The Importance of St Margaret's Church in *The Book of Margery Kempe*: A Sacred Place and an Exemplary Parishioner

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In chapter 63 of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the narrator explains that 'on a tyme' Margery was in the prior's cloister at St Margaret's church, Lynn, because she 'durst not abydyn in the Cherch, for inqwietyng [disturbing] of the pepil wyth hir crying'.[1] A visiting friar has been preaching against her in Lynn but God bids her to 'gon ageyn into cherch, for I schal takyn awey fro the thy criyng that thu schalt no mor cryin so lowde' (p. 298). With divine authorisation, Margery re-enters the church but she is accused of hypocrisy by the congregation who 'levyd that sche durst no lengar cryen for the good frer prechyd so ageyn hir and wold not suffyr hir in no maner' (p. 299). Once inside the church, God speaks to Margery again, declaring that the friar will be 'chastized scharply':

> Dowtyr, thu schalt be in cherch whan he schal be wythowtyn. *In this chirche* thu hast suffyrd meche schame and reprefe for the yyftys that I have yovyn the, and for the grace and goodnes that I have wrowt in the, and therfore *in this cherche and in this place I schal ben worschepyd in the*. Many a man and woman schal seyn: 'It is wel sene that God lovyd hir wel.' (p. 299, italics mine)

In this quotation God identifies St Margaret's parish church as a crucial location in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. 'In this chirche', the church of her namesake St Margaret, Margery has suffered shame and reproof for the gifts that God has given her and 'therfore in this cherche and in this place I schal ben worschepyd in the.' The repeated deixis- this church, this place- firmly locates God's utterance in Margery's parish church and places the reader in direct proximity with St Margaret's, both as a material building and a textual construction in the *Book*. This passage is frequently taken as evidence for the future veneration of Margery as a

I would like to thank Helen Barr for her helpful advice during the early stages of this article; Laura Kalas Williams and the anonymous readers for their invaluable feedback; and my colleague Oliver Clarkson for his support in the final stages. This article is dedicated to my students at University College, Oxford, for their exemplary work on Margery Kempe.

[1] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 298. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

saint, in line with the *Book*'s hagiographical strategies identified by Gail McMurray Gibson and examined more recently by Katherine J. Lewis.[2] But rather than focusing primarily on what St Margaret's can do for Margery, as a stage for the performance of saintly identity, in this article I will focus on what Margery- and her *Book*- can do for the church.

The two major miracles that take place at St Margaret's church, when Margery survives a heavy stone and beam falling on her back during mass (chapter 9) and when she saves the church from fire (chapter 67), are often read as confirmation of the *Book*'s aim to present Margery 'as a potential saint'.[3] This is a persuasive and important reading but, as I shall argue, one that neglects the opportunity that both episodes present for the representation of Margery Kempe as an exemplary parishioner in her parish church. The *Book* does not always draw sharp and exclusive distinctions between her lay and saintly exemplarity, indeed the liminal and flexible nature of Margery's religious practice is in many ways essential to the text's operations. But when re-contextualised within the literature of pastoral care, familiar to Margery and her fellow Christians through the teaching of parish priests, it becomes clear that Margery's identity as a member of a particular parish, housed within a particular church, is fundamental to the *Book*'s presentation of lay piety and communal identity.[4]

Sarah Salih foregrounds the importance of location in the *Book*, arguing that Margery's piety is 'often performed in legible spaces, in her pilgrimages and processions, in

[2] See Windeatt's footnote 5254, p. 299; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Katherine J. Lewis, 'Margery Kempe and Saint Making in Later Medieval England', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 195-215.
[3] Lewis, 'Margery Kempe and Saint Making', p. 195.
[4] In this I follow recent work that sees the *Book* reflecting an orthodox expression of lay spirituality, such as Raymond Powell, 'Margery Kempe: An Exemplar of Late Medieval English Piety', *Catholic Historical Review*, 89.1 (2003), 1-23.

the meanings and memories associated with each part of her parish church'.[5] In the Middle Ages the parish church was the most important 'legible space' in the devotional landscape and it was read, constructed, and re-read in the literature of pastoral care that flourished in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The *Book*'s depiction of St Margaret's is, I argue, informed by the teaching of pastoral care texts such as John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the sermons in his *Festial*, and the penitential material on appropriate behaviour in the church contained in texts such as Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (all of which I will discuss in detail below). Margery's *Book* is frequently read alongside the lives of continental holy women such as Bridget of Sweden and Marie D'Oignies, but it has not been sufficiently grounded in the vernacular texts that formed the basis of lay engagement with the parish church.[6] Margery Kempe is first and foremost a married laywoman and while it is undeniable that her *Book* employs tropes from hagiography to establish her identity as a holy woman, the text also deliberately draws upon the literature of pastoral care to depict Margery as an exemplary parishioner who cultivates a deeply affectionate relationship with her parish church.[7] Sarah Beckwith comments that 'it is evidently to Kempe as a lay woman that her

[5] Sarah Salih, 'Margery's Bodies: Piety, Work, and Penance', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 161-76, pp. 167-68.

[6] See for example Janette Dillon, 'Holy Women and their Confessors, or Confessors and their Holy Women?', in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 115-40. P. H. Cullum and Rebecca Krug have examined Margery in the context of the pastoral material which I am advocating. Cullum discusses Margery's charitable acts in the context of the Seven Works of Mercy and Krug has recourse to the *Gesta Romanorum* and Mirk's *Festial* in her discussion of Margery's sanctity. See P. H. Cullum, '"Yf lak of charyte be not ower hynderawnce": Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the Practice of the Spiritual and Bodily Works of Mercy', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 177-193 and Rebecca Krug, 'The Idea of Sanctity and the Uncanonized Life of Margery Kempe', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*, ed. by Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 129-45.

[7] Here I am drawing on David Wallace's argument that the *Book* 'is not to be categorized a priori as a religious treatise, a pious *vita*, but rather as a text negotiating and absorbing various genres and values (hagiographic, mercantile, and romantic)', and I would suggest, pastoral and didactic. See David Wallace, *Strong Women: Life, Text, and Territory 1347-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 111.

community, lay and clerical alike, responded' and it is this lay identity, rooted in the parish church, that I want to examine here.[8]

In her article '"A Peler of Holy Cherch": Margery Kempe and the Bishops', Sarah Rees Jones argues that 'the *Book* is not about Margery, but about the Church, about relationships between clergy and laity, and in particular about the authority of the archbishops and bishops in the ancient, but newly reformed, Church of England'.[9] It is a text 'by clergy, for clergy, and about clergy' at a time when there was a shift back to public communal worship as a response to Lollardy and the rise in personal devotional practices.[10] Rees Jones's conclusion is problematic in that it radically downplays Margery's importance within the *Book* and her role in its production.[11] But the placement of 'the Church at the centre, rather than the periphery of the book' is a useful springboard for my discussion here.[12] The *Book* is about 'the church' but as the spiritual and material home of the laity and, moreover, about Margery Kempe's relationship with that church as exemplified by St Margaret's, Lynn. The *Book* is about lay understanding of the church as a material building, a symbolic architecture, and a sacred place. And this is an understanding which is shaped by the clergy but not to the detriment of lay agency and practice. Margery Kempe is as important to the church as the church is to Margery Kempe.

There has been a recent turn towards the material locations of Margery's *Book*, initiated by Sarah Stanbury and Virginia Raguin. Their 'Mapping Margery Kempe' website

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[8] Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 102.

[9] Sarah Rees Jones, '"A Peler of Holy Cherch": Margery Kempe and the Bishops', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain, Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 377-91, p. 390.

[10] Rees Jones, 'A Peler of Holy Cherch', p. 391. For this argument about fifteenth-century religious culture see Jeremy Catto, 'Religious Change under Henry V', in *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship,* ed. by G. L. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 97-115, pp. 109-11.

[11] As Diane Watt notes in *Medieval Women's Writing: Works by and for Women in England, 1100-1500* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 131.

[12] Rees Jones, 'A Peler of Holy Cherch', p. 380.

provides 'access to the material culture of Kempe's fifteenth-century world, and especially the dynamic world of the parish', including images of East Anglian parish churches, such as St Margaret's, and their visual art.[13] Stanbury and Raguin have also written important articles on the *Book* in their collection of essays *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church.*[14] In 'Margery Kempe and the Arts of Self-Patronage', Stanbury argues that Margery's public self is 'deeply indebted […] to contemporary donor images' in church art and that the *Book* consistently presents Margery in church space as a 'visible patron gifted with the means and social power to endow and control the material life of the churches in which her meditations occur'.[15] Raguin shows how the *Book of Margery Kempe* is 'rife with specific notation of place' and she argues that Margery's references to place 'serve as memorial aids or structural principles in the *Book*', drawing on medieval memory techniques based on architectural models.[16] Raguin concludes that Margery constructs 'a self-image based on experience within spaces, seeing herself as an image in sepulchral brasses, transfixed by a night within the basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, journeying to pilgrimage sites, and grounded in the daily experience of her parish church'.[17] Developing Stanbury and Raguin's focus on Margery's relationship with church buildings, I will show how the daily experience of St Margaret's, mediated by the literature of pastoral care, is a crucial foundation for the presentation of Margery as an exemplary parishioner.

Margery's relationship with St Margaret's must be read within the context of her hometown and local environment, however, and in the first part of this article I will show how St Margaret's is one of the most important locations in the *Book* and how the text's

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[13] Sarah Stanbury and Virginia Raguin, 'About Mapping Margery Kempe', *Mapping Margery Kempe* (2009) <http://college.holycross.edu/projects/kempe/about.htm> [accessed 7 March 2016]

[14] Sarah Stanbury, 'Margery Kempe and the Arts of Self-Patronage' and Virginia Raguin, 'Real and Imagined Bodies in Architectural Space: The Setting for Margery Kempe's *Book*', in *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. by Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2005), pp. 75-103 and 105-140 respectively.

[15] Stanbury, 'Arts of Self Patronage', pp. 77 and 96.

[16] Raguin, 'Real and Imagined Bodies', pp. 105 and 113.

[17] Raguin, 'Real and Imagined Bodies', p. 131.

orientation around Lynn places the town and its church at the centre of the text's mapping of Christian holy places.[18] Despite her frequent travels, Margery Kempe always returns to Lynn. The town and its church are her social and spiritual home, and St Margaret's gains in sanctity by association with the great pilgrimage sites of Europe and the Holy Land that Margery visits. In this article I will show how Margery's spiritual life begins and ends at St Margaret's. Her temptation and conversion take place there (chapters 4-5) and the *Book* concludes with Margery's final return to Lynn and her prayers that open with the *Veni creator spiritus*, the Pentecostal hymn that she always recites 'whan sche came to chirche' (p. 421). St Margaret's is the foundational place in the *Book* for Margery's understanding of the church as a community and a sacred material building with a pastoral mission.

After establishing the centrality of St Margaret's and Lynn in the first half of this article (sections 1-3), I will examine three interrelated characteristics of the church- the material, sacred, and communal- through a detailed analysis of the aforementioned miracles at St Margaret's: the beam and stone falling on Margery in chapter 9 and when Margery saves the church from fire in chapter 67.[19] Both episodes construct St Margaret's as a sacred place, in which miracles occur, and a material structure that can be destroyed or fall apart. Both events provide an opportunity for the rebuilding of community as St Margaret's, foregrounded in the stone miracle by the Pentecostal time frame and in the fire miracle by the parish priest and congregation seeking Margery's help to stop the fire consuming the church. When the sparks of the fire fly into the building, Margery cries out to God to 'qwenchyn this fyer and esyn myn hert' (p. 308) and her deep affection for the church is rewarded when a miraculous snowstorm extinguishes the flames. It becomes clear that St Margaret's is at the very heart of Margery's spiritual life and that when God declares 'in this cherche and in this

[18] For the history, politics, and economic status of Lynn see Kate Parker, 'Lynn and the Making of a Mystic', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 55-73.
[19] For ease of reference I will refer to this episode as the 'stone miracle' throughout this article.

place I schal ben worschepyd in the', the *Book* is presenting Margery's devotional practice in the parish as an example to emulate. God will be worshipped in Margery because of the exemplary manner in which she conducts herself. God is in Margery as he is in the church.

