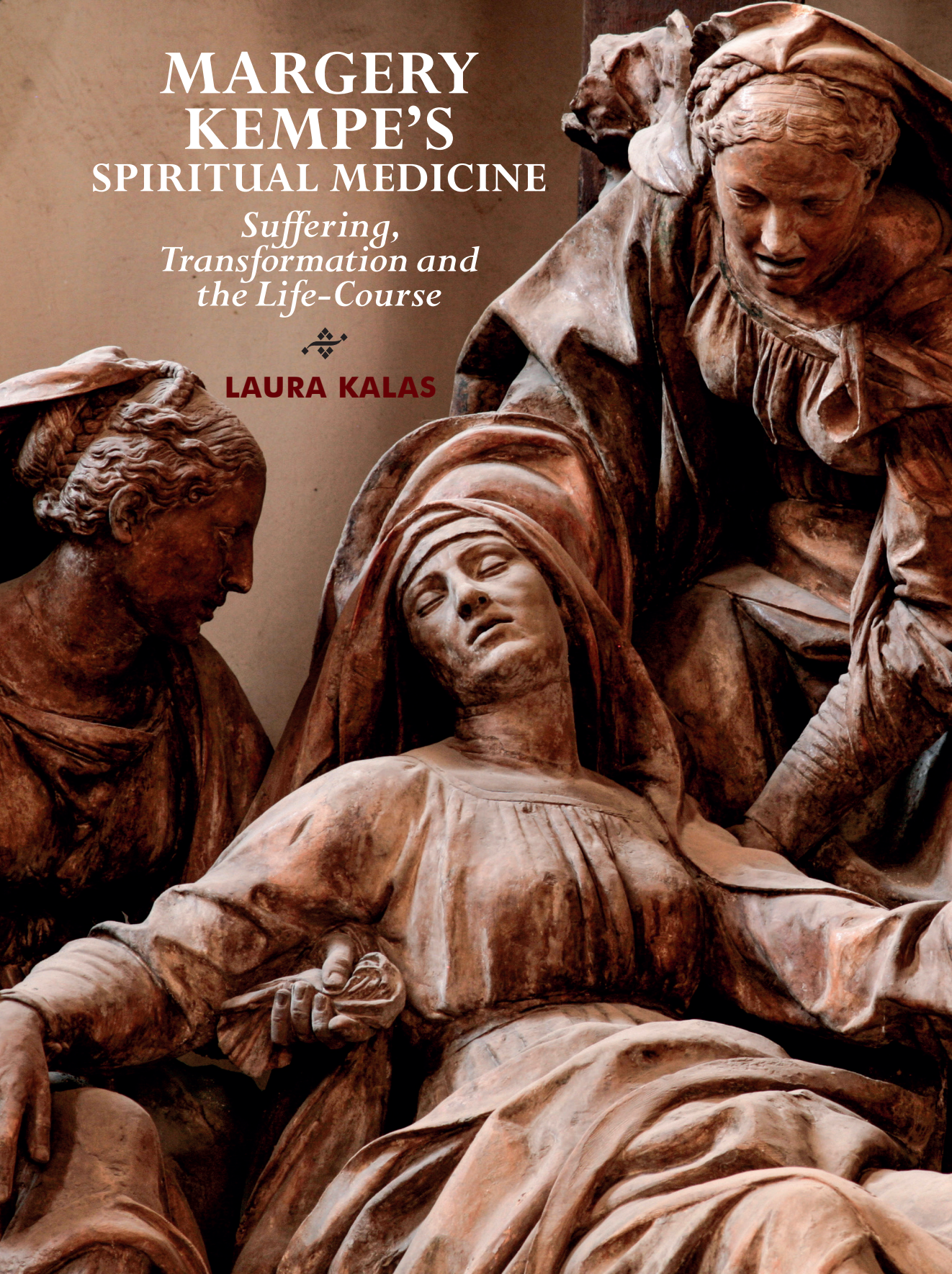


# MARGERY KEMPE'S SPIRITUAL MEDICINE

*Suffering,  
Transformation and  
the Life-Course*



**LAURA KALAS**



## MARGERY KEMPE'S SPIRITUAL MEDICINE



MARGERY KEMPE'S SPIRITUAL MEDICINE  
Suffering, Transformation and the Life-Course

Laura Kalas

D. S. BREWER

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*For my parents, Anne and Paul Kalas*



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## *Edge*

### Disclaimer:

Some content in the printed version of this book  
is not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the poem on this page please refer to  
the printed version of the book.

