“CLAD IN FLESH AND BLOOD”:
THE SARTORIAL BODY AND FEMALE
SELF-FASHIONING IN *THE BOOK*
OF MARGERY KEMPE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the engagement with textiles and textile-craft in *The Book of Margery Kempe* facilitates the performance of Margery's female religious identity. Drawing on the fundamental precepts of performance theory, the article responds to recent scholarly interest in the manifestations of material devotional culture and the performative body. It first maps out the charged theological significations of textiles and their subsequent transformative potential. Then, it examines how Margery finds an active tool in “fabrics of devotion” in the form of saintly relics, images, and garments themselves, and how Margery's adoption of white garb refashions her body in the image of a saintly matrilineage. It concludes that interaction with Bridgettine visual and material objects supplies Margery with a new Marian iconography, which allows her to perform a double *imitatio*, weaving together the thread of her own life into the rich tapestry of archetypal holy women.

KEYWORDS: Margery Kempe, mysticism, performance theory, visual culture, material culture

In chapter 6 of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1438), Margery (c. 1373–after 1438) receives a vision of the Virgin Mary's birth to St. Anne, in which Mary is clothed in “fayr whyte clothys and whyte kerchys.”¹ The chapter concludes with Margery seeking for Mary the same “fayr whyte clothys and kerchys for to swathyn in hir sone whan he wer born,” after which she herself “swathyd hym wyth byttyr teerys of compassyon” (77). This passage is one of many scenes in the *Book* charged with Marian devotion, evoking the apocryphal tradition that augmented the New Testament's rendering of Mary's early life and the incarnation of Christ.² This particular devotional practice to the mother of Christ exemplifies a process that continues

throughout Margery's text, whereby "clothys" operate as devotional objects and interaction with them facilitates the performance of her religious identity. This article examines how Margery finds an active tool in her fabrics of devotion, using them to refashion her body in the image of a saintly matrilineage, engaging textiles as a means to superimpose upon her own body the suprasexual and incarnational maternity of her devotional icons. It concludes that this performance is multifaceted: interaction with Bridgettine sites supplies Margery with new Marian iconography, which allows her to perform a double *imitatio*, reiteratively fabricating her religious identity in a particularly material construction of the self.

The notion of "performance" is here drawn from Judith Butler, whose *Gender Trouble* formulated gender as a "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names"; an enactment rather than an experience.³ Laura Varnam has recently argued that the same is true of religious identity: it is produced and constituted in the individual moment of performance, or in Butler's words, "a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings already established."⁴ Varnam applies this to *The Book of Margery Kempe*, proposing that Margery draws upon devotional objects' established sets of meanings ("citations") as part of her attempt to "fix a religious identity."⁵ On account of her status as a married laywoman, Margery was excluded from performing her religious identity in ways presiding members of society were able to—such as ordination. Marginalized groups, including the emerging middle classes and women, had to find other ways to perform their self-fashioning. As Andrea Denny-Brown has shown, clothing and materiality offered medieval people and authors visual markers with which to communicate the transformation of their social—and, I argue, spiritual—aspirations.⁶ By "reorienting the discourse on the body which we've inherited, toward a more performance-sensitive perspective,"⁷ material culture and performance studies have offered ways of reading texts with these issues in mind: whether "reading through clothes" or "talking garments,"⁸ the literary historian finds clothes functioning as active objects in a fluid and heterogeneous socio-cultural terrain. Clothing becomes costume, and textile artifacts become props, in this context of ritualized, performative religious identity.

Margery Kempe's particularly embodied form of devotion has been read as an example of devotional performance, with objects operating as signifiers that evoke her affective response.⁹ While Varnam has opened this methodological dialogue by focusing on the crucifix and the pietà, I propose that, for Margery, textiles work similarly. Further, that the direct and enclosing application of

textiles to the body enhances this performative process, through a crossing of the threshold of the internal/external so ontologically constitutive of material devotion. As Kathryn Rudy articulates, “textiles often mediate between the secular and the divine. . . . Threads, cloths, and vestments mark, absorb and transmit holy status.”¹⁰ This article shows how this transmission enables Margery’s autobiographical self-textualization to situate her within a matrilineage of female heavenly models.¹¹ To employ Lynn Staley’s famous distinction,¹² Margery-the-subject’s sartorial devotion assists Kempe-the-author’s autobiographical project move into hagiographic territory, even while the convergence of the two effects a “collapsing of hagiographic and mystical discourses.”¹³ Allowing the source to prevail, I will “centralize”¹⁴ the text as a form of *textile*, treating *The Book of Margery Kempe* as the work positions itself: interwoven into a powerfully female theological and historical tradition. This metaphor speaks to the concept of performativity, which frames text- and textile-craft as a kind of female performance, and thus configures Margery’s identity as a form of her own incarnational craft. Margery becomes woman-crafter as she spins together her narrative and religious identity: her own body becomes a text woven into a narrative of matrilineal sanctity, just as she attempts to insert her autobiography into the hagiographic tradition, manufacturing herself quite literally as a “self-styled saint.”¹⁵

TEXT, *TEXENS*, TEXTILE: THE INCARNATIONAL CRAFT

The association between the construction of literary narrative—*text*—and weaving is a critical commonplace,¹⁶ with the Latin *textilis* etymologically infused with *texere* (to weave).¹⁷ This synonymy is employed by numerous classical prototypes of women crafting textiles as a medium through which to find their authorial voice: Athena; Arachne; Penelope; Philomela, and so on. The Fates (Greek *Moirai*, Latin *Parcae* or *Fata*) act as the closest pagan precursor to the apocryphal Mary, all of whom spin the thread of man’s life and destiny.¹⁸ The *Protoevangelium* depicts Mary at the Annunciation spinning the purple and scarlet cloth for the veil in the Herodian Temple of Jerusalem, which, exegetically, serves to remind us of the achronological divine providence of the Word made flesh.¹⁹ According to the Synoptic tradition, the fabric would later be rent in two at the moment of Christ’s death: “Jesus autem emissa voce magna expiravit. El velum templi scissum est in duo, a summo usque deorsum” [And Jesus, having cried out with a loud voice, gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in two, from

top to the bottom].²⁰ Mary is, therefore, depicted as the crafter of Christ the redeemer: as Mary tells Joseph in the N-Town play, “[Jesus] wyll be clad in flesh and blood.”²¹ This line is representative of a wider theological trope of Mary literally wrapping – swaddling – the Christ-child in flesh, a metaphor which has roots in Psalm 138:13: “suscepisti me de utero matris meae” [You knitted me together in my mother’s womb].²² However, while the power of creation is here attributed to God, by the fifteenth century, with the role of the Incarnate Son at the forefront of affective piety, this role of Mary as clothier of Christ was popularized by renewed devotional emphasis on her incarnational power. For example, Mary’s later cloth-making of Christ’s “tunica inconsutilis” [seamless tunic] in John 19:23, the legend of which tells that the garment grew with Jesus’s body to adulthood, rendered in the Buxtehude altarpiece (c. 1400–10) from Master Bertram and in the *Vita Beatae Mariae Rhythmica* (c. thirteenth century) (fig. 1).²³

FIG. 1 The Buxtehude Altarpiece (c. 1400–10). Kunsthalle Hamburg.
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Such domestic language of textile enclosure in relation to the life of Christ is also deployed by Julian of Norwich (1342/3–1416), the “ankres” visited by Margery in chapter 18: “Dame Jelyan.” Julian writes of an exceptionally “homely” Christ, who “halseth us” with his love: “He is our clotheing that for love wrappith us, (halseth) us and all beclosyth us for tender love.”²⁴ The intimate inflections of Julian’s text seem to echo through Margery’s—she also desires that the figure of Christ on the crucifix should “halsyn” (66) her²⁵—and though we cannot know if she had access to Julian’s writing, it is an attractive thought that Julian may have delivered some of her work to Margery in the “many days that thei were togedyr” (123). Regardless, the sensual language of textiles bestows upon the holy family a domestic

FIG. 2 Piero della Francesca, *Madonna del Parto* (c. 1450–1475). *Museo della Madonna del Parto, Monterchi*. (Wikimedia Commons Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported – Source: Edisonblus [<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Edisonblus>])

quality, which resonates particularly through maternal and incarnational modalities. Madeline Caviness comments, for example, on the “heavily draped idealized figure” of the Virgin represented in the art of the high Middle Ages, noting the “gynecological power” hidden beneath the folds.²⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly in the climate of late-medieval affectivity—which Gail McMurray Gibson terms the “incarnational aesthetic” of the period²⁷—this “thread of life” motif pervaded both visual and material devotion. Nicola Lowe has noted, for example, that in *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, Mary spins, weaves, and takes in the laundry.²⁸ The gynecological power of the Marian “text” even served to manifest as protection during birth, with birth girdles such as that preserved as London, Wellcome Library MS 632 laid over the womb of the laboring mother to ease delivery.²⁹

