

Medieval Women's Writing Workshop: Reading Pack.

Wednesday 22nd February 2017.



Generously supported by the Department of English and
Comparative Literary Studies



University of Warwick
Medieval Seminar
Series

Contact

Louise Campion: L.G.E.Campion@warwick.ac.uk
Jane Sinnett-Smith: J.Sinnett-Smith@warwick.ac.uk



@medievalwarwick

Hildegard of Bingen **Germany, 1098-1179**

Hildegard of Bingen was a German Benedictine nun, who is often cited as a visionary writer, philosopher, composer, polymath, and Christian mystic. Born into a noble family and the youngest of ten children, she was vowed to God by her parents. At the age of eight, she joined her aunt as an enclosed nun, and a new foundation of nuns grew up around them. In Germany, she is often noted as the founder of scientific natural history. Indeed, her vast collection of works reflects this broad spread of knowledge, as she is credited with writing the oldest surviving medieval morality play, a number of medical treatises, works on botany, songs, and lyric poems. Much of her music survives, and is still performed today. She also founded two monasteries, one at Rupertsberg, in 1150, and another at Eibingen, in 1165. Hildegard suggested that she experienced her first vision from God at the age of five, and though she was initially reluctant to record her visions, she began to do so in her early forties, when she received a divine message instructing her to write down all that she saw and heard.

1. Hildegard's Lyrics.

Hildegard's lyrics draw upon both the Bible and the language and experiences of her visions, received directly from God. Medieval women visionaries, who had often been excluded from the male-dominated world of Biblical commentary and exegesis, made great use of the divine authority that receiving visions straight from God afforded them. This lyric is dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Ave generosa- ymnus de Sancta Maria
Hail, noble one- hymn of Saint Mary

Hail, girl of a noble house,
shimmering
and unpolluted,
you pupil in the eye of chastity,
you essence of sanctity,
which was pleasing to God.

For the heavenly potion
was poured into you,
in that the Heavenly word
received a raiment of flesh in you.
You are like the lily that dazzles
whom God knew before all others.

O most beautiful
and delectable one:

how greatly God delighted in you!
in the clasp of His fire
He implanted in you so that
His son might be suckled by you.
Thus your womb
held joy,
when the harmony of all Heaven
chimed out from you,
because, Virgin, you carried Christ
whence your chastity blazed in God.

Your flesh has known delight,
like the grassland touched by dew
and immersed in its freshness;
so it was with you,
o mother of all joy.
Now let the sunrise of joy be over all Ecclesia
and let it resound in music
for the sweetest Virgin,
Mary compelling all praise,
mother of God. Amen.

2. Hildegard's Visions.

This short excerpt from Hildegard's extensive catalogue of visions draws upon a pervasive image throughout the works of many women mystics, that of the Bride of Christ. To be a Bride of Christ is to enter into what is often described as a 'spiritual marriage' with Jesus, in which one is entirely devoted to God, often forsaking the material world for a more profound connection to the spiritual realm. In Hildegard's vision, the Bride of Christ is allegorised as a huge city, into which all of the devout Christians can enter. Many medieval religious texts, particularly those written for and by women, allegorise their readers in terms of spaces or buildings, often drawing on images of castles, stone towers, churches, and houses.

Taken from: *Vision III: The Church, Bride of Christ and Mother of the Faithful* .

After this I saw the image of a woman as large as a great city, with a wonderful crown on her head and arms from which splendour hung like sleeves, shining from Heaven to earth. Her womb was pierced like a net with many openings, with a huge multitude of people running in and out. She had no legs or feet, but stood balanced on her womb in front of the altar that stands before the eyes of God, embracing it with outstretched hands and gazing sharply with her eyes throughout all of Heaven. I could

not make out her attire, except that she was arrayed in great splendour and gleamed with lucid serenity, and on her breast shone a red glow like the dawn; and I heard a sound of all kinds of music singing about her, 'Like the dawn, greatly sparkling'.

