

Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Deanne Williams, 'Hope Emily Allen Speaks with the Dead',
Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 35 (2004), 137-60

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123806&silos_library=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

Hope Emily Allen Speaks with the Dead¹

Deanne Williams

On a fateful day in the summer of 1934, Hope Emily Allen, an American medievalist living and working in London, was summoned to the Victoria and Albert Museum to identify a medieval manuscript owned by Colonel Butler-Bowdon, scion of an old Catholic family from the north of England. Over the years, the Butler-Bowdons had taken a number of their heirlooms to the Victoria and Albert for identification. This one had been discovered in a ping-pong cupboard.² But this time, all of the English authorities on medieval manuscripts were on their summer holidays. Miss Allen, a scholar who had published widely on the subject of medieval mystics, was brought in for the job. She identified the manuscript, now British Library Additional MS 61823, as *The Book of Margery Kempe*, a text known to scholars only from extracts printed in sixteenth-century editions by Wynkyn de Worde and Henry Pepwell. *The Book of Margery Kempe* was published almost immediately in a modernised version edited by the Colonel, and a scholarly edition of the text, edited by Sanford Brown Meech, with notes by Allen, was published by the Early English Text Society in 1940.

The Book of Margery Kempe has since come to play a foundational role in the establishment of a canon of women authors, and it occupies an important position in recent theoretical and revisionist approaches to medieval studies. It has provided a focus and stimulus for recent studies of medieval popular devotion, Lollardy, and social dissent, and supplied feminist scholars and theorists of gender with classic examples of *écriture féminine*, writing through the body, and queer identity.³ Margery is a touchstone for the concerns of contemporary feminist and medieval scholarship. If she had not been rediscovered, she would have had to be invented. Her book provides an irresistible blend of defiance of authority (especially of 'patriarchy', that troubled term), unabashed sexuality, and unembarrassed emotion. Composed by a series of male amanuenses, *The Book of*

Margery Kempe raises tantalizing questions about authorship, authority and the mediated status of textuality. Its radically individualistic form of religious devotion offers a model of resistance and independence to contemporary scholars who are seeking an alternative Middle Ages to counter a previous generation's celebration of obedience and submission.⁴ And it charms any reader who likes a rebel.

Margery gives contemporary readers the chance to see themselves reflected in her text. By identifying *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Hope Emily Allen produced not only a text, but also a model for locating the self in the object of study. Allen's self-conscious investment of her own personality, personal conflict, and personal commitments in her scholarship seems ubiquitous today, as the lines between scholarship and memoir are so often, and so productively, blurred.⁵ At a time when medievalists were preoccupied with philological and linguistic concerns, Allen was pursuing historical work devoted to uncovering the lives of medieval mystics, or, to put it in her own words, 'the character and circumstances of individuals who had once lived'.⁶ In her early research on the identity of the women for whom the *Ancrene Riwe* (or 'guide for anchorites') was written, Allen located and reconstructed a medieval analogue to her own life: bookish, retired, and spent largely in the company of women. After identifying the Butler-Bowdon manuscript, Allen sought to incorporate Margery Kempe within what she called a 'remarkable contemporary feminist movement'.⁷ At this time, Allen was, herself, part of a small group of women scholars with whom she lived and worked on Cheyne Walk in Chelsea.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations* opens with the phrase, 'I began with the desire to speak with the dead'.⁸ Like many scholars, Hope Emily Allen's desire to speak with the dead prompted her to recreate the past in her own image and to use the past, consciously or unconsciously, to explore and comment upon issues in the present. However, speaking with the dead is not without its misunderstandings. Allen's attempt to place Margery, an illiterate East Anglian brewer's daughter, within a transnational community of highly educated female mystics was far from a triumphant act of feminist inclusion. Academic politics as well as gender and class tensions interfered and, ultimately, defeated Allen's project, leading her to distance herself from Margery.

As John Hirsh describes in *Hope Emily Allen, Medieval Scholarship and Feminism*, Allen eventually lost control over the EETS edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* to Sanford Brown Meech of the University of Michigan.⁹ At this time, her attitudes towards the text itself began to change. Denigrating Margery's

accomplishments by damning her with the charged term, 'hysteric', Allen enshrined hysteria as the key term in critical discussions of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, anticipating its significance in subsequent theoretical discussions of women's writing.¹⁰ The personal papers (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Eng. Misc. c. 212, d. 217, and c. 484), collected by her friend Joan Wake and deposited in the Bodleian Library, chart Allen's path from young academic prizewinner to alienated independent scholar, and complicate any attempt to explain Allen's difficulties as a simple example of gender prejudice. These papers allow us to recover the historical and cultural as well as personal circumstances surrounding the identification and eventual publication of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, shedding light on a key moment in the evolution of a feminist literary canon and literary theory, and on the role played by psychoanalysis in the history of twentieth-century medieval studies. Along with her published works of scholarship and fiction, they uncover a personalised and idiosyncratic mode of literary criticism that looks to the past for answers to the problems of the present.

Smashes

Hope Emily Allen's desire to speak with the dead was incubated during her undergraduate years at Bryn Mawr, where she was influenced by the charismatic and powerful Carey Thomas, president of the college from 1894-1922. From 1900-1905, Allen basked in the visionary glow of 'PT', as she was affectionately known. In daily speeches at chapel, 'PT' exhorted Bryn Mawr girls to apply their studies to further 'the cause of women' and to keep in mind the following maxim: 'only failures marry'.¹¹ She considered 'the books we read, the knowledge we get' to be 'weapons for the Ego to fight with when the time comes'.¹² Thomas's rhetoric of muscular feminism, which openly defies the Victorian cult of the angel in the house, extends to her appropriation of a classic image of masculine power to describe the political, and specifically feminist, ends of academic achievement: 'now is the time when we are forging our swords'.¹³

For Carey Thomas, medieval scholarship was less an end in itself than a means of performing feminist conviction. Carey Thomas did her postgraduate work in comparative philology at Leipzig and Zurich, two of the small number of universities that would award advanced degrees to women at the time. After submitting a master's thesis on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, she promptly abandoned philology for university administration. Whereas Thomas had been put

off by nineteenth-century German philology, with its almost anthropological notions of textual purity and corruption, and its nationalist, genealogical models of textual transmission, Allen found a more congenial scholarly home in England.¹⁴ After graduating from Bryn Mawr in 1906 (her commencement speaker was Henry James), she went on to graduate studies at Newnham College, Cambridge. There she blended the model of feminist action that she had inherited from Thomas with traditional English methods of historical scholarship. In her work, Allen sought medieval counterparts to herself, charting a historical genealogy for the alternative, independent lifestyle that she had chosen: one that eschewed marriage and childbirth, and favored, instead, intimate female friendships that were devoted to the shared pursuit of some form of higher calling or profession.