1. Exemplary Behaviour in the Ideal Parish Church

In his work on the medieval exemplum, Larry Scanlon argues that a person becomes 'exemplary precisely by transforming his or her actions into a moral narrative' and this is the process that Margery Kempe's life undergoes in her *Book*.[20] The text states its purpose in the prologue and lays out important markers for its function and the required reading process:

> Here begynnyth a schort tretys and a comfortabyl for sinful wrecchys, wherin thei may have gret solas and comfort to hem and undyrstondyn the hy and unspecabyl mercy of ower sovereyn Savyowr Cryst Jhesu, whos name be worschepd and magnyfyed wythowten ende, that now in ower days to us unworthy deyneth to exercysen hys nobeley and hys goodnesse. All the werkys of ower Saviowr ben for ower exampyl and instruccyon, and what grace that he werkyth in any creatur is ower profyth, yf lak of charyte be not ower hynderawnce. (p. 41)

The works of God are for 'ower exampyl and instruccyon' and the grace that he works in 'any creatur is ower profyth' unless we are hindered by 'lak of charyte.' The inclusive plural pronouns here position the reader to profit from the exemplary and instructive works of God that are contained within the *Book.* In the quotation discussed at the beginning of this article in which God declares that he will be worshipped in Margery, God uses the same vocabulary of work and practice to describe Margery's spiritual performances: 'for the grace and goodnes that I have *wrowt* in the' (p. 299). Margery's grace is the work of God and an example to the reader. 'Exampyl' in Middle English means a 'story which teaches a lesson', such as a fable or narrative from Scripture, and when referring to persons signifies a model to

[20] Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucer Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 34.

be imitated.[21] The episodes I will discuss from the *Book* are exemplary both in content and in style. That is, they demonstrate the appropriate way to behave in the church, as advocated by pastoral care texts, and they draw on the narrative strategies of didactic exempla relied upon by preachers such as John Mirk to illustrate their teaching. Both miracles could be read as standalone narratives, like the exempla in popular story collections such as the fifteenth-century *Alphabet of Tales,* and furthermore, both oscillate between the general and particular, which Elizabeth Allen argues is the 'defining' characteristic of exempla.[22]

The stone episode begins: 'it befel *on a Fryday befor Whytson Evyn*, as this creatur was in a cherch of Seynt Margarete at N. heryng hir messe' (p. 82, italics mine). The fire episode opens with: '*on a tyme* ther happyd to be a gret fyer in Lynne Bischop, whech fyer brent up the Gyldehall of the Trinite' (p. 307, italics mine). Sermon collections such as Mirk's *Festial* organized exempla according to specific dates in the liturgical calendar and I will explain below the importance of the stone miracle taking place just before the feast of Pentecost (described here as Whitsun). The exempla in the *Alphabet of Tales* alternate between generic time markers, such as 'on a tyme' or 'som tyme', and references to textual authorities, 'Cesarius tellis' for example.[23] The fire miracle in Margery's *Book* begins 'on a tyme' but it is far more specific in its geographical location, including both the name of the town, 'Lynne Bischop', and the progression of the fire towards the church from the 'Gyldehall of the Trinite'. In the stone miracle the reference to place is more complex. The church itself is clearly named, 'Seynt Margarete', but the town is not. Barry Windeatt notes that the identity of Lynn is 'concealed' at the beginning of the *Book* but 'later openly named', and indeed references to the town as 'N' (Latin *nomen*, 'name') appear six times in chapters

[21] MED s.v. 'exaumple' 3 and 4a) respectively.
[22] Elizabeth Allen, *False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later Medieval English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 4
[23] *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. by Mary Macleod Banks, Early English Text Society o.s. 126-27 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1904-5). For example, 'Cesarius tellis', pp. 19 and 27, 'Jacobus de Vetriaco tellis', p. 29; 'we rede on a tyme', p. 48 and p. 49; 'som tyme', p. 1.

1-9, but in chapter 16 when Margery returns from London, it is to Lynn (described as her home).[24] Similarly, when Margery returns from Europe and the Holy Land, she travels 'hom togedyr to Lynne' (p. 219). I will discuss the collocation of Lynn with home in the next section but here it might be countered that the replacement of the proper name 'Lynne' with 'N' is evidence contrary to my argument that the specific identity of the town is crucial to the *Book*. The initial veiling of Lynn is easily decoded, however, and only appears in the early part of the *Book*. A local reader would have little difficulty in deciphering 'St Margaret's at N town' as a reference to Lynn. But this does not mean that the text does not also make space for wider application to the lives of readers outside Lynn, who are also intended to benefit from its 'exampyl and instruccyon'. The reader could insert their own town, or an imagined town, into the reference to 'N' town, even in the episodes that name the church as St Margaret's as this was a popular dedication in late medieval England. Miri Rubin argues that 'exempla attempted to locate the miraculous within the immediate surroundings of their audience, and tales acquired local place names, their protagonists came to speak the regional dialect, and adhered to local customs', but this specificity does not mean that they are any less efficacious when read outside the immediate local environment.[25] Margery Kempe's attachment to her local parish church in her local town remains an important lesson for parishioners throughout medieval England as to how they should view their own local church in turn.

The efficacy of exempla rests on the construction of audience. Exemplary texts, as Allen points out, 'imply that narratives correspond to reader's lived existence, so that an exemplary moral is reiterated, or re-enacted, by live audiences'.[26] Margery Kempe's

[24] 'N' referenced on pp. 57, 60, 71, 82, and twice on p. 58.
[25] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 114.
[26] Allen, *False Fables*, p. 6. Scanlon concurs that the exemplum's enactment of authority 'assumes a process of identification on the part of its audience': it expects them 'to put themselves in the position of its protagonists,

interaction with St Margaret's corresponds with readers' experiences of their parish churches, both lived and taught in pastoral care texts. Allen argues further that exempla frequently include 'acts of recognition and explanation performed by the characters themselves' but in the *Book* such 'embedded interpretations' do not function merely to reiterate a stable moral, rather they offer alternative, frequently polarized, responses between which the reader has to choose.[27] This can be seen clearly in the stone episode which the Carmelite friar Alan of Lynn declares to be a 'gret myracle' but the congregation of St Margaret's question. 'Mych pepyl magnyfied mech God in this creatur':

> And also mech pepyl wold not levyn it, but rathar levyd it was a tokyn of wreth and veniawns than thei wold levyn it was any token of mercy er quemfulnes [favour]. (p. 85)

This evidences what Deborah S. Ellis has called the *Book*'s 'double perspective' in Margery's relationship with Lynn: 'we see Kempe flourishing on the tensions between her two goals of inclusion (acceptance by the townspeople) and exclusion (their repelled recognition of her special status).'[28] This duality is played out in the church as a key site of social interaction in the Middle Ages and a space that frequently acts as a moral barometer for medieval Christians. In pastoral care exempla, presence in the church was frequently determined by an individual's state of grace. The sinful were expelled and the virtuous remained. In Margery's *Book*, the situation is not resolved quite so neatly but this is because, as Nicholas Watson argues, the *Book* 'invites us to struggle with it in order to be edified by it':

> Not only does Kempe show herself, God's friend, fighting this struggle, she shows her supporters and the whole of Lynn doing the same. In this way, the *Book* continually tempts us into refusing her, should their faith and trust not be supple enough to understand.[29]

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to emulate the protagonist's moral success, or avoid his or her moral failure. It persuades by conveying a sense of communal identification with its moral lesson,' Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 34.

[27] Allen, *False Fables*, p. 5.

[28] Deborah S. Ellis, 'Margery Kempe and King's Lynn', in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 139-59, p. 139.

[29] Nicholas Watson, 'The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 395-434, p. 424.

This interpretation of our response to Margery ties in to the prologue's assertion that the works of God are for our example and instruction 'yf lak of charyte be not ower hynderawnce' (p. 41).[30] If we read the *Book* in a charitable frame of mind, we will be edified by it and here Watson's use of the word 'edify' is especially appropriate. In Middle English it means both to strengthen and confirm spiritually or morally, to instruct in Christian conduct, and also to build, for example, the house of God.[31] The *Book* edifies Margery, her community, and her readership by building a parish church and asking us to take our place within it alongside 'this creatur'.

Any discussion of the *Book* and its exemplarity must address the text's designation of Margery as 'this creatur.' In the prologue, the text moves from the general to the specific: from the grace that God works in 'any creatur' (p. 41), to how God moved and stirred 'a synful caytyf' to his love (p. 41), and finally the way of high perfection that 'this creatur' enters, in the third paragraph of the Prologue (p. 42) and throughout the *Book*. Felicity Riddy argues that 'this creatur' is 'slightly formal and distancing', in the manner of legal depositions, and that this 'seems to indicate presence or at least adjacency': 'the story is that of someone else nearby: readers are not invited to identify the protagonist with a narrating "I" who can in turn be identified with the author'.[32] Riddy suggests that the *Book*'s indirect narrative strategies present an argument against the text as the vita of a local saint, commenting with reference to the use of 'this creatur' rather than 'Margery' that 'saints are nothing without their names'.[33] This leaves room for Margery's role as an exemplary lay person rather than purely a 'self-styled saint', to use Gail McMurray Gibson's phrase.[34] We are all 'creatures' and as such can identify with Margery but I disagree that the overall effect

[30] Cullum discusses this caveat in the context of the Seven Works of Mercy in her article '"Yf lak of charyte be now ower hynderawnce", pp. 177-9.
[31] MED s.v. 'edifien' 4a) and 1a) and b).
[32] Felicity Riddy, 'Text and Self in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Voices in Dialogue,* pp. 435-53, p. 442.
[33] Riddy, 'Text and Self', p. 441.
[34] Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, p. 64.

is formal and distancing. Certainly there is a division between the narrator and 'this creatur', as Riddy asserts, but the repetition of the deictic 'this' brings the reader into close proximity with the 'creatur' and creates a relationship of intimacy and familiarity that aids the text's didactic and exemplary purposes.[35] The text also extends the proximal deixis to the *Book* itself in the prologue: 'the wrytyng of this boke' (p. 48), 'thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr' (p. 49), and even to 'this proym' (p. 50). And more importantly for my purposes here, God himself refers to St Margaret's in the same terms: 'in this cherche and in this place I schal ben worschepyd in the' (p. 299). Deixis is the 'linguistic means by which a speaker anchors utterances in the concrete place of enunciation' and here God anchors his authorisation of Margery Kempe in St Margaret's itself and in *The Book of Margery Kempe*.[36] 'This place' is both St Margaret's and the text. For Russell West-Pavlov, spatial language such as this 'never ceases to remind one of one's debts to the place in which one stands' and both Margery and the *Book*'s narrator, as we shall see, are indebted to St Margaret's.[37] But deixis is always reciprocal. Deictic markers 'frame and configure a realm of material space, making it meaningful':

> But by the same token, it is only by virtue of that space that deictics take on a specific context. Without that concrete contextualisation they remain empty, abstract, pure formalism. In turn, they owe their meaning to the ground in which they anchor their act of enunciation.[38]

The *Book*'s deictic markers, 'this cherch' and 'this place', make St Margaret's a meaningful place, both within the text and in Lynn itself, and the physical church building acts as a

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[35] Here I follow Riddy rather than Watson on the question of authorship and agency. Watson argues that Kempe herself is 'primarily responsible for the *Book*'s structure, arguments, and most of its language', see Watson, 'The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*', p. 397. In contrast to Watson, Riddy argues that the *Book* is 'polyvocal' and that we should be asking 'through whom are events focalised', who 'perceives' and 'speaks' within these episodes. Riddy identifies, for example, a 'preacherly discourse' at work in the text and I will discuss this below with reference to the identification of Margery's primary scribe with the parish priest of St Margaret's, Robert Spryngolde. See Riddy, 'Text and Self', pp. 437-8.

[36] Russell West-Pavlov, *Spaces of Fiction / Fictions of Space: Postcolonial Place and Literary DeiXis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 2.

[37] West-Pavlov, *Spaces of Fiction*, p. 51.

