

Juliana Dresvina

Creating a Margery-sized Space

Margery Kempe's Narrative Defences and Offences

(An Academic Thought Experiment)

Margery Kempe (1373 – c. 1440) was born Margery Burnham (or Brunham) in Bishop's Lynn (now King's Lynn), Norfolk, to a wealthy mercantile family. Around 1393 she married a fellow merchant John Kempe (born c. 1365) and suffered a mental breakdown after the birth of their first child, with episodes of self-harm, depression, and hallucinations; she went on to give birth to thirteen more children. After her local businesses failed, she became intensely religious, going on pilgrimages all around England, and subsequently travelled to Rome, Jerusalem, Germany and Norway. Claiming to have regular visions of Christ, Mary, and saints, Margery suffered bouts of uncontrollable screaming every time she heard or saw anything she would interpret as a reference to Christ's Passion, which secured her a reputation both of a holy and a possessed woman. In the late 1430s, she dictated a story of her life to a succession of three scribes, first of which may have been her son John Kempe, a citizen of Danzig. The single extant manuscript of her book, now kept in the British Library in London (MS Add. 61823, c. 1440) is often styled as the first autobiography in the English language. Since its rediscovery in 1934 in a cupboard of a Catholic country house during a game of table tennis, it went through multiple editions and translations and became both a part of the history curricula and a subject of numerous scholarly works.

The ever-growing body of writing on Margery perhaps attests to a cord which her life strikes in many readers, making academics engage with her in multiple diverse ways. As Chris Wickham recently put it, “Margery Kempe was doubtless, on the basis of her book at least, a totally infuriating person, but she managed to create a Margery-sized space for herself and defend it against people of every social level”.¹ This is perhaps the best one-sentence summary of what Margery means to me personally. From my everyday experience, despite equal opportunities, diversity, advanced medicine, and political correctness of today’s world, it still rather sucks being a woman, an offspring of a wrong social caste and country, and born with a chronic health condition. Being a medieval woman, especially one with aspirations, ambitions, and serious health issues was certainly even less fun.

One way of dealing with the unsatisfactory present and the hopeless future (e.g. the perspective of old age, infirmity, pain, and eventually death) is retreating into a fantasy, daydreaming, creating one’s own version of mental and emotional space, the world with more satisfying parameters.² An effective opportunity to arrange such a space in our modern culture is presented by fan-fiction. According to *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, “Anyone who has ever fantasised about an alternative ending to a favourite book or imagined the back story of a minor character in a favourite film has engaged in creating a form of fan fiction”.³ In my opinion, reading *The Book of Margery Kempe* (hereafter *BMK*) in dialogue with fan fiction shows once again how Margery’s life still has much to say to the 21st century.

Many scholars have criticised anachronistic approaches to Margery’s text, especially the “reflex resort to popular psychology”, which is “neither historically sensitive nor medically sound”.⁴ In the past years, in the light of demands for further neurodiversity, her “illness” has been rebranded as a condition leading towards self-transformation, and we are called to abandon our own modern expectations of what is normal and what is abnormal while dealing with texts like hers. Eventually, Anthony Bale states in his introduction to a new popular translation of Margery’s self-narrative, that “the *real* challenge issued by the *BMK* is to assess Kempe’s behaviour *according to her times*” (my emphasis).⁵

Fanfic as a Cognitive Lens to Approach Medieval Literature

Let me address my two potentially anachronistic approaches in reverse order: the use of psychology and the use of fan fiction, because in my cognitive

approach the latter is a subset of the former. I do not wish to pathologize Margery's "experiences" to the point of providing diagnoses; it has been attempted before, and at this stage I am not qualified to say exactly what was wrong with her. Clinical psychologist Alison Torn resists the application of modern terms to a medieval experience, and warns that approaching it through a positivist paradigm is extremely problematic.⁶ At best, we can read it as evidence of the historical provenance of mental illness, but even that is insensitive to the "social meaning of her behaviour and the possible theological interpretations of medieval society".⁷ Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough in their reading of Margery Kempe's inner voices try to build on the data suggesting that although auditory-verbal hallucinations can be symptoms of psychosis, they happen to at least one percent of the "healthy" population, who experience them as both distressing, and as benign or positive.⁸

