð ha  
mot wel biseon hire. biloken hire on euch half. þet ha nohwer  
ne misneome leste ha beo icaht þurh sum of þe deofles grunen.<sup>25</sup>

(True anchoresses are indeed birds of heaven. They fly on high and sit singing merrily in the green boughs. . . .A bird, however, must sometimes light on the earth again to seek its food for bodily needs. But while it sits on the earth, it is never secure, but often turns and always looks cautiously around. So it is with the

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<sup>24</sup> Corpus Christi, 69.

<sup>25</sup> Corpus Christi, 70.

good anchoress. No matter how high she flies, she must sometimes light down on the earth, because of her body, to eat, drink, sleep, work, speak, hear what she needs to of earthly things. But then, as does the bird, she must look well around her, in every direction, so that at no point can she be tricked, lest she be caught in some of the devil's snares.)

In this passage, as often happens in this work, the Riwe author's figurative language leads him to a literal admonition. Figurative birds and anchoresses "fly on high and sit singing merrily in the green boughs," but literal birds and anchoresses must come down to earth again to feed their bodies. Real birds are fearful on the ground; and though it is figurative anchoresses who, like birds, "must look well around" so that they do not get caught in "the devil's snares," the author's very literal message is that an anchoress must "eat, drink, sleep, work, speak, hear what she needs of earthly things," and always fear being tempted into sin by her body. In this passage, as Georgianna has observed, the Riwe author emphasizes that anchoresses, like birds, must partake of both the spiritual world represented by their flight and the material world represented by their need to forage for food.<sup>26</sup> Yet elsewhere in Part III, as I mentioned previously, the author explains that an anchoress should think of her body as her enemy. She should punish it often, yet not so severely that she destroys it because it is too closely linked with her soul. To this admonition, the author adds:

Ant tis is an of þe measte wundres on eorðe. þ̅ te heste þ̅ing  
under godd. þ̅ is monnes sawle as seint Austin witneð. schal beo  
se feste ifeiet to flesch þ̅ nis bute fen ⁊ a ful eorðe. . . . Ah godd  
nalde nawt þ̅ ha lupe i prude. ne wilnede to climben. ⁊ feolle as  
dude lucifer for he wes bute charge. ⁊ teide for þ̅i a clot of heui

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<sup>26</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self 56.

eorðe to hire as me deð þe cubbel to þe ku. oþer to þe oþer beast þ  
is to recchinde. ⁊ and renginde abuten.<sup>27</sup>

(And this is one of the major wonders on earth, that the highest thing under God--that is, man's soul, as St. Augustine attests--should be so fastly joined to the flesh, which is but mud and foul earth. . . . But God did not desire that it [the soul] should leap into pride, nor wish to climb [too high], and fall [sin] as did Lucifer--for he was without such a burden [a material body]--and for this reason He [God] tied a clod of heavy earth to the soul, as men do to hobble a cow, or some other beast that is prone to roam and range about.)

In this passage, the Riwe author once again offers his justification for promoting a very bodily spirituality throughout the guide. Though his rhetorical tone is relatively benign, he does emphasize that the flesh--"which is but mud and foul earth"--is inferior to the soul. This passage and the one before it, wherein he reminds the anchoresses that they must participate in the worlds of both spirit and matter, indicate one of the main concerns of Part III: because an anchoress's primary duties are to live in solitude, engage in fasting or mortification practices, confess her sins, and watch and pray, her life is very difficult. The author seems to expect such a harsh enclosed life to spark negative inner feelings, like anger, pride, or loneliness, in an anchoress's heart, or to cause her to desire excessive food, drink, or material possessions and comfort.

One of the Riwe author's dominant admonitions in Part III is against wrath, a mouth sin which he greatly abhors, and he uses the pelican as a figure for both wrath and the remedy for wrath. As he explains, in addition to guarding her outward senses, an anchoress must be meek, gentle-hearted, and patient in the face of hardship. Therefore, he warns his audience against

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<sup>27</sup> Corpus Christi, 73-74.

anger--the opposite of such acceptable traits--and presents the well-known figure of the pelican, which appears in Physiologus and most medieval bestiaries, writing,

Aȝein bittre ancras dauȝ seȝ þis uers. Similis factus sum pellicano solitudinis. . . . Pellican is a fuhel se weamod ⁊ se wreaȝful þ hit sleaȝ ofte o grome his ahne briddes hwen ha doȝ him teone. ant þenne sone þrefter hit wuȝ swiȝe sari. ⁊ makeȝ swiȝe mucche man. ⁊ smit him seolf wiȝ his bile þ he sloh ear his briddes wiȝ. and draheȝ blod of his breoste. ⁊ wiȝ þ blod acwikeȝ eft his briddes isleine.<sup>28</sup>

(Against bitter anchoresses, David says this verse: "I am like a pelican in solitude]" . . . . The pelican is a fowl so peevish and so wrathful that it often slays in anger its own young when they taunt it, and then soon thereafter, it becomes so sorry, and makes so much moan, and smites itself with [the same] bill, that before, it [used to] slay its [young] birds, and draws the blood of its breast, and with that blood quickens its [young] slain birds afterwards.)

Though the author quotes the biblical verse from Psalms 101: 7, which connects the pelican with solitude, he emphasizes the fact that the bird is "peevish" and "wrathful" and presents the image as representative of a "bitter" anchoress. In traditional accounts of the pelican, the bird demonstrates angry tendencies by killing its young, but few earlier descriptions of the bird--as both Graham and Maybury have observed <sup>29</sup>--emphasize its wrathful nature as much as that of the Riwe author. For example, Isidore of Seville's account in his Etymologies reads:

Pelicanus avis Aegyptia habitans in solitudine Nili fluminis, unde et nomen sumpsit; nam Canopos Aegyptus dicitur.

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<sup>28</sup> Corpus Christi, 63.

<sup>29</sup> See Graham, "The Pelican as Image and Symbol" 241 and Maybury, "On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwe," 96.

Fertur, si verum sit, eam occidere natos suos, eosque per triduum lugere, deinde se ipsam vulnerare et aspersione sui sanguinis vivificare filios.<sup>30</sup>

The pelican is an Egyptian bird which lives in solitude near the Nile River, from whence its name is derived; for it is called Canopos Aegyptus. It is said, whether true or not, to kill its chicks and mourn them for three days; then it wounds itself and sprinkles blood on its young to bring them back to life.<sup>31</sup>

Comparison of Isidore's brief text and the Riwle demonstrates that the Riwle author not only omits any references to the bird's origin (in Egypt) but also places more emphasis on the pelican's wrath or bitterness than the earlier writer. In contrast to Isidore, the Riwle author, and earlier writers, Jerome makes no reference to the pelican's killing and reviving of its chicks.

However, when he discusses the pelican in his commentary on Psalm 101: 7, Jerome states that there two kinds of pelicans, and proceeds to explain their habitats and food preferences. For example, Jerome asserts that one type of pelican is found in water regions and eats only fish ("Unum in aquis est, et esca ejus pisces sunt"), and the other is found in the desert and eats poisonous animals such as snakes, crocodiles, and lizards ("et unum in solitudine, et esca ejus venenata animalia, hoc est, serpentes, et crocodili, et lacertae").<sup>32</sup>

This particular description of the pelican appears in a number of early

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<sup>30</sup> Isidore of Seville, Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarvm Sive Originvm, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxonienses Ser., 2, ed. W. M. Lindsay (New York: Oxford UP, 1911), [73]. This source will hereafter be cited as Isidore, Etymologies. It should be noted that Isidore does not include moralizations or exegesis on the biblical or Christian significance of the birds and beasts he describes in this work.

<sup>31</sup> The translation of Isidore's passage is my own.

<sup>32</sup> Jerome, Breviarium in Psalmos, Patrologia Latina (hereafter cited as PL), ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1904), vol. 26, col. 1127.

bestiaries as McCulloch has explained.<sup>33</sup> After these descriptions of the pelican, Jerome adds that the kind of pelican which lives in the desert and eats poisonous animals represents the penitent speaker in this Psalm, who rejoices in solitude but consumes (and purges through confession) the poisonous food of his own sin ("Illi ergo similis laetus sum qui est in solitudine: qui comedit venenata animalia, hoc est, esca mea quasi venenum erat mihi").<sup>34</sup> The Riwle author does not describe the pelican's habitat or food preferences, and he makes no further references to pelican's association with solitude. Therefore, his account does not seem to closely resemble those of Isidore or Jerome in placing so much emphasis on the wrathful nature of this bird.

Physiologus also does not call particular attention to the pelican's anger, generally describing the bird in more positive terms than the Riwle author by asserting:

[T]he pelican. . . loves its young most dearly; and when the young are born and begin to grow up, they strike their parents in the face; then the parents strike them back and kill them. Then the parents moved by pity, mourn over their young for three days; then their mother comes on the third day and pierces her right side, and pours out her blood on the dead birds, and the blood brings them back from death.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See McCulloch, Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries, 25-34. She explains that this particular description of the pelican occurs in what is called the "First Family" of bestiaries derived from Physiologus and Isidore (28). She adds that these bestiaries also contain similarities to the medieval Aviarium (30). See also McCulloch, 155-157, wherein she summarizes the characteristics of the pelican found in this family of bestiaries.

<sup>34</sup> Jerome, Breviarium in Psalmos, PL, vol. 26, col. 1127.

<sup>35</sup> Physiologus. The Very Ancient Book of Beasts, Plants and Stones, trans. Francis J. Carmody, [9].

Here, as in the passage from Isidore, the pelican's anger is only implied; and Physiologus even calls attention to the pelican's devotion to its young, a point which the Riwe author omits in his description of the bird. Furthermore, Physiologus (unlike Isidore or Jerome) sets up the pelican figure as a representative of Christ from the beginning with allusions to Christ's being struck in the face and pierced in the side during the Passion, and to his entombment for three days before the Resurrection, information which the Riwe author also omits from his account; he simply states that "soon thereafter [after killing its chicks]," the pelican pecks its breast and brings its chicks alive again. As Maybury has noted, the account of the pelican in the Riwe, "beyond the basic incident regarding the pelican's altercation with its young," has little in common with the Physiologus account of the pelican.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the bestiary describes the pelican in more positive terms than the Riwe author and associates the bird with Christ:

The pelican is excessively devoted to its children. But when these have been born and begin to grow up, they flap their parents in the face with their wings, and the parents, striking back, kill them. Three days afterward the mother pierces her breast, opens her side, and lays herself across her young, pouring out her blood over the dead bodies. This brings them to life again. <sup>37</sup>

Here, the bestiary, like Physiologus, emphasizes that the pelican loves its young, that "three days" lapse before the mother pelican revives her brood, and that she "opens her side" in order to raise them from death. In playing

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<sup>36</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 5.

<sup>37</sup> The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts, trans. T. H. White (1954; New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), 132.

up only the pelican's wrath, rather than its love for its chicks, the Riwe author can be said to use source information selectively.

In his tendency to emphasize the bird's anger, the Riwe author may be following Neckam closely as Maybury has observed. He states for example that Neckam's account of the pelican, in De Naturis Rerum, also calls attention to "the extreme degrees in which the pelican is affected by. . . emotions,"<sup>38</sup> which could include wrath. The Riwe author's account of the pelican not only de-emphasizes the bird's association with Christ and makes much of its association with an angry anchoress, but also implies that the pelican chicks, which taunt their parents, inherit their parents' wrathful nature in much the same way that woman inherits Eve's confrontational nature (as he has explained in Part II). Therefore, the Riwe author's description suggests that the pelican's nature—and by extension the nature of the anchoress it represents—is inherently wrathful rather than loving.

The Riwe author goes on to make a more direct connection between the angry pelican and the bitter anchoress by switching to feminine gender when he refers to the pelican-anchoress, writing,

Dis fuhel [sic] pellican is þe weamode ancre. hire briddes beoð  
hire gode werkes þ̅ ha sleað ofte wið bile of scharp wreððe. Ah  
hwen ha swa hauēð idon. do as deð þe pellican. ofþun che hit  
swiðe sone. ⁊ wið hire ahne bile beaki hire breoste. þ̅ is wið  
schrift of hire muð þ̅ ha sunegeded wið. ⁊ sloh hire gode  
werkes. drahe þ̅ blod of sunne ut of hire breoste. þ̅ is of þe  
heorte þ̅ sawle lif is inne. ant swa schulen eft acwikien hire  
isleine briddes. þ̅ beoð hire gode werkes.<sup>39</sup>

(This pelican fowl is the hateful anchoress. Her birds are her good works that she slays often with the bill of sharp wrath; and

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<sup>38</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 13.

<sup>39</sup> Corpus Christi, 63-64.

when she has done so, [she should] do as the pelican does; often and soon she should be sorry for it, and with her own bill peck her breast--that is with schrist of her mouth that she has sinned with to slay her good works--draw the blood of sin out of her breast--that is of the heart that the soul's life is in--so that she should thereafter quicken her slain birds--which are her good works.)

In his first reference to the pelican (cited previously), the author has assigned the creature neuter or male gender (with such pronouns as "he," "hit," and "his"). Here, the pelican has suddenly become female. Such a rhetorical strategy requires the anchoresses to identify more closely with the spiteful female pelican, which is said to represent the "bitter anchoress," than with the male or neuter pelican to which the author has referred earlier.

In the above passage, the Riwle author also describes both the negative and positive traits of the pelican, and the figure represents both the false (angry) and the true (repentent) anchoress. He indicates that the bird pecking its breast to revive the dead chicks represents confession rather than Christ's giving of his life for the salvation of sinners. Since he omits references to the pelican as representative of Christ, the author's rhetoric again suggests that anchoresses must identify only with the angry pelican or, additionally, with its ungrateful chicks, that is, with sinners rather than saviors. This omission further implies that an anchoress's access to the imitatio Christi--that is, the suffering with Christ--which the Riwle author claims is part of anchoritic life, is limited. In the above passage, the author also emphasizes the idea that the wrathful anchoress must pierce her breast, "the heart that the soul's life is in," as the pelican does, to draw out the blood of its sin, thereby reinforcing the idea that anger originates in an anchoress's heart, that her anger is part of her inherently sinful nature. Here, Riwle author offers his audience an implied

reminder that the heart, which leaped like a wild beast into lechery in Part II of the guide, is the same heart that strikes out in anger in Part III. The Riwle author indicates that a pelican is prone to anger, like the “hateful anchoress,” and that the pelican sins with its beak, like a false anchoress sins with her mouth. Therefore, as he asserts, the transgressive anchoress must confess her sin audibly with her mouth in order to redeem her sinning body organ. The Riwle author’s direct comparison between the pelican’s beak and the anchoress’s mouth supports his assertion that an anchoress must confess her sin aloud.

Interestingly enough, the Riwle author’s emphasis on the the fact that the pelican pierces itself with its beak is somewhat unusual in Christian exegesis. In fact, according to Maybury, the first Christian writer who seems to have called particular attention to the pelican’s use of its beak to pierce its breast is Hugh of Fouillooy. As Maybury has observed, Hugh adds to older accounts the “new detail that [the pelican] employs its beak for the bloody business” of piercing its heart to revive its young.<sup>40</sup> It seems significant that the Riwle author, like Hugh, chooses to emphasize in particular that the pelican uses its beak to draw its own blood when earlier sources for pelican exegesis—such as Isidore’s Etymologies, Physiologus, and the bestiary—do not call special attention to this point. Such a striking similarity between Hugh’s aviary and the Riwle suggests that the former work could have influenced the latter, but if this is not the case, the Riwle author could be drawing from Neckam’s De Naturis Rerum since Neckam also draws attention to the fact

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<sup>40</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle” 10.

that the pelican uses its beak to strike its breast.<sup>41</sup> Neckam explains, for example, that the pelican, feeling remorse for having slain its young, uses its beak to open its side and spill the blood (“Rostro latus aperit, et se prodiga sanguinis proprii cruentat”) which revives its chicks (“Sanguine perfunduntur pulli, et sic reviviscunt”).<sup>42</sup>

In addition to implying—through his rhetorical strategy and selective interpretation of the pelican figure—that an anchoress’s access to imitation of Christ is limited, the Riwle author omits source information on the pelican which might suggest that anchoresses have clerical authority. Comparison between the Riwle and possible sources for his pelican exegesis is useful in demonstrating this point. Some early Christian writers associated the pelican with preachers. As Maybury states, for example, Augustine believes that the pelican and other birds represent “different aspects of offices of the preacher of the Word who carries his message to men in various conditions.”<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Hugh of Fouillooy associates the pelican with the preacher. Hugh’s account of the pelican is much more detailed than those of many other religious writers, and he discusses each bird figure at several levels of interpretation. Like the writers of Physiologus and the bestiary, Hugh associates the bird with Christ as a savior sacrificing his life for sinners. But unlike these writers, he adds that the pelican-Christ’s slaying of its offspring

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<sup>41</sup> Maybury, 12. I would further suggest that Neckam may be following Hugh in calling particular attention to the pelican’s beak.

<sup>42</sup> Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 119. Here, it is worth noting that Neckam’s emphasis on the pelican’s beak may well have been borrowed from Hugh.

<sup>43</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe,” 5-6. Maybury refers to Augustine’s treatment of the pelican figure in his commentary on Psalm 101: 7-8 in his Narrations on Psalms; see also St. Augustine, Opera, Pars X, 3, Enarrationes in Psalmos, CI-CL, Corpus Christianorum: series Latina 40 (Tyrnholti, 1956), 1430-1432.

with its mouth is an act of preaching, stating that “by the discourse of the sermon He [the pelican-Christ] converts non-believers (verbo praedicationis incredulous convertit).”<sup>44</sup> Hugh portrays the pelican-Christ not only as savior—as do Physiologus and the bestiary—but also as preacher, as does Augustine. Additionally, Hugh explains that the pelican represents a righteous man who is “far removed from the pleasures of the flesh (carnali voluptate longe remotum).”<sup>45</sup> He adds that the righteous man-pelican kills its chicks because he “with his own mouth judges and denigrates his wrongful thoughts and deeds (cogitationes et opera quae male gessit ore proprio iudicat et confundit)” by confessing his sins.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Hugh also associates the pelican with a remorseful sinner going to confession. In contrast to his forebears, the Riwe author makes no references to the pelican as a savior or as a preacher or teacher figure. He seems to have favored only accounts of the pelican, such as that of St. Eucher, which associate the bird with a religious recluse, or with those of St. Paul of Nola, Alcuin, and Rabanus Maurus, which associate the pelican with penitence, as Maybury states.<sup>47</sup> Neckam also does not associate the bird with preachers or teachers but writes that the pelican designates a penitent (“pellicanum designari

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<sup>44</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170-171. Both the English text and the parenthetical Latin phrases included throughout this dissertation chapter are taken from Clark’s edition of Hugh’s aviarium.

<sup>45</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170-171.

<sup>46</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170-171.

<sup>47</sup> See Maybury’s discussion of these accounts of the pelican in “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe,” 7-10; for discussions of the pelican’s significance in Christian exegesis, see also St. Eucher, Liber Formularum Spiritualis Intelligentiae, Patrologia Latina (hereafter cited as PL), ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1904), vol. 50, cols. 749-750; St. Paul of Nola, Epistolae, PL 61, col. 371; Alcuin, Enchiridion seu Expositio Pia ac Brevis in Psalmos Poenitentialies. in Psalmum CXVIII et Graduales, PL 100, cols. 588-589; Rabanus Maurus, De Universo, PL 111, cols. 250-251.

poenitentem").<sup>48</sup> Maybury has suggested that all of the above writers—who associate the pelican with remorseful sinners rather than preachers—may have influenced the Riwle author, but he finds peculiar similarities (such as the emphasis on the pelican's beak, discussed above) between the accounts of Neckam and the Riwle author which have led him to assert that the latter is "deeply indebted for his own treatment of the pelican to the account in Neckam's " De Naturis Rerum."<sup>49</sup> Given the fact that other Christian writers have associated the pelican with both preachers or teachers and with penitents, the Riwle author, like Neckam, seems to have made a conscious choice to connect the pelican with the latter rather than with the former. This is not surprising since the Riwle author writes for religious recluses rather than for a monastic audience composed of monks or nuns (who might engage in less severe bodily punishments and who might have preaching or teaching duties). As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Riwle author provides persistent and pervasive reminders that an anchoress must regularly confess her sins and mortify her body. He also offers strong admonitions against female anchorites preaching to men, teaching men, or even teaching children in Parts II and VIII of the guide. His omission of references to the pelican-Christ as a preacher supports both the idea that anchorites should engage in constant penitential activities and the idea that female anchorites—unlike monks or nuns—can have no access to imitation of Christ by preaching or teaching.

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<sup>48</sup> Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 119.

<sup>49</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 12; see also Maybury, "On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwe," 96-97.

The Riwle author's association of the pelican chicks with an anchoress's good deeds also deserves further commentary and comparison with earlier sources. Maybury suggests that the Riwle author again follows Neckam closely by portraying the pelican chicks as representative of good works. He observes, for example that in his exegesis of the pelican,

Neckam sketches a definite moral or spiritual sequence closely resembling the tropological sequence later described by the author of the Riwle, in which man first slays his good works, then experiences repentance, and, finally, opening his heart in confession, revives the good works.<sup>50</sup>

Neckam's account of the pelican reads in part:

Natura in his hominem repraesentat, qui per peccata sua opera bona mortificat; qui postmodum poenitentia ductus, ornatum respuat vestium, et se ipsum crucians, gemitibus dolorem manifestat interiorem. Cor aperit in confessione, et fervore dilectionis opera priora quae facta erant in caritate reviviscunt.<sup>51</sup>

(Nature, in this sense [in the case of the pelican] represents man who, through sin, kills his good works [the pelican chicks] and afterward, guided by remorse, rejects ornamental vestiges, and punishing himself, groans in anguish, demonstrating his inner pain. He lays bare his heart, and in fervent delight, scratches out his former pain in confession and revives his good works.)<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, unlike Physiologus and the bestiary—which state that the pelican's chicks represent people who have begun to worship matter rather than God—Neckam's and the Riwle author's accounts imply that the pelican chicks represent “good works” which have been destroyed by sin and must be

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<sup>50</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in Ancrene Riwe,” 13; for Neckam's account of the pelican, see De Naturis Rerum, 118-119.

<sup>51</sup> Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 118-119.