And that image spread out in splendour like a garment, saying, 'I must conceive and give birth!' And at once, like lightning, there hastened to her a multitude of angels, making steps and seats within her for people, by whom the image was to be perfected.

Hildegard excerpts taken from: *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*. Ed. Carolyne Larrington. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Clemence of Barking
England, fl. c. 1163 to 1200

Little is known about Clemence, other than the information she gives about herself when she signs her name at the end of her Life of St Catherine, written in Anglo-Norman French in the late 12th century: that her name is Clemence and she is a nun from Barking Abbey in Essex:

I who have translated her life am called Clemence by name. I am a nun of Barking, for love of which I took this work in hand. For the love of God, I pray and beseech all who will hear this book and who listen to it with a receptive heart to pray to God on my behalf, that he may place my soul in paradise and guard my body while it is alive, he who reigns and lives and will reign, and is and was and will always be. (2689-2700)

Jo ki sa vie ai translatee,
2690 Par nun sui Clemence numee.
De Berkinge sui nunain.
Pur s'amur pris cest oeuvre en mein.
A tuz cels ki cest livre orrunt,
E ki de bon coer l'entenderunt,
2695 Pur amur Deu pri e requier,
Qu'il voillent Deu pur mei preier,
Qu'il m'anme mette en pareis,
E quart le cors tant cum ert vis,
Ki regne e vit e regnera
2700 E est e ert e parmeindra.

1. The Life of St Catherine, c. 1163 to 1200.

The Life of St Catherine written by Clemence follows the tale of Catherine of Alexandria, a young Christian martyr who died in the early 4th century. According to Clemence's text, Catherine was very wise, highly educated, and trained in the arts of argumentation. After she speaks out against pagan religious practice, the pagan emperor Maxentius embarks on a series of efforts to convert her to paganism, from persuasion to violent torture, but Catherine holds firm to her Christian faith. 50 of the most learned pagan philosophers are summoned to debate with her, but she defeats them all with the strength of her arguments and her rhetorical skill. In the following extract, one of the philosophers admits defeat, praising her wisdom.

At this one of the clerks, who was very worthy and wise, replied: 'Truly,' he said, 'lord emperor, since our mothers bore us, we have never heard a woman speak so, or debate so wisely. She is not revealing foolish things to us, but matters full of truth. Her argument was mainly about the godhead. No one with whom we might have debated was ever able to stand up to us so. He who thought himself wise at the outset thought himself a fool at the end. I have never seen a clerk, however skilled, whom I could not have forced to surrender. But I cannot refute her claims, for I see nothing wrong with them. It is no small thing that this lady advances against us. She speaks of the creator of the world and confounds our gods with the truth. We no longer know what to say to her, for our cause is false. We truly believe in her God, who created everything from nothing. From the moment this lady spoke to us about Jesus Christ's holy cross, his name, his power, his death and his birth, all our wisdom fled and we were completely overcome. We believe in him with all our hearts; we shall say nothing else to you.' (1075-1108)

1075 *Uns clers respunt a itant*

Ky mut est sages et vaillant:

"Certes," fait il, "dreiz emperere,

Unke puis que fumes nez de mere,

N'oimes femme si parler,

1080 *Ne si sagement desputer.*

Ne nus mustre pas choses veines,

Enz sunt de verité tutes pleines.

Le plus dunt ele ad desputé,

Est de la divinité.

1085 *Unke mes ne nous pot cunter ester*

Nul a ki deignium parler.

Tel se tient sage a l'envair

Ke fol se tient al departir.

Unkes ne vi clerc si vaillant,

1090 *K'ele ne feisse tut recreant.*

Mes ses diz desdire ne puis,

Kar nule fauseté ne truis.

Ceo n'est pas petite chose

Dunt ceste dame nus oppose.

1095 *Del faire parole del mund,*

Et par verité tuz noz deus confund.

Nus ne lui savum mes dire,

Kar fausee ad nostre mateire.