Scripturally, Mary’s weaving of the Temple veil also recalls the veil from the Jewish Temple of Solomon, which protects the sacred space of the Holy of Holies, the innermost tabernacle of the temple in which God resides. Herbert Kessler has argued that this veil is replaced by “the incarnate Jesus,” thus declaring a new covenant.³⁰ Hebrews 10:20: “quam initiavit nobis viam novam, et viventem per velamen, id est, carnem suam” [A new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh]. Mary’s craft metaphorically crosses the threshold of the sacred tabernacle of God, creating the heavenly on earth. In his discussion of the veil, Alexei Lidov employs the useful neologism “hierotopy” (or *ierotopia*) to denote the creation of sacred spaces by human creativity, which can be interpreted via the study of “image-paradigms,” or phenomena of spatial imagery that cannot otherwise be incorporated into the mostly positivist discourse of visual culture.³¹ For Lidov, hierotopy is strongly linked to performativity, given that the “activation” of particular sites depended on dramatic and changeable environments; space becomes operative. The metaphor of Mary creating Christ’s flesh accommodates this idea, whereby Mary’s gynecological power renders her own body a hierotopy: a space that conscious, creative, human activity has made sacred.³² In the context of the narrative that consigns our original human flesh as fallen, to be redeemed by the Word-made-flesh, Mary’s gynecological power confers particular capabilities, not only of creation, but re-creation: of reversals and reinvention. Gabriel iterates the redemptive power of these creative capabilities in the N-Town Mary play, when he remarks that “*Eva* is turnyd *Ave*.”³³ Indeed, while the N-Town Eve’s textile production —“I shal spynne”³⁴—is a labor of toil in a postlapsarian world, her distaff becoming a symbol of the fall (see Figure 3), Mary’s role as “*Eva Secunda*” perfects the incarnational craft.

FIG. 3 Adam Delving and Eve Spinning, *The Hunterian Psalter* (c. 1170), fol. 8r. Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 229 (U.3.2). (Reproduced with permission by University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections)

Textile production dominated the East-Anglian economy, and so for the audience of the N-Town plays,³⁵ this would certainly have been an appealing image. In the mid-fifteenth-century stained-glass window at St. Mary's, Martham, in Norfolk, for example, Eve sits spinning in a flower-strewn meadow, which Lowe has called "the very embodiment of the late medieval domestic ideal of womanhood: beautiful but also humble and industrious."³⁶ Industry and humility are stitched together as the female act of textile construction atones for, redeems, and re-creates the perfection of humankind. As Gail McMurray Gibson observes, "[i]n a visual and verbal pun as providential as medieval Christendom found the Eva-Ave reversal, the Virgin Mary spins both *filum* (thread) and *filium* (son), crafting the garment of flesh and of human mortality for the still embryonic Word."³⁷ Theologically charged with incarnational, redemptive, and specifically female, power, textiles act as signifiers that contain significant potentiality for appropriation, becoming dynamic objects that offer the devotee the opportunity for interactive *imitatio*, or in Butlerian terms, "citation."

This type of performance is repeatedly invoked throughout the *Book* by Margery's manifold engagement with textiles and textile-craft. Harnessing the aforementioned productive and redemptive power, Margery directly subverts expectations of her gender and social status. In the case of textile-production, she overturns associations of servile domesticity that might otherwise be associated with such "feminine" occupations. In turn, Margery responds to challenges against her devotional practices and legitimises her position within the Church. Margery's performance of her religious identity defies the repeated scorn she meets from "men of the cuntre," who say unto her, "Damsel, forsake this lyfe that thu hast, and go *spynne and carde as other women don*, and suffyr not so meche schame and so meche wo" (258–59, my emphasis). Margery retorts that she desires to suffer "in regarde to that [owr merciful Lord Crist Jhesu] suffyrd" (259), framing her devotional performance for the Lord in opposition to the exemplary performance of womanly duties, "spinning" and "carding." The contemporary associations of these activities with obedient and servile wifehood are iterated in, for example, the late medieval folk poem, *A Pennyworth of Wit*,³⁸ in which the wife, "trewe as ston," faithfully comforts her husband who, unbeknownst to her, has betrayed her:

"I wyll neuyr forsake the in thy woo;
Y schall go to the kyng & to the quene
And knele before them on my kneen

There to knele and neyyr to cese,
 Tyl of the kyng y haue getyn þy pees.
I can bake, brewe, carde and spyinne."³⁹

Here, the wife's skills in the domestic sphere are listed as performative conventions that reiterate her virtue and integrity. Margery's failed domestic business endeavors—the brewery and the grain mill—correspond to the first two listed occupations, and the above accusation that she should abandon her life of affective devotion in favor of spinning and combing wool indicates her further rejection of those remaining. After this, the *Book* describes Margery's visit to the church of St. Margaret (notable, of course, for St. Margaret's patronage of pregnancy and expectant mothers), where she is asked to pray for a "seke woman that was alienyd of hir witte" following childbirth (328). The woman's postpartum symptoms are strikingly similar to Margery's own experiences: she "roryd and cryid so, bothe nyth and day for the most part, that men wolde not suffyr hir to dwellyn amongys hem"; she is relegated to the outskirts of town "that the pepil schulde not heryn hir cryin"; and her hands and feet are "bowndyn" with "chenys of yron" (328). The physical and mental disturbance, social exile, and bondage involved in bearing children are acutely pronounced here, and it falls to Margery to restore the woman to "hir witte and hir mende agen" (329) through prayer: "wepyng and sorwyng," Margery performs her prayer reiteratively, "iche day." Consequently, the sick woman is able to participate in the "churching" or purification ceremony which marked a woman's postpartum re-entry into parish life: she is "purifid *as other women be*" (my emphasis). Margery's religious performance enables the woman's performance of her own devotional identity, in a direct challenge to the former accusation that Margery should do *as other women* and abandon her life of piety in favor of spinning.

Against accusations of heresy—"Brennyth this fals heretyk!" (258)—Margery constructs a defiant devotional identity for herself, rejecting the occupational expectations of her status. In order to enact this subversion, Margery draws on the charged gynecological "potentiality" of textiles. In the case of her interaction with saintly relics, Margery is provided with "citational narratives" to which she refers in her own performance.⁴⁰ This is what Joanna Ziegler calls "transference": an "exchange of identity between the beholder and the object via the sense of touch."⁴¹ Varnam has cogently argued that such exchange occurs through Margery's desire for physical interaction with the crucifix and the pietà, known in English as a "pyte" (285), the representation of the Virgin at the foot of the cross holding

Christ's dead body. This image, Varnam argues, becomes a devotional "meroure" of sorrow to be imitated, which inspires Margery to respond in kind, such that she then becomes an exemplar herself.⁴² The public object of the "pyte" would have augmented Margery's more private engagement with Marian iconography, through, for example, her primer or Book of Hours. Sacred objects popular among the laity who could afford them, primers acted as devotional tools that facilitated a direct connection to major scriptural narratives, particularly that of Mary:⁴³ the Hours of the Virgin enclosed within these books were frequently illuminated with scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin. The luxurious *Belles Heures* of Jean de France (1405–1408/9), for instance, has an image of Mary at the Nativity, ornamented with gold leaf and a vine border.⁴⁴ Of course, such illuminated primers were costly to produce, and degrees of embellishment varied widely: Eamon Duffy observes that "[in the fourteenth century] most Books of Hours were humbler objects, mass produced with no illustrations, few illustrations, or just bad illustrations."⁴⁵

We cannot know whether Margery's private devotions would have been supplemented by such intensely-visual materials, although given her socio-economic status, it is highly likely she would have had access to a fairly embellished personal copy.⁴⁶ In chapter 9, Margery conceivably clutches one of these books (*Horae*), when her Church's rafter-beam falls on her: "boke in hir hand" (83), the object seems to have an apotropaic influence, and though the man "John of Wyreham" presumes her to be "gretly dysesyde," Margery emerges unscathed, "al hol and sownd" (84).⁴⁷ Here, Margery's "boke" clearly constitutes a component in her wider performance of religious identity: a signifier of some degree of wealth, as well as her dedication to semi-monastic textual practices, reiterating her hybrid identity of vowess/laywoman. Moreover, as a symbol the network of material and visual devotion that pervades Margery's text, the "boke" gestures towards Margery's attention to iconographical representations of scenes from the lives of Mary and Christ. Margery's encounter with the "fayr ymage of owr Lady clepyd a 'pyte'" (285) would, then, as with the more public displays present in, for example, Norwich Cathedral, have reiteratively invoked the devotion she had cultivated more privately with personal tools.⁴⁸

In these instances of performative identity transference—particularly that of Margery holding her "boke" imbued with Marian iconography—the two participants (beholder and object) are connected via an epistemology of touch. The transactional powers of textiles function as part of a devotional

economy, with identity as capital. However, this economy also supplied women with other opportunities for such an exchange. In the production and patronage of medieval liturgical textiles, women are frequently cited as makers of embroidered cloths and vestments, “stitching the sacred.”⁴⁹ This afforded medieval women the opportunity to emulate the Virgin’s incarnational power and engage with the hierotopy of the Church. Alexandra Gajewski and Stefanie Seeberg observe that the *vitae* of saintly queens and church inventories often categorize textiles specifically created *manus feminarum* (of female hands), although they observe that the common use of the term *facere* on textiles’ inscriptions sometimes makes unclear whether a woman commissioned, supervised, or made the garment.⁵⁰ Clearly, the literal manipulation of the fabric was not a prerequisite for engaging in these transactions, with female beneficiaries relying on the basic expectation of reciprocity in the ritualized gift-economy. Although gift exchange would typically have required a haptic engagement, women of a higher social standing could receive the equivalent returns through their patronage. This would have been a performative exchange of material object and identity capital, with the most common return provided in the form of posthumous remembrance.⁵¹

Identity capital could also be returned less advertently on account of the textiles’ proximity to the altar. With women excluded from the priesthood and even from approaching the altar, donating liturgical textiles allowed them to assert their presence in the otherwise male-dominated space of the Church.⁵² Moreover, with the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament given stronger emphasis from the eleventh century onward, altar cloths were considered significant for their proximity to the Eucharistic elements.⁵³ As Jenifer Ní Grádaigh argues, “[b]y making altar cloths, women were clothing the altar itself, where Christ’s sacrifice was re-performed; essentially, they were following the Virgin’s example, and clothing Christ.”⁵⁴ While Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg declares that this activity associated women “with their future home in the celestial gynaeceum,”⁵⁵ I advance that it allowed them proximity to spaces otherwise inaccessible to women: beyond the gynaeceum and into the tabernacle. This patronage offered women the same proximity to Christ experienced by Mary, thereby associating them with her gynecological power.

