

The Book Of Margery Kempe Norton Critical Editions

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alas that i ever did sin it is so merry in heaven the book of margery kempe c 1436 8 is the extraordinary account of a

medieval wife mother and mystic known as the earliest autobiography written in the english language kempe s book describes the dramatic transformation of its heroine from failed businesswoman and lustful young wife to devout and chaste pilgrim she vividly describes her prayers and visions as well as the temptations in daily life to which she succumbed before dedicating herself to her spiritual calling she travelled to the most holy sites of the medieval world including rome and jerusalem in her life and her boisterous devotion kempe antagonized many of those around her yet she also garnered friends and supporters who helped to record her experiences her book opens a window on to the medieval world and provides a fascinating portrait of one woman s life aspirations and prayers this new translation preserves the forceful narrative voice of kempe s book and includes a wide ranging introduction and useful notes about the series for over 100 years oxford world s classics has made available the widest range of literature from around the globe each affordable volume reflects oxford s commitment to scholarship providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features including expert introductions by leading authorities helpful notes to clarify the text up to date bibliographies for further study and much more

the text presented here remains as faithful to the original middle english as possible without sounding archaic

though a familiar name little was known about the english mystic margery kempe c 1373 c 1440 for hundreds of years except that she had an association with the great julian of norwich this all changed in 1934 with the discovery of the book of margery kempe in a library where it had lain hidden for four hundred years finding margery s own story was important not just because of the light it shed on her life but it also turned out to be the first known autobiography in the english language even more intriguing to the experts of the day this unique document was written by a woman but if anyone had expected to find her anything like her cloistered contemporary julian they were in for something of a surprise far from being a typical holy woman margery kempe was married and mother of fourteen children moreover she had been a woman of substance even running a large brewery for a time after turning to religion she traveled thousands of miles around the known world on pilgrimages to distant lands beyond the circumstances of her life what s most compelling about the text is the inner margery that emerges her account of spiritual awakening far from being a blissful episode is instead full of conflict and recrimination what good was this new way of life if it caused her such trouble was this really the only way to lead a holy life margery remained unsure of the answers but her patience in her struggle is a wonder to behold and an example for us today

the book of margery kempe is the story of a boisterous worldly mystic that will appeal to modern women margery the mother of fourteen wife of a debt ridden lusty husband a hoarder of secret sin brings the world of medieval women alive to contemporary readers her earthly emotional autobiography dictated to a priest near the end of her life known as the first written in english reveals a woman whose passions vanities were turned from self absorption to the service of her lord it records a brand of mysticism marked by pilgrimages secret penances near hangings as a heretic uncontrollable tears inspired by the holy spirit a love of god so intense that the passion of jesus reeled before margery in much the same way as a film does for us today the book of margery kempe paints a vivid portrait of a unique medieval mystic a woman more vibrantly emotionally attached to god than to pious mortifications carried out in isolation

this innovative volume harnesses the interdisciplinarity and flexibility of encounter to provide dynamic readings the book of margery kempe in the twenty first century incorporating thirteen original chapters and a critical introduction it offers myriad exciting approaches to this important and ever surprising medieval text

a biography of the medieval english religious pilgrim margery kempe and a social and cultural history of her world

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a portrait of margery kempe a strange character who lived a colourful life in a turbulent often tragic world because margery kempe was illiterate her book was dictated to two scribes showing an extraordinary recall of outer events and of her inner life over 40 years

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