Et son Deu creum vraiment

1100 *Ky tute rien fist de nient.*

Puis ke ceste dame nus dist

De la croiz seinte Jhesu Crist,
De son nun, de sa puissance,
De sa mort et de sa naissance,
1105 Trestuit le sanc nus enfui
Et si sumes tut esbay.
De nos quers en son Deu creum;
Autre chose ne te dirrum.”

English translation from: Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Glyn S. Burgess (trans), *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths: Two Exemplary Biographies for Anglo-Norman Women* (London: Everyman, 1996), pp. 19-20, 43.

Old French version from: Electronic Campsey Project
http://margot.uwaterloo.ca/campsey/cmphome_e.html

Marie de France
England, fl. c.1160-1215

The little we know about Marie de France, Marie of France, comes from her own writing, most likely undertaken during the 12th century in England. As well as translations of Aesop's Fables, Marie is probably best known for her collection of Breton Lais, short texts which are often identified today as having an interest in Celtic folklore and magic, as well as identity politics. She also wrote a saint's life, the Legend of the Purgatory of St. Patrick. She paints an image of herself as a translator from Breton and Latin into French, and her work, particularly the Fables, enjoyed much popularity in the Middle Ages. Here we provide you with modern English translations of the Prologue to the Fables followed by the fable of the Crow and the Fox.

1. Prologue

Learned and lettered people ought
to devote study, time, and thought
to those whose books and texts are full
of sayings, tales, examples, all
composed by the philosophers,
who marked well what came to their ears.
To teach the moral and the good
they wrote down proverbs that they heard
so folk who wished their lives to better
could profit by the learned letter.
Fathers they were to all of us!
The emperor, old Romulus,
instructed thus his son, and by
his own example taught the boy
how he must be on guard, so that
he not be done in by some plot.
Aesop wrote to his master, too --
he knew his man, his mind and view --
fables he'd found; they had been done
from Greek into the Latin tongue.
Some people thought it ludicrous
he'd waste his mind to labor thus.
no fable is so foolish, though,
that wisdom is not found there, too;
in the examples you'll soon soo
there's always some philosophy.
To me, who must compose these rhymes,
It happens there are, oftentimes,
words quite unsuitable at best.
However, he who did request
my task, is flower of chivalry,

of wisdom and of courtesy.
When such a man approaches me,
in no way do I wish to be
shirker of any pains in store,
though some may take me for a boor
in honoring such a behest.
And now I shall begin the first
of fables Aesopus wrote down
and to his master passed along.

2. *The Crow and the Fox*

It happened once--as well it could--
that by a window with a good
pantry just next to it, inside,
a crow flew by; and there he spied
some cheeses lying on display,
spread out upon a wicker tray.
He snatched one up, and flew away.
He met a fox while on his way.
Now a great longing had this fox
to share the cheese; he thought some tricks
he'd try, some cunning stratagem,
and the crow might be fooled by him.

"Dear God, Sire", said the fox, "I see
a bird of such gentility!
no fairer fowl has lived on earth.
Never have I beheld such worth!
Does the song match the form? If so,
fine gold's naught to this beauteous crow!"

This praise the crow was bound to hear.
On earth he thought he had no peer,
and he resolved to sing, for he
as chanteur, got much flattery.
He sang, his beak was all agape,
the cheese, of course, made its escape,
and fell right down upon the ground.
And the fox snapped it with a bound.
Now he'd no care for song, no praise;
he had his object, and his cheese.

Example take: the proud must have
the praise and plaudits that they crave;
by lies and tricks and blandishments
they're made to service others' wants.
Fools, squanderers, they've not a chance
with cunning frauds and sycophants.

Extracts taken from *Marie de France: Poetry*, trans. and ed. By Dorothy Gilbert (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2015).