The haptic dimension of “bodily knowing”⁵⁶ is also transcended by visionary experience itself. Maggie Ross has distinguished the two contemplative epistemologies, designating “beholding” a state of the “deep mind,” which “irrupts” in an oppositional but inherently transactional relationship

with the “self-conscious mind,” displacing the interpretive diversions of experience.⁵⁷ The cataphatic-apophatic dialectic common to medieval mysticism is at play here: Julian of Norwich distinguishes between seeking towards beholding, and beholding itself.⁵⁸ Ziegler points out how this distinction manifests between the “primacy of materiality and touch among the Beguines” and the superseding of touch by medieval mysticism.⁵⁹ Given Margery’s complicated status as visionary laywoman, her material epistemology is equally complex, falling somewhere between the two. Margery’s mystical meeting with devotional objects is characterized by her famously affective form of piety, often accompanied by “terys” and “crying.” This performance is “of the body,” but it does not always rely on the haptic dimension of having and holding. Indeed, Margery’s tears often replace touch in her interaction with devotional materials, functioning as catalysts for her revelations or *beholding*. This movement from affectivity to beholding fits within Ross’s contemplative epistemology. Margery’s roaring fits externalize her devotion, quite literally *irrupting*, no matter how she tries to contain them: “And therfor, whan sche knew that sche schulde cryen, sche kept it in as long as sche mygth and dede al that sche cowed to withstond it er ellys to put it away, til sche wex as blo as any leed, and evyr it schuld labowryen in hir mende mor and mor into the tyme that it broke owte” (165–66). This passage precedes Margery’s visionary experience at “Calvarye,” where “in the sygh of hir s[owle]” she sees “Crist . . . hangyn befor hir bodily eye in hys manhode” (166). Her crying fit is here framed as “so very contemplacyon,” implicitly interpolated into the contemplative framework. Indeed, it leads directly to her beholding of Christ: “it was grawntyd this creatur to *beholdyn* so verily hys precyows tendyr body” (166, my emphasis). The visually visceral depiction that follows recalls the affective aesthetic of late-medieval Christological devotion, also present in Julian of Norwich’s showing of the same content.

The performative replacement of touch with tears is particularly striking in Margery’s engagement with textile relics, which offer to interpolate her into the Incarnational narrative. In chapter 31, for example, Margery encounters in Assisi “owyr Ladys kerche which sche weryd her in erth” (180), the veil with which Mary is said to have swaddled the infant Christ.⁶⁰ Here, “[s]che wept, sche sobbyd, sche cryed wyth gret plente of teerys and many holy thowtys” (180–81). The affective response elicited by the relic makes clear the power of the object; a process of interaction and reaction that constitutes Butler’s “stylized repetition of acts.”⁶¹ Significantly, it is only following this exchange at Assisi that Margery feels able to defy the

Church's authority and clothe her own body in the symbolic white: "And than sche went and ordeynd hir white clothys and was clad al in white, liche as sche was comawndyd for to do yerys befor in hir sowle be revelacyon, and now it was fulfilt in effect" (181). The choice of the verb "ordeyn" directly appropriates the institutional confirmation of spiritual identity available to male religious, ordination or appointment to holy orders, and appears on a number of occasions relating to Margery's sartorial transformation. Returning to our opening example in chapter 6, for instance, Margery "begs" and "ordains" the textiles in which Mary and the infant Christ are enclosed: "and whan Jhesu was born, sche ordeyned beddyng for owyr Lady to lyg in wyth hir blyssed sone" (77). This scene's focus is on the maternal line of the Holy Family, as Margery's vision follows the pregnant St Anne, through to the birth of Mary, and then Christ. In a particularly moving moment, the chapter closes with Margery's quiet reassurance that she will handle the baby Jesus gently: "I schal not byndyn yow soor" (78). She promises to "fare fayr" with him, to treat him tenderly, on account of his "scharp" death to come, which Windeatt glosses as "bitter, cruel." The affectivity of this moment is similar in sentiment to the poem by Margery's contemporary, Thomas Hoccleve,⁶² "The Complaint of the Virgin," an early translation of Guillaume de Deguilleville's *Pèlerinage de l'ame*,⁶³ in which Mary cries "calle me Mara," since she has lost the "I" (which is Jesus) of "Maria." Hoccleve here invokes Ruth 1:20, when Naomi, grieving for her husband and sons, asks to be called "Mara" (literally "bitter"), because the Lord has filled her with bitterness: "quia amaritudine valde replevit me Omnipotens" [for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me] in the King James Version].

Margery cries "byttyr teerys of compassyon" (77) for the bitterness of this separation. Yet in addition to the literal suggestion that Margery cries *while* wrapping the infant, this line figuratively suggests that her tears become the wrapping material. Margery's devotional patronage transcends the haptic dimension: she has ordained the bedding and swaddling materials, but her maternal performance refuses heavy-handedness. Instead, Margery deploys tears as an affective response to this "beholding" of the Nativity. This ordains her with identity capital, as the performance inserts her into this matrilineal line of bitterly grieving women. The role extends to the final section of Margery's travels when, on her journey to Danzig, she visited Aachen ("Akun"), and encounters "owr Ladys smokke and other holy reliqwiis" (407). The Aachen relics provide a counterpoint to Margery's earlier pilgrimage to Assisi;⁶⁴ she visits on St. Margaret's Day, a

patronal significance that reiterates the citational maternal narrative. Her newly widowed status is then highlighted when Margery seeks out the company of the “worschepful woman . . . fro London, a wedow wyth meche meny wyth hir, to seen and worschepyn the holy reliyks” (408). Margery’s visits to the textile relics thus serves to chart her reiterative and citational performance of mother, wife, and widow. Identity transference is conveyed through the process of irruptive affectivity, which leads Margery into a “beholding” of the Lord. Her tears become maternal (and material), enclosing the infant Jesus and substituting touch as conductor for the current of gynecological power.

WOLF IN “WULLE” CLOTHING: ECCLESIASTICAL OBJECTION AND DIVINE JURISDICTION

Patronage of the Nativity textiles implicitly associates Margery with the Virgin Mary, but Margery’s manufacturing of her own holy identity also relies on a sartorial *imitatio* of the Virgin herself. She subsequently extends her role of patron to performer, inhabiting both positions as she deploys the aforementioned gynecological power in an incredibly public self-styling. Indeed, Sarah Stanbury comments on the “unusual [benefactor] list” in Kempe’s narrative, with “one name [appearing] over and over”—Margery’s, in the form of “this creature.”⁶⁵ Margery quite literally costumes herself for her intended role, a venture implicitly connected to performative rituals of identity. In Victor Turner’s theory of ritualized performance, costume assists in rearticulating the wearer’s identity into a “threshold” persona, a transitional state of identity or “in-between” state from which the individual emerges with changed status.⁶⁶ Margery’s performance takes her on an equivalent journey: as Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa notes, “as a pilgrim Margery experiences what anthropologists define as a liminal experience, one that separates her from her society, takes her to the margin of a new reality, and then returns her renewed.”⁶⁷ The narrative arc of the *Book* is constructed around the chronology of Margery’s travels, an active and temporal journeying that implies movement towards holiness.⁶⁸ Yet I suggest that this pilgrimage is paralleled by a corresponding “sartorial pilgrimage.” Faced with objections from the religious authorities and her peers (even her husband), Margery is marginalized to a liminal place in society, plunged into a “betwixt” state of transitional identity which persists for much of her *Book*. In her reiterative act of self-costuming, Margery journeys through this

“in-between” in stops and starts, a pilgrimage that requires negotiation of the various conventions that regulate her body and worldly situation.

