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Recalling the Word:
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By

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Committee in charge:

Professor Niklaus Largier, Chair
Professor Thomas Shannon
Professor Frank Bezner

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Abstract

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Despite the renaissance of interest in medieval mystical texts over the past three decades, an investigation of literary form and genre classifications has not yet occurred at great length. Shorter articles concerning genre and gender (e.g. Veerle Fraeter's many articles on the subject come to mind) have often taken a contrary approach to Derrida's lecture "The Law of Genre", seeking to establish female-authored literature as comparable to that of men, and arguing for an even-handed application of theoretical analysis and treatment of women's literature. Although beguine literature and other writings by women have often been classified by adjectives such as "emotional", or in different terms than more scholastic writings, I argue that beguine mystical works be approached on par with that of other contemporaneous mystical writers (e.g. Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and a corpus of texts going back to St. Bernard of Clairvaux). Highlighting the works of three key beguine mystics—Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Agnes Blannbekin—my focus is that of (1) form and (2) the intrinsic relationship between form and content in order to depict the highly "individualistic" nature of each text, as well as the strong didactic reasoning at the heart of literary form selection and creation.

Each main chapter of my dissertation focuses on a different mystic, ordered chronologically, to provide the space to discuss the construction and organization of the texts written by Hadewijch, Mechthild and Agnes individually. Although textual form is the primary object of investigation, the body chapters also highlight the main themes within their writings, provide close readings of significant or exemplary chapters, and demonstrate the ways in which these themes and excerpts intersect. The underlying aspect behind the investigation of form and content outlined above is the interest in the connection between method and meaning, text creation and readership.

Although the discussion of each mystic's work is outlined in Chapters Three through Five, Chapter One and Two provide a theoretical and historical background to the discussion of the

beguine mystical texts. The initial discussion focuses on Derrida, gender and genre, and the counterarguments posited by feminist and gender scholars of the beguines. My aim is to explicate how a focus on genre and gender has shifted from the textual evidence and led scholars away from a philological-oriented close readings, which would connect form, structure and content. The second line of inquiry in the first chapter is the question of text classification and the rediscovery of the medieval mystical texts. The nineteenth-century focus on taxonomical categorization altered the ways in which these texts have been considered, analyzed and approached, as well as the opinion on the content relayed through the choice of genre. When scholars label these mystical texts "visionary literature", "mystical treatises" or even show the relationship to hagiography, these structural categories deny acknowledgement of all present text forms and their variations. The result is the inclination to "fit" the beguine mystical texts into an overarching genre type (such as "visionary literature"), which may or may not represent the function of the genre within the text as part of a larger dogmatic program or system. For example, Hadewijch of Brabant wrote four groupings of works, organized by genre, that depict not only her visionary experiences, but also explanations of spirituality and *imitatio Christi* (the imitation of Christ) within the larger discourse of salvation, suffering and a desired perfect union with divinity. Despite the fact that these writings are grouped together as a single corpus, many scholars focus on one genre group, prompting questions regarding the ways in which an individual or separate generic reading of these genres has upon a broader understanding of that genre's function within the scope of Hadewijch's entire corpus.

I argue that the question of genre is not one that can be answered with single generic categories and that the variations present in these mystic texts exists to promote and support didactic motivations running like an undercurrent beneath all of the mystics' writings. In the end, the emphasis on genre categorization is not the method that should be implemented in the close readings of Hadewijch's, Mechthild's and Agnes' works. I posit that the motivation behind the composition of the beguine mystical texts is the unifying factor that allows the reader and scholar to approach these works as a tradition. We find variation in the methodology and form used to convey their messages to the reader, from courtly lyric forms depicting the conflicting emotions of the mystical spiritual process to mnemonic landscapes organizing and mentally revisiting visionary experiences. My hope with this study is to place these beguine mystical texts within the same niveau as other religio-philosophical writings of the late Middle Ages and base my claim upon the premise that these female authors mastered the predominant didactic forms that prevailed in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries and, through their own innovation, carried new literary forms into the fold of didactic literature.

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Introduction
All in a Name: Nomenclature, Etymology and Generic Usage

I first came upon the topic of the beguine movement and mystics during my undergraduate studies in German Studies and medieval history. During a medieval history course, I first heard of Mechthild of Magdeburg. Although Mechthild was cited as an example of lay religiosity during the thirteenth century, the details of her life and even the definition of beguine lifestyle were sparse. I was overwhelmed with questions about how such a significant authoress could be so mystifying (pun intended), what the sources might be to inform scholars about beguines and their lifestyle, and whether we could approach, with any degree of certainty, the impetus for the emergence of these various lay religious movements throughout Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As with many studies, my honors thesis led to further and more complex questions rather than satisfying the thirst for knowledge that initiated the inquiry.

After a brief detour during my Masters studies, this dissertation is a return to the questions about the texts, reception and categorization of mystical texts attributed to the beguines. With formidable advances in research during the past decades and recent discoveries of additional manuscript fragments, the quest for understanding the beguines continues. Although the bulk of my dissertation is concerned with specific texts and their analyses, this introduction serves as a foray into the subject, an attempt to provide the reader with a knowledgeable historical setting within which to place the religious writings of three known mystics from the beguine movement: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Agnes Blannbekin. Each represents a different stage of the development of lay religiosity during the later Middle Ages, as well as distinct regional (the Low Countries, Germany, and Austria) and linguistic (Middle Dutch, Middle German, and Latin) variants. I chose to focus my studies upon these female mystics in attempt to depict the variety within the beguine movement, not only in the differences cited above, but also to illustrate the complex and highly individualized nature of scholarly understanding of the term beguine, the genre of visionary writing, and the reception of each based upon the specific nomenclature applied to these subheadings.

I will first discuss an overview of the debates concerning the term beguine, its etymology, and application. While this overview is by no means complete, I hope that it will provide sufficient background for the following chapters and the texts that will be discussed.

I. Overview of historical understanding and development of the beguine movement

The history of the beguine movement is rich and complex, thought to be situated initially within the Low Countries and Germany.[1] Its history is difficult to define along a single chronological progression, due in part to the lack of centralized location or founding leader(s). Characterized by its predominantly urban constituency, the origins of the beguines and beguine-like movements were the basis for suspicion by contemporaries, although several advancements in modern understanding have developed over the past two decades.[2] The groups of women

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[1] More recent research has focused on the lesser studied areas of present-day France, Spain and Italy, in attempt to broaden the field and understanding of the beguine movement. Yet there remain few studies that cross all linguistic borders for a complex and integrated assessment of the similarities, differences and connections between the various groups attributed to the beguine lifestyle between the late twelfth through sixteenth centuries.

[2] Walter Simons's monograph *Cities of Ladies* (2001) includes an in-depth study of the possible origins of the beguine movement, the climate and population of the Low Countries during the eleventh

attracted to the beguine lifestyle came from exceedingly diverse backgrounds, drawn to the idea of penitential religiosity and the possibility to devote one's life to the Christian faith in imitation of Christ (otherwise known as *imitatio Christi*). Pope John XXII in his *Ratio recta* of 1317 describes what he calls beguines as the following, stating,

> In many parts of the world numerous women likewise commonly called beguines, living apart sometimes in their own houses or those of their parents or sometimes in others or together in hired communal dwellings, lead honest lives, visit churches frequently at night, reverently obey their diocesans and the rectors of their parish churches, in no way usurp for themselves the inquisitiveness of disputations or the authority or rather temerity of preaching, and do not in any way involve themselves or any other women or men in the aforesaid opinions and errors and concerning these things, there is and never have been any reproach or suspicion against them.[3]

Pope John XXII outlines orthodox behavior in beguines. At the same time, the first line of the above quotation suggests that these practices are not universal. "numerous women likewise commonly called beguines" hints that there are other women called beguines who may not adhere to the recognized and church-supported activities. As we will see, the history of the word *beguine* is fraught with contradictions, at times orthodox, others heretical. What a beguine was by definition, how she lived her life—whether she lived within a community or beguinage, or in an urban area under the auspices of a Dominican or Franciscan monk—and how she saw her faith plays into a larger picture and analysis of what it meant to be a beguine.

Despite over a century of investigation and research, the initial dichotomy (until quite recently) remained true, which was the common instinct to utilize the definitions of ecclesiastical figures in order to assign a description of beguines by means of negative association. In other words, beguines have been approached, not by what they were and how they described their own lifestyle, but rather scholars have constructed a definition based upon a comparison to cloistered sisters and, thus, highlighted what they lacked or were not. Jennifer Deane argues that beguines are often viewed by scholars in contrast to sisters in cloisters and thereby exaggerate beguines connection (or lack thereof) to the religious lifestyle of the age. Beguines followed the same or similar dogma to other religious groups and their development is wholly intertwined with that of the broader Christian community in Europe during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries.[4]

Herbert Grundmann notes that the beguines were as much a part of society as they were a conventional and recognized convent order; that is to say, the beguine movement and its followers, hovered somewhere between the practices of the mendicant orders (who had taken their vows) that lived near city spaces and women who took the cloth and lived as nuns[5]. One

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through thirteenth centuries, as well as a lot of other invaluable background information about the beguines, their communities and the development of their movement. Sara Poor (*Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book* (2004)) and Bernard McGinn's studies on mysticism have also helped to shape and refine the discussion initiated by Herbert Grundmann and others.

[3] Giles Constable, Introduction to *Labels and Libels: Naming Beguines in Northern Medieval Europe*, eds. Letha Böhringer, Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, and Hildo van Engen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014), 4.

[4] Jennifer Deane, "Beguines Reconsidered: Historiographical Problems and New Directions," *Commentaria* 3461 (August 2008), 2.

[5] Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth*

could argue that the beguines were an eclectic mélange of followers who hailed from all walks of life, defined and created lifestyles for themselves as they saw fit or however patronage and dowries allotted them. And yet, despite superficial differences between practices and even varying degrees of composure, they had the common desire to live a religious life within the world and devote themselves to Christ.

Questions raised by these semi-religious women became a turning point within the theological approaches to scripture and the teachings of Jesus, playing upon the themes of sinfulness, unworthiness or lowliness of being uneducated and a woman. Many of these themes were adoped by Meister Eckhart and others, which they would develop into treatises on negative theology in the fourteenth century.[6] Specifically, Eckhart establishes his theology through a concept called *via negative,* or "the path of negation".[7] The ideas and expressions of the beguine mystics would survive the centuries, although often the names associated with those pious sentiments do not. By emulating the apostolic life (*vita apostolica*) in their quest for a more intimate relationship with Christ—as exhibited in the Song of Songs—these semi-religious or pious lay men and women became the new generation of evangelists. Circulated within religious communities and beyond, their texts and sermons aimed to reach the Christian community at large by means of their common tongue and analyzing the imagery and language akin to secular literary forms (*chanson de geste*, courtly lyric, folksongs) and traditional exegetical and Biblical tomes alike.[8]

On several levels, the beguine mystics' ability to recognize an urgency for knowledge of one's soul and a return to the gospels lies precisely in the area which was the source of their disapproval: the fact that the beguines resided in a gray area that was more substantial than fervent lay piety but less austere than a recognized order for women was a source of friction. Beguines eluded definition: there was a high degree of variation and personalization in their religious practices and lifestyles, and what appeared to outsiders as a resistance of conformity was actually a reaffirmation of a continued religious tradition of reading and interpretation of the scriptures. In my opinion, their way of life suggests that the attraction to the beguine movement was multifaceted and individualized and that it afforded a certain degree of leniency to pursue piety in a way that was informed by their own interpretation. While initially residing somewhere between secular and religious customs and practices may appear to allow the freedom for choice and the ability to create and modify the way in which one lived in the faith—not to mention the decision of the words, imagery and symbolism at one's disposal—beguines more often than not sought to revise and redefine the role of the evangelist, not reject it.

Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism, Trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995),140, 145.

"Beguines belonged just as little to the lay world of *sæculares,* since beguines had left the *sæculum,* sworn chastity, and led a *vita religiosa* permitted by Honorius III and recognized as legitimate in letters of protection and priviledges from popes, legates, and bishops" (p. 140).

[6] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 10.

[7] Amy Hollywood's *The Soul as Virgin Wife* and Bernard McGinn's *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* provide an excellent overview of how later mystical writers intersect with the beguine writers of the thirteenth century.

[8] Grundmann, McGinn and Poor have all noted the conjunction between the rise of the vernacular literatures and its significance in the development of vernacular theology. Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (1995, English transl.), Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* vol. 3 (1998), and Sara Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: The Making of Textual Authority* (2004).

It is not surprising that, while a lack of confinement into a set group afforded the potential benefit of individualized religious ways of life, these women were a source of ill-contentment and irritation for ecclesiastics and possibly members of the mendicant order, particularly following centuries of implemented reforms and revised indoctrination within circles of organized and cloistered religious groups. The ecclesiastics' annoyance finds its roots in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at a time when new religious movements were taking hold of Europe. Within these groups, the apostolic life (*vita apostolica*) was often emulated to varying degrees and the line between legitimate fervor and heresy was difficult at times to differentiate.

In the following pages, an emphasis will be placed first upon the development of the women's religious movement, of which the beguines were a part, as well as other historiographical information pertinent to the discussion of who the beguines were, how they fit into contemporaneous society (if at all), and what orchestrated these changes. The premise for this discussion is the understanding that the beguines and their community arrangements and forms compels a deeper understanding of the climate within which the beguine mystics resided and produced their array of texts. As this dissertation outlines, life and (literary) art are inseparable, just as the lines were blurred between secular and religious works and motifs, the real and the idealized, the blessed and the profane. While it has been noted that modern scholars cannot *know* Hadewijch, Mechthild and Agnes from their texts, the literary representation of themselves—a slightly fictionalized projection, if you will—is approachable and alive within their writings.

Second, a discussion of the historiographical information demonstrates a high level of variation within the beguine movement, between each mystic and, consequently, from text to text within the beguine mystical corpus. In order to discuss the importance of variation, the works and lives of key figures from within the movement will be addressed, highlighting the women whose works became the inspiration for subsequent decades through the circulation of excerpts or full or partial copies of their works, in some cases long after their deaths. Their differences cross languages and borders, they dwelt in varying living arrangements, and composed works in a wide range of styles and genres. In my dissertation the general discussion of beguine ways of life, motivations and beliefs then shifts to focus upon three key beguine mystics within the Germanic tradition: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Agnes Blannbekin. Each woman and her surviving texts represent a mere handful of possible expressions of beguine spirituality, yet their differences in literary style and approaches are notable and worthy of comparison. As Sara Poor notes,

> Becoming an author of God's words, Mechthild recorded her visions of intimate conversations with God and others in the afterlife. Hadewijch wrote down her visions, composed instructional poetry and crafted letters about the theology revealed to her and Beatrice of Nazareth wrote a short instructional treatise about the seven stages of loving God.[9]

Poor highlights the significance of variation, depicting the various modes and means with which a mystic may approach the *representation* of their visionary experience, connection to the Godhead and ecstatic moments. From Minnesang-resemblant poetry to rhyming couplets and didactic prose, beguine mystics played with the blurred genres of courtly romance and lyric, sermon and folk songs, and at the same time they alluded to a sensation of reaching inward

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[9] Sara S. Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 4.

towards the source of their inspiration (i.e. the memory of divine encounters), as well as to their fervent and deep love for Christ/God. All the while these mystics strove boldly upon carefully crafted lines towards ecclesiastics, their broader audience and, ultimately, the divine.

At the heart of this transformation from life, innovation, and verbal artistry is the fact that the religious women of the thirteenth century were playing with the formats and foci of the established models within the concept of visionary literature, selecting genres that sought to guide and inspire others to structure their lives upon the apostolic model and emulate the scriptures through works. Their aim and motivation was a more intimate relationship with the divine and a recapitulation of evangelism. In other words, these women were creating variations upon tradition, pushing the envelope of how the educated, the pious and the enlightened were defined, and, even more significantly, whether the traditional education or ecclesiastical position carried greater weight than knowledge acquired directly from God. It is precisely such definitions, including that of the beguines themselves, which will serve as a gateway into a more in-depth discussion about the beguine movement, development and place within society and religious circles.

II.1 Beguine movement and beguine mysticism

Before embarking upon a lengthier investigation of the intricacies concerning the development of the beguine movement, a comparison of interpretations of the word *beguine*, its etymology, documented usages and historical associations with the movement will be discussed, followed by the presumed origins of the beguines, examples of their various formations, and key figures within their movement. A discussion of terminology is in many ways a crucial aspect of understanding the beguine movement and how they fit within and influenced the societies where they lived. As will be demonstrated, how one is referred to, how one categorizes and names oneself is a significant element to beguine spirituality, and is an integral aspect of understanding the mystic's relationship to the Godhead, the composition of her texts, and the various forms of literary edification played upon by beguine mystics throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

beguine: Origins, Meaning and Etymology

As one might suppose, the etymology of *beguine* is complex and there exist numerous explanations for the development of its usage. Herbert Grundmann cites the origins of the word *beguine* from France, originally used to denote the members of the heretical Cathar movement that gained prominence throughout the twelfth century.[10] In fact, Fiona Bowie notes that the word *beguine* continues to "[evoke] for many people the notion of heresy" as its roots may lie in "a derogatory term for a female heretic."[11] Some connection has been made to the nickname *le Bègue*, which is derived from the Old French *li Beges*, meaning "one dressed in grey" "after the colour of their grey penitential dress".[12] Yet this suggestion has met some skepticism because it underscores a strong connection to a heretical sect of the 1170s, known as the Apostles, more so than to the women's religious movement appearing decades there following. *le Bègue* is more commonly translated as 'the stammerer/stutterer', which could suggest anything from an

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[10] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 80.
[11] Fiona Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality: Mystical Writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg, Beatrice of Nazareth, and Hadewijch of Brabant* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 12.
[12] Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality,* 12.

endearing personal feature to an intended derogatory association with one's oratory skills or even the intellectual coherence of one's arguments. Whatever the source of the term, *li Bege* or *le Bègue* is fraught with possible contradiction and not easily interpreted.

Lambert *le Bègue*

One notable figure with this nickname is Lambert *le Bègue*, a dissident cleric who was active during the third quarter of the twelfth century in Liège. Lambert was accused of heresy by local priests and the bishop, and traveled to the curia to plead his innocence as early as 1145.[13] The central facet of his dissent was his desire to lead his congregation along the path of the apostles (*via apostolica*), to live a life piously and consciously through good works, and direct access to Biblical literature (i.e. reading of the scriptures). A key element within Lambert's religious education was the translation of Psalms and the Acts, sometimes into verse form to encourage recitation and memorization among his parishioners and those who were unfamiliar with the Latin.[14] Lambert's support of biblical translations reflects not only the concern for ecclesiastical leaders with the division between the *literati* (i.e. educated and well-read persons) and the *illerati* or *rusticani* (i.e. uneducated), but also the potential threat that those with the power of the word (i.e. the Bible) may lose sway over their congregations if the intermediary (i.e. the priest or other ecclesiastical official) is removed from their position between God/God's word and the laity. Translation of biblical literature becomes a cornerstone for the apostolic lifestyle, and many so-called heretical groups commissioned vernacular translations for the purpose of study, introspection, and discussion.[15]

For several decades, scholars attributed the origins of the beguine movement to Lambert, a fact which Bowie, McDonnell and others supported. However, the assertion that Lambert was the founder and namesake of the beguine movement appears first midway into the following century with no reference to previous sources purporting this claim. Nearly a century following Lambert's death in 1177, Giles of Orval names Lambert the founding father of the beguine movement circa 1250.[16] The Cistercian historian wrote his *History of the Bishops of Liège*, citing Lambert as "a heroic voice for reform in twelfth-century Liège, when simony crippled its church" and that there were then women and girls following his example and called *beguines* in French, which they derived from his nickname (*le Bègue*, 'the Stammerer').[17] At that point in time, the beguine movement was well under way in the diocese of Liège, other areas of Flanders, and stretching into the areas of Cologne and beyond. It is also notable that by as early as 1223 council records for Cologne speak of beguines, and in the following decade charters specify women who are called beguines by the people.[18] After 1245, religious women begin to use *beguine* to describe themselves and others in the movement.[19] While the connection between Lambert and *beguine* sits on unstable ground, what is apparent is that the association between

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[13] Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 24.

[14] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 30

[15] The Cathars of southern France were also cited as commissioning translations of the Bible for use within their groups. Of course, the main difference between Lambert and the "beggini of Albi" is the premise of dualist belief and an overall rejection of ecclesiastical order and control.

[16] Elizabeth Andersen, *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 62.

[17] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 32.

[18] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 81.

[19] Ibid.*,* 82.

Lambert's plight and religious dogma and that of the beguines was of interest by the mid-thirteenth century.

Yet the assertion that Lambert played a critical role within the development and even creation of the beguine movement requires further investigation, and, when taken in conjunction with Grundmann's research and that of other later scholars (such as Walter Simons), the connection between Lambert *le Bègue* ('The Stammerer') and the etymology of the word appears all too suggestive. Simons dispels any association between Lambert le Bègue and the formation of the beguine movement, let alone the origin of its terminology.[20] He states that

> [t]he name *beguina* has nothing to do with Lambert…Lambert did not found the beguine movement, nor did he translate the letter of St. Paul.[21]

Initially a statement such as the one above may appear unnecessarily critical, yet with further investigation the rebuttal of a long-standing legend concerning beguine origins gains substantiation and consideration. Simons later clarifies that, while the earliest recorded examples of beguine communities (or those quite similar) appear in the region of Brabant-Liège, the data also suggests that these communities "sprang up in different parts of the region more or less simultaneously, without central coordination and, most certainly, without a single point of origin or a single founder".[22] Not only did these communities crop up unsystematically, there were variations amid the formation and constituency of these groupings, which repel notions of a broader network of organization or control. In the early decades of the thirteenth century, a combination of Roman and medieval roads physically connected the disparate congregations of female religious (*mulieres religosae*), in addition to individual beguines guided under the auspices of clerics who traveled between the towns, relaying messages and perhaps other pertinent information.[23]

While Lambert and his practices do not necessarily suggest a connection between the formation of the beguine convent at St. Christophe, the correspondence and confrontation he faced does illuminate aspects of religious activity in and around Liège in the decades preceding the beguines' development. Yet at the same time, the appearance of any connection between Lambert and the origins of the beguines appears questionable, if only for the fact that all and any mention of such an association appears seven decades following Lambert's death. In addition, by the time this claim appears, the connotation of the term *beguine* has shifted from one denoting heresy to one synonymous with feminine piety and *mulieres religiosae*. As will be discussed in the next section, it seems that Lambert's heresy and the comparison with contemporaneous heretical sects sets a stronger argument for the etymology of *beguine*.

Beggini, beguina, **heretics, and Cathars**

In the previous section, the term *beguine* was connected to the term *Bègue* or *bege*, meaning 'Stammerer' in Old French. However, there is a second possible translation: "undyed cloth.[24]" Undyed cloth ties to the garments typical to the Cathars, but also undyed cloth appears

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[20] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 81.

[21] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 32.

[22] Ibid*.,* 47.

[23] Ibid*.,* 45.

[24] The etymology of *bègue* originates in the Old French, *bege*, which is related to the modern English word, 'beige'. While one could make the connection to the color, as was found in Mens' study

in its natural color, untampered by dyes. 'Pure' and 'natural' are central aspects to Cathar beliefs and their chosen name for followers (*Cathar* is derived from the Greek word meaning 'pure').[25] While it would be erroneous to make the association between a standard dress or the color of habits worn by the beguines—the regional variations and widespread nature of the so-called beguine movements resist such a notion—the significance of the name ties perhaps more concretely to a southern French usage of the word than to the beguines specifically. The fourteenth century inquisitor, Bernardo Gui, concentrated the fourth chapter of his manual for inquisitors about the beguines, commenting that male and female beguines wore "a garb of coarse brown" and likened themselves to the followers of St. Francis.[26] Yet Gui conflates a description of the Flemish beguines—a "positive experience in religious life"—with the *beguins* of the south and heresy.[27] Confusion lies in two similar words with a varied connotation. Although not homophones, Bernardo Gui is not the first to voice concern about the beguines nor to point out the ambiguity of the word's usage.

There is a further connection to cloth, or rather the production thereof, and the Cathars. The Cathars and other similarly motivated heretical groups preached voluntary poverty and the apostolic lifestyle. Due to the uncertainty concerning the reception of their message and the length of time before one might be persecuted for said religious beliefs, Cathars often chose weaving as their profession, a trade that allowed the flexibility of movement or travel within an expansive region, and yet were necessary skills within the increasingly populated urban areas of France, the Low Countries and German-speaking lands.[28] Grundmann comments that the terms and/or pejorative names for these heretics often became synonymous with the profession they were so keen to undertake.[29] The prevalence of the weaving profession among heretics should not lead one to assume that a vast majority of weavers and artisans were drawn into heretical groups, but rather that heretics became weavers, thus establishing the connection to the profession.[30] It is then not surprising that in some parts they were known as *texterants*, others *beguines*, as well as a long list of other regional varieties for persons of analogous dogmas. The beguines of the women's religious movement also took on a number of professions to support their communities and lifestyle, the most common of which being weaving. Walter Simons comments that many women who moved into the cities in the Low Countries took on low-wage, low-status jobs, often within the textile industry, sometimes to such an extent that the legal codes of this area referred to those jobs in the female form only.[31] In my opinion, the evidence from the legal codes suggests that the confusion between heretical beguines and those who followed orthodox practices existed on several levels, and that the appearance of the word *beguine* and its variants must be interpreted within the context that a given text provides.

(1958), it seems more appropriate to suggest that it refers to the undyed color of cloth (also a beige in color), which has many connotations within Christian sects and even the apostles.

See Elizabeth A. Andersen, *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg*, pp. 63–64 for further discussion and references.

[25] Bowie, 10; Elizabeth A. Andersen, *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg*, ff. 64.