However, we may be in danger of whitewashing Margery's experiences, reading them as benign or positive. Margery was *not* "fine", nor did she feel that way, at least some of the time, by her own admission. It is enough to recall her descriptions of auditory or multisensory hallucinations, her convulsions, or her many references to her acute suffering, both physical and social, as a result of these "experiences".⁹ Not to mention her regular falling out with her closest relatives, her lack of interest in her fourteen children except for her adult son when he was needed to advance the narrative, denigrating of her husband, interfering with neighbours, giving up other people's property, and generally being insensitive (if not blind) to the states of those real human beings around her.

I am not prepared to write *all* these off as literary topoi. To me, Margery clearly had not just psychological but actual organic issues. However, like many other scholars I admire what she does with what she is given, and how she often pays no attention to the limits set on her by society and her own body. She wants to go on pilgrimage, act as a prophet or a mystic, or be a virgin while being married and bearing children, write her own *vita* – well, damn it, no one can stop her. It is amazing how her inner life spills out into the common, shared reality and sometimes – often – manages to shape it. The most extraordinary episode is perhaps her winning over the initially hostile archbishop of York, when she went from being arrested and threatened with burning to getting a permission to wear white virginal clothes (while still being married), continue her conversations about God with the people in public – after which she stayed within his diocese as long as she needed. If

we are to believe her account, to every one of his commands she answers no; and then she tells him off for arresting her.¹⁰

But how does she do it, where is the source of her confidence? It is not her social position or human patronage; the way I see it, she does it with the help of what in our world can be styled as fanfic (fan fiction) and a closely related and often overlapping cultural phenomenon of cosplay/LARP (costumed play/ live action role-playing game). Such an approach is not as anachronistic as one would think. We all know that even with all the veneration of the *autoritas*, the medieval idea of authorship was more fluid than the modern one and would have appealed to our 21st century fandom. C. S. Lewis, a seasoned fan himself, aptly highlighted medieval and Renaissance culture's priority of utilising other people's plots: "The originality which we regard as a sign of wealth might have seemed to them a confession of poverty."¹¹ Chaucer is famously worried about the lack of control over his own text (in the verse to Adam the Scribe and at the end of *Troilus* where he releases his "little book" into the world to the mercy of both copyists and readers), but his framework and the tropes, here and in the *Canterbury Tales*, are often not original, like that of Shakespeare – or the Trekkies (i.e. fans writing their own stories of Star Trek).¹² Globally, what is the whole of the late chivalric culture, with its fake Round Table and anachronistic tournaments, but merely some elaborate cosplay?

More specifically, one of the features of fanfic is its frequent use of a "Mary Sue" (sometimes called "Gary Stu" for men) type of character who is a self-insertion of the authorial ideal self that facilitates wish-fulfilment. Thus, Lancelot in *Morte Darthur*, I believe, is very much a glorified self-insertion of Thomas Malory, resulting from a midlife crisis and social instability of the War of the Roses: Malory, who spent two decades in reckless fighting and bursting out of various prisons, clearly imagined Lancelot's invincible career as a better and romanticised version of his own. Depending how broadly one wants to apply the concept of fanfic to medieval literature, Dante can be seen as fanboy of Virgil and a "Gary Stu" in the *Comedia*, inserting his poetic idol into his "revenge-fic" as a character, with Petrarch and Boccaccio as Dante's fanboys and Chaucer as theirs. Modern fanfiction scholars praise the genre of their primary interest on the grounds that storytelling is not a professional activity but a human one, and claim that the characters are loved by the fans into greatness.¹³ Having spent many years researching such legendary (i.e. a-historic) saints as St Margaret and St George, I cannot help seeing how they were loved by their devotees into greatness through multiple, often awkwardly

executed, stories.¹⁴ Finally, implanting oneself into an existing canonical narrative is recommended by a popular devotional treatise *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, which famously advocates imagining oneself as a minor character of the sacred history and fantasising about it as a preferred religious practice.¹⁵ Its early 15th-century Middle English adaptation was produced by Nicholas Love, the prior of Mount Grace, the monastery where the sole surviving manuscript of the *BMK* was later kept and read.