<sup>52</sup> The translation of Neckam is my own.

revived by confession and penance, yet another point that has caused Maybury to suggest that the Riwe author may be greatly influenced by Neckam.<sup>53</sup> Maybury has also noted, however, that Hugh of Fouillooy, in his pelican interpretation, also “understands the pelican’s offspring to signify a person’s deeds.”<sup>54</sup> Hugh, however, views the pelican chicks—before confession—as bad thoughts and deeds (“cogitationes et opera quae male”).<sup>55</sup> But after confession and penance, Hugh indicates that the revived pelican chicks represent “spiritual impulses (actus spirituales bene),” which might also be interpreted as good deeds.<sup>56</sup> The Riwe author—unlike Hugh—makes no direct association between the pelican’s chicks and wicked deeds but writes instead that a pelican- anchoress’s “birds are her good works that she slays often with the bill of sharp wrath.” Since he will, later in Part III of the guide, address how an anchoress may destroy her good works by boasting of them, it appears that the Riwe author found it more useful for his didactic purpose to equate the pelican chicks only with an anchoress’s good works, a point that could be related to the emphasis he places on mouth sins (including boasting of good works) throughout this segment of the guide.

Once he has presented the vivid example of the pelican’s wrath and the remedy for this vice, one expects the Riwe author to conclude his discussion of anger and extol the virtues of confession at more length, but in fact he does not do so. Instead, he goes on to address wrath further and to introduce the

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<sup>53</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in Ancrene Riwe,” 12; see also Maybury, “On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwe,” 96-97.

<sup>54</sup> Maybury, “On the Structure and Significance of Part III of the Ancrene Riwe,” 96.

<sup>55</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170-171.

image of the angry she-wolf into his argument. In so doing, he follows the pattern (of using beast metaphors to emphasize the foulness of sin) that he has set up in Part II. In addition, he utilizes a rhetorical strategy similar to that which he has used in Part II which puts his audience "on the spot."<sup>57</sup> After presenting the pelican exemplum and explaining its significance, the Riwe author describes how wrath in an anchoress's nature can be exemplified in the behavior of an angry wolf. He informs his audience that an angry woman is:

wuluene. . . hwil þeauer wreaðe is in wummone heorte.  
Versaili. segge hire Vres. Auez. Pater nostres. ne deð ha bute  
þeoteð. Naueð ha bute as þeo þ is iwent to wuluene i godes  
ehnen. wuluene steuene in his lihte earen.<sup>58</sup>

( [a] she-wolf. . . While wrath is ever in a woman's heart, she can say her Versicles or Hours or Aves [and] Pater Nosters, [but] she does no more than howl [to the empty air]. In everything, she is no more than one who has become a she-wolf in God's eyes, and a wolf's voice in His sensitive ears.)

This image of the female wolf, with her mouth opened in a wrathful howl, is a more monstrous and frightening visualization than the figure of the relatively benign pelican pecking at its chicks. Therefore, the author seems to use this image to emphasize the vileness of wrath in the same way as he has used other beast characters in Part II. Furthermore, his assertion that God will only hear howling when an angry woman speaks puts one in mind of the loudly argumentative speech which has traditionally been associated with women in general. Here, the author makes a comparison not only between the howling she-wolf and a woman but between the wolf and anchoress by

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<sup>57</sup> Rygiel, "A Holistic Approach to the Style of Ancrene Wisse," 278.

<sup>58</sup> Corpus Christi, 64.

asserting that the angry woman whom God does not hear says “her Versicles . . . Hours. . . Aves [and] Paternosters,” recitations that are more readily associated with women religious than with women in general.

The Riwe author continues his discussion by informing his audience that anger is a type of madness, and he uses a skillful rhetorical strategy, which requires audience participation in this madness. First, he invites his audience to visualize what an angry man looks like or sounds like (“hu lokeð he hu spekeð he”); and he asks the sisters to consider how anger affects the wrathful man’s heart and his outer appearance (“hu feareð his heorte inwið Hwucche beoð utewið alle hi se lates?”). Then, he questions whether an angry man may be considered a man at all, stating that he behaves more like an animal than a human being. Finally, he clinches his argument with the question, “Ant hwet gef eni ancre iesu cristes spuse is forschuppet into wuluene. nis that muche sorhe?” (and what if any anchoress, Jesus Christ’s spouse, is transformed into a she-wolf; is that not much cause for sorrow?).<sup>59</sup> Once again, the author not only suggests that an angry anchoress is more bestial than human, but also puts his immediate audience ‘on the spot’ by forcing them to consider the possibility that they themselves are capable of expressing such bestial anger. In the above passage, his tendency to equate the bestial with the feminine continues even when he is not discussing the vice of lechery.

As he has in discussion of the angry pelican, the Riwe author offers a remedy for wolflike wrath; this remedy, however, unlike the act of

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<sup>59</sup>Corpus Christi, 64.

confession, more closely resembles the erotic union between the anchoress and Christ which he has described in Part II. The Riwe author writes that an anchoress who behaves like a she-wolf must

forwarpe þ̅ ruhe fel abute þ̅e heorte. ⁊ wið softe sahtnesse  
makien hire með̅e ⁊ softe as is cundeliche wummone hude.  
for wið þ̅ wuluene fel na þ̅ing þ̅ ha deð̅ nis gode licwurð̅e.<sup>60</sup>

(throw away that rough skin around her heart and, with gentle reconciliation, make her [self] smooth and soft as a woman's skin naturally is. For with [while she is wearing] that wolf skin, nothing that she does will please God.)

The author's reference to the heart, in this passage, is easily linked with the his previous admonition that an anchoress, like the pelican, must purge her heart of sin. However, the anchoress is not directed to pierce her heart and draw out sin here, but rather to throw off "that rough skin around her heart . . .with gentle reconciliation;" and she is told to "make her [self] smooth and soft as a woman's skin naturally is." Though reconciliation with God/Christ may imply the act of confession, the author does not actually remind his audience at this point to confess to the sin of wrath. The visualization suggested above more closely resembles an erotic uncovering of the body for an intimate embrace, which is intensified by author's reference to the smoothness and softness of a woman's natural skin. The Riwe author has emphasized in Part II that an anchoress's heart represents the bower into which she invites her heavenly spouse on her spiritual wedding night, and this passage reminds her that her inherently recalcitrant heart must be purified and softened if she hopes to be an acceptable consort of Christ.

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<sup>60</sup> Corpus Christi 65.

The Riwle author uses the wolf figure selectively, just as he has the pelican, by omitting some of the elements of wolf lore that are found in traditional sources for animal imagery. According to Baxter, the wolf does not appear in Physiologus but is a beast figure which was later incorporated into the texts of medieval bestiaries.<sup>61</sup> Significantly, the medieval bestiary asserts, "Wolves are known for their rapacity, and for this reason we call prostitutes wolves, because they devastate the possessions of their lovers."<sup>62</sup> There is no way to determine whether or not the Riwle anchoresses were aware of this association between the wolf and a prostitute, but the author seems to have been aware of this connection. His admonition that an anchoress throw off the rough wolf skin to make herself acceptable to her heavenly lover is a figurative act that seems to represent the opposite of an act of prostitution, a lecherous union between a mortal woman and man. The bestiary further states that if a wolf sees a man first during a confrontation between the two, the wolf "strikes him [the man] dumb and triumphs over him like a victor over the voiceless."<sup>63</sup> Here, the wolf seems to be a figural representation of the sin or temptation which is a constant threat to a good Christian. If the Riwle author has this anecdote in mind when he describes the wolf, he uses it loosely. He does not equate the wolf with sin in general, but with anger in particular. He also genders the wolf female and states that it is an angry woman or anchoress.

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<sup>61</sup> Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 93.

<sup>62</sup> The Bestiary, 56.

<sup>63</sup> The Bestiary, 58.

The bestiary account explains that the way for a man to defend himself when attacked by the wolf is to "drop down his clothes to be trampled underfoot" and then knock two stones together to make noise that frightens the wolf away.<sup>64</sup> The Riwle author's reference to the throwing off of clothing --that is, the "rough skin" around an anchoress's heart--suggests that he knows and is at least influenced by the this typical wolf exemplum. The removal of clothing in the bestiary account, however, represents throwing "off the old man in baptism,"<sup>65</sup> a point that the Riwle author does not make clear in his interpretation of the wolf image. Despite his apparent view of his audience as novices in spiritual understanding, he does not specifically say that this throwing off of clothing represents baptism, which indicates that the Riwle author uses the wolf image to support his literal interpretation of the anchoress's marriage to Christ rather than to discuss the efficacy of baptism. The author also omits any reference to the striking of stones to frighten the wolf away. In the bestiary account of the wolf, this striking of stones is said to represent a kind of clamor during which Christians attacked by the wolf "reverberate the saints of God. . . with exhortation of our mouths."<sup>66</sup> It is difficult to understand why the Riwle author would choose to omit references to "exhortation" or prayer that saves one from sin (the wolf ) in a rule which frequently extols the virtues of prayer, but it should be recalled that at this point in Part III the author is emphasizing the sin of the mouth rather than the redemption of it.

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<sup>64</sup> The Bestiary, 60.

<sup>65</sup> The Bestiary, 60.

<sup>66</sup> The Bestiary, 60.

As I stated earlier, one of the spiritual lessons that Part III of the Riwe emphasizes is the efficacy of confession, but thus far, the Riwe author has had little to say about this virtue. He has asked his audience, first, to visualize the violence of the murderous pelican, adding briefly that the pelican's striking of its breast represents confession. Then, seeming to forget the idea of confession altogether, he has described the wrath of the howling she-wolf. Additionally, through manipulative use of sources for both the pelican and wolf figures, he has continued to emphasize the foulness of mouth sins such as anger and to reinforce the idea that an anchoress should control this vice-ridden bodily organ. Furthermore, even though he has presented a remedy for wolflike anger, the cure he has offered is not confession per se, but again—as in Part II—a literalized bodily union between the anchoress and Christ. Therefore, despite the author's assertion that the spiritual practice of confession is important in Part III, his admonitions against wrath, like his admonitions against lechery in Part II, tend to obscure what he has to say about confession in this segment of the guide.

In addition to using the pelican as a metaphor for both wrath and confession, the Riwe author employs this bird figure to represent penance in the form of fasting; and he continues to deviate from traditional sources for bird imagery in selective ways. The author portrays the pelican as a positive model for the spiritual practice of fasting by setting up an opposition between the pelican and the ostrich, a bird image which—in the Riwe—seems to represent excessive materialism. The Riwe author introduces the opposing figures of the pelican and the ostrich by asserting,

þeo briddes fleoð wel þe habbeð lutel flesch as þe pellican hauerð  
 ⁊ feole fiðeren. þe strucoin for his muchele flesch. ⁊ oþre

swucche fuheles makieð a semblant to fleon. ⁊ beateð þe  
wengen. ah þe uet eauer draheð to þer eorðe.<sup>67</sup>

(Those birds fly well that have little flesh, as the pelican has, and many feathers. The ostrich with its abundant flesh, and other such fowls, make a semblance to fly, and beat the wings: but the feet ever draweth [it] to the earth.)

With this reference to the thinness of the pelican, which enables the bird to fly, the Riwle author implies that leanness is admirable in an anchoress and that this leanness is achieved through resisting fleshly temptations. Here, the Riwle author again favors information on the pelican which comes from sources other than Isidore, Physiologus or the bestiary. None of these three sources mentions that the pelican is thin, but this concept is not new in Christian exegesis. According to McCulloch, the bird's thinness seems to have first been mentioned in Horapollo's discussion of the pelican, which influenced a number of religious writers.<sup>68</sup> As Maybury explains for example, Alcuin had a "particular interest in the leanness of the pelican as a sign of penitence and mortification"; he adds that, following Alcuin's example, Rabanus Maurus "explains the pelican's leanness by observing that the bird receives its food internally by stretching its stomach without engaging in any other form of digestion."<sup>69</sup> Additionally, both Hugh of Fouilloy and Alexander Neckam discuss the leanness of the pelican. For example, Hugh's aviarium includes the following description:

Huius etiam volucris natura talis dicitur esse quod semper  
afficitur macie, et quicquid glutit cito digerit, quia venter eius

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<sup>67</sup> Corpus Christi, 70.

<sup>68</sup> McCulloch, Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries, 156.

<sup>69</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 9; see also Alcuin, Enchiridion, PL 100, col. 588 and Rabanus Maurus, De Universo, PL 111, col. 250.

nullum habet diverticulum in quo retineat cibum. Non igitur cibus ille corpus impingat, sed tantum sustinet et confortat. Huic siquidem pelicano eremitaе vita fit similis, qui parvo pascitur, nec quaerit repletionem ventris, qui non vivit ut comedat, sed comedit ut vivat.

(Moreover, the nature of this bird is said to be such that it is always made thin, and whatever it gobbles it quickly digests, because its belly has no passage in which to retain food. Therefore, that food does not fatten its body, but only sustains and fortifies it. If only the life of the monk might become like this pelican, who eats little, nor seeks to fill its belly, who does not live to eat, but eats to live.)<sup>70</sup>

Here, Hugh suggests that the pelican is lean because it is not overly concerned with material sustenance. Neckam emphasizes the bird's thinness as well, writing,

Diximus igitur per pellicanum designari poenitentem, quod quidem maciei dictae avis competit. Est enim avis ista macilenta; sic et poenitens macere debet corpus suum.<sup>71</sup>

(It has been said that the pelican designates a penitent, who is thin like the bird with which he is repeatedly compared. Truly that bird is thin; and likewise the penitent keeps his own body thin.)<sup>72</sup>

Here, Neckam does not explain as specifically as Hugh why the pelican is thin, but his exegesis of the bird suggests that it is thin because it represents the penitent who feels remorse for transgressions and rejects ornamental vestiges ("ornatum respuit vestium"); so he implies confession or penance as

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<sup>70</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 170-171.

<sup>71</sup> Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 119.

<sup>72</sup> The translation is mine.

well as rejection of the material world.<sup>73</sup> Though the Riwe author does not interpret the pelican's leanness in the same terms as Hugh or Neckam, his description of the pelican certainly implies that the bird is thin because it eats little--or fasts often as a true anchoress should--unlike the ostrich which is too heavy to fly because of its "abundant flesh." Indeed, the author goes on to advise his audience not to spend their lives like pigs in a sty, who become fat waiting to be slaughtered.<sup>74</sup> Instead, he explains that they should fast regularly and engage in other bodily mortification practices in order to control fleshly tendencies. One kind of leanness, then, is that which is achieved by depriving oneself of food through the religious practice of fasting. Also implied in the Riwe author's insistence on fasting here is that this practice helps one to avoid yet another mouth sin, that of gluttony. Elsewhere in Part III, however, the author also warns his audience not to hoard material possessions.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, another kind of spiritual leanness with which the Riwe author is concerned is that which is achieved through having few material possessions or comforts.

Given his comparison of the ostrich and pelican, it may be suggested that the Riwe author employs the ostrich primarily as a metaphor for

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<sup>73</sup> Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 119.

<sup>74</sup> The Riwe author also associates the pig, or sow, with gluttony in his catalogue of the Seven Deadly Sins in Part IV.

<sup>75</sup> Corpus Christi, 68. Foxes and false anchoresses, he states, habbeð. . . hōlen þe hōlieð inwārd eorðe wið eorðliche. unþeawes. ⁊ draheð in to hare hole al þa mahen reopen ⁊ rinnen. Þus beoð gederinde ancras of godd i þe gospel to uoxes ieuenet.

(have. . . holes which they dig in the earth with earthly vices, and draw into their holes all that they may capture and carry. Thus are gathering anchoresses, by God in the gospel, equated with foxes.)

gluttony, but he indicates that this bird also represents hypocrisy, or more specifically, a hypocritical anchoress. After he introduces the heavy ostrich as the foil of the thin pelican, he writes:

Alswa fleschlich ancre þe liueð i fleshces lustes ⁊ folheð hire  
eise. þe heuīnesse of hire flesch ⁊ flesches unþeawes  
bineomeð hire hire [sic] fluht. ⁊ tah ha makie semblant ⁊  
muche nurð wið wengen. oþres nawt hiren. þ̅ is leote of as  
þah ha fluhe. ⁊ were an hali ancre. hwa se ȝeorne bihalt.  
lahheð hire to bismere. for hire uét eauer as doð þe strucoins.  
þ̅ beoð hire lustes. draheð to þere orðe. þeos ne beoð nawt ilihc  
þe leane fuhel pellican. ne ne fleoð nawt on heh. ah beoð eorð  
briddes. ⁊ nisted on eorðe.<sup>76</sup>

(Like [the ostrich], the fleshly anchoress lives in lust of the flesh and follows her ease. The heaviness of her flesh and flesh's desires deprive her of her flight. And though she makes a semblance [to fly], and much noise with her wings--that is, pretends to fly and be a holy anchoress--whosoever looks at her closely laughs her to scorn. For her feet, that is, her lusts ever, as do the ostrich's, draw her to the earth. These are not like the lean pelican, nor do they fly high, but [they] are earth birds, that nest on the earth.)

Here, the author states that the heavy ostrich represents the "fleshly [or worldly] anchoress." However, this description of the bird also implies hypocrisy since he writes that the worldly anchoress "pretends to fly and be a holy anchoress" but that others see her show of piety as insincere (they laugh "her to scorn"). Though the Riwe author does not actually state that the ostrich represents a hypocrite, he goes on to describe the hypocritical actions of the false anchoress. She makes "much noise with her wings," but in reality, she engages in prayer or other religious activities without a sincere commitment to anchoritic life. Here, the author also implies that the ostrich-

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<sup>76</sup> Corpus Christi, 70.

anchoress's superficial prayers represent nothing more than useless "noise," a mouth sin similar to that of the howling of the she-wolf. It should also be noted of this passage that the Riwle author utilizes the same rhetorical ploy--of assigning female gender to the ostrich--as he has with the pelican anchoress exemplum. In his initial reference to the ostrich (above), the author has used the masculine or neuter pronoun "his." But here, in addition to stating explicitly that the ostrich represents the "fleshly anchoress," he re-genders the ostrich as female thereby suggesting that his audience identify with both the false anchoress and the greedy ostrich.

This association of the ostrich with hypocrisy is not especially unusual in Christian exegesis, but certainly other writers have discussed the ostrich in more positive terms than the Riwle author, which is one indication that he may use the bird image selectively. In biblical, patristic, and medieval animal lore, the ostrich is not always depicted as negatively as the Riwle author portrays it. The ostrich exemplum, unlike that of the pelican and its chicks, occurs in the Bible, and is described in the following manner:

The ostrich's wings flap wildly, though its pinions lack plumage. For it leaves its eggs to the earth, and lets them be warmed on the ground, forgetting that a foot may crush them, and a wild animal may trample them. It deals cruelly with its young, as if they were not its own; though its labor should be in vain, yet it has no fear; because God has made it forget wisdom, and given it no share in understanding. (Job 39: 13-17) <sup>77</sup>

This description of the ostrich indicates that the bird flaps its wings futilely, but does not actually state that it cannot fly. In addition, the passage does not necessarily suggest that the ostrich's inability to fly is related to gluttony or hypocrisy. The negative significance which is attached to the ostrich above is

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<sup>77</sup> The quote is from The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

that it is cruel to its young and has no spiritual wisdom or understanding.

Isidore, who does not interpret the moral or biblical meaning of the ostrich's behavior, simply writes:

Struthio Graeco nomine dicitur, quod animal in similitudine  
avis pinnas habere videtur; tamen de terra altius non elevatur.  
Ova sua fovere negligit; sed proiecta tantummodo fotu  
pulveris animantur.<sup>78</sup>

(It is said that ostrich is the Greek name for a creature which  
resembles a bird in that it seems to have feathers; nevertheless, it  
does not raise itself from the earth. It neglects to warm its eggs;  
but only abandons them to be incubated and brought to life in  
the sand.)<sup>79</sup>

Here Isidore states that the bird cannot fly and that it abandons its eggs, but he does not imply that this is cruel or unusual behavior. Both Physiologus and the medieval bestiary follow the biblical description by stating that the ostrich leaves its eggs behind; however, both sources assign more positive significance to this behavior than the biblical exemplum. Physiologus, for instance, asserts that the ostrich abandons its eggs simply because "it is by nature a forgetful animal" and implies that even though the ostrich forgets its clutch, the eggs will still be hatched by the warmth of the sand in which they are buried.<sup>80</sup> Physiologus goes on to moralize that if the ostrich "forgets its posterity, how much more should [Christians forget] worldly things to follow heavenly things."<sup>81</sup> Likewise, the medieval bestiary notes the ostrich's

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<sup>78</sup> Isidore of Seville, Etymologies, [72].

<sup>79</sup> The translation is mine.

<sup>80</sup> Physiologus, [38-39].

<sup>81</sup> Physiologus, [39].

abandonment of the eggs, and the fact that the sand will hatch them despite their parent's neglect, and moralizes,

Now if the Ostrich. . .disregarding earthly things, cleaves to the heavenly ones--even unto the forgetting of its own offspring--how much the more should you, O Man, strive after the reward of the starry calling. . .in the glorious kingdom of the heavens.<sup>82</sup>

Here, the bestiary account seems to allude to the biblical idea that a true Christian should be willing to leave all, including material possessions and an earthly family, in order to be Christ's/God's disciple.<sup>83</sup> Though both Physiologus and the bestiary emphasize the ostrich's association with turning away from the material world, and both briefly mention that the ostrich cannot fly, neither source explicitly connects the ostrich's inability to fly with an excessive love for food, drink (gluttony) or with a false commitment to anchoritic life (hypocrisy) as the Riwle does. In fact, the ostrich in both of the former descriptions is actually associated with Christians who do not indulge in these vices. The Riwle author assigns only negative significance to the ostrich, unlike the Bible, Physiologus, and the bestiary. Jerome, however, also interprets this bird figure in a less flattering way.

In his Interlinear Exposition on Job, Jerome indicates that the mother ostrich represents a church which does not properly nurture its congregation in Christian precepts, and that the ostrich's eggs represent church members who either stop attending church or cease to follow the Christian instruction

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<sup>82</sup> The Bestiary, 122.