[26] Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism 1200–1350* (*The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism* vol 3) (New York: Crossroad, 1998)*,* 183.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 14.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 15.

[31] Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 10.

Placing the beguines against the backdrop of contemporaneous history, the origin of the word, its pejorative connotation and its association with the pious communities developing in urban areas of the Low Countries falls into stride with the themes and actions of the time. Following a stream of heretical conversions and uprisings, the introduction of a new religious movement that is largely without centralization and vows adheres to similar personal vows of apostolic life and voluntary poverty, and dictates that the same or similar roles within urban society (i.e. undertaking the weaving profession) are worthy of some skepticism. Despite support from several members of recognized religious orders, the initial groups and individual women later called *beguines* were cast in the same light as the heretics who rallied before them. In fact, the Cathars appear to have gained a greater mainstay of the populous in southern France by the time the church council met near Albi in 1176, and by 1198, just as Innocent III is named pope, he vows to defend Christianity against the Albigensians/Cathars/*texterants*.

Ernest W. McDonnell's work on the beguines further elaborated the possible connections between the Albigensian and Cathar groups of France (and possibly elsewhere) with the younger beguine movement and the term's etymology. According to *The Beguines and Beghards of Medieval Culture,* there is a distinct connection between the understanding of heresy in southern France and the Latin word *beggini*. McDonnell cites the *Chronica Regia Coloniensis,* dating from between 1209 and 1215, as the central support for his argument and highlights the phrase "*heresis quedam cuius cultores Beggini denominabantur*" ("certain female heretics of such supporters/worshipers are given the name *beggini*") as the definitive written evidence that *beggini* referred not just simply to some generalized idea of heretics during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, but specifically the heretics of Albi.[32] Yet at the same time, even if within written evidence there is a connection between the *beggini* in Albi with the term *beguine*, it does not explain the shift from a term describing heretics of the Albigensian Crusade to the highly diversified groupings of women in the southern Low Countries within years of the entry.

One point that stands without question is that the appearance of a French-origin word within southern Dutch and Flemish dialects is less surprising than one might think. Walter Simons notes that each of the southern Netherlandic principalities was bilingual due to a mix of both French and Dutch speakers.[33] Despite whatever communication issues that this mélange might perpetuate, the advantage is the exchange of French and Germanic cultural influence for both sets of speakers.[34] Due in part to interaction between French and Flemish speakers, the mélange of languages created an optimum atmosphere within which a French word of pejorative origins, laden with heretical overtones, could become redefined and shaped into a term reflecting thirteenth-century lay religiosity. It seems plausible that the term *beguine/beguina/Beggini* was a derogatory term attributed to these religious women, which was used to suggest heretical acts, those potentially suspected of heresy, or simply activities that were seen as unorthodox or untraditional. The term initially had the stain (or at the very least a suspicion) of heresy, and, considering the overwhelming tensions in southern French-speaking areas during the early thirteenth century, it does seem plausible that heresy was viewed as a real and pressing threat, one that could sink an area into siege and destruction, as it had in Albi.

In an unfortunate stroke of coincidence, the northern beguine communities developed amid the apex of inquisition against heretics in southern lands. Although mere speculation, the similarities between the beguines and Cathars (e.g. urban lifestyle, *vita apostolica,* and the

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[32] Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and the Beghard of Medieval Culture, With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 436.

[33] Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 3.

[34] Ibid.

weaving profession) may have been the cause of the direct comparison between the two groups and thus the attribution of the same term for both. Like the Cathars and similar sects, the beguines sprouted up amid several key urban centers throughout present-day Flanders, spreading into France and German-speaking lands during the first decades of the thirteenth century.[35] Although several scholars narrow down the first beguine communities to the areas surrounding Liège, the fascination with *imitatio Christi* and the *vita apostolica* encouraged the development of beguine or beguine-like individuals and communities among the burgher classes and others of sufficient wealth and means in various areas throughout Europe. Often the Low Countries are highlighted because there are early documented examples, and the tradition of beguines and *begijnenhoven* (literally 'beguine courts')[36] continued well beyond the prohibition of the movement in the Council of Vienne (1311–12) into the nineteenth century.

Yet the apostolic life and voluntary poverty were also central elements of the Cathar scriptural interpretation and way of life, providing another similarity between the heretics and the newly forming groups of *mulieres religiosae*. However, as Barbara Newman aptly notes,

> Knights and merchants, stewards and minstrels, scholastic theologians and beguines might substantially agree about vast areas of belief and practice; and where they differed, no individual's allegiance can be determined a priori without particular, relevant evidence.[37]

Whereas the above citation highlights the differences between groups, in the case of the usage of *beguine* over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is the similarities in dogma and lifestyle that caused ground for comparison, and, when one considers the general uneasiness associated with religious women outside of cloistered groups and without vows, the apprehension and distrust of the beguines' motivations is predictable.

While the etymology of the word remains uncertain, the connection with heresy slowly eroded over the first half of the thirteenth century and the "stain of heresy" was not retained as strongly.[38] According to Grundmann, heretics in southern France were still deemed *beguines* in 1215, the year of the influential Fourth Lateran Council under Pope Innocent III, but less than a decade thereafter the term and the women associated with it are divorced largely from Albigensians or other Cathar groups. The specifics of this shift are uncertain, however. Dyan Elliott posits that it was the anti-heretical polemics of James de Vitry and Thomas de Cantimpré which rallied positive support behind the beguines and placed them in direct contrast to the

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[35] There is growing debate concerning the initial areas of the beguine movements, and more localized studies have highlighted that there is in fact some weight to the argument that, not only did the beguine movement not have a centralized nucleus, but that there were various groups that appeared throughout Germanic lands, in particular Brabant, Flanders, and German-speaking lands--and it was contact with groups inspired and impacted by the eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic reforms that would in turn lead to these groups. The terminology would spread later, but the groups themselves were conceived before the term *beguine* arrived in their area, particularly with the connotation that has become normalized over time for that type of lay religious women. See the edited volume *Labels and Libels: Naming Beguines in Northern Medieval Europe,* eds. Letha Böhringer, Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, and Hildo van Engen (2014).

[36] Walter Simons focused on this word usages for his monograph *Cities of Ladies*, a play upon the idea of the *begijnenhoven* or beguinages as mini walled cities in which these communities lived.

[37] Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 16.

[38] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 81.

Cathars and *beguins/beguines* of southern France.[39] James de Vitry is credited with securing papal approval of his female religious followers in Liège, albeit only in oral form, immediately following the death of Innocent III and in the days before Honorius III was named pope.[40]

As Bernard McGinn has argued, the beguines become a breaking point within thirteenth century religiosity by instituting a new form of theology, a revival of evangelism, and a call for further ecclesiastical reform all within the realm of traditional and orthodox Christianity.[41] Therefore, one could argue that a shift in the perception of the term *beguine* instituted an altered definition of heresy and how one might be able to classify or categorize a person as a heretic. Perhaps more significant than the particular origins of *beguine* is the process with which the word shifts in meaning, and the question of whether it was a term chosen by lay religions women themselves, despite potential heretical connotations, or a term applied to the loosely connected groupings of women throughout the diocese of Liège, connected by various roads, a fervor for apostolic life, and a calling to reform lay religious lifestyles.

Due to concerns of suspected heresy, the beguines were initially referred to in more orthodox-sounding Latinate terms and not the vernacular. Simons lists several more variations, stating that the ecclesiastical figures sympathetic to the movement referred to them as *mulieres religiosae* or *religiosae feminae* ['religious women'], *sanctae virgines* or *mulieres sanctae* ['holy maidens or women'], *virgines continentes* ['chaste virgins'] and other similarly derived forms.[42] These Latinate terms were ambiguous and could possibly encompass any number of groups during the women's religious movement.[43] However the greatest appeals to these forms were a) the emphasis on their religiosity or sanctity; and b) the fact that these forms did not highlight their difference but rather aligned them with conventional and accepted forms of female piety.

beguine or the Latinate *beguina* most certainly also signified a term of derision, as this term was used primarily by critics of the religious women's movement in the early thirteenth century.[44] Yet as the thirteenth century progressed, the term *beguine/beguina* was used increasingly for women who exhibited the common traits of beguine spirituality, such as an emphasis on love and Love Mysticism, Eucharistic devotion and voluntary poverty. However, how one was designated a beguine is a more complex idea. Even in Mechthild's *bůch,* there are scant mentions of Mechthild as a beguine. Modern scholars have perhaps overemphasized the significance of the label *beguine* for some writers, such as Mechthild. Looking at the various characteristics that one might consider typical for beguine spirituality, if there is such an idea of typical in their case, one finds an overwhelming similarity to other religious movements developing out of the twelfth-century reforms and those shortly preceding them (such as the Cathars and akin groups mentioned above).

In truth, the women's religious movement was a series of movements expressed in a wide range of ways and forms. Through these variations, women attempted to etch out a revised concept of piety for themselves during a time already rife with religious fervor and exploration. That is not to deny the similarities that commonly appear in beguine or beguine-labeled texts: the imitation of Christ, embracing one's and Christ's humanity, and a fervent desire to emulate an apostolic life were all significant. However the beguines were not singular in their interpretation of spirituality. As Simons elucidates, even from its onset the movement "presented itself in a

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[39] Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 48.
[40] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 75.
[41] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 141.
[42] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 36.
[43] Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 11.
[44] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 36.

variety of forms" and everything from the ways in which the women lived to their choices of professions and forms of devotion differed from region to region.[45]

On the one hand, there is a draw to connect the core features of beguine spirituality within these texts, highlight their significance, and then close that chapter upon the discussion of a beguine mystical corpus. Yet that potentially hasty approach not only simplifies the nuanced writings of these women but also the lives, communities, and societies the texts support, affirm, and criticize. Such an approach also exposes the fact that beguine spirituality shares common elements with several other religious movements which developed over the course of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. On the other hand, some scholars might be inclined to negate any connections across beguine-composed texts. And rather than read these highly individualized texts as a continued tradition, some scholars might be inclined to support isolated readings of these works (that is, each text would stand on its own and should not be forced into any set group or corpus).

Instead, I propose a revised approach that neither oversimplifies textual elements to heighten commonality across beguine-composed writings, nor resists comparative readings of the texts. I argue that variation or individualized interpretation is vital to the development of the women's movement and the prominent texts from within the movement. The development of the beguine movement is, I believe, central to understanding the importance of variation and the contrast and comparisons with which she chose to define herself. Bernard McGinn makes this case against undue generalization and essentialization, remarking that,

> [t]he fact that some, or even many women may tend to use language in a certain way, or to adopt distinctive kinds of symbols, or to construct their gender identity and its relation to God according to particular patterns, does not necessarily mean that all women or no men will do so. From this perspective, it is difficult to imagine that there could be *one single* form of mysticism characteristic of all women, and only of women, either in the late Middle Ages, or in any other period in the history of the tradition.[46]

McGinn outlines a key generalization that occurs within scholarship about beguine texts, one that I aim to contradict throughout this dissertation. The label of 'female writer' and *beguine* should not automatically determine how a text might be interpreted, nor should gender be used to categorize or group texts, despite the presence of variation. The beguine mystical texts I am focusing on in this dissertation provide a glimpse into textual worlds that are congruent but also representative of a religious phenomenon that swept across much of Western Europe. The conscious choice of language, literary reference, emulation of styles/genres, and emphases defies strict categorization and embraces the variation and diversity present within contemporaneous society. In essence, I advocate to relinquish, as much as possible, the divisions that have been promoted in scholarship over the decades in recognition that these texts represent both the universal and the feminine, the traditional and innovative, the secular-urban and religious societies. This is very similar to the manner that the beguine writers pushed for a revision and reassessment of lay spirituality and religious expression through their works. In order to discuss and analyze this hypothesis more thoroughly (and concretely), a look at the development of the beguine movement in the Low Countries and Germany is needed before proceeding to the theories and texts themselves.

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[45] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 35.
[46] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 15.

II.2 Beguine movement development and lifestyle

In many ways, a discussion of the origins and definition of the word *beguine* lapses quite steadily into one about the development of the beguine movement and some key facets of this particular lay religious lifestyle. It is tempting to traipse back to the late eleventh and twelfth centuries to begin a discussion about the origins and development of the beguine movement; however the influences will only be briefly addressed in this section.[47] Central facets of thirteenth-century religiosity find their basis in the reforms of the previous two centuries and the shift in focus that occurs within Christianity. The Gregorian Reform of the twelfth century called into question the role of ecclesiastical leaders, the worthiness of a priest to minister to the laity, and the values which should be emphasized and instilled to parishioners.[48] Yet the process of delving into the significance of spirituality within the religious hierarchy proved to inspire similar introspective interrogations in the relationship between the ecclesiastics and the laity, the laity and their role within Christian salvation according to the scriptures, and the lay religious and God. Lay piety strengthens as literacy improves among the upper classes and the increasing burgher class.

Within the same time frame, Bernard of Clairvaux promotes a new approach to spirituality in his sermons on the *Song of Songs,* which sought sensual metaphors and descriptions in order to illustrate the complex (and at times ineffable) connection between the church or soul and the divine.[49] The preoccupation with the *vita apostolica* and the emulation of the evangelical lifestyle[50] becomes a widespread fascination amongst the laity and centered upon the three core concepts of poverty, penance and preaching.[51] Seeking penance for one's sins or the sins of the world is certainly a key tenement of medieval Christianity, but the espousal of voluntary poverty and preaching were more controversial. It is precisely these two more questionable activities, which would cause some groups to fall under the suspicion of heresy, particularly by the end of the twelfth century.

However not all factors leading to development of a lay religious women's group found their basis in the Christian faith. Within political history, the twelfth century marks a shift towards less fragmented societal governing, which was more efficient in its organization and administration.[52] Economically, urban centers grew under the expansion of trade and commerce, as well as the gradual transition from a gift economy to a profit economy based upon money and banking.[53] Grundmann postulates the significance of urban expansion, trade and industry within the decades prior to the thirteenth century and the fact that the beguine movement "developed most powerfully and independently in areas where trade and industry made the most progress…"[54]

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[47] There are numerous exhaustive studies about the religious developments leading into the thirteenth century. Two key studies have been the following: Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (German 1935, English 1995); Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism—1200–1350* (1998).

[48] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 7.

[49] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife,* 15.

[50] Bernard McGinn notes that Luke 10:1–12 is often cited as the basis for the argument for an evangelical model of ideal Christian life (McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 6).

[51] Ibid*.,* 6.

[52] Ibid*.,* 2.

[53] Ibid*.,* 3.

[54] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 87.

Within these urban centers came the development of education and town schools, a factor which Walter Simons suggests played heavily within the religious movements of Flanders in the mid-twelfth through thirteenth centuries.[55] It would seem that the increase of lay literacy, even if only in the upper strata of socio-economic levels, also enlivened the call for the creation and translation of religious texts into the vernacular.[56] The mere existence of beguine mystical writings in the vernacular arguably supports this presumption—if one believes that these texts were created for literary consumption and a potential audience—as well as to the evidence of more widespread lay education.

Although the birthplace of the beguine movement cannot be pinpointed, Flanders, and in particular the diocese of Liège are often cited as an area with the earliest documented examples of what will be considered beguines and beguine communities. In his monograph *Cities of Ladies,* Walter Simons situates a key area in the development of the beguine movement in Liège and its connection to James of Vitry. According to Simons (and other scholars), it is rumored that James of Vitry ventured to Honorius III in order to gain papal approval for the women's religious groups to whom he ministered.[57] Furthermore the oral approval allotted the women religious a certain degree of freedom regarding the development of communities, specifically the permission to organize without taking vows and without adhering to a previously established order.[58] Yet it should be noted that, while James of Vitry rallied on behalf of the women within his diocese, his letters suggest that he witnessed similar religious groupings during his travels to the curia.[59] Upon gaining verbal sanction, James of Vitry returned to Liège, and under the guidance of James and other traveling priests (often of the mendicant orders) lay women received instruction and began to follow a pious lifestyle without living in the cloister or taking vows.

Simons describes four periods of development for the beguine movement within the first half of the thirteenth century. The first period is classified by its informal communities and gatherings of religious women, beginning sometime around 1190 until 1230, anticipating James of Vitry's journey to the Papal See by over twenty years.[60] Little is known about this initial stage, save information gleaned from the so-called *beguine vitae* penned by male ecclesiastics. One of the earliest examples is the vita of Mary of Oignies (d. 1213), a close personal friend of James of Vitry.[61] While a student at Paris, James heard of Mary and journeyed to visit with her, and later joined the priory at Oignies to reside in her vicinity.[62] There are references from his *Vitae Mariae Oigniacensis* that James was aware of many religious women (*mulieres religiosae*) and the variously formed beguine communities present in the dioceses of Liège and Cologne during the first decade of the thirteenth century. Following James of Vitry's time in Rome, he remained largely absent from the area, serving as the bishop of Acre and later a cardinal-bishop in Rome. From around 1216 until his death in 1240, he remained current on the events concerning the women religious through correspondence only.[63]

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[55] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 43, 82–3

[56] "Starting in the twelfth century, merchants and other powerful groups in the main urban centers successfully challenged the Church, which since the early Middle Ages had controlled all educational institutions, and establishes secular schools that offered elementary instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic" (Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 6).

[57] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 48.

[58] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 75.

[59] Ibid*.,* 76.

[60] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 36.

[61] Ibid*.,* 37.

[62] Ibid*.,* 38.

[63] Ibid.

As the thirteenth century progressed, so too did the popularity of the *mulieres religiosae*, more frequently called simply *beguines*, throughout the Low Countries, Germany and France. A contemporary of James of Vitry, Thomas of Cantimpré emulated the work of James and is notable for his "continuous and diversified contact with the early beguines", in addition to the numerous hagiographical works he composed (the *Supplement to the Life of Mary of Oignies* (written 1229–32), the *Life of Christina Mirabilis* (started 1232, revised until 1239–1240), the *Life of Margaret of Ypres* (1243), and the *Life of Lutgard of Tongeren* (started prior to 1248 but finished sometime around 1262).[64] His corpus includes three of the eleven surviving beguine "vitae" that have become essential to scholarly understanding of the early beguine movement. Later in 1233, Pope Gregory IX professed a position of neutrality concerning beguine convents or communal houses in the papal bull "*Gloriam virginalem*". Fiona Bowie states that Gregory IX's position of neutrality caused a rapid multiplication of beguinages in all urban centers of the Low Countries, Germany and France during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries due to the lack of outward dismissal.[65]

While James of Vitry is a prominent figure and supporter of the early, largely informal communities of the beguine movement, it would be misleading to propose that the movement was the "creation of a single individual, male or female."[66] The developments of the twelfth century—a shift towards larger urban centers, an increase in trade and monetarily based economy, questions regarding the role of lay spirituality and lifestyle, and increased literacy of the laity—all seem to contribute to an altering mentality, one that relinquished an overwhelming fear of change and was drawn towards new experiences and exploration on both an introspective and worldly level.[67] It is perhaps this lack of a single determinant in the development of the beguine movement which explains why a singular locale of origin cannot be placed and the premise of variation (and also individuality) becomes the common delineating factor. Furthermore, the above-discussed changes over the course of the twelfth century were not isolated to Flanders or Italy, but impacted most regions of Western Europe.

Without a nucleus from which the beguine movement developed, information about individual women drawn to the lifestyle and the early communities shines all the more relevant as a glimpse into this period. The women attracted to the beguine movement over the thirteenth century vary in socio-economic background, formation (beguinage, recluse-like solidarity or more urban communities), and personal motivation. Despite previous historical assertions, recent studies have suggested that it is more likely that *mulieres religiosae* were not solely of poor and humble backgrounds, as some scholars have supposed, but rather there is evidence that these women were in fact of comfortable to wealthy means, and renounced familial inheritance and auspicious marriage contracts in pursuit of modest means obtained by their own work.[68]

Within the diocese of Liège, one could argue that urban development created the unique backdrop which coincides with Grundmann's suggestions mentioned above, as there was a higher percentage of the population in urban areas, which in turn suggests the potential for a higher quality of living and education than their countryside counterparts or other parts of Europe. The presence of urbanization is significant on a variety of levels. While some scholars[69] have argued that the popularity of the beguine lifestyle was due to the surplus of unmarried daughters and widows resulting from local feuds, wars, crusades, and celibate clergy due to

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[64] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 38–39.
[65] Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality,* 18.
[66] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 36.
[67] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 4.
[68] Grundmann, *Religious Movements,* 83.
[69] Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality,* 13–14.

Gregorian reforms, others propose that there were several pressing factors, which were unrelated to the deaths of men or overabundance of single women.[70] In fact, evidence now suggests that women migrated from the countryside to obtain work in the rapidly expanding textile industry or as house servants in the increasing burgher households, both types of positions being unsuitable for men.[71]

It should not be presumed, however, that the women drawn to the beguine movement, whether in its infant stages or later in the thirteenth century, fit any one profile as per their education, background or socio-economic level. Although the presence of a thriving urban area does weigh into how early beguine or beguine-like communities appear, at the same time there is immense variety concerning the characteristics of an urban population. As Simons has noted, Flanders was a culturally diverse area filled with a mélange of French and Dutch speakers and their respective cultures.[72] And while this point may have factored into the literary production within the area and allowed for a broader exchange of both religious and secular works, perhaps the most significant element it promoted was that of variation on linguistic, literary and social levels. With an increase in beguine communities over the course of the century, the concept of variation widens to encompass numerous dialects and approaches as represented in the existing beguine texts, at times their only uniting factor being the loosely connected beguine spirituality and label.

As the thirteenth century progressed, Germany, as well as the Low Countries and France, saw the beguine movement increase in popularity, which may be due in part to the papal bull of 1233. While both the Dominicans and Franciscans were present in thirteenth-century Germany, the Dominicans had a foothold in northern Germany shortly after their arrival, whereas the Franciscans remained primarily in the southern areas.[73] Grundmann noted, for example, that Mechthild had strong connections to the Dominicans in Magdeburg and Halle. Even her confessor was a friar of the Dominican order.[74] Although the Cistercian monasteries had often established relationships with beguine communities as confessors at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the order distanced itself from the *mulierae religiosae,* as the female communities were seen as more heretical. The women religious may also have detached themselves from the Cistercian monks due to beguine emphasis on voluntary poverty and participation within the world.[75] The emphasis on the *vita apostolica* and *imitatio Christi* within beguine communities created a desire for mendicant confessors and spiritual advisors who shared their beliefs and desire to follow a religious path within an urban setting. These two important factors would also connect to the growing mysticism within the beguine communities, as well as to the Dominicans.[76] Grundmann concluded, however, that voluntary poverty and mysticism were present in the female communities preceding the emergence of the Dominicans in Germany and their subsequent influence on those communities.[77]

Daily Life

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[70] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 9.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid*.,* 3.
[73] Grundmann, *Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen,* 409.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 414.
[76] Ibid., 409.
[77] Ibid., 416.

The religious life of the beguines often included daily attendance at mass and the Divine Office, prayers, meditational readings and lectures, communal penances and confession fortnightly or monthly.[78] The piety of beguines and within beguine communities commonly included an emphasis on the humanity and passion of Christ, espousal of poverty, chastity and devotion to the Eucharist.[79] Austere fasting combined with manual labor and Eucharist devotion were also frequents aspects of their beliefs. The Eucharist signified the culmination of a mystical marriage between the soul and its heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, a theme that is prevalent to Bernard of Clairvaux's writings. Through close ties with the mendicant orders, especially Dominicans, friars often served as spiritual mentors and confessors for the beguines.[80] The Dominican order had an emphasis on education and scholarship, and the works of William of St. Thierry and St. Bernard of Clairvaux would have been common knowledge to many friars. The beguine lifestyle in turn connected to texts written on behalf of these communities, often under the premise of spiritual edification or general instruction through the established tradition of contemplative reading practices.

Despite the fact that similar movements erupted during the early part of the thirteenth century, the German mystics retained the vocal condemnation of clerical impurity and corruption, which disappeared in the other regional movements.[81] In several chapters of the *Flowing Light,* Mechthild chastises the local clergy for their corruption, stating that their impurity prevented them from performing the sacraments purely. Perhaps it is the retention of this political aspect of religion that inspired Mechthild to develop a discourse on issues in church politics and create a work that is part visionary, part social critique. Around 1270, a church council met in southern Germany to address female discussion of clergy and their interpretation of church doctrine.[82] The outcome was the suppression of female discourse and more enforced regulation of female communities throughout the rest of the thirteenth and into the early fourteenth century. Finally, with the Council of Vienne in 1311–12, the tumultuous relationship between the papacy, the beguine movement, and the *mulieres religiosae* comes into marked strife with the acknowledged (and written) disapproval of some *beguinae* and the continued praise for other *beguinae*. Without a distinct separation in terminology between the two forms of *beguinae,* the general attitude toward all beguines shifts and the popularity of the movement declines.

III. Beguine Mystics and Their Texts

Following the discussion of the historical development of the beguine movement, it seems appropriate to shift to the writings of the Germanic beguine "sisters"[83] and the ways in which these texts (and the authorial voices on their pages) have continued to fascinate modern

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[78] Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality,* 23.

[79] Ibid.*,* 27.

[80] Beguines often sought out priests sympathetic to their aims as spiritual directors and chaplains. Dominicans frequently acted in this capacity, sometimes appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities specifically as chaplains to a beguinage (Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality,* 23).

[81] Herbert Grundmann, „Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik" in *Deutschte Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 12 (1934), 417.

[82] Ibid., 421–2.

