

ENGLISH 632
Margery Kempe CSI; In Search of the Scribe.
Fall 2006. SLN 15187
Monday 4.40 - 7.30. LL 148

Professor Rosalynn Voaden

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Office hours: Monday 2.00 - 3.30 pm and 7.30 - 8.30 pm; Wednesday 1.30 - 3.00 pm; and by appointment.

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The Course

I) The Problem

This will be a unique and experimental class, conducted in a manner unusual in the humanities. Using a method more common to the sciences, rather than pursuing individual research projects, the entire group will focus on one problem and we will all work together as a team to gather and analyze the evidence.

The problem which faces the group is as follows:

Ever since the discovery of *The Book of Margery Kempe* in 1934, scholars have puzzled over the identity of the scribe. Who was this person, who only consented to write *The Book* when persuaded by a miracle, who worked closely with this contentious and controversial woman, and who is responsible for possibly the most intriguing record of a medieval Englishwoman's life and spiritual experiences? In this course, we will try to solve the mystery. We will look for clues in the text itself, and sift through every kind of contemporaneous record and source of information we can think of, as well as reading everything ever written by modern scholars on the scribe and the writing of the book.

Because this course will be pure research, a matter of following the clues and pursuing the references, I can't outline a conventional syllabus or schedule of topics and readings: I don't know what is going to happen, what the group will discover and need to do, any more than you do. However, I can indicate some of the things I expect the group to achieve.

ii) The Results

Although identifying the scribe is the ultimate goal, and a consummation devoutly to be wished, there are other things we can achieve along the way.

a) Create a powerful website incorporating all the research findings. This will be linked through ACMRS and the English department, as well as to other relevant websites.

b) Develop an extensive, possibly annotated, bibliography which documents all the sources you have explored. This will form part of the website.

c) Make a presentation on The Search for the Scribe at the ACMRS conference in February 2007. The format of the presentation will be determined by you, but you will have to submit an abstract for a session by 15 October, 2006. Details of the conference are available on the ACMRS website.

iii) Evaluation

Final grades will be based on your self-evaluation of your contribution to the project (what you initiated, what you worked on with others, discoveries you made, list of readings, your research contributions, contributions to the final goals of the project etc.) combined with my observations of your work during the semester.

A Beginning Bibliography

Following are some secondary sources which might be useful to kick-start the investigation.

Atkinson, C. W., *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca, 1983).

Barratt, A., 'Margery Kempe and the King's Daughter of Hungary', in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. S. J. McEntire (New York, 1992), pp. 189-201.

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Beadle, R., 'A Handlist of Later Middle English Manuscripts Copied by Norfolk Scribes', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. F. Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 102-8.

Boffey, J., 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 159-82.

Cleve, G., 'Semantic Dimensions in Margery Kempe's "Whyght Clothys"', *Mystics Quarterly* 12: 4 (1986), 162-70.

Ellis, D.S., 'Margery Kempe and King's Lynn', in S. McEntire (ed.), *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ??

- Ellis, R., 'Margery Kempe's Scribe and the Miraculous Books', in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition*, ed. H. Phillips (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 161-75.
- Hirsh, J. C., 'Author and Scribe in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Medium Aevum* 44 (1975), 145-50.
- Johnson, L. S., 'The Trope of the Scribe: the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe', *Speculum* 66 (1991), 820-38.
- Lochrie, K., 'The Book of Margery Kempe: the Marginal Woman's Quest for Literary Authority', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986), 34-55.
- ., *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia, 1991).
- McGann, J. J., 'The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary Works', in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 69-89.
- Mooney, L.R. "Chaucer's Scribe", *Speculum* 81:1 (2006), 97-138.
- Owen, D.H. (ed.), *The Making of King's Lynn: A Documentary Survey* (London, 1984).
- Riddy, F., "'Women talking about the things of God": a Late Medieval Sub-culture', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. C. M. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 104-27.
- Sargent, M., 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 225-40.
- Scott Stokes, C., 'Margery Kempe: Her Life and the Early History of Her Book', *Mystics Quarterly*, 25:1/2 (1999).
- Staley, L. *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*. University Park, PA, 1994.
- Tanner, N. P., *The Church in Late-Medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984).
- Watson, N., "The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*" in *Voices in Dialogue*, eds L. Olson and K. Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, 2005, pp. 395-434. See also F. Riddy's response immediately following, pp. 435-53.

Internet Source: Mapping Margery Kempe.

<http://www.holycross.edu/departments/visarts/projects/kempe/>