<sup>83</sup> This idea is expressed, for example, in Luke 18: 22-25, wherein a wealthy man is told to sell all he owns since "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." The quote is from The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

which the church has initially given them but not reinforced.<sup>84</sup> In other words, Jerome's rather ambiguous exegesis suggests that the ostrich-church has produced sons ("Ecclesia filios") through teaching but deserts them by failing to nurture them until they are entirely strong in doctrine ("fovendo doctrina")<sup>85</sup> because the church itself has become too interested in the material world ("Quia stulta mundi elegit").<sup>86</sup> Additionally, Jerome suggests that the ostrich-sons abandon the church or its teachings because the church has done little to aid them in avoiding temptation ("Relinquere autem eos dicitur, dum adversantibus non resistit").<sup>87</sup>

The equation which Jerome makes between the mother ostrich and the church at least implies that the ostrich-church's preoccupation with the world may be interpreted as hypocrisy, which has driven away its own offspring-sons. If it could be proven that the Riwle author drew upon Jerome's account of the ostrich, one would have to conclude that the idea of associating this bird with hypocrisy might have inspired the Riwle author; but one would also have to conclude that he uses Jerome's text loosely since the Riwle

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<sup>84</sup> See his account in Jerome, Expositio Interlinearis Libri Job, PL 23, cols. 1462-1463.

<sup>85</sup> Jerome, Expositio Interlinearis Libri Job, PL 23, col. 1462.

<sup>86</sup> Jerome, PL 23, col. 1463.

<sup>87</sup> Jerome, PL 23, col. 1462. Here, and throughout this comparison of Jerome's text with the Riwle, I interpret Jerome according to my understanding of the significance he attaches to the ostrich based in part on telephone conversations and correspondence with Dr. Anthony Damico, Professor of Foreign Languages at the University of North Texas. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Damico for his kindness in not only providing an admirable translation of Jerome's commentary for me to compare with my own, but for his complete willingness to discuss the sense of Jerome's passage at length with me. Dr. Damico was able to offer especially compelling insight on Jerome's problematical (ambiguous) interpretation of Job 39 because he has published a complete translation of Thomas Aquinas's exposition of Job with which he was able to compare Jerome's interpretation. See for example, his translation of Aquinas's commentary on the ostrich in Damico, Thomas Aquinas: The Literal Exposition on Job. A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 437-438.

author does not associate the ostrich with a hypocritical church, but more specifically with a hypocritical anchoress.<sup>88</sup> Significantly, as Anthony Damico has explained, the ostrich which is described in Job 39 has historically been associated, by religious writers, with people who are not inherently evil or willful but who, by nature, do not quite measure up to perfect Christian standards; that is, the ostrich represents people on whom God has chosen to bestow inferior intelligence or understanding.<sup>89</sup> Jerome does in fact suggest that the hardness towards its offspring-sons ("Duratur ad filios suos"), which the ostrich-church displays by deserting the eggs, may be unintentional on church's part.<sup>90</sup> In his interlinear commentary on Job, Jerome indicates that the ostrich-church abandons her young because "God has deprived the Church of worldly wisdom to escape earthly misfortunes."<sup>91</sup> He thereby implies that the church's failure to keep or nurture its members with perfect success results because God has not given the church as much sensitivity or understanding as it might need to help both itself and its congregation avoid temptation. Unlike Jerome, the Riwle author implies that the ostrich-anchoress is willfully and deliberately hypocritical. He says nothing about the ostrich-anchoress being deficient in intelligence or understanding because God has deprived her of these characteristics. Though it is possible that the

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<sup>88</sup> It should be noted that Maybury does not suggest in his study that the Riwle author uses Jerome as a source for ostrich exegesis. His discussion of the ostrich exemplum does not include comparison of Jerome and the Riwle author. See Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 30-37.

<sup>89</sup> Anthony Damico, personal interview. 1 March 2000.

<sup>90</sup> Jerome, Expositio Interlinearis Libri Job, PL 23, cols. 1462-1463.

<sup>91</sup> The translation here is Dr. Damico's. Jerome's text reads: "Ideo Ecclesiam privavit carnali sapientia fugere damna terrena"; see Jerome PL, 23, col. 1463.

Riwle author was inspired at least minimally by Jerome's commentary on the ostrich, other descriptions of the bird—notably those of Gregory the Great and Hugh of Fouillois—more closely resemble the Riwle author's.<sup>92</sup>

Both Gregory and Hugh (usually borrowing verbatim from Gregory) describe the ostrich's association with hypocrisy thus:

A terra quippe elevari non valet, et alas quasi ad volatum specie  
tenus erigit, sed tamen numquam se a terra volando suspendit.  
Ita sunt nimirum omnes hypocritae qui dum bonorum vitam  
simulant, imitationem sanctae visionis habent, sed veritatem  
sanctae actionis non habent.<sup>93</sup>

(Indeed, it [the ostrich] is not able to rise from the ground, and it  
raises its wings, poised as if to fly, but even so, never raises itself  
from the earth in flight. So surely are all the hypocrites, who,  
while they feign a life of good deeds <and> imitate a holy  
appearance, yet do not possess the truth of holy action.)<sup>94</sup>

Here, Gregory's account differs from Jerome's in that the ostrich is directly associated with individual religious hypocrites rather than a hypocritical church. Additionally, Gregory's description differs from Jerome's (and more closely resembles the Riwle author's) since he explains that the ostrich represents people who pretend to be devout ("imitate a holy appearance") but are not truly sincere in religious commitment. Gregory adds that the ostrich

raris pennis induitur, et immani corpore gravatur, ut etsi  
volare appetat, ipsa pennarum paucitas molem tanti corporis in  
aera [which reads as aere in Hugh's account] non suspendat.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 32.

<sup>93</sup> See both Gregory the Great, Moralium Libri, PL 76, col. 578 and Hugh's account in Medieval Book of Birds, 188. Hugh's text follows Gregory exactly here.

<sup>94</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 189. Since Hugh's account is exactly the same as Gregory's here, and Clark has already skillfully translated this passage, I use her translation rather than my own.

<sup>95</sup> Gregory, Moralium Libri, PL 76, col. 579; see also Medieval Book of Birds, 190.

(is clothed in sparse plumage, and is weighted down by an enormous body, so that although it might try to fly, that paucity of plumage would not support the bulk of such a body in the air.)<sup>96</sup>

This description of the ostrich places more emphasis than Physiologus or the bestiary on the ostrich's body, which is "enormous" and has great "bulk," a point which might have inspired the Riwle author since he emphasizes the "heaviness" of an ostrich's or false anchoress's "flesh." In contrast to Gregory, however, the Riwle author adds, more specifically, that the bird's heavy body represents the "lusts [that]. . .draw her to the earth" and keep her from flying like a true bird (the sincere anchoress). The Riwle author's account closely resembles Gregory's in that it plays up the heaviness of the ostrich's body and associates the bird with hypocrisy; therefore, the Riwle author's interpretation of the pelican more closely resembles Gregory's than those found in the Bible, Physiologus, Isidore, the bestiary, or Jerome. As Maybury has asserted:

[I]t would appear that the author of the Ancrene Riwle drew upon Gregory's approach to the ostrich, at least for the specific, basic structure of his own account; for in both, the ostrich, which, with its fleshly bulk and dearth of feathers, only seems able to fly, represents a kind of hypocrite. . .and again in both, the ostrich is contrasted to another bird [the pelican]. . .which, having little flesh and many feather, [does] indeed fly and so designate the truly religious.<sup>97</sup>

To Maybury's conclusion, I would add, however, that the Riwle author's emphasis on the ostrich's large body suggests the mouth sin of gluttony, and his emphasis on the ostrich's deliberate hypocrisy suggests the mouth sin of reciting prayers or offices without a sincere religious commitment. His

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<sup>96</sup> The translation is Clark's because Hugh again follows Gregory verbatim here. See Medieval Book of Birds, 191.

<sup>97</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 34.

admonitions that anchoresses should regularly fast, confess their sins and punish their sinful bodies support this assertion as does the author's use of nest-building imagery.

According to the Riwle author, the way in which a bird constructs its nest is representative of mortification practices such as fasting and flagellation of the body, which the author states tame an anchoress's earthly desires; therefore, right after the Riwle author compares the spare body of the pelican to the generous body of the ostrich, he describes a bird's nest-building habits, and encourages his audience to emulate these. He explains that birds of heaven

habbeð nestes he [ure lauere] seið. . . . Nest is heard utewið of prikinde þornes. inwið nesche ⁊ softe. swa schal ancre utewið þolien heard on hire flesch ⁊ prikiende pinen. swa wisliche þah ha schal swenche þ flesch. þ ha mahe seggen wið þe psalmwruhte. . . . Ich chulle [sic] wite mí strengðe lauere to þine bihoue. for þi beo flesches pine efter euchanes euene. þ nest beo heard wið uten. ⁊ softe ⁊ swete þe heorte wið innen. þeo þe beoð of bitter oðer of heard heorte. ⁊ nesche to hare flesch. ha makieð frommard hare nest. softwe wið uten. ⁊ þorni wið innen. Þis beoð þe weamode ⁊ te estfule ances. bittre wið innen as þ swete schulde beon. ⁊ estfule wið uten as þ heard schulde beon.<sup>98</sup>

(have nests, says Our Lord. . . . A nest is hard on the outside, of pricking thorns. [But] inside, it is tender and soft. So must an anchoress suffer outwardly hard pains pricking her flesh; yet so wisely must she mortify her flesh that she may say with the psalmwriter. . . . "I will keep my strength, Lord, for your benefit." . . . The nest should be hard outside, and the heart within it soft and sweet. Those who are of bitter or hard heart, and nest in the flesh, make their nest the opposite way, soft without, and hard within. These are the hateful and [self] indulgent anchoresses [who are] bitter within when they should be sweet, and full of ease [and softness] without when they should be hard.)

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<sup>98</sup> Corpus Christi, 70-71.

Here, the Riwe author reinforces the idea that an anchoress should engage in bodily punishments ("hard pains pricking her flesh") in order to tame her heart. The outward thorniness of the good anchoress's nest is a metaphor for the bodily mortification practices which make her heart—the nuptial bower into which she welcomes Christ her spouse—tender and yielding. False anchoresses who "nest in the flesh, make their nest the opposite way": they do not punish the body but, like the ostrich, indulge it in excessive food, drink, or comforts. This interpretation of the nest seems unusual in traditional exegesis. Maybury has explained that "The nest is not one of the principal subjects in the Physiologus or bestiary tradition, and, in exegesis generally, it receives only incidental or limited treatment."<sup>99</sup> When the nest is mentioned in exegesis, however, as Maybury indicates, interpretations of it vary among religious writers. He asserts, for example, that Ambrose "seems to interpret nests as evil affections built in the hearts of wrongdoers which allow no place for Divinity to lay its head."<sup>100</sup> In contrast, St. Eucher states that the bird's nest "designates the Church" as well as "a good conscience, in which the brood of good thoughts is incubated and brought forth in works."<sup>101</sup> Maybury adds that "Gregory interprets the nest both positively and negatively," indicating that it represents both "the thoughts of proud people" and "the most peaceful quiet of faith."<sup>102</sup> Alternatively in traditional

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<sup>99</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 38.

<sup>100</sup> Maybury, 38; see also St. Ambrose, Expositionis in Evangelium Secundum Lucam, PL 15, col. 1795.

<sup>101</sup> Maybury, 38; see also St. Eucher, Liber Formularum Spiritualis Intelligentiae, PL 50, col. 749.

<sup>102</sup> Maybury, 38; see also Gregory, Moralium Libri, PL 76, cols. 96, 128-129.

religious writings, the bird's nest is said to represent "faith. . . holy conduct" and "the soul of a holy man."<sup>103</sup> Maybury finds that the Riwle author's interpretation of a bird's nest, "in some of its basic features--such as the likening of the interior of a nest to the heart, or the association of young birds with good works--. . . clearly follows traditional patterns."<sup>104</sup> However, he concludes that the author's "associations of the thorny exterior and soft interior of a nest, respectively, with fleshly mortification and with sweetness of heart--constitutes a new approach to the interpretations of the nest."<sup>105</sup> Though I am in agreement, for the most part, with this conclusion, I would add that the idea of an anchoress's heart being soft inside and hard outside could have been inspired by Gregory's account of the ostrich rather than his treatment of the nest. In his description of the ostrich, Gregory writes:

Sed haec hypocritae charitatis viscera nesciunt, quia eorum mens quanto per mundi concupiscentiam in exteriora resolvitur, tanto per inaffectionem suam interius obduratur; et torpore insensibili frigescit intrinsecus, quia amore damnabili mollescit foris [.]<sup>106</sup>

(But these hypocrites do not understand charity because their minds are made outwardly soft by worldly desires in the same way as they have grown inwardly hard through self love; and with insensible torpor they have become cold inside because of that damnable love and become outwardly soft [.])<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 38.

<sup>104</sup> Maybury, 40.

<sup>105</sup> Maybury, 40.

<sup>106</sup> Gregory, Moralium Libri, PL 76, col. 583; for comparison purposes, see also Hugh of Fouillois's account of the ostrich, which again follows Gregory closely (but not verbatim) in Medieval Book of Birds, 196.

<sup>107</sup> Since Hugh of Fouillois does not follow Gregory's account exactly here, this English translation of Gregory's text is my own rather than Clark's.

Here, Gregory uses terms ("exteriora resolvitur. . .interius obduratur. . .[and] mollescit foris") which could have inspired the Riwle author's references to the inner or outer softness or hardness of an anchoress's nest or heart. In addition, Gregory states that the hypocrite's inward coldness ("frigescit intrinsecus") is a result of "self love." The Riwle author's "[self] indulgent anchoress" with her "bitter or hard heart" closely resembles the hypocrite that Gregory describes. Her nest (or heart), which is "the flesh," is "soft without" like the hypocrite who is "made outwardly soft by worldly desires." To his figurative description of the bird's nest, however, the Riwle author adds the literal admonition that an anchoress must

temie ful wel hire flesch sone se ha ifeleð þ hit awilgeð to swiðe.  
mid feasten, mid wecchen. wið hère. wið heard swinc. wið  
hearde disceplines. wisliche þah ⁊ wearlich.<sup>108</sup>

(tame full well her flesh—as soon as she feels that it grows too wild—with fasting, with watching, with haircloth, with hard labor, with hard disciplines, but wisely and warily.)

Here, he makes clear that in addition to confessing their sins like the pelican-anchoress, his audience must regularly discipline the body by fasting and by striking it, wearing haircloth, or engaging in hard work. Thus, the Riwle author continues to place great emphasis on a very bodily spirituality when he compares the pelican to the ostrich. His use of the ostrich exemplum to warn his audience against gluttony and hypocrisy seems reasonable; at the same time, his omission of any references to the ostrich's abandonment of its eggs is puzzling. Since this characteristic is mentioned in all of the sources for information on the ostrich that are presently under discussion, this omission on the Riwle author's part warrants further examination.

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<sup>108</sup> Corpus Christi, 72-73.

Though the Riwe author could have compared the ostrich's habit of forgetting its clutch with the pelican's habit of killing its chicks, he does not do so. Since the pelican's young represent the anchoress's good works, which she destroys by using her mouth to express anger, it would seem that the ostrich's eggs could also represent the anchoress's good works, which she abandons by engaging in such mouth sins as hypocritical prayer and perhaps gluttony. In addition, the Riwe author has asserted in Part II that the hen's eggs represent an anchoress's good works. Given this fact, one must ask why he does not attach such significance to the eggs of the ostrich in Part III. One explanation for the Riwe author's omission of references to the ostrich's abandonment of its eggs is suggested by the significance that Jerome, Gregory, and Hugh of Fouillois assign to the eggs in their interpretations of the ostrich exemplum. We have seen from previous discussion in this chapter that Jerome associates the mother ostrich with the church and the ostrich's eggs with a congregation which has not been properly supported by the church (the mother ostrich) with teaching. It has also been demonstrated that Gregory—in an interpretation of the ostrich which is more narrow than Jerome's—associates the ostrich with a hypocritical person rather than a hypocritical church. Gregory's interpretation of the ostrich eggs also seems to be more narrow than Jerome's. He writes, for example:

Quid enim per ova, nisi tenera adhuc proles exprimitur, quae diu fovenda est, ut ad vivum volatile perducatur? Ova quippe insensibilia in semetipsis sunt, sed tamen calefacta in viva volatilia convertuntur. Ita nimirum parvuli auditores ac filii certum est, quod frigidi insensibilesque remaneant, nisi doctoris sui sollicita exhortatione calefiant. Ne igitur derelecti in sua insensibilitate torpescant, assidua doctorum voce fovendi sunt,

quousque valeant et per intelligentiam vivere, et per  
contemplationem volare.<sup>109</sup>

(For what is represented by the eggs if not tender offspring who are yet young enough to be warmed for some time, so that they might be moulded and instructed in a life of flight. Indeed, the eggs, left to themselves, are insensible things, but nevertheless when incubated they are converted into living creatures of flight. It is without doubt true of young students and children that they remain cold and insensible unless they are warmed by the solicitous encouragement of their teacher. Therefore, lest those abandoned become hardened in their insensibility, they should be continuously nurtured by the word of teachers to the extent that they can live by intelligence and fly in contemplation.)<sup>110</sup>

In this passage, Gregory seems to associate the ostrich eggs, more literally than Jerome does, with “young students and children” who need to be carefully nurtured by teachers, in a monastery perhaps. Here, he makes no reference to the church but asserts that teachers need to instruct their pupils to “live by intelligence and fly in contemplation,” which implies a different kind of instruction than Jerome seems to advocate in his discussion of the ostrich and its eggs. Certainly, Hugh of Fouillooy, whose interpretation of the ostrich eggs follows Gregory’s almost word-for-word, seems to have found his predecessor’s account entirely appropriate for both lay brothers and monastic teachers for whom he wrote; that being the case, this particular interpretation of the ostrich eggs may have particular significance for those who instruct lay brothers or sisters.<sup>111</sup> The Riwole author may have omitted references to the

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<sup>109</sup> Gregory, Moralium Libri, PL 76, col. 583; see also Hugh of Fouillooy’s account of the ostrich’s eggs in Medieval Book of Birds, 190, 192.

<sup>110</sup> The translation is again mine rather than Clark’s.

<sup>111</sup> I refer to Clark’s assertion that Hugh’s work was written for both audiences of monks and teachers of monks in Medieval Book of Birds, 2.

ostrich eggs because an interpretation of the eggs as pupils, which Gregory and Hugh suggest above, would apply more to the Riwe author himself than to his audience. Certainly, since the author strictly forbids his anchoritic audience to teach, his omission of references to the ostrich eggs—like his omissions of other references to birds which represent preachers or teachers—seems to reinforce this limitation on his audience's religious role. In addition to utilizing sources selectively for interpretation of the pelican and ostrich images, the Riwe author uses sources freely for description and interpretation of the sparrow and night bird figures, to which I now turn.

The Riwe author implies that the sparrow figure as a metaphor for spiritual vigilance, but this spiritual lesson is obscured by his tendency to play up the sparrow's negative trait, loquaciousness; therefore, when the author employs the sparrow in Part III, he again tends to emphasize the dangers of mouth sins. As he has the pelican, the author introduces the sparrow with a biblical quotation (Ps. 101: 8) which associates this bird with solitude, writing:

Ich wes waker seið davið in ancre persone. ⁊ ilich spearewe  
under rof ane. . . .for þ is ancre rihte muchel forte wakien. . . .Na  
þing ne awealdeð wilde flesch ne ne makeð hit tomre. þen  
muche wecche.<sup>112</sup>

("I have been wakeful," says David in an anchoress's character  
"I have watched as a sparrow alone on the roof ". . . for it is right  
for an anchoress to engage in much watching. . . .Nothing  
subdues wild flesh or makes it more tame than much vigilance.)

Here, the sparrow is clearly associated with solitude and spiritual vigilance, and the Riwe author adds that vigilance is useful primarily for taming "wild

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<sup>112</sup> Corpus Christi, 75.

flesh.” He goes on to explain why spiritual vigilance is necessary, stating, for example, that an anchoress must be watchful in order to protect her fragile virginity, count her sins, and prepare for God’s final judgment of her behavior.<sup>113</sup> Once he briefly defines vigilance and explains why it is important, however, the Riwe author returns to the sparrow figure and writes:

Spearewe is a chiterinde brid. chiterēð aa. ant chirmeð. ah for þi  
þ moni ancre hauēð þ ilke unþeaw. dauīð ne euenēð hire nawt to  
a spearewe þe hauēð fére. ah deð to spearewe ane. . . Ich am he  
seīð bi ancre as spearewe þ is ane. . . .for swa ah ancre hire ane in  
anlich stude as ha is chirmín ⁊ chiterin eauer hire bonen.<sup>114</sup>

(The sparrow is a chattering bird, [which] always chatters and chirps. And because many an anchoresses has this same fault, David compares her, not to a sparrow that has a mate, but to a sparrow that lives alone. . . .“I am,” he says, as [if he were] an anchoress, “as a sparrow that is alone”. . . .For likewise, an anchoress, alone in a lonely place as she is, should ever be chirping and chattering her prayers.)

Significant here is the author’s statement that a sparrow is loquacious, and “many an anchoress has this same fault [italics added],” which indicates that the anchoress-sparrow’s tendency to chirp or chatter is a negative trait. Taken along with the author’s warning against gossip in Part II, the implication is that an anchoress cannot resist the temptation to engage in idle speech, a point which brings the focus of his argument back to mouth sins. Therefore, the author’s assertion that David equates the talkative anchoress “not to a sparrow that has a mate, but to a sparrow that lives alone [italics added],” suggests that the best remedy for excessive or offensive speaking is for an

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<sup>113</sup> Corpus Christi, 75-80.

<sup>114</sup> Corpus Christi, 80.

anchoress to live in solitude, that is, have no one but herself and God to speak to. Further along in Part III, the author also admonishes, “chiterð ower beoden aa. as spearewe deð ane (Always be chattering your prayers alone as the sparrow does),” thereby suggesting that prayer is yet another remedy for transgressive use of the mouth.<sup>115</sup> Like the pelican, which redeems its murderous beak through confession, the sparrow redeems its sinning body organ with prayer. In especially associating the sparrow’s chatter with idle speech, the Riwle author uses the sparrow image selectively in Part III.

A number of diverse interpretations have been attached to the sparrow in Christian exegesis; therefore, the Riwle author had a wealth of sources to choose from for information on this bird figure. One source which seems to have little or no influence on the Riwle author’s interpretation of the sparrow in Part III is Jerome’s commentary on Matthew. In this work, as Clark has noted for example, Jerome discusses “[t]he sparrow symbolism of body and soul, and of the five senses.”<sup>116</sup> She refers to Jerome’s interpretation of Matthew 10: 28-29.<sup>117</sup> Jerome states that the two sparrows have been interpreted as the soul and the body (“Quidem coacte duos passeret, animam et corpus interpretantur”).<sup>118</sup> He further explains that it is possible for the body to die, but not the soul (“eos qui possunt occidere corpus,

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<sup>115</sup> Corpus Christi, 91.