Allen's research concerned the identity and life records of the women for whom the *Ancrene Riwle*, a twelfth-century guide for anchorites, was written. In a series of three *PMLA* articles published between 1918 and 1935, Allen proposed their names (Emma, Christina, and Gunhilda), located their anchorage at Kilburn Priory (in what is now Hampstead), traced the records of its foundation in 1134, and submitted that the Kilburn hermit, Godwin, was the name of the *magister loci* who had composed the text.¹⁵ Allen dated the text's Corpus Christi College Cambridge manuscript to the early twelfth century, and hypothesised that three 'daughters of Deorman' were the offspring of one Deorman, 'an important Anglo-Saxon thane of William the Conqueror', and his unidentified Norman wife. Deorman (or Derman) of London was the tenant-in-chief of the *Domesday Book*, which documented the assets of William the Conqueror's English territories.

The *Ancrene Riwle's* advocacy of chastity and enclosure resonates with the all-female communities in which Allen lived. After Bryn Mawr and Newnham, Allen shared a Chelsea house with Dorothy Ellis, a fellow anchorite-fancier, and their friend, the historian Joan Wake. Allen referred to their little triple as the 'Three Daughters of Deorman'. At a time when Charlotte Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain of St. Hugh's College were publishing papers which claimed that they saw the ghost of Marie Antoinette walking at Versailles in spiritualist journals, Hope Emily Allen was using the 'medium' of scholarship to establish contact with the prototypes for her own life-choices, with her medieval, mystical, ego-ideals.¹⁶ Her efforts to track down the records of the three recluses and to gain, as she puts it, 'an intimate and complete knowledge of both the domestic and the spiritual incidents' in their lives attests to her interest and investment in female achievement in a context which sets itself apart from marriage and sex.¹⁷

As President of Bryn Mawr, Carey Thomas had encouraged and inspired a group of individuals, the future scholars and doctors and lawyers of Allen's generation, to put off the exigencies of compulsory heterosexuality for as long as possible. She stated explicitly that one of her feminist goals was for more women to fall in love and take up house together, and devote themselves to their intellectual or political or artistic work. Her goals were not inconsistent with the acceptance and encouragement with which passionate same-sex relationships were viewed.¹⁸ Turn-of-the-century parents who were horrified by the thought of their daughters so much as waltzing with men sent their girls off to boarding school or college with stern injunctions against dating or any form of heterosexual fraternizing. Thus, Thomas and her Philadelphia Quaker set pursued intense friendships with each other, writing home to their mothers openly relating the joys of their latest 'smash' (their slang word for 'crush'), including hopping into bed in their flannel nightgowns for a rapturous reading of Swinburne. When Thomas, who regarded Swinburne as an essential component of courtship, wrote a triumphant letter from college, relating her success at an all-girl dinner party that she attended in a tuxedo, her mother (who was at the time lamenting the dwindling of her own passionate feelings for another Quaker matron) responded with a letter sternly forbidding a repeat performance. Mrs. Thomas's concern was not that her daughter was taking a male part with her girlfriends, but that nice Quaker girls from good Philadelphia families should not expose their legs (or limbs) like prostitutes.¹⁹

Parental rules about avoiding relations with men until marriage were, of course, bound up with the property value of their virginity, but marriage at this time (as it was in the Middle Ages) meant the reality of submission to a spouse, childbearing and other domestic demands, and, for wealthy girls, relinquishing to their husbands control over a sizeable fortune. For Allen, the prospect of marriage was, quite literally, a nightmare. She once wrote to Ellis, 'after your cable last night I had a nightmare ... you announced you were going to be married—I was in a torment to ask if a clergyman, but did not dare to ask questions! I feared in that case you would spend all your time on Sunday school and parish work!'²⁰ As a graduate student at Cambridge, Allen's real 'smash' appears to have been with an Anglo-Greek biologist named Marietta Pallis, who recorded their love in a poem that contains the following lines:²¹

I blew a kiss to the cherry
and the wind blew its petals to me:

with its delicate flakes I was whitened,
I loved, and the month was May.

Here the traditional elements of a medieval love-lyric—the May morning, the blossoms—are deployed in a celebration of female eroticism. Note, too, how the lyric 'I' is whitened by this love making, a suggestion of the chastity or purity often associated with love between women. Pallis adorns what Ben Jonson called 'chaste tribadry' and Queen Victoria called absolutely nothing at all, Pallis adorns her lyric with classic medieval images of purity and renewal that echo and reflect upon Allen's research on anchoritic spirituality.

Many Victorians and late nineteenth-century Americans considered sex an essentially male enterprise: phallic participation was required for a loving caress to become carnal knowledge. For Allen and for Thomas (who asserted, 'I have disliked gentlemen all my life') lesbianism continued long past graduation.²² However, the word 'lesbian' was not, at this point, commonly in use: Thomas's journals record her discovery of the term late in life, and a lengthy consideration of its applicability to her own experience.²³ And of course, at this time, many topics (like money, politics and religion, as well as sex) were considered inappropriate for polite conversation. As for sex, Thomas's mother wrote, 'naked female backs and thighs and knees are not subjects that ought to be discussed promiscuously.'²⁴ As a result, it is difficult to pin down precisely what kind of intimacy the women experienced together. Readers today encounter references to 'clasped hands and loving eyes and close kisses and admiration' and cannot help assuming that sex, or at least what we define as sex, is involved.²⁵ We may only speculate upon the specific acts that are referred to in the highly charged emotional economy of secrecy and disclosure that informed boarding-school and college smashes, or what exactly lies behind the joy of a shared passion for feminist activism or writing or scholarship or motivates a horror for the dynamics of heterosexual marriage. Although we ascribe sexuality a primary role in our own classifications of identity, it has not always occupied this central position. In any case, Hope Emily Allen would say that it is none of our business.