Christine de Pizan
France, 1364 – c. 1430

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice in 1364, but grew up at the French court of Charles V, where she was educated by her father, a court physician and astrologer. She was married at 15, and when her husband died ten years later she was left to run his estate and support her three children, as well as a niece and her own mother. Around 1399 Christine turned to writing to make a living. She was hugely successful, enjoying the patronage and financial support of influential figures at court. Her vast and varied output includes lyric poetry, biography, and moral and didactic treatises. She often included autobiographical details about her own life in her work, and wrote eloquently on the role of women in society.

1. *The Letter of the God of Love, 1399.*

L'epistre au Dieu d'amours is one of Christine's earliest works. The Letter is written in the voice of Cupid, the god of love, who addresses it to all who are in his service. In the Letter, Christine takes aim at the misogyny and anti-feminism of the (male, clerical) literary establishment. In this extract, Cupid defends women from the slanderous accusations levelled at them by men:

“Why then if women are weak and flighty, and easily manipulated, silly and lacking self-control, as some clerkly authors say, why do those who pursue them have any need of ruse? And why do women not give in at once, without requiring that strategies and tricks be used to catch them? For it is not necessary to go to war for a castle that is already captured. [...] It is necessary to conclude that, since scheming, great ingenuity and great effort are required to deceive a noble or low-born woman, they are not so fickle as it is said, nor is their behaviour so changeable.

And if anyone says to me that books are full of such fickle women (a charge made by many, and one that I dislike), I answer that women did not write the books, nor did they put into them the things that one reads there against women and their behaviour. Thus do male authors write to their hearts' delight their descriptions of women; these authors show no mercy when they plead their cases, happy to yield in nothing and to take for themselves the spoils of victory: for aggressive people quickly attack those who do not defend themselves. But if women had written the books, i know for a fact that they would have been written differently, for women well know that they are wrongly condemned. The parts are not fairly distributed, for the strongest take the largest pieces, and the one who divides up the pieces takes the best for himself.”

The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan, trans. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 22-23

‘Et comment donc quant fresles et legieres,

380 Et tournables, nyses et pou entieres
Sont les femmes, si com aucuns clers dient,
Quel besoing donc est il a ceulz qui prient
De tant pour ce pourchacier de cautelles ?
Et pour quoy tost ne s'i accordent elles
385 Sanz qu'il faille art n'engin a elles prendre ?
Car pour chastel pris ne fault guerre entreprendre.
...
Dont convient il tout de necessité,
Puis qu'art convient, grant engine et grant peine,
A decevoir femme noble ou villaine,
405 Qu'elz ne soient mie si variables,
Comme aucun dit, n'en leur fait si muables.
Et s'on me dit li livre en sont tuit plein,
C'est le respons a maint dont je me plain,
Je leur respons que les livres ne firent
410 Pas les femmes, ne les choses n'i mirent
Que l'en y list contre elles et leurs meurs :
Si devisent a l'aise de leurs cuers
Ceulz qui plaident leur cause sanz partie,
Sanz rabatre content, et grant partie
415 Prenent pour eulx, car de legier offendent
Les batailleux ceulz qui ne se deffendent.
Mais se femmes eussent les livres fait
Je sçay de vray qu'autrement fust du fait,
Car bien scevent qu'a tort sont encoulpées,
420 Si ne sont pas a droit les pars coupées,
Car les plus fors prenent la plus grant part,
Et le meilleur pour soy qui pieces part.'

Maurice Roy (ed.), *Œuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, 3 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886-96; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), vol 2, pp. 13-14

2. *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 1405.

[Adapted from *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. xvii-xviii]

Le Livre de la Cité des Dames is composed of a catalogue of biographies of celebrated women, within the framework of a dream-vision in which Christine is the protagonist. The vision comes to her when she is reading a misogynist tirade against marriage that vilifies

women as depraved and malicious. Three personified Virtues - Reason, Rectitude and Justice come to Christine to correct the negative portrayal of women, informing Christine that she will write a book that will refute the misogynists' accusations against women. This book will be like a city that houses virtuous women and protects them from anti-feminist attack. The Virtues provide Christine with examples of distinguished heroines who demonstrate the crucial role women have played in human history. In this passage, Christine speaks with Rectitude about the education of women:

Book II, Chapter 36. Against those who claim that it is not good for women to be educated.