Sylvia Plath

*al shal be wele, and al shall be wele, and all manner thing shal be wele.*  
Julian of Norwich

# Acknowledgements

This book has materialised at a life moment that resonates curiously with the medieval women of a similar age and stage whose tenacity, persistence, and textual production inspired my return to academia with the same impulse to grow, and to write. That I have been given the chance to flourish in an academic career is something for which I will always be grateful, and I am indebted to my colleagues at Swansea University for giving me the opportunity to do that.

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my Margery Kempe ‘partner in crime’, Laura Varnam, whose wisdom and friendship I value greatly. Any errors in this manuscript of course remain my own.

The discovery of the contents of the recipe from the Margery Kempe manuscript has been a joy to reveal, and possible only with the help of several individuals. My thanks go to Andrea Clarke at the British Library for allowing me access to the manuscript, to the British Library imaging scientist, Christina Duffy, for providing me with the multispectral images, and to Daniel Wakelin, Eddie Jones, Susan Maddock, Laura Varnam, and Paul Acker for their help in interpreting the handwriting and enabling me to arrive at a transcription. I am also grateful to Theresa Tyers for taking on the unenviable task of recreating the medicinal sweets in an impressively authentic manner.

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# Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
BMK	<i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
e.s.	Extra Series
o.s.	Original Series
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
s.s.	Supplementary Series
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , ed. Hans Kurath and S.M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1952–) <a href="https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary">https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/ middle-english-dictionary/dictionary</a>
n.s.	New Series
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64)
TEAMS	The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages

## Note on Editions and Translations

The edition used throughout is *The Book of Margery Kempe*, EETS o.s. 212, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen (London: Oxford University Press, 1997, unaltered reprint). Page numbers appear parenthetically in the text; all italic emphases are my own. All quotations from the Bible in English are from the Douay-Rheims version: <<http://www.drbo.org/>>.

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# Introduction

For fly[ ] take [ ]  
Sugyr candy Sugur plate Sugur wyth  
Annes sed fenkkell sed notmikis Synamum  
Genger Comfetis and licoris Bett them to  
Gedyr in a mortar and sett them in all maner  
of metis and drynkis and dry frist & last et yt  
[ ]ger candy sug[?u]r pla[?te]<sup>1</sup>

This book begins, *mutatis mutandis*, at its end: a mystery solved; a body healed. The hastily written, faded recipe, hidden on the final folio of BL Additional MS 61823, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, has puzzled scholars of Kempe since the rediscovery of the manuscript in 1934, lingering in a tantalising lacuna of illegibility (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps aptly, the British Library's multispectral imaging equipment – the same technology employed in space exploration to capture data about the earth's surface and the universe, that is, Creation itself – has enabled the faded handwriting of the manuscript's recipe to be deciphered (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>3</sup> The recipe, annotated by a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century reader, probably

<sup>1</sup> Translation: 'For fly[ ] take [ ] / Sugar candy, sugar plate, sugar with / Aniseed, fennel seed, nutmeg, cinnamon, / Ginger comfetes and licorice. Beat them / together in a mortar and make them in all / manner of food and drinks and dry first and last eat it. / [Sugar candy, sugar plate]'. The top line of the recipe is unclear, but the word 'fly' may indicate 'flux'. If so, the rest of the recipe is unlikely to be connected to the top line, since the nature of the hot, dry ingredients indicates a remedy for a phlegmatic disorder of the stomach.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Andrea Clarke at The British Library for allowing me access to the manuscript; to Christina Duffy, Imaging Scientist at The British Library, for providing me with the multispectral images of the folio, and to the British Library Board. My very grateful thanks go to Eddie Jones, Daniel Wakelin, Susan Maddock, Laura Varnam, and Paul Acker for their help in transcribing the recipe. All errors in transcription remain my own.

<sup>3</sup> A multispectral image captures data within specific wavelength ranges across the electromagnetic spectrum and allows the extraction of additional information that the human eye fails to capture with its receptors for red, green and blue. It was originally developed for space-based imaging and is still used by NASA. See, for example, Mary Pagnuttia et al., 'Radiometric characterization of IKONOS multispectral imagery', *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 88 (2003), 53–68.