The first phase of Margery’s sartorial pilgrimage is her rejection of clothing that signifies lack of virtue, namely the fashionable garb she sports early in *The Book*: “sche weryd gold pypys on hir hevyd, and hir hodys wyth the typettys were daggyd. Hir clokys also wer daggyd and leyd wyth dyvers colowrs between the daggys, that it schuld be the mor staryng to mennys sygth and hirsself the mor ben worshepd” (57). A practice popular in the mid-fourteenth through to the late fifteenth century, “dagging” involved the ornamentation of fabric edges by slashing, which, John Block Friedman remarks, “excited the scorn of moralists both for being wasteful of fabric and for signifying unmerited higher status.”⁶⁹ The decoration of Margery’s garments thus corresponds with her vainglorious “envye at hir neybowrs, that thei schuld ben arayd so wel as sche” (58). When Margery’s merchant son later returns to England, she makes this connection explicitly: “For afortyme hys clothys wer al daggyd and hys langage al vanyte; now he weryd no daggys, and hys dalyawns was *ful of vertu*” (388, my emphasis). Similarly, the Bishop of Worcester’s men are depicted as “al-to-raggyd and al-to-daggyd in her clothys.” Margery asks: “‘Whos men be ye?’ Thei answeryd ayen: ‘The Bischopys men’. And than sche seyde: ‘Nay, forsothe, ye arn lykar the develys men’” (225). This serves to emphasise the potential fabrics have to signify—literally, to fabricate—attributes of sin of virtue, grounding the symbolic power of Margery’s sartorial performance.

By contrast, the “clothys of whyte and non other colowr” (102) that Christ instructs Margery to wear are, as Hope Emily Allen has noted, symbolically polysemous, signifying martyrdom, remission of sins, the clothing of heaven, and virginity.⁷⁰ Mary Erler has observed that the latter is employed in the Digby Mary Magdalene by a costume change into white, reiterating her status as an icon of restored purity.⁷¹ As the *Legenda Aurea*’s gloss of Mary Magdalene’s name stresses, she is *manens rea*; armed; unconquered; magnificent; “not to be ouercomen.”⁷² Margery’s choice to adopt this garb can, therefore, be viewed as an attempt to sartorially remake her fallen “vertu.”⁷³ In Carolyn Dinshaw’s words, “Margery wants to use her body completely differently from the (reproductive) ways expected by her community: that desire is signalled by her white clothing.”⁷⁴ Margery’s repudiation of her marital obligation is a somatic restoration that arises from her deep shame at her lack of virginity, an issue which persists throughout her text, arguably metaphorized by her adoption of her white garb. Margery is reminded of her failings when she falls pregnant again, notably

shortly after the Church has refused to sanction her choice of clothing. This episode highlights the conflict between Margery's required performance as a wife of her conjugal duties, and her desired performance of chastity (and indeed, between her earthly husband and her heavenly one). Margery bemoans this contradiction, announcing herself as "the most unworthi creatur that evyr thow schewedyst grace unto in erth" (131), but Christ reassures her that he loves her "as wel as any mayden in the world" (132). He continues: "I take non hede what a man hath ben, but I take hede wat he *wyl ben*" (my emphasis), an assurance repeated in chapter 36, following Margery's mystical marriage to the Godhead. Margery's reinvention is therefore framed within a redemptive economy, whereby virtue is a transactionally-viable purchase: when a clerk tests her orthodoxy by asking her to interpret the words "*Crescite et multiplicamini*," she responds, "Ser, thes wordys ben not undirstondyn only of begetyng of chyliden bodily, but also be purchasyng of vertu, wech is frute gostly" (243–44, emphasis in original). In its representation as white clothing, virtue is framed as the capital of an iconographic textile economy, and Margery's defence against the clerk renders her rhetorically unconquered—"not to be ouercomen"—as she defends her right to procure this asset.

Margery, however, tackles consistent objections by ecclesiastical and public figures to her sartorial transformation. At York Minster, a priest takes her "be the coler of the gowne" (242), calling her a "wolf," querying the material of her clothing. Passing children confirm "it is wulle!" (242), which is presumably neutral-colored, an incomplete rendering of the heavenly white. Just as with her other expressions of piety, Margery's costume is disruptive. Here, Margery's costume is mistaken for disguise, her performance for deception. This highlights the late medieval anxieties associated with intentionally altering one's appearance, which manifested in varied attempts to control the clothed body. Costume, while a tool for the intentional and iterative performance of identity, was also an instrument for counterfeit.⁷⁵ The notion that an individual could conceal or undo their gender or sexual identity (as Margery attempts to do within the Christian symbolic) was alarming, as it could redistribute power in ways not sanctioned by societal structures and hierarchies. Perhaps the most dangerous form of identity disguise was cross-dressing.⁷⁶ This was largely frowned upon when masculine identities were concealed in more feminine guises,⁷⁷ since, as Claire Sponsler points out, certain strains of thought tolerated cross-dressing by women on the grounds that it made sense for women to wish to "better" themselves by becoming more male, even if

only in appearance.⁷⁸ The degree of criticism largely rested on whether the costume or disguise was perceived as “unnatural,” pivoting on a dichotomy between the body as “a natural and transparent sign of identity” and clothing as “unnatural and deceptive.”⁷⁹ In phenomenological terms, the body is, in everyday experience, absent and transparent, “passed by in silence.”⁸⁰ Identity as it is perceived through the body is taken for granted, and clothing can obscure this natural sign. If, moreover, clothing suggests a narrative at odds with that of the body (such as marking an individual out as a virgin when she is a wife), the costume makes visible the dissonance between these two expressions. The incongruity is unsettling, and the wearer is deemed duplicitous. Margery’s costuming can, therefore, be read as a type of cross-dressing that goes against this natural order; an act of defiance that dares to attempt a recalibration of identity opposing that which is signified by her body.

Repeatedly exposed to these regulatory attitudes and discourses, Margery initially seeks approval from the Church authorities for her clothing choices. This would validate her new performed identity, resituating her sartorial body within acceptable social and religious parameters. However, Philip Repingdon, bishop of Lincoln, expresses uncertainty at Margery’s request that he sanction her white garb. As Michael Van Dussen reminds us, while “churchmen can officially sanction special clothing . . . when it corresponds to a worldly condition for which it is typically designated,” Margery’s “worldly condition . . . has no sartorial counterpart.”⁸¹ In other words, Margery does not fit the category of virgin designated by wearing white. Together with the “mantyl and . . . ryng,” the “whygth clothys” function as signifiers in the sartorial triad of humility, feminine virtue, and spiritual marriage.⁸² Since Margery is already married, Repingdon asks John Kempe if it is his “wyl” that his wife “schal take the mantyl and the ryng and levyn chast,” to which Margery’s husband agrees: “‘Ya, my Lord,’ he seyde, ‘and in tokyn that we bothen vowyn to leve chast, her I offyr myn handys into yowyr’” (106). Margery attempts to persuade the Bishop—“yf ye clothyn me in erth, owyr Lord Jhesu Cryst schal clothyn yow in hevyn” (106) – invoking Christ’s “reuelacyon” as her divine jurisdiction on the matter. However, in the negotiation of these multiple authorities, Margery’s voice is silenced by Repingdon’s “counsel,” which will not allow him to “professe [Margery] in so synguler a clothynge wythowtyn bettyr avysement” (107). While the Bishop parts with the pair with a transaction of “xxvi schelyngys and viii pens” for Margery to “byen hyr clothynge” (109), official sanction by the Church seems to remain pending, the mercantile exchange unfulfilled.

Her attempt to engage in a transactional contract with the ecclesiastical authorities unsuccessful, Margery ventures abroad, where she invokes the gynecological power of the textile relics of the Virgin. I have noted above that it is only following her interactions with the Virgin's textile relics that Margery dons her white garb in a more permanent sense. This relic-relationship stresses the exchange of gynecological power supplied by what Leslie Twomey calls the "fabric of Marian devotion," which, in consideration of the polyvalency of the textile tradition, might more aptly be termed "*fabrics* of devotion."⁸³ Twomey is here considering the writing of Isabel de Villena (1430–1490), whose *Vita Christi* is framed by scenes of the female figures in Christ's life, notably the Virgin Mary: Montserrat Piera has observed that in this female-dominated text, Christ remains the focus of only four thousand lines of nearly forty-thousand.⁸⁴ For Twomey, the fabric of de Vilena's Marian devotion "[creates] a female space," just as the signified narratives of these materials sartorially and allegorically reinvent Margery's fallen body. In Margery's experience, this female space is defined partially by its exteriority to the places in which she has been denied her transformation: Margery quite literally enters another, external *locus*—"strawng cuntreys" (124)—the liminality of which fulfills the Butlerian requirement of an "exterior space" in which identity can be reiteratively performed,⁸⁵ and Turner's transitional "between" stage. This capacity seems to rest on the pilgrimage removing Margery from the immediate eye of *Ecclesia*, a removal from the proximal space of the Church that leaves room for the construction of her own sacred space: her body.