As much as her feminist commitment, Allen's unusual religious background explains her desire to reconstruct the women's community of the *Ancrene Riwe*. Writing in 1949 to C. T. Onions, who was at that time the editor of the Early English Text Society, Allen attributed the 'extra pleasure' that she derived from her research on the mystics to her 'fortunate background'.²⁶ She was referring to her childhood in the utopian religious community of the

Perfectionists, in Oneida, New York. Founded by John Humphrey Noyes in the 1840s, the Perfectionists opposed traditional social structures such as private property, marriage and the nuclear family. They practiced communal childrearing and what they called 'complex marriage', a doctrine that opposed monogamy, and considered all members of the community married to each other.²⁷ In their teens, young men and women were initiated into sex by their elders. Particular attention was paid to young men learning from older women the necessity to please their partners: they would be criticised in public if they didn't. The men also learned to practice *coitus reservatus*, a natural form of birth control, with the idea of women having the right to decide when they wanted to become pregnant. By 1880, however, many of these practices had been abolished, and Hope Emily Allen was born and raised in the decades following the community's return to traditional monogamy. Their successful businesses—including silverware (which the Oneida company manufactures to this day)—ensured a high level of prosperity for its members.

In an undated letter to her friend Joan Wake, Allen made explicit the ties between her religious background and her scholarly work: 'to me scholarship has always been sounding very individual—as religion would be'.²⁸ The Perfectionists' abolition of traditional social structures and binaries in order to construct a utopian community may have shaped Allen's scholarly interest in mysticism as well as anchoresses, while its historical advocacy of a woman's right to sexual choice may also have informed Allen's decision to spend her life in the company of women. We can also trace Allen's comfort with communalistic domestic structures—from Bryn Mawr to Newnham College to Cheyne Walk—to the practice of sharing wealth in the Oneida community. If Allen's 'fortunate background' opened her mind to alternative life choices, it also gave her the opportunity to pursue them. While choosing a life with women, often devoted to a shared vocation, was viewed by many with a kind of philosophical indulgence, money made this kind of life practically possible. A modest private income from Oneida gave Allen economic independence: she was proud that she was not in the position of having to seek either employment or a husband's support, and she was sorry when the 1929 stock market crash meant that she had to take up paid work, for a time, for the *Middle English Dictionary*.

Allen's scholarship refers frequently to the privileged background of the daughters of Deorman: as she remarked in a 1934 letter, 'there is scant hope of tracing our ladies unless they were heiresses'.²⁹ Allen's account of their decision to become anchoresses, rather than upper-class wives, could equally apply to

members of her own Bryn Mawr cohort who chose professions over marriage: 'they were of noble birth, and young, and their entrance into religion had occasioned a stir in the world'.³⁰ In her 1929 article, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', Allen writes admiringly of the royal patronage the women received for their spiritual work: 'it is against a background of worldly prominence that the author of the *Ancren Riwle*, writing to three nobly born recluses, sketches the temptations of the enclosed life, and this we can understand when we realise that in real life as in romances in the twelfth century kings and nobles visited holy anchorites and anchoresses'.³¹ This passage evokes the fictional world of Malory, drawing upon a quintessentially medieval image of knights visiting and paying homage to and supporting anchoresses. The life that Allen conjures for her anchoresses reinforces her own choices as well as the intellectual reasons behind them: with their bodies safely enclosed behind walls, the anchoresses have the opportunity to hold forth verbally. Covering their physical selves, literally blocking them up, gives them license to offer spiritual advice that would signify differently (or perhaps not at all) if the knights or kings were confronted with the physical presence of the women along with their words. This leaves the anchoresses free to bask in male attention and approval.

Masculine Investments

Hope Emily Allen constructed her own kind of twentieth-century anchorage, an insulated world of female friendship and feminist scholarship. However, as the image of the kings and knights visiting the anchoresses suggests, it is impossible to create a life untouched by gender politics. Although Allen shared her life with women, and, as her friends recall, 'read Jane Austen up to the end', she remained, nevertheless, deeply male-identified.³² After her death in 1960, one of her friends fondly recalled 'that time we three were staying at Newnham', where Allen was 'flitting around in her black beret and long black cape like the ghost of Erasmus'.³³ Allen was embracing a model of academic homosociality, to be sure, yet Erasmus's scholarly community rigidly excluded women.

Allen's *Ancrene Riwle* scholarship manifests her investment in masculine approval: she describes how the three 'maidens' entertained rich and famous men (rather like Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas), and refers to the financial support they received from them: 'to take devout women under their protection was not an uncommon act'.³⁴ Moreover, Allen's interest in the *Ancrene Riwle* was

motivated initially by her admiration for the 'master' who is (indisputably for her) the text's author.³⁵ Allen's editions of the work of Richard Rolle, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle* (1928) and *The English Writings of Richard Rolle* (1931), had given her the kind of professional status that led the Victoria and Albert to think of consulting Allen when they received the curious Butler-Bowdon manuscript. Her research won the Rose Mary Crawshay prize from the British Academy. The Bodleian Library papers contain congratulatory letters from the leading lights in medieval scholarship: Carleton Brown, executive secretary of the Modern Language Association and noted scholar of Middle English lyrics; G. G. Coulton, the Cambridge medieval historian; R. W. Chambers, Quain Professor of English Language and Literature at University College, London. Yet they also record her dismay when Sir Israel Gollancz, then the secretary of the British Academy, invited her to tea, and she learned that it was a prize only for women: 'Sir I then announced the prize, but told me to come to his house Sat.—then only by accident did I learn the prize was for women—a disappointment'. Allen's desire to have her work praised on its own terms, and not because it was written by a woman, trumped whatever recognition she may have had that the prize was intended to encourage and publicise the work of female scholars.

Another disappointment came in 1928, when J. R. R. Tolkien rejected her conclusions about the date of the *Ancrene Riwe*. In a 1928 article for *Essays and Studies*, Tolkien argued against Allen's dating of the manuscript on philological grounds, thus calling into question her association of it with the daughters of Deorman and Kilburn Priory. Tolkien proposed the later date for the manuscript that remains widely accepted among medievalists.³⁶ He complained that Allen's account of the reception of the text, its court connections, and its translation into Anglo-Norman for a noble audience, were too sentimental. Allen was cut to the quick. But her hurt was assuaged when, as she describes in a letter to R. W. Chambers, she received 'one of the nicest letters' from Tolkien, which made it clear that 'he did not mean anything personal against me ... I am much relieved to get rid of the sense of disapproval which I had suffered from'.³⁷

Allen's reaction to J. R. R. Tolkien's rejection of her work reveals how being in error, in a factual or intellectual sense, presented less of a problem to her than the loss of acceptance by her male colleagues. Her attachment to masculine models of scholarship in male-dominated academic hierarchies illustrates the extent to which the traditional equation between masculinity and power penetrated into a female-identified environment, its influence reaching those

spaces explicitly designed to exclude it. We may trace Allen's investments in masculinity in her short fiction, published in the twenties alongside the work of Gertrude Stein and Hart Crane, in high-profile magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Dial*. At the same time that she was pursuing her research on anchoresses, Allen was writing short stories that adopt the perspective of a male protagonist. Allen's women function as potentially tragic objects to be admired or, more frequently, pitied.

