
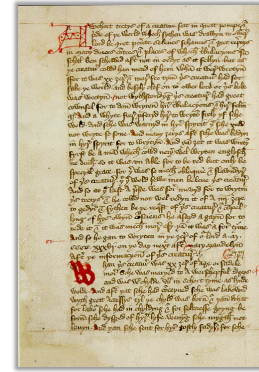
 Margery Kempe (ca. 1373 - ca. 1438)




- daughter of John Burnham, a mayor of King's Lynn in Norfolk; wife of John Kempe, a townsman
- suffered a mental collapse following birth of her first child
- on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, experienced a series of visions
- was self-taught in literacy from sermons and other oral sources
- her extreme piety made her the subject of scorn and suspicion during her life (NAEL A232-33)



 Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1436-38)



- consists of two “books,” of 5,246 lines and 801 lines respectively
- Kempe claimed to have dictated the original manuscript (now lost) to two different scribes
- a later manuscript from the fifteenth century was found in the 1930s, now located in the British Library; its annotation by four different hands suggests its frequent use as a study source
- considered by some critics to be the first autobiography in English (Wikipedia)

 Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1436-38)

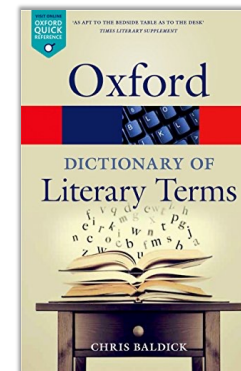
autobiography

Original Middle English

Whan this creatur was twenty yer of age or sumdele mor, sche was maryed to a worschepful burgeys and was wyth chylde wythin schort tyme, as kynde wolde. And, after that sche had conceived, sche was labowrd wyth grett accessys tyl the child was born, and than, what for labour sche had in chyldyng and for sekenesse goyng before, sche dyspered of hyr lyfe, wenyng sche mygth not levyn. And than sche sent for hyr gostly fadyr, for sche had a thyng in conscyens wech sche had nevr schewyd before that tyme in alle hyr lyfe.

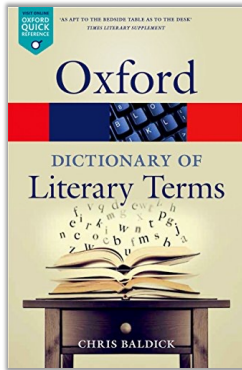
Modern Translation

When this creature was twenty years of age or somewhat more, she was married to a worshipful burges and was with child within a short time, as nature would. And, after she had conceived, she was laboured with great attacks of illness until the child was born, and then, what for the labour she had in childing and for the sickness going before, she despaired of her life, thinking she might not live. And then she sent for her ghostly father, for she had a thing in conscience which she had never shown before that time in all her life.



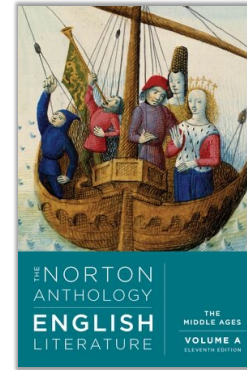
- a narrative account of an extended period of a person's life, written by that person, usually in prose
- presents a more subjective, less conclusive viewpoint than a biography
- some restrict their scope to a specific period or aspect of the subject's life
- **spiritual autobiography**: an autobiography that relates crises of religious conversion (Baldick 30-31)

hagiography



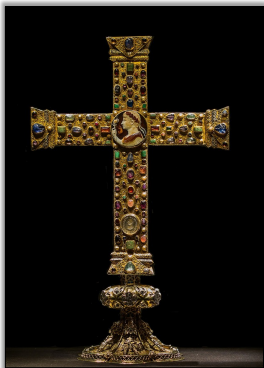
- writing devoted to recording and glorifying the lives of saints and martyrs (people who are persecuted and/or killed for their religious convictions)
- a form of Christian propaganda that was widely practised in the Middle Ages
- also applied to modern biographies that treat their subjects excessively reverentially
- **autohagiography**: a hagiography written by the saint or martyr subject themselves (Baldick 159)

affective piety



- in the Middle Ages, the bodily representation of Christ was a preoccupation of artists
- representations of the crucified Christ moved away from a godlike, conquering figure removed from humanity to a full-fledged, suffering human being
- this shift encouraged viewers to see Christ in the here and now, rather than as an historical figure
- viewers thus experienced a more profoundly emotional connection to human Christ (NAEL A215-16)

affective piety



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Michelangelo, *Pietà* (1499)



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