[38] West-Pavlov, *Spaces of Fiction*, p. 26.

material guarantor for the *Book* and for Margery Kempe's authority. When we read the *Book* outside St Margaret's we may lack the 'concrete contextualisation' that West-Pavlov deems crucial for deictic operation but the church in Lynn nevertheless stands, even today, as tangible, solid proof of the *Book*'s veracity.[39]

Theories of deixis also call our attention to the role of the speaker because 'the proximal/distal poles of deictic marking (*here* vs *there*) are centred upon the human actor' or, in the case of God's statement in the *Book*, the divine actor.[40] When God asserts that he will be worshipped in Margery in 'this cherche' he places himself in proximity to St Margaret's. He speaks from within St Margaret's and anchors himself in the place. In this passage the 'preacherly discourse' identified by Felicity Riddy as part of the *Book*'s narrative operation can be seen at work.[41] 'This cherche' is a crucial formula used in pastoral care literature for the creation of a proximal, familiar, and efficacious relationship between parishioners and the parish church. John Mirk employs the formula in his sermon for the feast of St Alkmund, for example, when he urges parishioners to worship the 'patron of þys chyrche'.[42] The fifteenth-century sermon collection the *Speculum Sacerdotale* also employs the formula its dedication sermon; dedication feast days were times at which the parish priest would especially encourage attendance in, and loyalty towards, the specific church in question.[43] But we also find the formula used in sermon exempla to impress upon the congregation the need for good behaviour within the church in which the sermon is delivered. In *Jacob's Well*, the narrator tells the story of Tutivillus, the demon who records the idle speech of the congregation on his scroll:

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[39] This is especially the case for the fire miracle as the church's continued existence proves that the fire did not destroy the building (see Windeatt, p. 307 n.5453 for historical evidence of the fire taking place on 23 January 1420/21).
[40] West-Pavlov, *Spaces of Fiction*, p. 8.
[41] See Riddy, 'Text and Self in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', p. 437.
[42] *Mirk's Festial*, ed. by Theodor Erbe, Early English Text Society, o.s. 96 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1905), p. 240.
[43] *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. by Edward H. Weatherly, Early English Text Society, o.s. 200 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 163.

> I trowe þe feend hath nede to drawe lengere & braddere his rolle *here*; for it is ellys to lytel to wryten on alle þe talys tolde in þis cherch.[44]

The addition of 'here' makes the mapping of the exemplum onto 'þis cherche' even more emphatic; *here* in *this* church Titivillus would need a large scroll indeed to record all the idle speech of the parishioners. *Jacob's Well* expands on the relationship between parishioner and church more explicitly in terms of the importance of physical presence in the structure:

> Þou schuldst on þe halyday kepyn þin owyn parysch cherche & heryn þe full dyvyne seruyse, & now3t styrten owt to oþere cherchys fro þe techyng of þi curate, þat þou schuldyst no3t here Goddys woord […] ffor grettere synge of hate to God may3t þou no3t schewe þan to fle þat place þere þou schuldyst here his woord.[45]

The text instructs the audience to keep to their own parish church and not flee from the teachings of their parish priest 'to oþere cherchys' as there is no 'gretterer sygne of hate to God' than leaving the church where they 'schuldyst here his woord'. There is a clear drive here to encourage parishioners to remain loyal to their parish churches and their clergy, a cause also supported by Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* in the directives on confession. Priests are told that when a man comes to confession, they must ask whether he is their own parishioner because without written permission, the laity should not seek absolution from another priest.[46] This did not mean that they refrained from doing so, however. Indeed Margery Kempe has a number of additional confessors, including the saintly vicar of St Stephen's, Norwich, Richard Caister, whose role in the *Book* I will discuss further below.[47] Katherine French has discussed the popularity of the mendicant orders and the potential threat to the livelihood of parish priests who feared 'the loss of revenue and influence when

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[44] *Jacob's Well*, ed. by Arthur Brandeis, Early English Text Society o.s. 115 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1900), p. 232.
[45] Fol. 188v-189r, quoted in Leo Carruthers, '"Know Thyself: Criticism, Reform, and the Audience of *Jacob's Well*', in *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, and University*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse et al (Louvain-le-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1998), pp. 219-40, pp. 229-30.
[46] *Instructions for Parish Priests by John Myrc,* ed. by Edward Peacock, Early English Text Society o.s. 31 (London: Trübner & co, 1868), p. 25.
[47] Margery's confessors include William Sleightholme (d.1420) who was also the confessor to St John of Bridlington, chapter 53, p. 257, and Wenslawe, the German priest whom she meets in Rome, chapter 33, p. 185 and chapter 37, p. 198.

their parishioners sought out confession with a mendicant or requested burial in mendicant or monastic churchyards'.[48] There was considerable competition for lay attention in this period- from the mendicant orders, but also from local and international pilgrimage sites- and this might explain why writers like Mirk and the narrator of Margery's *Book* are keen to refocus attention back on the parish, its church and its ministers, as the primary source of spiritual sustenance and sanctity. Reading the depiction of St Margaret's church in the light of the strategies employed by priests in the literature of pastoral care shows how the *Book* encourages the people of Lynn to support their parish church and sets a good example for the text's wider audience of the positive relationship that can be established between the laywoman and her local sacred place.

It may not be surprising to find traces of this pastoral mission in the *Book* if we consider the possibility that the priest who helped Margery to write the *Book*, 'whech this creatur had gret affeccyon to' (p. 47), is Robert Spryngolde, the parish priest of St Margaret's. Both Janette Dillon and Barry Windeatt have suggested that Spryngolde could be involved in the production of the *Book* and the documentary evidence recently uncovered by Sebastian Sobecki, linking Spryngolde with Margery's older brother Robert Brunham, significantly 'strengthen[s] the case for his role as the clerical scribe behind much of *The Book*'.[49] As the parish priest of St Margaret's, Spryngolde would certainly have a vested interest in promoting the church's position in Lynn. He would also have had knowledge of the traditional narratives and teachings of the pastoral care literature that I argue influenced the *Book*'s representation of Margery's relationship with the church. Indeed, Sobecki argues that the use of 'N' town, discussed above, 'belongs to the liturgical and administrative

[48] Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 178.
[49] Windeatt, p. 7. Janette Dillon, 'Margery Kempe's Sharp Confessor/s', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 27 (1996), 131-38. Sebastian Sobecki, '"The Writyng of this Tretys": Margery Kempe's Son and the Authorship of Her Book', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 37 (2015), 257-283, p. 258 and pp. 271-8 on Spryngolde.

register of English parish priests such as Spryngolde'.[50] Moreover, on more than one occasion in the *Book* we see Spryngolde defending Margery's right to remain in St Margaret's. For example, in chapter 56 the prior of Lynn, Thomas Hevyngham, asks Spryngolde to 'provydith […] another place' for Margery because one of the new brothers refuses to 'comyn in owr chapel as long as sche is therin' (p. 274). St Margaret's was both the parish church and the church of the small Benedictine priory that was attached to its south side, and as such control over the space could be a complex issue.[51] The prior's chapel was in the south choir aisle of St Margaret's and Spryngolde answers that if Hevyngham wants to remove her from that space, 'we must than howselyn hir in the chirche':

> We may nat chesyn, for sche hath my Lordys lettyr of Cawntyrbery and hys seel, in the whech we arn comawndyd, be vertu of obedyens, to heryn hir confessyon and ministryn to hir the sacrament as oftyn as we ben reqwiryd. (p. 274).

Spryngolde manages both to support Margery and save face with the prior here. He appeases Hevyngham by suggesting that Margery be received 'in the chirche' rather than in the prior's chapel, a place that the prior claims possession over linguistically when he describes it as 'owr chapel'. Spryngolde aligns himself with Hevyngham when he says that '*we* may nat chesyn' but he then invokes the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury, reminding the prior that 'we arn comawndyd, be vertu of obedyens' to hear her confession and administer the Eucharist. As a member of the secular clergy, Spryngolde was technically under the jurisdiction of the prior at St Margaret's and his solution, while keeping the prior happy, places Margery at the very heart of the church. The *Book* tells us that she was 'howselyd aftyr this tyme at the hy awter in Seynt Margaretys Chirche', the most sacred place in the building.[52] Margery refuses to allow her access to the church to be restricted by the prior, however, as she then 'cryed so lowde that it myth ben herd al abowte the chirche and owte of

[50] Sobecki, 'Margery Kempe's Son', p. 278.
[51] See Windeatt, p. 68, n.441-2.
[52] Anthony Goodman, *Margery Kempe and her World* (London: Pearson, 2002), pp. 78-9. For Margery's access to privileged spaces in the church, see Raguin, 'Real and Imagined Bodies', pp. 122-5.

the chirche' (p. 274). Margery's tears, like church bells, sound throughout the church and out into the local environment. Spryngolde and Hevyngham might be engaged in a struggle for control over a church that has a dual function- as a parish church and the location of a Benedictine priory- but for Margery, the entire building is sacred to her and she will not restrict her devotions to any particular location within it.

Throughout this article I will be referring to St Margaret's as a sacred 'place' and I want briefly to establish the theoretical framework for this terminology. I am drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau and Doreen Massey in the theorisation of space and place here. Elsewhere I have argued for St Margaret's as a sacred *space*, invoking de Certeau's characterisation of space in *The Practice of Everyday Life* as 'composed of mobile elements' which are 'actualised by the ensemble of movements deployed within it'.[53] Place, on the other hand, implies 'an indication of stability' and as such it 'excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location'.[54] Rather than reading this as a limiting definition of place, when compared with the flexibility and openness of space, in the context of St Margaret's church, the stability and singularity of place is both a necessity and an opportunity. As we have already seen, a key aim in pastoral care texts was to cement the relationship between the parishioner and their church, building on an obligatory relationship to create affection and loyalty. The parish priest had a clear stake, both spiritual and financial, in emphasising the stability of the parish church and its constancy at the centre of communal religious life. As we shall see, the miracles of the stone and the fire in Margery's *Book* construct St Margaret's as a sacred place that rewards personal and communal devotion. But this is not to say that place is a static or fixed concept. On the contrary, as the work of Doreen Massey has shown, when viewed in the context of social relations, the identity of place is 'much more open and

[53] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), p. 117. See Laura Varnam, 'Church', in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. by Marion Turner (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 299-314, especially pp. 307-12.
[54] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 117.

provisional'.[55] Massey argues that 'place' is 'formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location':

> And the singularity of any individual place is formed in part out of the specificity of the interactions which occur at that location (nowhere else does this precise mixture occur) and in part out of the fact that the meeting of those social relations at that location (their partly happenstance juxtaposition) will in turn produce new social effects.[56]

My analysis of St Margaret's church in *The Book of Margery Kempe* will be alert to the 'specificity' of the interactions that occur in the church in each individual episode and the 'new social effects' that are produced when Margery and her community come together and renegotiate their parochial relationship. Lynn Staley suggests that the *Book* exhibits a 'keen interest in the idea of community', and I would suggest that it is through the representation of social relations at St Margaret's church that this interest is explored.[57] Doreen Massey goes on to suggest that:

> One way of thinking about place is as particular moments in such intersecting social relations, nets of which have over time been constructed, laid down, interacted with one another, decayed and renewed. Some of these relations will be, as it were, contained within the place; others will stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated too.[58]

Massey's identification of the 'nets' of social relations that have been constructed and renewed over time points to the importance of reading any manifestation of place contextually. In my analysis of *The Book of Margery Kempe* this contextual focus will be twofold. Firstly, it will be alert to the historical situation of St Margaret's as the parish church of Lynn and the relationship that Margery negotiates with the community housed within it, relations which are 'contained within the place', to use Massey's formulation. Secondly, it will consider the relationships which 'stretch beyond' the place, in terms of the symbolic, sacred, and pastoral significance of the parish church established in the literature of pastoral

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[55] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 168.
[56] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 168.
[57] Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 39.
[58] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender,* p. 120.

care and in the 'wider relations and processes' in which Lynn is implicated by its connection with other places in the *Book*. The following three sections of this article will work inwards towards St Margaret's church. Firstly I will show how the *Book* places Lynn at the centre of a sacred map of medieval Christendom and, secondly, establishes St Margaret's as the foundational church in which Margery's spiritual journey begins and ends. In the third and final section I will analyse the stone and fire miracles that take place at St Margaret's. Both miracles aim to edify Margery's audience, both internal and external, and a picture of St Margaret's emerges that is vigorous, dynamic, and devout, a strong foundation upon which to build a parish community and a sacred place.