After hearing these words, I, Christine, said, 'My lady, I can clearly see that much good has been brought into the world by women. Even if some wicked women have done evil things, it still seems to me that this is far outweighed by all the good that other women have done and continue to do. This is particularly true of those who are wise and well educated in either the arts or the sciences, whom we mentioned before. That's why I'm all the more amazed at the opinion of some men who state that they are completely opposed to their daughters, wives or other female relatives engaging in study, for fear that their morals will be corrupted.'

Rectitude replied, 'This should prove to you that not all men's arguments are based on reason, and that these men in particular are wrong. There are absolutely no grounds for assuming that knowledge of moral disciplines, which actually inculcate virtue, would have a morally corrupting effect. Indeed, there's no doubt whatsoever that such forms of knowledge correct one's vices and improve one's morals. How could anyone possible think that by studying good lessons and advice one will be any the worse for it? [...] Therefore, it is not all men, especially the most intelligent, who agree with the view that it is a bad idea to educate women. However, it's true that those who are not very clever come out with this opinion because they don't want women to know more than they do.'

The Book of the City of Ladies, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 139-41.

Margery Kempe
England, c.1373-c.1439

Margery Kempe was born in what is now King's Lynn, in Norfolk, the daughter of a successful merchant. Shortly after she was married and had given birth to her first child, she received her first vision of Christ. After giving birth to a further thirteen children, and attempting somewhat unsuccessfully to make a living from brewing and milling, Margery devoted herself to a life of penance, prayer, and pilgrimage. The Book of Margery Kempe is often cited as the first autobiography in English, and details everything from Margery's marital problems and her stint as an unsuccessful businesswoman, to her extensive pilgrimages across the Holy Land, as well as her visits to all of the major holy sites in Europe. Her pilgrimage visits are often characterised by her uncontrollable crying and weeping at various important locations, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It seems that she did not get along at all well with her fellow pilgrims, and she often complains that they ignore her and turn away from her, and even mentions that they can't stand to travel alongside her. Margery's Book also records some of her mystical visions, in which she is present at both the Nativity and the Passion of Christ, quite audaciously inserting herself into Biblical narrative. In a few places, it seems as though she is making the case for herself to be made a saint, wanting recognition for her bold and outlandish spirituality.

From *The Book of Margery Kempe*.

This excerpt from the proem to Margery's Book introduces a pervasive theme of the text as a whole, that of Margery as maligned and insulted by those around her, while also detailing some of the reasons as to why Margery was keen to write down her 'treatise'. What is notable about this passage is that Margery often refers to herself in the third person, as 'this creature'. Margery calls herself a 'creature' throughout the Book, and the question of why the text is written in the third person is very interesting, as it provokes some debate about precisely what is meant by the term 'author'. Margery is often cited as one of the first English female authors, but she did not physically write her narrative down herself. Rather, she dictated it to several different scribes and listeners, including one of her sons and her local priest, who was initially reluctant to record her story as Margery was the subject of such a high volume of unfavourable gossip.

1. Proem
In the name of Jesus Christ.

Here begins a short and comforting treatise for sinful wretches, in which they might have great solace and comfort for themselves and understand the high and indescribable mercy of our sovereign Saviour, Lord Jesus Christ- whose name shall be worshipped and magnified without end- who now in our time deigns to exercise His nobility and His goodness to us, the unworthy ones.

All the works of our Saviour are for our example and instruction, and whatever grace He works in any creature is to our profit, if lack of charity be not our hindrance.