Margery's sartorial pilgrimage is, however, "interrupted and sporadic."⁸⁶ En route to Rome, Margery loses the "bone maryd ryng to Jhesu Crist" (179). The "ryng," symbolic of the sartorial triad (white dress, mantle, and ring), has been hanging "be hir purs-stryng," a detail which, immediately preceding the insinuation of guilt on the part of the hostess—"sche chongyd hir cher and hir cuntenawns wondyrly, *as thow sche had ben gylty*" (my emphasis)—reminds the reader of the material economy of Margery's devotional tools. Margery claims, however, that "sche wold not a lost the ryng for a thowsand pownde and meche more" (178), reiterating that the true value of the object resides in the devotional capital conferred by the symbol to the wearer. Later, Margery encounters yet another lesser authority that blocks her performance: the "Duche preste that sche was schrevyn onto" (188). "I charge yow than that ye leve yowr white clothys, and weryth ageyn yowr blak clothys," he requests, to which she acquiesces (188). Such punctuated disturbances to Margery's full sartorial transformation serve to heighten

the narrative progression of the liminal experience of the pilgrimage towards the climax of Margery's mystical marriage to the Godhead, which takes place in Rome on her return to Jerusalem, after which she proceeds as the spouse of Christ. Yoshikawa has observed that this marriage "intriguingly . . . occurs in the middle of the *Book*," while contemplative literature usually interprets it as the ultimate goal of spiritual experience.⁸⁷ The unusual location of the spiritual marriage in the *Book* consolidates the citational narrative of *sponsa Christi* to which Margery's later enactment and reenactment refers. It offers a midpoint identity paradigm toward which Margery projects herself in the first half of the *Book*, and which in the latter half provides a point of reference that the narrative can recapitulate.

The marriage itself, which Margery participates in with "gret plente of terys" (192), is seemingly consummated after the fact by the "tokne" of the "flawme of fyer" (193) that pierces "hir brest" and burns "at hir hert, as verily as a man schuld felyn the material fyer yyf he put hys hand or hys fynger therin" (194). She is given to understand that by this fire, "the Holy Gost is in [her]" (194), a mutual in-dwelling of reciprocal love. Indeed, the following chapter details the domestic requirements of the spiritual marriage: the Father—also the husband—claims "I nedys be homly wyth the and lyn in thi bed wyth the," asking her to "take [him] to the as for thi weddyd husband, as thy derworthy derlyng" (196) in an intimate expression of spiritual love. I draw attention to the second quoted use of "tokyn," which Varnam glosses as a "visible indicator of an inward state," "an act performed in confirmation or recognition of a contract or an agreement" and a "marvel or an event assumed to signify the favour of a supernatural power."⁸⁸ In this reading, Varnam states, "objects are not static, unresponsive matter, they are agential, interactive, and performative."⁸⁹ Rather, as in Dan Hick's reading of devotional objects, they are "events."⁹⁰ The "tokyn" of the flame is carried by Margery "abowtyn xvi yer, and it encresyd evyr mor and mor" (193). It remains *active*, in flux, releasing its charged potential for most of the remaining period covered by the *Book*. This is followed, moreover, by another "tokyn" (217), of "levyn, thundyr, and reyn," the impetus of which comes from God, signifying that she should "weryn white clothis" (218) after his request. Succeeding the "tokyn" presented by John Kempe to the Bishop of Lincoln, this manifests the transference of the jurisdiction of Margery's body from husband to Church, and finally, to God.

Here, Margery delays the financial transaction of "ii nobelys" (218) to the man until she "myth payn." The commission accords with Margery's repeated self-styling as the patron of her text (and textiles), which serves

to indicate her sociopolitical standing: here, she is decidedly wearer rather than weaver. Yet it also consolidates the development of Margery's religious status: Christ's declaration that he "schal ordeyn for [her]" (221) the clothes interrupts the exchange of money in favor of divine decree, resisting the denigration of Margery's self-fashioning to a mere mercantile transaction. Moreover, the buying of the fabric falls to the "good man," who "dede makyn hir a gowne therof, and an hood, a kyrtyl, and a cloke," but any *financial* exchange with Margery is forestalled, as he decides to give the garments to her "for Goddys lofe" (218). God's love is the capital that provides for Margery's transformation: "Crist Jhesu be hys reward." References to payment and debt scatter the episodes to follow, including one instance in which Margery is given "fowrty pens" with which she buys herself "a pylche"⁹¹ (220), inducing Christ's warning to give no thought to money: "Dowtyr, stody thow for no good" (221). He repeats his earlier statement of ordination, allowing Margery the security to "yaf away to powr pepil al the mony that sche had," even that which she has borrowed; she is "yovyn . . . so meche mony that sche myth wel payn the foreseyd man al that sche awt hym. And so sche dede" (221). Such instances reconfigure, of course, the preeminent debt in Margery's spiritual transformation: the conjugal debt.⁹² Divine sanction has released her from this obligation, and when it comes to further borrowings, God's love is equally powerful.

RE-DRESSING IN ROME: MATRILINEAGE AND THE INHERITED TEXT

Stitching together Margery's citational narratives of Eve and the Virgin's incarnational craft is Margery's devotion to St. Bridget of Sweden, who not only provides a model for Margery's *sponsa Christi* performance, but whose revelations reconfigured iconographical representations of the Virgin's own garments. By plotting Margery's interaction with Bridgettine iconography and materiality, we can chart the genealogy of her sartorial performance, which is revealed as directly inherited from a matrilineage of female saints. Margery acknowledges this inspiration both implicitly and explicitly in her *Book*, citing Bridget ("[B]ridis boke" [115]) as one of her religious exemplars.⁹³ Christ's words to Margery at her spiritual marriage are almost identical to the promise granted to Bridget: "Dowtyr, I wil han the weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn the my prevyteys and my cownselys, for thu schalt wonyn wyth me wythowtyn ende" (190). An authenticating similitude, certainly, for a visionary whose spiritual

authority is constantly subject to hostile scrutiny, an insecurity that perhaps accounts for her devotional one-upmanship: Christ appears to Margery at mass, informing her, “My dowtyr, Bryde, say me nevyr in this wyse” (129). Connection to Bridget also manifests explicitly in Margery’s sartorial triad: while not white, the Bridgettine habit constituted of the same three items which Margery requested be sanctioned by the Bishop of Lincoln.⁹⁴ The white color, Yoshikawa argues, indicates Margery’s “obsession” with virginity, without contradicting her emulation of the Bridgettine nuns.⁹⁵ Gunnel Cleve accounts for this *imitatio* as Margery’s “longing to be even more favoured, even more loved, by the Trinity than Birgitta.”⁹⁶ The wedding vows uttered by God confirm her exceptional status against these references to the saint: “For, dowtyr, ther was nevyr childe so buxom to the modyr as I schal be to the, bothe in wel and in wo” (192).

Furthermore, Margery’s pilgrimage route follows almost precisely the footsteps of that of Bridget, actively seeking out sites in Rome made notable by the saint, in an *imitatio Birgittae* of near-identification.⁹⁷ Yoshikawa suggests that Margery’s contact with the holy sites associated with Bridget precipitates a “new era for her spiritual progress,”⁹⁸ and Einat Klafter has recently mapped out the influence of the Swedish saint on Margery’s pilgrimage, which was, she confirms, “not undertaken in the footsteps of St. Peter and Paul, but in those of Bridget, who called the Eternal City home from 1350 until her death in 1373.”⁹⁹ In chapter 39, Margery speaks with “Seynt Brydys mayden in Rome” (203), from whom she learns that the saint “was goodly and meke to every creatur.” Immediately after this, Margery’s entrance into the “chawmbre that Seynt Brigyt deyd in” (204) plunges her into a powerfully-charged gynecological sacred space; the room in which “owr Lord aperyed to Seynt Brigyte,” since transformed into “hir chapel.” Margery visits on “Seynt Brigyptys days,” most likely the feast of St Bridget’s canonization: 7 October 1414. Windeatt notes that this visit “evidently preceded chronologically the experience in ch. 35 [the spiritual marriage], which occurred in 9 Nov, but [Margery] has grouped together in this chapter some recollections connected with St Bridget.”¹⁰⁰ This chronology corroborates Yoshikawa’s notion of the influence of Bridgettine sites on Margery’s spiritual progression. The devotional power of these sites seems, then, to have invigorated Margery to proceed to her *sponsa Christi* performance, her white clothes costuming her for this particular role. Yet a closer look at the devotional objects in this scene reveals a more implicit exertion of influence on Margery’s sartorial performance. I have suggested above that the Marian textile relics operated as active

tools in Margery's self-fashioning, on account of the charged symbolism of the incarnational craft. The clothing becomes a material metaphor for the uteran enclosure, whereby one form of enwrapment is transposed for another. However, the white garb also augments Margery's *imitatio* performance, transforming it into *imitatio Mariae* via an appropriation of the Virgin's own clothing. This serves to extend Margery's imposition of herself into the Nativity scene, in which she swathes the Christ-child "wyth byttyr teerys of compassion."

White clothing was, of course, associated with the virtue of virginity in the European iconographical tradition. It is notable, however, that the Virgin was historically robed in blue and white, rather than purely white—indeed, Marian blue is an artistic commonplace.¹⁰¹ The Virgin's blue clothing was an iconographic convention presumably familiar to Margery through her various forms of private and public devotion.¹⁰² However, I propose that Margery's encounter with Bridget's "chawmbre" might have provided a new sartorial model of the Virgin, which Margery then emulates in a double-*imitatio* that invokes both Bridget and the Virgin Mary. This remodeling leads us back to Rome (in Margery's sartorial pilgrimage, all paths seem to lead back to Rome). In 1358, Bridget of Sweden was in Rome when the Virgin promised her a showing of Christ's birth in fifteen years' time. These revelations constitute chapters 1 and 21 (22 in the Middle English translation) of the seventh book of Bridget's *Revelaciones*.¹⁰³ At the Nativity scene, the Virgin is clothed in a *white* mantle ("clede in one white mantill" in the vernacular):¹⁰⁴

Cum essem ad presepe Domini in Bethleem, vidi quandam virginem pregnantem pulcherrimam valde, indutam albo mantello et subtili tunica, per quam abextra eius carnes virgineas clare cernebam.¹⁰⁵

[When I was at the manger of the Lord in Bethlehem, I saw a Virgin, pregnant and most beautiful, clothed in a white mantle and a finely woven tunic through which from without I could clearly discern her virginal flesh.]