2. 'I am of Lynne': Locating St Margaret's at the Centre of *The Book of Margery Kempe*

In chapter 46 of the *Book*, when Margery is in Leicester, she is asked by the mayor to identify herself and her parentage. Margery replies as follows:

> 'Syr,' sche seyd, 'I am of Lynne in Norfolke, a good mannys dowtyr of the same Lynne, whech hath ben meyr fyve tymes of that worshepful burwgh, and aldyrman also many yerys, and I have a good man, also a burgeys of the seyd town, Lynne, to myn husbond.' (p. 229)

Margery's threefold claim makes her origins and attachment to Lynn abundantly clear. She is from Lynn, as are her father and husband who are inscribed into the governance and mercantile economy of the town by her declaration: her father has been the mayor five times and her husband is a burgess. Margery's insistence on Lynn as the originary space of her identity and her narrative is a constant throughout the text. After her major pilgrimages Margery returns to Lynn and the places that she visits enable her to better understand and visualize the rituals of her parish church when she returns home. Margery's experiences in Jerusalem, for example, have a direct impact on her engagement with the Easter week rituals

at St Margaret's, as I have argued elsewhere.[59] Lynn Staley contends that the *Book* presents Margery 'as figuring in the ongoing spiritual life of her community, anchoring her firmly to the town of Lynn' and here I want to show how this anchoring takes place in the language and structure of the text.[60]

For Margery Kempe, Lynn is first and foremost her home. This is evident in Margery's first journey and return to the town. Until chapter 10, the action has taken place in Lynn but Margery is then 'mevyd in hir sowle to go to vysyten certeyn places for gostly helth' (p. 85) and she visits York (chapters 10-11), Canterbury (chapter 13), Lincoln (chapter 15), and London (chapter 16). While in London, Margery visits Lambeth Palace for an audience with Thomas Arundel and it is there, at the residence of the archbishop of Canterbury, that she is granted the extraordinary privileges of choosing her own confessor and receiving the Eucharist every Sunday (pp. 109-10). After receiving archiepiscopal approval of her piety, Margery and her husband return to Lynn:

> Aftyrward thei comyn ageyn to Lenne, and than went this creatur to the ankyr at the Frer Prechowyrs in Lenne and teld hym what cher sche had had and how sche sped whyl sche was in the contre. And he was rygth glad of hir comyng hom and held it was a gret myracle, hir comyng and hir goyng to and fro. (p. 112)

The anchorite that Margery visits 'held it was a gret myracle' that she returns home to Lynn, echoing the words of God in the stone miracle when Margery is urged to 'held this [her survival] for a gret myracle' (p. 84). Lynn is Margery's home- her husband is often waiting there for her return from pilgrimage- but it is also the miraculous centre of her travels. Her 'comyng, and hir goyng to and fro' are more than just a practical matter of coming back to the town where her family are based, Margery's travels in relation to Lynn itself are a 'gret myracle'.

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[59] I discuss the ways in which Margery maps her experiences on pilgrimage in Jerusalem onto St Margaret's church during Easter week in Varnam, 'Church', pp. 307-312.
[60] Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions,* p. 99.

The word 'hom' frequently collocates with Lynn in the *Book*. When Margery returns from her frequent travels, it is 'hom into Lynn' (p. 271), 'hom ageyn to Lenne' (p. 286), or 'homward' to Lynn (p. 270, p. 360). The directionality of the *Book* is centred upon the town as home and when the word is not associated with Lynn, it collocates with England when Margery is abroad and must return to her country before returning to her hometown.[61] Home is also, importantly, associated with heaven in the *Book*. In chapter 54, for example, Christ tells her that 'whan thu comyst hom into hevyn, than schal every sorwe turnyn the to joye' (p. 261).[62] God is described as 'homly […] in hyr sowle' (p. 44) and shows her 'gret homlyness' (p. 374). Also used by Julian of Norwich in her *Revelations*, the word 'homely' has connotations of intimacy and familiarity, a closeness to the divine that is direct, unmediated, and affectionate.[63] Margery's relationship with her hometown of Lynn has this same quality of proximity and affection but it is also a sacred relationship. The stone and fire miracles occur in Lynn, representing St Margaret's as a sacred place, and when Margery returns home to her church it is to a familiar location that is, in the words of Genesis 28:17, 'the house of God and the gate of heaven'. Until Margery can return home to heaven, Lynn is the next best thing.

This is not to say, of course, that the other places that Margery visits are not also important to her *Book*. Individual locations work in particular ways during Margery's narrative to establish her identity as a holy woman and to boost the reputation of Lynn by association. Margery's visit to Lambeth Palace, mentioned above, is a case in point. Or her trial for heresy in Leicester (chapter 48), a city that was 'an early centre for Lollard activity'

[61] See Book II, chapter 5, when God tells Margery that 'I browte the hedyr, [to Stralsund] and I schal bryngyn the hom ageyn into Inglond' (pp. 401-2); see also chapter 7, 'hom into Inglond', p. 408.
[62] Christ says 'this schal be thy mete whan thu comyst hom into hevyn' (p. 301); c.f. 'myn holy seyntys schal enjoyen of thy comyng hom' (p. 137).
[63] MED s.v. 'homli' (adv). Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Divine Love*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1986), see for example: 'full gretly was astonyed for wonder and mervel that I had that he that is so reverend and dredfull will be so homely with a synfull creture liveing in wretched flesh', (p. 6); 'our lord shewed to me a ghostly sight of his homely loveing', (p. 7); 'our God and lord, that is so reverent and dredefull, is so homley and curtes', (p. 11).

(chapter 48); if Margery can be cleared of Lollardy there, her orthodoxy should not be in doubt.[64] Margery visits numerous pilgrimage sites associated with key models for her spirituality: St John of Bridlington and St William of York at home in England, and St Bridget of Sweden and St Jerome in Rome, for example.[65] Margery's marriage to the godhead, a crucial stage in her development as a holy woman, also takes place in Rome, where, according to Rosalynn Voaden, Margery's 'liminal status as a pilgrim and her separation from home- and, not incidentally, her earthly husband- created the necessary psychic space for the divine union to occur'. [66] Margery's pilgrimage to the Holy Land is also of vital importance to her mystical identity; her first tears of contemplation occur at Calvary, for example (chapter 28). Rome and the Holy Land are always, and already, centres of orthodox piety in the *Book* and although Margery keeps travelling out of Lynn, she always returns. The *Book* is a journey of there and back again. And each time she returns, she reinforces the position of Lynn at the centre of her map of Christendom. The *Book* is concerned with national and international holy places, with the universal, but it also foregrounds the local and specific, as represented by St Margaret's and Lynn. Indeed, this is not a strategy that is unique to the *Book*. It is influenced by pilgrimage narratives and miracle collections that aim to promote particular locations as *especially* sacred. The *Stacions of Rome*, for example, establishes an explicitly competitive relationship between Rome and Jerusalem. 'Ȝif men wuste grete and smale | þe pardoun þat is at grete Rome' there would be 'no neod to mon in cristiante | to passe in to þe holy lond ouer þe see'.[67] *The Book of the*

[64] Helen Barr, 'Leicester', in *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, ed. by David Wallace (Oxford University Press), <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~dwallace/europe/nodes/leicester.html> [accessed 22 February 2016]
[65] While in Rome, Margery visits 'the chawmbre that Seynt Brigypt deyd in' (p. 204) and the shrine of St Jerome in Sancta Maria Maggiore (p. 210). See below for discussion of St John and St William.
[66] Rosalynn Voaden, 'Travels with Margery: Pilgrimage in Context', in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050-1500*, ed. by Rosamund Allen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 177-95, p. 187. On Rome, see also Diane Watt, 'Political Prophecy in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 146-60, pp. 152-6.
[67] *The Stacions of Rome*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, o.s. 25 (London: Trübner, 1867), lines 287-91.

Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church associates St Bartholomew the Great, London, with a comparable list of pilgrimage sites from Europe to the Holy Land, but St Bartholomew's itself always comes out on top.[68] This text also convinces readers of the special sanctity of St Bartholomew's by representing the church as a site of miracles, as Margery's *Book* does for St Margaret's.[69] It is only by association with other holy spaces that a text can promote its own preferred location as truly sacred.

There is, however, one specific site that Margery visits on more than one occasion and with which she has a significant relationship outside of St Margaret's, and that is St Stephen's, Norwich. As Norman Tanner has shown, Norwich was a 'remarkably religious city', indeed it may have been 'England's *most* religious city' in the late Middle Ages.[70] Lynn was 'closely connected by ecclesiastical, religious, economic and social ties' to Norwich, not least as a result of St Margaret's relationship to Norwich cathedral as a church of the Benedictine priory.[71] Anthony Goodman argues that Norwich is 'a place for spiritual renewal and nourishment for Margery' and this is especially noticeable in her visits to St Stephen's.[72] In chapter 17 she is commanded by God to 'gon to the Vykary of Seynt Stefenys and sey that I gret hym wel, and that he is an hey chossyn sowle of myn' (p. 113). The vicar in question is Richard Caister, a priest and theologian whose 'reputation for holiness developed into a minor cult'.[73] Caister died in 1420 and Margery's second visit to St Stephen's is made specifically to visit his grave. In chapter 60 when Margery weeps and cries at Caister's grave,

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[68] *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*, ed. Norman Moore, Early English Text Society o.s. 163 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

[69] For a detailed discussion of this strategy see Laura Varnam, '*The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*: Consecration, Restoration, and Translation', in *Sacred Text, Sacred Space: Architectural, Spiritual, and Literary Convergences in England and Wales*, ed. by Joseph Sterrett and Peter W. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 57-75, especially pp. 67-73.

[70] Norman Tanner, 'Religious Practice', in *Medieval Norwich*, ed. by Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 137-55, p. 137. Italics original.

[71] Goodman, *Margery Kempe*, p. 137 and pp. 78-9 on St Margaret's.

[72] Goodman, *Margery Kempe*, p. 138.

[73] Norman P. Tanner, 'Richard Caister (d.1420)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition 2006) <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/4349> [accessed 7 March 2016] See also Norman Tanner, *The Church in Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, Ont.: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), pp. 231-3.

we hear that he has been her confessor and that he administered the sacrament to her on a number of occasions (p. 285). When Margery realizes that God 'werkyn so special grace for swech a creatur as sche had ben conversawnt wyth in hys lyfetyme', she is unable to restrain her weeping and the local community at St Stephen's exclaim, 'What eylith the, woman? Why faryst thus wyth thiself? We knew hym as wel as thu' (p. 285). This collective outburst emphasises the extent to which the congregation have internalised the loyalty to their parish priest and church encouraged by the literature of pastoral care. Margery's tears are interpreted by the congregation as laying claim to Caister, a claim that as a visitor, rather than a parishioner, she has no right to make. But Caister was an important supporter of Margery Kempe. The *Book* states that 'this holy man […] evyr held wyth hir and supportyd hir ayen hir enmys into hys powyr' and this is not merely abstract support as Caister goes with Margery to Norwich and 'delyveryd hir fro the malys of hyr enmys' when she is examined by the bishops' officers (pp. 116-7). It is unsurprising therefore that Margery should find St Stephen's to be a welcome spiritual home when she travels outside Lynn.

The majority of Caister's writings are no longer extant but the hymn 'Jesu lorde, þat madest me' does survive in seventeen manuscripts. The hymn's concerns resonate with the *Book*'s interest in the church community and its spiritual wellbeing. In each verse, the hymn's speaker addresses Jesus and in the penultimate stanza Christ is presented as the foundation of the church:

> Ihū, þat art þe gostly stone
> Of all holy cherche and erde,
> Bryngge þi foldys floke in one
> And reule hem ryghtly with on herde.[74]

[74] *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 98-100, p. 100, hereafter cited by line number. See also Dundas Harford, 'Richard of Caister and his Metrical Prayer', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 17.2 (1909), 221-44. Caister's hymn is thought to be an expansion of an earlier text but this stanza on the church is an addition by Caister himself. For the earlier version of the hymn, see *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 124-5.

Caister was known for being a holy man and a parish priest, and the red ink annotator of Margery's *Book* adds 'vyker' in the margin when Caister is first introduced (p. 113), emphasising his pastoral role rather than his personal name.[75] The hymn represents a compilation of fundamental pastoral instruction for the laity in two sections: the first 'concerned with personal petitions and the second with petitions for others'.[76] In the first section, for example, Christ is asked for forgiveness 'þat I haue greuyd þe | in worde, werke and thowght' (lines 3-4). The speaker prays to be meek and humble, and to love Christ 'for þi woundys smerte' (line 5); the wounded Christ is, of course, a ubiquitous image in the medieval parish church. Christ is petitioned to 'here and spede my preyorys' (line 23), after which is written 'Pater noster Aue Maria', as if to instruct the reader to pause and pray at this point of the hymn.[77] Both prayers were crucial in pastoral instruction and the dedication sermon in the *Speculum Sacerdotale* reminds us that the church was consecrated as a 'hous of prayinge' in which prayers are made and heard.[78] The programme that Caister sets out in his hymn ticks all the important pastoral boxes and reminds the reader that Christ is the foundation stone of the church (Ephesians 2:20) and the shepherd who will bring his flock together (John 10:11; Isaiah 40:11). The hymn represents Caister as an effective parish priest who is focused on his community and this chimes perfectly with the *Book*'s pastoral aims. In this way, St Stephen's and its saintly vicar act as a positive supplement to St Margaret's church in Lynn. Here I am deliberately using supplement in the Derridean sense of a

[75] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Liturg. e.3 uses the same title to describe Caister, 'this prayer made ye gode vycary of Norwych Mastre Richard Castre', see Harford, 'Richard of Caister and his Metrical Prayer', p. 236. A number of pilgrimage badges survive from the second quarter of the fifteenth century that memorialize Caister as a preacher standing in a pulpit. Such badges have been found at Lynn but also in London, Canterbury, and Salisbury, demonstrating the popularity of Caister's cult outside Norwich. See Brian Spencer, *Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue Part 2: Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (Salisbury: Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, 1990), pp. 46-7.
[76] Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century* p. 314.
[77] Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, p. 99.
[78] *Speculum Sacerdotale*, p. 163.

'plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence'.[79] St Margaret's is not lacking in comparison with St Stephen's; the *Book*'s idea of the parish church as the ideal pastoral space is enriched as a result of the comparison. St Stephen's is a local sacred place with a local holy writer, held in great esteem by the community. As such, it provides a useful template for the *Book*'s depiction of St Margaret's and the social relations that could be established between Margery, her *Book*, and her community. But the comparison also highlights the difficulty that Margery has in gaining the full support of her fellow townspeople. The relationship between Margery and the congregation at St Margaret's is more delicate than that between Caister and his church. As an ordained and locally venerated holy man, Caister's claims to spiritual authority are officially sanctioned and acceptable in a way that Margery Kempe's are not.[80] Katherine Lewis suggests that one possible reason for Margery's failure to secure canonisation, or even a flourishing local cult, is that medieval English Christians were 'particularly interested in holy bishops and clerics', rather than 'lay people whose claim to sanctity was their holy way of life'.[81] Caister's approval of Margery goes some way to channelling this popular model of holiness, as Lewis points out, but otherwise, the *Book* has to rely on staging repeated performances of exemplary piety that secure Margery's place as part of a thriving parish church and community.

3. Temptation, Conversion, and Prayer: Beginning and Ending the *Book* at St Margaret's

The *Book* establishes St Margaret's as the central location for Margery's religious experiences in the very structure of text: it begins and ends at St Margaret's. Margery's first

[79] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976; rep. 1978), p.144.
[80] I argue for the necessary repetition of Margery's performance of sanctity as a laywoman in Laura Varnam, 'The Crucifix, the Pietà, and the Female Mystic: Devotional Objects and Performative Identity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 41.2 (2015), 208-37, especially pp. 212-3.
[81] Lewis, 'Margery Kempe and Saint Making', pp. 208-9.

vision of Christ occurs at home, after her post-partum illness (chapter 1), but at the beginning of her conversion to the religious life, she experiences a period of temptation that takes place in the parish church. In chapter 4, the *Book* explains that God tempted Margery with the sin of lechery and that this took place on St Margaret's Eve (19 July) before evensong when 'a man whech sche lovyd wel seyd onto hir […] that for anythyng he wold ly be hir and have hys lust of hys body, and sche schuld not wythstond hym, for yf he mygth not have hys wyl that tyme, he seyd, he schuld ellys have it another tyme' (pp. 67-8). Margery believes the man to be 'ful ernest', although he is in fact testing her, and they proceed into St Margaret's for evensong. When Margery is in the church, however, she is unable to concentrate on the service because of the temptations in her mind:

> This woman was so labowrd wyth the mannys wordys that sche mygth not heryn hir evynsong, ne sey hir Pater Noster, er thynkyn ony other good thowt, but was mor labowrd than evyr sche was befor. The devyl put in hir mende that God had forsakyn hir, and ellys schuld sche not so ben temptyd. She levyd the develys suasyons and gan to consentyn for because sche cowde thynkyn no good thowt. Therfor wend sche that God had forsake her. And whan evensong was do, sche went to the man beforseyd that he schuld have hys lust, as sche wend that he had desyred, but he made swech symulcyon that sche cowd not knowe hys entent, and so thei partyd asondyr for that nygth. (pp. 68-9)

Margery eventually 'consentyd in hir mend' and propositions the man, who reveals that 'he ne wold for al the good in this world; he had levar ben hewyn as smal as flesch to the pott!' (p. 69). Both the time and the place of Margery's temptation are important here. The man approaches her on St Margaret's Eve, the feast day of the patron saint of St Margaret's church. St Margaret was an exemplar of chastity who was subject to sexual temptation and fought a battle with a demon. As Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa points out, St Margaret's 'determined resistance contrasts sharply with the sin of lechery which Margery had painfully to overcome'.[82] In addition to the timing of Margery's temptation, the setting in which Margery wrestles with the man's proposition- the church, during evensong- underscores the

[82] Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditations: The Context of Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy, and Iconography* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 98.

serious consequences of her sin. In his sermon for the feast of St Margaret, Mirk emphasizes the importance of going to church on that day, asserting that the saint will 'cun ȝow more þank to makyn a masse isayde in worchep of hur þan to faston many evenes'.[83] Margery goes to church but unfortunately she is unable to 'heryn hir evynsong, ne sey hir Pater Noster' because she was 'so labowrd wyth the mannys wordys' (p. 68). There is an irony in the use of the word 'labowr', referring to being troubled or occupied and of course to childbirth, given St Margaret's status as the patron saint of childbirth.[84] Margery's temptation prevents her from listening to the church service and praying as she ought to do, and the *Book* tells us that 'the devyl put in hir mende that God had forsakyn hir' (p. 68). The significance of Margery's distraction in the church, and the subsequent intervention of the devil in her temptation, is illuminated by the pastoral care texts that were preoccupied with the consequences of lay misbehaviour in church.

The early fourteenth-century penitential handbook *Handlyng Synne*, for example, categorises sexual activity of any kind in church as sacrilege.[85] The reader is urged to:

> Kepe þy body yn cherche fro synne,
> Þy membres & þy wyt wyþ ynne,
> Specyaly þy þoght & þy syght,
> Þan may þy preyer be made al ryght.[86]

Margery's is unable to concentrate on the liturgy because her 'þoght' is occupied by sexual temptation and, as a direct result, the sanctity of St Margaret's is threatened. This is reinforced when we are told that the devil puts in her mind that God has forsaken her. Pastoral care texts readily attest to the presence of devils in the church due to the sinful behaviour of the congregation and here it is Margery's sinful thoughts that have allowed a

[83] John Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Susan Powell, Early English Text Society o.s. 334 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), vol. I, p. 181.
[84] MED s.v. 'labouren' s.v. 2a) and 3a).
[85] Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. by Idelle Sullens (Binghampton, N. Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), lines 8933-36. Compare *Dives and Pauper*, ed. by Priscilla Heath Barnum, Early English Text Society o.s. 275 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), vol. I, p. 219 and vol. II., p. 59.
[86] *Handlyng Synne*, lines 8909-12.

devil to enter.[87] John Mirk explains that the aim of the consecration ceremony is to cleanse the building of the devil so that he has no power to return, unless 'sum wykkyd lyuer þat is belafe wyth þe fynde bryng hym ynto chyrch wyth hym. For also longe os a man is owte of charite, þe fende is in hym and hath power oure hym'.[88] When Margery is tempted by lechery, she is out of charity and in the power of the fiend, and therefore she brings the devil into church, preventing her from being able to participate in the service appropriately.

Since Margery's temptation takes place in St Margaret's, it is fitting that her conversion should take place there too. Margery is tempted with lechery and despair for a year following her initial temptation but this finally comes to an end when she is 'knelyng in a chapel of Seynt John wythinne a cherch of Seynt Margrete' (p. 70).[89] Margery weeps and asks for forgiveness of her sins, and Christ appears to her:

> Dowtyr, why wepyst thow so sor? I am comyn to the, Jhesu Cryst, that deyd on the crosse sufferyng byttyr peynes and passyons for the. I, the same God, foryefe the thi synnes to the utterest poynt. And thow schalt nevyr com in helle ne in purgatorye, but whan thow schalt passyn owt of this world, wythin the twynkelyng of an eye, thow schalt have the blysse of hevyn, for I am the same God that have browt thi synnes to thi mend and mad the to be schreve therof. And I grawnt the contrysyon into thi lyves ende. (p. 71)

Christ commands Margery to give up eating meat and instead to eat 'my flesch and my blod, that is the very body of Crist in the sacrament of the awter. Thys is my wyl, dowtyr, that thow receyve my body every Sonday, and I schal flowe so mych grace in the that alle the world schal mervelyn therof' (pp. 71-2). In this crucial moment of conversion to a religious life, sanctified to God, Margery is fully absolved of her sins 'to the utterest poynt' by Christ himself. She is promised immediate entrance into heaven after her death and is authorized to receive the Eucharist every Sunday. Here St Margaret's church exhibits the primary

[87] See, for example, the proud woman who brings 'a huge multitude of fendis' through the church door, hitching a lift on her elaborate headdress, in the *Alphabet of Tales*, p. 395.
[88] John Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Susan Powell, Early English Text Society o.s. 335 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. II, p. 249.
[89] Goodman suggests that the chapel was probably dedicated to John the Baptist and that this would be an appropriate place for the 're-ordering of [Margery's] asceticism' because Christ commands her to give up wearing a hair shirt in this episode, see *Margery Kempe*, p. 235, n.5.

characteristics of sanctity established in the most important scriptural quotation for the sacred identity of the church, Genesis 28:16-17, in which Jacob dreams of a ladder of angels ascending and descending into heaven and declares: 'How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven'. St Margaret's church is both the house of God and the gate of heaven in this moment in Margery's *Book*. Christ appears in his house and speaks directly to her, promising her entry into heaven and guaranteeing his bodily presence when she takes the Eucharist.[90]

Margery's holy life begins with the establishment of a new relationship with Christ in St Margaret's and the *Book* ends at the church, both literally and spatially. When Margery has visited the Brigittine house of Mount Syon in the final chapter of Book II, she returns to Lynn in the company of Reynald, the hermit from St Margaret's, who agrees to bring her 'hom ageyn to Lynne' (p. 420). Once again Lynn collocates with home and the *Book* then concludes with Margery's prayers which are located within the church itself:

> Thys creatur, of whom is tretyd beforn, usyd many yerys to begynnyn hir preyerys on this maner. First, *whan sche cam to chirche*, knelyng beforn the sacrament in the worschep of the blissyd Trinite (Fadir, Sone, and Holy Gost, oo God and iii Personys), of that gloryows Virgine, Qwen of Mercy, owr Lady Seynt Mary, and of the xii apostelys, sche seyd this holy ympne, 'Veni creator spiritus' wyth alle the versys longyng therto, that God schulde illumynyn hir sowle, as he dede hys apostelys on Pentecost Day, and induyn hir wyth the yyftys of the Holy Gost, that sche myth han grace to undirstondyn hys wil and parformyn it in werkyng, and that sche myth han grace to wythstondyn the temptacyons of hir gostly enmiis and enchewyn al maner synne and wikkydnes. (pp. 421-2, italics mine)

As Lynn Staley comments, this description of Margery 'positions her at the focal point of the community of the Body of Christ': kneeling before the Eucharist in the church.[91] And the church in which Margery prays most often is, of course, St Margaret's. Margery's prayer that she might 'wythstondyn the temptacyons of hir gostly enmiis' reminds us of her initial sexual temptation at St Margaret's and here at the *Book*'s close she returns to the origin of the

[90] Sarah Stanbury discusses Margery's position kneeling before the speaking Christ as an image of a patron before the Man of Sorrows, see 'Arts of Self Patronage', pp. 88-9.
[91] Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*, p. 182.

apostolic church by praying the *Veni creator spiritus* or the Pentecostal hymn which entreats the Holy Ghost to descend as it did upon the disciples in Acts 2:1-4.[92] Staley argues that Margery's prayers represent 'the embodiment of the Holy Spirit's power in Margery, who, like the Church of the faithful, is quickened by the gift of the spirit'.[93] The *Book* thus ends with Margery reinvigorating her church with the Holy Spirit and invoking the Pentecostal themes of community, harmony, and setting a good example. Margery's spiritual life begins and ends at St Margaret's and through her text, the church as a wider community of readers is imbued again with the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit.