in a monastic context, is for medicinal sweets: curative digestives known as 'dragges' that were commonly used remedies for digestion, employed to dry and warm a cold, phlegmatic stomach.<sup>4</sup> It calls for plentiful sugar, itself considered medicinal in the Middle Ages, and the luxuriant spices of aniseed, fennel seed, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, and liquorice. Given Kempe's attendance at many meals with 'worthy' folk, it is inconceivable that she would not herself have eaten dragges. The Middle English translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* (written c. 1240), a medical text that circulated widely in the fourteenth century, notes that sweet flavours are pure 'by kynde [nature]' and beneficial for bodily health. Sweetness is restorative, softening the body with moisture: it 'restoreþ in þe body þinge þat is lost, and most conforteþ feble vertues and spirites, and norissheþ speciallich all þe membres'.<sup>5</sup> The spiced sweetness of the recipe is, then, at once therapeutic, sensory, symbolic, and salvific, since the moral properties of food were also imbricated with its ingestion in medieval culture. By consuming a foodstuff, one would acquire some of its associated properties (the Eucharistic wafer, for example).<sup>6</sup> As a medico-religious addendum by one scribal reader, the recipe functions as a means of enhancing – or at least acknowledging – the medical subtext of the *Book*, itself an object of healing potential for subsequent readers who are edified by the unfolding of Margery Kempe's spiritual journey. It is, then, a metonymy for Kempe's own spiritual healing. This healing is inscribed both by the Proem's amanuensis and by Kempe, the designated 'creatur' of the *Book*, who, as a part of the Creation largely beyond her earthly prescience, *sees* in glimpses, like the multispectral snapshots of the twenty-first-century universe.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed exploration of the recipe's genesis, ingredients, purpose, and spiritual semiosis, see Laura Kalas Williams, 'The *Sweetness* of Confection: A Recipe for Spiritual Health in London, British Library, Additional MS 61823, *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 40 (2018), 155–90. Short passages from the article are replicated in this study. An adapted section from Chapter 1 appears also appears in the article "'Slayn for Goddys lofe": Margery Kempe's Melancholia and the Bleeding of Tears', *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality*, 52:1 (2016), 84–100. Thanks are due to the editorial boards of *SAC* and *MFF* for allowing the use of the material in this book.

<sup>5</sup> *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum*, 2 vols, ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), vol. 2, p. 1307.

<sup>6</sup> C.M. Woolgar, 'Food and the Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 36 (2010), 1–19 (p. 8).