There is nothing new in stressing that the framework of Margery's vivid daydreaming is provided by medieval Christianity as distilled and reflected in medieval drama, hagiography, iconography, devotional bestsellers, and pilgrimage sites.¹⁶ But recently scholars such as Anne Wilson, Alicia Spencer-Hall, and Godelinde Perk have commented on how Margery actively searched for models to shape her devotional practices and how such models suited her purpose of self-expansion and self-fashioning. They also further articulated how such pious fantasies as Margery's were authorised by the popular guide to meditations which encouraged devotees to imagine themselves as actors within the sacred narratives.¹⁷ They began to connect Margery's behavioural models with modern cultures of fandom.

This gave me an enormous sense of relief and comradery. Reading Margery's *Book* for the first time many years ago, I could not help feeling embarrassed. It felt like finding a secret teenage girl's journal, in which she inadvertently tells more than she meant to, or even understood. Medieval and early modern works are a treasure trove for scholars in that sense because in the pre-Freudian era, many authors often displayed much more of their personality than they perhaps intended to. Margery was often too reminiscent of a Mary Sue of a female author, dissatisfied with her real as opposed to ideal self, her prospects in the world, and her position in it. However, the potential problem with making fanfiction/medieval literature comparisons is the academic "so-whatness" – yes, they look similar, but how does that help us understand those texts better? Adding the perspective of psychology to the equation is even more problematic, not in the least because the fan studies field began with pathologising psychological studies of fanfiction writers (mostly by men who were themselves not members of fan communities).¹⁸ So heaven forbid you mention "immaturity and affect" in relation to the two, lest you be shut down as speculative and "neither historically sensitive nor medically sound".

However, to me, both fanfic and medieval devotional writings are primarily therapeutic in their intended purpose. They do not just help escape

inhospitable and unsatisfying circumstances, they help create and shape reality – virtual and otherwise. One of the appeals of fanfic is that it allows people more active participation in culture rather than passively receiving it. It is unsurprising that, given continuing social disadvantages, fan fiction is still a female-dominated art form.¹⁹

Granted, the dominant mindset in the modern cosplay and LARP communities assumes that the “actors” are aware of the divide between the consensual universe they design and temporarily inhabit and the “outer” world of their everyday functioning. Yet the border between these two worlds as we see it in many pre-modern examples is much more porous, similar to the blurred boundaries between the authorship of medieval canon vs. fanon (as highlighted above). Traditional societies tend to view the world around them as significantly richer populated than we do now, by virtue of believing that its vast part is usually concealed from the human eye: a mystery no microscopes or telescopes can penetrate – only the grace of God or the fairy magic. Equally, the layers of the modern self are normally fewer, more embedded in the individual’s body, and pronouncedly more divorced from the communities it participates in.²⁰ Unsurprisingly therefore, Margery’s awareness of such boundaries which appear natural to us is less clear – firstly, because hers was a different cultural norm, and secondly, due to her specific psychological organisation.