4. Miracles in the Parish Church: An Exemplary Parishioner and her Sacred Place

Miracles are a major way in which a place is marked out as sacred in the Middle Ages and they play a crucial role in the representation of St Margaret's church in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. In his book *The Sacred and Profane*, Mircea Eliade argues that in order to be visible, sanctity must be made manifest and he describes such a manifestation as a *hierophany*.[94] Eliade argues that 'in the homogeneous and infinite expanse in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a centre'.[95] Miracles such as the stone and fire establish St Margaret's as a sacred centre around which the rest of the text orbits. Moreover, in addition to creating a sacred place, miracles are an opportunity for the redefinition of community. Michael Goodich discusses the way in which miracles can produce political reconciliation and spiritual renewal because they create a community of witnesses who are 'bound together by their common

[92] For a Middle English version of the hymn, see Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 21-2.
[93] Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*, p. 182.
[94] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1957), p. 11.
[95] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 21.

faith and experience of the sacred' to support a particular cult.[96] In Margery Kempe's *Book*, miracles turn the spotlight on the community at St Margaret's and Margery's place within it. Margery's fellow parishioners are cast as witnesses to her experience and although their response is often divided rather than unified, they provide an 'embedded interpretation' of the alternative readings between which we, as readers of the *Book*, much choose.[97]

The first miracle takes place in chapter 9 of the *Book* and unfolds as follows.

> It befel on a Fryday befor Whytson Evyn, as this creatur was in a cherch of Seynt Margarete at N. heryng hir messe, sche herd a gret noyse and a dredful. Sche was sore astoyned, sor dredyng the voys of the pepyl, whech seyd God schuld take veniawns upon hir. Sche knelyd upon hir kneys, heldyng down hir hed, and hir boke in hir hand, prayng owyr Lord Crist Jhesu for grace and for mercy. Sodeynly fel down fro the heyest party of the cherch-vowte, fro undyr the fote of the sparre, on hir hed and on hir bakke a ston whech weyd iii pownd, and a schort ende of a tre weyng vi pownd, that hir thowt hir bakke brakke asundyr, and sche ferd as sche had be deed a lytyl whyle. Soone aftyr sche cryed 'Jhesu, mercy!' and anoon hir peyn was gon. (pp. 83-4)

A layman called John of Wyreham, a mercer and a member of the Guild of St Giles and St Julian in Lynn, pulls Margery by the sleeve and enquires after her health:

> The creatur, al hol and sownd, thankyd hym of hys cher and hys charyte, mech merveylyng and gretly awonderyd that sche felt no peyn and had felt so mech a lytyl befor. Ne xii wekys aftyr sche felt no peyne. Than the spiryt of God seyd to hir sowle: 'Helde this for a gret myracle, and yyf the pepyl wyl not levyn this, I schal werkyn meche mor.' (p. 84)

God tells Margery to consider her survival a 'gret myracle' and when Alan of Lynn, a local Carmelite friar and 'worschepful doctor of dyvynite', hears about the 'wondyrful werk' he questions Margery about the 'forme of this processe' and examines the physical evidence:

> He, desyryng the werk of God to be magnyfyed, gat hym the same ston that fel upon hir bakke and way it, and sythen he gat hym the treys ende that fel upon hir hed, which oon of the kepars of the cherch had leyd in the fyre to bren it. And this worshepful doctowr seyd it was a gret myracle, and ower Lord was heyly to be magnyfied for the preservyng of this creatur, ayen the malyce of hir enmy, and teld it mech pepyl, and mych pepyl magnyfied mech God in this creatur. (pp. 84-5)

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[96] Michael Goodich, 'Foreigner, Foe, Neighbour: The Religious Cult as a Forum for Political Reconciliation', in *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 11-26, p. 11.
[97] Allen, *False Fables*, p. 5.

The episode in chapter 9 is the first time that Margery has been in St Margaret's since her conversion and dialogue with Christ in chapter 5, and this time we see Margery in a communal setting, at mass. The miracle has been read as evidence of Margery's sanctity and certainly her survival is crucial, as I will discuss. But I also want to examine the event in the light of its Pentecostal time frame ('on a Fryday befor Whytson Evyn') and how this emphasizes Margery's exemplarity and foregrounds the division at the heart of her community. Pentecost celebrates the birth of the church, and the church that is engendered here at the beginning of Margery's *Book* is ruptured by the opposing responses to the miracle. With the material church crumbling around them, it is a far cry from the Pentecostal ideal of unity and accord but the parish community at St Margaret's do share a desire to interpret the event as a divine token, as we shall see.

The medieval church, both as a material building and a community, relied upon and was sustained by the annual liturgical cycle of festivals. After Easter, Pentecost was the most significant event in the church year and its association with the formation of the church was an opportunity for the parish to focus on the church building as well as strengthen its communal ties. Pentecost celebrated the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the disciples after the ascension; as John Mirk's sermon explains, the disciples were 'preying to God wyth one herte and one sprite for help, socor and comforde' when 'sodenly a gret sownde was made in þe firmament and lyk a grete berste of þondyr, and þerwyth anone þe Holy Gost com amonges hem'.[98] When Margery Kempe is in the church at mass, just before Pentecost, she hears 'a gret noyse and a dredful', reminiscent of the 'gret sownde' in Acts, but rather than the appearance of the Holy Spirit, Margery fears the 'voys of the pepyl, whech seyd God schuld take veniawns upon hir' (p. 82). The people gathered in the church interpret the noise not as a precursor to divine blessing but as a sign of punishment and initially this seems to be

[98] Mirk, *Festial*, ed. Powell, vol. I., p. 147.

confirmed when 'sodeynly' a beam and stone from the church roof 'fel down' upon Margery and she fears 'as sche had be deed a lytyl whyle' (p. 83). It is the full force of the material church that descends upon Margery, rather than the Holy Ghost, but Margery's miraculous survival represents a shift in communal identity at St Margaret's. Pentecost, as Ellen K. Rentz puts it, 'renegotiates and reaffirms the relationship between God and mankind through the church, its clergy, and its sacraments' and I suggest that this episode is an opportunity for Margery to begin the process of renegotiating her relationship with her fellow parishioners, a relationship that is framed by and implicated in the material architecture of St Margaret's.[99]

The material church was central to Pentecostal celebrations and in this way the stone miracle in Margery's *Book* is aptly timed. Church ales and fairs frequently took place at Whitsun to raise money in support of the fabric of the church and St Margaret's was in dire need of such support in the late Middle Ages.[100] In 1391 bell-ringing had been prohibited because of the fragile state of the bell-tower and in the 1430s the town was levied twice to raise money for it to be rebuilt.[101] In this episode in the *Book* the church is an insistently material presence. The physical mass of the church is emphasized by the architectural vocabulary and the quantities mentioned: 'fro the heyest party of the cherch-vowte, fro undyr the fote of the sparre, on hir hed and on hir bakke a ston whech weyd iii pownd, and a schort ende of a tre weyng vi pownd' (p. 83). The specific weight is important for Margery's miraculous survival, falling from the highest part of the church vault the impact is not insignificant if Margery thinks that 'hir bakke brake asundyr' (p. 83). The stone and beam fall from under the rafter or 'sparre' in the vault of the church, 'vaute' referring to an arched

[99] Ellen K. Rentz, 'Castles for St William: The Late Medieval Commemoration of York's Local Saint', *Viator*, 43 (2012), 111-30, p. 116.
[100] Clifford Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 109, and French, *The People of the Parish,* p. 31 and pp. 134-5.
[101] Dorothy Owen, *The Making of King's Lynn: A Documentary Survey* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1984), p. 27 and document 133, p. 141.

interior roof-structure.[102] Alan of Lynn examines the stone by weighing it and he rescues the beam from one of the 'kepars of the cherch' who have 'leyd [it] in the fyre to bren it' (p. 84). The churchwarden's decision to burn the beam is curious here because the entire material fabric of the church was considered to be sacred as a result of the consecration ritual and thus ought not to be destroyed. It may simply have been a practical decision that the beam could not be replaced in the roof, but the warden appears short-sighted in disregarding the future potential of the object as a relic, as was the case for the stone that fell upon a layman at York Minster when St William's relics were translated, as I will discuss below.

Perhaps the churchwarden wanted to destroy the evidence of the miracle, evidence that Ruth Shklar argues demonstrates Margery's 'strained relations with the Church as both hierarchy and community': the church 'literally falling apart at Kempe's presence at mass signifies the division in her community'.[103] Shklar is right to identify such division, emphasized all the more because the miracle takes place at Pentecost, and if we read the beam and stone symbolically, this perspective is plausible. Church architecture was read allegorically in this period, based on the influential thirteenth-century *Rationale divinorum officiorum* of William of Durandus.[104] In this text, Durandus classifies the church community according to a hierarchy of architectural features in the church, the pavement represents the poor and the common people, for example, and the pillars are the bishops and holy doctors.[105] This influential model was translated into Middle English in the mid fifteenth-century as *What the Church Betokeneth* and the beam and the roof, the elements that feature in the *Book*'s miracle, are interpreted as follows:

[102] MED s.v. 'sparre' a) and 'vaute' 1a).
[103] Ruth Shklar, 'John Cobham's Daughter: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the Powers of Heterodox Thinking', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 56 (1995), 277-304, p. 284.
[104] *The Rationale divinorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. by Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
[105] *Rationale*, pp. 9-25.

> Whate betokyn the beemys of þe church. That betokenyth the pryncis of this worlde and the prechours that kepe þe pees of hoolye Churche, þat one in worde and þat other in dede, for al knyghthode is made to maynteyn the right of hoolye Churche and to chastice extorcioners that wolde oppresse the pore people […] Whate betokenyth the roffe of the churche. The roffe or the coueryng of the churche betokenyth the prechours in hooly Churche that liften vp the thoughtis of men into þe ioye of hevyn, and by prechyng of the worde of God þe soule of man is made fayre with manye vertues, and alle synne and malice is put oute by verye charitie *quia caritas* [*operit*] *multitudinem peccatorum*, that is to saye, charite coueryth the multitude of synnes.[106]

The beam represents the princes and preachers that keep the peace and maintain the rights of holy church, and the roof represents the preachers who lift up the thoughts of men to heaven. When applied to Margery's miracle, an allegorical reading of the beam and stone might imply that the princes and preachers who protect and inspire the church community are positioned against Margery. The church hierarchy, to return to Shklar, bears down upon Margery with its full architectural and symbolic weight. But what Shklar neglects to emphasize in her analysis is that Margery survives. The stone and the beam do not cause her any bodily damage. She remains 'al hol and sownd', her physical integrity acting as material proof of the miracle. Sermon exempla frequently employ a structure of conflict and resolution and here the assault of the material church upon Margery's body turns out to be a powerful sign of her right to remain within the church, no matter the opposition she might face. Indeed, four chapters later in the *Book*, Margery's place in the church is confirmed and materialized by God when he declares 'thow wer a chosyn sowle wythowt begynnyng in my syghte and *a peler of Holy Cherch*' (p. 97, italics mine). As a pillar of the church, Margery is integrated into the very structure of the church. It is Margery who supports the community and the building, and the red ink annotator of the *Book* transforms her into this architectural feature by drawing a pillar in the margins of the manuscript.[107] In *What the Church Betokeneth*, pillars represent the 'bysshops and doctours that maynten the feythe of hooly Churche by the

[106] 'What the Church Betokeneth' in *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the Gilte Legende,* ed. by Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, Early English Text Society o.s. 315 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 85-128, p. 88. Italics original.

[107] See Varnam, 'Church' for further discussion of this image, pp. 302-4.

doctrine of God'.[108] Margery's *Book* has appropriated a powerful architectural symbol here, subverting Durandus's classification of the laity at the foot of the spiritual hierarchy, represented by the church pavement. Margery's physical and textual interaction with the material church rewrites its symbolic meaning and undermines the allegorical schema's attempt to keep the laity in their place. Margery has a place in the church but it is a new place, guaranteed and sanctified by God's miraculous intervention.

Margery's community do not fully support her new role, however. The stone miracle initiates the discourse of persecution that the *Book* frequently employs to present Margery as a saintly figure, suffering derision like Christ and the virgin martyrs. This 'double perspective', as Ellis called it, is encapsulated in the episode when Alan of Lynn 'teld it mech pepyl, and mych pepyl magnyfied mech God in this creatur' but, equally, 'mech pepyl wold not levyn it, but rathar levyd it was a tokyn of wreth and veniawns than thei wold levyn it was any token of mercy er quemfulnes [favour]' (p. 85).[109] This division in Margery's community shows that the Pentecostal ideal of unity and harmony has not yet been reached at St Margaret's. The gift of tongues received by the disciples at Pentecost has been read as a reversal of mankind's punishment for building the Tower of Babel, the separation of communities by linguistic division.[110] But here, Margery's community is to some extent unified in their division by the narrator's use of linguistic repetition. Each group believes in their own interpretation and both consider it to be a 'tokyn', a word that embodies a productive range of meanings for the way in which the beam and stone operate. The word means a physical object used to 'represent an action, concept, state'; an 'omen, portent'; 'evidence, proof, a confirming detail', including a 'physical trace' such as footprints or a seal

[108] 'What the Church Betokeneth', p. 87.
[109] Ellis 'Margery Kempe and King's Lynn', p. 139.
[110] John Gunstone, *The Feast of Pentecost* (London: Faith Press, 1967), p. 52. Christine F. Cooper discusses the Pentecostal gift of tongues as a model for the two miracles of reading in Margery's *Book* in 'Miraculous Translation in "The Book of Margery Kempe"', *Studies in Philology*, 101 (2004), 270-98, pp. 271-2.