[83] I put "sisters" in quotations because I acknowledge that the beguine communities were very loosely connected, and it is at times difficult to determine how much contact, if any, a community or solitary beguine had with others. What is perhaps more likely is that, as we will see in the body chapters of this dissertation, Dominican and Cisertercian confessors facilitated the circulation of beguine-composed writings and through the influence of the confessor, beguines came into contact with works.

scholars over the past several decades. Seen as gems of lay religiosity from the golden age of medieval German and Dutch literature, these didactic-mystagogical writings can be seen as both a reflection upon and product of the Christian society within which the beguine mystics resided, as well as the contemplation upon and critique of their intimate relationship with God. The texts associated with the beguine mystics are unique and notable examples of Christian ideals made personal and the translation of visionary experience from a personal or intimate one to a text aimed at the purpose of reader consumption and understanding. Their works play upon the personal experience with the divine, yet the characteristic facets of the beguine way of life (if one could attribute a universal one to all) seeps into the literary and textual experience, depicting urban activity and placing emphasis upon learning, piety and poverty outside the constraints of monastic vows and walls. The so-called beguine mystical corpus spans several decades in the High and Late Middle Ages and coincides with a period of heightened literary activity, particularly in vernacular literature.

The works by these women are difficult to classify, a mixture of genres that drew upon the courtly literature of the time, as well as Biblical imagery and language and noteworthy theologians, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, the Victorines, and William of St. Thierry. Poetic language and form lent itself to the task of representing sensual experiences and the ineffable in words, and the continually developing dialects allowed for the possibility of word creation in order to best portray something that was normally felt, smelt, seen, heard or tasted. The authors and translators of these texts attempted to cross the threshold of the written word to the reader via associations with more common things (e.g. likening the beauty of something to a flower) in order to conjure a specific image and/or sensation while reading the text. In a sense, readers are able to conceptualize these descriptions of the ineffable due to their memory/knowledge of common objects around them.

Yet the process of dictating or composing these texts[84] must occur after the mystical experience, allowing the writer to reflect upon the *memory* of the sensual experience and construct/compose it with a potential reader in mind.[85] For example, there appears a conscious effort by Mechthild to incorporate contemporary literary styles (e.g. courtly lyric, *Botenlied*, etc.) throughout the work to *reflect* upon her experience and not simply report her visions.[86] It is this use of literary styles and an apparent knowledge of major works in literature that sets the writings of the beguine mystics apart from other religious writings of the period.[87]

Bernard McGinn comments that the beguine mystics, although recognized for their ingenuity, are "deeply indebted to the tradition of monastic mysticism initiated by the church fathers", but they received this legacy from the monks of the medieval West.[88] Although the beguine lifestyle, and that of others in women's religious movement, had its roots in the

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[84] As Mary Suydam notes in her article "The Touch of Satisfaction", employing the term "vision" is in many senses a misnomer because mystics such as Hadewijch, Mechthild and others included "the sensory realm of touch, hearing and taste, as well as mental states that could be described 'abodily' (the experiences of being 'out of senses' as Hadewijch puts it)." Mary A. Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 12:2, 11.

[85] Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction," 11.

[86] Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, transl. by Frank Tobin (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997), 10. Hereafter this will be referred to simply as *Flowing Light* in the footnotes.

[87] There are references to some of the most influential works during that time, including Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on the "Song of Songs". Frank Tobin argues that Mechthild had access to all the texts that an author would have at that time (*Flowing Light*, 10–11).

[88] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 1.

examples of *vita apostolica* dating back into the fourth and fifth centuries—that is the apostolic life as documented in Acts—the beguine mystical writings combined aspects from the much more recent twelfth-century authors: the erotic love language from among the Cistercians and hints of the scholastic method of *contemplatio* from the Victorines.[89] McGinn notes that,

> "[t]he late eleventh and the twelfth century saw the emergence of scholasticism, the new scientifically organized and academically professional mode of seeking the understanding of faith (*intellectus fidei*)…Soon even the monks established houses in Paris so they could train their men in the regnant mode of theology".[90]

The idea that the beguine mystical writings exhibit characteristics of scholastic writings may seem contradictory to the common portrayal of the texts, which often frames mystical writings and their female writers in terms of the affective response and expressed emotion rather than their textual references to theological and philosophical writings. In other words, the assumption that women who chose to write in the vernacular did so as a direct reflection of their lack of knowledge of Latin and overall schooling.[91]

Yet the revision of how one approaches these texts must also inevitably redefine the idea of knowledge, wisdom, and literacy. Just as the definition of reading varies significantly in the medieval period, so too might our understanding of female education during this time. A lack of written evidence from religious women writers is in many ways a non sequitur, and it is entirely plausible that there are many works lost over the centuries. What written evidence does survive in its various forms, in particular the beguine mystical writings of the thirteenth centuries, suggests that at the very least a select few were knowledgeable of key treatises, sermons and commentaries of the previous centuries.[92] In many ways it was the expanding literacy among the laity in conjunction with an upsurge of vernacular writings that provided the "necessary foundations for the emerging vernacular theology".[93] Here life, piety and literary arts intermingled to create lasting testimonies that espoused elements of contemporaneous reality, fervent beliefs and idealized worldly representations for the sake of edification and atonement, renewed suffering and ecstasy.

As is common with many texts of the period, the beguine mystical writings sought the attention of audiences they knew, audiences familiar with their language and desirous of the religious teaching acquired by means of experiences. Just as the Bible attained its poignancy through the hallowed lives of those bestowed divine intervention, one could argue that the beguine mystics (and those inspired by their lives and writings) aspired to emulate not only the lives of the apostles but also the admiration and inspiration that their lives caused over the centuries. For this reason, the origins of the beguine movement can be seen as a parallel of the movement itself, with its emphasis on secular awareness, high level of literacy and (spiritual) education. For example, Hadewijch, a beguine mystic active during the first half of the thirteenth

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[89] Ibid.*,* 2. The process of *contemplatio* is discussed at length in Chapter Two.

[90] Ibid.*,* 3

[91] Sara Poor has rejected this hypothesis and cited several examples where Mechthild of Magdeburg expresses a knowledge of courtly literature, tropes, and language. Hadewijch of Brabant also exhibits a broad knowledge of Latin and vernacular literature, but it seems she chose to write in the vernacular due to her audience and her motivations rather than simply because she lacked the knowledge to write in Latin.

[92] Ibid. 4.

[93] Ibid.

century in the diocese of Liège, composed a collection of works in her Brabantian dialect, which included strophic poetry, rhyming couplets, visions and letters.

The life of beguines is in many ways the basis for my argument about the ways in which we should approach their texts. The beguine movement and what we have learned about their beliefs include many variations: they are at once an emulation of the mendicant orders, living partially in the city and interacting with society by working as teachers, laundresses, etc., while living a life of piety and working to support themselves. Their texts are in many ways mirrors of that lifestyle, which is certainly understandable, seeing as the majority of the information we have about the beguines and their way of life comes from texts. However, it is not suggested that the beguine mystical texts are based solely upon experience, but rather a combination of their earthly, spiritual and textually-created experiences (i.e. the embodied text).

The Germanic beguine "sisters"—a short overview

Following a discussion about the development of the beguine movement and the extremely broad-based contextualization and definition of the term *beguine*, it may seem contradictory to even refer to a universal or common aspect of beguine mystical theology.[94] However there are certain commonalities present in the texts—facets of thought and interpretation concerning in particular (but not limited to) one's relationship with the divinity— the quasi-dual nature of the soul and the body, the soul on earth and the soul in heaven with God. A central emotion within beguine mystical texts is one of longing, a longing that promotes an eternal drive towards unity with the divine, a longing that is only briefly fulfilled within ecstatic vision and the recapitulation of visionary experience in the text.[95] The difference lies not only in their concerns, but also in the ways in which these writers approach their subject and shape verbally the expression of their unique perspectives on spirituality. Placing the individual mystics within the context of their contemporaries and social environments has the benefit of highlighting the numerous factors which influenced the manner, means, and approach of their texts. Their texts, when compared and contrasted as a loosely connected tradition, portraits the importance of diversity within each mystic's textual corpus, as well as the multifaceted expression of what constitutes a beguine and what the broad definition signifies within society.

Hadewijch of Brabant

Heralded as the first great poet of the Flemish language, Hadewijch was possibly the leader of a beguine group and is believed to have written between the years 1220 and 1240.[96] Little is known about her lineage and life other than that included in her collection of letters, visions and poems (of which there is a collection of rhyming couplets—*Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven*—and another of stanzaic verse—*Strofische Gedichte* or *Liederen*), although copious literary references suggest that she was familiar with Latin, Old French and Provencal

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[94] McGinn comments that the beguine mystics' "teaching regarding [the role of visions, the relation of soul and body in consciousness of God, the excess of love, and the annihilation that lead to indistinct union] and modes of expression were far from uniform, however, and were sometimes even opposed" (McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 199).

[95] Ibid.

[96] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast,* 153. Other more recent works include Patricia Dailey's *Promised Bodies,* Frank Willaert and Veerle Fraeters's introduction to the editions of *Liederen* and *Visioenen,* Veerle Fraeters's articles (listed in the bibliography), and Frank Willaert's articles on Hadewijch (listed in the bibliography).

literature.[97] The writings of Hadewijch are rich with sensual, some have even argued erotic, imagery, in particular during descriptions of unity with God or Christ, which she terms as being "God with God."[98] Some scholars have argued that Hadewijch was a member of a "traditional" beguine community, possibly the beguinage's leader for a time, she was well read and educated in Flemish and Latin, a prolific writer that organized her works in set genres (letters, strophic poems, visions, and other poetry). Most significantly there is a continuity to her style and writing throughout her corpus. Hadewijch's expression of mysticism is unlike the other beguine writings and exhibits characteristics of scholasticism and courtly lyric, while at the same time resisting their traditional rigid structure and literary constructions. Looking at the development of the beguine movement and its believed origins near Brabant where Hadewijch resided, her literary profile is one that is both unique and reflective of the world within which she lived.

As the earlier of the prolific beguine mystic-writers, Hadewijch and her works will be the subject of Chapter Three, with a focus upon the ways in which her specific groupings of texts worked within her beliefs and motivations to compose religious writings. Hadewijch's texts are a testimony to her unique interpretation of faith and also a means with which to a) experience a literary union with the Godhead, although brief; b) relive or recall the experience of visionary enlightenment; c) inspire and evoke a desire for union with the Godhead that is at once intrinsic and extrinsic. Being one of the most classically trained of the three mystics, Hadewijch's works interweave traditional poetic and prosaic forms with innovative diction and rhyme/verse structure, for example, suggesting that the concept of variation is as fundamental to all facets as her relationship with the Godhead. Hadewijch's poetry, although it at first glance may appear akin to courtly lyric, is unlike any other Middle Dutch lyric of the time. Each of her collections of works, from visions and couplets to poetry and letters, exhibit the multifaceted expression of her faith and divine experience. Understanding that there is no single defined way to find God/Christ other than to love and revere him, Hadewijch's narrative voice speaks to the beguines of her time, who were all called to the lay movement but allowed to do so with a freedom of choice that befit them.

Mechthild of Magdeburg

Mechthild of Magdeburg is known by modern scholars through her sole work, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (*The Flowing Light of the Godhead*), which was written during the thirteenth century in northern Germany. *Flowing Light* is important to modern scholars because it is a rare piece of writing by a medieval female author and also an early work written in the German vernacular. Mechthild's work is also significant because it contains her visions, yet is more a piece of literature than a book of revelations. There appears a conscious effort by Mechthild to incorporate contemporary literary styles (e.g. courtly lyric, *Botenlied*, etc.) throughout the work to *reflect* upon her experience and not simply report her visions.[99] It is this use of literary styles and an apparent knowledge of major works in literature that set *Flowing*

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[97] Elizabeth A. Petroff, *Body &Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 13.

[98] Hadewijch wrote in Letter 6, "We all indeed wish to be God with God, but God knows there are few of us who want to live as men with his Humanity, or want to carry his cross with him, or want to hang on the cross…" (*Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* Transl. by Mother Columba Hart (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 61). This will be referred to as "CWH" in footnote references following this citation, which is the standard abbreviation in many scholarly works.

[99] *Flowing Light*, 10.

Light and Mechthild apart from her contemporaries.[100] Therefore, it appears as if Mechthild used her visions as the basis for *Flowing Light* but then expanded the information revealed during these experiences to address certain issues. The recollection of her visions reveals divine opinion of many subjects, including the purity of priests and the validity of Mechthild's authority.

Based upon the textual evidence, scholars believe that Mechthild began to receive visions around the age of twelve. Yet it is not until around 1250 (some thirty years later) that Mechthild finally reveals her mystical experiences to her confessor. Her confessor assures her of the validity of her visions and pushes her to record them in writing (IV 2, 128–33). During the next ten years, the first five books of *Flowing Light* are believed to have been formulated under the guidance of her confessor, whom Hans Neumann identifies as the Dominican monk, Heinrich von Halle. It is believed that Mechthild composed her treatise as the mood compelled her on loose sheets of parchment.[101] Some scholars argue that these sheets were collected and preserved by Heinrich von Halle, who may have organized the pages into the order found in the Einsiedeln manuscript. Over the course of the following decade, Mechthild completed Book VI, although there is minimal textual evidence in reference to writing this section of her text. Around 1270, Mechthild enters the Cistercian convent at Helfta and remains there until her death in 1282/1287, completing Book VII during this time.[102]

Due to the personal nature of the text, *Flowing Light* compels scholars to research Mechthild's biography in hopes that they might better understand the situation within which Mechthild wrote her text and what may have influenced its creation. Therefore, a greater understanding of Mechthild's biography can ultimately aid scholars to read *The Flowing Light* within the historical context it was written.[103] Within *Flowing Light*, one encounters the discussion of the meaning of Mechthild's text, but also the idea that the text may be a symbolic representation of the "sinless" Mechthild. For this reason, what *Flowing Light* signified for Mechthild as a text and the general meaning of words, especially God's word (i.e. the Bible) are connected to her construction of the book and Mechthild's identity with her text.

However, research on Mechthild's identity and interpretation of her work are complicated for several reasons. One main reason scholars often encounter difficulties with this subject is the lack of the original manuscript. Although it is almost always the case that the original manuscript is no longer available for medieval scholars, there has been a fascination with the lost original due to references in the surviving transmissions that suggest that Mechthild wrote the original manuscript herself. It is very likely that the surviving transmissions are translations of circulated copies into the dialect of the region, intended audience, or scribe and not the original. Scholars are therefore unable to establish the impact that copyists and translators may have had on the text. If Mechthild did in fact write the original manuscript herself, her text would represent her experience as she interpreted it and strengthen the representation of the text as a divinely-inspired Mechthild. As is common with medieval documents, scholars are unable to discern what

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[100]There are references to some of the most influential works during that time, including Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on the "Song of Songs".

[101] Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 78.

[102] Although Helfta followed the Cistercian Rule, it was never formally accepted into the Cistercian Order. For this reason, many scholars refer to the convent near Eisleben as Benedictine (Anderson, *Voices,* 77).

[103] Herbert Grundmann, "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der Deutschen Mystik", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, Band 12, eds. Paul Kluckhohn and Erich Rothacker (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1934), 405.

words Mechthild herself wrote without the original manuscript, and its loss poses questions concerning the authorship of her text.

Another complication is the genre of her work. Some have described her book as a *Visionenbuch* (a book of visions), while others refer to it as a "theological reflection of experiences of a Christian soul."[104] Yet, it has been accurately noted by a few scholars[105] that the genre of a piece is linked more so with the modern methodologies of interpretation than the creation of the work. When scholars classify *Flowing Light* in a particular genre, the text is interpreted in a manner appropriate to the said genre. *Flowing Light* is comprised of many different styles (mystical treatise, socio-historical commentary, etc.) in which one set method of interpretation would be unsuitable for another genre within *Flowing Light*.[106] The question of Mechthild's authorship also challenges modern scholars to separate the present definition of an author and authorship with that of the medieval period. Whereas modern scholarship draws a distinct line between the work of the author and that of previous scholarship, that line was often neither distinct nor existent in the Middle Ages. Throughout *Flowing Light*, "Mechthild" displays concern about the authority of her text and the validity of her visions. In response to her concern, God is represented as replying that her text is her authority, particularly in Book II, Chapter 26, which also discusses a tripartite allegory for her book and the Holy Trinity.

In Chapter Four, Mechthild and her text will be the focus, highlighting the theme of variation within these works, showing how Mechthild/author plays with the idea of the authorial voice or voices, and in her case, to create a work in line with the evangelists and prophets of the New and Old Testaments. Within *Flowing Light*, representations of Soul, Lady Minne, and others provide a range of voices and promote a method of edification by means of dialogical explication, vision, allegory and commentary. Each of the voices within the work portray a different aspect of her experience with the divine, fashioning her in many ways as a "new evangelist". However, these voices parallel the genres within which that section is written, acting as *personae* with which to depict, enact and embody facets of not only her audience—in attempts to reach them—but also fragments of Mechthild herself, aspects of real or imagined virtues created within the highly idealized world in text that she composes. Due to the problematic nature of assigning authority and authorship, Mechthild will be referred to as the author, but more in the sense of a narrative voice within the text rather than an author in the modern definition. Taking this stance also allows for the possibility to compare her as a textual figure with other personalities and personifications found in *Flowing Light of the Godhead* and to highlight the nuances of the written word rather than the complicated establishment of an earthly author.

Agnes Blannbekin

The third and final figure I discuss in this dissertation is Agnes Blannbekin who lived during the late thirteenth-century in Vienna and is described in the Neresheimer manuscript as

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[104] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife,* 57.

[105] Amy Hollywood is one of the main scholars to champion this idea, to name only one.

[106] For example, if a scholar classifies *Das fließende Licht* as a visionary text, that scholar would have to interpret all sections of the book as Mechthild's personal experience. The sections in which Mechthild provides commentary could not be considered her experience and would therefore warrant a different approach to that material.

being a farmer's daughter.[107] Her life story survives today in only four different manuscripts, two of which are only fragments.[108] Codex Zwettlensis 384 is one of the fragmented texts. The codex includes one of the earliest extant copies of the *Vita et Revelationes* (*Life and Revelations)* of Agnes Blannbekin, whose *vita* has remained vastly unstudied in recent decades despite the increasing interest in female mysticism in the Middle Ages. Unable to write herself, it is reported by her monk-confessor that she entrusted him with the task of recording her visions and biography while she lived in Vienna as a beguine.[109] For this reason, the text was composed in Latin and not the vernacular (i.e. common spoken language), yet this does not explain the scant bibliography on the text or Blannbekin's biographical information, as other mystics of the time created texts under similar circumstances with significant present interest (i.e. Angelia of Foligno).

What is particularly interesting about the genre of the *Vitæ* is the fact that these narratives fulfilled a variety of textual roles, from the proposed beatification and canonization of a religious person to the account of a remarkable Christian life meant to inspire others. And yet, these proposed uses for the *Vitæ* are united by the desire to instruct and illuminate the reader-listener about a holy existence. The idea that this genre has a specific focus calls into question the validity of Agnes Blannbekin's life experiences and visions, mostly due to the fact that many of the *Vitæ* adopted set ages and actions from Biblical figures. Yet, on the other hand, while one cannot deny that the basis for the text was factual, the degree of fact represented in the text is difficult to decipher. The testimony to the title of her work as a *Vita et Revelationes* is further complicated by the appearance of one fragment enveloped within the Latin translation of Mechthild of Magdeburg's work, *Lux divinitatis.* Ms. Ra, in the collection of transmissions of Mechthild's *bůch*, provides a textual connection between Agnes and Mechthild, while also proposing a question of function (i.e. naming the text a hagiography) and genre (i.e. the motifs and structures reflective of a given notion of form). It is precisely this intertextuality on a wide array of levels that is the focus on my chapter on Agnes (Chapter Five).

Although far more conservative in its style than Hadewijch or Mechthild, Agnes's *Vitae et Revelationes* is a hybrid genre of sorts, in that it is an appeal for the canonization of Agnes Blannbekin by way of using standard, dare I say generic, hagiographical forms infused with visionary recollections that have the latent sensuality found in other beguine mystical texts. The *Vita et Revelationes* will stand as the final study of a beguine mystic in this dissertation in Chapter Five. During this chapter, I parallel the information from the *Vita et Revelationes* with the development of hostilities against beguines throughout most of Europe. Variation in the sense of Agnes Blannbekin is more subtle and nuanced than that of Hadewijch and Mechthild. In this case, the variation lies in the approach with which the beguine mystic and confessor chose to transmit her visions and life, as well as her outlook. The differences between her work—written in Latin and penned almost certainly by her confessor—and that of the other mystics discussed in my dissertation exhibits the numerous ways with which beguine mystics sought for orthodoxy while still attempting to revise and reform the very definition of orthodoxy itself.

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[107] Anneliese Stoklaska, "Die Revelationes der Agnes Blannbekin: Ein mystiches Unikat im Schrifttum des Wiener Mittelalters" in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wiens* 43 (1987)*,* 10.

[108] Agnes Blannbekin, *Leben und Offenbarungen der Wiener Begine Agnes Blannbekin*, ed. and transl. by Peter Dinzelbacher, Renate Vogeler (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1995) 17–21.

[109] Stoklaska, *Die Revelationes,* 10.

IV. Conclusion: Interrelation of Beguine-Text-Audience

Despite the apparent differences between each mystic's approach and even structure of her work(s), the centrality of the beguine mystical texts lies within their dogmatic concerns with *imitatio Christi* and underlying emphasis on didactic features interwoven within their texts. One could simply boil down the inspiration for composing these mystical texts to experience, but to state that the mystic merely bases her theory/philosophy /doctrine upon divine encounters would devalue the creative function and action present in the texts and conflate a knowledge of *what* is written with *why* these texts were written (i.e. motivation vs. function). Yet as with most creative endeavors, the personality and experience of the author are reflected within the text. And thus it could be argued that she and her experience, she and her writings, she and her philosophy are at once reflective of her visionary experience, her life experience, and her God.[110] This theory is expressed in Mechthild's emphasis on copying and rereading her work, to the extent that she includes a special blessing for those who copy and presumably circulate the work, as well as a recommended number of readings of the text (nine in her case).[111]

Throughout this introduction, the focus has been on the complex and varied development of the beguine movement, the difficulties surrounding the terminology and classification of *beguine*, and an introduction into the beguine spirituality and mystical writings. Moving forward, I organize this dissertation in two key parts. The question of genre, as K. S. Whetter rightly points out, can only serve as a beginning, a gateway into the further questions concerning the relationship between form and content, emotion and expression.[112] The first two chapters discuss the basic components of genre theory, first through an analysis of key voices within modern genre theory (Chapter One), followed by an overview of scholarly interpretation concerning beguine-composed texts and the main genre forms seen within these texts (Chapter Two). Chapters Three, Four, and Five encompass the second part of this dissertation. In those chapters, I look at the writers individually, beginning with Hadewijch, followed by Mechthild, and ending with Agnes. I aim to demonstrate the incredible amount of variation apparent in these texts. Although one might assume that genre variation would lead to a lack of synthesis or cohesiveness within the texts, the use of genre hybrids actually enhances the reader-listener's experience. In fact, the diverse use of genres and mixing of genres create a more complex reading experience because it alters the reader-listener's understanding of how a text functions and plays upon the expectations readers might have when they approach a given genre. I argue that the didactic and mystagogical nature of Hadewijch's, Mechthild's and Agnes's writing reaches beyond the page, not simply through the concept of textual embodiment (i.e. a physical text that one can read *and* touch), but also through memory/*memoria* on two distinct levels: a) the transference and translation of experience with the divine from the writer-speaker's memory to the composition of the text; b) the experience of reading these texts and their varied approaches that become a part of the reader through contemplative reading practices (reading-meditation-oration-contemplation) and internalization through *memoria*.

In other words, I posit that it is the variation of genre, the diversity of form and corresponding expression that provides a more vibrant and memorable experience with the text. Hadewijch's complete book of visions, collection of letters in prose and rhyme, and strophic

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[110] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife,* 31, 36.

[111] The Latin introduction of Codex Einsiedelnsis 384 references a later passage within Mechthild's buoch, blessing all those who read the work nine times. This passage is discussed at more length in Chapter Four.

[112] K.S. Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Taylor and Francis, 2008)*,* 30.

song exhibits a broad range of emotions, interior as narrator, exterior as teacher and advisor, interior as love-sick believer. Vision, letter, rhyme and song harness and mediate literary situations that reflect experience multilinearly (i.e. from various perspectives and emotions) that create a dynamic encounter. By reading the text, it becomes viable and enlivened to the reader; the literary becomes alive through the process of reading and creation of memory within the reader. The success of Hadewijch's process lies in its form. Just as life and its experiences of love and pain, ecstasy and suffering, cannot be expressed through a single medium, the process of *unio mystica*, growing in the divine and achieving union far exceeds a single sentiment.

With Mechthild, her *bůch* ages and matures with its continued composition. It oscillates between lyric and prose, and even moves between subgenres within a single vision because those forms have the ability to express more verily the image, sentiment, or lesson Mechthild intends to impress upon the reader. A messenger simply passes on information by instruction. Mechthild meditates upon the message and disseminates that knowledge by the means and form that she deems most instructive. In that aspect, it fulfills the role of messenger-teacher, a mystagogue, crafting the incomprehensible divine mysteries through the forms her readers know through their life on earth. In Mechthild's *bůch*, we not only see variation of genre to express a range of emotion and enlivened association with recognizable and common lived experience. We see a dualistic approach that marries the human experience with the divine, made comprehensible through the everyday or commonplace forms—nursery rhyme, courtly lyric, prayer, meditation—used to portray the ineffable.

Agnes is linked to Mechthild textually—her vita interwoven with the Latin translation of Mechthild's *bůch*, *Lux divinitatis,* in Ms. Ra—and formulaically in their *alltäglich* approach. Like Mechthild and Hadewijch, Agnes mediated upon her experiences of everyday life and the divine, but through interaction with her confessor, the scribe of her vita and revelations. I argue that, despite the absence of pen in hand, due to the language and forms, Agnes dictated and authored her story, which was presented in the guise of an acceptable and orthodox form: *vita et revelationes*. Hers is a blending of the everyday with the ecclesiastical literary, potentially to showcase the ability of the commonplace to express the divine.