"þan laide sho fro hir hir mantill, and tuke of þe kirchefe of hir hede, and stode in hir kirtill alone," the Middle English text reports.¹⁰⁶ Then, "sho tuke two clene clowtes of linen and two of cloth þat sho broght with hir, to lappe þe childe in when he ware born. And sho laide þame done bi hir, to time were." After the birth, Mary wraps the Christ-child in the linen and woolen cloths: "firste, in on linen clothe, and withen in one wolle, and band

his bodi, | his armes and his legges with one band; and þan sho band two linen litill cloþis, þat sho broght with hir, aboute his heued.”

Absent in the Middle English translation from the original Latin is the full description of the “band”: “que suta erat in quatuor partes superioris panniculi lanei” [which was sewn into four parts of the upper woollen cloths].¹⁰⁷ The Latin text here highlights the composition of the different textiles against one another, *suta* —literally “fastened,” commonly “sewn”—together.¹⁰⁸ Here, *suta* designates the perfect passive participle of the verb *suō* [to stitch]. As a noun, *suta* also denotes “a garment which is made of things fastened together,” for example, a coat of mail. This distinguishes the swaddling bands, defined by their fastenings or joinings, against the seamless tunic that Mary constructs when Christ is a child, which he will wear throughout his life. Mary Dzon has argued that Bridget “genders the fabrication and use of textiles by emphasizing Mary’s continual efforts at clothing her son and preparing his garments,” but also that she goes further than simply designating the task as woman’s work, “interweaving such textile imagery with the late-medieval tropes of the Proleptic Passion and of Mary as *Mater Dolorosa*, even at the beginning of Jesus’ life.”¹⁰⁹ For Dzon, the swaddling bands foreshadow the burial garments that the Virgin will see Jesus’s body wrapped in, in a “reversed, mirror image of his swaddling.”¹¹⁰ Much of the significance of the birth-cloths is contained, then, in their opposite; in what they are not, or what they will become. They stitch together the narrative of Christ’s life, the *suta* reference in Bridget’s revelation invoking the apocryphal Mary’s fleshly *texens* [weaving]. Bridget’s words here augment the act of wrapping Christ with the fabric of her own composition, in a genealogical swaddling: Mary’s enfolding of Christ imitates Anne’s earlier wrapping of the infant Mary, a fabrication that finds its cognate in the textual incorporation of the episode into Bridget’s narrative, which, in turn, is subsumed into Margery’s *Book*. And so, Margery weaves her own narrative and religious identity by enfolding herself into the matrilineage of Anne, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Bridget: a line of mothers, daughters, brides, and virgins (restored or otherwise).

Bridget’s revelation had a significant impact on the traditional iconography of the Nativity in contemporary visual culture: not only was the Virgin regularly reconfigured from a lying to kneeling posture, she was also re-dressed in white, rather than blue.¹¹¹ The vision is perhaps most famously represented by Niccolò di Tommaso’s (c. 1346–1376) *Vision of Saint Bridget* (fig. 4) which, painted after 1372 (likely after meeting Bridget), depicts the Nativity scene as related by the saint. Here, Mary kneels before

FIG. 4 Niccolò di Tommaso, *Saint Bridget and the Vision of the Nativity* (ca. 1372). *Pinacoteca Vaticana*. Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 120. Used with permission.

her son, in a long white dress, having cast off her blue and red cloak, which lies in a bundle behind her feet, as though she has sloughed her worldly status in favor of her singular position as mother of the divine. The vision influenced other representations, such as the fresco by Pietro di Miniato (c. 1366–1430/46) at the Santa Maria Novella in Florence (fig. 5), one of the earliest depictions of the Bridgettine Nativity in Tuscan art.¹¹² Chiara Gambacorta, Alfonso of Jaén's protégée, also commissioned a similar version of the scene in Pisa, speculatively attributed to Turino Vanni.¹¹³ Later representations include those by Robert Campin (c. 1375–1444), Rogier van

FIG. 5 Pietro di Miniato, *Fresco* (c. 1400–05). *Santa Maria Novella*, Florence. (Wikimedia Commons Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported – Source: Sailko [<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Sailko>])

der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), and Sano di Pietro (1406–1481), which depict the Virgin's dress and cloak as white, or white and blue.¹¹⁴

Now residing in the *Pinacoteca Vaticana*, Di Tommaso's painting is likely the object of a commission solicited by Bridget's patroness, Francesca Papazzuri, following the saint's death. From the Florentine archives, we know that Papazzuri wrote to Madonna Lapa Acciaiuoli, sister to Niccolò Acciaiuoli, the Florentine Seneschal of Naples, informing her that Bridget's household had left Rome for Sweden, and describing the commission of a painting for the chapel in the *Casa di Santa Brigida*, Bridget's house in Rome: "unam tabulam pro illa capella et altari posita in illa camera" [a painted board for Bridget's chapel and placed on the altar in her room].¹¹⁵ The painting was to be a triptych for the altar, including a central panel featuring Bridget envisioning Mary at the Nativity, among other saintly scenes. The commission epitomizes, Julia Bolton Holloway has argued, the genre of the "Sacred Conversation"; the international web of devotion that demonstrate Bridget's importance and influence "both inside the cloister and outside of it, in the world of commerce, in counting houses and legal chambers of

men of wealth and power, both cloister and market; while also involving the world of women—who were usually excluded from the male world of documents.”¹¹⁶ Such influence resonates specifically through Margery’s devotion, which feeds into her wider development of a female religious identity at odds with convention. Di Tommaso’s painting predates Margery’s stay in Rome (September 1414–Easter 1415), and considering her visit to Bridget’s chapel, she almost certainly would have seen it. Female patronage of this remarkable piece of material culture thus facilitates Margery’s own self-patronage of her devotional identity, as she dons the same white dress as the Bridgettine Mary and then as *sponsa Christi*, inserting herself via *imitatio* into a network of authenticating relationships to the divine.

Margery remakes herself in the image of these female saints, a process of refashioning that culminates, finally, in Margery’s receipt of communion while wearing white. From chapter 39 to 44 in the *Book*’s narrative progression, Margery’s visit to Bridget’s chapel seems to lead fluidly into Christ’s provision of his “tokyn” of “ordination” of Margery’s white clothes (217–18). Although she has “sufferyd meche despyte and meche schame in many dyvers cuntreys, cyteys, and townys” (218), this divine ordination allows Margery to invoke the charged potential of her white garb: on “Trinite Sunday next folwyng,” Margery is “howselyd al in white” for communion. The fabrics of Margery’s devotion here continue to invite judgement, but her Eucharistic performance and personal transformation are catalysed by their imbued power. To be houselled in white is to receive Christ’s flesh into her own refashioned body which, “swathyd” in heavenly signs, is subsequently reformed as a sacred space, despite ecclesiastical disapproval. It has undergone “sanctificacion” (*sanctificatio*), as did Mary’s womb.¹¹⁷ Rebecca Krug has highlighted that in the later Middle Ages, “sanctity” (or *sauntite*) tended to have the more general meaning of “a state of blessedness or a righteous manner of living rather than canonized sainthood in a strict sense”: the fundamental sense is “that the sanctified person both embodies and practices holiness.”¹¹⁸ Although Margery is uncanonised, her sartorial transformation constitutes both literal embodiment and practice; if sanctity is a lifestyle, rather than an appointment, Margery’s *Book* depicts a life sanctified by her holy performance.

Roszika Parker has argued that historically, women’s interaction with textiles represents both the attainment of a “feminine ideal” as well as “a weapon of resistance to the constraints of femininity.”¹¹⁹ Margery’s interaction with textiles enjoys this plurality, appropriating the symbolism of a heavenly ideal despite her worldly circumstances and accusations of

heterodoxy. Indeed, having charted Margery's sartorial pilgrimage, we can see quite plainly how she reiteratively performs her costumed body in light of the coded narratives of her female models, thereby configuring a hierotopy that reaffirms her own sacred place in this matrilineage. As both wearer and weaver of her own text, Margery's sartorial pilgrimage thus facilitates the performance of her religious identity with an agency that channels the generative and redemptive power of these signified narratives. Finally, wearer and weaver merge as Margery's self-fashioning is translated to her autobiographical enterprise: Kempe's *text* consequently becomes a physical demonstration of her own gynecological power and incarnational craft, as it stitches together the thread of her own life into the rich tapestry of archetypal holy women.