Like Stein, Henry James, and other members of that generation, Allen is interested in the complex cultural experiences of the American abroad. However, unlike their counterparts in Stein or James, Allen's Americans do not visit country houses or city *pied-à-terre*. Instead, they cross the Atlantic to visit the rustic, rural East Anglia of their ancestors. It comes complete with villagers speaking in heavy dialect, rendered phonetically (and with plenty of apostrophes) much in the manner of Mark Twain. At loose in the English countryside, earnest, upright American men encounter exotic East Anglian women, mysteriously harmed by sex and scandal. In 'The Fanciful Countryman', published in *The Dial*, Billie (note the feminine spelling) Appleyard falls in love with Emily Woods, and he resolves to take her back with him to America, nobly overlooking 'the black warks of the fam'la' that exclude Emily from courtship by the locals.³⁸ Yet Billie is also tempted by the even more humble Jennie, who uses all of her charms to persuade him to buy her a pair of gloves. In 'Ancient Grief', published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, John Williams visits the home of his grandmother, finding her to resemble closely the 'many squat brunette types' in the area: 'remnants, he was told, of a primitive race cut off by the fens'.³⁹ There he learns that she had been made pregnant by a 'gentleman parson' (182). Not wishing to confront the father, as she felt it would ruin his life, she sought refuge with another man in 'the New World' (186). John's attempts to probe the villagers for more details prompt him to make the following observation: 'some issues are too deep and delicate for any touching by a third party, however interested' (187). Identified, in the first story, with the fetishised glove, or with a diabolical black mark, female sexuality is imagined in these stories as impenetrably private, unattainable, and obscure.

Allen shifts the paradigm slightly in 'A Glut of Fruit', also published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Here, James Turner visits the East Anglian coast of his childhood with his American wife and daughter. Margie, James's daughter, falls in love with Myles, a young man living in brutal poverty. While the eventual success of Myles's suit parallels James's success at wooing his wife, as well as developing the theme of love-across-class-boundaries that appears to be a

favourite with Allen, it also prompts James to acknowledge that the years have passed. Allen writes: 'His wife looked haggard [. . .] up to now he had been able to pride himself on her looking more like Margie's sister than her mother'.⁴⁰ Allen's fiction reproduces traditional gender roles apparently without negative judgment. It reflects a value system that feminists of subsequent generations have critiqued, anatomised, and dismissed: the stereotypes of a youthful beauty and a haggard wife; the sense of threat a father feels from the interloper, his daughter's suitor; and the possibility of sexual activity shaming and harming a woman for life. Paradoxically, given her choice of male protagonists, Allen's stories reproduce the idea that there is an eternal feminine, an idea of Woman that is fundamentally different from, an inaccessible to, men.

Allen's entrenched attitudes to gender would seem to conflict with her commitments to the feminism of her day, to her career in a male-dominated field, and to her domestic life shared only with women. Her male protagonists suggest that a flight from the female, and, in particular, from female sexuality, was necessary for her to attain professional advancement. The Rose Mary Crawshay prize was earmarked for women. However, at that time, most women who achieved this level of scholarly achievement had placed themselves outside the commitments of marriage and childbearing. Many of Allen's generation acknowledged that the demands of the household (identified as 'female') and the opportunities of a professional life (identified as 'male') remained incompatible. Gertrude Stein, for example, came to the conclusion that very few women, such as herself, were actually capable of the accomplishments of great men. Although Stein praised to the skies the norms of feminine domesticity embodied by Alice B. Toklas, she nevertheless exempted herself from such activities.

Stein pursues her essentially anti-feminist position in *Fernhurst*, an early *roman à clef* that was later reworked in *The Making of Americans*. *Fernhurst*, the subtitle of which is *The History of Philip Redfern, A Student of the Nature of Woman*, is based on an event that occurred during Hope Allen's senior year at Bryn Mawr. Mamie Gwinn, who had been Carey Thomas's companion for years, left Carey for Arthur Hodder, a devastatingly handsome former student of William James and recent Bryn Mawr appointment.⁴¹ For years, Thomas had referred to Gwinn as her 'wife', and they had traveled together to graduate school in Germany and Switzerland. There was even a rumour that Gwinn, in the tradition of many long-suffering academic wives, had ghost-written Thomas's doctoral thesis. For Stein (herself a former student of William James, who attended Johns Hopkins Medical School thanks to Carey Thomas's efforts), their

breakup—a scandal, really—encapsulated the social problems created by the 'college woman ... conducting herself in all things as if there were no sex and mankind made all alike and traditional differences mere variations of dress and contour'.⁴² For Stein, the world is pushed out of balance, not by sexism, but by a 'doctrine of the superiority of women' (6), bolstered by a combination of progressive Quaker politics and Victorian morality.

Stein argues that women's moral, professional and intellectual powers produce confusion when they are allowed to develop unchecked by male authority. Each of Stein's female characters has a weakness in her character: Nancy, the wife of Mr. Redfern (i.e. Arthur Hodder) is an unthinking conservative; Miss Thornton (based on Carey Thomas) is aggressive and insensitive; and the dreamy and inspirational Miss Bruce (Mamie Gwinn) is out-of-touch with reality. The women defuse the masculine energies of Redfern, and produce serious trouble for themselves. Yet for Stein, Arthur Hodder and his exploits supply the material, not for lesbian tragedy à la Radcliffe Hall, but for stern social critique. Rather than 'persisting to the end in the belief that their power was as a man's', Stein instead pleads with the 'new woman' to 'relearn the fundamental facts of sex' (4). For Stein, the male mandate to conquer and to possess must prevail, and 'the great mass of the world's women should content themselves with attaining to womanhood' (5). Her point made, Stein gives the story a happy ending: Miss Bruce eventually sends Mr Redfern back to his stolid Midwestern wife and returns to her true soulmate, Miss Thornton. If only life had mirrored art: Arthur Hodder's early death prompted Mamie Gwinn to lose herself in spiritualism and seances. Carey Thomas consoled herself by taking up with Mary Garret, a woman with the same initials as her former lover.