The writers discussed in this dissertation are linked together by a sense of tradition, despite variations in genre, address, style, and emphasis. At the heart of this query, beyond form and even compositional motivation, is the desire to verify that there are grounds to discuss these texts as a tradition, one that unifies the texts by these authors of varying backgrounds, languages, and lifetimes precisely through the element that would seem to divide them: variation. While the sense of tradition is different from more modern periods, the expression of form married to the underlying emphasis on instruction and guidance expresses aspects or motifs from other genres of the period, but differs enough in the hybridity and variation of expression to stand in a related, but separate literary arena.

Chapter One
Questioning Genre: Derrida, Bakhtin, Jauss and Modern Genre Theory

> As soon as the word "genre" is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon
> as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn.
> —Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre"[113]

When scholars approach the works of Hadewijch, they encounter a grouping of texts, separated by genres (visions, letters, strophic poems/songs, and poems in couplets), hastily huddled under the common term *visionary literature*. And yet, even as one mentions this broad textual classification, one sees the conflict in stating that all of Hadewijch's texts fall under the category of visionary literature. Considering the form and function of a letter, even within the medieval period, how does Hadewijch's collection of 31 letters fall under the realm of visionary literature? The mode and means of a vision and a letter differ significantly in style and approach, in how they are voiced, and in their anticipated reader response. In a similar regard, how can strophic songs or poems in couplets entail aspects of visionary literature? And potentially the most problematic is the question concerning the scholarly understanding of these genres, how they play out or speak through the contents of their texts, and whether these fixed constructs of genre aid or hinder the didactic and mystagogical framework of the text. If the expanse of Hadewijch's corpus can be considered visionary literature, how can the imprint of the visionary, of vision, be demonstrated? And if these are all expressions of visionary literature, does that then discount the possibility for simultaneous belonging to another genre category (in this case, letter, strophic song, etc.)?

Scholars have taken various stances on the definition of visionary literature, emphasizing often the experience, or what they deem the motivation for composition—the vision—over the form of the texts themselves.[114] Elizabeth A. Andersen and Mary Lou Shea bury the term *visionary literature* even further under the even larger heading of devotional literature, of which Andersen explains,

> If Mechthild's book had to be assigned to one category of writing, then
> probably it would be best accommodated under the general heading of
> "devotional literature" as a reflection of the overriding concern of the
> author...[115]

Andersen writes in reference to Mechthild of Magdeburg, but this interpretation is applied to other mystic writers during the medieval period. For example, Shea bases her theological comparisons upon Hadewijch, Julian of Norwich and other mystics. The writings and textual forms of these authors differ greatly, so much so that the narrative "I" expresses a variance of personalities depending upon the author, the genre, and even a given section within a larger grouping of writings.

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[113] "Dès qu'on entend le mot 'genre',dès qu'il paraît, dès qu'on tente de le penser, une limite se dessine" (cited in Jonathon Crimmins, "Gender, Genre, and the Near Future in Derrida's 'The Law of Genre'" in *Diacritics* 39:1 (Spring 2009), 48).

[114] Patricia Dailey, *Promised Bodies: Time, Language, and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 125.

[115] Elizabeth A. Andersen, *Voices,* 97.

What is more ambiguous about the term *visionary literature* is the fact that the vision as a genre is intermingled with an array of other genre types, at times as a section within a saint's life or *vita*, at other times included in a compilation of writings (such as those of Hadewijch or Mechthild).[116] Furthermore, the vision was at times purely literary and not strictly religious in nature. The dream vision was a genre that diverted from the religious genre *visio*. It takes the form of a revelation, but not necessarily divinely inspired. A well-known example of the dream vision is the medieval French romance *Le roman de la rose* or *The Romance of the Rose*. Composed by both Guillaume de Loris and Jean de Meun, *Romance of the Rose* employs a plethora of generic forms, strongly allegorical in nature, in which the narrative "I" seeks to woo or court and obtain his "rose". He solicits advice from various allegorical figures such as *Raison*, *Old Age*, and *Amor,* in addition to Venus, the goddess of love and lust.

In his commentary on mysticism between 1200 and 1350, Bernard McGinn clarifies that not every visionary text is mystical nor is every mystical text visionary (e.g. Beatrijs of Nazareth, a contemporary of Hadewijch, wrote *The Seven Manners of Love*, decidedly a mystical but not visionary text, despite the fact that she did receive visions, according to her *Vita*). The difficulty with labeling Hadewijch's or Mechthild's writings simply "visionary" is the understanding that "visionary" and "mystical" are not synonymous. As McGinn notes,

> …it seems incorrect to me to treat all late medieval accounts of visions as mystical, if the term mysticism is to retain enough specificity to allow it to characterize a continuing tradition in the beliefs and practices of the Christian theology…The visionary and the mystical elements of Christianity are distinct, though obviously interconnected, trajectories.[117]

McGinn highlights two significant words in the above citation: continuing tradition. If I return to the citation from Elizabeth A. Andersen above, we see an interesting conflict between the categorization and definition of "visionary" and "devotional literature." To describe the writings of medieval mystics as a "basic understanding of Christian belief" but also "not concerned with defining points of doctrine in a systematic way" is not only unnecessarily ambiguous but also inaccurate. As Patricia Dailey, Sara Poor, Amy Hollywood and even Andersen herself have demonstrated, the writings of Hadewijch and Mechthild are complex, elaborate works that sought to enlighten and encourage their readers to a theological extreme: *unio mystica*—union with the divine. While at times certainly less systematic than others, the beguine mystical authors discussed within this dissertation strive via their texts to mature and ready their readership to the highest of Christian goals, a readership that demonstrated interest and drive for a different lifestyle (i.e. beguine) that already set them apart from a "basic" readership.

In addition to debates concerning the classification or labeling of these texts, scholars contest whether a text fully qualifies as a set genre. Veerle Fraeters and Frank Willaert argue that Hadewijch's Book of Visions does not constitute fourteen visions, because some do not fit the recognized form of a vision/*visio* and others are incomplete and should be read as a single vision rather than two (Visions Two and Three constitute a single vision, as well as Thirteen and Fourteen, for example).[118] The question then arises, when does a text not constitute the genre it

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[116] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 20.

[117] Ibid, 25.

[118] See Veerle Fraeters, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's Book of Visions," in *The Voice of Silence Women's Literacy in a Men's Church,* eds. Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 57–81; and Frank Willaert, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in

has been prescribed, particularly with historical texts? How can modern scholars negotiate their understanding of a given genre, even based upon comparative analysis, with that of a text? With my investigation of genre, I will not challenge the prescribed labels within these texts if they represent a historical viewpoint. As this chapter will show, a better understanding of modern genre theory actually has the potential to unlock historical texts in a way that both respects the contemporaneous understanding of a genre and highlights the shift in our expectation of a generic type as modern readers.

One key difficulty I recognize in modern literary criticism of medieval writing is genre hybridity and variation. Sara Poor, in her study of Mechthild of Magdeburg's book, notes the array of genre types employed by different beguine mystics.

> Becoming an author of God's words, Mechthild recorded her visions of
> intimate conversations with God and others in the afterlife. Hadewijch
> wrote down her visions, composed instructional poetry and crafted letters
> about the theology revealed to her and Beatrice of Nazareth wrote a short
> instructional treatise about the seven stages of loving God.[119]

The different form types—dialogic visions, poetry, letters and instructional treatise—depict a rejection that there existed a singular approach to intimacy with the divine, ones that were as varied as the ecstatic experiences themselves. Perhaps due to these differences, there is a perceived difficulty of "fitting" these texts into a specific genre, whether it be the very generalized (and misleading) category of "visionary literature" to hybrid headings such as "mystical treatise" and the like. Yet, while the concept of genre most certainly did exist during the Middle Ages,[120] the question arises whether the inability to categorize beguine mystical texts potentially lies within our previously defined labels and list of characteristics, modern understanding of literary texts, emphases and motivation of theoretically-based scholarship (e.g. feminist approaches, Marxist readings, etc.) or all of the above.

Just as the classification and definition of authorship, intellectual ownership, and textual authority shifts over time (particularly since the medieval period), so too has the understanding, study, and breadth of genre. With modern classification of texts, the delineation of clearly defined textual groups or families—the establishment of a recognized literary canon—inevitably became a byproduct. The presence of various literary styles and vocabulary meld to construct the multifaceted vernacular expressions that emerge so prevalently throughout the later twelfth and thirteenth century, ranging from courtly epics and romances to mystical treatises and revelations. The message housed within beguine mystical writings is just as significant as the means by which those texts are constructed (i.e. generic forms) and the audience's expectations for the application of those form types.

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den Visioenen" in *Abendlandische Mystik im Mittelalter: Symposion Kloster Engelberg 1984*, ed. Kurt Ruh (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1986), 368–387.

[119] Sara S. Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book,* 4. Also cited in the Introduction but repeated here to provide emphasis and remind the reader of Poor's comment about variation and genre choice.

[120] For example, the genre of courtly epic, romance, and poetry was established. The *vita* was a recognized form, first in Latin and later the vernacular languages. Sermons and letters were other generic forms that followed aspects from the Classical tradition, of which I will speak at greater length in. Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Delving into genre theory and beguine-composed literature, my aim in this chapter as well as throughout this dissertation is to investigate and question the genre concepts as they have been applied to these texts and the role that gender has played in the naming (and coincidentally also the meaning-making) of the beguine mystical corpus. Central to this study are the following questions: How does one approach a text that houses numerous genres and the tone/voice alters with each textual form (or in form depending upon address, for that matter)? Do we focus on the underlying ontological and didactic elements? And then, in what ways do these vignettes of different genres interact with the whole? Are these genres and mixed genre types an insertion, perhaps a reflection, refraction of the whole? Or should we rather view this as a case of symbiosis or synthesis? Let us take, for example, Mechthild of Magdeburg, who classified her collected writings as a *bůch* or book. The significance of naming the writings a *bůch* ties to the writer-speaker because it demonstrates how they view their texts during the process of composition.[121] At the same time, these texts do not exist within a vacuum, and at times it is difficult to distinguish the imprint of a translator or scribe after the initial composition has occurred. Whereas more recent scholarship by Sara Poor and Balázs Nemes connects this terminology to textual authority and authorship,[122] from the standpoint of genre, the who and the what becomes less pressing than the question of how (i.e. manner or means). A question of authority also presupposes an awareness of the impact of genre on the reader and the reader response (á la Bakhtin's speech genres). However, even Jacques Derrida admits that authors and readers may not always be conscious of genre choice.[123]

And yet, if we consider that the authorial voice has an ongoing acknowledgement of the reader during the creation/production of the text (what Derrida might call its birth), both in its compositional process and upon completion as a text/texts, can we still classify these texts solely based upon content (i.e. visionary or mystical literature)? Can the societal qualification of the author be the delineating factor in describing and categorizing the text? While my dissertation seeks to address the above-mentioned questions, due to time and space, I fully acknowledge that not all questions may be answered in depth. At the very least, I hope my investigation highlights, perhaps even illuminates, some of the ways that genre theory and analysis play a revelatory role within the study of medieval literature.

Returning to the example of Mechthild, she states in her writings that God designated her work as a *bůch*. In fact, the first mention of *bůch* appears in the first lines of text following the preface. With that utterance, *bůch* is not only associated with Mechthild's writing, but also with

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[121] I would also include the scribe copying the text, which Mechthild encourages within her text. Scribal errors and interpretation of different dialects are only two examples of possible textual transformation. In addition, scribes also compose the preface, introducing the work to the reader and bestowing a certain mood and understanding of the text there following.

[122] The two most notable studies of Mechthild and textual authority are Sara S. Poor's *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and Making of Authority* (2004) and more recently Balázs Nemes's *Von der Schrift zum Buch—Vom Ich zum Autor. Zur Text- und Autorkonstitution in Überlieferung und Rezeption des 'Fliessenden Licht der Gottheit' Mechthilds von Magdeburg* (2010). Both monographs provide substantial background and analysis of the manuscript tradition of the text.

[123] "The remark of belonging need not pass through the consciousness of the author or the reader, although it often does so. It can also refute this consciousness or render the explicit 'mention' mendacious, false, inadequate or ironic according to all sorts of overdetermined figures".
Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre", transl. Avital Ronell in *Glyph* 7 (1980), 211.

the introduction of the dialogic interaction between herself and the divine.[124] Bakhtin's emphasis on dialogic orientation is further exemplified with *bůch* in the first pages of the work, in which the naming of her work as *bůch* coincides with the revelation of the *bůch's* title: *Ein fliessendes Licht der Gottheit*. The title of the work establishes not only the communication that exists between Mechthild and the divine, but also the connection between the author/narrator (Mechthild) and the reader.[125] To add more nuance (and confusion) to the term, the entire *bůch* is comprised of seven smaller *bůcher* each with chapters and other subdivisions. Here the understandings of *bůch* as encompassing a whole body of writings and *bůch* as a section within that whole are not synonymous and represent aspects of categorical distinction that extend beyond the simple translated concept of *bůch* as "book". In Book II, the genre parallels the allegory of her *bůch* as the Holy Trinity (Book II, Chapter 26) because the image of the book is used to depict the three aspects of the Trinity[126]. The fact that *bůch* houses a variety of uses and reflects new meanings through allegory renders a more careful investigation of genre and speech genres necessary.

Genre, therefore, is expressed on various levels, just as *bůch* is not simply "book" and not all *bůcher* embody the same understanding within Mechthild's text as the *bůch* that entails the work entirely. Submerging oneself deeper into Mechthild's work, we find a complex and intricate interweaving of genre types (such as a prayer or mass during a vision),[127] hybridity in form, and variation in linguistic expression, voice, and hermeneutic intention. So, while *bůch* envelopes a concept of the whole, just like the Trinitarian allegory for her *bůch*,[128] Mechthild's transmission of experience into textual form models the uniqueness of said divine encounter and

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[124] Elizabeth A. Andersen discusses in two of her chapters of *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg* the concepts of dialogic text and intertextuality as seen in Bakhtin. Her reading differs from mine on several levels, a point which I will discuss at more depth in Chapters Two and Four.

[125] This reference is found in Book I, I. Before any visions or any lengthy discussion of the nature of the book, *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit* is named, placing, I would argue, significance between the name of the work and the naming of the genre: *bůch*. Even in the Middle Ages, significance is placed upon the naming of genre types, such as sermon, epistle, etc.

[126] Book II, Chapter 26: "At once God revealed himself to my joyless soul, held this book in his right hand, and said:

> "My dear One, do not be overly troubled. No one can burn the truth. For
> someone to take this book out of my hand, He must be mightier than I.
> The book is threefold and portrays me alone. The parchment that encloses
> it indicates my pure, white, just humanity that for your sake suffered
> death. The words symbolize my marvelous Godhead.
> It flows continuously into your soul from my divine mouth. The sound of
> the words is a sign of my living spirit and through it achieves genuine
> truth. Now, examine all these words–How admirably do they
> proclaim my personal secrets! So have no doubts about yourself!
> (*Flowing Light* 96–97)."

[127] Book II, Chapter 4 details one of the most famous visions from Mechthild's writings: the Mass of St. John the Baptist. What is significant about this vision is that "the poor girl" who encounters Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus as a lamb is believed to be Mechthild. There is a note written at the end of the vision providing short commentary, which suggests that Mechthild is possibly referring to herself in the third person. In terms of genre, Mechthild employs several genres and subgenres, such as the sermon, prayer, divine instruction or advice, and allegory (to name just a few).

[128] See note 127.

expresses the wide range of genres people encounter during their lives. In other words, Mechthild elevates the *bůch* to *perfectus* (taking the Latin definition of *perfectus* as "complete, without lacking, whole") through multiplicity, understanding the designation of *perfectus* befits those that are utterly complete, lacking no part, and thus worthy of the divine. *bůch* becomes a genre and a reflection of Mechthild's experience *in uniso,* paralleling her own quest, a spiritual *aventiure* towards perfection (read "full fruition") with the Godhead.

In the introduction to his translation of Mechthild's work, Frank Tobin discusses the paradoxical relationship between textual diversity and the existence of unity by means of that diversity. Tobin remarks that,

> Intentionally or not, Mechthild, through her extensive absorption of the many kinds of writing to which she was exposed, wrote a book whose paradoxical nature is that its unity consists, in part, in its diversity of forms.[129]

Variation, according to Tobin, expresses a unity that may initially appear contradictory to the basic meaning of the word. Tobin reflects upon the variation within Mechthild's text. Interestingly, the result of such diversity does not result in a chaotic mélange of writings but a synthesized reflection upon a complex and multifaceted experience and understanding of the divine. In addition, Tobin hints at the interaction between reader or consumer of other writings and genres with the production of Mechthild's own book. The layering of reading and writing in Mechthild's *bůch* suggests that her work exists within an ongoing dialogue of writer-reader/listener. This dialogue uses genre to add texture and individuality to her writings/*bůch*. When Mechthild absorbs the many kinds of writing to which she was exposed, we see a dialogue between writer-speaker and reader-listener (Mechthild). On the other hand, we encounter the mediated readings of Mechthild as a new composition, one that is read and internalized by readers of her *bůch.* As Jauss notes, the significance of this concept holds true with the realization that no text or genre exists in and within itself.[130]

The existence and significance of *bůch* and its division into smaller *buechelîn* pays testimony to the inner workings of the whole *Flowing Light of the Godhead*, as well as allegory. Just as *visio* in Hadewijch's corpus falls short of accurately defining all writings attributed to her authorship, *bůch* cannot express the individual excerpts from Mechthild's work, and yet *visio* can occur as a part within her *bůch*, contributing to the expression of the whole. Variation, as will be

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[129] *Flowing Light*, 10–11.

[130] Jauss, "Theory of Genres", 132.

"The theory of literary genres cannot remain within the structure of self-enclosed histories of genres, but rather must also consider the possibility of a historical systematics…Even the literature of the Middle Ages is no arbitrary sum of its parts, but rather a latent ordering or sequence of orderings of literary genres" (Jauss 132).

In addition, Jauss cites modern scholarship about medieval literature as a main deterrent between a more complex understanding of genre and its function in medieval literature:

"The question of the reality of literary genres in the historical everyday world, or that of their social function, has been ignored in medieval scholarship, and not because of a lack of documents. Resisting any insight into this question, there has long been the humanist overemphasis on the written and printed tradition, a Platonic aesthetics according to which past literature can really be 'present' for us in a book at any moment, and the naively objectivist equation of philological interpretation with the experience of the original reader or hearer" (Jauss 134).

discussed later in this chapter and throughout the body chapters, holds a central place within the understanding of genre and the unique nature of texts classified as the beguine mystical corpus.

With Mechthild, we can see how the concept of genre and the classification thereof permeates the studies of beguine literature. Genre, however, is often so rigidly defined that it acts almost as a literary litmus test or line of demarcation between one text type and another. Derrida describes this as a line of demarcation in his 1979 lecture "The Law of Genre", stating that as soon as genre "is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn."[131] And yet this limit need not define a distinct separation, but rather a relationship, what Derrida refers to as "a set", connecting textual elements of genre. The line of demarcation acts as the connection or gateway to another genre rather than the rigid separation between two singular types. In this "marking", both the beginning of one text type and the end of another are noted, suggesting a multidirectional element to this line. A line can be crossed, blurred or even erased. Derrida later goes on to explain that,

> The trait that marks membership inevitably divides, the boundary of the
> set comes to form, by invagination, an internal pocket larger than the
> whole; and the outcome of this division and of this abounding remains as
> singular as it is limitless.[132]

"Membership" to a particular trait designates the non-fitting or failure to be member of another trait or set and, in that case, creates a divide between genre types through the strict classification of a genre. One can imagine a list of descriptors with checkboxes to be fulfilled rather than the actuality that genre types can be more fluid and multiplicitous in aesthetic expression.

Derrida employs the concept of "invagination" to describe the potentiality of a text including more than a simple generic descriptor. In other words, "invagination" implies that there is more than the surface, that there are genres and expressions of genres enfolded within the text that are waiting to be discovered. Much like female anatomy, the sex organs are hidden, unseen from the superficial level of the body. "Invagination" depicts a series of folds, some seen, some unseen, that incorporate new and old readings of the texts, as well as various genre types and hybrid genres (some also seen and at others yet to be discovered. Derrida's concept of "invagination" corresponds to a subversely gendered discourse of terminology surrounding genre, based largely upon his linguistic interpretation of the words "genre" and "gender" in French and German. The choice of his analogy I find suspect, but the underlying message of "invagination" illustrates Derrida's ongoing complaint: to prescribe generic constraints to a text diagnoses it based upon the exterior large motifs, while the potential innerworkings continue to remain unseen.

Similar to the folds of a book, Derrida's "invagination applies to both individual texts and to genres", Jonathan Crimmins explains, and that the "'internal pocket [of the fold (*li pli*) is] larger than the whole' because the text demarcates a limit made to be breached."[133] What Derrida explains here is that, like in the case of Mechthild and the other beguines, *visio* is a fold within what he deems the "invagination" of *bůch,* an aspect or thing of meaning as significant and contributing to the whole as a *bůch*, just as allegory, *contemplatio* and prayer are also folds or internal pockets. Therefore, like the Trinity ("three in one" and "one in three") exemplified in

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[131] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," 203.

[132] Derrida, Ibid., 206.

[133] Jonathan Crimmins, "Gender, Genre, and the Near Future in Derrida's 'The Law of Genre'," *Diacritics* 39:1 (Spring 2009), 54.

the allegory for Mechthild's *bůch*, genre variation (allegory, prayer, didactic letter, etc.) can occur within a genre (*bůch*) or genres without being completely consumed by one generic expression.

Returning to the broader discussion at stake within this dissertation, in this chapter I seek to initiate the discussion about the classification of genre, particularly for the texts grouped under the ambiguous term "beguine mystical texts". Although I am unable to include all writers that fall under the nebulous "beguine mystic" category, I focus my study on three examples selected from varying backgrounds, experiences, and languages with the aim to create a cross-section of these texts, their contents, and historical contexts. Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Agnes Blannbekin establish the range within the multifaceted beguine literary corpus: from Middle Dutch prolific "beguine" writing in four set literary "kinds";[134] to a *mulier religiosa* of Magdeburg, composing her *bůch* across decades and marking shifts in wisdom and age, experience and criticism; and finally, a young recluse-esque figure living within the vibrant city of Vienna and relaying her visions and reactions to a confessor, who would in turn record her *Vita et Revelationes*. These three female mystics were chosen in part because of what each represents. First, from a linguistic perspective, the three main languages of works by beguine mystics are Latin, Middle German, and Middle Dutch, although some might add Italian and Middle French in the group. However, and this is the second reason behind my selection, each mystic embodies a *Zeitgeist* within the history of beguine groups, as well as providing a glimpse into the various roles in which beguines appear (recluse, distanced religious community). As I outlined in my introduction, the role of the beguine lifestyle is present within the texts written from those communities. For this reason, a selection of texts is needed to demonstrate the variation and use of genre throughout beguine mystical writings.

Each writer-speaker is addressed individually within body chapters (Chapters 3–5), in which I broaden my scope slightly from intense close reading to a discussion of revised genre concepts, intertextuality, and the interplay between writer-speaker and reader, genre and content. Taking cues from Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Hans Jauss, I argue that modern genre theory alleviates many of the misconceptions perpetrated by more rigid taxonomical classifications of the nineteenth century (particularly remnants of Neo-classicist interpretations and extensions of Platonic and Aristotelian narrative forms).[135] Through the deconstruction of these Romantic (perhaps even antiquated) notions of genre type and mood (Derrida), historical contextualization and appropriate legitimization of genre and its shifts over time (Jauss), and dialogic and, with the example of these mystics' texts, didactic intertextuality (Bakhtin), I seek to demonstrate that not only does genre hybridity or variation appear in all three selected examples from beguine-composed mystical texts, but that the appearance of genre hybridity does not necessitate broader genre-type labels, but rather implores scholarly approaches to medieval literary form, content, and generic emulation (or the creation of sub genres and altered genre types) that expose this complexity rather than regiment our expectations through arbitrary classifications (i.e. generic labeling).

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[134] David Duff, *Modern Genre Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 1, 6.

[135] Derrida, citing Genette, comments at length about the misrepresentation of the classical genre triad (lyric, drama, epic), something that Goethe defined as the three *Naturformen* of poetry. Genette reveals in his writings that this understanding is actually a conflation of theories by Plato and Aristotle, supported and furthered by the Jena school.
For further information concerning this discussion, see David Duff, *Modern Genre Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 3–6; Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 208–211; Genette, "L'Architexte",

Therefore, the discussion found within this first of two theoretical chapters outlines and critiques the main theories of genre influential in the twentieth century. My discussion of genre theory would remain incomplete without particular attention given to the theorists and texts that are arguably foundational within modern genre theory, notably Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre", Hans Robert Jauss's "Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature", and Mikhail Bakhtin's "The Problem of Speech Genres". Without a reading and analysis of these works, d I find it would be difficult to situate my discussion of medieval genre within broader understanding or significance in literary studies. Although I rely upon twentieth-century genre theorists, I illustrate the ways in which these modern definitions, redefinitions and deconstructions of generic categories actually support and coincide with medieval understandings of genre and its relationship to composition, intended audience, reader expectations, and broader societal conceptions of genre during a given period. Theories of genre have often experienced criticism, largely due to the fact that each proposed theory often remains relevant and applicable to a single genre or even subsection thereof. Acknowledging this difficulty, I propose a more multifaceted approach to genre, recognizing that there is no "one size/label fits all" and rather identify each text in its manuscript form as a unique and separate entity, even in cases where organization and overall structure appear more or less identical on the surface.