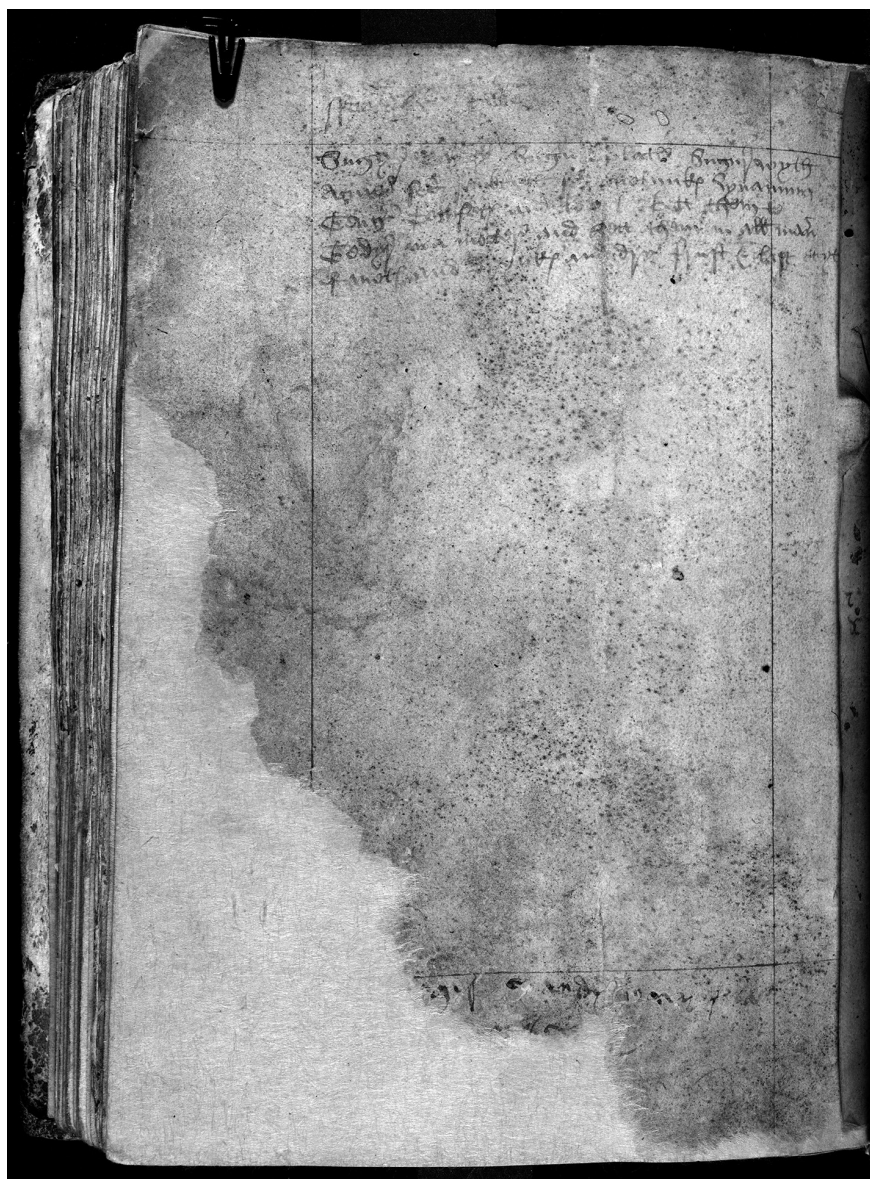


Figure 1. The recipe folio: British Library Additional MS 61823, fol. 124v.

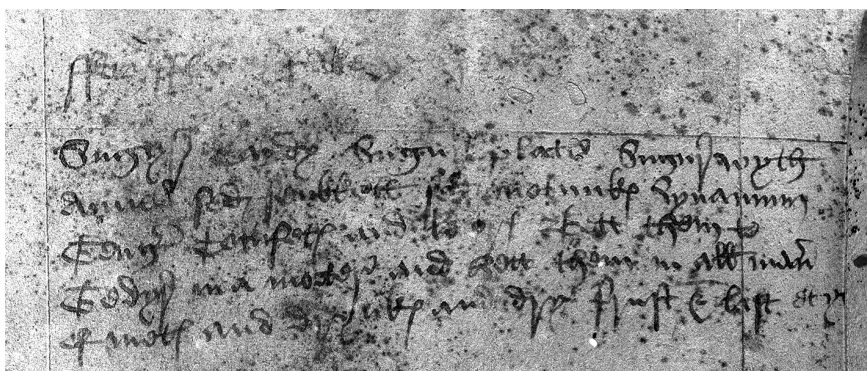


Figure 2. Detail of the recipe folio achieved using multispectral imaging technology: British Library Additional MS 61823, fol. 124v.

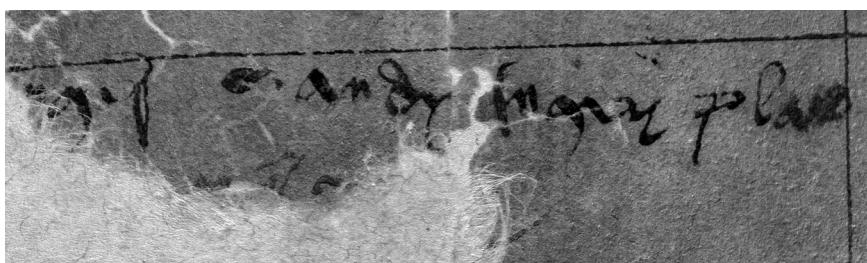


Figure 3. Detail of the bottom of the recipe folio achieved using multispectral imaging technology: British Library Additional MS 61823, fol. 124v.

The interaction of the medieval and postmodern technologies involved in rendering visible the recipe on the page – the medieval codex and the multispectral imaging technology that unveils the past in the present – resonates with the *Book's* own achronicity, revealing the type of ‘heterogeneous temporal experience’ signalled by Carolyn Dinshaw, like Kempe’s own mystical dissolution of time and space.<sup>7</sup> This ‘asynchronous *now*’ of the *Book*, as Dinshaw puts it, was made literal in 2018 when the medieval recipe was recreated and Kempe scholars sampled the resulting spiced sweets, a further way through which twenty-first-century readers encountered the past, ‘tasting’ Kempe’s world (Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the annotated recipe chimes with the persistent tendency in scholarly responses to the *Book* to medicalise, or pathologise,

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, p. 117. The sweets’ resurrection was thanks to Theresa Tyers, who painstakingly recreated the ingredients and ‘draggēs’ for the landmark conference ‘Margery Kempe Studies in the Twenty-First Century’, organised by myself and Laura Varnam, held at University College, Oxford, 5–7 April 2018.





Figure 4. The medicinal sweets recreated by Theresa Tyers.