So therefore, by the leave of our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, to the magnifying of His holy name, Jesus, this little treatise shall deal somewhat with parts of His wonderful works; how mercifully, how benignly, and how charitably He moved and stirred a sinful wretch towards His love, the which sinful wretch for many years wanted and intended, through the prompting of the Holy Ghost, to follow our Saviour, making great promises of fasts and many other penitential deeds. Yet she was always turned back in times of temptation- like the reed's stalk which bows with every wind and is never unwavering unless no wind blows- until that time that our merciful Lord Jesus Christ, having pity and compassion for His handiwork and His creature, turned health into sickness, prosperity into adversity, esteem into disgrace, and love into hatred.

Thus with all these things turning upside down, this creature, who for many years had gone astray and always been unstable, was perfectly drawn and stirred to enter upon the way of perfection, the perfect way which Christ our Saviour in His own person exemplified: steadfastly He trod it gravely and duly He took it before. Then this creature (of whom this treatise shall, through the mercy of Jesus, reveal in part the manner of living) was touched by our Lord's hand with great bodily sickness through which she lost her reason and her wits for a long time until our Lord, by grace, returned her to health again, as shall later be shown more openly. Her worldly goods, which in those days were plentiful and abundant, were shortly afterwards utterly barren and bare. Then pomp and pride was cast down and put aside. Those who had previously respected her afterwards rebuked her most sharply; her kinsmen and those who had been her friends were now her utmost enemies. Then she, considering this shocking change, and seeking succour under the wings of her spiritual mother, Holy Church, went and submitted herself to her confessor, accusing herself of misdeeds and afterwards she did great physical penance. In a short time our merciful Lord visited this creature with profuse tears of contrition day by day, so much so that some people said she would weep whenever she wanted to and in doing so they slandered the work of God.

She was so used to being slandered and disgraced, to being chided and rebuked by the world for the grace and virtue with which she was provided through the strength of the Holy Ghost, that it was a kind of solace and comfort to her when she suffered any distress for the love of God and for the grace that God performed in her. Since the more slander and disgrace that she suffered, the more she increased in grace and holy meditation, of high contemplation, and of wonderful speeches and conversation which our Lord spoke and intimated to her soul, teaching her how she should be despised for His love, how she should have patience, setting all her trust, all her love, and all her affection on Him only.

2. From Book One, Chapter 30.

This excerpt deals with some of Margery's most significant pilgrimage visits to a number of sites across the Holy Land, many of which are important places in Biblical narrative. It also picks up the theme of Margery as maligned and disliked by her fellow travellers: some would not even be paid to take a journey with her. Margery is much more comfortable, and apparently better liked, by the local people that she meets along the way, and they are seen to facilitate her devotion. The great scale of Margery's travels, along with her dogged determination to visit the most important holy sites is clear to see, and she is frequently spurred on by interactions with God.

Another time, this creature's party wanted to go to the River Jordan and would not let her go with them. Then this creature pleaded with our Lord that she might go with them, and he charged that she should go with them whether they wanted it or not. And then she set out by the grace of God and did not ask their permission. When she came to the River Jordan, the weather was so hot that she believed her feet would burn for the heat that she felt.

After that she went on with her companions to Mount Quarantine, where our Lord fasted for forty days. There she asked her companions to help her up the mountain. And they said 'no', because they could barely help themselves up. Then she had much sorrow, for she could not get up the hill. And then a Saracen*, a good-looking man, chanced to come upon her, and she put a groat into his hand, making signs to him to take her up the mountain. And swiftly the Saracen took her under his arm and led her up the high mountain where our Lord fasted for forty days. Then she was terribly thirsty and had no sympathy from her party. Then God, in His high goodness, moved the Grey Friars with compassion and they comforted her when her own compatriots would not even acknowledge her.

And so she was ever strengthened in the love of our Lord and all the more bold to suffer shames and rebukes for His sake in every place she went, for the grace that God performed in her in weeping, sobbing, and crying, the which grace she could not resist when God wished to send it. And she always proved her feelings were true and those promises that God had made to her while she was in England, and in other places too, came to her in actuality just as she had sensed before, and therefore she dared the better receive such speeches and conversations, and act all the more boldly thereafter.