Yours ever, Gunhilda

Allen, like her elusive anchoresses, inhabited a 'female world of love and ritual'.⁴³ In their respective periods, they established for themselves a mode of living that cushioned them from being hurt or even touched by the more unpleasant aspects of heterosexuality and gender difference. Allen's little utopia blended easily with the same-sex friendships sanctioned by her society, while the medieval anchoresses inhabited a world in which sex was suspect—at best, a necessary evil, and something to get out of if at all possible. However, as Allen's short fiction and Gertrude Stein's *Fernhurst* attest, it is one thing to live away from

men, and another thing to succeed in avoiding masculinity altogether. Their fictional treatments of love and desire not only handle heterosexual relationships, but adopt a male perspective and even sanction traditional gender roles, producing a strangely anti-feminist aspect to their feminism.

Ultimately, the publication of *The Book of Margery Kempe* brought Hope Emily Allen neither the satisfaction of professional kudos nor the pleasures of transhistorical feminist community-building. As John Hirsh explains in *Hope Emily Allen, Medieval Scholarship and Feminism*, Allen lost control over the EETS edition to Sanford Brown Meech, a Harvard graduate recently appointed at the University of Michigan, whom she hired to transcribe the manuscript after confirming her role as editor for the EETS edition. In a letter to Robin Flower (then the general editor of EETS), Allen describes Meech as 'a very energetic worker'.⁴⁴ He took the transcription job because he had a young family to support. Subsequent letters that insist 'the paleography is not my job', and describe Meech's projected introduction as a 'secular annotation', reinforce Allen's view of Meech as a subordinate.⁴⁵ Employing Meech to do the work she didn't want to do left Allen free to chase anchoresses (which she still considered her real work), and to produce a kind of key to medieval mysticism that would contextualise Margery within the tradition of medieval women's spirituality: 'a general synthesis, using my materials and ideas on medieval literary history, of many years'.⁴⁶

However, almost as soon as he started working for her, Meech began to undermine Allen's authority as editor by working and communicating directly with Colonel Butler-Bowdon. Allen concedes, in a 1936 letter to Mabel Day of EETS, that her overzealousness might have alienated the colonel:⁴⁷

I did irritate the owner during the last part of my cooperating with him over his modern edition—after I had turned it back to him, and was very worried, not only about its accuracy, but also about his possibly—not realizing what this meant—forestalling your edition. The owner took Mr. Meech into his confidence about his irritations.

Eventually, in a move for which, as Hirsh observes, he would have never had the nerve if Allen had been a man, Meech had himself named co-editor, and was given leave by Robin Flower, then the general editor of EETS, to write the extensive philological introduction. Thus, the 1940 edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* presents Meech's introduction first. Allen's short prefatory note

comes second. Meech's success with the EETS edition places male bonding in conflict with class prerogative. Whereas Allen was operating within the codes of amateurism and gentility that served scholars in the nineteenth century, Sanford Meech was a young academic on the make—Allen noted with horror that he sported a Phi Beta Kappa key—his mode of behaviour anticipating current conceptualisations of literary studies as a profession.⁴⁸

If Allen was not, as she was beginning to discover, one of the boys, her response was to refuse to allow Margery to become one of the girls. In the late 1930s, when she was composing her prefatory notes to the EETS edition, Allen had sought to place Margery, whom she considered to be a 'very creative type of person', firmly in the tradition of what she called the 'notable women writers of the Middle Ages' such as Hroswitha of Gandesheim, Hildegard of Bingen, and Elizabeth of Hungary.⁴⁹ However, Allen changed her tune. In the addendum to her prefatory notes, dated 1940, Allen recasts Margery as a 'hysteric' (lxv), defining hysteria as 'a mental disease consisting chiefly in an exaggeration of suggestibility' (lxv). Where Allen once found Margery 'original' (lxii), 'visionary' (lxii), 'endowed with the spiritual graces' (lxi) and, best of all, 'egotistical' (lv), she now views Margery as 'neurotic, vain, illiterate, physically and nervously overstrained' (lxiv), a victim of 'constitutional deficiencies' and 'shattered health' (lxv). Abandoning her previous claims for Margery's unique relationship to an inherited tradition, Allen now insists that Margery's spirituality merely 'reflected back' what she was 'incapable of making her own'.

Allen's change of heart reflects a painful process of disavowal, transferring onto Margery her own experience of exclusion on the basis of gender. Of course, Margery Kempe is a highly complicated figure. Intensely emotional, irrepressible, obnoxiously self-absorbed, she is a character that many people, throughout her life, seemed to love to hate. Nevertheless, Allen had originally sought to include Margery within the all-female spiritual community that she was constructing in her work on medieval anchorites. However, the publication of Colonel Butler-Bowdon's modernised edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* in 1936 had prompted a wave of male reviewers to describe Margery with reference to the psychoanalytic terminology of the day: 'a supreme egotist'; 'unhinged'; her actions 'manifestations of the same sex aberration'.⁵⁰ Using a term that unwittingly looks forward to readings of Margery Kempe by Robert Gluck and Carolyn Dinshaw, Dean Inge of *The Evening Standard* dubbed her 'certainly queer, even in a queer age'.⁵¹ Father H. Thurston, S. J., who wrote for Catholic periodicals such as *The Month* and *The Tablet*, and who had 'long experience of psychological types like

Margery', asserted 'that Margery was a victim of hysteria can hardly be open to doubt'.⁵² Critiquing Margery's 'terrible hysteria and exaltée piety', complaining about her emotionalism and bad manners, and insisting, 'the hysterical temperament is revealed in every page of the narrative portions', Thurston diagnoses Margery as a classic hysteric.