'guaranteeing' the quality of an item.[111] 'Token' combines both the materiality of the objects, verified by Alan of Lynn, and their symbolic meaning or what they 'betoken', to return to Durandus. Glending Olson argues that 'Pentecost was not just an event but also a sign' and here the beam and stone are signs of Margery's state of grace and her relationship with the parish church, even though her immediate community remain divided in their interpretation.[112]

Here I would like to look in more detail at the sequence of events as they occur to further challenge Shklar's assertion that the church is 'literally falling apart at Kempe's presence at mass'.[113] In fact, the church falls apart as a result of God's response to Margery's prayer for mercy, not her mere presence at mass. Indeed her behaviour at mass is exemplary. John Mirk's sermon for Pentecost promotes the good living of the disciples as an example to emulate. He suggests that Pentecost is known as Whitsunday because 'þe Holy Goste as þis day broght wytte and wysdam into alle Crystes dysciplus, and so be here prechyng aftur into alle Crystys pepul'.[114] He continues by lamenting that 'many haue wytte but no wysdom', being able to speak and teach well 'but al to few haue wysdom to do wel':

> But þe Holy Gost, he bryngyth wyth hym boþe wytte of wyse prechyng and wysdam of gode levyng. *For he þat levyth wel he techeth wel, for a gode ensaumpul is a gode doctrine*. Þis grace o þis day was ȝeven to Crystes disciplus, for þei taght wel and lyved wel, so þat be here gode techyng and gode ensampul of lyving þe faythe of Holy Chyrche is spradde alle aboute þe worlde.[115]

Margery Kempe's behaviour in this episode is an example of good living for her community. When she hears the 'gret noyse and a dredful', her reaction is to kneel down, bow her head and, with 'hir boke in hir hand', to pray to Christ for grace and mercy. In this moment Margery takes up the position of a pious laywoman and signals her devotion through her

[111] MED s.v. 'token' 1a), 2a), 4a), 4d), 4e).
[112] Glending Olson, 'The End of *The Summoner's Tale* and the Uses of Pentecost', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 21 (1999), 209-45, p. 231.
[113] Shklar, 'John Cobham's Daughter', p. 284.
[114] Mirk, *Festial*, ed. Powell, vol. I., p. 146.
[115] Mirk, *Festial*, ed. Powell, vol. I, pp. 146-47. Italics mine.

bodily gestures. In Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, in the section on how to behave in church, priests are encouraged to teach their parishioners to kneel and pray just as Margery does:

> No non in chyrche stonde schal,
> Ny lene to pyler ny to wal,
> But fayre on kneus þey schule hem sette,
> Knelynge doun vp on the flette,
> And pray to god wyth herte meke
> To ȝeue hem grace and mercy eke.[116]

Mirk then explains the importance of standing during the gospel reading and kneeling at the consecration of the host before enumerating the benefits of seeing the host itself:

> Mete & drynke at thy nede,
> Non schal þe þat day be gnede;
> Idele othes and wordes also
> God for-ȝeueþ the bo;
> Soden deth that ylke day,
> The dar not drede wyþowte nay.[117]

Margery is in the church during the mass performing all the appropriate gestures and therefore she need not fear sudden death, for example as a result of falling masonry. Once again the Pentecostal time frame also adds symbolic weight to Margery's experience. Mirk's sermon for the eve of Pentecost details the gifts of the Holy Ghost, including 'grace of strenche [strength], boþe in body and in sowle, to bere mekely and in gladde schere grete bodyly harmys and diuerse sekenesse and losse of godde and catell and of frenschep'.[118] Margery has the strength to withstand 'grete bodyly harmys' when the stone and beam fall on her. The book that Margery is holding might also encourage a Pentecostal reading of the scene. Barry Windeatt suggests that the book is probably a Book of Hours, and in addition to the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Holy Ghost were a popular inclusion in such books

[116] *Instructions for Parish Priests*, p. 9.
[117] *Instructions for Parish Priests*, p. 10.
[118] Mirk, *Festial*, ed. Powell, vol. I, p. 145.

and they were frequently accompanied by a full page miniature of Pentecost.[119] Such images tend to depict the disciples taking up a pious position similar to Margery's: kneeling in a church-like structure with their hands in prayer, often holding a book.[120] The Virgin Mary frequently appears in such illuminations, alluding to the earlier descent of the Holy Ghost at Christ's conception, and she too is sometimes depicted reading.[121] Margery Kempe's behaviour might therefore be said to mirror the kinds of images found in the Book of Hours she is holding. Praying and reading in a church, Margery is an exemplar of piety at Pentecost.[122]

Margery's piety is clearly rewarded when we realise that the beam and stone fall *after* she has prayed to Christ 'for grace and for mercy' (p. 83). The material church responds to Margery's prayer by performing a miracle and her survival is evidence of Christ's grace and mercy. When read in this context, what initially looks like a punishment is instead a confirmation of Margery's exemplary behaviour and right to remain in the church, and this is emphasized by God when he tells her that 'yyf the pepyl wyl not levyn this, I schal werkyn meche mor', that is 'meche mor' miracles (p. 84). Margery's exemplarity is further highlighted when the incident is compared with a similar miracle involving falling stones in the window commemorating St William of York at York Minister, visited by Margery in

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[119] Windeatt, p. 83. See Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: George Brazillier, 1988), p. 92.

[120] The De Bois hours (first half of the fourteenth century) has a series of illuminations of Pentecost featuring these key tropes, see Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity, and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours* (London: British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 82-119.

[121] The Virgin is featured in the Pentecost illustration in the Book of Hours of Jean, Duc of Berry, in a church surrounded by the disciples, with her hands in an attitude of prayer, see Timothy B Husband, *The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg Brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 186-7. In a late fifteenth-century Book of Hours in the Bodleian (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Liturg. 43) the Virgin kneels and gazes upon a book, surrounded by the disciples, fol. 109r. The Virgin is also often depicted with a book at the Annunciation as Laura Saeveit Miles has recently detailed, 'The Origins and Development of the Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation', *Speculum*, 89.3 (2014), 632-69.

[122] David Griffith examines portraits of secular donors with books in the parish church and argues that the wall painting of Sir Thomas, Baron Camoys, at Trotton, Sussex, in which Thomas kneels at a desk facing the altar, 'offers the congregation a model of piety'. Margery Kempe, kneeling with her book, presents a similar model. See David Griffith, 'A Portrait of the Reader: Secular Donors and their Books in the Art of the English Parish Church', in *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 209-35, p. 217.

1417.[123] The window features two exempla in which stones fall upon laymen. The first depicts a man who is knocked off a ladder by a stone when he is hanging a tapestry. The second, and more relevant here, features a man who is hit by a stone during the translation of William's relics.[124] This is clearly framed as a punishment because the man is shown to be asleep during the service, in sharp contrast to Margery Kempe who is participating in the mass. In the top right hand corner of the panel, the hand of God emerges from red clouds and yellow rays, suggesting that it is God's intervention that caused the stone to fall. The man's miraculous survival is due to St William and in the second panel, the man displays the hole in his hat caused by the stone and the people gathered around him look amazed.[125] The community come together to marvel at the miracle and indeed the stone itself survived and was kept in the Minster, inscribed with the words 'qui cec[i]dit super caput Rogeri de Ripun [which fell upon the head of Roger of Ripon]'.[126] It is possible that Margery saw the stone when she visited the cathedral and the four panels of the window featuring falling stones may have stood out as a result. There is no evidence that the stone survives at St Margaret's, although Alan of Lynn did rescue the beam from being burnt. Both items could have been used at the church as evidence for the miracle that had taken place and they would no doubt have drawn the curiosity and interest of local people and pilgrims, keen to see the relics of St Margaret's very own material miracle.

My analysis so far has shown that the parish church of St Margaret's is an insistently material, if fragile, structure in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, with the potential to do important social work in the community. The association with Pentecost foregrounds the role

[123] Margery declares that she has come to York 'on pilgrimage to offyr her at Seynt William', chapter 51 (p. 246). Thomas French dates the window to 1414 which would mean that it was installed by the time of Margery's visit, see *York Minster: The St William Window* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 19. Katherine Lewis also notes the similarity to the miracles in the window but suggests that the window would have been under construction when Margery visited, see 'Margery Kempe and Saint-Making', p. 201, footnote 16.
[124] See French, *York Minster*, plate 20c, p. 93.
[125] French, *York Minster*, plate 20d, p. 94.
[126] French, *York Minster*, p. 17, fig. 8.

of miracles in re-establishing the community around Margery Kempe herself and a reading of the material objects of the beam and stone show how the *Book* appropriates and subverts the allegorical reading of the church as the ideal, hierarchical Christian community. That community is again under pressure in the fire miracle, to which I will now turn, and the threat of destruction forces the parishioners at St Margaret's to unite around Margery in order to save their church. This miracle constructs a new net of social relations, to return to Doreen Massey's formulation of place, in which Margery not only defends and protects the church but also her fellow parishioners.

Chapter 67 of the *Book* describes a 'hydows fyer and grevows' that had already burnt down the Guild Hall in Lynn and was 'ful lekely to a brent the parysch cherch dedicate in the honowr of Seynte Margarete, a solempne place and rychely honowryd, and also al the town, ne had grace ne myracle ne ben' (p. 307). The fire threatens the entire the town but it is the danger posed to St Margaret's church that is most significant for the *Book*. The importance of the church is evident from the description. It is 'rychely honowryd' by the local community, 'rychely' here meaning both 'magnificently' and 'lavishly.'[127] It is also a 'solempne place' and in Middle English 'solempne' is used to mean 'sacred' in the sense of consecrated, produced 'with due religious ceremony or reverence'.[128] It is sacred both because of the rituals that have been performed there and because of the support, both spiritual and financial, of the local townspeople. Margery is present and 'seyng the perel and myschef of al the towne', she cries and prays for grace and mercy:

> And notwythstondyng in other tymes thei myth not enduryn hir to cryen and wepyn for the plentyvows grace that owr Lord wrowt in hir, as this day, for enchewyng of her bodily perel, thei myth suffyr hir to cryen and wepyn as mech as evyr sche wolde, and no man wolde byddyn hir cesyn, but rather preyn hir of contynuacyon, ful trustyng and belyvyng that thorw hir crying and wepyng owr Lord wolde takyn hem to mercy. (p. 307)

[127] MED s.v. 'richeli' 1a) and b).
[128] MED s.v. 'solempne' 1a).

The local people set aside their intolerance of Margery's weeping on 'this day' because of their 'bodily perel', hoping that through her tears God will 'takyn hem to mercy'. Chapter 72 of the *Book* similarly reports that although many people 'lovyd not hir wepyng ne hir crying in her lyfetyme', many request Margery's presence, and tears, at their deathbed (p. 321). In extremis, Margery's exemplary piety is a powerful resource for her community.[129] It is striking here that the community's concern for their church is phrased in terms of 'bodily perel' (physical injury or destruction). Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space* that buildings such as the parish church provided a 'social visage' for a community.[130] The church building was the material embodiment of the parish's collective identity and with the Guild Hall destroyed, the symbol of Lynn's mercantile identity, the threat to the parish church represents a major threat to the social body.