<sup>116</sup> See Medieval Book of Birds, 167, notes 3 and 5.

<sup>117</sup> The quotes read, respectively: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” and “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.” Both are from The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

<sup>118</sup> Jerome, Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei, PL 26, col. 67.

et animam non possunt").<sup>119</sup> He concludes, therefore, that if tiny creatures of little worth [such as the sparrow] do not die without God's authority, and are not destroyed without God's wish, those who are eternal should not fear that they would live without God's providence ("Si parva animalia et vilia absque Deo auctore non decidunt. . .et sine Dei voluntate non pereunt. . .vos qui aeterni estis, non debetis timere quod absque Dei vivatis providentia").<sup>120</sup> Clark also refers above to Jerome's interpretation of the sparrows in Luke 12: 6, which reads: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight."<sup>121</sup> Jerome briefly mentions that the five sparrows in this passage represent the five senses ("Quinque quoque passerres. . . ad sensus referunt").<sup>122</sup> While Jerome's association of the sparrow with the five senses might have proved useful in the Riwle author's discussion of the "Five Wits" in Part II, he does not refer to this concept or to the sparrow in that segment of the Riwle and does not emphasize the sparrow's association with the senses in Part III. Additionally, the Riwle author does not discuss the sparrow as a representative of both soul and body as Jerome has. Given these facts, it seems unlikely that Jerome's commentary had much influence in the Riwle author's interpretation of the sparrow figure in Part III, but there are accounts of the sparrow in religious literature which more closely resemble the Riwle author's.

The association of the sparrow with solitude and vigilance found in the Riwle is suggested in earlier exegesis of this bird figure. Maybury points

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<sup>119</sup> Jerome, PL 26, col. 67.

<sup>120</sup> Jerome, PL 26, col. 67.

<sup>121</sup> The quote is from The New Oxford Annotated Bible.

<sup>122</sup> Jerome, PL 26, col. 67.

out, for example, that St. Paul of Nola associates the sparrow with a poor recluse who watches, prays, and contemplates “the law of the Lord” and thereby unifies his soul and body, “harmonizing in the will of God.”<sup>123</sup> He adds that Alcuin also associates the sparrow “with vigils and with prayers, and with the tears of penitence.”<sup>124</sup> Maybury has further noted that Hugh of Fouillooy views the sparrow as representative of vigilance and solitary religious life.<sup>125</sup> As Hugh states, for example, the sparrow “protects himself through vigilance (*Vigilat sibi custodiam*)” and is “called a recluse. . . because he is far removed from earthly desires (*dicitur solitarius, quia a terrenis desideriis procul amotus*).”<sup>126</sup> The Riwe author’s brief reference to the sparrow’s solitude and vigilance in the segment of Part III presently under discussion could be inspired by such accounts as those above as Maybury has observed.<sup>127</sup>

The sparrow does not appear in Physiologus or the traditional medieval bestiary, and Isidore discusses it only briefly as Maybury has also noted.<sup>128</sup> Maybury explains that “Isidore simply notes that ‘sparrows are small,’ flying things, named for their smallness, and that their young are very

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<sup>123</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe,” 23; see also St. Paul of Nola’s account of the sparrow in his, Epistolae, PL 61, col. 373.

<sup>124</sup> Maybury, 24; see also Alcuin’s interpretation of the sparrow in his Enchiridion, PL 100, col. 589.

<sup>125</sup> Maybury, 26.

<sup>126</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 164-165.

<sup>127</sup> Maybury, 29.

<sup>128</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe,” 22.

small.”<sup>129</sup> Maybury finds the earliest noteworthy exegesis of the sparrow figure in Augustine’s Narrations on Psalms, in which the bird is said to represent “the preacher who comes among Christian people” who are lukewarm in their Christian beliefs.<sup>130</sup> According to Maybury, Augustine also views the sparrow as representative of Christ in that he “understands the sparrow to designate the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord.”<sup>131</sup> These two interpretations of the sparrow have led Maybury to conclude that “there is little, if anything, in Augustine’s treatment of the sparrow to suggest the . . . account in the Ancrene Riwe.”<sup>132</sup> Like Augustine, St. Eucher believes that the sparrow “sometimes designates the Lord or a holy man.”<sup>133</sup> Given his tendency to omit references to bird figures as representative of Christ or preachers in his exegesis of the pelican and ostrich, it is not surprising that the Riwe author’s account of the sparrow does not resemble Augustine’s or St. Eucher’s on these points. Maybury also notes that Christian writers such as St. Paul of Nola, Alcuin, and Rabanus Maurus have associated the sparrow with wisdom or intelligence.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, Maybury has observed that both Hugh of Fouillooy and Alexander Neckam describe the sparrow as

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<sup>129</sup> Maybury, 24.

<sup>130</sup> Maybury, 22; for Augustine’s account of the sparrow, see his Enarrationes in Psalmos, Tomi XXSVIII-XL, Corpus Christianorum (hereafter cited as CC) 40 (Tyrnholti, 1956), 1430-1432.

<sup>131</sup> Maybury, 23.

<sup>132</sup> Maybury, 23.

<sup>133</sup> Maybury, 22; see also St. Eucher’s account in his Liber Formularum, PL 50, col. 750.

<sup>134</sup> Maybury, “Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe,” 23, 24, 25, 28; see also accounts of the sparrow in: St. Paul of Nola, Epistolae, PL 61, col. 373; Alcuin, Enchiridion, PL 100, col. 589; Rabanus Maurus, De Universo, PL 111, col. 250-251; Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 109.

"clever."<sup>135</sup> For example, as Maybury has noted, Hugh asserts that the sparrow represents the clever soul which is able to avoid the devil's attempts to trap it in sin.<sup>136</sup> He adds that Neckam describes this idea as well, writing that the sparrow is an expert at detecting and avoiding the traps of the fowler, or devil, and that this bird represents that crafty cleverness which recognizes fraud ("[l]aqueos. . . aucupis deprehendit gnara, et deprehensos evitat. . . hanc avem versipellis astutia designatur, quae laqueos fraudis deprehendit").<sup>137</sup> The Riwe author, unlike the above writers, does not state that the sparrow is intelligent or clever. In contrast to these associations of the sparrow with intelligence or cleverness, however, Hugh and Neckam suggest some sparrow traits that may be considered less positive. For example, Hugh states that the sparrow represents "the unsteadiness of mind in any man (instabilitas mentis in quolibet homine) because the sparrow is "a capricious and inconstant bird (passer avis inconstans et instabilis)."<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, as Maybury has noted, Neckam "says that the sparrow is a lustful bird" and that it is "inconstant. . . and harmful to the fruits of human labor."<sup>139</sup> Maybury has also observed that a few sources for sparrow exegesis—to which I will return presently—also associate the sparrow with locquaciousness, and he

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<sup>135</sup> Maybury, 26 and 28.

<sup>136</sup> See Maybury's discussion of the kinds of traps the sparrow is able to avoid in "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 27; see also, Hugh's account in Medieval Book of Birds, 165-166; see also,

<sup>137</sup> See Maybury's discussion of Neckam's exegesis, 28; see also, Neckam's account of the sparrow in De Naturis Rerum, 109.

<sup>138</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 162-162.

<sup>139</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwe," 28; see also Neckam, De Naturis Rerum, 109.

concludes that for the most part “much of what is said about the sparrow in the Ancrene Riwe--references to its watchfulness, its solitariness, its ‘loquacity’--is material discussed in the traditional interpretations of that creature.”<sup>140</sup> To Maybury’s argument, I would add, however, that despite his reference to the sparrow as representative of solitude (reclusive life) and vigilance, the Riwe author places more emphasis on the sparrow’s loquaciousness than other religious writers. I also suggest, here, that comparison between Physiologus, the medieval bestiary, Hugh’s aviary, and the Riwe suggests that the author of the latter work may conflate the sparrow image with that of another bird figure, the swallow.

The swallow, unlike the sparrow, appears in both Physiologus and the medieval bestiary. Physiologus asserts, “when winter goes and summer comes, it [the swallow] rises, and in the morning praises the Creator, and wakes sleeping men to work.”<sup>141</sup> Though the swallow is not actually said to praise God or waken “sleeping men” with the noise of its voice, birdsong or chatter is certainly implied here. The bestiary account, however, actually describes the swallow as “a chattering bird which sweeps about in twisting and winding circles,” adding that the swallow “is very clever at nest-building as well as at bringing up its children.”<sup>142</sup> Hugh of Fouillois calls attention to these same swallow characteristics.<sup>143</sup> Thus, it is significant that the Riwe author refers to the sparrow (rather than the swallow) in similar terms,

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<sup>140</sup> Maybury, 29.

<sup>141</sup> Physiologus [42].

<sup>142</sup> The Bestiary, 147.

<sup>143</sup> See Medieval Book of Birds, 208-209. Hugh states that the bird chatters, flies in circles, constructs a nest with skill, and is good at caring for its offspring.

stating that it is a "chittering bird, [which] always chatters and chirps."<sup>144</sup> In addition, the Riwle author's argument in Part III of the guide emphasizes the importance of an anchoress building her nest correctly. These striking similarities between the Riwle author's account of the sparrow and accounts of the swallow in earlier sources certainly suggest that the Riwle author may be confusing the two birds.<sup>145</sup>

Both the sparrow and the swallow appear in Hugh's aviary, and both birds are associated with noise or chatter; but differing interpretations are attached to the loquacity of the two birds in Hugh's work. Hugh states that the chittering sparrow represents "preachers (raedicatores)," who persistently cry out for "words of divine eloquence (verbis divini eloquii)."<sup>146</sup> Here, Hugh seems to follow earlier religious writers who associate the sparrow with preachers or teachers. The Riwle author, however, does not transfer this element into his interpretation of the sparrow figure, a point which again seems to be related to his admonitions against idle chatter and preaching when he addresses his female audience. Interestingly enough, the chatter of the swallow in Hugh's aviary closely resembles the transgressive speech (loquacity) that the Riwle author assigns to the sparrow. Hugh writes that the swallow's chatter represents "querulous language (querulosis orationibus)."<sup>147</sup> Certainly, the Riwle author implies above that the

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<sup>144</sup> Corpus Christi, 80.

<sup>145</sup> Such conflation may have been a common occurrence among religious writers in the Middle Ages. Perusal of bestiary illustrations which are presently available for modern scholars to view demonstrates that medieval artists often do not represent the physical differences between various birds and beasts as accurately as we would like.

<sup>146</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 147, 159.

<sup>147</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 208-211.

sparrow's idle chatter can represent gossip and argumentative language; therefore, he advises the anchoresses to "chatter" their prayers in order to redeem their mouths from this vice. The swallow in Hugh's treatise is also said to represent "the lament of the penitent spirit (*animae poenitentis*)," that is, people who indulge in transgressive speech but later repent of it and utter prayers asking God for forgiveness.<sup>148</sup> Significantly, this is the kind of speech that the Riwle author advocates when he advises not only confession but constant recitation of prayers. Since such penitent speech seems to have been historically assigned to the swallow rather than the sparrow, it is puzzling that the Riwle author should use the sparrow image at all. Why not the swallow? It may be suggested that he uses only the sparrow because this bird, like the pelican, is associated with solitude in the Bible ("I have watched as a sparrow alone on the roof [Ps. 101: 8]" and "I am like a pelican in solitude [Ps. 101: 7]"). Like most religious writers, the Riwle author frequently employs biblical quotations which add authority to his argument. It can never be determined with certainty that he intentionally or unintentionally conflates the figures of swallow and the sparrow to suit his didactic purpose. But in view of the traditional interpretations that have been attached to both the sparrow and the swallow in the sources under discussion, the Riwle author can be said to use source information especially freely in order to re-emphasize the dangers of transgressive speech. The Riwle author's interpretation of the sparrow also reinforces the idea that anchoresses should not teach or preach.

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<sup>148</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 208-211; Clark states that Hugh's exegesis of the swallow follows that of Bede; see also, Bede, Commentary on Tobit, CC 119B-6, line 16.

In addition to employing the figures of the pelican, ostrich, and sparrow to represent vices of the mouth and remedies for such vices, the Riwe author utilizes the night bird to illustrate why an anchoress should not engage in prideful boasting, yet another mouth sin. In Part III of the guide, the Riwe author admonishes his audience that all of an anchoress's good deeds should be hidden from others. These should be performed without desire for earthly rewards such as recognition or gratitude; therefore, an anchoress should neither boast of her good deeds, nor accept praise for these if they are occasionally acknowledged by others. Through either of these vices, she is said to exhibit pride and be guilty of canceling out any of the good she has done. The Riwe author uses the night bird as an exemplum to illustrate the efficacy of keeping good works concealed and keeping silent about them. He explains in his first reference to this creature that it flies only at night and that it hunts and consumes its food in flight. In the Riwe author's exegesis, night is a metaphor for solitude, privacy, and secrecy; and the night bird which consumes food while flying represents the good anchoress who stays in the air (away from the temptations of the material world) and spends her time in spiritual contemplation. The Riwe author asserts that like the night bird

schal ancre fleon wið contemplation. þ is wið heh þoht. ⁊ wið  
hali bonen bi niht toward heouene. ⁊ bigeote biniht hire sawle  
fode. Bi niht ah ancre to beon waker ⁊ bisiliche abuten  
gastelich bigete.<sup>149</sup>

(an anchoress shall [should] fly with contemplation--that is with  
high thought--and with holy prayers by night toward heaven,  
and acquire her soul's food. By night an anchoress must be  
wakeful and busy about her spiritual gain.)

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<sup>149</sup> Corpus Christi, 75.

Here, the author indicates that this nocturnal creature represents the spiritual use of the mouth in figurative eating or drinking activities which feed the soul. He also associates this bird with prayers and vigilance as he has the sparrow. But he employs the night bird primarily to introduce a discussion of the evils of pride, and particularly boastful pride. As he goes on to explain:

Hercnið nu leoue sustren hu hit is uuel to uppfn. ⁊ hu god þing hit is to heolen goddede. ⁊ fleo bi niht as the nihtfuhel. ⁊ gederin bi þeostre. † is i priuite. ⁊ dearnliche sawle fode.<sup>150</sup>

(Hear now, beloved sisters, how it is evil to boast of good works, and how it is beneficial to hide our good deeds, and fly at night as does the night bird, and gather in darkness—that is, in privacy and secrecy—the soul's food.)

The author makes clear in this passage that night represents "privacy and secrecy"; therefore, the behavior of the night bird represents hidden contemplation and prayer. However, sources for the night bird exemplum do not assign exactly the same spiritual significance to this bird figure as the Riwe author.

The night bird (which is called "nycticorax" in most sources) appears in the works of a number of early Christian writers and in Physiologus, the medieval bestiary, and in Hugh's aviarium; but these works differ greatly in exegesis of this bird figure.<sup>151</sup> Physiologus comments upon this bird's preference for night rather than day, but associates this preference with spiritual ignorance: the night bird represents "those who were in darkness

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<sup>150</sup> Corpus Christi, 76.

<sup>151</sup> Modern scholars have been unable to determine whether or not the Latin term "nycticorax," refers specifically to the owl or to some other nocturnal bird. See Clark's commentary in Medieval Book of Birds, 173, where she states, "no medieval text provides enough information to allow specific identification of the nycticorax."

and seated in the shadows of death" before Christ saved them.<sup>152</sup> As Maybury asserts, however, the only "hint" that the Riwle author is influenced by Physiologus for his interpretation of the night bird is in his "simple reference to this bird's loving darkness more than light."<sup>153</sup> Isidore's description of the night bird is too brief to suggest more than obvious similarities between his and the Riwle author's account. As Maybury notes, "Isidore says of the 'nycticorax' only that it is an owl because it loves the night and shuns the light, not being able to look upon the sun."<sup>154</sup> The medieval bestiary, on the other hand, gives this bird figure a more negative connotation, asserting that the night bird with its preference for darkness represents "the Jews, who repulse Our Saviour when he comes to redeem them, saying: 'We have no King but Caesar'. . . . and value darkness more than light."<sup>155</sup> In Augustine's Narrations on Psalms, as Maybury has observed, the nycticorax represents both "the preacher who brings the word of God to people formerly Christian but fallen away" and "Christ in his passion"; and Maybury finds these interpretations of the night bird very different from the bird's interpretation by the Riwle author.<sup>156</sup> Closer to the exegesis of the night bird found in the Riwle are the accounts of St. Paul of Nola, Alcuin, and Rabanus Maurus. For example, Maybury suggests that St. Paul's association of the night bird with "interior illumination"—that is, spiritual enlightenment—may have

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<sup>152</sup> Physiologus, [10].

<sup>153</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 15.

<sup>154</sup> Maybury, 17; see also Isidore, Etymologies, [75].

<sup>155</sup> The Bestiary, 134.

<sup>156</sup> Maybury, "Sacramentalism in the Ancrene Riwle," 15-16; see also Augustine, Enarrations in Psalms, CC, 1430-1432.

influenced the Riwe author.<sup>157</sup> Additionally, Maybury finds Alcuin's emphasis on the fact that the night bird "seeks its food at night" in the same way that a "penitent. . . should seek at night with great care the food of his soul" very similar to the Riwe author's exegesis.<sup>158</sup> Certainly, the author's assertion that an anchoress should "fly with contemplation—that is with high thought—and with holy prayers by night toward heaven, and acquire her soul's food" suggests both St. Paul's and Alcuin's interpretations. Furthermore, as Maybury has noted, Rabanus Maurus's association of the nycticorax with "a recluse or solitary" is reflected in the Riwe.<sup>159</sup> But Rabanus Maurus also, like Augustine, associates the night bird with Christ, adding that the bird designates "a holy man."<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Hugh of Fouilloy interprets the nycticorax as representative of Christ and preachers.<sup>161</sup> Hugh writes, for example, that the night bird "shuns light (*Lucem refugit*)" and "seeks food by flying at night (*in nocte volitans cibos quaerit*)" and offers both spiritual and allegorical interpretations of this behavior.<sup>162</sup> On a spiritual level, according to Hugh, the night bird's preference for hunting for food at night signifies Christ who "converts sinners into the body of the Church

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<sup>157</sup> Maybury, 17; see also St. Paul of Nola, Epistolae, PL 61, cols. 371-372.

<sup>158</sup> Maybury, 17; see also Alcuin, Enchiridion, PL 100, col. 588.

<sup>159</sup> Maybury, 18; see also Rabanus Maurus, De Universo, PL 111, cols. 30-31.

<sup>160</sup> Maybury, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Maybury, 19; see also Hugh's account in Medieval Book of Birds, 172-175.

<sup>162</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 172-173. It should be noted that Hugh distinguishes between the night bird and the owl, devoting two separate treatments to these birds, unlike Physiologus and the bestiary. Hugh's account of the owl, which he names "bubone," is scathing whereas his account of the night bird, which he calls "nycticorax," is complimentary. See his description of the owl for comparison purposes in Medieval Book of Birds, 216-219.

through preaching (*peccatores in corpus ecclesiae praedicando convertit*).<sup>163</sup> This is a point that the Riwle author does not mention in his treatment of the night bird. Therefore, it should once again be noted that unlike earlier writers such as Augustine, Rabanus Maurus, and Hugh of Fouillooy, the Riwle author makes no references to a bird figure's association with Christ or holy men. He uses the *nycticorax* as he has other bird figures, primarily to introduce discussion of transgressive uses of the mouth.

Close reading of passages from Part III of the Riwle and comparison of this text with traditional sources for exegesis of bird imagery demonstrates that the Riwle author's employment of bird metaphors falls into definite patterns. His use of bird images as rhetorical devices consistently reinforces the idea that the Riwle audience has no access to clerical authority, denies this audience access to full expression of their spirituality in *imitatio Christi*, and emphasizes the dangers of mouth sins. The Riwle author bypasses source interpretations which associate bird figures with religious preachers or teachers, a tendency which is influenced by his audience's gender. Women were forbidden to preach or teach at the time the Riwle was written. The Riwle author also omits references to bird figures which are symbols for Christ, which implies limitations on an anchoress's spiritual expression. In one instance, the author also seems to conflate two bird images (the sparrow and swallow), which, whether intentional or unintentional, certainly supports his admonitions against evil speech and against preaching or teaching roles for women religious. Though authorial intention can never be uncontestably proven in a text such as the Riwle, the evidence presented in this dissertation chapter suggests that the Riwle author tends to place more

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<sup>163</sup> Medieval Book of Birds, 172-173.

emphasis on admonitions against mouth vices than on spiritual lessons, such as confession, vigilance, or prayer, despite the fact that he labels Part III as part of the inner rather than the outer rule for anchoritic life. Since women were more readily associated with transgressive speech than men at the time the Riwle was written, and women religious were forbidden to preach or teach, the author's rhetorical strategy seems once again to be influenced by his audience's gender and suggests that his female audience is inherently wrathful, loquacious, boastful, gluttonous, and hypocritical, and that they have no access to clerical authority. Though animal imagery has heretofore been seen to add color, charm, and uniqueness to the Riwle, it is also a vehicle through which the author seems to perpetuate the traditional medieval idea that women are inherently weak and willful; and through his skillful rhetoric and manipulative use of animal images, the Riwle author frequently implies that his female lay religious audience is especially prone to bodily sin and resistance to reform. The Riwle author's tendency to use source information strategically to admonish his audience against bodily transgressions continues in Part IV where he employs beast images to represent the Seven Deadly Sins.