After that, when this creature had come down from the Mount, as God wishes, she went onwards to the place where St John the Baptist was born. And after that she went to Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived, and to the grave where Lazarus was buried and raised from death to life. She also went to the chapel where our blessed Lord appeared to His blissful mother before all others on Easter Day in the morning. And she stood in the same place where Mary Magdalene first stood when Christ said to her, 'Mary, why weepest thou?' And so she was in many more places than are written, for she was in Jerusalem for three weeks and in the regions thereabouts. And she was always very devout while she was in that region.

And the friars of the Temple made her very welcome and gave her many fine relics, wishing that she might stay with them, if she wanted, as they had such faith in her. Also, the Saracens made much of her and escorted her and led her around the region, wherever she wished to go. And she found all the people to be good and gentle towards her, except her own companions.

And as she came from Jerusalem to Ramlah, she wanted to return to Jerusalem for the great grace and spiritual comfort that she had felt when she was there, and to purchase more pardons for herself. And then our Lord commanded her to go to Rome, and from there home to England, and said to her: 'Daughter, as often as you say or think, "Worshipped be all those holy places in Jerusalem in which Christ suffered bitter pain and Passion" you shall have the same pardon as if you were physically present there, both for yourself and for all those to whom you wish to give it.'

And as she went on to Venice, many of her companions were really sick, and our Lord always said to her, 'Do not be afraid, daughter, no person shall die in the ship you are in.'

And she found her feelings to be really true. And when our Lord had brought them back to Venice in safety, her compatriots forsook her and went away from her, leaving her alone. And some of them said that they would not travel with her for a hundred pounds.

* 'Saracen' is a term that is often used in medieval texts to describe Arabic-speaking Muslim peoples.

Margery Kempe excerpts taken from: *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Ed. and trans. Anthony Bale. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.

Important Dates: Timeline.

1098: Birth of Hildegard of Bingen.

1141: Hildegard of Bingen receives a vision, which tells her to write down her visions.

c.1160-c.1215: Marie de France writes her most important works.

1160s-1170s: Hildegard of Bingen teaches many sermons.

c.1163-c.1200: Clemence of Barking composes *The Life of St. Catherine*.

1179: Death of Hildegard of Bingen.

1364: Birth of Christine de Pizan.

1380: Christine de Pizan is married, aged 15, and is widowed 10 years later.

c.1373: Birth of Margery Kempe.

c.1405: Christine de Pizan finishes *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

1413: Margery Kempe sets off for Jerusalem, also visiting Bologna, Constance, and Venice, among other places.

1417: Margery Kempe travels to Santiago de Compostela.

c.1432: Approximate date of first writing down of Margery Kempe's *Book*.

1436: Priest starts to rewrite parts of Margery Kempe's *Book*.

c.1438: Death of Margery Kempe.

c.1460: Death of Christine de Pizan.

A selection of other women writing in western Europe, 1000-1500:

11th century:

Umm Al-Kiram, Andalusian poet and princess, wrote love poetry in Arabic

Wallada bint al-Mustakfi, 1001-1091, noble poet from Cordoba, 9 Arabic poems survive

Muhyā bint Al-Tayyāni, poet of non-noble birth from Cordoba, became a student of Wallada, composed in Arabic

Nazhun al-Garnatiya bint al-Qulai'iya, d. c. 1100, poet from Granada, of low-status birth, composed witty Arabic verse

Ava (of Göttweig? Of Melk?), c. 1060-1127, first named woman writer in German, composed religious poems in Middle High German

12th century:

Ḥamda bint Ziyād Al Muaddib, poet from Guadix in Granada, wrote in Arabic

Héloïse, 1090/1100-1164, French nun and scholar, 7 letters in Latin to her former lover Peter Abelard survive

Tibors de Sarenom, c. 1130–1198, the earliest attestable *trobairitz*, or woman troubadour, who wrote lyric poetry in Occitan, the language of southern France and Catalonia