Rather than defending Margery from these reviewers, Allen's addendum instead defers to their 'expert judgment'. Her change in attitude enshrines hysteria as the key term in the reception of Margery Kempe, who has been diagnosed with everything from post-partum depression to conversion hysteria.⁵³ Although Allen does not locate hysteria as an illness of the womb (in the tradition of Janet and Charcot), she nevertheless uses its stereotypical connotations to diminish her appraisal of Margery. Hysteria was traditionally perceived as symptomatic of women's biological incapacity to think abstractly, argue dispassionately, or make lasting cultural contributions: an excess, as it were, of an innately inferior femininity. Thus, for Allen, Kempe's text is no longer the work of an original thinker, but evidence of a psychological pathology. Mimicking, rather than contributing to, the tradition of mystical writings, Kempe's text is interesting now only for the 'clues' to her condition that are 'dropped' in the 'most tedious and repetitious parts of her book' (lxvi). Now the object of psychoanalytic investigation, her spiritual insights are transformed into a clinical testimonial out from which an accredited professional can establish a definitive diagnosis.

By 1940, however, hysteria had been reformulated. Sigmund Freud's revisionist work on hysteria had changed the field of psychoanalysis at the turn of the century. His 'A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria' was translated into English and published in 1909; 'Dora' appeared in English in 1924.⁵⁴ For Freud, hysteria was the damming up of emotional and sexual responses to a damning social order. Tormented by the conflict between the presence of her physical desires and the negations of a moralistic culture that would deny their existence, the Freudian hysteric exhibits physiological symptoms that indicate her psychological defence against a sexual longing that is at once fascinating and terrifying. Like Margery, Freudian hysterics often suffered from an experience of sexual abuse that they interpreted as a personal fault. Their hysteria was the affliction of a life that had been circumscribed by their psychological and economic dependence on fathers and husbands, and it signaled their unwillingness to accept the female roles that had been thrust upon them.

Feminist appropriations of hysteria in the wake of Freud, such as Hélène Cixous's celebratory self-identification with Freud's Dora in *Le rire de la Méduse*,

provide a congenial point of entry into *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Cixous even writes, 'you'll splutter I'm a mystic').⁵⁵ There is a Medusa-like intensity in Margery's mystical excesses: her irrepressible tears, frank sexuality, and fascination with the morbid details of Christ's suffering exemplify Cixous's manifesto for the literary transcendence of phallocentrism by writing through the body. In fact, Margery Kempe of Lynn has a great deal more in common with Freudian hysterics such as Dora, who, like Kempe, came from a middle-class family in a 'remote provincial town', than with Anglo-Norman heiresses (or expatriate American medievalists). Moreover, as David Aers observes, 'Margery's religious identity involved a *rupture* with the earthly family, an energetic struggle *against* the nuclear family, its bonds, its defenses in the lay community, and its legitimating ideologies'.⁵⁶

Margery's mystic method is entrenched in the feminine. She focuses upon the most domestic aspects of birthing, caring and nurturing associated with the Virgin, while her lachrymosity and melancholia take their cues from the mournful attitudes of the Madonna. Her devotion to the Holy Family, moreover, reproduces in an idealised form the aspects of the traditional household that she abandoned for Christ, while her intense love for Christ is powerfully overlaid with heterosexual metaphors.⁵⁷ Yet if Margery's dramas of self-denial are rooted in what Freud would call the family romance, her devotional practice also reflects her ambition to catapult outside these restrictions, and to enjoy a completely unique place in the heart and mind of Christ. Margery was a tireless self-promoter. Her spiritual aspirations seem consistent with the successes she enjoyed, prior to her religious awakening, in the brewing business. The very existence of her manuscript, composed by a series of amanuenses whom she had to persuade to listen to her and copy down her words, is a testament to her singular ambition. Defying her status as wife and mother by donning the white robes that signify virginity, Margery sought not simply to reject but to transcend gender binaries. Margery's dogged opposition to the male representatives of ecclesiastical authority, and her cherishing of the feminine aspects of Christ's wounded vulnerability, constitute a highly physical (even combative) and performative mysticism that starkly polarises opposites as a means of blasting them apart.⁵⁸

Although Hope Emily Allen's use of the term 'hysteria' opened the door for Freudian hysteria (and its discontents) to offer contemporary readers a congenial paradigm to make sense of Margery's theories and practice, she originally used the term to distance herself from Margery. Her account of Margery's

psychological condition invokes earlier formulations of hysteria, despite a familiarity with Freud. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many of the leading lights of the Cambridge intelligentsia, such as the botanist A.G. Tansley, the maths prodigy Frank Ramsay, and the psychologist Lionel Sharples Penrose, were either undergoing analysis or considering it, discussing it with their friends, travelling to Vienna in secret, or trying very hard to avoid it altogether.⁵⁹ Even if Allen had managed somehow not to encounter Freud at Cambridge, by 1940 he was ubiquitous in the educated London circles in which Allen travelled. Leonard Woolf started publishing James Strachey's translations of Freud at the Hogarth Press in 1924, and psychoanalysis fast became a fashionable subject for dinner conversation as well as scholarly investigation. A letter Allen wrote to the medieval scholar Mabel Day, outlining her plans for a general study of English mysticism, makes it clear that she knew Freud: 'I had thot of putting together the salient features [of Margery Kempe's relationship to a mystical tradition] in a series of preliminary excurses—taking the background up to c. 1400, when the whole picture, as I now realize, changes for English mysticism (what was once mysticism drops into being considered mere conventional devotion of the more intense sort. The change is something like psychology before and after Freud)'.⁶⁰

Allen may have intuited the fruitful coexistence of Freudian hysteria, mysticism and feminism in her private correspondence, but her published work on Margery Kempe resists it. Instead, hysteria signals her frustration with Margery, who is difficult to imagine as one of the daughters of Deorman (however fanciful they turned out to be). It also constitutes a projection of her experience of professional humiliation directly onto the subject of her scholarly investigation, in order to detach herself from a situation that was causing her emotional pain. Despite the intensity of her will to succeed in terms that were not circumscribed by gender prejudice, it appears that Allen was defeated by Meech because she was a woman. Like Freud's hysterical analysande, who 'pressed her dress up against her body with one hand (as the woman), while she tried to tear it off with the other (as the man)', Allen was simultaneously supported in her feminist work and ambitions and suppressed by male privilege: a form of entitlement she wished for herself.⁶¹ Hence, Allen's note and her addendum produce the scholarly equivalent to the repressions of Freudian hysteria. They describe her initial excitement, which, she says, 'swelled my notes far beyond expectation' (lxi-ii) such that their publication had to be 'postponed' to a separate volume. As the scope of her projected study increased, her relations with Meech and Butler-Bowdon deteriorated, and Allen's contribution dwindled to mere 'notes', reflecting

her internalization of traditional models of gender difference and acceptance of the diagnosis of a coterie of male professionals. The pleasure of finding a place for Margery and for herself as a scholar is thus transformed into the agony of thwarted desire.