NOTES

1. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000; repr. 2004), 75. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the text by page number. All translations are taken from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Barry Windeatt (London: Penguin Books, 1985; repr. 2004).
2. Cf. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "Marian Virtues and Margery Kempe: The Influence of Carmelite Devotion to the Virgin," *Carmelus* 50 (2003): 89–112.
3. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990; repr. 1999), 33.
4. Laura Varnam, "The Crucifix, The Pietà, and the Female Mystic: Devotional Objects and Performative Identity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41, no. 2 (2015): 208–37, at 213; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178.
5. Varnam, "The Crucifix, The Pietà, and the Female Mystic," 6.
6. Andrea Denny-Brown, *Fashioning Change: The Trope of Clothing in High- and Late-Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012).
7. Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler, *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), xiv.
8. E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1; Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years' War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 10.
9. Cf. Santha Bhattacharji, "Tears and Screaming: Weeping in the Spirituality of Margery Kempe," in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 229–40.
10. Kathryn M. Rudy, *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3.
11. For studies on this topic, see Susan Dickman, "Margery Kempe and the English Devotional Tradition," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1980), 156–72; Susan Dickman, "Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1984*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984), 150–68; 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), 115–40; Carol Heffernan, "The Revelations of St Bridget of Sweden in Fifteenth-Century England," *Neophilologus* 101, no. 2 (2017): 337–49; 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), 195–216.

12. Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 3.

13. Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 59.

14. Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xiii.

15. Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 64.

16. Cf. Nancy K. Miller, "The Woman, The Text and The Critic," in *The Poetics of Gender* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 270–95.

17. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "textile" (*adj.* and *n.*)

18. Cf. Gail McMurray Gibson, "The Thread of Life in the Hand of the Virgin," in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright, and Joan Bechtold (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1990), 46–54.

19. J. K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 61. For this tradition in the Middle Ages, see A. Weyl Carr, "Threads of Authority: The Virgin Mary's Veil in the Middle Ages," in *Robes and Honour: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. S. Gordon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 59–63.

20. Mark 15:37–38. See also Matthew 27:50–52 and Luke 23:45–46. All Latin quotations taken from the Vulgate Bible, with translations based on the Douay-Rheims edition unless otherwise stated.

21. "Play 12: Joseph's Doubt," in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. Douglas Sugano (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), line 65. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-12-josephs-doubt>.

22. Modern translation. See also Job 10:11.

23. Cf. Hilda Charlotte Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 2 vols. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963–65; rev. with Thomas A. Thompson, 2009).

24. Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1976; rev. ed. 1986), 5.

25. Cf. Varnam, "The Crucifix, The Pietà, and the Female Mystic," 1–14.

26. Madeleine H. Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 2. Cf. Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34.

27. Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 8. Cf. Eamon Duffy, "'Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes': The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England," in *Women In The Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 175–96.

28. Nicola Lowe, "Women's Devotional Bequests of Textiles in the Late Medieval English Parish Church c. 1350–1550," *Gender and History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 407–29, at 404.

29. This MS inscription states that the roll is a measure of "our lady seynt Mary lenge" (length). That is to say, the measurement of length of the roll is proportionate to the height of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ. Lea T. Olsan, "Wellcome MS. 632: Heavenly Protection During Childbirth in Late Medieval England," *Wellcome Library Early Medicine Blog*, October 25, 2015, <http://blog.wellcomelibrary.org/2015/10/wellcome-ms-632-heavenly-protection-during-childbirth-in-late-medieval-england/> (accessed March 20, 2018). See also Peter Murray Jones and Lea T. Olsan, "Performative Rituals for Conception and Childbirth in England, 900–1500," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89 (2015): 406–32; Mary Morse, "'Thys moche more ys oure Lady Mary longe': Takamiya MS 56 and the English Birth Girdle Tradition," in *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift Dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday*, ed. Simon Horobin and Linne Mooney (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014), 199–219; Carole Rawcliffe, "Women, Childbirth, and Religion in Later Medieval England," in *Women and Religion in Medieval England*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), 91–117.

30. Herbert L. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," in *Studies in Pictorial Narrative* (London: Pindar Press, 1994), 63.

31. Alexei Lidov, "The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon: Revealing an Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy," *IKON Journal of Iconographic Studies* 7 (2014): 97–108.

32. Often interpreted as representing Mary as the tabernacle, Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto* is a visually-striking illustration of the hierotopy symbolism of Mary's enclosing flesh. See figure 2.

33. "Play 11: Parliament of Heaven; Salutation of Conception," *The N-Town Plays*, line 219.

34. "Play 2: Creation of the World; Fall of Man," *The N-Town Plays*, line 333. <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-2-creation-of-the-world-fall-of-man>."

35. While we cannot know whether Margery can be included in this particular contingent, Windeatt suggests that Margery's visit to York in 1413 – "It befell upon a Fryday on Mydsomyr Evyn in ryghth hot wedyr, as this creatur was komyng fro-Yorke-ward" – coincides with Corpus Christi Day, and so she may have seen the Mystery Plays performed at York. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 86, note to line 708.

36. Lowe, "Women's Devotional Bequests of Textiles," *Gender and History*, 404.

37. Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 164.

38. Preserved in two versions: the former, not later than 1325, consists of 200 short couplets in MS Auchinleck (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 19.2.1) (1330–1340). The latter, *How a Merchande dyd hys Wyfe Betray* is in Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38 (15th century) in 136 couplets, and London, British Library Harley MS 5396 (15th century), a fragment of 175 verses in couplets.

39. "A Pennyworth of Wit," in "Kleine publicationen aus der Auchinleck-hs.," ed. E. Kölbing, *Englische Studien* 7 (London and New York: Trübner; B. Westermann, 1884), 122, my emphasis.

40. Cf. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 306–07.

41. Joanna Ziegler, *Sculpture of Compassion: The Pietà and the Beguines in the Southern Low Countries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 172.

42. Varnam, "The Crucifix, The Pietà, and the Female Mystic," 15–29.

43. See Mary C. Erler, "Devotional Literature," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume III 1400–1557*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 495–25, esp. 496.

44. *Belles Heures* of Jean de France, duc de Berry (1405–1408/9), folio 48^v. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Cloisters Collection*, 1954, 54.1.1. <http://blog.metmuseum.org/artofillumination/manuscript-pages/folio-48v/> (accessed March 20, 2018).

45. Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240–1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 30.

46. Sue Niebryzdowski has suggested that Margery could have been influenced by piety in York, including devotional objects such as the embellished Bolton Hours (York Minster, MS Add. 2). "'Wolcomyd and mech made of in dyvers placys': The Shared Piety of the Citizens of York and Margery Kempe," presented at *Margery Kempe Studies in the 21st Century*, University College, University of Oxford, April 5–7, 2018.

47. Windeatt notes that this is "probably a 'primer'" (*The Book of Margery Kempe*, 83). See also Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 212–14, who cites Margery's "boke."

48. Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *The Early Art of Norfolk* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 85–86.

49. Cf. Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Holy Women and the Needle Arts: Piety, Devotion, and Stitching the Sacred, ca. 500–1150," in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe*, ed. Katherine Smith and Scott Wells (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 95–125.

50. Alexandra Gajewski and Stefanie Seeberg, "Having Her Hand In It? Elite Women as 'Makers' of Textile Art in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval History* 42, no. 1 (2016): 26–50, at 27.

51. Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 47.

52. The Council of Paris (829) prohibited women from the area around the altar and warned that they were not to touch priestly garments. Cf. Fiona Griffiths, "'Like the Sister of Aaron': Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles," in *Female vita religiosa Between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin: LIT, 2011), 346; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Gender, Celibacy, and Proscriptions of Sacred Space," in *Women's Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 176–93.

53. Requiring they be kept clean. Cf. Thomas M. Izbicki, "Linteamenta alteria: The Care of Altar Linens in the Medieval Church," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 12, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 41–60.

54. Jennifer Ni Grádaigh, "Mere Embroiderers? Women and Art in Early Medieval Ireland," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: IDC and Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2012), 124.

55. Schulenburg, "Holy Women and the Needle Arts," 104.

56. Ziegler, *Sculpture of Compassion*, 170. Cf. John Giles Milhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowing: Women's Experience and Men's Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 57, no. 2 (1989): 341–72, at 362–68.

57. Maggie Ross, "Behold Not the Cloud of Experience," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Exeter Symposium VIII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2011*, ed. E. A. Jones (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 36–37.

58. Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, 33.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Windeatt notes that this tale appears in Bonaventure's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, which was known to Kempe. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 180.

61. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.

62. To whom Margery has often been compared, on account of the autobiographical and psychological flavor of both authors' work. See Richard Lawes, "The Madness of Margery Kempe," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VI: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 1999*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 147–68; Isabel Davis, "Men and Margery: Negotiating Medieval Patriarchy," in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 35–54. Cf. also Windeatt's note to the line, "go spyne and carde as other women don" that Hoccleve, in his *To Sir John Oldcastle* (1415) also exclaims, "Some wommen eeke, thogh hir wit be thynne, I wole arguments make in holy writ! | Lewde calates [foolish women] sittith down and spyne, | And kakale of sumwhat eles, for your wit | Is al to feeble to despute of it!" *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 259–59, note to line 4330.

63. Translated before 1413. Thomas Hoccleve, *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, EETS, e.s. 61, 73 (1892, 1925), rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1–8.