The second section turns to a focus on Hans Jauss and his "Theories of Genre and Medieval Literature", which delves into the question of genre categorization and historical texts, as well as an overview and critique of the origins of modern literary classification largely beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jauss also aptly demonstrates the significance of the historical component in the approach and understanding of medieval literary genres. In addition to Jauss's article and the categorization of medieval literature, I also include the work of Bernard McGinn, whose broad interest in mysticism during the medieval period allows for a generic comparative approach and highlights a more extensive history of literary form in religious literature.

In tandem, Bernard McGinn and Hans Jauss question contemporary understandings of medieval generic form. Their research highlights the complicated notion of congruency between anticipated form types, as well as the ways in which the expectation of these forms plays upon modern scholarly anticipation of how texts, or rather the use of literary forms, should and do function within a text. McGinn and Jauss also complicate the validity of genre classification in the presence of multiple genre types within a single text or text grouping. In particular, the work of Hans Jauss is a pivotal approach to a revision of these assumptions and function in conjunction with the concept of interconnection and, perhaps even, intertextuality across medieval texts of varying types. I compare Jauss's theory with the writings of Bernard McGinn and the concept of genre and classification of texts, mystics and visions. McGinn is significant in that he promotes a contemporaneous understanding of medieval texts and provides key comprehension in how the literature and the mentality—with which these texts were composed—should be approached. In conclusion, the generalized discussion of the use of genre within beguine mystical texts shifts to the individual author's works as an outline of the three following chapters commences.

While this discussion stands in no way conclusive, I seek to question the nature of genre classification and selection through the lens of Jauss and McGinn in tandem, by returning to the texts in order to unfold the potential clues that inform scholars about textual composition, the reader, and the dialogic relationship between writer-speaker and reader(s). The shift from Derrida's interpretation of genre to Jauss's theory marks a difference in focus, a move from an emphasis on textual production to textual reception, from the nature and history of genre to the

historical understanding of the changing nature of genre (Jauss and Bakhtin). I will refrain from discussions of too many specifics concerning the beguine mystical texts in this chapter, but rather I focus on these works by Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes at length individually in the body chapters and focus upon possible trends and interpretational methods that might apply to these texts in Chapter Two.

Through the interpretation and comparison of genre theories, I posit a new potential avenue for the analysis and understanding of the function of genre within beguine mystical texts. Drawing upon the works of Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss discussed within this chapter, I emphasize and demonstrate that beguine-composed literature necessitates a hybrid approach, one that reflects the dualistic two-in-one understanding of nature and history from Derrida's discussion of "invagination"—that is the investigation of the folds within the literary text—and Bakhtin's concept of primary and secondary genres (particularly with the case of speech genres). With Derrida, the folds of "invagination", on the one hand, reflect the form and structure of a genre (what Derrida deems masculine), and, on the other hand, has a separate fold that employs meaning making, a semiotic infrastructure (Derrida's feminine) emboldened and strengthened through the interaction and mutual contribution of the masculine form and structure. Here the history of the text creation and historical eyewitness is conjoined partially to the nature of the text (i.e. the mood, inner workings) and portrayal that reflect the contents and bodily feeling. However, Derrida is not alone in the dualistic approach, which is also reflected in Bakhtin's theory of speech genres and the intrinsic dialogic function of author and audience, text and reception and critique.

In my reading of Derrida and Bakhtin, I demonstrate how the emphasis upon gender in genre theory for Derrida has marked subsequent scholarly discussion and that the central nature of gender in genre theory has irrefutably marked female-authored texts in ways that has remained as persistent as the antiquated taxonomical systems derived during the Romantic era. Derrida read via Bakhtin allows a more nuanced and gender-distanced discussion of genre. Furthermore, the introduction of Jauss into the analysis promotes a dual-focused reading that considers both textual production and reception simultaneously. I argue that Jauss complicates our recognition of historical or temporal significance and promotes Bakhtin's warranted assertion that the understanding of genre is ever-changing and never static (i.e. the possibility for multiple readings or textual interpretations), a point which even Derrida acknowledges.[136]

With Jauss, as with Bakhtin, the analysis of textual reception via genre extends to include a secondary discourse concerning the intended readership and the anticipated response to the genre. While the impact of the intended audience has not escaped scholarly discussion (see Willaert, Dinzelbacher, Poor, Nemes, and others), "intended audience", as conceptualized in the aforementioned scholarly works, places emphasis upon a passive and receptive readership. For Bakhtin, the writer-speaker considers not only his or her audience during the composition. Rather the writer-speaker anticipates within the text the response of the reader to the text, which

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[136] Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 227–228.
"I isolated a type, if not a genre, of reading from an infinite series of trajectories or possible courses. I have pointed out the generative principle of these courses, beginnings, and new beginnings in every sense: but from a certain point of view. Elsewhere—in accordance with other subjects, other colloquia and lectures, other I/we drawn together in one place—other trajectories could have, and have, come to light."

It should be noted that Derrida speaks at length about *donner le jour,* a colloquial term that means "to give birth". So, in this instance, Derrida is suggesting not only the possibility of revelation by means of different readings, but also the possibility for different births and rebirths of textuality and genre.

helps to establish a more multifaceted understanding of composition and text creation. Reading and composition framed as multi-directional cerebral activities underscore that the underlying function of the text is to be consumed literarily, processed and then pondered.

As will be demonstrated in the body chapters, the creation of the text is much like a birth, as suggested by Derrida, merging divinely-inspired encounter and human remembrance as text. As Mechthild and other mystics state, the true "author" of their writings is God, and while some scholars have disputed the veracity of that statement, the intention of the writer-speaker is clear: without divine encounters these texts would not exist. That is not to say that these mystics simply report their experience. For this reason, the memory of the divine melds with the meditation and contemplation thereof before and during the process of composition. The text becomes the literary offspring of human-divine mingling.

And yet, these texts reflect the multifaceted experience of the mystic, entombed within the text to be awakened and revisited.[137] The longing and suffering, ecstasy and sorrow, moments of enlightenment and understanding dwell within the cognitive recasting of the mystical text. Naturally such varied experience supersedes a single mode of expression, particularly a lifetime of encounters with the divine. Therefore, it is unsurprising that mystics drew upon numerous genre traditions and its variations to express the ineffable experience of mystical piety and divine encounters. In the conclusion of this chapter, I connect the undercurrent of genre variation with beguine mystical texts and illustrate the ways in which these modern genre theorists illuminate overarching medieval conceptualizations of genre and the function of the didactic text. I demonstrate that the central concerns outlined by Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss parallel medieval understanding of the art and manner of the text as a mirror reflecting both inwardly (the inner body and the connection to the divine) and outwardly (as inspiration to other humans seeking a deeper and more meditative relationship-understanding of the divine. Genre is the key to unlock the bridge between reader-listener and writer-speaker, the structure and motifs of the texts like building blocks that connect through the page.

This dissertation focuses on the role and function of genre within beguine-composed texts because genre has the ability to highlight both the individuality of a text and its claims to universality or broader audience comprehension. As K.S. Whetter notes,

> Our generic consideration may, like our use of language, be so thoroughly assimilated as to function unconsciously, but our presentation, understanding, and interpretation of any mimetic and communicative act is affected by genre, whether the medium be speech, literature, music, film, dance, or anything else.[138]

Whetter exposes a crucial yet challenging aspect of genre: we do not deny its existence and yet challenge and continually find difficulty in the definition and classification of genre. Genre or kinds existed during the medieval period and well beyond into the ancient period, and yet modern scholarship on genre is wrought with contradictions and disagreements concerning the importance or accuracy of generic taxonomical classifications. Whether we acknowledge or attempt to reject its presence, as Whetter points out, "genre is an essential part of the medium of

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[137] In her article, "Children of Promise" (discussed at length in Chapter Three), Patricia Dailey outlines a very powerful reading of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions*, one that reflects divine encounter, remembrance of the encounter, and the process of meditation that reminds Hadewijch of the significance of humble works in everyday life (*werken* in Middle Dutch).

[138] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 9.

a work, without which…we can never fully understand its message."[139] My hope is by the end of this chapter, a potential avenue of investigation can aid in approaching genre in a way that will illuminate the complex web of messages within beguine-composed texts. I now discuss Derrida and the main concepts and critiques of genre from his 1979 lecture, "The Law of Genre", using the lecture as a way to highlight prevailing discussions within genre theoretical scholarship.

I.   The Constraints of Genre and Interpretation

Derrida, genre, and gender

In his monumental 1979 lecture, Jacques Derrida deconstructed the notion of genre, the inadequacy of genre expectations within a text, and a highly gendered understanding of genre based upon the overly-generalized concepts of the sexes.[140] In Derrida's reading of genre, the concept of genre ties to words referring to gender in several European languages (French: *le genre* signifies "type, sort, kind" as well as "gender", in the grammatical sense—there are three genders (*genres*) in German, for example) or marriage, the union of one or more genders into matrimony (German: *die Gattung* suggests "genus, type, species, genre, etc.", which is very similar to French, and yet *die Gattin* "wife, spouse" and *der Gatte* "husband, spouse" relate not simply to the question of gender, but the consummation of genders).[141] Categorizing genre along these lines, Derrida employs a system of logic that designates male-authored literature within a scholarly, academic context (as in the masculine or neuter "genre" in French), delegating femaleness and female-authored texts to solely the sexual and biological (*die Gattung, die Gattin, der Gatte*—the emphasis is on marriage, physical union, and consummation).

"The Law of Genre", however, presents possible readings of genre that extend beyond the persistent, taxonomical classification of textual form that Derrida deems not only cultural constructs but also falsified and false. Citing Genette, Derrida explains that

> The history of genre-theory is strewn with these fascinating outlines that *inform and deform reality,* a reality often heterogeneous to the literary field, and that claim to discover a natural "system" wherein they construct a factitious symmetry heavily reinforced by fake windows.[142]

In other words, the classification of genre through the scholarly lens is an artificial construct by nature. This does not signify that genres do not exist within literature at any point in history. In fact, Derrida proposes a hypothesis that "a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre."[143] Genre is therefore a complicated construct that is as duplicitous as it is singular in nature. But what does that actually mean?

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of gender and genre in Derrida's lecture extends well beyond classification of textual traits. When a "line of demarcation" is broached, it signifies the inclusion of a text into a specific genre group but also anticipates and suggests the

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[139] Ibid.*,* 14.

[140] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre" in *Appendix: Bulletin of the International Colloquium on Genre*, (Strassbourg: Groupe de recherches sur les theories du signe et du text, 1979).

[141] Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 221–222.

[142] Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 207, cited from Genette's essay "Genres, 'Types,' Modes" p. 408. Italics added by Derrida for emphasis.

[143] Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 212.

exclusion of that same text from other genre groups. Derrida explains that "[t]his inclusion and this exclusion do not remain exterior to one another; they do not exclude each other."[144] Rather than view a line as a division between two or more elements, Derrida defines it as an ellipsis, meaning that it marks both the end of one thing and the beginning of another simultaneously. Derrida states that this inclusion and exclusion,

> …form what I shall call the *genre-clause,* a clause stating at once the juridical utterance, the precedent-making designation and the law-text, but also the closure, the closing that excludes itself from what it includes (one could also speak of a floodgate ["*écluse"*] of genre).[145]

With this initial discussion of genre in basic terms, Derrida demonstrates the forced nature of scholarly generic classification that ineffectually seek to organize and separate genres that do exist within literature. In essence, Derrida exposes the paradoxical situation that is genre classifications.

In order to combat this paradox, Derrida proposes an alternative understanding of the law or function of genre within literature. If we return to his earlier hypothesis, Derrida goes on to explain that

> Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging.[146]

In my understanding of Derrida's hypothesis, the inclination to assign texts to a genre group is false, or as Derrida states, "[m]aking genre its mark, a text demarcates itself."[147] Derrida asserts that texts include genre and textual forms but there is no sense of belonging. Belonging cannot exist because texts and genres do not express a singular genre, there is always a concept of hybridity or mixing of genres.[148] The marking of a text as a particular genre, in Derrida's analysis, leads to the demarcation of that text, meaning that when a scholar assigns a text to a specific overarching genre, they then expose the text's inability to "fit" squarely into one genre because of the presence of other genres within its pages.

Let us take for example the previously-mentioned situation of Hadewijch's corpus and its designated genre types. While all parts of her corpus might express some aspects of "visionary literature" or "mystical treatise", other aspects express themselves more infrequently and the presence of multiple genres within one text complicates even the overarching headings of "vision/*visio*" or letter. And yet the hybridity of genre types found within Hadewijch's corpus might not, as Derrida argues, be conscious or deliberate.[149] There exists a conflict between

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 212–213.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] The concept of "mixing genres" is significant because it reflects the first line of Derrida's lecture: "Genres are not to be mixed" (Derrida, 202).

[149] "The remark of belonging need not pass through the consciousness of the author or the reader, although it often does so. It can also refute the consciousness or render the explicit 'mention' mendacious, false, inadequate or ironic according to all sorts of overdetermined figures. Finally, this remarking-trait need be neither a theme nor a thematic component of the work—although of course the instance of

textual production, its reception, and scholarly interpretation as per what was intentional or conscious in terms of genre selection and expression. Scholars have interpreted the manuscript organization of Hadewijch's corpus by genre as a means to designate her works in terms of rigid genre types. These genre types are then compared with other textual examples that were also classified rigidly by type (e.g. all poems of the court as "courtly lyric", when there are at least three traditions of courtly poetry that existed during the Middle Ages). Not surprisingly the comparison between Hadewijch's "courtly lyric" and that of "standard" courtly lyric result in discourses complicated by exceptions and highlight the unexpected nature of Hadewijch's use of what is classified as a rigid, standardized form.

Returning to Derrida, the forced "belonging" of Hadewijch's corpus into set (read "rigid") genre groups complicates scholarly understanding of the nuanced and complex genre types that do exist within her texts. The "floodgate" or "genre-clause" describes the permeable nature that genre classification should/ought to exude. In marking an end of one genre with the beginning of another genre type, the "floodgate" is also the ellipsis. Derrida (unfortunately) classifies these two directions from the point of ellipsis in terms of twined gender form, which is divided into very heteronormative conformities of gender and sex (male/female, masculine/feminine). Playing with the idea of the ellipsis/"floodgate", Derrida later defines it as a "hymen", "…a relationless relation between the two, …an identity and difference between the feminine and the masculine."[150] It is the centering of gender and biological sex that renders, in my opinion, Derrida's "The Law of Genre" problematic in its gendered linguistic casting but fruitful in its overall scope and proposed lines of analysis.

Masculine-feminine and "invagination"

In the first half of "The Law of Genre", Derrida embarks on a philosophical and highly organized examination of genre theory and history. Gender holds no central position in the discussion, but rather his language is framed by processes and expressions of function within the text. The discussion is, by most considerations, scholarly and well-balanced. However, in Jonathan Crimmins' reading of the lecture, he posits that the first half does express aspects of gender subversively when read together with the second half, particularly with the concept of "invagination."[151] In fact, Crimmins implies that the first half with its highly theoretical and balanced approach signifies the "masculine" whereas the second half, with its highly-charged appropriation of female anatomical references, signifies the "feminine."[152] In addition, the organization of the lecture situates the first half within the viewpoint of classical genre classification (which I referred to above as taxonomical classification). Derrida devotes the second half of the lecture to more contemporary views of genre, "associated with speech-act

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belonging to one or several genres, not to mention all the traits that mark this belonging, often have been treated as theme, even before the advent of what we call 'modernism'" (Derrida, 211–212).

[150] Ibid., 221.

[151] Crimmins discusses the first half, in particular the discussion of the "floodgate" or "genre-clause" as the preparation for the second half of the lecture, which more concretely includes gender within the discussion. According to his reading, the one (first half) leads to the birth of the other (second half), thus embodying the very concept that Derrida seeks to describe.
Jonathan Crimmins, "Gender, Genre and the Near Future in Derrida's 'The Law of Genre'", 54.

[152] The duality of this lecture has also been addressed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in "Displacement and the Discouse of Women", "Notes Toward a Tribute to Jacques Derrida", and "Feminism and Deconstruction", which Crimmins mentions in the initial pages of his article (Crimmins, 46 n.4).

theory and rhetorical genre theory."[153] With these lines of argument, Derrida enacts a theoretical delineation that, in some ways, disassociates female-authored texts from equal scholarly treatment and consideration as male-authored texts. Derrida connects the feminine with the emotional, the "yes, yes" of compliance with other genres, while the masculine resides in the objective classification of previous scholarly research.

 Playing upon the act of reading and speech genres, Derrida demonstrates the possibility of present and future readings in the second half of his lecture. Reviewing Genette's analysis of Romanticism, Derrida details the ways in which Genette engages with Romantic ideals without "belonging" to that classification.[154] As Derrida interprets Genette's reading of Romanticism's classification of genres, he depicts the concept of "the law of the law of genre" through reading.[155] The layering of present readings (Derrida), past readings (Genette and the Romantics), and possible readings (I/we as readers) illustrates the complex nature of genre(s) and textual classification. Crimmins explains that,

> It is because of this capacity of texts to be reentered and reiterated that Derrida
> extends the metaphor of the fold [*les pli*]—adopted in "The Double Session"
> to refer both to the folds of book pages and the folds of the vulva—by speaking
> of the "invagination" of the text, a metaphor that becomes for Derrida the basis
> for an alternative, non-teleological diachrony.[156]

Whereas above I describe this process as a "layering", Derrida employs "fold(s)" and "invagination" as a means of understanding what is seen on the surface (present readings of the text) and possible/future readings that are hidden in the fold. The highly biological nature of Derrida's analogy connects not only to the concept of the "hymen" or ellipsis (demarcation of beginning and end, belonging and non-belonging) but also the birth of new readings of the texts and, by extension, the creation or birth of literature at all.[157] The birth or creation of literature, according to Derrida, occurs at the line of demarcation because as soon as the limit of a text is marked, a new phase of reading and deeper comprehension can begin. That new phase is what Derrida describes as "invagination", a word that he creates in order to conflate the cerebral process of literary composition (represented by the image of a book with pages and folds) with the physical act of encountering the text—the eyes exploring each word, seeking understanding, and potential ways to unlock the hidden meanings of the text that occurs beyond the page.

 Therefore, "invagination" suggests not only the reading and future readings of a text, but the genre(s) and unseen genre(s) hidden within the "folds." In this sense, Derrida returns to

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[153] Ibid., 45.

[154] Derrida, 208.

[155] The use of "law" here is purposeful. A "law" can be seen as a guideline for behavior or characteristics (such as the law of gravity), but in most European societies, a law upholds a structure that should not be breached. In many ways, I believe Derrida expresses the range of defintions with his use of "law." As I have discussed, the categorization and separation of genres has led scholars to classify texts upon very rigid lines. What Derrida outlines here is a theory for the approach and scholarly understanding of genre, both what it was ("law" as rigid, unyielding, and decreed by some authority) and what it may be ("law" as fluid and malleable, a guideline for investigation).

[156] Crimmins, 54.

[157] "Without [the clause or floodgate], neither genre nor literature come to light, but as soon as there is this blinking of an eye, this clause or this floodgate of genre, at the very moment that a genre or a literature is broached, at that very moment, degenerescence has begun, the end begins" (Derrida 213).

aspects of the first half of his lecture (the masculine side) as termed through the second, feminine half. During the first half, Derrida clarifies two points concerning the identification of the mark of genre on/in a text.

> Let me clarify two points on this subject. First, it is possible to have several genres, an intermixing of genres or a total genre, the genre "genre" or the poetic of literary genre as genre of genres. Second, this re-mark can take on a great number of forms and can itself pertain to highly diverse types.[158]

Invagination allows for the known and unknown aspects of genre to be expressed but also for those aspects potentially uncovered through analysis. And yet, through his highly-gendered reading in the second half and more objective reading in the first, Derrida betrays the fact that the explanation for the understanding of genre can in fact exist without the gendered bias. Derrida's declaration of equal and mutual interaction between the masculine and feminine halves of the lecture is complicated because he employs analogies that reduce biological/anatomical female traits to simple functions intended to affirm his reading of the law of genre.[159]

While at first glance such a rigid connection between linguistic factors and literary form and organization might appear unmediated, perhaps even unwise, Derrida exposes a central flaw within scholarship, particularly in the scholarly approach female-authored texts. A brief reading through past academic studies of beguine mysticism reveals a limitation in the approach and comparisons made with these female authors' texts. A prime example is the approach, interest, and treatment of Hadewijch and Mechthild as female mystics, distanced from the male-authored mystical texts attributed to Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Heinrich Seuse.[160] Despite incredible linguistic fluency, Hadewijch's writings remained a topic of interest in women's history and feminist studies until the late twentieth century.[161] Her works, an ingenious collection of vision, letters, and poetry, attracted interest largely from feminist scholars, who in turn compared her corpus to works of other well-known female authors. Derrida's lecture complicates the understanding of genre and gender because it provides on the one hand the contradiction of wanting to include female-authored texts into the canon, and, on the other, the issue of classification and description of these female-authored and –attributed texts. Crimmins' reading of Derrida implies that Derrida sought to acknowledge both "genders" of the text (i.e. the

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[158] Ibid., 211.

[159] Crimmins, 56.
Crimmins reads this overtly feminine casting of genre theory as Derrida's reaction to Hegel's overly masculine reading.

[160] In Chapter Two, I discuss Amy Hollywood's work on the subject of the beguine mystics and the male German mystics. Whereas Wolfgang Mohr focuses more heavily on Mechthild and states that her genres are beyond the ability to compare to the male German mystics, Hollywood aims to bring the texts into dialogue, however more specifically on the subject of content and not genre. Bernard McGinn, Hollywood's doctoral advisor, also wrote a monograph comparing the beguine mystics with the writings of Meister Eckhart (*Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics,* 1994).

[161] Hadewijch was only "rediscovered" during the 1870s, at which time she was celebrated for her compositional acrobatics, yet remained in a subgroup affiliated with Jans Ruusbroec and other male authored texts. Amy Hollywood instituted new readings of Hadewijch in comparison, not only with Mechthild of Magdeburg but also Meister Eckhart, aligning the female-authored texts with that of a canonized male author. (See Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife* and other works.)

historical and the natural, the scientific/scholarly and the emotional) and suggest that both are present simultaneously.[162]

However, Derrida's explanation of genders continues to remain through a male lens. He never denies a difference between his two classifications of gender nor the biological functions implied through his analogies. In reference to form and gender, Derrida states,

> The question of the literary genre is not a formal one: it covers the motif of the law in general, of generation in the natural and symbolic senses, of birth in the natural and symbolic senses, of the generation difference, sexual difference between the feminine and masculine genre/gender, of the hymen between the two, of a relationless relation between the two, of an identity and difference between the feminine and masculine.[163]

While theoretical, Crimmins argues that Derrida seeks to challenge the male-oriented reading of textual form by Hegel. I would argue, however, that this reading of Derrida remains complicated because of the strength of the male lens despite an attempt to create what Crimmins calls a textual "bisexuality", or the presence of "two genres (genders) becoming one genre (gender)."[164] While Crimmins states that Derrida creates a "double invagination"[165] through ellipsis (or the hymen) between the public and the private law of genre, between the gendered conceptualizations of genre, Derrida's masculine lens as author-speaker-narrator impedes his ability to truly distance his analysis from the masculine genre/gender enough to fully represent the feminine genre/gender as something combined rather than a continual "other."

The feminine, both naturally and symbolically, remains an object of attraction and lust in Derrida's lecture, a subject of emotion and biological capabilities (i.e. a womb to give birth to text). In his discussion of the feminine law, Derrida explains,

> Now the feminine, or generally affirmative gender/genre, is also the genre of this figure of law, not of its representatives, but of the law herself who, throughout an account, forms a couple with me, with the "I" of the narrative voice.[166]

Derrida, as speaker and "narrative voice", insinuates in his prevailing concepts of heteronormative biological couplings that he remains the masculine, joining together with the feminine law. And although Derrida continues on in his explanation that the law "is not a woman", he also states that "she, *la loi*, is in the feminine, declined in the feminine…[n]o, she is described as a 'female element'".[167] His affirmation of the law as feminine and yet attempt to deny the heterosexual coupling implied with his analogies conflicts the claims that there is in fact a true "bisexuality" at play in his statements. Furthermore, the description of feminine as "generally affirmative" specifies qualities—such as the biological, the emotional, the sexual—as inherently feminine. So, while Derrida seeks to complicate Hegel's theories of negation and form, he situates his argument within pre-scripted gender roles and classifications.

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[162] Crimmins, 56.
[163] Derrida, 221.
[164] Crimmins, 56.
[165] Ibid., 57.
[166] Derrida, 225.
[167] Ibid.

The irony lies in the fact that Derrida attempts to deconstruct the restrictive and misleading taxonomical genre classifications through the reaffirmation of restrictive and misleading gender classifications. Yet, how does this impact female-authored texts? The classification of female-authored texts by means of gender reflects a practice that generations of literary theorists and scholars have followed before Derrida's lecture. In my opinion, what this signifies is a lack of demarcation, a lack of separation in the way that scholars read the feminine and the female-authored text. Gender and biological sex remain present in modern feminist readings of female-authored texts. And yet, as Mary Eagleton notes,

> …how can we ever know that the similarities between any group of writers
> are determined by sex, rather than race, class, literary form, conditions of
> literary production, or any combination of any number of factors?[168]

Derrida's application of the biological or natural feminine as determining aspects within the reading of the law of genre only reaffirms the continuing generic attributes, however misleading, of the feminine within authored texts and female-authored texts. The past, gendered readings permeate present readings, just as genre classifications persist despite deconstruction of their modes of demarcation. In many ways, Derrida exposes the present imbalanced treatment of female-authored mystical texts, while at the same time highlighting future avenues of reformed scholarly investigation of genre. Understanding these limitations in gender/genre and taking them into consideration, I would still argue that "The Law of Genre" opens up potential readings of genre and textual examination through his warranted questioning of historical genre analysis.