Key Features of Fanfic and how they Fit in with Margery’s Narrative

If we look at the five key concepts of fanfic as offered by Francesca Coppa in *The Fanfiction Reader*, we will see how they are relevant to the *BMK*:

1) *Fanfiction is fiction created outside of the literary marketplace.*²¹ Fanfiction is usually created by non-professionals, often in preparation for a professional writing career, as witnessed by the success of E. L. James’ *Fifty Shades* books. Initially, Margery cannot write, yet lives and acts her fanfic of the sacred narratives, eventually becoming an author and producing the book which wins a status of a classic five hundred years later. Certainly, the *BMK* is not entirely fiction, neither was it seen as fiction by Margery’s contemporaries, but this is where fanfic’s LARP comes in – she lives her fiction like life and her life like fiction.²²

2) *Fanfiction is fiction that rewrites and transforms other stories.*²³ Margery habitually “rewrites” and transforms not only the Gospel, but also saints’ lives and the devotional classics of her day. The best examples are

perhaps the appearance of St Paul in chapter 65 of Book I, who is forced by God to apologise to her for all the misogynistic crap he said in his epistles, or Margery comforting Mary after Christ's death on the Cross by making her a hot drink (I:81).²⁴

3) *Fanfiction is fiction that rewrites and transforms stories currently owned by others.*²⁵ With many moderations and reservations, it is still possible to say that in Margery Kempe's case the stories were owned by the Church in the vein of a modern-day corporation and the clerics as its individual members bound by certain corporate ethics. Coppa reminds us: "The average person is – in the Marxist sense – alienated from the process of storytelling. It is only in such a system – where storytelling has been industrialised to the point that our shared culture is owned by others – that a category like "fanfiction" makes sense". Banned from preaching and threatened by the early Lancastrian Lollard/dissident paranoia, Margery takes the storytelling back, almost by force.²⁶ For example, she refuses to stop telling godly stories to random people during her exchange with the Archbishop of York, and treats him to the cheeky parable of the farting bear without much ado; she similarly surprises the Archbishop of Canterbury with a story of a mocked wise fool.²⁷

4) *Fanfiction is fiction written within and to the standards of a particular fannish community.*²⁸ Again, Margery is using all the popular modern classics, making herself familiar to the advanced users of vernacular theology and contemplation.²⁹ These standards are recognised by many recipients of these stories, both laymen and clerics. "Fanfiction isn't simply fiction created *outside* the market; it's also produced inside the community and *within* the culture of fandom", Coppa says. Hence the importance for Margery to have her "fanfic" approved of and validated by other members of the contemplative community – devotional writers, preachers, the friars in the Holy Land, and so on. This network of "fans" become fans of fan fiction itself: "Fan fiction began to create its own fandom with its own infrastructure".³⁰ This network implies a whole social structure of gift-giving and receiving: "The fiction that is also written in and for fandom is not only written to community specifications; it is also typically written as a gift".³¹ Note how Margery constantly receives money donations, food, clothes, and other comforts as a result of her good story telling.³² Fanfic stories, first and foremost, are a gift to the community, a labour of love. (A lot of academic work, done unpaid, is the same; sometimes we even get free conference food.)

5) *Fanfiction is speculative fiction about character rather than about the world.*³³ Here, again, Margery fits the definition very well: her fanfics comprise characters set in her familiar world, with very little sense of historicity even

during her pilgrimages, although they are clearly important as aides to render her “contemplation” more detailed and life-like. Fanfics are very different from modern sci-fi, which is a speculative fiction centred on the nature of the world, and the principle also applies to most “medieval fanfiction”, if one considers the examples of medieval romances, best illustrated by *Sir Orfeo*. The world of medieval romance remains largely recognisable to contemporary readership, with Orpheus rebranded as a feudal lord and a knight, and Hades as the Elven, or Fairy, King. Modern fanfiction tends to ask “what if” about the character, not about the world, and the same is largely true of its medieval counterpart.

Another important comparison point to make is that modern fanfic is often interested in going transmedia: turning a moving image into prose, but also the other way around through cosplay/LARP. In fact, the largest modern book fandoms tend to be of books that have already gone transmedia (p. 13). This dovetails with the Bible being the main source of fanfic-like creative processes in the Middle Ages, and is evident in Margery’s own stories, informed by contemporary iconography and religious drama yet rendering their message more democratic and portable: words are cheap to work with, they do not require paints, gold, glass, wood, or expensive cast with props.