Kempe's particular form of spirituality.<sup>9</sup> In her Prefatory Note to the 1940 EETS edition, Hope Emily Allen described Kempe as 'largely limited by her constitutional difficulties'. She was, she stated, 'petty, neurotic, vain, illiterate, physically and nervously over-strained; devout, much-travelled, forceful and talented', and Allen hoped that the EETS volume would 'aid the professional psychologist who later will doubtless pronounce at length on Margery's type of neuroticism' (lxiv–lxv). Many have done just that, of course. But while Allen concedes Kempe's tenacity as well as her supposed congenital 'difficulties',

<sup>9</sup> The recipe was added by a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century reader of the *Book*, according to Sanford Brown Meech, *BMK*, p. xlv. Little has been written about the recipe itself. It is mentioned in Kelly Parsons, 'The Red Ink Annotator of *The Book of Margery Kempe* and His Lay Audience', in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (Victoria: English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 2001), pp. 143–216 (pp. 153–4); and Johanne Paquette, 'Male Approbation in the Extant Glosses to the Book of Margery Kempe', in *Women and the Divine in Literature before 1700: Essays in Memory of Margot Louis*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Victoria: ELS Editions, 2009), pp. 153–69 (p. 158). Gail McMurray Gibson speculated that the recipe could be for a caudle in *Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 51.

subsequent diagnostic readings of Kempe have tended towards the pejorative, marginalising her or framing her insistence upon a bodily experience of God as inferior to the more theologically sophisticated meditations of her mystical contemporaries. But what happens if we read the *Book* not only through the psychology of the 'now', but in the light of medical writings of the 'then'? What if the ubiquitous doctrine of *Christus medicus*, or Christ the Physician, shapes Kempe's life-course more venously than previously acknowledged? Might not such understandings transform our insight into Margery Kempe's mystical experience and its articulation in her world and her text?

This book is concerned with the interactions of medicine, mysticism, life cycle, and (re)production, and with Margery Kempe's negotiation of the painful inheritance of female flesh. In offering a new way of reading the *Book* as a narrative of Kempe's *own* engagement with and use of the medical paradigms of which she has previously been a passive subject, I argue for a turn from the pathologisation that has hitherto reduced her to a historical figure of perplexing disorder. The book also explores the surrogacy hermeneutic that I see as a central *modus operandi* for Kempe's devotional and healing practices, that is, the substitutional activities that she undertakes, both mystically and socially, and which are authorised in the locus of the post-reproductive maternal body. Furthermore, it examines the melancholic mourning phenomena that underlie the operations in the *Book* as Kempe seeks a 'truth' in her quest to *know* God via an epistemology of pain and suffering. That journey begins with the inversion of health as she suffers great bodily sickness as a trigger for spiritual transformation, a trajectory inscribed by the clerical author of the Proem as a primary structuring device:

[God] *turnyd helth in-to sekenesse*, prosperyte in-to aduersyte, worship in-to reprep, & love in-to hatered. Thus *alle þis thyngys turning vp-so-down*, þis creatur which many 3erys had gon wyl & euyr ben vnstable was parfythly drawnen & steryd to entren þe way of hy perfeccyon, which parfyth wey Cryst ower Savyowr in hys propyr persoon eamplyd. Sadly he trad it & dewly he went it befor. Than þis creatur, of whom thys tretys thorw þe mercy of Ihesu schal schewen in party þe leuyng, towched be þe hand of owyr Lord wyth grett bodily sekenesse, wher-thorw sche lost reson & her wyttes a long tyme tyl *ower Lord be grace restoryd her a-geyn, as it schal mor openly be shewed afiyrward* (1–2, my emphases).

Margery Kempe's spiritual and medical restoration thus forms a central hermeneutic of the 'schort tretys and a comfortabyll' that is the *Book*. It is 'ower Lord be grace [that] restoryd her a-geyn' – her physician, God, the healer of her body and soul.<sup>10</sup> The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had stipulated the primacy of the priest over the physician, stating that:

<sup>10</sup> On the interplay of medicine and religion in the Middle Ages see 'Medical Discourse in Premodern Europe', Special Issue, ed. Marion Turner, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 46 (2016); *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. Naoë

[we] command physicians of the body, when they are called to the sick, to warn and persuade them first of all to call in physicians of the soul so that after their spiritual health has been seen to they may respond better to medicine for their bodies, for when the cause ceases so does the effect.<sup>11</sup>

The interplay of medicine and religion, made scholastic in the universities of Italy and France and later disseminated to England, is evidenced locally in Bishop's Lynn (now King's Lynn) – Margery Kempe's home town in Norfolk – by records of religious and medical treatises. The Hospital of St Mary Magdalen in Lynn contained a *Liber vitae* which listed its twelve brethren and sisters and the names of visitors and patrons to be prayed for.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, a thirteenth-century book of miscellaneous *medica* – Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1398 – was held at the Carmelite convent at Lynn.<sup>13</sup> Margery Kempe was closely connected to both the Dominican and Carmelite Orders in Lynn, and the Carmelite friar Master Aleyn was a particular admirer of Kempe and is likely to have impressed both his medical and theological learning upon her.

