#### Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, *Hali Meiðhad*, and *Ancrene Wisse* Dr. Brian McFadden ENGL 2323 British Literature I

#### Julian of Norwich

- c. 1342 c. 1416
- Norwich important civic and religious center
  - episcopal see, 22 religious houses, 63 churches
  - Several outbreaks of the plague through the 14<sup>th</sup> century and a key site in the Peasant's Revolt in 1381, but little of this shows up in her writing
  - Possible she lost her family in the plague, but very little is actually known of her life

## The life of an anchoress

- Lived in a small cell attached to the church
  - Entrance ceremony parallel a funeral dying to the world
  - Poverty, chastity, isolation
- Prayer to complement clergy in remembering the members of the parish
- Probably making clothes for the poor
- Religious counselor (Margery Kempe visited her)
  - Supported by the parish

#### Showings or Revelations of Divine Love

- Short account of visions during an illness, probably shortly thereafter
  London, BL, Addl. MS 37790
- She returned to them 20 years later and wrote a fuller interpretation
  - London, BL, Stowe 42 (copied c. 1675)
  - Paris, Bibliotheque National, fonds anglais 40 (16c)
  - London, BL, Sloane 2499 (17c) and Sloane 3705 (late 17c)
  - London, Westminster Cathedral, Treasury MS 4 (c. 1450)
- First printed publication was 1670

#### The Paris MS, ff. 8v, 9r

4 The type Chaptert The first reached The source Chapter her is nothing that is made, but the F law her thatly in bodily hybenes a fim bleffed manhad of Chrift as to my ficht ple mayden and a meete youd of age a fittle waren abone a chulde m the for n this fame tome that 7 faw this ture affe was when the conceibede, light of the hest bleidynd . our de Alfo dod thewed me in part the wi ad land themed a shapily light of his Nom and the truth of her lowle . when homly langung. F faw that he is to be in F understode the reverent behaldin all thing that is dood and comfortable that the beheld her god . that is her ma to our helpe, De is oure clothin Per. marbauling w drest renerence that for love wrappeth bs. and wound that he would be borne of her that eth vs. Galfeth vs. and all becloteth vs Was fymple creature of his makend angeti about us for tender lone Hor this was her marbauling that he may never leene bs. And fo in this he that was her maker would be bory lidht Flaw that he is all thind that is of her that was maden And this dood as to my underftandint And wildome and truth Enowind the dre m this he flewed a little thind the atnes of her maper. and the littlehen quantitie of an hafelnott lying my of her selfe that is made, made her to fay paime of my hand as me femide an full meetely to Anbrielt 100 me gere it was as rounde as a balle. Flood gods handmayden. I In this fydir theran we the eye of my understanding F did buderstand verily that the is more and thought , what may this be . And then all that dad made beneth her . it was answered denerally thus. in woordines and in fullhead, for about her Ft

#### Margery Kempe

- C. 1373– c. 1438
- Born Margery Burnham at King's Lynn
- Three relatives were MP's for Lynn; her father was also mayor
- No record of formal education
- Married John Kempe, Lynn councilor, around 1393
  - Fourteen children

# The Book of Margery Kempe

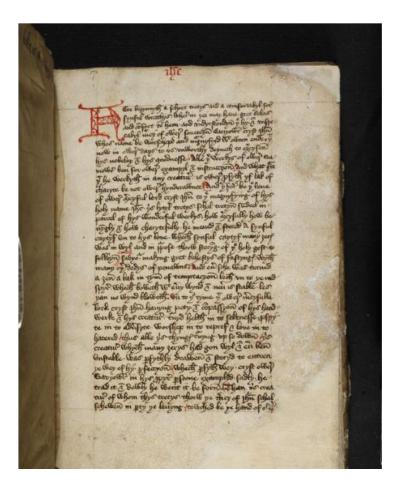
- Dictated in early 1430's to one scribe; was unintelligible and was recopied by her priest c. 1436
  - One surviving medieval copy: London, BL, Add. MS 61823, C. 1440
- Begins with birth of her first child and what might be postpartum psychosis
- Description of her sexual temptations
- Accounts of her pilgrimages and chaste marriage
- Gift of tears as remorse for the world, although it was disconcerting and/or annoying to local clergy and laity
- Got in frequent trouble for preaching, wearing white (impersonating a nun), possible heresy

or possession

Accusations of Lollardy (supporter of reformer John Wyclif)

## **Margery Kempe Images**

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\_MS\_61823



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## The Katherine Group

- Lives of St. Margaret, St. Juliana, St. Katherine, Sawles Ward, Hali Meiðhad
  - Our text Oxford, Bodleian Lib., Bodley 34, c. 1225
  - Text itself may have been late twelfth/early thirteenth century at least one copy before this version
  - Virginity/celibacy could be seen as empowering in a rigid society; note that *HM* is found in MSS with lives of virgin martyrs
- Ancrene Wisse, Wohunge of Ure Lauerd

- Our text Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 402, mid-13c
- also in London, BL, Cotton Titus D. xvii, c. 1220, and London, BL, Royal 17 A xvii, c. 1220-1230 (minus *HM* and *SW*)

## HM's context

- Probably written by a priest for the instruction of nuns in a convent
- Citation of St. Paul, St. Jerome both had written in support of virginity and chaste widowhood
  - 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; 1 Timothy 5:3-16
  - *Epistle Against Jovinianus* pro-celibacy for those in cloistered life and for widows
- Misogyny in classical texts on women (Ovid, Juvenal, Martial) often reflected in works of the classically-educated Church Fathers
- Mistrust of sexuality in classical philosophy (Stoics, Cynics)

# AW context

- *eremitic* life solitary life with separation from society by leaving city/town
  - eremita, "desert" > hermit
  - was original form of monastic life Gr. *monachos* (single) > *monk*
- *cenobitic* life contemplative life in community
  - *cenobium* "common life" in a monastery or convent
  - some contact with outside world schools, hostels, preaching, etc.
- Anchorite/-ess one who chooses to follow monastic-style discipline alone, but not apart from world
  - Gr. anachoreos, "withdrawn"
  - Cell was connected to a church service to community as dispenser of wisdom
  - Church creates canons to govern the anchoritic life

# AW rhetoric

- Emphasizes separation from world
  - Context suggests Augustinian or Dominican priest was author
- Use of romantic images (Christ as courtly lover) to promote spiritual love over human love
- Physical discipline, but not denigration of the body