Herrad of Landsberg, c.1130-1195, nun and abbess from Alsace, completed pictorial encyclopedia *The Garden of Delights* in Latin in 1185

Ḥafṣa bint al-Ḥājj ar-Rakūniyya, c. 1135-1190/91, aristocratic poet from Granada, 19 compositions survive, including love poetry, elegy and satirical verse

Anonymous nun of Barking, fl. c. 1163-89, anonymous nun from Barking Abbey in Essex, wrote a *Life of Edward the Confessor* in Anglo-Norman French

Almucs de Castelnau, c. 1140-1184, *trobairitz* (woman troubadour) from Provence, wrote in Occitan

Azalais de Porcairagues, late 12th century, *trobairitz* (woman troubadour), wrote in Occitan

Comtessa de Dia, fl. c. 1175 or c. 1212, *trobairitz* (woman troubadour), wrote in Occitan

Maria de Ventadorn, late 12th century, *trobairitz* (woman troubadour), wrote in Occitan, 1 work survives from c. 1197

13th Century:

Marie, fl. early 13th century, worked in England, wrote a *Life of Saint Audrey* in Anglo-Norman French

Castelloza, fl. early 13th century, aristocratic *trobairitz* (woman troubadour) from Auvergne, wrote in Occitan

Dame Margot and **Dame Maroie**, fl. 13th century, 2 poets from Arras in France, who debate each other in a debate poem in Old French

Beatrice of Nazareth, c. 1200-1268, nun from Tienen in Flanders, wrote religious dissertation *The Seven Ways of Holy Love* in Middle Dutch

Mechthild of Magdeburg, c. 1207–1282/1294, noble German mystic, composes *The Flowing Light of Divinity* in Middle Low German c. 1250-c.1280

Gormonda de Monpeslier, fl. 1226–1229, *trobairitz* (woman troubadour) from Montpellier, wrote in Occitan

Mechtild of Hackeborn, 1240-1290, German Benedictine nun and visionary writer. Writes *The Book of Gostly Grace* in the late 13th century

Marguerite d'Oingt, c. 1240-1310, French nun and mystic, composes *Meditations* in Latin in 1286, as well as 2 texts in Franco-Provençal

Marguerite Porete, c. 1248/1250-1310, French mystic, composes *The Mirror of Simple Souls* in Old French in the 1290s

Hadewijch of Brabant, poet and mystic from Brabant, composes letters, visions and poetry in Middle Dutch

Gertrude the Great, 1256–c.1302, German nun, mystic and theologian, composes *The Herald of Divine Love* in Latin from 1289

14th century:

Christina Ebner, 1277–1356, German nun and mystic, composes *Life and Revelations* in German c. 1317-1324, the *Book of Sisters* from 1344 and a second book of *Revelations* from 1352

Bridget of Sweden, 1303-1373, noble mystic from Sweden, recorded her mystical visions in the text *Celestial Revelations*, translated into Middle English c.1410-1420

Catherine of Siena, 1347-1380, Italian nun and philosopher, recorded her visions in *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* in Latin, 1377-1378, letters and prayers also survive

Julian of Norwich, 1342–c.1416, English anchoress and mystic, writes *Revelations of Divine Love* c. 1395 in English

15th century:

Catherine of Bologna, 1413- 1463, Italian nun and artist, writes *Treatise on the Seven Spiritual Weapons Necessary for Spiritual Warfare* 1438-1456 in Italian

Floencia Pinar, poet from Castile, 4 works in Castilian survive

Teresa de Cartagena, c.1425-?, Spanish nun, 2 works in Spanish survive, *Grove of the Infirm* and *Wonder at the Works of God*

Eleanor de Poitiers, 1444/1446-1509, noblewoman from Burgundy, writes etiquette book *Les Honneurs de la Cour* in the 1480s in French

Gwerful Mechain, fl. 1460–1502, noble poet from Mechain in Powys, wrote religious and erotic poetry in Welsh, including *Ode to the Pubic Hair*