The phenomena of pain and mysticism and their ontological connection form a further foundation for my present exploration as specific derivatives of the broader medico-religious context in which this book sits. Like mystical experience, pain is extra-linguistic, intangible, esoteric, and always 'other'. Joanna Bourke's argument that pain is a self-authenticating phenomenon, not an 'it' in the body – or an entity in itself – but a 'type of event', is a useful way of thinking about the articulation of pain in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, particularly since Kempe persistently conflates physical pain and psychological or spiritual suffering, employing the term 'peyne' interchangeably. Bourke, then, challenges Elaine Scarry's essentialising of pain as an 'ontological fallacy', asserting that Scarry mistakenly treats 'metaphoric ways of conceiving suffering ... as descriptions of an actual entity'.<sup>14</sup> The problematics

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Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015); Daniel McCann, *Soul-Health: Therapeutic Reading in Later Medieval England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018); 'Medieval and Early Modern Literature, Science and Medicine', ed. Rachel Falconer and Denis Renevey, *Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 28 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2013); Louise Bishop, *Words, Stones, Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007); and *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Biller and Joseph Ziegler (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> From The Fourth General Council of the Lateran, 1215 AD., decree 22, in *Papal Encyclicals Online* <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net>> [accessed 8th May 2016].

<sup>12</sup> *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, ed. Neil Ker, 2nd edn (London: Butler and Tanner, 1964), p. 127. The *Liber* is now held at Norwich in the Norfolk and Norwich Record Office, B-L ixb. On spiritual and medical care in medieval hospitals see Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine for the Soul: The Life, Death and Resurrection of an English Medieval Hospital, St Giles's, Norwich, c. 1249–1550* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999); and *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice*, ed. Barbara S. Bowers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 127.

<sup>14</sup> Joanna Bourke, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 3–5. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).



of definition resist satisfactory resolution, particularly when one is attempting to transfer modern categories of pain, psychology, biology, and neuroscience to the texts of the Middle Ages. But I do not think that the distinction between pain and suffering need necessarily be rendered as binary. This book will employ the terms *pain*, *suffering*, and *tribulation* as multivalent nuances of the same overarching experience because Kempe herself uses the term *peyne* metaphorically, spiritually, and literally, and because, in the medieval imaginary, the signifiers of corporeal, spiritual, and social 'suffering' always return to the same signified teleology: God.

The cultural framework of Margery Kempe's experience of pain is predicated upon her interpretation of events and their relationship to God's plan for her life. Indeed, pain is argued by Javier Moscoso to be 'incomprehensible without this duality between the unified form of experience and the cultural modulation that allows the breaking of the (supposedly objective) correspondence between physiological pain and its subjective expression'.<sup>15</sup> The present study of medicalised spirituality and the synchronic spiritualisation of medicine thus offers a fresh way of approaching Kempe's mystical body-in-pain and aims to further our understanding of the *Book* as a product of the micro/macroc cosmic concept of the universe and human experience in the medieval imaginary. It will not hide from Kempe's sense of her embodied, female, maternal 'essence', experienced subjectively (and abjectly); at the same time it will explore the medico-cultural *construction* of that same female flesh as diseased and disordered. Through a broadly interpreted framework of the life-course, the book shows how Margery Kempe utilises that very socio-biological matrix to transition, transform, and repurpose herself, within an overarching surrogacy hermeneutic and towards a transcendent encounter with God. My approach is, moreover, part of a necessary project in aligning modern methodologies more holistically with the pre-Cartesian conception of the integrated body-soul dynamic, since, whether perceived through her 'bodily' or 'ghostly' eye, mystical and painful experience for Margery Kempe is always equally and 'verily' authentic.

### *Towards a Medicalised Hermeneutic of Spirituality*

The reframing of Margery Kempe's mystical body that this project seeks to achieve occurs within a growing corpus of scholarship that has taken multiple turns, not least the retrospective diagnoses that were favoured in the medicalised studies of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>16</sup> Among these, Richard Lawes argued that Kempe's 'symptoms' indicate a depressive psychosis in the puerperium,

<sup>15</sup> Javier Moscoso, *Pain: A Cultural History*, trans. Sarah Thomas and Paul House (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 6–8.