Allen had every intention of completing her study of the international feminist mystic community, which would include the material from the projected separate volume on Margery Kempe for EETS. But her Casaubon-like project was never completed.⁶² Of course, the outside world did much to interfere: the manuscript was identified at the time of the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and the tensions between Allen and Meech were coming to a head just as World War II was being declared. Allen reluctantly returned to Oneida in 1939, writing to Joan Wake, 'thank God every drop of blood in my body is English'.⁶³ A volume which made a strong argument for the influence of continental and especially German mystics on English spirituality could not have felt terribly congenial in wartime.⁶⁴ One senses, however, that a loss of heart really informs Allen's abandonment of the volume. Allen had found in her anchoresses a prototype for her own life-choices, rejecting marriage and childbirth for higher learning. The international feminist community of mystics that she sought to reconstruct offered a medieval analogue to the alternatives that activists such as Carey Thomas had opened up as a means of altering the limiting circumstances in the lives of women. But life changed with the war. After Allen returned to America, she perpetually postponed and, ultimately, abandoned her work on Margery, while her friends put aside their own scholarly ambitions to support the war effort. As Joan Wake wrote to Dorothy Ellis: 'I think it is a fall from grace that one of the three daughters of Deormann should be see of Hosp. Supp. Dep. [an overseer of the Hospital Supply Department, where women worked rolling bandages and other medical supplies for the war effort] wh. [when] so many can do + only the very elect can do the Religious Houses of Cambs [Cambridgeshire] ... Love to you both—Yrs ever [. . .] (was it?) Gunhilda?'⁶⁵

Hope Emily Allen and Margery Kempe were forced apart; yet they could be reunited. The historical, cultural and personal circumstances that surround Hope Emily Allen's identification of the Margery Kempe manuscript reveal a female, as well as explicitly feminist, version of the kind of idiosyncratic, individualistic and politically motivated literary-historical scholarship that has come to dominate the field of literary studies in the wake of the New Historicism. In her work on the so-called 'Daughters of Deorman', Allen had sought out medieval paradigms for her own life-choices, and forged a relationship between

the ideals of medieval epic and romance and the strictures of medieval religious practice, and her contemporary world. By contrast, her work on Margery Kempe opened the door (albeit unwittingly) to the forms of religious, social and sexual disobedience that inspire literary studies today.

This key moment in the reception of Margery Kempe sheds light upon the evolution, throughout the twentieth century, of a feminist literary canon and literary theories. It also allows us to historicise the significant role played by psychoanalytic theory in medieval studies, as scholars continue to debate the respective merits of historicist scholarship and psychoanalytic interpretation.⁶⁶ This debate highlights the impossibility of unmediated access to the past, despite the powerful attraction of 'the medieval' and the challenge of cracking its codes, while, at the same time, drawing attention to the cultural specificity of psychoanalysis itself, with its roots in modern bourgeois European culture. Although Allen did not give Margery the benefit of being a Freudian hysteric, open to future reinterpretation and celebration, the history of her relationship with *The Book of Margery Kempe* reminds us that when we are speaking with the dead, we are also negotiating with ourselves.

NOTES

¹ Portions of this essay were presented at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo in 1998, at the Modern Language Association Convention in 2001, and at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 2004. I would like to thank D. Vance Smith and Michael Uebel, as well as the lively audiences at those sessions, for their interest and encouragement. I have also received the benefit of insights and responses from Terry Goldie, Barbara Gelpi, Simon Palfrey, Seth Lerer, Michael Adams, and some anonymous readers. My greatest debt is to John C. Hirsh for his pioneering research and intellectual generosity.

² See Hilton Kelliher, 'The Rediscovery of Margery Kempe: a Footnote', *British Library Journal*, 23 (1997), 259-63.

³ See, on religion and politics, Sarah Beckwith, 'A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 34-57 and David Aers, 'The Making of Margery Kempe: Individual and Community', in his *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing, 1360-1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 73-116; and, on gender, Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1991) and Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁴ See especially Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, but also Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) as well as *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003). On the ideological underpinnings of various constructions of the Middle Ages see Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁵ See, for example, Marjorie Perloff, *The Vienna Paradox* (New York: New Directions, 2004); Alice Kaplan, *French Lessons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). On the intersection between scholarship and biography (or autobiography), see Michelle R. Warren, "'Au commencement était l'île": the colonial formation of Joseph Bédier's *Chanson de Roland*", in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* ed. by Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 205-226.

⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 116. March 12, 1949.

⁷ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech, with a prefatory note by Hope Emily Allen, EETS o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. lix.

Hope Emily Allen Speaks with the Dead

⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

⁹ John C. Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen. Medieval Scholarship and Feminism* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1988). This indispensable book is the source for much of my biographical information on Hope Emily Allen.

¹⁰ See Allen's addendum to her prefatory note in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech, p. lxxv.

¹¹ See Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *The Power and Passion of M. Carey Thomas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp. 198 and 385.

¹² Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 35.

¹³ Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 35.

¹⁴ On the political implications of German philology, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "'Un souffle d'Allemagne ayant passé': Friedrich Diez, Gaston Paris, and the Genesis of National Philologies', *Romance Philology*, 40 (1986), 1-37.

¹⁵ See Hope Emily Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwele*', *PMLA*, 33 (1918), 474-546; 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwele*', *PMLA*, 44 (1929), 635-80 and 'The Three Daughters of Deorman', *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 899-902.

¹⁶ Terry Castle, 'The Marie Antoinette Obsession', *Representations*, 38 (1992), 1-38.

¹⁷ See Allen, 'On the Author', p. 639.

¹⁸ Martha Vicinus, 'Distance and Desire: English Boarding-School Friendships', *Signs*, 9 (1984), 600-622.

¹⁹ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 68.

²⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 45. February 21, 1956.

²¹ See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 28.

²² See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 66.

²³ For discussions of the term 'lesbian' and its history see (among others) Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 13-31; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

²⁴ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 127.

²⁵ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 86.

²⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 116. March 12, 1949. In the 1920s, Allen corresponded with George Bernard Shaw, who was interested in socialist experiment, about the Oneida Community, and offered a strong defence of the community and its ideals.

