

**THE LIFE OF CHRISTINA OF MARKYATE
(OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS) BY SAMUEL
FANOUS, HENRIETTA LEYSER, C.H.
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About the Author

Fanous and Leyser's collection of essays about Christina, published in 2005, has increased interest in the scholarly community. The St Albans Psalter, which was presented to Christina and the priory she founded, is one of the glories of twelfth-century English manuscript illumination and has now been digitized and is available on the Web.

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'I wish to remain single, for I have made a vow of virginity.'

This is the remarkable story of the twelfth-century recluse Christina, who became prioress of Markyate, near St Albans in Hertfordshire. Determined to devote her life to God and to remain a virgin, Christina repulses the sexual advances of the bishop of Durham. In revenge he arranges her betrothal to a young nobleman but Christina steadfastly refuses to consummate the marriage and defies her parents' cruel coercion. Sustained by visions, she finds refuge with the hermit Roger, and lives concealed at Markyate for four years, enduring terrible physical and emotional torment. Although Christina is supported by the abbot of St Albans, she never achieves the recognition that he intended for her.

Written with striking candour by Christina's anonymous biographer, the vividness and compelling detail of this account make it a social document as much as a religious one. Christina's trials of the flesh and spirit exist against a backdrop of scheming and corruption and all-too-human greed.

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