<sup>16</sup> See Diane Watt's very useful online bibliography on Margery Kempe criticism: 'Margery Kempe', *Oxford Bibliographies Online* <DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199846719-0034>.

along with temporal-lobe epilepsy or psychomotor epilepsy, considering the *Discretio spirituum* of the Middle Ages as similar to modern psychiatry since both systems recognise the patterns of inner experience.<sup>17</sup> Further ‘diagnoses’ include Hope Phyllis Weissman’s Freudian interpretation of Kempe’s tears as a productively utilised facet of a ‘conversion hysteric’; and other studies that conceptualise the first childbirth episode as an example of postpartum depression or psychosis.<sup>18</sup> Wendy Harding interpreted Kempe’s behaviours as mimicking the pains of birthing, while other pathologies have included Tourette’s Syndrome and the psychological advantages of ‘hysteria’.<sup>19</sup> Such approaches followed early and mid-twentieth-century psychoanalytical responses to the *Book*, which mainly dismissed Kempe as pathologically disordered.<sup>20</sup> The historicist approaches that have dominated Kempe scholarship in more recent years have continued the debate over the form of authorship that the *Book* takes, building on John Hirsch’s stance that the scribe is the author of the text. Lynn Staley’s important intervention drew a distinction between Kempe the author, Margery, her fictional creation, and the scribe as a literary trope. Nicholas Watson conversely regards Kempe as the author in a ‘positivistic

<sup>17</sup> Richard Lawes, ‘The Madness of Margery Kempe’, in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Ireland and Wales, Exeter Symposium VI, Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 1991*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 147–68; and ‘Psychological Disorder and the Autobiographical Impulse in Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Thomas Hoccleve’, in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 217–43.

<sup>18</sup> See Hope Phyllis Weissman, ‘Margery Kempe in Jerusalem: *Hysterica Compassio* in the Late Middle Ages’, in *Acts of Interpretation: The Text in Its Contexts, 700–1600, Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. 201–17; Maureen Fries, ‘Margery Kempe’, in *An Introduction to The Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 217–35; and Mary Hardman Farley, ‘Her Own Creatur: Religion, Feminist Criticism, and the functional Eccentricity of Margery Kempe’, *Exemplaria*, 11 (1999), 1–21. On the risks of retrospective diagnoses see Piers D. Mitchell, ‘Retrospective Diagnosis and the Use of Historical Texts for Investigating Disease in the Past’, *International Journal of Paleopathology*, 1 (2011), 81–8; and Juliette Vuille, ‘“Maybe I’m Crazy?” Diagnosis and Contextualisation of Medieval Female Mystics’, in *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. Yoshikawa, pp. 103–20.

<sup>19</sup> Wendy Harding, ‘Medieval Women’s Unwritten Discourse on Motherhood: A Reading of Two Fifteenth Century Texts’, *Women’s Studies*, 21 (1992), 197–209; Nancy P. Stork, ‘Did Margery Kempe suffer from Tourette’s Syndrome?’, *Mediaeval Studies*, 59 (1997), 261–300; and Becky R. Lee, ‘The Medieval Hysteric and the Psychedelic Psychologist: A Revaluation of the Mysticism of Margery Kempe in the Light of the Transpersonal Psychology of Stanislaw Grof’, *Studia Mystica*, 23 (2002), 102–26.

<sup>20</sup> For early accounts of Kempe’s ‘disordered’ spirituality, see Herbert Thurston, ‘Margery the Astonishing’, *The Month*, 168 (1936), 446–56; David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), pp. 138–50; and Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 96. More recently, Riehle has ‘come to recognize [Kempe’s] importance’, in *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 280.

attitude to some of the text's historical claims'.<sup>21</sup> New historical discoveries have deepened our understanding of the *Book's* genesis. Sebastian Sobecki's uncovering of evidence in Gdansk corroborates the theory that Margery Kempe's son was the first scribe, and Robert Spryngolde the revising, clerical scribe. Anthony Bale has traced Richard Salhouse (inscribed at the end of the *Book* in the lines 'Jhesu mercy quod Salthows') as a monk at the powerful Benedictine cathedral priory in Norwich, persuasively arguing that he was the copier of the original manuscript, and most likely writing in Norwich – one of the most wealthy and prestigious religious houses of Europe.<sup>22</sup> Bale's work has significant implications for the source of the recipe's annotation, since a wealthy Norwich monastic context would explain the expensive ingredients of the 'dragges', and its reception in a location of theological and medical education resonates further with this volume's central concern to illuminate the medico-religious operations that underlie the *Book's* presentation of physio-spiritual health.