Having delineated the similarities between modern fanfic and Margery’s lived text, let us consider that she needed this “therapeutic” fiction as a therapy for. Judging by her text and its historic context, Margery’s problems spread across organic, psychological, and social spectrums, usually flowing into each other. Organic problems include hallucinations, convulsions, emotional seesaw which is particularly evident in the early part of the *Book*, with Margery going through manic exhilaration and the “fire of love” to depressive bouts of demonic temptation or acute panic. On top of that there are multiple pregnancies and births, at least one of which was traumatic enough to warrant special mention in a book that is not concerned with Margery’s own childbearing and in an age where difficult births were common. Psychological issues are also numerous, and they are often the flip side of the organic ones. Margery displays constant need of reassurance, fear of death and damnation, fear of abandonment (she is a very social creature even by medieval standards), fixation on males (especially handsome young ones), difficulty judging time, and massive problems with attachment, more on which in a moment. Social issues described include repeated spousal rape, frustrated expectations regarding status, authority and agency, in addition to rapidly changing social climate.

Dealing with the Changes Through Imagination

The disintegration of the social world of Margery's childhood and youth may have played a key role in her reimagining her life story. Margery idealises her father, or rather his status, claiming that she married down, and even referring to her father's status after his death. (She, however, never mentions her mother, who lived next door, or Robert Brunham, her brother or uncle, was also very prominent in Lynn politics (mayor in 1406 and 1408, alderman c. 1413)).³⁴ As Michael Myers, a historian-turned-psychologist, brilliantly demonstrates, at the time of Margery's marriage around 1393 John Kempe looked a perfectly worthy match that would secure and assure the future high social status of John Burnham's daughter.³⁵ However, in the rapidly changing socio-economic circumstances, Margery seems to ignore or be ignorant of her husband's struggle to succeed. "In a process of transference", Myers argues, "Margery attributed the loss of her mundane self-image and the accompanying comfort, status, and prestige not to economic and political transitions but to a 'bad' marriage".³⁶ The early chapters of the book depict a conflicting image of Margery's husband: an insensitive sex-driven bore, financially inept, but also a loyal and obedient companion. Perhaps if it is true that Margery's son was her first scribe, he was thus trying to tone down his mother's unflattering portrayal of his father while she was fictionalising her accounts of her "normal" life as she was writing herself into a different story.

By 1410 Margery's mundane social reality – the web of mercantile relationships which provided shared experiences and values for two or three generations – was no longer there and "had been replaced by an entrepreneurial elite whose realities differed markedly from that of Margery's youth and early marriage".³⁷ Myers argues that this new social reality is what Margery rebelled against: "The early frames of reference and their values continued to influence and mould her persona even as she assumed her spiritual identity, but their reality was becoming increasingly marginal shortly after her marriage to John Kempe. Nor did Margery fail in her kinship and social relations, nor they her, instead as the kinship and social relations of her youth became marginal she replaced them with new webs of meaningful relationships."³⁸ And these meaningful relationships were as much "imaginary" as they were real. It is not surprising that many modern examples of fanfic also try to migrate to an established and often nostalgic world as a response to the current world's instability.

Margery's attempts to return to her past which perhaps appeared more stable may be seen as her modelling of the figure of Jesus. He is certainly the focus of her affection, but his main role is not of the ideal spiritual lover, despite his famous Song-of-Songs-inspired suggestion that Margery take him to bed with her. Saunders and Fernyhough observe that his voice "is deeply practical: the Lord offers advice on where Margery should go, to whom she should speak and what she should say (particularly when it is confrontational), how she should treat her husband, what ascetic practices she should adopt and when, how she should dress, and whether she should write the book. He assures her of her well-being, safety, and health, and those of the people around her, and provides explanations for natural events, for the responses of people to her, and for her own physical states – illness, pain, the affects of vision."³⁹ This sounds more like an ideal parent rather than an ideal lover, a figure of (male) authority who, similar to a confessor, is needed to bypass restrictions on female self-expression. Never is she called "friend" or "darling" by her divine spouse – only "daughter". At a very basic level his voice really responds to "the lowest part of our needs": health, safety, love, support; it provides explanatory models, it takes responsibility for her life. In a very uncertain world where she has most of the responsibility and does most of the adulting (her husband seems like a passive party), Margery's initial collapse may be a response to all the responsibilities and very little rights (some academic partners and parents will, I am sure, sympathise). Delegating these cares and responsibilities must have been liberating.