While the gendered genre structure preoccupies the second half of the lecture, Derrida betrays the fact that, while he complicates the notion of naming a genre, there is no disagreement whether genre exists and holds a significant position within the medium of expression. I disagree that assigning a text to a generic group betrays or limits its function. If one approaches texts by means of their function, looking at the ways in which genre is used in order to express an underlying message, the text has not been betrayed but illuminated. The permeability or malleable nature of genre expressed as an ellipsis and "invagination" visualizes the changing nature of genre without denying its existence, a point which scholars commonly note, particularly in discussions that incorporate gender and genre together.[169]

Derrida and Medieval Reading Practice

Despite apparent issues with Derrida's use of genre and gender, elements of his theory correspond well with medieval understanding of the text and the function of genre in promoting memory and contemplation. From a medieval standpoint, Derrida's concept of "invagination" and the creation or birth of a text bodes well with the practice of contemplation, a cycle of behavior that encouraged reading (*lectio*), meditation upon the text and its contents (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*) and contemplation (*contemplatio*), a word that differs from the modern sense, and surmises a sense of brief unity and enhanced understanding of the divine. Similar to "invagination", the stages of *lectio* and *meditatio*, reading and re-readings of a text (or listening and reading, and any combination thereof) denote an ongoing and fluid process. In other words, *lectio* and *meditatio* harbor a sense of re-living and even re-experiencing the inner meaning of

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[168] Mary Eagleton, "Genre and Gender", reprinted in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (New York: Routeledge, 2014), 259.
[169] K.S. Whetter, *Understanding Romance*, 14.

the text. This concept connects to "invagination" because it suggests and encourages the discovery of and contemplation upon the hidden folds within the text, which are intended to increase consciousness of the divine message and internalize its lessons. Through *lectio* the text is encountered by the outer senses—the eyes, hands/touch, and ears (in the case of listening)—but the message is intended for the inner senses (i.e. the mind or psyche) which connects to the soul.

Therefore, reading in the medieval sense depicts something more than perusing a page for information or entertainment. Monks and other religious persons read to transfer the lessons of the text to memory, a faculty that was believed to be a physical etching onto the brain (often analogized as a wax tablet, other times a storeroom).[170] Meditation (*meditatio*) guides the reader-listener inward toward the inner faculties or senses. The inner senses paralleled the outer senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste but were divorced from the physical body in many ways. As Patricia Dailey notes,

> For Augustine, just as the outer body has eyes, ears, and other sensory
> organs, the inner body, the sign of the interior human being, has inner ears
> and inner eyes, and memory, part of its most spiritually nutritive element,
> which functions like a stomach, distilling the inner from the outer, the eternal
> from the temporal…[171]

Humans thus are two-bodied, in the sense that they are comprised of the earthly/corporeal and the spiritual/divine. Reading feeds the inner mind via the memory, which in turn has the ability to influence the actions of the outer body. The text provides that bridge between inner and outer bodies and senses.[172] Although the concept of inner and outer bodies finds its roots in Hellenic thought, Augustine expands upon these concepts, as well as those outlined by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16. The main difference we encounter in Augustine's theory of inner and outer bodies is that he connects the human with the divine through the inner senses and memory. For Augustine, it is the inner body that encounters the divine, at the end of which they return to the outer body. Meditation (*meditatio*) and the contemplative process brings the human closer to the divine by focusing on the inner body and senses (often aligned with the soul and "mind's eye"), as well as the mysteries surrounding the ineffable and incomprehensible experience with divinity.

How does Augustine's theory of inner and outer bodies connect to the question of genre? As mentioned above, memory is one of the faculties of the inner senses, and one that enables the reader-listener to meditate upon the lessons of the readings. Generic motifs and elements assist the reader-listener to internalize (or memorize) these lessons through the use of distinct markers constructed within the form to organize the information in the mind. For example, the use of allegory and exegesis provide both explanation and an image upon which one can meditate. Hadewijch's first vision uses the image of a forested landscape to help guide the reader-listener through a series of trees, each with their own unique meanings and descriptions. The descriptions play upon the outer senses of sight, touch, sound, and taste, while the exegesis extends each

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[170] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 24–25.

[171] Patricia Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Patricia Z. Beckman and Amy Hollywood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 264.

[172] Dailey, 265.

image's significance to a second, more profound message. By employing the use of allegory and exegesis, the reader-listener has the ability to revisit these lessons through the meditation upon the sensory experience housed within the text. In addition, as I discuss in more length in Chapter Three, the manuscript design itself—memory and inner senses made physical—encourages further internalization through colored initials and spatial organization of the text on parchment. Genre provides the structure and the signposts that encourage the reader-listener to experience the text in a way that promotes further reading (of text or of memorized images), meditation, and prayer.

Derrida's "invagination" connects to these medieval lines of thought on a few levels. One, the process of transferring reading to memory occurs through noted markers in the text (such as allegory and explication), all of which are heavily based upon generic motifs and structures. Two, the basis of "invagination" suggests reading into "the folds", exploring the multitude of aspects of a text, both generic and more linguistic, to unlock new understanding and readings. Finally, the existence of the mystical text is in itself an "invagination": the experience read (via memory), meditated upon, and constructed literarily and generically through these series of readings and understandings. The rich complexity of the text and its expressed generic motifs illuminates the densely ineffable divine experience in altered form. "Invagination" houses the potential to depict the writing and reading of a text simultaneously. The folds of the book (or of the vulva, in the case of Derrida) mimic the folds and web of connections within the mind, which, if trained accordingly, contain readings and potential meditations upon those readings stored for future perusal.

In this section, I addressed Derrida and the complexities of his lecture, "The Law of Genre". While I find the discussion of a gendered theory of genre highly problematic, Derrida's term "invagination" denotes a process seeped in medieval traditions of reading and the practice of contemplation. In the next section, I discuss Bakhtin's theory of genre and the role genre plays during the composition of the text as the writer-speaker anticipates the reader-listeners' reaction. Bakhtin's analysis of the relationship between reading and composition creates a dialogic aspect to a text based upon the reader-listener and writer-orator's knowledge of identified genres and motifs. Through his theory of speech genres, we see two central elements crucial to mystical writings: one, the concept of "the living word"; and two, communication between human and the divine.

II. Bakhtin and genre(s)

Moving away from the focus of gender and genre, I shift now to a discussion of Bakhtin and genre, in particular speech genres. While the section on Derrida sought to expose both the question of rigid taxonomical genre classification and gender implications, my reading of Bakhtin highlights a different approach: the significance of speech and dialogue within the beguine-composed texts. Although his article, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel", classifies the older genres found within beguine texts as completed or no longer evolving, Bakhtin admits that,

> All these genres, or in any case their defining features, are considerably older
> than written language and the book, and to the present day they retain their
> ancient oral and auditory characteristics.[173]

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[173] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 70.

The underlying orality and the tradition of oral forms mentioned in the above citation is, I believe, a significant characteristic of genre within beguine-composed texts, one that warrants more investigation. My focus here is speech genres, orality, and the understanding of a "dialogic orientation" that, I argue, is paramount to how beguine-composed texts should be understood in terms of genre. Through the use of "dialogic orientation", Bakhtin uncovers the element of intimacy between author-narrator-speaker and reader-listener and the ways in which this underlying intimacy shapes the choice not only of genre but also of language.[174] My analysis will conclude with the connection between Bakhtin's speech genres, intimacy and possible merging of writer-speaker and reader-listener. In addition, I revisit Derrida's theories to show how Bakhtin intersects with "invagination" and reading *les pli*.

"The Problem of Speech Genres"

Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal essay, "The Problem of Speech Genres", was intended to be part of a longer volume, *The Genres of Speech,* which Bakhtin never completed.[175] Speech, Bakhtin maintains, holds a significant place within all communication, oral and written, and contributes to his concept of "dialogism".[176] It should be noted that Bakhtin's essays first appeared in the early 1950s, predating Derrida's "The Law of Genre" by roughly two decades. Both Derrida and Bakhtin influenced modern conceptualizations of genre theory. However, I chose to discuss Derrida before Bakhtin in order to demonstrate the marked shift that preoccupies current literary theory trends and reiterate, perhaps even, reinstate the strength of Bakhtin's interpretations and theories as a move away from the highly gendered and heteronormative discourse surrounding genre/gender. In this essay, Bakhtin concentrates on the connections between different types of genres, particularly emphasizing the "extreme heterogeneity of speech genres (oral and written)",[177] what he classifies as "primary" and "secondary genres".

> Primary genres include things like letters, diaries, minutes, everyday stories, as well as the so-called "speech genres", namely the different forms of dialogue; secondary genres are the more complex entities—including the vast majority of literary genres—that are formed by the combination and transformation of primary genres.[178]

Whereas Derrida gendered the concept of separation between genres, Bakhtin situates his discussion of genre in expressive language in the form of speech (oral and written). Just as was demonstrated in Derrida, Bakhtin acknowledges the complexity of genre and the potentiality that texts express more than one genre, an intermixing of genre, and even genres within genres.

Although literary genres have occupied scholarly consciousness "more than anything else" in terms of speech genres, Bakhtin accurately notes that these studies have focused on works "in terms of their specific literary and artistic features, in terms of the differences that

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[174] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres" in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 93.

[175] *Modern Genre Theory,* 82

[176] Ibid.

[177] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", 83.

[178] *Modern Genre Theory,* 10.

distinguish one from the other."[179] Derrida also comments on this scholarly tendency, thereby establishing that the taxonomical classifications of texts has persisted from Bakhtin through the time of Derrida's lecture. Yet, whereas Derrida interprets the limitation as the misguided scholarly desire to "define" texts—or to force a "belonging" onto that text—Bakhtin cites a different reason. The "extreme heterogeneity" of speech genres lies at the heart of the difficulties scholars face when analyzing and categorically organizing literary texts.[180] I interpret Bakhtin in stating that scholars seek to expose and highlight those elements lacking from a text, the "have nots" of a given work, rather than explore the presence of generic elements and how those function within the work as a whole. In his thesis, Bakhtin positions "primary" and "secondary speech genres" as the first step in working towards establishing and understanding, not only how speech genres function within a text, but also how these speech genres interact with one another and as a whole. Bakhtin, like Derrida, does not question the existence of genre but instead cites scholarly methodology and approach as key inhibitors in our ability to fully appreciate a work.

Primary and Secondary Speech Genres

Primary speech genres are simple genres, utterances that occur in everyday speech. While Bakhtin does not explain primary genres at length, what is crucial is the understanding that these primary genres are the seeds with which secondary speech genres develop. Bakhtin states that,

> During the process of their formation, [secondary speech genres] absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion.[181]

Secondary speech genres are complex genres precisely because they express the combination of one or more genres and reflect aspects of simple speech that is transformed and adapted to suit the nature of the literary text. Bakhtin cites the difference between primary and secondary speech genres in his essay "Epic and Novel". Bakhtin states that it is the influence of "high" literature—literary forms that adhere to those accepted by ruling bodies—which decides how literature should conform in style and language.[182] While Bakhtin distances himself from a harsh critique of non-"novel" genres, he continues to discuss the mediation of simpler speech genres and their integration into secondary speech genres. The question of reality and its connection to speech are exposed.

"Absorbed" and "digested" primary genres no longer hold direct connection to reality. Bakhtin explains that,

> These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. They lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others.[183]

Speech genres that reflect simple speech (i.e. everyday dialogue, more intimate utterances) transform in complex/secondary speech genres (i.e. literary texts, etc.). The utterances within literary texts—and the forms they suggest—have lost "their immediate relation to actual

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179 Bakhtin, *Speech Genres,* 84.
180 Ibid.
181 Bakhtin, *Speech Genres,* 85.
182 Bakhtin, *Epic and Novel,* 80.
183 Bakhtin, *Speech Genres,* 85.

reality".[184] In other words, these speech genres become reflections or shadows of real speech utterances, rather than the speech that one would hear in everyday expression. Primary and secondary speech genres are connected, yet different, and contribute to what Bakhtin describes as "the whole".

> [Primary genres] enter into actual reality only via the novel as a whole, that
> is, as a literary-artistic event and not as everyday life.[185]

These "literary-artistic events" reflect everyday life, they reflect experience but they are not the embodiment of experience itself. If we take, for example, the instance of prayer within Mechthild's *bůch* —particularly in the instance of the Mass of St. John (Book 2, Chapter 4)—we encounter this phenomenon of experience or everyday speech (i.e. the prayer) mediated by way of literary text and layered within the vision of a mass that has been literarily constructed. In other words, we do not hear Mechthild pray. We (the modern reader) are distanced historically and intimately from the writer-speaker, and the experience of the prayer is mediated through the lens of a vision in which the mass "plays out".[186] Prayer is only one fold within other, more prominent genres of mass, liturgy, vision (in this example).

The incorporation of numerous genres, as seen with the example of Mechthild, also exemplifies another concept of Bakhtin's theory on genres and speech genres: novelization and the layering of genres. Although Bakhtin does not speak at length about this phenomenon in "The Problem of Speech Genres", in his earlier essay, "Epic and Novel", he elucidates the connection between the use of primary genres (in transformed use, of course) within the novel. Despite the fact that the novel is the focus of this discussion, the "extraliterary heteroglossia" corresponds well to the question of genre usage within beguine-composed texts. Understanding genre within beguine mystical texts warrants not only deconstruction of primary genre elements within the text[187] but also the reading of these texts for evidence of what John Frow terms intertextuality; specifically, "the range of processes by which a text invokes another, but also the way texts are constituted as such by their relationships with other texts."[188] Texts, therefore, are not simply reflections of the society in which they were written nor the individual genius of a solitary nature, but a response to and interaction with other texts. The comparison of textual constructions plays upon what Jauss describes as the "horizon of expectation": the anticipation of how a set of motifs and/or genres interact and how the expected outcome is depicted within the text.

Similarly, Bakhtin speaks of the intertextual relationship in terms of dialogic representation, a concept that Bakhtin coins "heteroglossia", or

> the orientation towards a multiplicity of other voices and languages which so
> marks the stylistics of the novel and which is realized through a range of stylized

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[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid.

[186] "The vast majority of literary genres are secondary, complex genres composed of various transformed primary genres (the rejoinder in dialogue, everyday stories, letters, diaries, minutes, and so forth)…As a rule, these secondary genres of complex cultural communication *play out* various forms of primary speech communication" (my emphasis) (Ibid., 94).

[187] John Frow, *Genre* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), 10–11.

[188] Frow, *Genre,* 52.

vocalizations.[189]

The multiplicity of other voices exists within a framework of dialogic orientation, meaning that the form and constructional outlining of the speech (spoken or written) anticipates a presumed response or reaction from the listener or reader. Bakhtin asserts that,

> [the novelization of other genres suggests that [t]hey become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary hetero-glossia and the "novelistic" layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally, this is the most important thing—the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present).[190]

"Novelization" refers to what Bakhtin develops into primary and secondary genres in "The Problem of Speech Genres." The appearance of "transformed" primary genres within the secondary genre forms—these "extraliterary heteroglossia"—reflect experience and play upon the reader's/readers' understanding of primary speech genres (i.e. everyday speech, dialogue, prayer, etc.) and establish an alternative concept of reality. Similar to Derrida's image of folds [*les pli*], Bakhtin illustrates textual heterogeneity through the description of the "layered" text. Bakhtin differs from Derrida in that he positions his argument upon speech and language usage (e.g. utterances) rather than a "law of genre".[191]

In other words, to understand genre and to classify the textual discourse into a larger umbrella concept of textual form(s), one must first understand key elements that a) aided the texts construction, b) motivated the writer-speaker to write /speak, c) formed the internal references (or what John Frow calls "citations"), both in terms of other voices (that is to say other texts or authorial voices—e.g. the Bible, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, etc. for beguine mystics) and other textual forms (e.g. Provençal courtly lyric, the letter, prayer, meditation, etc.), and finally, d) are historically derived, meaning the contemporaneous significance of certain genres (primary or secondary) over others. Following Bakhtin's example of textual layering, I shift to the next aspect of his discussion of speech genres, delving deeper into the text from form and speech genre types to composition and textual intimacy.

The Individual and Intimacy

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts in beguine-composed texts is the highly individualized nature expressed through intimate methods of speech, which are employed to describe, portray, or embody an experience or thought. As discussed in the previous section,

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[189] Frow, 48.

[190] Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel", 72.

[191] Even the Law of Genre reflects an authoritative, recognized form, while at the same time establishing a new "order". The fact that Derrida refers to his lecture as "The Law of Genre" hints towards the authority-based knowledge that he references. That said, Derrida complicates these understandings of genre to state that, while he sees that they exist, we have created an understanding that goes against the very nature of genre. By placing boundaries between genre types that are restrictive or perhaps seek to be isolationary, we in fact limit the text's nature to express and prohibit ourselves from seeing future and potential expressions of genre (and new readings).

Bakhtin describes the underlying foundations of literature in terms of speech genres, both primary and secondary, to describe the ways everyday speech patterns—normal utterances—translate into literary expression and exude a sense of heterogeneity that defies belonging to existing taxonomies of genre. In the introduction to this chapter, I cited the example of Hadewijch and her corpus and the difficulty in "naming" her texts as solely "visionary", when in fact other motivations and genres reside within those textual walls. Bakhtin addresses this issue of labeling, what Derrida might call a "forced or fictive belonging", through his discussion of the individuality of utterance.

According to Bakhtin, the concept of the utterance explains the connection between language and life, literature and reality. Bakhtin explains that,

> Any utterance—oral or written, primary or secondary, and in any sphere of communication—is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker (or writer); that is, it possesses individual style.[192]

Bakhtin suggests that the utterance defies the rigid cultural constructs of taxonomical genre classifications because the origins are the individual and therefore highly individualized. The bridge between language/speech and genre also illustrates the relationship between expression and the reader, form, and the interpreter/analyst. The utterance can express one aspect of a whole. Similar to how primary genres are transformed and reflect a shadow of reality, so too can genres and utterances reflect aspects of the authorial or narratorial voice within a text. Bakhtin further explains,

> Various genres can reveal various layers and facets of the individual personality, and individual style can be found in various interrelations with the national language.[193]

Bakhtin again employs the image of layers to explore the complex nature of speech genres and how the individual uses combinations of genres (primary, secondary, and a mixture of both) to create an expression that is as unique as the writer/speaker. Even a narrated story, such as a recounted vision from Hadewijch's corpus, portrays aspects of experience (via primary and secondary genres), emotions and reactions to said experience (via utterances and reflections upon the experience), and the translation or transformation from an experience to a "literary-artistic event". Reading Hadewijch's words reflects simultaneously a reading of a literary Hadewijch and her transcribed literary-artistic experiences. This is not to suggest a fictitious nature or quality to her writings or the events that motivated these texts. More so, this Bakhtinian reading of Hadewijch, with the example of a vision, suggests that the layering of literary genre and composition is by its very construction complex and therefore defies a simplistic underpinning of "visionary literature".

However, "visionary literature" is also problematic, not just in its labeling, but due to the lack of distinction between form and function. "Visionary literature" places emphasis upon the proposed experience, which some scholars centralize as the motivation for the composition of a text. The term "visionary literature" highlights a concentration on the visionary episode(s) and emphasizes reporting encounters with the divine. Beguine mystical writings are more than simple reporting and play with act of composition and reading. As mentioned in the previous

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[192] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres", 86.
[193] Ibid.

section, the process of reading as a part of the medieval practice of contemplation seeks to prolong the encounter with the divine through reading and meditation. Writing is included in this practice because it is necessary for the mystic or confessor to meditate upon the experience to construct a text intended to encourage further meditation and contemplation.[194] With "visionary literature", it is not so much that a genre can never be attributed to a text but rather that scholars need a deeper understanding of how the writer-speaker conforms a genre for a specific purpose. Visionary or devotional literature as a generic label infers only vague concepts of the form and function of a text. For beguine-composed texts, "visionary literature" reflects an unmediated experience, one that fails to encompass the didactic and dogmatic-driven focus within their texts.

In addition, Bakhtin clarifies with the example of the utterance, that personalized expression is an aspect of style and reflects the sentiments, thoughts, emotions, and moods of the writer-speaker. The complexity of Mechthild's, Hadewijch's or Agnes's writings suggests a fluency of genres and their ability to combine and alter recognized genres to suit the function and message of their writing. Bakhtin describes style and genre as "inseparably linked" and cites the harmful nature of attempting to "separate style from genre when elaborating historical problems".[195] In other words, the study of historical styles and genres require the scholarly consideration of not only the language, but also the historical foundations present during the composition of the text (and its use of speech genres). For Bakhtin, literary language is "a complex, dynamic system of linguistic style", one that is "constantly changing."[196] Similar on some levels to Derrida's concept of folds and multidirectional understanding of literary genre, Bakhtin institutes a reading of genre as a speech act, one that reflects the writer-speaker, the reader-listener, and the overarching implications within literary and social history at the time of composition. Bakhtin proposes that,

> In order to puzzle out the complex historical dynamics of these systems and move from a simple (and in the majority of cases, superficial) description of styles…one must develop a special history of speech genres (and not only secondary, but also primary ones) that reflects more directly, clearly, and flexibly all the changes taking place in social life.[197]

Bakhtin outlines the textual reflection of the writer-speaker in literary form, linking language and expression to life and history, what one might deem the "historical reality" of the writer-speaker.

On an even deeper level, Bakhtin establishes the connection between genre, style, content, and linguistic expression, thus building the complex edifice of a historical literary text and its analysis. The model of layering concepts, speech genres, expressions, and realities play a significant role in the body chapters of this dissertation and my analysis of beguine-composed texts. And yet, the understanding of historical reality can only partially be portrayed with a discussion of the individual personality of the writer-speaker and stands incomplete without the consideration of the receptive (what Derrida might call the "feminine) half: the reader-listener. Often classified as the "intended audience", the proposed and potential reception of a text is undoubtedly expressed within its construction and composition. Bakhtin remarks that the

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[194] Patricia Dailey, "Children of Promise: The Bodies of Hadewijch of Brabant" in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41:2 (2011), 338.

[195] Ibid., 87.

[196] Ibid., 87–88.

[197] Ibid, 88.

> Finer nuances of style are determined by the nature and degree of personal
> proximity of the addressee to the speaker in various familiar speech genres,
> on the one hand, and in intimate ones, on the other.[198]

Style, therefore, is not only linked to genre and language, but also the addressee or reader-listener of a given text. Bakhtin plays with the concept of primary and secondary speech genres here, establishing that the utterance does exhibit definite forms. And yet, it is precisely through this knowledge, perhaps even fluency, of these speech genres that more complex and surprising expressions of utterances take place.[199]

> The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more
> fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them (where this is
> possible and necessary), the more flexibly and precisely we reflect the
> unrepeatable situation of communication—in a word, the more *perfectly*
> we implement our free speech plan (my emphasis).[200]

Fluency in language reflects fluency in style, which in turn leads to a fluency in speech genre and the adaptation of genres to express the individual. Bakhtin's use of the word "perfectly" in this passage I connect back to my discussion earlier in this chapter about Mechthild and her *bůch*. In that discussion, I described the complexity of the word *bůch* in Mechthild's work, but also the concept that the *bůch* connects to the whole as well as its parts, to the expression of experience as well as its form. I read "perfectly" here in the Latin sense—*perfectus* (complete or without lacking)—fulfilling the understanding of production and reception of the text and its multitude of layered understandings and aspects.

The production/composition and reception are then irrefutably linked, even to a greater degree when the speaker-writer and addressee share a close proximity. Through the act of these utterances and style, the writer-speaker gains fluency and perfects the art of his or her individual speech genre and style. Bakhtin describes these intimate genres and styles as

> …imbued with a deep confidence in the addressee, in his sympathy, in the
> sensitivity and goodwill of his responsive understanding. In this atmosphere
> of profound trust, the speaker reveals his internal depths.[201]

The "revealing" of "internal depths" through a sense of "deep confidence" expresses the fundamental aspect of style behind the extremely intimate tone and depiction found within the beguine-composed texts. Unlike more distanced themes of epic heroics or courtly adventure, the texts discussed within this dissertation necessitate an intimacy with the reader-listener due to its content-matter: the personalized reflection upon an individualized experience with the divine and opinions of the society surrounding that individual.

However, Bakhtin's description concerns more than just the individual, but the reflection of the individual as consumed or revealed within the literary text; a reflection of expectation, of reader-listener reception, of comprehension and internalization. Thus, the conceptualization of the reader-listener is just as present in a text as the writer-speaker, although this concept is the

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[198] Ibid., 92.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid., 91–92.
[201] Ibid., 93.

complex culmination of the writer-speaker's societal reality and reader-listener expectation. The result is a reader-listener as complex as the reflection and revelation of the individual through style, language, and genre. While medieval scholars often reflect upon the significance of the "intended audience", the portrayal of the audience is the passive construct, our scholarly opinion shaped only by way of historical understanding of the then-present. Bakhtin's reading of the addressee holds more sway within the text and alters the interpretation of genre, language and style choice.

One key example of a more static "intended audience" is found in Elizabeth Petroff's reading of Hadwijch's *Strophishe Liederen.* In her chapter, Petroff stipulates that Hadewijch selected the Provencal love lyric forms in order to "explore the experience of 'Minne'".[202] Petroff elaborates on this assertion, equating Hadewijch's employment of courtly love lyric to the same motivation that Bernard of Clairvaux sought in the composition of his commentaries on the Song of Songs. In her opinion,

> Hadewijch used the poetry of courtly love to express the emotional tensions
> of the longing for God, showing an unfailing mastery of all its techniques:
> stanza structure, the tornada, meter, rhyme, assonance, concatenation, and
> figures of speech.[203]

This analysis of the motivation for textual construction in Hadewijch's writings divorces Hadewijch as writer-speaker from her audience, without which arguably the creation of these texts might not exist.