The *Book's* very capaciousness and resistance to definition are reflected in the expansiveness of its critical avenues, not least those that have situated Kempe as an authorised holy woman: as saint, pious exemplar, and as part of a much broader female devotional and European context than was previously recognised.<sup>23</sup> The work of Sarah McNamer in foregrounding the

<sup>21</sup> See Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Anthony Goodman, *Margery Kempe and Her World* (London: Longman, 2002); John C. Hirsch, 'Author and Scribe in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Medium Aevum*, 44 (1975), 145–50; Lynn Staley Johnson, 'The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe', *Speculum*, 66 (1991), 820–38; Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and Nicholas Watson, 'The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 395–434 (p. 397). For readings of collaborative authorship see Ruth Evans, 'The Book of Margery Kempe', in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350–c. 1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 507–21; and Felicity Riddy, 'Text and Self in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Voices in Dialogue*, ed. Olson and Kerby-Fulton, pp. 435–53. On the autobiography of the *Book* see Janel M. Mueller, 'Autobiography of a New Creature: Female Spirituality, Selfhood, and Authorship in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 155–71.

<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Sobecki, '"The writyng of this tretys": Margery Kempe's Son and the Authorship of Her Book', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 37 (2015), 257–83; and Anthony Bale, 'Richard Salhouse of Norwich and the Scribe of *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 52 (2017), 173–87 (p. 177).

<sup>23</sup> On sainthood, see Gail McMurray Gibson, 'St Margery: "The Book of Margery Kempe"', in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Joan Bechtold, and Constance S. Wright (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 144–63; Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing: Works by and for Women, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 116–35; Katherine J. Lewis, 'Margery Kempe and Saint Making in Later Medieval England', in *A Companion to 'The Book of Margery Kempe'*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 195–215; Rebecca Krug,

‘insistent feminization’ of spirituality during the so-called ‘affective turn’ of the later Middle Ages has inspired scrutiny of the role of affect and emotion in female spirituality, something that is taken up by Rebecca Krug in her book-length study of Kempe which brings to the fore the spiritual comfort offered by devotional writing and community and Kempe’s inherent contribution.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, that devotional community is increasingly understood to be Europe-wide, indicating how Kempe’s affective and bodily inflected form of spirituality was greatly influenced by her Continental antecedents and contemporaries, through texts that circulated in England and were read to her by her confessors.<sup>25</sup> The pioneering work of Caroline Walker Bynum has been central to much of our understanding of medieval religious women and their embodiment, while other scholars have specifically uncovered the cruciality of Margery Kempe’s own bodily types of devotion.<sup>26</sup> McNamer has

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‘Margery Kempe’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100–1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 217–28; and Krug, ‘The Idea of Sanctity and the Uncanonised life of Margery Kempe’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*, ed. Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 129–46. On authority and exemplarity see Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe’s Meditations: The Context of Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy, and Iconography* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007); Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 143–82; and Laura Varnam, ‘The Importance of St Margaret’s Church in *The Book of Margery Kempe*: A Sacred Place and an Exemplary Parishioner’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, ed. Joanna Martin and Rob Lutton, 61 (2017), pp. 197–243.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 11; Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2017).

<sup>25</sup> See Diane Watt, ‘Before Margery: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and Its Antecedents’, and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa and Liz Herbert McAvoy, ‘The Intertextual Dialogue and Conversational Theology of Mechthild of Hackeborn and Margery Kempe’, both in *Encountering The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Laura Kalas and Laura Varnam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming). See also ‘Women’s Literary Culture & Late Medieval English Writing’, Special Issue, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, *The Chaucer Review*, 51 (2016); and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, ‘Mysticism and Medicine: Holy Communion in the *Vita of Marie d’Oignies* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*’, in ‘Convergence / Divergence: The Politics of Late Medieval English Devotional and Medical Discourses’, Special Issue, ed. Denis Renevey and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Poetica*, 72 (2009), 109–22. Some prior work on the Continental tradition includes: Gunnel Cleve, ‘Margery Kempe: A Scandinavian Influence on Medieval England’, and Susan Dickman, ‘Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman’, both in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1984*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), pp. 163–75 and pp. 150–68 respectively; and Janet Dillon, ‘Holy Women and Their Confessors or Confessors and Their Holy Women?: Margery Kempe and Continental Tradition’, in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 115–40.

<sup>26</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Urzone, 1989). On Margery Kempe and corporeal spirituality see Liz Herbert McAvoy,