

Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, *Hali Meidhad*, and *Ancrene Wisse*
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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 14th 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

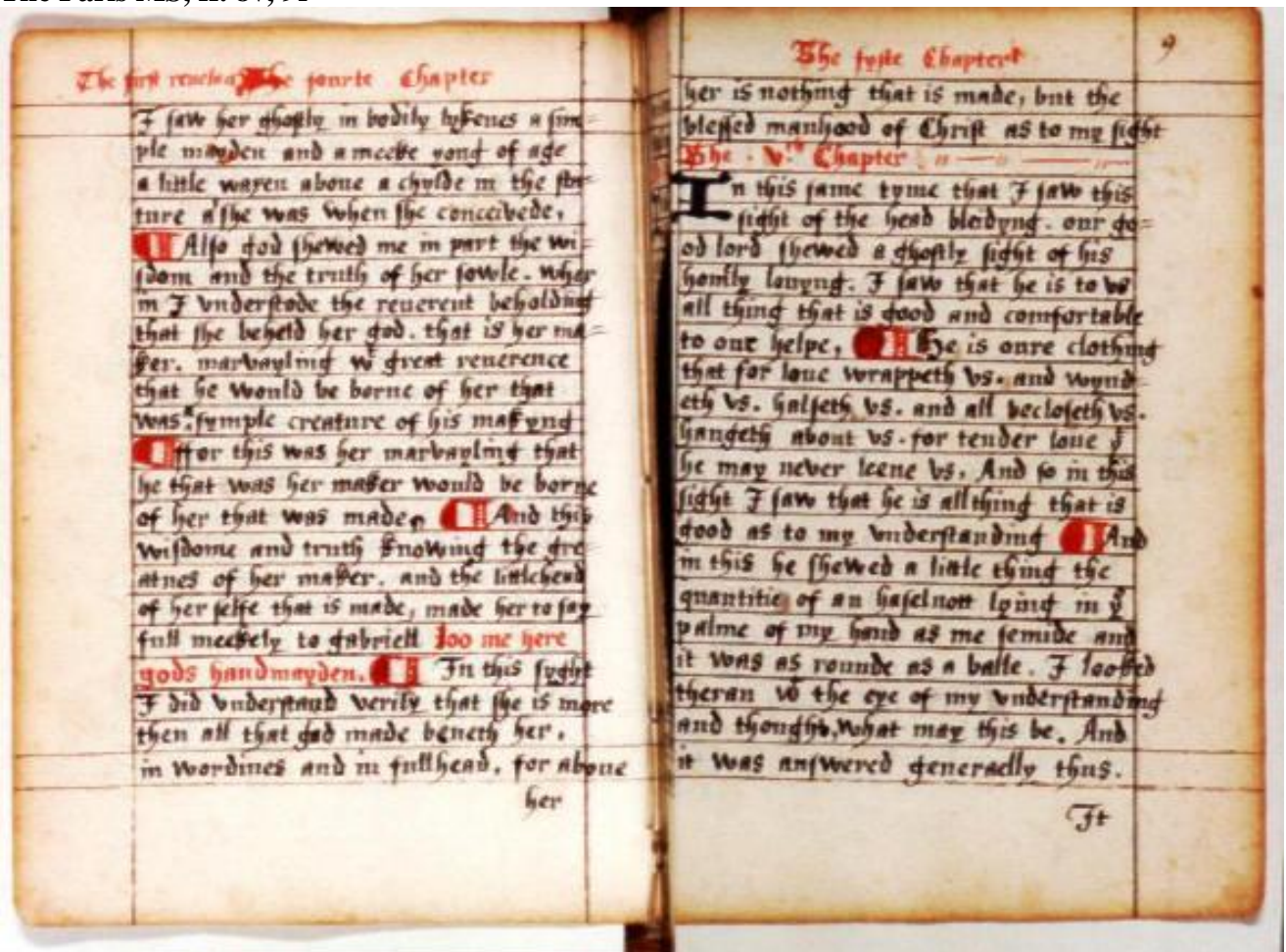
The life of an anchoress

- 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



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

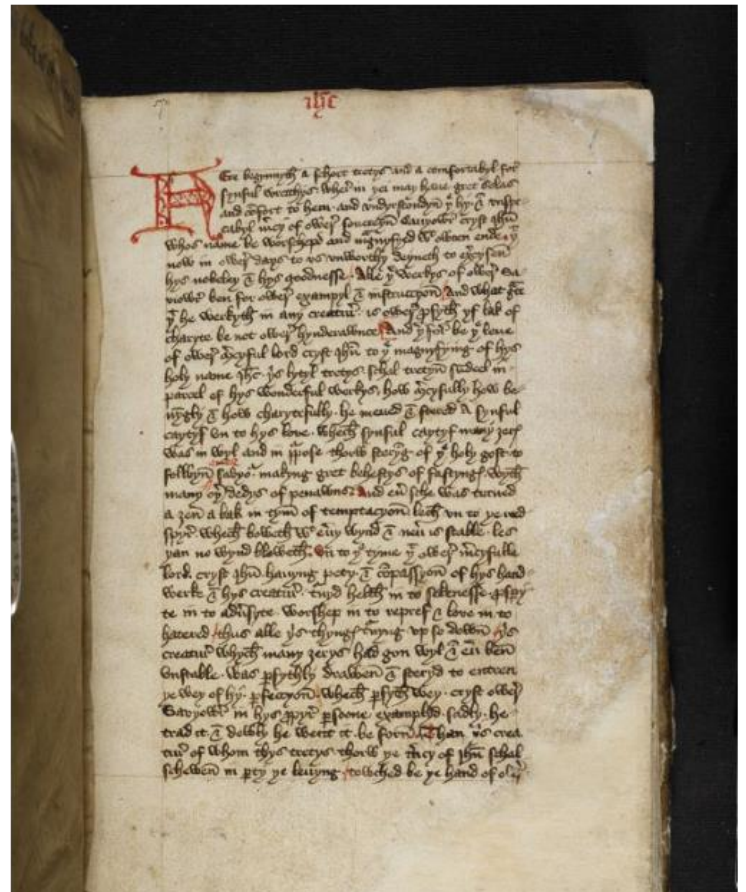
- Dictated in early 1430's to one scribe; was unintelligible and was recopied by her priest c. 1436
 - One surviving medieval copy: London, BL, Add. MS 61823, C. 1440
- Begins with birth of her first child and what might be postpartum psychosis
- Description of her sexual temptations
- Accounts of her 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