Margery's role in the incident is foregrounded when the parish priest of St Margaret's, Robert Spryngolde, asks her whether he should take the sacrament to the fire:

> Sche seyd: 'Yys, ser, yys, for owr Lord Jhesu Crist telde me it schal be ryth wel.' So her confessowr, parisch preste of Seynt Margaretys Cherche, toke the precyows sacrament and went beforn the fyer as devowtly as he cowde and sithyn browt it in ageyn to the cherche- and the sparkys of the fyer fleyn abowte the cherch! The seyd creatur, desiryng to folwyn the precyows sacrament to the fyre, went owt at the cherch-dor, and as sone as sche beheld the hedows flawme of the fyr, anon sche cryed wyth lowde voys and gret wepyng: 'Good Lorde, make it wel!' (p. 307)

The very real danger posed to the church is evident from this dramatic scene when Robert re-enters the church with the sacrament and the narrator exclaims that the sparks of the fire are flying about the church. Margery's relationship with Spryngolde here is mutually supportive. When he asks for her advice about taking the sacrament to the fire, hoping that its sacred

[129] I cannot fully explore this here for reasons of space, but Margery's prayers for the congregation and her revelations about those who have passed away also form part of the *Book*'s construction of Margery as an exemplary parishioner who supports the entire community, both living and dead (see, for example, chapter 8, when Margery prays for Robert Spryngolde to be with her in heaven and for her good deeds to benefit his salvation, pp. 80-1; chapter 23, when Margery prays for the dead at St Margaret's and intercedes for parishioners on the point of death, pp. 138-40; and chapter 75 when Margery restores a woman's sanity, enabling her to undergo the churching ceremony and re-join the congregation, pp. 328-9).

[130] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) p. 220.

powers will ward off the flames, he is demonstrating his confidence in her and when she agrees, she confirms his suggestion as an appropriate course of action. Spryngolde is not referred to by name here, rather he is described by his relationship to Margery (her confessor) and his status in the church (the parish priest), emphasising his ecclesiastical authority. When he cedes control of the Eucharist to Margery, then, this demonstrates extraordinary faith in her ability to save the church.

When Margery leaves the church and prays to God to 'make it wel', the *Book* continues:

> Thes wordys wrowt in hir mende, in-as-meche as owr Lord had seyd to hir beforn that he schulde makyn it wel, and therfor sche cryed: 'Good Lord, make it wel, and sende down sum reyn er sum wedyr that may thorw thi mercy qwenchyn this fyer and esyn myn hert.' Sithyn sche went ageyne into the cherch, and than sche beheld how the sparkys comyn into the qwer thorw the lantern of the cherch. (p. 308)

Margery re-enters the church, putting herself at risk as the sparks of the fire enter the choir through the lantern tower. Margery knows that all shall be well as 'owr Lord had seyd to hir beforn that he schulde makyn it wel' but she still prays to God, begging him to 'qwenchyn this fyer and esyn myn hert', thus demonstrating how closely her own bodily comfort is tied to that of the church. As the material building of the church is threatened by the fire, so Margery's heart is afflicted; to 'esen' in Middle English means to relieve from danger or oppression, and to be freed from anxiety and care.[131] The word 'quenchen' also has a dual meaning here: to extinguish a fire but also, figuratively, to expunge sin.[132] The word is associated with sin and fire elsewhere in Margery's *Book*, when she weds the Godhead and the Lord gives her a Pentecostal 'flawme of fyer' in her heart, for example (pp. 193-4). Margery is afraid and God explains to her that 'this hete is the hete of the Holy Gost, the

[131] MED s.v. 'esen' 4a) and 3.
[132] MED s.v. 'quenchen' 1a) and 3e). See, for example, *Handlyng Synne*: 'þe shryfte þat we to go | al oure synne may quenche & slo' (lines 12003-4).

whech schal bren awey alle thi synnes, for the fyer of lofe qwenchith alle synnes' (p. 194).[133] Imagery of fire is intimately connected with Margery's heart in the *Book* and therefore it is unsurprising to find her heart troubled by the real fire attacking her parish church.

This relationship with the heart cements the affective connection that is established between Margery and St Margaret's. In *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory, and Place*, Shelley Hornstein argues that architecture has a twofold existence: firstly as a 'physical entity' that 'registers as a place that we come to remember' and secondly, 'in our recollection of it':

> We function always with what I call an 'architecture of the heart', or a place within us that holds onto the emoting memory of a place. That place is the symbolic construction that connects our idea or image of a place to its physicality.[134]

St Margaret's exists as a 'physical entity' in the *Book*, under threat of destruction from fire in the urban setting in which it is located, but it also exists as an 'architecture of the heart': there is a place within Margery that contains her 'emoting memory' of the church which is then translated into her *Book*. She has an affective bond with the church in which she was tempted and converted, and in which she almost died when part of its roof fell upon her. Margery was saved from spiritual and bodily destruction in this church and therefore it is entirely appropriate that she should want to repay the favour and step in to save the church. Her heart is consumed by the fire of love but when the architectural heart of her *Book* is threatened by real fire, she prays to God for a miracle.

God fulfils Margery's prayer by sending 'a fayr snowe to qwenchyn wyth the fyr' and the *Book* reports that Robert Spryngolde believes that 'God grawntyd hem for hir preyerys to be delyveryd owt of her gret perellys, for it myth not be, wythowtyn devowt preyerys, that the eyr, being brygth and cler, schulde be so sone chongyd into clowdys and

[133] Compare chapter 21: 'lofe, dowtyr, qwenchith al synne', p. 132.
[134] Shelley Hornstein, *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory, and Place* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 3.

derkys and sendyn down gret flakys of snow, thorw the whech the fyr was lettyd of hys kendly werkyng' (p. 308). Spryngolde directly attributes the miracle to Margery's prayers and the episode represents a reworking of popular fire miracles in Middle English texts. A number of hagiographical tales show patron saints fighting fires at their churches. In the prose legend of St Erkenwald from the *Gilte Legende*, when St Paul's is on fire, the local people 'see the blessid Seinte Erkenwolde ouer his tombe fyghtyng with þe fyre' and as a result the shrine is preserved.[135] In the life of St John of Bridlington, a local saint whose shrine Margery visited in 1413 and 1417, a miracle occurs whereby St John is able to carry an exceedingly heavy ladder to the flames so that the local people can extinguish the fire.[136] But in exempla featuring laywomen, their prayers tend to save their own domestic dwellings from combustion, rather than their churches. In the *Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*, a local woman prays to St Bartholomew and encircles her house with a thread in order to protect it from a fire that is spreading through the city.[137] Miraculously, the fire 'ferid the feith of the womman', represented by the thread as the 'tokyne' of St Bartholomew, and the house is saved.[138] In the *Alphabet of Tales*, a fire is sweeping through the city of Cologne towards the house of a woman who mends and launders the cathedral's textiles. When the fire destroys the house next door, she prays to the apostles and as a result of her 'fayth, & belefe', her own house is saved and her service to the cathedral is repaid.[139] In both examples, the women's prayers and their faith save their houses from destruction. In the *Alphabet* the narrative entitled 'apostolorum memoria et deuocio est utilis' ('memory and devotion to the apostles is beneficial or useful') but in the case of Margery Kempe, her prayers and commitment to her local parish church are beneficial to the people of Lynn as a

[135] Hamer and Russell, *Supplementary Lives,* p. 58.
[136] See Windeatt, p. 87 and p. 257, when she visits William Sleightholme, St John of Bridlington's confessor. For a description of the miracle see John Wardle, *St John of Bridlington: His Life and Legacy* (England: John E. Eckersley, 2013).
[137] *The Book of the Foundation,* pp. 62-63.
[138] *The Book of the Foundation,* p. 63.
[139] *An Alphabet of Tales*, p. 59.

whole.[140] Margery's prayers do not protect her domestic house but safeguard her spiritual house. St Margaret's church is the house of God on earth and the house of Margery in Lynn, and as such it must be protected and defended.

Conclusion: St Margaret's 'stod stylle in her worshep and hyr degre'

In chapter 25 of the *Book*, Margery's advice is sought when the chapels of St Nicholas and St James in Lynn attempt to gain the rights to perform baptisms and purification.[141] When Margery is asked 'how sche felt in hir sowle in this mater, whethyr thei schuld have a funte in the chapel or nowt', she states categorically that 'thow thei woldyn yeve a buschel of nobelys, thei schuld not have it' (p. 149). Margery's reference to money here is more than a figure of speech. The *Book* explains that the parishioners who were pursuing the privileges had support from 'ryche men, worshepful marchawntys, and haddyn gold anow, whech may spede in every nede, and that is rewth that mede schulde spede er than trewth' (p. 148). If the chapels were granted the rights, St Margaret's would suffer financially and as a stalwart supporter of her parish church, Margery would naturally be opposed to this. Margery prays to God and receives a revelation that the petition will not be successful and as a result she is 'mor bold to preyn owyr Lord to wythstonde her intent and to slakyn her bost' (p. 149). The group's petition is seen by Margery as a sign of pride, to 'slakyn her bost' means to cast down their pride or arrogance. St Nicholas's chapel is described by the *Book* as the 'grettar and fayrare' of the two chapels (p. 147) and indeed it had been rebuilt in the fifteenth century and had a large congregation.[142] Located in the northern perimeter of Lynn, where St Margaret's was to the south, St Nicholas's had become an important local sacred space for its

[140] *An Alphabet of Tales*, p. 59.
[141] For the historical background to the dispute, see Watt, 'Political Prophecy', p. 168 and Windeatt, pp. 146-7. For the petitions and documents, see Owen, *The Making of King's Lynn*, documents 126, 127, and 131, pp. 135-9 and 140-1.
[142] Windeatt, n.1894, p. 147 and Owen, *The Making of King's Lynn*, p. 29.

supporters. Katherine French argues that the underlying desire of such petitioners is not for the sacraments *per se* but 'a desire for the sacraments to be performed in the most meaningful place for them- near their homes and surrounded by family and neighbours'.[143] Such petitions, common in the period according to French, 'thus declare the importance of place in the practice of Christianity'.[144] St Nicholas's did receive a bull granting the chapel a font but, as the *Book* reports, it contained a caveat stating that the privileges were only effective as long as 'it wer no derogacyon to the parysch cherch' (p. 147). Diverting baptisms from St Margaret's would clearly have been a 'derogacyon' or infringement of the rights of the parish church and indeed St Margaret's had already had to put measures in place when faced with competition from local religious foundations infringing upon their burial rights.[145]

This episode has been read by Diane Watt in terms of local politics in Lynn in the period and she concludes that the *Book* gives a 'very partisan account of events'.[146] This is most evident in the narrator's final comment on the event:

> And so, blyssed mot God ben, the parysch cherch stod stylle in her worshep and hyr degre, as sche had don ii hundryd yer befor and mor, and the inspiracyon of owyr Lord was be experiens prevyd for very sothfast and sekyr in the forseyd creatur. (p. 149)

The narrator thanks God that the parish church 'stod stylle in her worshep and hyr degre' as it had for over two hundred years. St Margaret's reputation and standing in the town ('hyr degre') has been preserved, as has its 'worshep', both its honour and religious veneration. It has been my contention throughout this article that ensuring the continued 'worschep' of St Margaret's, Lynn, is a major aim in the *Book of Margery Kempe*. St Margaret's 'degre' in the

[143] French, *The People of the Parish,* p. 26.
[144] French, *The People of the Parish,* p. 26.
[145] Both the Augustinian and Dominican friaries in Lynn had become popular burial sites for wealthy townspeople and St Margaret's objected to the decrease in their revenue as a result, and so in 1361 an agreement was made with the Augustinians that a quarter of all offerings made at funerals at the friary would be returned to St Margaret's, 'as is done by the Dominicans and Franciscans'. See document 87 in Owen, *The Making of King's Lynn*, p. 116.
[146] Watt, 'Political Prophecy', pp. 148-9, p. 148.

town and in the *Book* is clear both from the structure of the narrative and the events that take place there. The *Book* begins and ends at St Margaret's and it constructs a sacred map with the church at the centre. The 'worschep' of St Margaret's is manifested in the *Book* by the miracles that take place in the church and by the affectionate, loyal, and supportive attitude of Margery Kempe herself. If Robert Spryngolde is indeed involved in the production of Margery's *Book*, he might well exclaim 'blyssyd mot God ben' for the devout support of his church's most vocal parishioner. Later in the narrative, Christ tells Margery that he knows that 'yyf thu haddist an had many chirchys ful of nobelys, thu woldist a yovyn hem in my name' and 'thu hast also in thi mende desyryd to han many preistys in the town of Lynne, that myth syngyn and redyn nyght and day for to servyn me, worschepyn me, and presysyn and thankyn me for the goodnes that I have don to the in erthe' (pp. 364-5). Margery is presented here and in the episodes that I've explored in the *Book* as the ideal parishioner who wishes to fill the church with monetary donations and establish Lynn as a powerhouse of priests, singing and reading night and day in praise of God for the goodness which he has done for her. This is an ideal church supported by an exemplary parishioner and promoted by the *Book* to inspire its readers. Margery Kempe might not have a church full of gold coins but in her *Book* she constructs a parish church full of sanctity and significance for her Lynn community and wider readers alike.

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