



## Narrative, Genre, and Pragmatics in the *Book of Margery Kempe*

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The fifteenth-century *Book of Margery Kempe* (BL Add. MS 61823) is an extraordinary narrative of travel, adventure, spiritual vision, and conversation, an episodic life writing comprised of interrelated scenes narrated by not one but numerous narrating voices. This paper is partly a justification for why reading the text as an ‘autobiography’ or even ‘autohagiography’ is impossible and why that impossibility is not a failure. The text we refer to as the *Book of Margery Kempe*, which the text also refers to as a “tretys” and a “wretyng,” is inexhaustible, and that has everything to do with the kind of narrative and the kind of readers the text makes. I deploy the narratological distinction between narrating time and position and narrated time and event and discuss the text’s “focalization” (Genette, Bal), marking not what but how something is described and to whom. I explore focalization and narration by analysing the text’s narrative discourse at the sentence level, the structural shape of the “vision” narratives, the role of embedded genres in the text, and the pragmatics of narrated conversation. Rather than a single ‘author’ or ‘narrator,’ the text is narrated from several discursive positions, only some of which are perceptible to the “sche” voice, her immediate confidants, and the readers. Knowledge and interiority are text deep.