²⁷ On the Oneida community, see Maren Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1969) and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia. Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

²⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 93. Undated.

²⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 37. January 25, 1934.

³⁰ See Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 476.

³¹ See Allen, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 646.

³² See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 57.

³³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 57. July 8, 1960.

³⁴ See Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 474, and 'The Three Daughters of Deorman', p. 902.

³⁵ See Allen, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 637.

³⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meidhad*', *Essays and Studies*, 14 (1928), 104-26.

³⁷ See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 107.

³⁸ See Allen, 'The Fanciful Countryman', *The Dial*, 83 (December 1923), 477-500 (p. 479).

³⁹ Hope Emily Allen, 'Ancient Grief', *Atlantic Monthly*, 131 (February 1923), 177-87 (p. 180).

⁴⁰ Hope Emily Allen, 'A Glut of Fruit', *Atlantic Monthly*, 132 (September 1923), 343-52 (p. 351).

⁴¹ Thomas despised what she considered Hodder's 'medieval' notions about women. Perhaps his attitude recalled her own experience of discrimination as a graduate student in medieval philology. See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 303.

⁴² Gertrude Stein, *Fernhurst, Q.E.D. and Other Early Writings* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 5.

⁴³ Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The female world of love and ritual: relations between women in nineteenth-century America', *Signs*, 1 (1975), 1-29.

⁴⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 2. October 22, 1934.

⁴⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 4. January 15, 1935.

⁴⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 56. Undated.

⁴⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 22. June 19, 1936.

⁴⁸ Hope Allen was not very circumspect about her class prejudice. As she wrote to Dorothy Ellis following a transatlantic voyage back to America in 1937: 'I was put with ex-melting pot at noon—ship full of Americanised persons from another world and stratum. At my table they compared notes on returning after 27, 21, 43 years! Quite interesting, but I couldn't stand the association for a week, so dashed to the agent, who was still on board ... Tonight I have been put at a table of women who at least can say something such as one is used to hearing'. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 93. December 31, 1937.

⁴⁹ See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech and Allen, pp. lviii and lix.

⁵⁰ Reverend Sir John R. O'Connell, 'Mistress Margery Kempe of Lynn', *The Downside Review*, 55 (1937), 174-82 (p. 176), and Thomas Coleman, review of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 162 (1937), 498-502 (p. 499).

⁵¹ Quoted in George Burns, 'Margery Kempe Reviewed', *The Month*, 171 (1938), 238-44 (p. 238). It is important to note, however, that other reviewers found Margery to be quite charming: Sir John Squire in the *Daily Telegraph* described her as 'a born story-teller with a genius for writing', while H. B. Charlton sets Margery apart from female stereotypes when he praises the text in the following terms: 'there are few domesticities ... and few mundanities' (quoted in Burns, 'Margery Kempe Reviewed', p. 238).

⁵² Herbert Thurston, 'Margery the Astonishing', *The Month*, 168 (1936), 446-56 (p. 456).

⁵³ See Hope Phyllis Weissman, 'Margery Kempe in Jerusalem: *Hysterica Compassio* in the Late Middle Ages', in *Acts of Interpretation: The Text in Its Contexts 700-1600. Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature in Honor of E. Talbot Donaldson*, ed. by Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. 201-17 and William Ober, 'Margery Kempe: Hysteria and Mysticism Reconciled', *Literature and Medicine*, 4 (1985), 24-40.

⁵⁴ Freud's *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses* was first issued in English translation in 1909; his *Collected Papers*, edited by James Strachey (including *Dora*) was published by the Hogarth Press in 1924.

⁵⁵ Hélène Cixous, 'Le rire de la Médus', *L'Arc*, 61: 39-54; 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1 (1976), 875-893.

⁵⁶ See Aers, 'The Making of Margery Kempe', p. 99.

⁵⁷ However, Margery's love for Christ provides the inspiration for Robert Gluck's novel, *Margery Kempe* (New York: High Risk Books, 1994), about the sexual passions of a gay male protagonist.

⁵⁸ As Barry Windeatt writes, most eloquently, Margery Kempe 'ignores the dualistic exclusions of traditionally male interpretations of the spiritual life, in which the flesh and the world can only be left behind. In this she could seem unnervingly radical and intrepid, needing all her indomitable spirit to face the misunderstanding and slander that followed her in life. Through a transvaluation of the sexual and social roles into which she was cast by birth and marriage, Margery Kempe claims her own spiritual path as a woman and has bequeathed—more lifelike than a book of visions and more eloquent—her moments of being, her 'felyngys and revalacyons and the forme of her levyng'. See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry A. Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 30-1.

⁵⁹ See John Forrester with Laura Cameron, 'Tansley's psychoanalytic network: An episode out of the early history of psychoanalysis in England', *Psychoanalysis and History*, 2

(2000), 189-256, and John Forrester's 'Freud in Cambridge', Inaugural Lecture for the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge (9 May, 2002).

⁶⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 93. January 28, 1947.

⁶¹ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Freud on Women. A Reader* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 152.

⁶² Of course, as an independent scholar, Allen had no outside pressure to complete her work. As she wrote to Mabel Day, her editor at EETS, 'I feel that the work is of enough importance so that you will want to print it when I get it as I want it to be. I don't want to send it till it suits me and till the copy is relatively final. The delay is not due to divagations but to lack of nervous force': Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. 212, fol. 47, April 6, 1944. In 1947, she admits 'it is all too complicated to pass on as it is', (fol. 93, January, 1947), and as late as 1949 she describes herself as 'browsing but not composing' (fol. 118, March, 1949).

⁶³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 101. Undated, 1939.

⁶⁴ Although Allen made precisely the opposite argument in a letter written that same year, when she was still feeling optimistic about her role in the edition: 'I feel that the German hysteria disclosed makes it somewhat timely under the circumstances. It is so just the same—wrong-headed, sentimental, even when in some way virtuous': Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 99. Undated, 1939.

⁶⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Engl. Misc. c.484, fol. 51. April 10, 1940.

⁶⁶ See Louse O. Fradenburg, 'We Are Not Alone: Psychoanalytic Medievalism', *New Medieval Literatures*, 2 (1998), 249-276; Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*; Lee Patterson, 'Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch: Psyche and Clio in Medieval Literary Studies', *Speculum*, 76 (2001), 638-80.