CHAPTER V  
FIGURATIVE BEAST BODIES: THE SEVEN DEADLY  
SINS AND FEMININE VICE

Thus far, in Parts II and III of the guide, the Riwle author has implied, through his stylistic use of literal and figurative human bodies and figurative bird and beast bodies, that anchorites, like all lay audiences, must always fear their inherently fleshly nature. His discourse is designed—like most medieval sermons—to inspire guilt and fear in a lay audience in order to encourage them to repent of sin. Such authoritarian discourse also serves to remind a lay audience of their inferior position in relation to God or even religious officials. In Part II however, such authoritarian discourse again becomes recognizably antifeminist, suggesting that the Riwle audience will not transcend their gender in the afterlife; and in Part III, the author's rhetorical use of animal metaphors tends to reinforce the idea that female anchorites have no claim to clerical authority. Like the bird figures considered previously, beast images play a dominant role in the rhetoric of the Riwle, and such figures are most prevalent in Part IV. This segment of the guide, which is also the longest individual division of the Riwle, focuses on "Temptations" and contains the author's most detailed treatment of sin.<sup>1</sup> The author employs figures of various beasts and their offspring to represent the Seven Deadly Sins. These beast figures are said to reside in a wilderness landscape which represents the anchoress's heart. Therefore, the author makes clear that bestial temptation dwells within the anchoress herself, and

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<sup>1</sup> The Ancrene Riwle, xxvii; see Salu's modern English titles for each segment.

she must continuously do battle with the unreasonable wild creatures which represent her vices if she hopes to keep her soul pure for union with God/Christ. As he has done with bird figures in Part III, the Riwe author employs and interprets beast images selectively and with the gender of his audience in mind. Significantly, he refers to the Seven Deadly Sins as the "seven Mother Sins (seouen modersunnen)" and the "seven hags (seouen haggen)," who nurse monstrous offspring at their breasts, a rhetorical practice which gives his discourse an unmistakably antifeminist slant.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Riwe author makes strong comparisons between these transgressive mother beasts and false anchoresses as he has done with animal figures in earlier segments of the rule.

In Part IV, the Riwe author favors beast imagery rather than bird imagery, apparently modeling his catalogue of sins after the familiar medieval bestiary and Physiologus, its forerunner. Medieval bestiaries were especially popular in England at the same time as the Riwe author wrote, and he seems to have been well aware of the way in which such treatises were used for religious instruction. As Willene Clark and Meradith McMunn assert, "Production of Latin bestiary manuscripts was at its peak in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries."<sup>3</sup> They add that bestiaries written in vernacular languages were also popular at this time, especially in England.<sup>4</sup> Baxter, in his recent study on bestiaries and their consumers, concurs that bestiaries flourished during these centuries, and adds that Latin bestiaries in

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<sup>2</sup> Corpus Christi, 112.

<sup>3</sup> Willene B. Clark and Meradith T. McMunn, eds., Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and Its Legacy (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Clark and McMunn, Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages, 4.

particular “were above all English books.”<sup>5</sup> Because bestiaries were such popular didactic tools in England during the same period in which the Riwle author wrote, he was probably familiar with and inspired by such texts. It also seems quite likely that either the anchorhold(s) for which he was responsible or the religious order to which he belonged owned copies of one or more bestiaries.

Clark and McMunn explain that the purpose of the bestiary is to teach “lessons in ethical behavior and Christian spirituality for both religious and lay audiences.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as Beryl Rowland has observed, “The bestiary was concerned with memory, with providing moral instruction in such a way that it could be remembered by the reader or auditor.”<sup>7</sup> Rowland adds that “the bestiary’s function was similar to that of the medieval sermon: it was to teach the Christian ethic in such a manner that would fix itself idelibly on the mind.”<sup>8</sup> Many bestiaries were illustrated, and Rowland writes that the illustrations were “designed to enable the reader to retain [the moral precepts taught] by fixing a series of images in the mind that could be recalled at will” to aid audience memory.<sup>9</sup> The Riwle author obviously knew the bestiary’s purpose and valued the importance of both verbal, and probably actual, illustrations of beast images as memory devices when writing Part IV of the guide. He may well have shown or offered his audience access to bestiary

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<sup>5</sup> Ron Baxter, Bestiaries and Their Users, 69.

<sup>6</sup> Clark and McMunn, Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages, 4.

<sup>7</sup> See Beryl Rowland, “The Art of Memory and the Bestiary,” Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Rowland, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Rowland, 20-21.

illustrations; but at the very least, he seems to assume that his audience has seen pictures of or are otherwise familiar with the beast figures he includes in his catalogue of temptations.

The beast images in Part IV primarily represent vice and many, like the wolf in Part III of the guide, are quite frightening. As rhetorical devices, these serve as reminders of the foulness and danger of sin in general. This stylistic effect is strengthened by Riwle author's emphasis on the femaleness of these beasts and their correlation to what he considers to be especially feminine vice. Though the Riwle author is obviously inspired by typical sources for beast images, he devotes less attention than Physiologus and the bestiary to enumerating the traits of a beast figure or explaining its exegetical significance. Instead of describing the characteristics of each image in his catalogue of the sins at length, he simply names a given beast, says—without really explaining why—that it represents a particular sin and vividly depicts how the sin is manifested in the actions of human rather than animal bodies. Each vice depicted in the author's list is said to have numerous offspring which represent sub-facets of one sin; and all the different facets are also described in terms of human rather than animal terms. This tendency to avoid description of bestial actions but to emphasize human actions instead repeatedly draws audience attention back to the vice-ridden human body. In addition, the Riwle author's most vivid descriptions of sin center around bodily actions which are usually more easily associated with the physical gestures or actions of women than with men. Furthermore, the Riwle author seems to emphasize the facets of vices, such as lechery and pride (or vanity), thereby implying that he considers his female audience especially susceptible

to such transgressions. His rhetorical association of beast images with particularly feminine and bodily vices reflects traditional religious discourse in which antifeminism is at least “a topos” as Bloch has demonstrated.<sup>10</sup> This implies, once again, that the limitations on spiritual expression and authority that the Riwe author’s discourse has reinforced thus far apply not only to lay audiences in general but to female lay audiences in particular. Therefore, regardless of the Riwe author’s expressions of warmth and affection toward his audience, his stylistic use of beast imagery in Part IV consistently suggests that his female audience is especially bodily and rebellious. Like the previous dissertation chapter, this one will compare the Riwe author’s descriptions and interpretations of animal images to those found in traditional sources via close reading of passages from these texts.

Apart from the Bible, Physiologus and the medieval bestiary, the Riwe author’s specific sources for beast imagery have been difficult or impossible for scholars to trace with certainty. As Savage and Watson have observed, many of the Riwe author’s sources for Part IV “are yet to be tracked down; many may never have been edited.”<sup>11</sup> The Riwe author’s interpretations of animal figures often do not resemble those found in Physiologus or a bestiary at all, yet he offers few hints in his text to aid modern scholars in determining where his information originated. For example, he uses the unicorn as a figure for wrath in his catalogue of sins, writing that this creature displays anger by viciously stabbing its victims with the horn on the front of its head.<sup>12</sup> Bloomfield has found this (and other) animal images in the Riwe

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<sup>10</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Anchoritic Spirituality, eds. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, 369.

<sup>12</sup> Corpus Christi, 104.

puzzling since few other patristic or medieval writers have used the unicorn figure in this way.<sup>13</sup> Physiologus and the bestiary describe the unicorn as a small, gentle, and rare creature whom hunters kill by trickery for its valuable horn. Hunters are said to place a virgin maiden in a location that the unicorn frequents. Then the unicorn, attracted by her purity, tamely approaches her, places its head in her lap, and is then ambushed and stabbed by the spears of the hunters. In both treatises the unicorn is a symbol for Christ. Physiologus, for example, states that "Christ is the spiritual unicorn" and associates the rare, valuable unicorn horn with Christ's gift of salvation to the world.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, the bestiary interprets the significance of the unicorn in this way:

by the sole will of the Father, he [the Christ-unicorn] came down into the virgin womb for our salvation.

It [the unicorn] is described as a tiny animal on account of the lowliness of his [Christ's] incarnation, as he said himself: "Learn from me, because I am mild and lowly of heart."

It is like a kid or scapegoat because the Saviour himself was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and from sin he condemned sin.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, the Riwle author's account of the wrathful, vicious unicorn figure does not resemble either of the above sources. For this unusual interpretation, Savage and Watson have only been able to suggest that the Riwle author "may be indebted" to Gregory's Moralities on Job.<sup>16</sup> This hesitancy to identify with certainty that Gregory's work is a source in this

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<sup>13</sup> See discussion of the Riwle author's use of the unicorn and other animal images in figurative representations of the sins in Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins, 150-151.

<sup>14</sup> Physiologus, trans. Francis J. Carmody, [33].

<sup>15</sup> The Bestiary trans. T. H. White, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Anchoritic Spirituality, 374.

portion of the Riwe illustrates the difficulty that most modern critics encounter in studies of the author's exegesis of beast figures. This problem of identification of sources for Part IV also indicates that the Riwe author may have used beast images selectively as he has bird images by freely attaching new significance to them himself.

Few critical studies have specifically addressed the Riwe author's use of beast imagery in Part IV, and even fewer suggest that the author employs such imagery for a selective didactic purpose. Mary Baldwin has produced a noteworthy treatment of Christian backgrounds that inform the Riwe, which includes, but is not limited to, discussion of beast imagery in Part IV.<sup>17</sup> Robertson's study of devotional literature written for women religious briefly compares the use of animal imagery in the Riwe to that found in Anglo-Saxon sermons and homilistic literature such as the Lambeth Homilies. Robertson classifies beast figures in the Riwe as examples of the quotidian imagery that the Riwe author—like other medieval preachers—favors because he writes for a lay audience. She suggests, for example, that descriptions of hell and the horrifying beasts said to dwell there and torment sinners are devices that medieval preachers typically used in sermons to frighten uneducated audiences—whom they associated with willfulness and

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<sup>17</sup> See Mary Baldwin, "Ancrene Wisse and Its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality." Diss. U of Toronto, 1974. It should perhaps be noted, however, that when I requested this work through interlibrary loan, I was informed (as late as the fall of 1999) that it had been lost or stolen from its original location. But see also Bella Millett's summary of the content of this dissertation in Millett, Ancrene Wisse, The Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group, 157-158.

sensuality--into abstaining from sin or vice.<sup>18</sup> Robertson, however, does not discuss beast imagery in the Riwe at length. Grayson's treatment of beast figures in Part IV, like her treatment of bird figures in Part III, is incidental in her examination of Riwe imagery as a whole.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Georgianna's references to animal images in Part IV primarily support her belief that the Riwe author is a medieval humanist.<sup>20</sup> None of the above scholars, however, assert that the Riwe author's selective use of beast imagery reinforces limitations on a female religious audience's access to spiritual understanding or authority.

Unlike the above scholars, Lucinda Rumsey notes that the Riwe author seems to employ at least one beast image, the scorpion, freely to suit his didactic purpose in Part IV.<sup>21</sup> Rumsey has devoted detailed attention to the significance that the Riwe author attaches to the scorpion, which represents lechery, in his catalogue of vices. She asserts that the image seems inappropriate for a female religious audience since the scorpion is employed historically in religious discourse to warn men against the dangers of

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<sup>18</sup> See especially her chapter titled "The AB Texts and the Anglo-Saxon Tradition" in Robertson, Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience, 168, 174-175. Robertson bases this conclusion in part on her belief that the Riwe anchoresses knew little if any Latin. However, see also Savage and Watson, Anchoritic Spirituality, 34. They suggest that the Riwe anchoresses' "liturgical Latin is. . . extensive" since the Riwe author does not translate the Latin text of a number of prayers for his audience in Part I of the guide.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, her discussion of Part IV in Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrone Wisse, 81-126.

<sup>20</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 32-78.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Lucinda Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and the Ancrone Wisse," 48, wherein she states that "in selecting the scorpion to represent lechery the author appears consciously to avoid the more traditional beasts associated with the sin, such as the ape, horse, goat and sow."

women.<sup>22</sup> Though she concludes that the Riwle author uses the figure selectively, she suggests that he does so because he finds it difficult to explain the dangers of lechery to his audience in detail, fearing that he will spark their curiosity to learn more about the vice which he considers the most disgusting of all sins.<sup>23</sup> Rumsey asserts that the ambiguity of the scorpion image itself allows the Riwle author to assign to this creature only the particular characteristics--of the scorpion itself and of the sin of lechery--that he is comfortable enough to mention to his audience.<sup>24</sup> A certain ambiguity does indeed surround the scorpion figure, for entire chapters of description and interpretation are not devoted to it in Physiologus or the bestiary; and references to this creature in the Bible do not closely resemble those found in the Riwle as I will demonstrate in this dissertation chapter. I will presently suggest, however, in contrast to Rumsey, that the Riwle author employs the scorpion as a metaphor for sexual lust because he considers this a peculiarly feminine sin. In his reasoning, as I demonstrated in an earlier chapter, women are guilty of lechery not only if they engage in lecherous thoughts or actions themselves but also if they incite these in other people, a point that the Riwle author especially emphasizes in Part IV.

As he has in both of the segments which precede Part IV, the Riwle author paints a more vivid portrait of sin than of virtue, and he justifies extensive treatment of the Seven Deadly Sins early on. At the beginning of Part IV, he assures his audience:

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<sup>22</sup> Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and the Ancrene Wisse," 50.

<sup>23</sup> Rumsey, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Rumsey, 56.

Ne wene nan of heh lif þ̅ ha ne beo itemptet. mare beoð þ̅ gode  
 þ̅ iclumben hehe. itemptet þ̅ en þ̅ wake. ant þ̅ is reisun. for se  
 þ̅ hul is herre. se þ̅ wind is mare þ̅ ron. Se þ̅ hul is herre of hali  
 lif ⁊ of heh. se þ̅ feondes puffes þ̅ windes of fondunges beoð  
 strengre þ̅ ron ⁊ mare. gef ei ancre is þ̅ ne ueleð nane fondunges.  
 swiðe drede iþ̅ puínt þ̅ ha beo ouer muchel ⁊ ouer swiðe ifondet.<sup>25</sup>

(Let no one of high [spiritual] life believe she will not be  
 tempted. The good who have climbed high are more often  
 tempted than the weak; and this is the reason: for the higher the  
 hill, the more wind there is upon it. Since the hill of high and  
 holy life is higher, the fiend's puffs, the winds of temptation, are  
 stronger and more [constant]. If any anchoress feels no  
 temptation, she should greatly dread, at that point, that she is  
 tempted overly much or overly strongly.)

Though the author has admonished the sisters to fly high like heavenly birds in Part III, and has told them that birds are not safe on the ground, here, he makes quite clear that even if an anchoress does become like a bird of heaven, she is still not safe from the devil's temptation. In fact, she may be less secure in the air of spiritual flight than she is on the ground of material life. As Grayson puts it, when an anchoress is able to achieve the spiritual understanding, which lifts her up like a heavenly bird, she becomes "a more precious prize" for the devil, and "Her very progress toward disciplining her inner feelings in Part III is in itself the occasion of a trial."<sup>26</sup> The primary theme of Part IV is that an anchoress can never escape the snares of temptation, or sin, as long as her soul is held captive, not only in a material body, but in a heart that can behave like a wild beast.

In his lengthy introduction to Part IV, the Riwe author explains that there are two kinds of temptation—exterior and interior—and that interior sins

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<sup>25</sup> Corpus Christi, 92.

<sup>26</sup> Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse, 82.

are more deadly than exterior sins. In addition, his discourse suggests that female anchorites are especially susceptible to the more deadly vices. Of exterior temptations, the Riwe author writes:

Vttre fondunge is hwær of kīmeð licunge oþer mislicunge wið uten oðer wið innen. mislicunge wið uten. ase secnesse. meoseise. scheome. vnhap. ⁊ euch licomlich derf þ̅ te flesch eileð. wiðinnen. heorte sar. grome. ⁊ wreaððe. Alswa onont þ̅ ha is pīne. licunge wið uten licomes heale. mete. drunch. clāð fnoht euch flesches eise. onont swucche þ̅inges. licunge wið innen. as sum fals gleadschipe. oðer of monne hereword. oðer gef me is iluuet mare þ̅en an oðer. mare iolhnet. mare idon god oðer menske. Þis dale of þis temptatiun þ̅ is uttre icleopet. is swikelure þ̅en þ̅e oðer half. Ba beoð a temptatiun ⁊ eiðer wiðinnen. ⁊ wið uten bæðe of hire twa dalen. ah ha is uttre icleopet. for ha is eauer oðer i þ̅ing wið uten. oðer of þ̅ing wið uten [sic]. and te uttre þ̅ing is þ̅e fondunge.<sup>27</sup>

(An exterior temptation is one from which comes inner or outer pleasure or pain. Pain from without [may be caused by] disease, poverty, shame, or mishap, [or] anything that can cause the flesh to ail. Inner [pain may include] heartsickness, anger, and wrath. Likewise, pleasure from without [may include such things as] pleasure in bodily health, meat, drink, or having enough clothing, [or] anything [that promotes] flesh's ease. Inner pleasure [may come from] false gladness because of men's praise, if one is loved more than another, or more honored, [or feels one has] done more good than another. The part of this temptation that is called outer is more deceiving than the other half. But both are one temptation; and each, within and without, both of two parts. But it is called outer because it is ever of a thing without, and the outer thing is the temptation.)

Here, the author indicates that some exterior temptations--such as sickness, poverty, or natural disasters, which God causes--are circumstances over

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<sup>27</sup> Corpus Christi, 93-94. It should also be noted of this passage that the Riwe author's statement that an "outer" exterior temptation is "more deceiving than the other half" is confusing. He later indicates that the "inner" rather than the "outer" portion of such temptations is more deceptive.

which an anchoress has no control. Such temptations may cause her to feel “outer [bodily] pain” or anger or bitterness in her heart, which would be considered “inner pain.” He further indicates that exterior temptations which cause “inner pleasure”—such as praise or compliments—come not from God but from other people. Therefore, he suggests here that pride is an exterior temptation. His references to “meat, drink. . . clothing, [and] flesh’s ease” indicate that he also considers gluttony and avarice among exterior sins which cause “outer [bodily] pleasure.” The exterior temptations he describes above are incited by objects or forces outside of the anchoress herself: these are “ever of a thing without.” The Riwe author also warns the anchoresses that the “part of this temptation that is called outer is more deceiving than the other half.” Since he does not clearly state what the “other half” is, this assertion implies that “outer” exterior sins are more deceptive than “inner” exterior sins. However, other textual evidence in Part IV suggests that the author actually means the opposite of what he has just implied: that “inner” exterior temptations more deceptive. He goes on to add:

ge muwen more dreden þe nesche dole þene <þe> herde. of ðeos fondunges þet is uttre ihoten. vor uein wolde þe hexte cwemen on. gif he muhte mid oluh-nunge makien ou fulitowen. gif heo nere þe hen’dure. Muche word is of ou hu gentile wummen ge beoð. vorgoleic ⁊ for ureoleic igirned of monie.<sup>28</sup>

(You have more need to dread the soft portion than the hard of these sins that are called exterior. For fain would the sorcerer [devil] cajole you if he might with flattery, making you rude if you were not so obedient [well-disciplined]. There is much word of you, what gentile women you are, well-loved [respected, or perhaps even sought after] by many for your goodness and nobleness.)

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<sup>28</sup> Nero, 85. This passage does not occur in Corpus Christi.

In this passage, the Riwle author, once again, does not clearly state what the “soft” (and more deceptive) “portion” of exterior temptations is but implies that it is pride incited by the devil’s “flattery,” thereby indicating an “inner pleasure” as opposed to an outer. It may be reasonably suggested that the pride which the devil inspires in an anchoress is that which is related to her profession, but this kind of pride is incited from within rather than from without. The Riwle author later warns his audience against becoming proud of their ability to endure harsh anchoritic life. As Francis Darwin phrases it, “A danger—the first and the greatest—in the solitary life is that of being self satisfied.”<sup>29</sup> The Riwle author further suggests that his audience—women who have come from a well-respected noble family and been “well-loved”—may be especially susceptible to pride related to their social status which, it would seem, also comes from within the anchoress instead of from without. Therefore, it is difficult for a reader to avoid wondering why the author lists this kind of pride under exterior temptations at all. Pride which is incited from an anchoress’s heart seems to belong in the author’s list of dangerous interior vices.

Also confusing in the Riwle author’s description of exterior temptations is his assertion that both inner and outer exterior temptations “are one temptation; and each, within and without, both of two parts. But it is called outer because it is ever of a thing without, and the outer thing is the temptation.” Indeed, Savage and Watson have also found this explanation puzzling. Their commentary on the passage reads:

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<sup>29</sup> Francis D. S. Darwin, The English Mediaeval Recluse (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.), 16.

For the . . . two sentences, which explain that “outer” temptations may include many “inner” ones, included in the “outer” category because their source is external, we have had to resort to expansive paraphrase. Even the Corpus scribe seems to have found parts of this passage confusing, and to have misarticulated its punctuation. Throughout part IV [sic] the author takes a very thirteenth-century pleasure in the divisions and subdivisions of temptation and sin, but often delineates them with extreme brevity.<sup>30</sup>

Here, Savage and Watson describe the confusion which many readers encounter when trying to understand the Riwe author’s explanation of exterior temptations. I suggest that such confusion results from the author’s conscious or unconscious conflation of inner and outer temptations, for he goes on to warn his audience:

agean þeos fondunges beoð iwarre leoue sus’tren. hwat se cume  
wiðuten to uonden ou mid licun’ge. oþer mid mislicunge.  
holdeð euer ower heorte in on wiðinnen. lest þe uttre  
uondunge. kundlie þe inre.<sup>31</sup>

(Against these [outer] temptations, be wary beloved sisters.  
Whatsoever comes from without to tempt you, pleasant or  
unpleasant, hold your hearts ever within, lest an outer  
temptation kindle an inner.)

This passage represents the Riwe author’s transition between discussion of the exterior and interior temptations, but it is also a point in Part IV where a conflation between exterior and interior temptation becomes especially apparent. Here, it is difficult to determine whether the “inner” temptation that may be kindled by an outer one is to be understood as an “inner” exterior temptation or as one of the dangerous “interior” temptations the author is

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<sup>30</sup> Anchoritic Spirituality, 370.

<sup>31</sup> Nero, 86. This passage also does not appear in Corpus Christi.

about to treat in the remainder of Part IV. After explaining that an anchoress should welcome the outer temptations and bear these with patience in order to make her soul pure and acceptable to God, the author introduces discussion of interior temptations, writing:

Inre fondunges beoð misliche unþeawes. oðer lust toward ham. oðer þohtes swikele þe þencheð þah gode. þeos inre fondunge kímeð. of þe feond. of þe world. of ure flesch oðerhwile.<sup>32</sup>

(Interior temptations are various vices, or lust toward them, or deceptive thoughts that seem to be good. These inner temptations come from the fiend, the world, or otherwise from our own flesh.)