Furthermore, by relying upon a lens of content-driven emotion, Petroff separates Hadewijch's textual experiences from the reality of her encounter with the divine that inspired her compositions. Bakhtin suggests that this phenomenon becomes improbable within more complex genre types, or secondary genres, which instill an aspect of hybridity (i.e. intertextuality). For example, love or courtly lyric is thoroughly multifaceted, shifting in meter, rhyme, authorial voice, compositional setting, thematic motivation (i.e. love vs. politically-motivated diatribes) and even in the psychological situation of the lover (i.e. frustration, longing, anger, ecstasy, etc.). By limiting the intended purpose of love lyric, Petroff reaffirms an overgeneralization of the genre, erasing the presence of variation within recorded textual expressions of the form. In some ways, Petroff distances Hadewijch's compositions from the varied generic structure of love lyric and, even broader, from poetry as a whole.

Recasting the genre of the Provencal love lyric for different aims, such as the expression of longing and experience of divine love, Hadewijch re-situates the intended audience of the work—thereby shifting the dialogic orientation of the text—yet retains the language expression, the shadow of the genre persists, and overall "aura" of the text form. That is to say, while the audience and the intertextual references motivate the construction of the text, the generic reference to Provencal lyric retains the skeleton, the bones, the basic construct of the love lyric. Hadewijch retains enough elements form the Provencal love lyric to make it recognizable to the reader-listener. At the same time, the genre is altered. The evidence of this skeleton of the Provencal love lyric is in the very fact that the generic form can be identified despite a shift in language, voice, and audience. John Frow describes this concept as "shifting texts to another

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[202] Elizabeth Petroff, "Gender, Knowledge, and Power in Hadewijch's *Strophische Gedichten*", in *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 182.

[203] Petroff, 182.

generic context…[which] suspends the primary generic force of the text but not its generic structure".[204]

Similar to genre recasting, the emotions within a text are representations of something real and felt, and yet are not real in the same sense as emotions experienced in "real life".[205] Bakhtin links emotional expression to the utterance, thus reflecting and revealing the style and language reflect and reveal the larger whole and more prevalent speech genres. The discussion of genre within beguine mystical writings alters the focus of the textual lens from that of content to context, from themes and tropes to textual form. The shift in focus allows the reader-listener to return to the base form(s) of the text and situate their understanding of the text's composition historically, textually, and literarily before engaging with the text's content.

In Bakhtin's analysis, the addressee, style, language, and speech genres connect and reflect the larger whole and, in turn, the individual writer-speaker. He writes,

> All these phenomena are connected with the whole of the utterance, and when this whole escapes the field of vision of the analyst they cease to exist for him. Herein lies one of the reasons for the narrowness of traditional stylistics we commented upon above. A stylistic analysis that embraces all aspects of style is possible only as an analysis of the *whole* utterance, and only in the chain of speech communion of which the utterance is an inseparable *link.[206]*

Piecing texts apart into characteristics or separating the concept of composition, writing, anticipation of the reader and the reader's expectations limits "the field of vision" through its "narrowness". Again, Bakhtin explains how function and form interact, highlighting that approach or questioning alters the ability to fully encounter the text. This difference lies in the process of asking *whether* a text qualifies as a stated genre versus *how* a text qualifies as that genre and what shifts this might signify in the use and formation of that genre within a given period or community.

Furthermore, Bakhtin compels scholars to understand writing as a process that engages reading and represents an expectation of the reader, as well as anticipating the expectations of the text for the reader. Bakhtin's theory highlights the highly communicative nature of the text, one that is both receptive and instructive. In case of medieval literature, particularly beguine mystical writings, I interpret the "whole of the utterance" to signify a deeper, subversive meaning to the text, one that is communicated through various genres and utterances, but all call upon a larger message than a particular page or passage. What is more compelling is the fact that this concept from Bakhtin have strong medieval connections. Patricia Dailey notes that medieval mystics and their writings often play with the concept of time and even suggest elements of an absence of time. Dailey remarks,

> …the vision is outside of time, in that the mystic's inner body or soul experiences an awareness or proximity to the divine, which may be beyond

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[204] Frow, 50.

[205] John Frow makes the connection between the real and the representation of the real in his discussion of genres shifted to a different context. Although the basis or structure of the genre continues to exist diminishes the "univocal" nature of the primary genre. That is to say, Frow states the primary genre forms express something completely and utterly intertwined within that textual expression/ representation. (Frow 43).

[206] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres", 95.

the grasp of language.[207]

The source of knowledge comes from the divine, and some scholars and theologians might even argue that the experience with the divine occurs within the concept and understanding of the divine, a space incomprehensible and infinitely more complex than human conceptualizations of time, memory or language.

In many ways, the vision is a complex genre because of the layering of a multitude of interpretations, readings, and incarnations of the text. Peter Dinzelbacher argues adamantly that to ignore the preface of experience within the vision is to attempt to erase the vision from the process of writing.[208] Through the lens of genre, however, it is impossible to discount the imprint of experience or the motivation from the act of writing or reading. The dialogic nature of Bakhtin's theory of genre acts in tandem with the assertion that the prophesized reading by the reader-listener and the literary reflection of experience (mediated understanding) are represented within the composition of any given work. An element of time and memory play throughout the text according to Bakhtin. The text represents a past, present and future event of understanding and consumption literarily. The mystic constructs a text that reflects upon an experience with the divine, one that she has meditated upon seeking to best formulate and express it in writing. In that same moment of composition, the mystic anticipates the reaction and comprehension of the reader-listener, structuring her writing with the hopes that she might reveal divine mysteries to whatever extent is plausible for the human psyche.

The complexities of the text, particularly mystical writings, extends well beyond questions of time and memory. Bakhtin suggests that when scholars interpret the significance of genre within a given text, they ought to highlight the importance not only of form and content, but of the physical existence of the text and its larger ramifications within theological understanding. From the Early Church Fathers onwards, the Scriptures represent the marriage of physicality and divinity: the holy word of God etched upon a tablet or parchment which was intended to remind the reader-listener of testimonies and lessons from Christ and visions of future events (Revelations). The physicality of these tones was also meant to inspire spiritual growth and understanding through contemplation and meditation upon the text.

Bakhtin compliments medieval sentiment with regards to intertextuality, a term that was devised to reflect sentiments from within Bakhtin's speech genre theory. With intertextuality, or heteroglossia as Bakhtin defines it, a multiplicity of aspects all lead to a reflection upon a greater whole. Form informs and guides, it creates, connects, and defies anticipated expressions of genre, thereby making it more memorable. Focusing on beguine-composed texts, heteroglossia suggests the convergence (but not conflation) of voices within their texts, both reflections of the divine and human, the eternal and the temporal. The dialogic nature of beguine-composed texts occurs on a multitude of levels: interlinearly as a conversation between cited utterances from divine encounter and text; extralinearly as a reflection upon or reiteration/revision of a recognized work outside the confines of the text; interpersonally as the writer-speaker conferring with her own memory of and meditation upon experience, acquired lessons, and scriptural education. In many ways, the extraordinary nature of beguine-composed texts lies in their ability to employ tradition from within a long-established and recognized corpus of writings to extrapolate necessary elements to construct a new expression of theology. The heteroglossia of genre establishes a highly individualized style in each of the beguine-composed texts. And yet

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[207] Patricia Dailey, "Time and Memory" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 347–8.

[208] Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981).

these writings—despite variation and complexity—achieve a sense of a cohesive work, both in form, function and message. Whereas Derrida's concept of "invagination" exemplifies the imprint of contemplative practices and memory within beguine-composed writings, Bakhtin's heteroglossia unites form with function and depicts the text as a bridge between human and divine—the new and tradition—in ongoing dialogue.

In the final section of this chapter, I now shift to Hans Robert Jauss and his application of modern genre theory to medieval literary genres and their readings. Jauss's article, "Theories of Genre and Medieval Literature", explores the complexities surrounding the scholarly investigation of historical texts. On several levels, Jauss's theories and proposed application of genre theoretical methods compliments Bakhtin's theory of speech genres. In addition to Jauss, Bernard McGinn's categorization and readings of beguine-composed texts help to provide more specified information concerning historicized readings of beguine mystical writings that will aid discussion during the three chapters devoted to Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes.

III. Jauss, McGinn, and Future Approaches

Jauss and "Reception"

Hans Robert Jauss's 1970 article, "Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature", marks the serious critique of previous scholarly approaches to genre in medieval texts and their understanding of textual production and its reception. While the initial discussion of modern genre theory revolved around more generalized descriptions of literature, Jauss's theory displays a more specialized lens toward medieval literature and genre theory. Similar to Derrida and Bakhtin, Jauss acknowledges the highly diffuse and diverse nature of medieval texts, something that at times has impeded further genre research in the area. Jauss notes that there is almost a cyclical aspect to the "problem" of medieval literary genres, in that the history and theory of these texts (of which he cites vernacular genres specifically) are derived from "the structural characteristics of the literary forms…[which] first have to be worked out from texts that are, chronologically, highly diffuse".[209] Whereas Bahktin exhibits no concern with the multi-genre text—admitting however that there are dominant genres for every epoch—Jauss seeks to extend the critique of the Romantic categorization of genre from that of production to reception as seen in Derrida.

Reception in Jauss's theory represents a multifaceted approach to the reading of a text. On the one hand, Jauss employs what he calls the "horizon of the expectable", which

> is constituted for the reader from out of a tradition or series of previously
> known works, and from a specific attitude, mediated by one (or more) genre
> and dissolved through new works.[210]

In this line of reasoning, the genre of a literary text cannot exist within a vacuous state, removed from the active and purposeful interaction with the known texts of the period, common generic forms and textual settings. In Jauss's interpretation, the connection to a genre or literary tradition signifies the "rules of the game", which in turn help "to orient the reader's (public's)

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[209] Hans Robert Jauss, "Theory of Genre and Medieval Literature" in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (New York: Routledge, 2014), 129.

The original text was in French and appeared in *Poetique* (1970), 79–101.

[210] Jauss, "Theory of Genre", 131.

understanding to enable a qualifying reception".[211] The concept of tradition and "a preconstituted horizon of expectations" leads the addressee (reader/listener, in the case of Bakhtin's speech genres) to a series of possible and probable comparisons of and contrasts with other texts or common literary tropes of the period.

On several levels, Jauss extends the Bakhtinian theory of primary and secondary speech genres and the embedded literary representation of the addressee to the "beyond-reader"; the reader/addressee encounters the text in a real setting, rather than the intended reader response and understanding reflected within the composition of the literary work. The "beyond-reader", as I call it, connects to one of the other aspects of Jauss's concept of "reception": historical context. Analyzing the function of the reader—both intended/imagined addressee plus his/her response and the actual literary consumption as active process by a reader/listener—acknowledges that the significance of the extant literary works and prominent genres upon the composition and reception of a given work. Jauss explains that "the function of a genre depends not only on its relation to a real, lived procedure, but also on its position within a comprehensive symbolic system familiar to contemporaries."[212] Modern scholarly reading and interpretation, in other words, should seek to conceptualize the work not on what we view as a tradition or canon in the centuries following the Middle Ages, but contextualized within the literary trends and influences as they were. Jauss posits a rejection of questions informed by our benefit of hindsight reading— knowing how literary genres shift and develop—and rather focus on the significance of the form as it was within its time.

Later in the article, Jauss further clarifies the importance of contextualization (what he might term more "historicization") and vividly explains its connection to genre and textual identity.

> A work which is ripped out of the context of the given literary system and transposed into another one receives another coloring, clothes itself with other characteristics, enter into another genre, loses its genre; in other words, its function is shifted.[213]

The violence of being "ripped out of context", taking on a different quality, and losing its genre suggests an overall severity of mishandling and reading medieval texts. According to Jauss, the initial disturbance lessens into a transposition, a translation from one generic understanding to another. Indirectly, Jauss also criticizes the use and misuse of readings that concentrate on a retroactive generic formulation. In other words, Jauss argues against the scholarly inclination to place a text within a certain hierarchy and lineage, one that allows scholars to trace a text from present-day back into the medieval period. "Clothing itself" within a different context alters the possible interpretation of text, but Jauss suggests a deeper impact with the loss of its genre. The "function is shifted" because the text, no longer imbued with the anticipated response from the intended addressee, the text become fashioned into a new style. Different styles denote different functions, varied functions signify varied genres.

Similar to Bakhtin's concept of dialogic interaction within a text, Jauss interprets the loss of historical contextualization (i.e. the function of the text within a specific literary tradition or period) as the muting of the historical voice (or "reflected reality" as Bakhtin might state) and the cacophony of literary generic voices that inspired, contradicted and competed with a given text.

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[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid, 138.
[213] Ibid, 141.

Jauss explains that literary genres "become defined as a 'structural ensemble into which everything comes to insert itself in order to arrive at a particular meaning'".[214] Whereas Bakhtin focused on the production/composition of a text and the writer-speaker's awareness of a future reader-listener, Jauss portrays the narrative voice as consisting of a historical element within which the text is read. He therefore implies that reading a text also requires a reading that comprehends the historical audience and their possible interpretations. Applying this concept to beguine mystical writings, Mechthild's *bůch* draws upon a wide array of literary genres, employing "most genres available to an author of her time".[215] Tobin further reflects upon the fact that Mechthild employs these various genres in order to express her "raw experiences" for literary consumption, an attempt to access the ineffable via the text.[216]

In many ways, Tobin's interpretation of generic variation in Mechthild's writings as means to embody a varied lived experience reflects Jauss's interpretation of the Bible. Jauss discusses the significance of the Bible as an exemplar for other literary production, in particular those texts that rely upon multiple genres and genre blending. Jauss states that "[t]he Bible is also a literary monument that bears witness to the life of a community…" one that reflects the historical contextualization of its composition, particularly "the literary genres known to the original addressees of the books".[217] What Jauss slowly addresses in this section (and with this example) is the underlying premise that genre functions in the process of meaning-making through the expectation and generic knowledge of the historical reader. Texts, whether biblical or medieval, "bear witness to the life of a community". Jauss's use of "witness" implies that a text encapsulates aspects of a given historical period through the eyes of a specific writer-speaker and community, as well as through the nuanced expressions of the language of that time. Acknowledging that a text can "bear witness" also enables modern scholars to recognize a more present and active participant in the composition and reception of a given historical text. As Bakhtin proposes, the voice in literary works, the speech genres and utterances, are no longer real, lived experiences but reflections of those moments made literary. In Jauss's theory, the text "bears witness" precisely because it is the recorded-mutated voice (via various speech genres, primary and secondary) or reflection of experience and speech that no longer exists and that would remain otherwise inaccessible to modern readers.

Another crucial yet related point is the connection to a community and the initial addressees within a text. Jauss remarks that the ability to conceptualize literature on a larger scale, the creation of an aesthetic piece within and for a community, remains a central facet in

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[214] Jauss, 135.
[215] *Flowing Light*, 10.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Jauss, 135.
Jauss discusses at length the genres found within the Bible.

"The Bible contains worldly lyrics (songs of work, ridicule, drinking, burial, and war) as well as spiritual ones (the hymn or lament). It developed the most varied forms of narrative prose: etiological, historical, and also heroic sagas (the legendary garland for Samson); legends of martyrs and novellas (the Kings novellas, but also the Book of Ruth).

It contains the model for various forms of historiography (tribal legend, genealogy, royal chronicle), historical prose (documents, letters, contracts, war reports), and biography (the self-disclosures of the prophets). All imaginable forms of wisdom literature (proverb, riddle, parable, fable, debate, allegory) and religious instruction (sermon, exhortation, epistle) are also found in it" (Jauss, 137).

the theory of literary genres.[218] However, the text's role in bearing witness for a community does not denote a single or cohesive voice (read here more as genre), but an interconnecting system of genres that coexist within the literary consciousness and knowledge of a specific moment for a community of addressees (or listener-reader in the case of Bakhtin). Jauss explains that

> …the basic principle of a historicization of the concept of form demands not only that one relinquish the substantialist notion of a constant number of unchangeable essential characteristics for the individual genres. It also demands that one dismantle the correlative notion of a sequence of literary genres closed within themselves, encapsulated from one another, and inquire into the reciprocal relations that make up the literary system of a given historical moment.[219]

The use and selection of a specific genre reflects the contemporaneous interpretation of a set genre's function, as well as the intersection and/or interaction of that genre with other known genres of that time and place. If modern scholars approach texts such as Mechthild's or Hadewijch's writings through the lens of a static and unaltered generic expression, one that remains true throughout history, the larger, more nuanced representations of genres within a text fail to be uncovered.

      Returning to Jauss's concept of the text "bearing witness", the voice or reflection within a literary work exists in dialogue with other voices/genres of the period for the simple fact that the literary voice is recognized by the addressee (listener-reader) because of its significance to other contemporaneous works. In other words, a text's genre reflects characteristics both inherent in and "othered" from a text; a literary work is defined generically through its expression of form but also by those forms that it does not represent. In reference to Mechthild's writings, Frank Tobin remarks that she drew upon almost all genres available to a writer at the time, and yet her *bůch* modulates, amends, and revises supposed guidelines for what a genre may or may not constitute.[220] Using Mechthild as an example, Jauss implores scholars to resist generalizing genre to literary kinds that exist without modification by the writer-speaker. If we interpret textuality and composition as Bakhtin posits, Mechthild's *bůch* exists due to the community of readers within her time.

      In contrast, Bernard McGinn discusses genre selection in terms of theological content and the process through which a text was composed. To McGinn, motive and genre are intrinsically linked in all forms of medieval theology because the composition of the text, its format, structures and stylistics were carefully selected in order to fulfill aspects of literary and theological/didactic goals.[221] The motivation for the creation of these religious texts is a "deepening [of] the understanding of faith (*intellectus fidei*) and enkindling charity (*experiential caritatis*)" with the hopes that the reader/believer will arrive at "a higher understanding of love (*intelligentia amoris*)".[222] Various genres are employed for two key reasons: 1) to connect the texts to the approaches of esteemed theologians by emulating genres they relied upon for

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[218] "The last step in a theory of literary genres can proceed from the fact that a literary genre exists for itself alone as little as does an individual work of art" (Jauss 140).

[219] Ibid.

[220] Tobin, Introduction.

[221] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 19.

[222] Ibid.

arguments, and thus almost authenticating the newer texts by association; 2) to address a diversified audience from varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds.[223] McGinn emphasizes the spiritual inspiration for genre selection and text creation, framing the concept of genre within the confines of theological belief and interpretation. For Jauss, simplifying the composition of a text, its structures, and stylistics to a choice dictated by spiritual dogma shifts the function of the text. Theological principles factor into a Jaussian reading of genre via the text's historical contextualization and reflection of the community of reader-addressees and the community or system of texts within a larger literary grouping. Genre as defined by McGinn focuses on content and motivation rather than Jauss's emphasis upon literary reception and the interaction between form and community, voice and manner of speech.

The danger of separating a text from its community (i.e. ignoring a text's ability to "bear witness") and isolating it from a larger literary community (i.e. the system of genres and potential texts from which an author of that epoch and community might draw reference) is that the scholar-reader then removes the work from its sphere of influence and distances his/her reading or analysis from the production *and* reception of a given text. Jauss, in contrast to McGinn, resists promoting a "known" genre type from within a text because that practice removes evidence of literary reception—the historical implications of meaning-making within a text—and forces recognition of only a few aspects or characteristics rather than a more complex whole. Jauss suggests that the preoccupation with how we organize and classify texts defies in many ways what is logically historical.

That is to say, anachronistic in its very nature, scholars often separate texts into heading and subheading based upon their observations in tune with the lineage of texts viewed in retrospect from the present, rather than limiting their investigation to that which was accessible or appropriate to the period. He states that,

> Understood as groups or historical families, not only the canonized major
> and minor genres can constitute a group and be described in terms of the
> history of genres, but also other series of works that are bound by a structure
> forming a continuity and that appear historically.[224]

Jauss suggests to include and compare broader textual forms and genres, implying that the classification of genre as an accepted law (Derrida) limits deeper analysis of the reception and conception of the text itself. Jauss resists not only the application of taxonomical genre categories but also the assumption that a given text falls within a literary tradition. Rather than reliance upon an implied tradition, the texts are explicated individually and the outlined characteristics of each text can then be compared and discussed. Applying Jauss's proposed methodology to beguine mystical texts, the possibility is laid bare to compare and contrast these beguine-composed and -inspired texts as they exist in their manuscriptal form, relying upon the textual evidence and thorough generic and rhetorical analysis in order to demonstrate the ways these texts are connected. From that standpoint, scholars might then compare the various spheres of literary and community-based influence before determining a likeness or possible tradition of literary texts. I, and certainly not Jauss, am not suggesting that no such connection exists, but rather that a degree of hesitation (or perhaps suspension of judgment) is necessary before further categorization of the text—whether based upon genre, language, rhetoric or structure—takes place.

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[223] Ibid*.,* 19–20.
[224] Jauss, *Genre,* 80.

The result is that a wider array of texts can be discussed and included within research, ones that may inform and revise how the texts in the previously delineated genres have since been studied. Amy Hollywood's study of Mechthild and Marguerite Porete vis-à-vis Meister Eckhart is a superb example of the type of contrastive focus, which enable scholars to incorporate and include themes seen previously as disparate or conflicting. Hollywood resists previously established separation of female-authored mystical texts from those written by men. Although Hollywood focuses more on content rather than form or genre, she traces central tropes within the works of Mechthild, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart to illustrate the influence of the female mystics upon the writings of Meister Eckhart. Her method and mode of discussion encourages inclusion of female-authored literary works into more standard medieval literary canon because it cites their importance in relation to Eckhart. This in turn demonstrates that, in order to fully discuss his texts, a scholar must first comprehend the scope and reach of those works and communities that influenced Meister Eckhart's writings.

Shifting again to a more general discussion of Jauss's theory, if you adjust the scope of concentration from content to form, genre, and genre choice, the focus shifts from author-authority to composition, form, and then content. In other words, if a scholar reorients his/her consciousness from what the writer-speaker utters to the structure and organization of those utterances, the motivating force within the text shifts from solely writer-focused to interconnected aspects of community, literary culture and reception of the text. This focus also distances the hold on gender as a pivotal force of genre choice and classification, emending Derrida's gender- and word-play-heavy discourse.

Any attempt to establish a literary tradition, and (perhaps also) the genre it embodies, requires what Derrida deemed "a line of demarcation", a marking of the beginning of one text or genre and the end of another. Although Jauss approaches history vs. nature as more deeply intertwined within medieval literature, reading Jauss via Derrida exposes the increased potential for deeper readings and investigation of written piece through the concept of "invagination" or *les pli*. The "line of demarcation" becomes a faded designator, the hymen made more pliable, as scholars reach beyond the limitations of a genre category or classification to uncover a broader range of literary interconnections. Using Jauss's theory, literary interconnectedness brings to light ("donner le jour" is referenced in Derrida's lecture)[225] new potential readings and previously unseen aspects of literary expression in the text because it expresses the layering of the textual folds.

Researching texts along these lines also demonstrates that a single text shares a central commonality with a select group. For the past few decades, scholars have recognized the concept of "beguine spirituality" and discussed the similarities between works by the beguine mystics. Yet at the same time, their studies have highlighted the difficulty in classifying these works into a specific genre, often lapsing to identify the texts as "visionary" or "mystical", which has the unfortunate side effect of negating and ignoring the rich textual diversity in its forms. Jauss comments that if we are truly to determine literary genres from a synchronic perspective, then

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[225] Derrida discusses at length about the parallel between "donner le jour", bringing to light, and giving birth within his "Law of Genre" lecture. He proposes that through "invagination" one is able to encounter the double hymen (the beginning and end of a genre—which is previously designates an "ellipsis"), the birth of one genre and the death of another. Although Bakhtin would allow for more melding of genres, particularly in the case of speech genres as both primary and secondary genre forms, Derrida suggests a coexistence and presence of multiple genres enfolded in the folds of "invagination". The coexistence or presence further supports Derrida's initial statement that "genres should not mix" but also that no text truly belongs to a genre (Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 202, 204, 206, 217).

scholars "must proceed from the fact that the delimitation and differentiation cannot be decided according to one-sided formal or thematic characteristics".[226]

In order to discuss these complex medieval texts, the question arises how to approach texts that include a mix of similar dogma, differing content, and very diverse literary stylistics and rhetoric. Jauss notes,

> There is the old recognition, first formulated by Shaftesbury, that the prosodic form does not by itself alone make up the genre, but rather that an "inner form" must correspond to the outer form, from out of which the particular "measure", the unique "proportion" of an independent genre first allows itself to be clarified.[227]

Here Jauss connects to Bakhtin's understanding of various and intersecting concepts of genre. Expression of prayer, mass, credo, and testimony can exist within the "main" genre (outer form) of vision or letter or strophic song. The interior form or motivation that links beguine mystical texts is one of didactic inspiration and intent. The genre choices exhibit aspects encountered in life, in church and in confession. Genre variation, therefore, instructs and leads a journey of *imitatio Christi*—the very text an embodiment of the life itself. Yet, as Frow explains, these texts are shadows, expressions of an experience encapsulated in the chosen genre to further a mood or aura that imbibes something beyond content or diction.[228]

Similar to Mechthild's *bůch,* the literary creation suggests more than a life, more than visionary experience. The understanding of genre as a mode and means within her *bůch* opens new avenues for introspection and interpretation that transcend the limiting and confined readings without "invagination" or concepts of dialogic orientation. As Bernard McGinn remarks in *The Flowering of Mysticism*,

> Without *some* claim to an underlying experience these textual expressions would probably not have come into existence and certainly would not have won acceptance; but to say that every expression of such a claim was intended as a more or less literal account of a divinely given vision is neither provable nor required in order to demonstrate how the new modes of *presenting* visions argue for a new stage of Western mysticism.[229]

McGinn's emphasis on the "presenting" of visions corresponds well with Bakhtinian speech genres, suggesting a dialogic interaction with an intended audience; an audience with whom the mystic intended to relay divine experience to instruct and inform the reader-listener. We also find expressions of Derrida in the dualistic position of nature of text/genre and historical contextualization, an expression that also resonates with the Jaussian binary of

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[226] Jauss, *Genre*, 82.