Despite occasional sourness, more often than not the overall tone of Margery's inner narratives is increasingly positive, reassuring and confidence-building. This seems to be partially facilitated through the therapeutic relationships with Margery's confessors and spiritual advisors, but also, more broadly, through self-expansion, by trying to achieve her ideal self through parasocial as well as social interactions. Psychological research suggests that interactions with "fictional" characters may offer some advantages, partly because of "reduced risk of rejection, creating a safer context in which to form relationships... Additionally, parasocial interactions have the capacity to offer ... an expansive range of experiences. For example, narratives may provide connections with others whom people would not ordinarily encounter in their physical environment, including people of different ethnicities, religions, or even other planets, thereby providing an avenue for developing new knowledge, skills, or perspectives."⁴⁰ Of course from Margery's perspective, Jesus, Mary, and other saints were not fictional characters – they were more

like modern-day celebrities whose posters decorate teenage bedrooms – with a similar degree of attainability and reciprocity.⁴¹ In theory at least, the saints were always accessible, and God was supposed to be everywhere, but in reality one required a fair degree of imaginative power to have a meaningful exchange with these entities – the fact that they did not speak directly to the vast majority of the population resulted in Margery’s self-declared privileged access to them being regularly questioned.⁴² Besides, since “absent interaction means reduced risk of rejection, creating a safer context in which to form relationships”, it may explain why Margery does not talk about her immediate social circle (she habitually falls out with the people she spends more time with on a daily basis) and focuses on the relationships with the more remote entities – just as some people now often use friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter as their preferred mode of social interaction. For sure, some of them still argue online, but the virtual reality of the social networks allows for significantly better filtration of undesirable contacts (hiding Margery on Facebook or banning her on Twitter would have been a much easier job for the Archbishop of York now).

Given, however, that Margery of the *Book* has more friends than foes, and even seemingly manages to establish amiable relationships with her husband and her son in the end, the self-expansion through pious fanfic and cosplay yielded some psychological and social fruit. She is terrified of Archbishop Arundel in 1413, worried about Archbishop Bowet in 1417, and is seemingly nonchalant about Archbishop Chichele in 1418, who grants her the requested letter and seal of approval without giving her any trouble (as long as she leaves him well alone). The main reason Margery wants to see these hierarchs is to be officially allowed to wear white, that is to continue cosplaying virgin saints, further working on her self-expansion through “perceived similarity of a fictional character to one’s ideal self”.⁴³

This essay may appear to some as annoying speculations of an imaginative woman, and Margery showed us that women with vivid imagination are often annoying. I am aware that Margery’s is not a documented life and that she may well be a character created by the historic Kempe and her scribe(s). Yet this character in all its confusion and extravagance leaves both psychologists and historians with a sense of consistency and lifelikeness, which makes it relatable and appealing for what can only be called academic fanfiction. Even certain degrees of possessiveness of Margery by groups of scholars working in distinct epistemological traditions, who perhaps feel personally attacked whenever other scholars read her text differently, is very similar to

the tensions between communities of fans, who think that others do not “do” Lizzie Bennett or Harry Potter correctly. Besides, just like the aim of fanfic, part of our profession lies in fleshing out of forgotten or neglected plotlines, and depends on certain what-if-ness: what if Richard III was really buried in Leicester? What if Julian of Norwich was highly educated? What if Margery Kempe wrote the first ever female fanfic? Does this mean that working on Margery Kempe makes us fans of fanfic? Perhaps it does, but I, for one, am not ashamed of it.