Here, the author is vague about what interior temptations are since he names none specifically. However, he indicates that these differ from exterior temptations in that they are “lust toward” vice or “deceptive thoughts.” These references imply that interior temptations are sins that are considered but not actually committed. Such internal vices might also be termed sins of thought rather than action. The interior temptations that the author seems to have in mind above are not incited by man but by “the fiend, the world, or otherwise. . .our own flesh.” In the remainder of Part IV, the Riwe author admonishes his audience against only these more dangerous interior temptations, which he goes on to describe at more length:

þe inre fondunge is twaualt. alswa as is þe uttre. . . fleschliche ⁊ gastelich. fleschlich. as of leccherie. of glutunie. of slawðe. Gastelich. as of prude. of onde. ⁊ of wreaððe. alswa of giscunge. þus beoð þe inre fondunges þe seouen heaued sunnen. ⁊ hare fule cundles. flesches fongunge mei beon ieuenet to fot wunde. Gastelich fondunge þ is mare dred of. mei beon for þe peril icleopet breost wunde. ah us þuncheð greattre flesliche temptatiuns for þi þ heo beoð eð fele. þe oþre þah we habben

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<sup>32</sup> Corpus Christi, 94.

ham. ofte nute we hit nawt. ⁊ beoð þah greate and grisliche i  
godes ehe. ⁊ beoð muchel for þi to drede þe mare. for þe oþre  
þe me feleð wel. secheð leche ⁊ salue. Þe gasteliche hurtes ne  
þuncheð nawt sare. ne ne saluið ham wið schrift ne wið  
penitence. ⁊ draheð to eche deað ear me least wene.<sup>33</sup>

(The inner temptations are twofold as are the outer. . . .fleshly and spiritual. Fleshly as in lechery, gluttony, or sloth. Spiritual as in pride, envy or wrath, and also covetousness. Thus the interior temptations are the seven deadly sins and their foul offspring. Fleshly temptations may be considered equal to a foot wound. Spiritual sins are more to be dreaded, and because of the peril [associated with these], may be called a breast wound. Though we think fleshly temptations are greater, because these are easily felt, when we have these other [spiritual temptations], we often do not know it, yet these are great and horrible in God's eyes, and for that reason, are all the more to be dreaded. For those that we feel strongly, [we can] seek leech or salve. The spiritual hurts, we think, are not sore; neither [do we] salve them with schrift and with penitence, and each of us draws ever nearer to death when we least know it.)

This passage seems contradictory in that the author lists lechery, gluttony, sloth, and covetousness as interior temptations when he seems to have included these among the exterior sins, incited by God or the world outside of the anchoress, which he has already discussed. Here, the Riwle author further conflates external and internal temptations by indicating that all of the Seven Deadly Sins, including those he has earlier listed as exterior vices, are interior. Since he asserts that all of the mortal sins are interior, one might wonder why he has taken the trouble to treat exterior temptations at all. At this point however, the author seems aware that his explanation of the divisions of both types of sin has become confusingly conflated; therefore, he goes on to classify the deadly sins as “foot [fleshly, outer]” and “breast [spiritual, inner]” wounds, explaining that wounds to the breast are closer to

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<sup>33</sup>Corpus Christi, 99-100.

the heart and, therefore, more dangerous than wounds to the foot. Later on in Part IV he explains that

Flesches lust is fotes wunde. as wes feor iseid þruppe. Ant þis is þe reisun. As ure fet beoreð us. alswa ure lustes beoreð us ofte to þing þ us luste efter. Nu þenne þah þi va hurte þe o þe vet. þ is to seggen. fondeð wið flesches lustes. for se lah wunde ne ded tu nawt to sare. bute hit to swiðe swelle þurh skiles ȝettunge wið to muchel delit up toward te heorte. ah drinc þenne atterlaðe ⁊ drif þet swealm ageinward frommard te heorte.<sup>34</sup>

(Flesh's lust is a foot wound, as was said before, quite awhile ago. And this is the reason: as our feet bear us, also our lusts bear us often to the thing that we lust after. Now then, though your enemies hurt you in the foot—that is to say, tempt you with flesh's lusts—for so low a wound dread not too sorely. But if it swells greatly through the consent of the mind, with too much delight, up toward the heart, drink the cure for the poison and drive that swelling out again from the heart.)

Here, the author clarifies that a “fleshly,” or exterior, temptation becomes a “spiritual,” or interior temptation when an anchoress, through her heart's consent, transforms a “foot wound” into a “breast wound.” He thereby implies, once again, that spiritual interior temptations are lustful thoughts, which may arise within an anchoress herself without direct incitement from the outside world.

The Riwe author's emphasis on internal rather than external sin implies that he fears his audience's memories of life before enclosure may interfere with their spiritual salvation by tempting them to return to secular life. As Georgianna has observed, strict religious enclosure—though it symbolically represents renunciation of matter, bodiliness, and sin—guarantees neither complete loss of contact with the secular world nor

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<sup>34</sup> Corpus Christi, 141-142.

salvation of an anchoress's soul.<sup>35</sup> She suggests that because of the severity of reclusive life, any anchoress who has lived for a time in the secular world (as the women in Riwle audience apparently have) may sometimes be plagued with memories of her previous existence which might tempt her to leave her enclosure and return to the world outside.<sup>36</sup> Even if she does not leave, however, thinking too often or too fondly of worldly things constitutes a dangerous interior sin. Furthermore, the solitude and privacy of an anchorhold itself may be a temptation. As Francis Darwin has noted, it seems significant that the Riwle author finds it necessary to warn his audience in Part III that false anchoresses, like sly foxes, have more opportunities to commit foul sins in secret in the privacy of their individual cells than they would living in a convent or the secular world.<sup>37</sup> Such secret transgressions could include either sinful thoughts of the heart or sinful actions performed in a cell without detection, which the Riwle author also classifies as dangerous interior sins. Therefore, in Part IV, the Riwle author continues to reinforce not only the suspicion that all lay audiences are willful and bodily but also implies that female anchorites may be especially prone to fleshly sin.

The Riwle author's confusing lists and divisions of exterior and interior temptations ultimately serve to emphasize that an anchoress can

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<sup>35</sup> Linda Georgianna's, The Solitary Self 7.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Georgianna, The Solitary Self 64. 66. Georgianna's guiding premise, to which she repeatedly returns throughout her study, is that the Riwle author realizes physical enclosure does not guarantee complete detachment from the secular world, and throughout, she asserts that he offers advice to his audience from the point of view of a medieval humanist who understands the very real situation of his audience in relation to the world.

<sup>37</sup> Darwin, The English, 82-83. Darwin refers to the passage in Part III of the guide in which the fox is compared to anchoresses which not only accumulate excessive material possessions but also foul their own abodes with hidden, and often lecherous, sin; see also, the Riwle author's description of the fox in Corpus Christi, 68.

never consider herself entirely free of sin. Even when she has no contact with the tempting forces of the secular world, her memories and her anchorhold cell become sources of temptation; and an anchoress's sin is more foul (dangerous and deceptive) when it comes from within than when it comes from without. It is important to restate here that the Riwe author devotes proportionally much less textual space to exterior temptations than to interior temptations in Part IV. Such outer temptations, or "foot wounds," are traditionally more often associated with men than with women during the Middle Ages. As Bynum has observed for example, male religious writers "tended to attribute the sins or lapses of women to inner faults, whereas male lapses were apt to be attributed to" influences from the outside world.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the Riwe author uses no frightening beast figures when he discusses the exterior temptations but employs such images abundantly in the remainder of Part IV when treating only the interior vices. His choice to do so reinforces not only the foulness of inner sin but also the weakness of the anchoress who indulges in such vice.

The Riwe author introduces his catalogue of mortal sins by suggesting that because the anchoress's heart is always in conflict with itself, it resembles a dangerous wilderness populated with the monstrous beasts of temptation.

He writes:

þeos wiðeriwines. . .folhið us on hulles. ⁊ weitð i wildernesse hu  
 ha us mahen hearmín. . .Wilderness is anlich lif of ancre  
 wununge. for alswa as i wildernes beoð alle wilde beastes ant  
 nulleð. nawt þolien monne nahunge. ah fleoð hwen ha heom  
 ihéreð. alswa schulen ancras ouer alle oþre wummen beo wilde  
 o þisse wise. ⁊ þenne beoð ha ouer oþre leoue to ure lauer. ⁊  
 swetest him þuncheð ham. for of all flesches is wilde deores

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<sup>38</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 86.

fleschs leouest ⁊ swetest. . . gað þah ful warliche. for i þis wilderness beoð uuele beastes monie. Líf of prude. Neddre of attri onde. Vnicorne of wreaðe. Beore of dead slawðe. Vox of gisceunge. Suhe of giuernesse. Scorpion wið teil of stinginde leccherie. þ is galnesse. Her beoð nu o rawe itald þe seouen heaued sunnen.<sup>39</sup>

(These enemies. . . follow us on hills, and wait in the wilderness that they may do us harm. . . . The wilderness is the solitary life, the way of life of an anchoress. For just as in the wilderness there are all manner of beasts that will not allow men to come near them, but flee when they hear them, so should anchoresses, over all other women, be wild in this way. And then they will be more loved of our Lord, and He will think them sweetest; for of all flesh, the wild deer's flesh is most loved, and sweetest. . . . Go then, full warily, for in this wilderness are many evil beasts: the lion of pride; the adder of poisonous envy; the unicorn of wrath; the bear of deadly sloth; the fox of covetousness; the sow of gluttony; the scorpion with the tail of stinging lechery, that is lustfulness. Here now, in order, are enumerated the seven deadly sins.)

An anchoress's solitary lifestyle is also a wilderness, and she must, more than "other women," think of herself as a wild animal loved by God because the spiritual flesh, which she offers to her heavenly spouse, like that of the wild deer, is "sweetest." In addition, she must fear other wild animals, "evil beasts" such as lions, bears, and unicorns, which prey on creatures such as wild deer. Though the Riwe author seems to counsel above that an anchoress should identify with the wild deer, his catalogue of the seven chief sins also requires his audience to identify with the monstrous beasts which attack the deer. As Georgianna has noted, in his list of beasts and sins, the author transforms "the holy anchoress. . . into the 'mate' of various crawling and earthbound beasts" and then the anchoress and her bestial mates

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<sup>39</sup> Corpus Christi, 100-101.

“produce a variety of sinful offspring.”<sup>40</sup> If anchoresses can be mates of these animals, as the Riwe author implies, then they must, by nature, have bestial tendencies, an idea which he has begun to promote in both Parts II and III of the guide, and which reaches its culmination in Part IV.

In the above passage, the author also states that he will discuss the seven mortal sins “o rawe,” that is, “in order,” which I take to mean in order of severity. He does indeed categorize the vices in what has come to be called the Gregorian order, which lists pride first because it is considered the most deadly sin, and lechery last.<sup>41</sup> This ordering of vices according to severity also implies that a great deal of discussion will be devoted to pride, but that proportionally less discussion will be devoted to each succeeding sin in the catalogue because it is less severe than the one that comes before it. The Riwe author, however, does not follow the rhetorical plan he initially sets up. In fact, he discusses only the first and the last sins—pride and lechery respectively—at length and in depth, and actually devotes proportionally more textual space to lechery than to pride. He even justifies his brief treatment of certain other sins by actually stating that he does not fear his audience will be guilty of these. For example, he dismisses the temptation of gluttony almost as soon as he mentions it, stating:

þe Suhe of giuernesse hauēð gris þus inempnet. To earliche  
hatte þ an. þet oðer to esteliche. þ þridde to frechliche. þ feorðe  
hatte to much. þ fifte to ofte. I drunch mare þen i mete beoð gris

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<sup>40</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 126.

<sup>41</sup> See discussion of Gregory’s ordering of the sins according to severity in Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins, 72-75, 140, 147-152.

iferhet. Ich speoke scheortliche of ham. for nam ich nawt  
ofdred mine leoue sustren leste ge ham feden.<sup>42</sup>

(The sow of gluttony has young with these names: the one, too early; the other too daintily; the third, too voraciously; the fourth is called too much; the fifth, too often. These offspring are bred more in drinking than in eating. I speak shortly of these, for I am not of dread, my beloved sisters, lest you feed these [piglets].)

In stating here that he has less to say about a sin such as gluttony because he believes his audience is less likely to commit this sin, he implies that he will speak at length of the sins--such as pride and lechery--which he fears his audience will commit. By treating pride and lechery at so much length, the Riwe author implies that anchoresses need more instruction on the evils of these particular sins than on others.

It also seems significant that the Riwe author should devote more attention to lechery than to pride when he has listed lechery at the end of his catalogue. This tendency seems to be related to the fact that he writes for a female audience. As Robertson has observed, didactic literature written for male religious ascetics usually emphasizes the dangers of pride more than lechery<sup>43</sup>; and Peter Brown has observed that "sexual desire was frequently overshadowed [in the lives of male ascetics], as a source of spiritual danger, by the dull aches of pride and resentment and by dread onslaughts of immoderate spiritual ambition" in the writings of the Desert Fathers.<sup>44</sup> The Riwe author is quite obviously guided in his philosophy of anchoritic life by

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<sup>42</sup> Corpus Christi, 106.

<sup>43</sup> Robertson, "Rule of the Body," 122.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, The Body and Society, 230.

the ascetic desert tradition and much of his reinforcement of powerlessness and lowliness in anchorites can be applied to both male and female religious ascetics. Yet the whole of this guide for female recluses tends to emphasize the dangers of sexual lust rather than pride, unlike works written for male ascetics. Pride, it should be recalled, is a “breast wound” in the Riwe author’s reasoning, which seems to warrant detailed treatment; but lechery is a “foot wound,” which seems to warrant less-detailed attention than the author devotes to it in Part IV and elsewhere. Furthermore, when the Riwe author enumerates the facets of pride, he often describes elements of this vice that lead directly to lechery. Though Savage and Watson have suggested that in Part IV of the guide, “lechery appears to be operating as a symbol for all sin,”<sup>45</sup> not just sexual lust, the author’s discussion of the dangers of lechery is rarely if ever illustrated by images other than those which can be associated with sexual acts.

The Riwe author begins his catalogue of temptations by stating that the lion of pride has a great many “hwelpes (whelps).” Then he lists eleven lion cubs as representative of the facets of pride, writing:

Vana gloria. þ is hwa se let wel of ei þing þ ha deð oðer seið.  
oðer hauēð wlite oðer wit. god acoīntance. oðer word mare þen  
and oþer. Cun oðer meistrīe. ⁊ hire wil forðre. and hwet is  
wlite wurð her. gold ring i suhe nease. acoīntance i religiun. wa  
deð hit ofte. al is uana gloria. þe let eawiht wel of. ⁊ walde  
habben word þrof. ⁊ is wel ipaīet gef ha is ipreiset. mispaīet  
gef ha nis itald swuch as ha walde. An oðer is indignatio. þ is  
þe þuncheð hokerlich of ei þing þ ha sið bi oðer oþer hereð. a  
forhoheð chastīement. oþer ei lahres lare. þe þrid de hwelp is  
ypocresis. þe makeð hire betere þen ha is. þe feorðe is  
presumptio. þe nimeð mare on hond þen ha mei ouerrecumen.  
oðer entremeteð hire of þing þ to hire ne falleð oðer is to

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<sup>45</sup>Anchoritic Spirituality, 375.

ouertrusti up o godes grace. oðer on hire seoluen. to bald up on  
ei mon that is fleschlich as heo is ⁊ mei beon itemptet.<sup>46</sup>

(Vainglory--that is, whosoever thinks well of anything that she does or says, or beauty and wit, friends in high places; or [thinks she is] more well-known than others, or has better family, or power, or [ability to] further her own will. And what is beauty worth to her? A gold ring in a sow's nose. Good acquaintance and religion? Often it causes woe. All is vainglory, such as the desire to be well known because of one's characteristics, or to have word spread of it, and be well pleased if she is praised, and ill pleased if she is not told of it as often as she would like. Another whelp is called Indignation--that is, whosoever thinks contemptuously of anything that she hears or sees another do, or despises chastisement or instruction from someone inferior [in social status]. The third whelp is Hypocrisy--that is she who views herself as better than she is. The fourth is Presumption--that is, she who takes more in hand than she may be able to accomplish; or meddles in anything that is not her concern; or is overtrusting of God's grace, or of herself. To be bold with any man who is fleshly as she is and may be tempted.)

Here, the Riwe author utilizes the rhetorical strategy he has used elsewhere, which assigns feminine gender to a bird or beast, and requires his audience to identify with such creature images. The frequent appearances of the pronouns, hire and her, the author's references to beauty, and his suggestion that presumption includes being "bold with any man," give the Riwe author's treatment of the lion a peculiarly feminine cast from the beginning. In addition, the first four facets, or offspring, of pride seem to represent vices peculiar to women of noble or gentile birth, such as the anchoresses in the Riwe audience. He has, after all, earlier reminded the sisters that they were once "well-loved by many for [their] goodness and nobleness" in the secular world. The anchoresses, before committing themselves to reclusive religious life, may well have also been sought after because of their beauty, and the

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<sup>46</sup> Corpus Christi, 101-102.

author implies that memories of praise for both their high station in life and their beauty still dwell in their hearts and can tempt them into pride. Therefore, he assures them that “beauty. . . wit [and]. . . good acquaintance” are the primary causes of vainglory, and that they must now consider these of no worth. In addition, he expects that the anchoresses, because of the respect their social status may have afforded them in the secular world, will at some time feel indignation at being admonished by someone—such as a priest or another anchoress—whom they would not have considered their social equal in the secular world. Also implied in the Riwe author’s description of presumption is the idea that an attractive woman of gentile birth could be vain about her beauty and, by being “bold with any man,” cause him to desire her sexually.

The Riwe author also assigns feminine gender to the ninth lion whelp, writing:

þe Nihēðe is contumace. and þis fet hwa se is anewil i þing þ has  
haueð undernyme to donne. beo hit god beo hit uuel. þ na  
wisure read ne mei bringen hire ut of hire riote.<sup>47</sup>

(The ninth [whelp] is Contumacy: and this whelp is fed by whoever is self-willed in the thing that she has undertaken to do, be it good or be it evil, so that no wiser counsel may bring her out of her riot.)

Here, it should be noted that the Riwe author makes a traditional association between the female and riotousness or stubbornness<sup>48</sup>; in addition, he emphasizes—with “this whelp is fed by whoever is self-willed in the thing

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<sup>47</sup> Corpus Christi, 102.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, discussion of this medieval tendency in Bloch, “Medieval Misogyny,” 1-6.

that she has undertaken to do"—that an anchoress who engages in contumacious behavior is the equal of the sinful mother lion. The tenth lion cub is also feminine, and represents the vice of contention, which is, as the author explains:

strif to ouercumen þ̅ te oþer þ̅unche underneoðen awarpen ⁊  
crauant. and heo me<i>stre of þ̅e mot. ⁊ crenge ase champiun þ̅e  
hauēð bigete þ̅e place. I þ̅is unþ̅eaw is upbrud. ⁊ edwitunge of al þ̅  
uuel þ̅ ha mai bi þ̅e oðer of þ̅enchen. ant eauer se hit biteð  
bittrure. se hire likeð betere. þ̅ah hit were o þ̅ing þ̅e wes biuore  
gare amendet. Her imong beoð oðerhwiles nawt ane bittre  
wordes. ah beoð fule stinkinde scheomelese ⁊ schentfule. sum  
chearre mid great sware. monie ⁊ prude wordes wið warinesses  
and bileasunges. Her to falleð euenunge of hamseof. of hare  
cun. of sahe oðer of dede. Þ̅is is among nunne.<sup>49</sup>

(striving to overcome so that an opponent may be cast down and surrender, and she [the victor] may consider herself to be master of the encounter, and preen like a champion who has won the place. Also included in this misdeed are reproach and blame for any evil done to her by another that she can think of. And the more bitter and biting the response, the better she likes to give it, even for old wrongs long ago amended. Here in this vice are also bitter words that are foul stinking, shameless, and shameful. Some swearings, many and proud words with threats and slanders. Here also fall comparisons of herself, her kin, or things that have been said or done [with the lineage and deeds of others]. This occurs among nuns.)

The behavior of a contentious woman is certainly implied here. Despite the fact that words such as surrender, master, and champion are more readily associated with men in battle, loud scoldings and “bitter and biting. . . response[s]” are sins of the mouth which are more easily associated with women than men. Further, the Riwe author suggests once more that

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<sup>49</sup>Corpus Christi, 102-103.

anchoresses who come from good families or do good deeds may be prone to prideful comparisons of their families or their accomplishments with those of others.

The Riwe author does not use pronouns at all when he describes the characteristics of the eleventh lion cub, nor does he give this whelp a name, but this lion offspring also has peculiarly feminine traits. The author explains to his audience that the eleventh lion whelp is “ifed wið supersticiuns. wið semblanz ⁊ wið sínés (fed with superstitions, semblances, and gestures)” and offers a number of detailed examples to describe these. One who nourishes this lion cub, he writes:

as beoren on heh þ heaued. crenge wið swire. lokin o siden.  
bihalden on hokere. winche mid ehe. binde seode mid te muð.  
wið hond oðer wið heaued makie scuter signe. warpe schonke  
ouer schench. sitten oðer gan stif as has istaket were. luue lokin  
o mon. spoken as an ínnocent. and wispín for þen anes.<sup>50</sup>

(carries the head high, curves the neck or looks to the side in a haughty way, looks contemptuously, bats the eyes, purses the mouth, makes scornful signs with the hands or the head, throws one leg over the other leg, sits or walks stiffly [as if tied to a stake], gives loving looks to men, speaks like an innocent, and affects a lisp.)

Here, the Riwe author offers his most detailed description of real bodily actions which can be considered displays of pride. Significantly, most of the gestures listed are performed by the head, neck, eyes, and mouth, that is, parts of the female upper body to which the Riwe author has drawn so much attention in Part II of the guide; and giving “loving looks to men” is certainly one of the specific actions, leading to lechery, against which the author has

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<sup>50</sup> Corpus Christi, 102-103.

admonished the anchoresses in Part II. The gestures and postures listed above are more traditionally associated with women than with men. Even if a man rather than a woman performed such actions, these would be considered feminine or effeminate. In the above passage, as Georgianna has observed, the Riwe author

makes an almost frightening transition from allegory to life: the guises are devastatingly specific. Pride might be a devouring lion, but its eleventh cub looks more like an anchoress who reads Cosmopolitan [.]<sup>51</sup>

The Riwe author's lion cubs certainly engage in very human bodily actions. Clearly the figurative beast body and the literal female body become conflated in the above passage. To his description of this unnamed lion whelp, the author adds:

Her to falleð of ueil of heaued clāð. of euch oðer clāð. to ouegart acemunge oðer in heowunge. oðer ipinchunge. gurdlesant gurdunge o dameiseles wise. scleaterunge mid smirles fule fluðrunge. heowin hér. litien leor. pinchin bruhen oðer bencín ham uppart wið wéte fingres. Monie oðre þer beoð þe cumeð of weole of wunne. of heh cun. of feier clāð. of wit. of wlite. of strengðe. Oh heh cun waxeð prude. ⁊ of hali þeawes.<sup>52</sup>

(Here falls [concern over] the veil that clothes the head, or other clothing; or overconcern about other adornments such as pleats or color; or to girdles or girding the waist like a woman who lives in the world; being fussy about medicines for blemishes; adding color to the hair or to the face; pinching eyebrows or pushing them upward with wet fingers. Many other things come from wealth and worldly interests; of high kin, of fair clothing; of wit; of beauty; of strength. Pride can arise because of high family or holy virtues.)