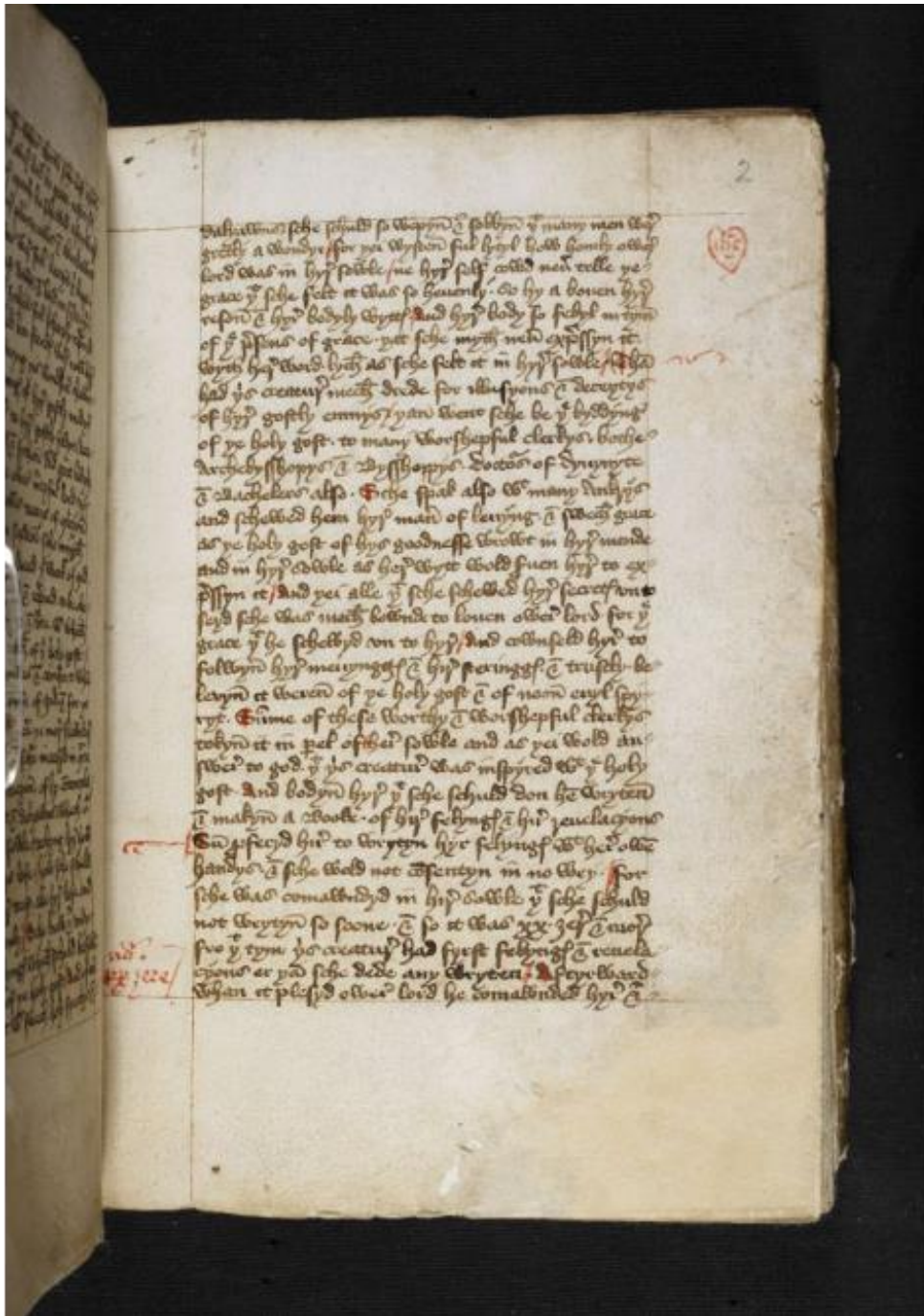
or possession

- Accusations of Lollardy (supporter of reformer John Wyclif)

Margery Kempe Images

- http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_61823





The Katherine Group

- Lives of St. Margaret, St. Juliana, St. Katherine, *Sawles Ward*, *Hali Meidhad*
 - 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