Notes

1. Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 189.
2. The most recent succinct example of the therapeutic value of fanfiction is summarised here: <https://www.psychotherapy.net/blog/title/therapeutic-fanfiction-rewriting-society-s-wrongs>. See also Larisa A. Garski and Justine Mastin, *Starship Therapise: Using Therapeutic Fanfiction to Rewrite Your Life* (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 2021).
3. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, eds Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (University of Iowa Press, 2014), 1.
4. Anthony Bale, “Introduction,” in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), xxix.
5. Idem, xxx.
6. Alison Torn, “Looking back: Medieval mysticism or psychosis?” <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-24/edition-10/looking-back-medieval-mysticism-or-psychosis>
7. Ibid.
8. Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough, “Reading Margery Kempe’s inner voices,” *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, Vol. 8:2 (2017), 209–217 (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41280-017-0051-5>).
9. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, I:3, 20, 29, 36, 59.
10. BMK, I:54.
11. C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1964), 211.
12. “Adam scriveyn [scribe], if ever it thee bifalle / Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe, / Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scale/, But after my makynge wryte more trewe; / So oft adaye I mot thy werk renewe,/It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape [erase by scraping the parchment], And al is thorough thy negligence and rape [haste]”; see Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton, 1987), 650; <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/go-little-book>

13. Francesca Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader: Folk Tales for the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 5.
14. Juliana Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
15. See Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
16. The best place to start is still: Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
17. Anna Wilson, "Full-body reading," Aeon, published 10 November 2016. <https://aeon.co/essays/how-a-medieval-mystic-was-the-first-creator-of-fanfiction>; https://www.academia.edu/39710774/Fan_Cultures_and_the_Premodern_World_Reading_Women_Past_and_Present_Gender_Romance_and_the_Reception_of_Medieval_Women_s_Literature_; Alicia Spencer-Hall, *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).
18. On early history of fan studies and psychoanalysis see Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott, *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, eds Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (New York; London: Routledge, 2018), 18-26.
19. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 11.
20. For a recent discussion see Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist and Bjørn Bandlien, *Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500*, eds Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist and Bjørn Bandlien (De Gruyter, 2020).
21. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 2.
22. There is however a work which suggests somewhat to the contrary: Lynn Stanley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).
23. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 4.
24. *BMK*, I:81.
25. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 6.
26. Idem, 7; Accessible overviews of the historic and religious backgrounds to Margery's book can be found in Santha Bhattacharji, *God is an Earthquake: the Spirituality of Margery Kempe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997); Anthony Goodman, *Margery Kempe and her World* (Harlow: Longman, 2002).
27. *BMK*, I:52; I:13; On those see Juliana Dresvina, "Medieval Memes, Misericords, and Margery Kempe," *Vox Medii Aevi* 2021:2, 117-146.
28. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 7.
29. See her reading list in the *BMK*, I:62.
30. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 8.
31. Idem, 9.
32. *BMK*, I:12, 15, 27, 30, 33, 38, 40.
33. Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 12.
34. Michael D. Myers, "A Fictional-True Self: Margery Kempe and the Social Reality of the Merchant Elite of King's Lynn," *Albion*, vol. 31:3 (1999), 377-39, at 382.
35. Idem, 380.

36. Idem, 388.
37. Idem, 391.
38. Idem, 394.
39. Saunders and Fernyhough, "Reading Margery Kempe's Inner Voices."
40. Randi Shedlosky-Shoemaker, Kristi A. Costabile and Robert M. Arkin, "Self-Expansion through Fictional Characters," *Self and Identity* (2014), 556–78 (at 556-7).
41. On saints as celebrities see Spencer-Hall, *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens*.
42. A useful study of the psychology of imagination in (fan)fiction can be found in Jennifer L. Barnes, "Fanfiction as imaginary play: What fan-written stories can tell us about the cognitive science of fiction," *Poetics*, Vol. 48 (2015), 69-82.
43. Shedlosky-Shoemaker et al., "Self-Expansion," 558.