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<sup>51</sup> Georgianna, The Solitary Self, 127.

<sup>52</sup> Corpus Christi, 103.

Despite the fact that the Riwle author uses the lion whelps figuratively in his description of the lion and its offspring, his admonitions against excessive attention to the dressing and primping of the body and face demonstrate the author's continued concern with the sinful actions of real feminine bodies.<sup>53</sup> The author employs the lion figure selectively in Part IV as comparison of the Riwle to sources for beast imagery will demonstrate.

The Riwle author has a wide variety interpretations to choose from for exegesis of the lion figure since it is one of the most frequently found beast images in the Bible and is always the first beast figure discussed in Physiologus and the bestiary. As perusal of any Bible concordance demonstrates, numerous literal and figurative references to the lion occur in the Bible which associate this creature with such characteristics as strength, bravery, ferocity, and secrecy. But only one biblical passage, which occurs in Job in a discussion of wisdom, seems to vaguely associate the lion with pride: "The proud wild animals have not trodden it [wisdom]; the lion has not passed over it [28: 8]." Most Bible references to the lion are so brief and nondescript that it is difficult to determine exactly how the Bible even influenced interpretations of the lion figure in Physiologus and the bestiary. Physiologus quotes a passage from Genesis which reads, "'Juda is a lion's whelp: thou didst arise from the prey, my son [Gen. 49: 9]'" before outlining the lion's traits. Elsewhere in Physiologus, however, quoted biblical passages do not refer to the lion at all but only to the characteristics it is said to represent. For example, when discussing the lion's habit of sleeping with its eyes open, Physiologus quotes from Song of Songs, "'I sleep but my heart

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<sup>53</sup> Women are also traditionally associated with ornamentation or decoration in the Middle Ages and earlier. For a more in-depth discussion of this concept, see Bloch, Medieval Misogyny, 37-64.

wakes [5: 2],” and from Psalms, “He who watches over Israel shall never slumber nor sleep [121: 4].” The bestiary does not include a biblical quotation at the beginning of its account of the lion, but uses the same passages from Song of Songs and Psalms as Physiologus when describing the lion sleeping with open eyes. Neither Physiologus nor the bestiary refers to the lion’s connection with pride but associates the lion image with God or Christ.

In Physiologus, the lion has three important characteristics: it covers its tracks with its tail so that hunters cannot pursue it; it sleeps with its eyes open so that it will not be caught unaware; and it bears dead whelps to which it gives life, after three days have elapsed, by breathing on them. Physiologus states that: the lion covering its tracks represents Christ disguising his divinity from the world by seeming to become human like mortal man; the lion sleeping with open eyes represents Christ watching “over Israel”; and the lion breathing life into its young after three days represents God first creating man and Christ saving fallen man by dying for sinners.<sup>54</sup>

The medieval bestiary, on the other hand, assigns both positive and negative traits to the lion in a much more lengthy treatment of this figure, thereby offering medieval religious writers a wide range of flexibility in interpretation. It states for example, that lions, like “leopards, tigers, wolves, foxes, dogs, and monkeys,” are called beasts “because of the violence with which they rage, and are known as ‘wild’ because they are accustomed to freedom by nature and are governed by their own wishes.” The bestiary adds that lions “wander hither and thither, fancy free, and they go wherever they

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<sup>54</sup> Physiologus [1].

want” and that the lion is “proud in the strength of his own nature.”<sup>55</sup> Such negative characteristics as being “governed by their own wishes,” and being “proud in the strength of” their “own nature” seem to appeal to the Riwle author in his selective use of the lion figure. He does after all admonish his audience against pride that causes them to favor their own desires or opinions over those of others or of God, or to feel that they are better than others because of the station in life to which they were born, or because of their beauty. The bestiary does, however, go on to discuss the lion in a more positive light by describing the same three lion traits, found in Physiologus, that represent Christ. As he has with references to the pelican, the Riwle author omits references to the lion as a metaphor for Christ.

The bestiary—in addition to assigning the lion Christly traits—assigns positive human characteristics to this creature, which the Riwle author also omits from his account. According to bestiarists, lions are also known for their compassion: they do not kill people who lie prostrate and surrender to them; and they also do not “kill children except when they are very hungry.” In addition, lions rarely overeat: “they only take food and drink on alternate days,” and often “they pop their paws carefully into their mouths and pull out the meat of their own accord, when they have eaten too much.”<sup>56</sup> Though such characteristics as compassion and abstinence from excessive food or drink might be useful for him to emphasize elsewhere in the guide, the Riwle author clearly uses the lion only as a figure for pride, and especially female pride, in his catalogue of sins. He concludes his description of the lion

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<sup>55</sup> The Bestiary, 7.

<sup>56</sup> The Bestiary, 9.

of pride and its whelps with a warning that the lion has more cubs than those he has named, and adds:

Hwa se eauer hauēð eani unþeaw of þeo þe ich her nempnede.  
oðer ham iliche. ha hauēð prude sikerliche hu se eauer hire  
curtel beo ischapet oþer iheowet. heo is þe lſunes make þ̅ ich  
habbe ispeken of. ⁊ fet hire wode hwelpes ínwið hire breoste.<sup>57</sup>

(Whosoever has any vice of those which I have here named, or any like these, she is surely guilty of pride regardless of the shape or color of her habit. She is the mate of the lion of which I have spoken, and feeds her mad whelps within her breast.)

In this passage, the author makes a point of reminding his audience that if an anchoress gives in to the temptation of pride, she becomes equal to the sinful mother lion, nursing “mad whelps in her breast.”

The Riwe author’s treatment of the second mortal sin, envy, also emphasizes another especially feminine facet of this vice. The author employs the adder as a metaphor for envy and offers the following description of its eighth whelp:

þe eahtuðe is suspitio. þ̅ is misortrowunge bi mon oðer bi  
wummon wið uten witer tacne. þenchen. þ̅is semblan ha  
makeð. þ̅is ha seið oðer deð me forte gremien. hokerín oðer  
hearmin. . . .as þenchen oðer seggen. ge ne luueð ha me nawt.  
Herof ha wreide me. lo nu ha speokeð of me þe twa. þe þreo.  
oðer þe ma þe sittēð togederes. swuch ha is ⁊ swuch ⁊ for uuel ha  
hit dude.<sup>58</sup>

(The eighth [offspring of envy] is suspicion. That is, mistrusting of a man or of a woman without just cause, thinking, ‘this is a semblance she makes; this she says or does in order to anger, slander, or harm me.’ . . .or thinking or saying, ‘Yes, she loves me not. Hear how she accuses me; now [how] they speak of me

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<sup>57</sup> Corpus Christi, 103.

<sup>58</sup> Corpus Christi, 104.

the two of them, or three or more sitting there together. Such they are and such they do it for evil purposes.')

In this passage, the author manufactures a speech which vividly illustrates the behavior of an anchoress who always suspects, without due cause or proof, that others gossip about her. As Grayson has observed, the Riwle author pinpoints "a rather common paranoia in the woman who thinks other women talk about her."<sup>59</sup> She also notes in passing that the author frequently demonstrates a "special touch in recognizing human faults, especially little imperfections in the female."<sup>60</sup>

The Riwle author's use of the adder as a figure for envy is not surprising since in the above passage, he associates envy primarily with gossip or damaging speech. Indeed, the author may be drawing in part from the biblical passage which asserts, of evildoers, that "They make make their tongue sharp as a snake's, and under their lips is the venom of vipers [Ps. 140: 3]."<sup>61</sup> Though this quotation does not specifically associate the adder, or a snake-like creature, with envy, references to sharp tongues and venomous lips certainly imply the mouth sins that the author associates with envy. Since both Physiologus and the bestiary include more than one type of serpent, it will be useful to discuss, at least briefly, descriptions of three snake-like creatures in these sources. It should be noted, however, that for his exegesis of the adder, which he specifically associates with envy, the Riwle

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<sup>59</sup> Grayson, Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse, 100.

<sup>60</sup> Grayson, 100.

<sup>61</sup> Compare this quote from The New Oxford Annotated Bible to the King James version which reads: "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adder's poison is under their lips [my italics]."

author seems to draw only vaguely from either Physiologus or the medieval bestiary. But both sources describe two slithering creatures, the viper and the snake; and the asp, which is not found in Physiologus, is also treated in the bestiary. In Physiologus, the viper represents “the race of vipers [Matt. 3: 7]” who “flee from” God’s righteous anger over man’s sin. This source goes on to describe the strange procreation habits of this creature, to which I will return presently in discussion of the scorpion of lechery.<sup>62</sup> Suffice it to say at this point that the Physiologus viper is not associated with the specific vice of envy. The bestiary account similarly describes the viper’s strange, copulation habits, which it treats with more disgust than Physiologus, and then devotes the remainder of textual space on the viper to a sermonic tirade which is said to “show up the habits of married couples.”<sup>63</sup> As in the case of the Physiologus viper, the bestiary viper, which is also not directly connected with envy, will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

The snake in Physiologus is also not associated with the vice of envy; in fact the snake is discussed in relatively positive terms. The snake has four traits: it sheds its skin and makes itself “young again”; it leaves its venom behind “in its lair” when it goes to a public water source to drink; it does not attack naked men, but clothed ones; and it leaves its body exposed but protects its head when it is attacked by an enemy. Its ability to shed its skin represents man’s ability to “tear off the former man, through abstinence and tribulations” and “seek the narrow door which leads to [eternal] life.” The snake leaving its venom behind represents Christian people who are able to leave “earthly sins and desires” behind when they go for public worship into

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<sup>62</sup> Physiologus, [16].

<sup>63</sup> The Bestiary.

a church. The third trait of the snake is the only negative characteristic assigned to it. According to Physiologus, the snake, which in this third case represents the devil, will not attack a naked man, which represents the fact that "as a spiritual symbol. . . Adam was naked. . . in Paradise, and the snake could not attack him; but after he was clothed in the mortalness of carnal sin, it [the snake] came at him." Physiologus adds, "if however you [mortal man] despoil yourself of the vestments of the princes and the powers of this world. . . then the snake, which is the devil, cannot attack you." Finally, the snake's ability to leave its body open for attack but protect its head represents the Christian ability "to expose our whole body to danger, but to guard our head, which is Christ. . . the head of all men."<sup>64</sup> The snake of the medieval bestiary is only discussed vaguely as the ancestor of "all serpents" and is said to be "slippery" and to creep on the ground "by secret approaches and not by open steps." While "secret approaches" and avoidance of "open steps" may put one in mind of the strategies of an envious gossip or backbiter, this suggestion is certainly not blatant. The bestiary ends discussion of the snake or serpent by stating that this creature has many species and represents "many poisons. . . many griefs, and. . . different colours."<sup>65</sup> Such vagueness makes it difficult for one to associate the snake specifically with envy as the Riwe author does.

The bestiary description of the asp, however, more readily suggests envy, asserting that the asp "gets its name because it injects and spreads

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<sup>64</sup> Physiologus, [18].

<sup>65</sup> The Bestiary, 165.

poison with its bite.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, the asp is said to press “one ear to the ground” and close “the other ear by sticking its tail in it” so that it may avoid “hearing the magical noises”; in other words, “it does not go forth to the chanting.”<sup>67</sup> This characteristic seems to be directly taken from a passage in the Bible, which reads:

The wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of the charmers or of the cunning enchanter. (Ps. 58: 4-5)

This passage is similar to the earlier biblical quotation which associates the snake with mouth sins, but also goes on to add that the adder stops its ears. The passage is ambiguous: it would seem that the adder stopping its ears could also represent a Christian stopping her or his ears to gossip or flattery. But clearly the stopping of the ears has negative connotations in this case, and may instead represent stopping one’s ears to truth. Indeed, the bestiary account of the viper continues by asserting that this creature “always runs about with its mouth wide open and steaming, the effect of which is to injure other sorts and kinds and species of animals”; and it also “refuse[s] to listen” to “the voice of the Lord.”<sup>68</sup> Since the Riwle author constantly admonishes his audience against mouth sins, and also associates transgressive speech with poison, it does not seem surprising that his account of the adder resembles those of the asp found in both the Bible and the bestiary.

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<sup>66</sup> The Bestiary, 173.

<sup>67</sup> The Bestiary, 173.

<sup>68</sup> The Bestiary, 173.

The next creature in the Riwe author's catalogue of sins is the unicorn of wrath, which has a number of whelps to which the author also attributes traditionally feminine, characteristics. Of these offspring, according to the Riwe author:

þe earste is chast oðer strif. þe oðer is wodschippe. Bihald te ehnen ⁊ te neb hwen wod wreaððe is imunt. Bihald hire contenenmenz. loke on hire lates. hercne hu þe muð geað. ⁊ tu maht demen hire will ut of hire witte. . . . þe seoueðe hwelp is. don for wreaððe mis. oðer leauen wel to don. forgan mete oðer drunch. wreoken hire wið teares gef ha elles ne mei. ⁊ wið weariunges hire heaued spillen o grome. oðer on oþer wise hearmin hire i sawle ⁊ i bodi baðe.<sup>69</sup>

(The first is contention or strife. The other is madness [mad anger]. Behold the eyes and the face when mad wrath is rising. Behold her countenance. Look upon her gestures. Hark how the mouth goes, and you might deem her well out of her wits. . . . The seventh whelp is doing misdeeds out of anger, or refusing to do well; [or] refusing meat or drink, [or] wreaking [revenge] with tears if she can [do so] in no other way, or spilling swearings out of her head in wrath, or in other ways harming herself in both soul and body.)

Here, as he has in Part III with the image of the howling wolf, the Riwe author once again encourages his audience to visualize how anger is expressed by the human body. This time, however, rather than inviting his audience to visualize the behavior of an angry man, he suggests that the anchoress visualize only an angry woman; and he implies that because "you might deem her well out of her wits," his audience should consider female anger unreasonable, and by extension, bestial. In addition, the author's description of the seventh unicorn whelp implies the belief that women are most likely to express anger by refusing to eat or drink, or by crying. I have

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<sup>69</sup> Corpus Christi, 104.

earlier demonstrated how the author's unusually selective use of the unicorn as a figure for wrath differs from descriptions and interpretations of this figure in Physiologus and the bestiary which I need not repeat. It does seem significant, however, that the Riwe author should transform this small and gentle goat-like creature into a frightening monster that more closely resembles an angry rhinoceros.

Biblical references to the unicorn are vague and seem to have caused disagreement as to what a unicorn is among scholars and translators of the Bible. For example, there are nine references to the unicorn in the King James Bible, but only one (Ps. 29: 6) associates the unicorn--and only a young unicorn--with the small, gentle, goat-like creature that appears in Physiologus and the bestiary. On the other hand, the Oxford Annotated Bible, in the same nine passages, invariably calls the unicorn a "wild ox," which also implies a much larger creature than a goat. Four Bible references, however, do associate the unicorn with God or Christ as Physiologus and the bestiary do.<sup>70</sup> One Bible quotation attaches value to the unicorn horn (Ps. 92: 10); two seem to refer to more literal unicorns or oxen (Job 39: 9-10); and one seems to associate the unicorn horn with a communication device through which God hears sinners' prayers (Ps. 22: 21).

The rhinoceros, or a creature referred to by this name, does not appear in the Bible or Physiologus. However, another one-horned creature, called monoceros, is found in the bestiary and said to be "a monster with a horrible howl, with a horse-like body, with feet like an elephant, and with a tail like a

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<sup>70</sup> See Num. 23: 22, 24: 8; Deut. 33: 17; and Isa. 34: 7.

stag's."<sup>71</sup> The bestiary goes on to describe its magnificent horn and to state that the horn easily impales anything that the beast charges.<sup>72</sup> Finally, bestiarists assert that the monceros can be "killed" but not "captured," but these writers attach no biblical or spiritual significance to the beast's nature or habits and do not directly associate it with anger.<sup>73</sup> In his initial reference to the unicorn, the Riwe author writes that it "bereð on his nease þe þorn [sic] þ he asneaseð wið al þ he areached (bears on its nose the horn with which it stabs all that it can reach)."<sup>74</sup> Here, the Riwe author may be conflating the monoceros and the unicorn as he has the sparrow and swallow in Part III. The bestiarist's mention of the monoceros's "horrible howl" suggests anger as does its charging behavior, which could account for the resemblance between this account and the Riwe author's description of the unicorn. In addition, the Riwe author's assertion that the unicorn "stabs all that it can reach" with its horn reflects the bestiary assertion that the monoceros' impales anything that it charges with its sharp horn. Thus far, all of the beasts in the Part IV catalogue of sins appear in some form in the Bible, Physiologus, and the bestiary, and the Riwe author seems to have chosen selectively from these sources to interpret the significance of these beasts for his audience, and his selective interpretation of beast imagery gives his sin catalogue an especially feminine bent. One more beast image in the Riwe author's catalogue now deserves attention: the scorpion, which, though mentioned in the Bible,

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<sup>71</sup> The Bestiary, 43.

<sup>72</sup> The Bestiary, 44.

<sup>73</sup> The Bestiary, 44.

<sup>74</sup> Corpus Christi, 104.

Physiologus, and the bestiary, is not discussed at length in these sources or assigned especially specific characteristics.

In the Riwe author's initial description of the scorpion of lechery, as I mentioned elsewhere and as Rumsey has also observed, the author openly expresses his hesitation about discussing the vice of lechery:

Ʒe Scorpiun of leccherie. Ʒ is of galnesse. hauð swucche cundles. Ʒ in a well itohe muð hare summes nome ne sit nawt forte nempnín. for Ʒe nome ane mahte hurten alle wel itohene earen. ⁊ sulen cleane heorten. Ʒeo Ʒah me mei nempnín wel. hwas nomen me icnawð wel. ⁊ beoð mare hearm is to monie al to cuðe. Horedom. Eawbruche. Meiðlure. ⁊ Incest. Ʒ is bituhe sibbe fleschliche oðer gasteliche. Ʒ is o feole i dealet.<sup>75</sup>

(The scorpion of lechery, that is, of lust, has such offspring that it is inappropriate for a well-bred mouth to name the names of some of them, for the name alone might hurt all well-bred ears and sully clean hearts. Those which may be properly named are those with names that are well-known--and more is the harm--all too well-known to many. [These are] whoredom, adultery, loss of maidenhead, and incest, that is fleshly or spiritual [lust] between siblings [kin], which is divided into many types.)

Here, the author makes clear, with the repetition "that is, of lust," that lechery is synonymous with lust or sexual transgression. In this passage, as Rumsey has stated, the author expresses "his fear of corrupting the innocent by elucidating potential sins."<sup>76</sup> She adds,

However artificial his squeamish avoidance of detail may be, he highlights the significant dangers which face a writer on sin, who must warn against evils without inflaming curiosity or enlarging knowledge of them.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Corpus Christi, 106.

<sup>76</sup> Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse," 56.

<sup>77</sup> Rumsey, 56.

Despite his apparently “squeamish” attitude about discussing lechery, however, the author goes on to offer a number of details, explaining that lechery involves

ful wil to ꝥ fulð wið skiles ȝettunge. helpen oþre þiderward. beo weote ⁊ witnesse þrof. hunti þrefter wið wohunge. wið toggunge. oðer wið eni tollunge. wið gigge lahtre. hore ehe. Eanie lihte lates. wið ȝeoue. wið tollinde word. oþer wið luue speche. Cos. Vnhende grapunge ꝥ mei beon heaued sunne. luuſe tide oðer stude forte cumen i swuch keast. ⁊ oþre foreridles þe me not ne de forbuhen. þe i þe muchele fulðe nule fenniliche fallen.<sup>78</sup>

(full willingness toward that filth with reason’s consent; helping others in that direction; being aware of and witnessing thereof; hunting after it with wooing, with seductive touching or with any other tempting actions; with giggling laughter, whorish eyes, or any light gestures, with gifts, with encouraging words or love speech; kissing, or any handlings that can be considered mortal sins; enjoying the times or places that provide opportunity for such illicit actions, and other occasions that one must avoid if one would keep from falling into that fenlike region.)

The Riwe author has already discussed a number of ways that the female body may be used to incite lust in Part II. Here, he again lists a number of bodily actions which are improper in an anchoress: “seductive touching. . . whorish eyes. . . love speech. . . kissing. . . [and] any handlings.” Though such actions can be performed by both men and women, the phrase “whorish eyes” implies the sinful actions of women more so than those of men. Near the end of his description of the scorpion of lechery, the author states:

Ich ne dear nempnín þe uncundeliche cundles of þis deofles scoriun attri itelet. Ah sare mei ha beon þe bute fere oðer wið. hauēð swa ifed cundel of hire galnesse. ꝥ ich ne mei spoken of for scheome ne ne dear for drede. lest sum leorni mare uuel þen

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<sup>78</sup>Corpus Christi, 106.

ha con y beoð þrof itemptet. Ah þenche on hire ahne aweariede fundles in hire galnesse. for hu se hit eauer is icwenct wakinde ⁊ willes wið flesches licunge bute ane i wedlac. hit geað to deadlich sunne.<sup>79</sup>

(I dare not name the unnatural offspring of this devil's scorpion with its poisonous tail. But sorry may she be who, with or without a companion, has so fed the offspring of her lust—which I may not speak of for shame, and dare not for dread--lest someone learn more evil than she already knows and be thereby tempted. But let each think upon her own cursed inventions in lust. For howsoever these are quenched, in a waking and willing state, and to the pleasure of the flesh, except in wedlock, it is a deadly sin.)