64. As Gail McMurray Gibson has described, "Margery Kempe's difficult pilgrimage to Aachen in her old age took her to view the Assisi relic's principal rival." "St. Margery: *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Equally in God's Image*, 151.

65. Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire*, 31.

66. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 95–105. For more on costume in performance, see Donatella Barbieri, *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Culture, and the Body* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

67. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditations: The Context of Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy and Iconography* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 39.

68. Middle English Dictionary, s.v. "pilgrimage."

69. John Block Friedman, "The Iconography of Dagged Clothing and its Reception by Moralists Writers," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 9, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 122. See also Sarah Thursfield, "Sewing: Cutting and Construction," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles of the British Isles, c. 450–1450*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth, and Maria Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 503–08.

70. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Hope Emily Allen and Sanford Brown Meech, EETS o.s. 212 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 273.

71. Mary Erler, "Margery Kempe's White Clothes," *Medium Ævum* 62 (1993): 78–83, at 78. Cf. "The Digby Play of Mary Magdalene," in *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, ed. Donald Baker, John Murphy and Louis B. Hall, EETS o.s. 283 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 24–95.

72. "[M]anens rea, vel . . . munita vel invicta vel magnifica" ("remaining guilty . . . armed, or unconquered, or magnificent"). Jacobus de Voragine, "Of Seynt Marie Magdalene," in *Aurea Legenda*, trans. William Caxton, 1487. <http://www.intratext.com/ixt/ENG1293/> (accessed March 20, 2018). Cf. Peter V. Loewen and Robin Waugh, eds., *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture: Conflicted Roles* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 7–11.

73. Cf. Suzanne L. Craymer, "Margery Kempe's Imitation of Mary Magdalene and the 'Digby Plays,'" *Mystics Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1993): 173–81.

74. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 157.

75. For more on deception and disguise in performance, see Philip Butterworth, *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 109–124.

76. The most detailed study on this subject remains Valeria R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York: Garland, 1996).

77. Such as in the case of Eleanor/John Rykener, a fourteenth-century sex worker arrested for having sex with another man, John Britby, in 1394. See David Lorenzo Boyd and Ruth Mazo Karras, “The Interrogation of a Male Transvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth Century London,” *GLQ* 1 (1995): 459–65; David Lorenzo Boyd and Ruth Mazo Karras, “Ut cum muliere”: A Male Transvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth Century London,” in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carl Freccero (London: Routledge, 1996), 99–116.

78. Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England*, *Medieval Cultures* 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 10.

79. Cf. *Ibid.*, 2–23.

80. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 354.

81. Michael Van Dussen, “Betokening Chastity: Margery Kempe’s Sartorial Crisis,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41, no. 3 (2005): 275–84, at 284.

82. See, for example, the “hold woman that was a poure creatur in Rome,” who Margery serves for six weeks: “sche had no bed to lyn in, ne no clothes to be cured wyth, *saf hir owyn mantel*.” *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 189, my emphasis.

83. Leslie Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel de Villena’s Vita Christi* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2013).

84. Montserrat Piera, “Writing, Auctoritas and Canon Formation in Sor Isabel De Villena’s Vita Christi,” *La Corónica* 32, no. 1 (2003): 105–18, at 110. Cf. Lesley K. Twomey, “Sor Isabel De Villena, Her Vita Christi and an Example of Gendered Immaculist Writing in the Fifteenth Century,” *La Corónica* 32, no. 1 (2003): 89–103.

85. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.

86. Erler, “Margery Kempe’s White Clothes,” *Medium Ævum*, 81.

87. Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe’s Meditations*, 39.

88. Varnam, “The Crucifix, The Pietà, and the Female Mystic,” 4.

89. *Ibid.* 5.

90. Dan Hicks, “The Material Cultural Turn: Event and Effect,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

91. A garment made with animal skin or fur.

92. After the teachings of Paul (1 Corinthians 7:3–4).

93. See Gunnell Cleve, “Margery Kempe: A Scandinavian Influence in Medieval England,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V: Papers Read at The Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 163–178; Louise Collis, *The Apprentice Saint* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964), 139; Julia Bolton Holloway, “Bride, Margery, Julian, and Alice: Bridget of Sweden’s Textual Community in Medieval England,” in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1992), 203–22; Liam Peter Temple, “Returning the English ‘Mystics’ To Their Medieval Milieu: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Bridget of Sweden,” *Women’s Writing* 23, no. 2 (2016): 141–58; Nanda Hopenwasser and Signe Wegener, “Vox Matris: The Influence of St. Birgitta’s ‘Revelations’ on *The Book of Margery Kempe*: St. Birgitta and Margery Kempe as Wives and Mothers,” in *Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers*, ed. Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 61–85.

94. See James Hogg, “A Brigittine Legislative Collection,” *Spiritualität heute und gestern, Analecta Cartusiana* 35, no. 9 (1990): 80–81.

95. Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe’s Meditations*, 56, n. 25.

96. Cleve, “Margery Kempe: A Scandinavian Influence in Medieval England,” 173.

97. Cf. Sylvia Schein, “Bridget of Sweden, Margery Kempe and Women’s Jerusalem Pilgrimages in the Middle Ages,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 14, no. 1 (1999): 44–58.

98. Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe’s Meditations*, 56.

99. Einat Klafter, “Margery Kempe’s Pilgrimage to Rome: In and Out of Step with St. Bridget,” *Women’s Literary Culture and the Medieval Canon: An International Network Funded by the*

Leverhulme Trust, August 21, 2018. <https://blogs.surrey.ac.uk/medievalwomen/2017/08/21/margery-kempes-pilgrimage-to-rome-in-and-out-of-step-with-st-bridget/> (accessed March 20, 2018). See also Anthony Bale's recent Leverhulme International Research Network, "Pilgrim Libraries: Books and Reading on the Medieval Routes to Jerusalem & Rome," *Birkbeck University*. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/pilgrimlibraries/posts/> (accessed March 20, 2018).

100. Windeatt, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 204, note to lines 3132–3133.

101. Blue replaced royal purple in the later Middle Ages, while according to Eastern or Byzantine iconography of the *Theotokos*, her robe was red. John Gage, *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 15. Cf. Andreas Petzold, "The Iconography of Color," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017), 437–52.

102. Such as the Primer or Book of Hours referred to above.

103. I here quote from both versions of the text to highlight some semiotic differences, though Vincent Gillespie has recently proposed that Margery's access to Bridget's book would have been via her confessor reading from the Latin and translating directly. Gillespie subsequently argues for further consideration of the "Latin Margery Kempe." "The Latin Margery Kempe," presented at *Margery Kempe Studies in the 21st Century*, University College, University of Oxford, April 5–7, 2018.

104. Bridget of Sweden, *Liber Celestis*, ed. Roger Ellis, EETS o.s. 291 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 485–86.

105. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelaciones*, ed. Birger Bergh (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1967), Book VII, ch. 22. <http://www.umilta.net/bk7.html> (accessed March 20, 2018).

106. Bridget of Sweden, *Liber Celestis*, 485.

107. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelaciones*, Book VII, ch. 22.

108. *A Latin Dictionary. Founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary*, rev. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v. "suta." <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=sūta&la=la&can=sūtao> (accessed March 20, 2018).

109. Mary Dzon, "Birgitta of Sweden and Christ's Clothing," in *The Christ Child in Medieval Culture: Alpha Es Et O!* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 118.

110. Dzon, "Birgitta of Sweden and Christ's Clothing," 125.

111. Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 40.

112. For more on this location, see Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, "The Images of Saint Birgitta of Sweden in Santa Maria Novella in Florence," *Renaissance Studies* 18, no. 4 (2004): 509–526; Henrik Cornell, *The Iconography of the Nativity of Christ* (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1924), 14–15. For a discussion of other examples of Saint Bridget's vision of the Nativity in the Tuscan context see Ann M. Roberts, "Chiara Gambacorta as Patroness of the Arts," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. E. A. Matter and J. Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 145–46; Richard Offner, Klara Steinweg, Miklos Boskovits, and Mina Gregori, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting* (Florence: Giunti, 1966), 198–199. On Bridgettine iconography see George Kaftal, *The Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence: Sansoni, 1952), 218–20; Vincent Mayr, "Birgitta von Schweden," in *Lexicon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, Günter Bandmann, and Wolfgang Braunfels, vol. 5 (Vienna: Herder, 1973), cols. 400–4.

113. Pisan Artist (Turino Vanni?), *Nativity According to the Vision of St Birgitta*. Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa.

114. Robert Campin, *La Nativité* (c. 1420), *Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon*, CA 150; Rogier van der Weyden, *Polyptych with the Nativity* (c. 1445). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Cloisters Collection*, 49.109.

115. Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Carte Stroziane, Serie Prima, CCCLII. Quoted by Isak Collijn, *Birgittinska Gestalter: Forsknings i italienska arkiv och bibliotek* (Stockholm: Michaelisgillet, 1929), 9–20.

116. Julia Bolton Holloway, *Julian Among the Books: Julian of Norwich's Theological Library* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 187.

117. *The Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS, e.s. 33 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 172. Quoted by Rebecca Krug, "The Idea of Sanctity and the Un canonized Life of Margery Kempe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature*, ed. Andrew Galloway, Cambridge Companions to Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129–46.

118. *Ibid.*, 129–30.

119. Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), ix.