Though the Riwle author has said that he cannot name some of the scorpion's offspring "for shame," he certainly alludes to the facets of lechery he does not name. Here, for example, the author makes very clear--without listing masturbation as a facet of this vice--that lecherous acts can be engaged in "with or without a companion"; and despite his seeming assumption that the anchoresses in his audience may be ignorant about lust, the author implies that they are capable of "cursed inventions in lust." Further, he adds,

I guheðe me deð wundres. Culche hit i schrift ut utterliche as ha hit dude. þe feleð hire schuldi oðer ha is idemet þurh þ fule brune cwench. to þeche brune of helle. þe Scorpíunes cundel þe ha bret in hire bosum. schake hit ut wið schrift ⁊ wið deadbote slea.<sup>80</sup>

(In youth strange acts are done. Let she who deems herself guilty belch it out utterly in confession as she has done it. Otherwise, she who quenches that foul fire, is condemned to everlasting burning in hell. Let her shake out in confession, slay with penance, the scorpion's offspring that she has bred in her bosom.)

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<sup>79</sup> Corpus Christi, 107.

<sup>80</sup> Corpus Christi, 107.

Here the Riwle author goes on to suggest that the anchoresses in his audience have probably already committed lustful sins “in youth.” In addition, he equates the anchoress with a mother scorpion by suggesting that she has bred the foul offspring of lust “in her bosom.”

The author concludes his description of the lecherous scorpion by explaining:

INoh [sic] is etscene hwi ich habbe ieuenet prude to lifun. onde to neddre. ⁊ of þeo alle þe oþre. wið ute þis leaste. þ is hwi galnesse beo to scoriun ieuenet. Ah lo her þe skile þrof sutel ⁊ etscene. Scorpion is a cunnes wurm. þe hauēð neb as me seið sumdeal ilich wummon. ⁊ neddre is bihīnden. Makeð feier semblant. ⁊ fikeð mid te heauēð. ⁊ stingēð mid te teile. þis is leccherie. þis is deofles beast þ he leat to chepīnge. ⁊ to euch gederunge. ⁊ chepeð forte sullen. ⁊ biswikeð monie. þurh ne bihaldeð nawt bute þe feire neb. oðer þ feire heaued. þ heaued is þe biginnunge of galnesse sunne.<sup>81</sup>

(It can be seen well enough why I have compared pride to a lion and envy to an adder, and all the other [animal images are understandable] except for this last—that is how lechery may be compared to a scorpion. But here is the reasoning of it, clearly and easily seen: the scorpion is a kind of worm that has a face, as it is said, that is somewhat like a woman’s, and is a serpent behind. It makes a fair semblance, fawns with the head, and stings with the tail. That is lechery. That is the devil’s beast which he leads to market and to every gathering, and offers for sale, deceiving many because they behold nothing but the fair face or the fair head. That head is the beginning of lust.)

As Rumsey has observed, the scorpion is the only beast image in his catalogue of sins that the Riwle author feels the need to justify to his audience. Rumsey writes that “in selecting the scorpion to represent lechery the author appears consciously to avoid the more traditional beasts associated with the sin, such

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<sup>81</sup>Corpus Christi 107.

as the ape, horse, goat and sow.”<sup>82</sup> She suggests that since the Riwle author is tentative about addressing the details of lust when writing for an apparently “innocent” audience, he chooses a relatively obscure creature image to represent lechery, writing:

The scorpion offers a double protection in this difficulty. It ensures the author a degree of control over the reader’s perception of the sin by presenting a symbol which is unencumbered by proverbially familiar association with lechery, and which by demanding explication enables the author to develop or limit its significance to serve his purpose.<sup>83</sup>

I concur with Rumsey’s assertion that the Riwle author uses the scorpion image selectively to suit his didactic purpose. However, I do not believe that the Riwle author has the scorpion represent lechery simply so that he may be vague about the details of lechery. I suggest instead that the Riwle author’s explanation of the scorpion’s significance reinforces his assertion, in Part II, that the female body itself is the primary source of most sexual temptation.

The scorpion of lechery falls at the end of the Riwle author’s catalogue of sins, which indicates that this vice is less dangerous or vile than those the author discusses before it. But, of course, his detailed description of the facets of lechery implies that lechery is the worst of sins; and his adamant association of the scorpion with woman implies that lust is a peculiarly female vice. Even if he were using lechery and the scorpion to represent all sin here, his choice to emphasize the fact that a scorpion is like a woman would still imply woman’s sexual guilt as Eve’s daughter (as he has also repeatedly done elsewhere in the guide). It remains to discuss the Riwle

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<sup>82</sup> Rumsey, “The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse,” 48.

<sup>83</sup> Corpus Christi, 56.

author's selective description and interpretation of the scorpion, which seems to be informed by, but cannot be directly linked to, a number of sources.

There are only scattered references to or descriptions of the scorpion in the Bible, and except for one brief passage found in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach), these are relatively vague.<sup>84</sup> All the same, biblical accounts make clear that the scorpion was a creature that was greatly feared because of the pain of its sting, which was often considered to be fatal. As Rumsey asserts:

Biblical references to scorpions in both Old and New Testaments reflect the fear with which they were regarded among people to whom they were a practical danger, and when these passages are referred to by the Church Fathers the scorpion is always a representation of evil.<sup>85</sup>

She adds that "deserted and inhospitable places which are the scorpion's habitat give it a particular significance as the enemy of holy men who went into the wilderness," and that the scorpion eventually came to symbolize "the dangers of the wilderness and the temptations besetting a recluse."<sup>86</sup> In addition to representing temptation in the desert, the biblical scorpion also represents discipline and punishment for sin. For example, in the Bible, when Solomon dies and his son Rehoboam succeeds him, the people he is to rule ask him to be kinder to them than his father has been. Rehoboam

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<sup>84</sup> See for example, The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Sirach 26: 7, which reads "A bad wife is a chafing yoke; taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion." Here, the scorpion is specifically associated with woman or a "bad wife." See also, Rumsey's discussion of this passage in "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse," 48-49. She notes for example, "In all the extant manuscripts of Ancrene Riwe that contain the passage on lechery, with the exception of the Corpus version, the description of the scorpion includes the Latin text" of the above passage from Sirach (48).

<sup>85</sup> Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse," 50.

<sup>86</sup> Rumsey, 51.

answers the people thus: "My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions [2 Chron. 10: 11]." Elsewhere, in Revelations, a longer passage in which the scorpion appears reads:

Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to damage the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. . . .and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it stings someone. (Rev. 9: 3-7)

Here, as Rumsey explains, "the locusts with scorpion tails" represent "heretical influences which are deadly."<sup>87</sup> She adds that throughout the history of medieval literature, the scorpion has represented a number of other sins in addition to heresy, including despair, flattery, malice, and treachery.<sup>88</sup> Since the scorpion seems to represent a variety of sins or perhaps sin in general in many biblical passages, Rumsey finds it puzzling that the scorpion in the Riwle is used only as a metaphor for lechery; but she suggests that the apocryphal passage in Ecclesiasticus 26: 7 ("A bad wife is a chafing yoke; taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion.") may be the source for the Riwle author's association of the scorpion with woman.<sup>89</sup> She writes that this verse from the apocrypha occurs in a chapter which addresses "the failings and merits of women," and "which forms part of the traditional stock of material on the subject available to writers of penitential literature and anti-feminist satire" during the Middle Ages.<sup>90</sup> Rumsey goes on to explain,

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<sup>87</sup> Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse," 51.

<sup>88</sup> Rumsey, 51.

<sup>89</sup> Rumsey, 48, 49.

<sup>90</sup> Rumsey, 49.

however, that the “tradition which defines the scorpion as lecherous appears to have developed separately from those strands that deal with its other qualities.”<sup>91</sup> This separately-evolved tradition is readily evident in medieval bestiaries.

The scorpion—which does not appear in an easily recognizable form in Physiologus—is often described in bestiaries as a species of worm. However, as Rumsey asserts, the scorpion is also “frequently compared with the snake species.”<sup>92</sup> The typical bestiary describes the scorpion thus:

The scorpion is a land worm which we classify with worms rather than with snakes. It is a stinging creature, and is called the Archer in the Greek language because it plunges in its tail and injects its poisons with a curving wound.”<sup>93</sup>

Since the Riwe author also describes the scorpion as “a kind of worm,” he seems familiar with this description of the scorpion in traditional bestiaries. The bestiary, however, does not go on to moralize about the worm or the scorpion, or to associate either with lust. In fact, the worm is said to be produced “without sexual intercourse” and the scorpion is said to “never [ be] born from eggs.”<sup>94</sup> Despite the fact that the bestiary associates the scorpion with the worm rather than the snake, the Riwe author’s use of the scorpion as a figure for lechery seems to be influenced by the bestiary account of a type of snake, the viper. Therefore, the Riwe author once again appears to be conflating or combining two different creatures.

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<sup>91</sup> Rumsey, “The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse,” 52.

<sup>92</sup> Rumsey, 52.

<sup>93</sup> The Bestiary, 192. See also pages 169, 185, 186, and 191. The scorpion receives no chapter of its own in this work, but in addition to being briefly described as a kind of worm, is compared to the basilisk and said to be the enemy of the newt.

<sup>94</sup> The Bestiary, 191.

As I mentioned earlier, both the bestiary and Physiologus describe the viper as having strange mating and birthing habits. In bestiaries, the viper is said to “bring forth [its young] in violence” because the young vipers in their mother’s womb do not wait for “the timely discharge of birth.”<sup>95</sup> Instead, the young vipers “gnaw through the mother’s sides and burst out,” killing their mother.<sup>96</sup> The bestiary adds that when two vipers mate,

the male puts his head into the female’s mouth and spits the semen into it. Then she, angered by his lust, bites off his head when he tries to take it out again. Thus both parents perish, the male when he copulates, and the female when she gives birth.<sup>97</sup>

The bestiary goes on to assert that the viper is especially “villainous” because it also mates with creatures of another species. Apparently because of the dangers of mating with its own kind, the viper seeks to satisfy its excessive sexual desire with the sea eel, which does not kill the male viper during copulation; and though not directly stated in the bestiary account, it also seems understood that the female viper also mates with the sea eel, but apparently does not conceive. Vipers who mate with sea eels are said to represent people who “do not copulate for the sake of procreation, but from a delight in the lusty fondlings of nature.”<sup>98</sup> The bestiary also sermonizes about the indiscretions of married men and women who, like vipers, often

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<sup>95</sup> The Bestiary, 170.

<sup>96</sup> The Bestiary, 170.

<sup>97</sup> The Bestiary, 170.

<sup>98</sup> The Bestiary, 173.

deceive or put away their spouses, and finally concludes that spouses should tolerate one another and not form a “corrupt union.”<sup>99</sup>

The bestiary association of the viper with lechery and the evils of marriage might well have appealed to the Riwle author in his use of the scorpion, but the account of the viper found in Physiologus may also have had influence. The Physiologus account, which only indirectly associates the viper with lechery, describes the physical characteristics of the viper in more detail than the bestiary, observing that

the male [viper] has a man’s face, the female a woman’s face; from head to navel they have the form of men, thence to the tail the form of the crocodile. The female has no vagina, but something resembling a hole; when the male approaches the female, she takes the semen in her mouth; and when she has received the semen, she bites off the male organs and swallows them, and becomes pregnant, and the male dies.<sup>100</sup>

Physiologus goes on to state that the female viper dies when her offspring are born, but attaches a different moralization to this beast figure. Unlike vipers in the bestiary, which represent unfaithful spouses, the Physiologus vipers are said to represent “the Pharisees [who] kill their spiritual fathers [the prophets and God/Christ]. . .and the Church their mother.”<sup>101</sup>

In these differences between the bestiary and Physiologus, we see how the interpretation of the viper’s significance changed radically over time. Both descriptions of the viper, however, seem to have been taken into account by the Riwle author and influence his description and interpretation of the scorpion. As Rumsey has noted, bestiary accounts emphasize “the

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<sup>99</sup>The Bestiary, 172.

<sup>100</sup>Physiologus, [16].

<sup>101</sup>Physiologus, [17].

dangers of lust," which the Riwe author emphasizes in Part IV and throughout the guide.<sup>102</sup> In addition, Rumsey suggests that the Riwe author may have been drawn to "the bipartite anatomy of the face and tail" of the scorpion, "which can represent both temptress and phallus," when he offers the physical description of the scorpion to his audience.<sup>103</sup> It is significant, however--since Physiologus, describes the viper's face as both male and female--that the Riwe author asserts only that the scorpion's face "is somewhat like a woman's [my italics]." Rumsey has suggested that the Riwe author may have used the scorpion to represent lechery because, of the beasts traditionally associated with this vice--the "sow, horse, goat and ape"--three are "familiar domestic animals" with "nothing evil or alarming about them."<sup>104</sup> She adds, "the ape is comical" and "more likely to inspire laughter than horror" unlike the scorpion, which "is both alien [to England, the anchoress's homeland] and repugnant."<sup>105</sup> Rumsey believes the author probably chose to use the scorpion figure because it would be a more frightening image for his audience to associate with the danger and foulness of lechery.<sup>106</sup>

The Riwe author goes on to offer one more strong admonition against lechery at the end of his catalogue of beasts and sins, writing:

NV [sic] ge habbeð ane dale iherd mine leoue sustren of þeo þe  
 <me> cleopeð þ seoue modersunne. ⁊ of hare teames. . . ⁊ hwi

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<sup>102</sup> Rumsey, "The Scorpion of Lechery and Ancrene Wisse" 53.

<sup>103</sup> Rumsey, 54.

<sup>104</sup> Rumsey, 54.

<sup>105</sup> Rumsey, 54.

<sup>106</sup> Rumsey, 54-55.

ha beoð swið to heatien ⁊ to schunien. ge beoð ful feor from ham  
 ure lauerd beo iþoncket. ah þ fule breað of þis leaste unþeaw. þ is  
 of leccherie. stinkeð se swiðe feor. for þe feond hit saweð ⁊ to  
 blaweð ouer al. þ ich am sumdel ofdred leste hit leape sum  
 chearre in to ower heortes nease. Stench stihēð uppert ⁊ ge hehe  
 iclumben þer þe wind is muchel of stronge temptatiuns. Vre  
 lauerd geoue ow strengþe wel to wiðstonden.<sup>107</sup>

(Now you have heard, my beloved sisters, one portion of those things which are called the seven mother sins, and of their offspring. . . and why these are to be much hated and shunned. You are far from these, our Lord be thanked. But the foul breath of this last sin, that is, of lechery, stinks so far and wide—for the fiend sows and blows it over all—that I am somewhat in dread lest it leap at some time into your heart's nose. Stench rises upward and you have climbed high, where the wind of strong temptations is great. Our Lord give you strength to withstand it well.)

Here, the author once again implies that lechery is the sin to which he fears his audience is most susceptible. Despite his disclaimer that the anchoresses are “far from” all the deadly “mother sins” which he has just described, the author is adamant in reminding the anchoresses that the high degree of spiritual progress they may have made does not make them immune to mortal temptations.

In this dissertation chapter, I have demonstrated that the Riwle author uses sources for beast imagery selectively as he has sources for bird imagery in Part III. In addition, the Riwle author, though seeming to model his catalogue of deadly sins after the medieval bestiary, chooses not to describe the beast figures in as much detail as some of his possible models. Instead, the author uses beast images simply as frightful verbal pictures which seem intended to reinforce audience memory. He does not employ such images to

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<sup>107</sup> Corpus Christi, 112.

teach spiritual concepts. In so doing, he implies that he views his audience first as laywomen rather than, more specifically, as religious laywomen who have taken vows of strict enclosure and are probably better-educated than the average secular layperson. In addition, the Riwle author's tendency to gender the beasts in his list of temptations as female, and to call them "mother sins" who nurse vice-ridden whelps at their breasts, and his tendency to describe literal sins in terms of bodily actions which are more easily associated with women than with men, give his sin catalogue an especially feminine cast. This rhetorical strategy, in effect, requires the Riwle audience to identify with the beast figures which represent inherent vice. Furthermore, in especially emphasizing the destructiveness of lechery, which he labels a "foot wound" more than pride, which he labels a "breast wound," the Riwle author indicates that lechery is a peculiarly feminine vice, and he never allows his audience to forget that they are female rather than male.

Given the Riwle author's apparent fondness and affection for his audience, it is indeed difficult to assume that this writer is a self-proclaimed antifeminist, but as Bloch has noted, "No one admits to antifeminism" but instead "tends, like the [Church] fathers, to quote what others have said about women."<sup>108</sup> Though it may not be assumed that the Riwle author's misogynous rhetoric in Part IV reflects real or personal feelings about his audience, his selective use of beast figures does reflect the kind of discourse in which, as Bloch asserts, antifeminism is "a topos."<sup>109</sup> Having demonstrated how the Riwle author's emphasis on the importance of discipline and control of literal human bodies and his selective use of both figurative human and

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<sup>108</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny, 47.

<sup>109</sup> Bloch, 7.

bestial body images in his rhetorical strategy reinforces the limitations of the anchoritic profession, and possibly female anchorites in particular, it remains for me to incorporate the conclusions which I have reached in this and previous chapters all in one place.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Like other medieval didactic texts, the Ancrene Riwle is characterized by preoccupation with human bodiliness and sin and by authoritarian discourse which employs bird and beast figures to instruct a lay audience in spiritual concepts. The rhetoric of medieval religious texts is usually designed to enforce clerical control over uneducated audiences by reminding them of their inherently sinful nature and admonishing them to reform. The written discourse of the Ancrene Riwle, however, is problematic for modern scholars because the author of this work writes for an exclusively female lay audience rather than for a general, or mixed, lay audience. The Riwle author is more concerned than rule writers such as Augustine, Benedict, and Aelred with exercising firm control over the physical actions of a lay religious female audience. He also utilizes animal imagery more abundantly and more selectively than other medieval didactic writers and usually feminizes such creatures when addressing a female audience. Since the Riwle is written for only a female audience, the rhetoric of this work should be examined holistically and considered with the gender of the Riwle audience in mind. The present study has demonstrated that such a holistic study might be done through close reading of various passages in the Riwle and through more detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies in this work.

Taken alone, the Riwle author's concern for controlling his audience's bodily gestures during devotional activities and for moderating and

monitoring their fasting and mortification practices in Parts I and VIII of the guide suggests little more than the traditional medieval cleric's desire to control a mixed lay audience (which he associates with sensuality and willfulness) through authoritarian discourse. But when the Riwle author's admonitions for control of the body are considered along with his frequent reminders of woman's sexual guilt and his warnings that the female body is the site of all lecherous temptation in Part II, his authoritarian discourse becomes more noticeably antifeminist. The Riwle author's rhetorical strategy of requiring his female audience to identify with Eve and with unruly beasts in this segment of the guide further supports the claim that his rhetorical strategy is guided by the gender of his audience. The author's stylistic use of bird and beast images in Parts III and IV of the guide continue to illustrate this point.

In Part III of the Riwle, the author's use of sources for bird images is especially skillful and selective. Close reading of a number of passages in this segment of the guide demonstrates that the author habitually omits source references which in any way imply that anchoresses should emulate birds which represent clerical preachers or teachers. This tendency indicates that the Riwle author is constantly aware that his audience is female and should not have access to such religious roles. The author also consistently omits exegetical information which associates various bird figures with Christ, thereby suggesting that he believes limitations or controls should be placed on his female audience's capacity to imitate Christ through ascetic suffering. The Riwle author employs bird metaphors primarily to admonish the anchoresses against expressing anger, boasting, gossiping, or being gluttonous,

and he uses source information manipulatively to emphasize the dangers of such mouth sins. This tendency indicates that the Riwle author especially associates women, and by extension his female audience, with transgressive speaking. Therefore, the discourse of Part III, like that of Part II, is guided by the gender of his audience.

In like manner, the Riwle author uses beast figures selectively in Part IV of the guide. Though his catalogue of the Seven Deadly Sins is modelled after the familiar medieval bestiary, the Riwle author uses beast images only to attract audience attention and to aid audience memory. He does not describe animal figures in the same depth as the bestiary but chooses instead to offer a beast image only as a verbal picture of sin. Thereafter, the author describes the actions of the sinful humans, which the beast images are said to represent, rather than the actions of unreasonable beasts themselves. Significantly, the human vices that the Riwle author illustrates in his list of temptations are more readily associated with women than with men. In addition, all of the beasts in the author's sin catalogue are female, and the author's rhetoric usually requires his female audience to identify with such transgressive female beasts. The Riwle author's discourse and his stylistic use of both bird and beast images in Parts III and IV of the guide are guided by the gender of his audience. Therefore, the rhetoric of these segments of the guide can also be viewed not only as authoritarian but antifeminist.

This dissertation has demonstrated that close reading of representative passages in the Riwle which call attention to the author's concern for control of the physical body and to his use of abundant bird and beast metaphors when addressing a female audience is a productive endeavor. Though such

careful and detailed reading of this text has rarely been done, I believe close examination of passages in this guide is useful, perhaps even essential, if modern scholars are to reach more satisfactory conclusions about the puzzling discourse of this work.

Even if the Riwle author's intentions and his real attitude toward his female audience remain a mystery, thorough examination of his rhetorical strategies and stylistic use of human and bestial body images does indicate that the Ancrene Riwle is characterized by both authoritarian and antifeminist discourse. Modern scholars might argue that the two are synonymous, that all lay audiences, whether male or female, are treated as women because all sin, at least in figurative or exegetical terms, is considered feminine. Some might even argue as Bynum has that both men and women of the Middle Ages viewed "themselves as in some sense female-human" rather than as male because of their capacity to commit bodily or fleshly sin.<sup>1</sup> But in the Riwle author's reasoning, as close reading of Parts II through IV of the guide demonstrates, the female body is more transgressive than the male body and even female religious cannot expect to transcend their gender in the afterlife. If the Riwle author had considered all sinners female, he would have encouraged his female audience to become male as did many of his religious contemporaries. But close reading of Part II in particular demonstrates that the Riwle author never encourages the anchoresses to become male. He also never suggests that their souls will become genderless in the afterlife. Such omissions make it possible and necessary to make distinctions between authoritarian and antifeminist discourse in the Ancrene Riwle and to note the points at which the two converge. Since most

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<sup>1</sup> Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 296.

medieval churchmen seem to have viewed all lay audiences as female, the authoritarian discourse of such religious writers can easily disguise antifeminist references which, in the case of the Riwle, seem more pointedly and specifically directed at laywomen rather than laymen. As Bloch has observed, "antifeminism" in medieval texts should be "a topic for discussion." It should not be "taken for granted" or "analyzed superficially" lest a "failure to recognize the topic" become "a source of misogyny" itself.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bloch, Medieval Misogyny, 1.

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