[227] Ibid.

[228] "… genres create effects of reality and truth which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or philosophy or science, or in painting or film or prayer or everyday talk…The semiotic frames within which genres are embedded implicate and specify layered ontological domains—implicit realities which genre form as a pre-given reference, together with the effects of authority and plausibility which are specific to the genre. […] Genre, like formal structures generally, works at a level of semiosis—that is, of meaning-making—which is deeper and more forceful than that of the explicit 'context' of a text" (Frow, 20).

[229] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 29.

composition/production and reception. Community, audience, and reception, for Jauss, provide the much-needed historical context in which to place a text and view it within the confines of its inception/composition. In my opinion, reading Jauss in tandem with Bakhtin and Derrida illuminates the great potential that modern genre theory can afford studies in medieval literature and (re-)discover aspects of the beguine mystical experience as text.

IV. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have focused on the foundations of modern genre theory and the potential application of these theories—both singularly and read in tandem—for medieval literature. I aim to demonstrate that the discussion of genre theory and medieval literature is inherently rife with complexity and requires the medieval scholar to tread carefully as they navigate the murkiest aspects of the text. Yet, despite these complexities, Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss promote new understandings of genre and reflect concepts that overlap with medieval approaches to genre. While a concept of genre and the classification thereof permeates studies of medieval literature through a variety of methods, the scope of this scholarly research often shies away from modern genre theory. Taking Mechthild of Magdeburg as an example, *Flowing Light* displays the ways in which Mechthild employed numerous courtly tropes and literary forms within her *bůch*. Reading Mechthild's work via Jauss compels the modern scholar to seek out the contemporaneous literary community upon which Mechthild drew inspiration. A Jaussian Mechthild expands the scholarly emphasis from analyses of composition and production to questions of reception, motivation, and dissemination. The intersection of Jauss's theory of genres and Mechthild recognizes the complexity of her *bůch* without attempting to restrict or "fit" it into a rigid genre category. In many ways, her *bůch* read through Jauss speaks to scholars without hesitation, the barrier of potential contradictions or impurities of a set genre is erased and the text allowed to function unhindered.

Reading Mechthild via Bakhtin highlights the wealth of genres within her work, particularly speech genres, and the successful way in which her *bůch* translates real, lived experience into a literary one. Through her use of speech genres, primary genres transition into secondary genres, recasting the divine into a comprehensible form for the reader-listener and shaping her text to acknowledge a desired response from the reader-listener. Bakhtinian Mechthild expresses her skillful fluency of speech genres: melding, mixing, and contrasting existing and recognizable generic forms. Similar to Bakhtin, Mechthild read via Derrida expands the potential readings and evidence of genres within her *bůch* through the existence of *les pli* (the folds). Derrida's profound imagery of readings known and unknown further explores the role of genre within Mechthild's work without forcing her writings to belong to a set category or singular expression of genre. The underlying question for my study therefore lies not in whether the use of modern genre theory aids a deeper, more complex understanding of beguine-composed mystical texts, but rather to what degree we might expand our studies. Returning to the text, uncovering its *pli,* highlighting the numerous speech genres, and elaborating upon the significance of historical contextualization all positively reflect works such as *Flowing Light*. A study of genre inevitably leads to the interest in the "bones" of a text, the generic framework and interaction, before engaging with the ways in which form takes shape, and structure meets content.

As mentioned previously, genre is often rigidly defined, acting almost as a literary litmus or line of demarcation between one text type and another. While Derrida classifies this demarcation as synonymously birth and death of a genre, the traditional taxonomical categorization forces belonging unnaturally. Texts lose their dialogic ability to communicate and

adapt with the reader-listener when scholars employ constrictive definitions of genre, and when scholars force association with particular text types through the use of standardized expectations and assumptions. Often scholarly investigation rests squarely, not upon the interplay between content, textual organization, and genre constructs—as Jauss and others have posited—but rather the assigned genre as a means to "unlock" the text's inner meaning. Yet structure and genre, according to Bakhtin, are related but not synonymous. Whereas structure denotes the literary construction (i.e. plot organization, prose vs. verse, the number of lines per stanza, etc.), genre incorporates aspects of the intended reader and the act of readership by way of the method that literature is mediated. While certain genres within medieval studies have attracted scholarly critique, the topic of visionary literature, particularly that written by women, remains focused upon the questions of gender, authority and agency within the texts.

The focus of this dissertation is on the beguine-composed texts read through the lens of genre rather than gender, form rather than authority, and contents solely for demonstrative properties (i.e. how the mystic articulates specific themes by way of one genre and other genres to approach different aspects of the mystical experience). I concentrate my theoretical methodology upon genre and textual organization, and my research remains tied to the extant manuscripts in their current form. I focus on physical manuscripts because a greater understanding of the communities, social constructs, and text circulation are needed to better comprehend the motivation behind genre choice and application within the beguine mystical corpus.

The beguine mystics varied the assumed generic functions of contemporaneous literary forms, and, by doing so, I argue initiated a dialogic interaction with the reader that was as didactic as it was ontological. For example, the use of courtly lyric to describe the relationship between the mystic and the divine defies the expected literary expressions of longing for a love because, whereas the "expected" or "traditional" courtly lyric forms promoted unrequited love, divine love and union are fleeting in their unrequitedness. The underlying assumption is that one will achieve some state of union, if one chooses to heed the instructions and warnings as laid out in the mystical treatises. Therefore, the genre of courtly lyric precludes an expectation of inaccessible love but in a highly temporal sense. The reign of suffering exists only during earthly existence, when the distance between the divine and human lover are greatest. Modifying genres and their anticipated literary expressions demonstrates what Bakhtin describes as generic fluency; in other words, the mystic's ability to expand the function of a genre to include new speech genres. And yet, without a knowledge of courtly lyric and its previous forms, the ingenuity of Mechthild, Hadewijch, and other beguine mystics' poetry becomes more difficult to uncover. It is Jauss's concept of contemporaneous literary systems and the community or addressee of a given text that provides yet more meaning and meaning-making to the beguine mystical texts.

Perhaps for this reason, the modern preoccupation with classification is complicated, because the emphasis is placed upon the categorization of content, form, and style rather than the motivation to employ styles and literary traditions with the purpose of furthering/promoting a closer relationship with the divinity. That is to say, how a text can be classified or labeled by form has taken precedence in how scholars approach the text, rather than approaching the text in relation to function and how that function interacts with the form, content or style. Using genre function as its starting point, a scholar can then use the knowledge of the text's inner-workings to distinguish it from or compare it to other generic textual forms. On this level, variation gains significance. It is not surprising that beguine mystical texts reject standard conventions of genre classification considering the plethora of religious and secular works drawn upon within their pages and the means with which those genres are implemented within their writings. The

personalized nature of textual formulations obfuscates traditional usage of form, expanding and complicating a rigid or narrowed understanding of genre. At the same time, more complex genre forms implore the reader-listener to connect the expression of a sentiment via genre with the mystic's dogmatic vision.

Theoretical Outline

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, genre is complex and malleable, but at the same time the concept of genre is a present and real gauge for expectation of a text for the reader. Modern scholars of medieval literature walk a fine line between informed investigation and the imprint of present-day definitions and expectations for literary works and their genres. Despite the fact that modern genre theorists in this chapter date from the twentieth-century, Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss present valid theories for the investigation of beguine-composed texts, because aspects connect to medieval conceptualizations of genre that pre-date Romantic period taxonomical genre classifications. In reality, what I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter is that no single theorist encompasses the breadth and fluidity of genre within beguine mystical writings. However, these complexities should not deter modern medievalists from delving into the murky waters of generic form and motifs. I therefore posit a melding of these concepts of genre, one that I believe opens up potential new avenues to approach and investigate Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes's writings.

To simply argue that the beguine-composed works constitute a reporting of their divine experiences is misleading and quite false. Time and again their texts imbue a sense of complexity to elucidate the ineffability of their many visions and experiences, a point that Frank Tobin rightfully notes. The presence of generic and linguistic variation within their writings creates the opposite impact one might expect, playing both within the reader-listener's "horizon of expectations" from the text and against textual instincts and literary conditioning based upon reading and genre. The effect exudes an odd sensation of newness to explore and signposts (i.e. motifs) from anticipated generic expression. These small unforeseen aspects signal an awareness in the reader-listener and alert them to shift their "horizon of expectations" for the text, which furthermore creates a new understanding of generic usage and with that, a memory of textual uniqueness. In other words, as Patricia Dailey and Mary Carruthers establish within their research, memory plays a crucial role within the practice of reading beguine-composed texts, and those texts build upon a combination of expected or recognizable mnemonic techniques (i.e. allegory and explication, landscapes of memory, etc.) and slight modifications upon known motifs and textual markers. The result of these modifications differs the reader-listener's expectations thus creating an unexpected and memorable textual experience.

Memory aligns with genre through a predominantly didactic function of a text. From embroidery to the Scriptures, heightened understanding and skill depends upon the internalization of a given subject, and, in some cases, the mastery thereof. Without memory, the mystagogic-didactic impetus behind literary construction is lost. Without recognition of the underlying motifs and fixtures that enable memorization and contemplation upon a mystical text, the importance of memory in the composition process remains hidden. The birth or creation of the beguine-composed texts reflect a mediated experience with the divine that is translated into recognizable prose and verse, married with the meditation upon those divine lessons, and inscribed with features to assist the reader-listener to later recall and recount the central lesson of the text during periods of meditation and contemplation.

Jauss's "horizon of expectations" also connects genre simultaneously to an acknowledgement of the universal and individual aspects within a text. Just as Derrida states that

there "is no genre-less text", encompassed within the term "horizon of expectations" is the representation of a shared frame of reference or references that enable the reader to make assumptions about the function(s) of a text. At the same time, the ability to recognize a genre or at least draw similarities or differences from other texts enables the reader-listener to remark upon the exceptionality or unique use and expression of genre. Genre therefore casts the contents of a text into a different light that either reaffirms or defies one's anticipated reaction to the work. Functioning as the light or lens through which a text is experienced, genre impacts the reader-listener without remaining in ever-present focus, allowing an ongoing influence beyond language and contents of the text. Genre alters voice and tone, creates a sense of anticipation but also surprise when the reader-listener's presumption is countered rather than realized.

Genre, in my opinion, necessitates further exploration within beguine-composed writings to establish how the form interacts with contents during composition and to investigate what form can reveal about the function and didactic elements of a text. Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss outline aspects of genre that are relevant for beguine-composed texts, ones that admittedly play a key role within contemporaneous writings and those inspired by their ingenuity. Similar to its malleable nature, I propose an approach to genre within this dissertation that aims to uncover the function(s) of genre within Hadewijch's, Mechthild's, and Agnes's writings and genre's relation to the function and contents of these texts as a whole. Without a diversified approach, I believe the challenge to illuminate the core messages of the beguine-composed texts would deem unfruitful. My approach to genre follows three key elements, some of which were previously outlined in this chapter:

1. Derrida's concept of "invagination" and the birth/death of genre bode well within the larger discourse of mnemonic devices, the significance of memory within medieval culture, and the process of meditation by way of reading the physical text. Derrida's "invagination" unifies the connection between the practice of contemplation (*lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*), composition and reading of mystical texts. "Invagination" depicts at once the folds of book and the folds of memory, the potential for meditation, new readings and deeper comprehension of the divine. Genre intersects with these notions in that it creates the guiding principles to aid memory and the internalization of the lessons/message of the text. Further "invagination" converges the didactic and ontological nature of the text, both through the practice of reading and that of composition. "Invagination" initiates as experience and is mediated through memory, first through the transference of experience into memory, later as the meditation upon divine encounter before it is transmitted as speech (in the case of Agnes and her confessor) or writing, as with Hadewijch and Mechthild.

2. Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" layers a communicative or dialogic element with reflection upon anticipated readership and comprehension of a work as foreseen by the writer-speaker. Genre informs the writer-speaker, either consciously or subconsciously, of a language beyond utterance: an expression of form that relies upon the fluency of the writer-speaker in his/her ability to combine, intermix, and create new genres that still maintain enough of the previous generic structure to remain recognizable and comprehensible. "Heteroglossia" speaks to the concept of voicing (inter- and extratextual) but also to a connection to the written page, the physical imprint of cited, transposed, and alluded lines on parchment or paper. As discussed in conjunction with Derrida's "invagination", memory relies upon the senses, both inner and outer, in order to internalize the lessons or message of the text beyond a

superficial perusal. Memory is relied upon by the reader-listener to recall previous readings, and the reader-listener uses this pre-knowledge to create comparisions between texts, and in some cases, subsequent readings of a single text.

3. Jauss's "horizon of expectations" holds deep ties to memory, meditation, and contemplation. With Jauss, we also see a concern about periodization and a recognition of time's impact upon shifting definitions of genre. And yet, he encourages scholars to move beyond the standard elements/motifs of genre to investigate each text on a deeper level. Jauss holds sway within the discussion of genre because his response to genre is at once temporal and eternal, it reflects upon memory, but also the potential for future readings and shifting understandings of genre. In the Bible, as well as in medieval mystical writings, the diversity of voices guides the reader-listener through the creation of motifs that both confirm and defy anticipation of a generic expression. That diversity provides a sense of newness. With re-readings and meditation, contemplation upon the work reveals additional elements that edify and mature the reader-listener. Mystical texts are unique because they are the representation of the human understanding of the divine, which have the intention to bring the reader-listener closer to the divine. Through the process of writing, a meditation upon the experience creates a reflection of that experience, of the divine and of the human encapsulated within the text. Furthermore, the text houses the infinite potentiality for spiritual expression, interpretation, and personalization-internalization. Genre functions not only as a marker or signpost for memory but also the invisible guiding hand that leads both the writer-speaker and the reader-listener towards deeper comprehension. In summation, Jauss's "horizon of expectations" works in tandem with the text as a reflection of a community (including generic knowledge, writer-speaker, and anticipation of reader-listener response) and encourages a cycle of new and re-newed readings, meditations, and compositions through memory, one that, I believe, expresses both the eternal and present expression of the divine.

In essence, Derrida's "invagination", Bakhtin's "heteroglossia", and Jauss's "horizon of expectations" together marry the key elements and concerns of beguine mystical texts. The dialogic interaction of the above concepts promote an ongoing renewal of the message and lessons within these writings. A variation of genres is expressed within Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes's texts to exhibit the multiple modes and paths towards the divine through anticipated and unexpected motifs of a given genre. Although varied, the unifying element of these diverse genres becomes clear: renewal of the text and its message through reading, meditation, rumination, and contemplation. A continually renewed cycle of creating and textual understanding reflects the "living Word", which is Christ, thereby bridging the writer-speaker, reader-listener, and the text to the divine by means of the mind's eye and the inner senses. The text becomes a reflection of *imitatio Christi* in its corporeal (physical) and ethereal-divine forms. Similar to the twofold bodies of the mystic, the text, enlivened by the reading and study of its structures and words, encompasses physicality and divinity through meditation and memory.

In the next chapter, I continue the discussion of genre, looking specifically at genres and literary criticism that impact beguine mystical writings discussed in this dissertation. The most prevalent generic forms—vision/*visio*, letters, prayer, and song are discussed, as well as an analysis of how scholars have attempted to classify the texts from Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes as a whole. Scholarly approaches to beguine-composed writings differ significantly from the theories of Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss. Perhaps more telling, their scholarly investigations

also conflict with medieval conceptualizations of genres, the separation between secular and religious forms, and the expression of literary function via genre.

Chapter Two
Naming the Form: Scholarly Approaches to Medieval Genres

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined how key aspects from genre theory resonated with the medieval practice of contemplative reading and memory. Although written during the twentieth century, the discussion of Derrida, Bakhtin and Jauss provided an overview of concerns related to genre and interpretation, one that highlighted the complexity of genre and the connection between genre and composition, readership, interpretation, and expectation. By first following form and then content, new avenues of understanding and interpretation are exposed, ones that might remain unseen without a revised perspective. Chapter One was the introduction into the question of genre. This chapter continues that discussion to focus upon key medieval genres found within Hadewijch's, Mechthild's and Agnes's texts, as well as the scholarly interpretation of these genres. This chapter shifts to outline how scholars approach genre within their studies.

In his recent monograph on the genre of medieval romance, K.S. Whetter explains that "it is…impossible to read a text without imposing some sort of generic expectation and identification."[230] The label "visionary literature" evokes a certain sense of expectation for the reader and assumptions are made concerning the subject matter, possible language, and perhaps form. Yet one could ask why genre holds such significance? What can genre tell us about texts, or even medieval texts? The reality is that, even though modern scholars struggle with genre and classification, the concept of genre permeates our aesthetic understanding of a work of art.[231] A dramatic play is rarely confused for a letter, nor a bawdy song for a prayer. Literary form exists and, as Jauss would insist, not within a vacuum. As outlined in the previous chapter, the importance of genre is linked to our understanding, expectation, and identification of aesthetic works, in this case, literature. Whetter takes this concept one step further, stating that that "understanding of genre, of how genres work and how they can be recognized is a crucial component of reading and interpreting—and teaching—a text."[232] In his analysis, genre is the first step into the text for the very fact that its motifs, the "set of essential generic features" play with our understanding and expectations as soon as we begin to read that text.[233] We as the reader make comparisons, we—perhaps subconsciously—infer things about the text based upon the characteristics it displays.

Recent scholarship by Sara Poor, Balaz Nemes, Ursula Peters, Patricia Dailey, and other scholars highlights the methodology and reasoning behind the varied readings of Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes. In particular, Veerle Fraeters and Frank Willaert's article about genre and Hadewijch's songs marks a shift toward genre-focused readings of beguine texts within scholarship. In this chapter, I illuminate the various scholarly approaches, definitions, and categorization of these texts and seek to demonstrate whether the analytical basis retains a sense of taxonomical organization or whether it detours to a nuanced, more theoretically-based interpretation of genre. Wolfgang Mohr's "Darbietungsformen der Mystik bei Mechthild von Magdeburg" was pivotal in research on Mechthild's writings, and in conjunction with Frank Tobin's interpretation thereof, provide a basis of discussion concerning the classification of

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[230] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 30.
[231] Whetter outlines this at length in the first chapter of his book, as well as provides his own analysis of Derrida, Bakhtin and others.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

genres and speech genres present not only in Mechthld's *Flowing Light of the Godhead*[234] but also the writings of Hadewijch and Agnes Blannbekin. I use Mohr's article to outline some of the genres and how scholars approach them in the works by and about beguine mystics discussed within this dissertation.

      Seeking to understand the range of styles and utterances, the first section discusses the most prevalent textual forms within beguine mystical literature, first through the work of Wolfgang Mohr and his analysis of genre forms, followed an explanation of medieval genres common within beguine-composed texts. These analyses are placed in dialogue with Bakhtin and Derrida to expose the potential light genre theory might shed of questions of classification and literary "belonging." However, this chapter also provides some background of the medieval and modern understandings of generic forms that appear within the texts discussed in this dissertation.

      I aim in this chapter to outline the necessary background information about genre and the beguine-composed texts from scholarly perspectives. Although some additional discussion occurs within each body chapter, I reserve only discourses specific to a particular mystic for those chapters and include in this one common trends and tendencies—or overarching debates— that impact all mystical writings of focus within this dissertation. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the three body chapters dedicated to Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Agnes, as well as a brief glimpse into the frame of discussion contained therein. I reiterate the theoretical lens of my analyses by restating the concepts of Derrida's "invagination", Bakhtin's "heteroglossia", and Jauss's "horizon of expectations" and how these three concepts constitute the main elements common within beguine-composed writings. Furthermore, the connection between "invagination" and memory combined with reading, meditation, and composition marries Derrida's core definition of genre and its "law" with a central practice of contemplation during the medieval period; Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" draws upon the complex notion of textual authority, authorship, references, and readership, which I extend to include an understanding of the reflection of self and reader, as well as potential readings and knowledge as achieved through the process of contemplation (lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio) tied to "invagination" (i.e. folds of the book paralleling folds of the brain as memory); and finally, the "horizon of expectations" impacting the reader-listener's approach to the literature based upon what one views as key motifs or elements for a genre. Playing with these expectations, beguine-composed texts merge "traditional" forms with their individualized sentiments, defying the reader-listener's anticipated generic expression and outcome, thus instituting a surprising and memorable literary encounter. As we shall see in the coming chapters, "invagination", "heteroglossia", and the "horizon of expectations" together function as quasi-motifs for the genre of beguine-composed literature.

II. Wolfgang Mohr and genre classification

      One early analysis of genre forms found within beguine-composed writings is Wolfgang Mohr's "Darbietungsformen der Mystik bei Mechthild von Magdeburg" (1963). In his essay, Wolfgang Mohr catalogues the genre and text forms found within Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Godhead.* Within the initial lines of his essay, Mohr situates Mechthild's style and use of genre in contradiction to male-authored mystical works, revealing that while Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Heinrich Seuse fall within the established Latin tradition

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[234] After this point, *Flowing Light of the Godhead* [German: *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*] will be abbreviated as *Flowing Light*.

of "sermon" [*Predigt*], "treatise" [*Traktat*], and "epistle/letter" [*Brief*], Mechthild's language and genres fall into a completely different category.[235] Mohr describes the stylistics in Mechthild's work as that of a "sentimental" person that betrays a sense of her naiveté.[236] Despite these initial (perhaps unwarranted) associations with the stylistics of Mechthild's writing, Mohr establishes a link between Mechthild's "Christian lay education" with the layering of various recognizable literary genres within her text, namely biblical narrative, psalms, prayer and liturgy, theological exegesis and allegory, citations from artistic works, spiritual plays and songs or worldly/secular songs and traditions.[237] These textual expressions, according to Mohr, emanate from her personal experience, the previously encountered situations and viewpoint that instruct her literary choices. In fact, Mohr classifies these as awoken archetypes of experience [*Archetypen des Erlebens*] and argues that her prehistory—Mechthild's encounters with the divine prior to the composition of her work—combined with a larger sense of prehistory are behind her genre selection.[238]

Frank Tobin notes in the introduction to his translation of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* that Mohr creates a comprehensive list of genres, organizing them into three larger categories: religious, courtly, and other.[239] Below I replicate the list from Mohr's article in Tobin's text:

Religious genres	Courtly genres	Other genres
the vision (*visio*)	courtly-love poetry	autobiography
hymn	allegorical dialogue	drama
sermon	dialogue between lovers	epigrammatic poetry and wisdom literature
spiritual instruction and tract	the messenger's song (*Botenlied*)	Anecdote
prayer	the exchange (*Wechsel*)	letter
liturgy		parody
litany		Nursery rhyme
Prophetic literature		polemics

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[235] Wolfgang Mohr, "Darbietungsformen der Mystik bei Mechthild von Magdeburg" in *Märchen, Mythos, Dichtung. Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag Friedrich von der Leyens am 19. August 1963,* eds. Hugo Kuhn and Kurt Schier (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1963), 375.

[236] Mohr, "Darbietungsformen", 375.

[237] "Was die christliche Laienbildung zu bieten hatte, ob aus biblischer Erzählung, aus dem Hohenliede und Psalmen, aus Gebet und Liturgie, aus theologischer Unterweisung und Allegorik, aus Denkmälern der Bildkunst, aus dem geistlichen Spiel und Lied oder weltlichem Lied und Brauch, alles dies rührte bei der Mystikerin Mechthild eine urtümliche Schicht des Erfahrens und Schauens an und löste ein unmittelbares Künden und Sagen aus" (Mohr 375–376).

[238] Ibid., 376.

[239] Tobin, 10.

What is significant about this list, when read in conjunction with Bakhtin, is that Mohr's classification of speech genres often coincides and even conflates Bakhtin's understanding of stylistics and genre. For example, the genres listed as "allegorical dialogue" and "dialogue between lovers" without question appear within courtly literature, and yet these expressions appear as utterances or even styles of a larger whole (often courtly lyric or romance). The "messenger's song" [*Botenlied*] appears within courtly poetry, but one might rather consider this a secondary genre or even subgenre.

There is a further problematic element to the above list of genres. Mohr structures and classifies the existence of genres by type, situating religious and courtly genre forms squarely in separate categories. However, just as Jauss illustrated in previous chapter on medieval conceptualizations of secular and religious, a line of demarcation is insisted that may not have existed for Mechthild, other writers of the period or even throughout the medieval period. The persistence to divide and classify creates rifts in his hypotheses. One notable example is the appearance of poetry under both religious and courtly literary types. Poetry is an overarching form, the style and rhyme of which varies greatly throughout the literary periods. So too has the allegorical dialogue existed since at least Plato and Aristotle, the form crucial in its ability to tackle and explain the more complex philosophical questions.

Perhaps the most perplexing categorization is the letter. Even in 1963 when Mohr writes his article, the letter or epistle was a recognized generic form for scholastics, philosophers (both ancient and otherwise), and in the Bible. As is discussed in the following section, the history and usage of the epistle for didactic and mystagogical means is long and well established. While Mohr's investigation into the evidence of possible genres and subgenres evident within Mechthild's *bůch* is admirable, the link between textual form and content, author and reader is completely absent. Mohr sketches the portrait of a woman who lacked the full understanding and education to employ these forms properly. This dismissal of Mechthild's potential impact upon readers and the remarkable existence of her *bůch* impedes his ability to delve deeper into genre and textual reception.

Returning to Bakhtin's concept of layering and the individual, as well as Mohr's earlier descriptions of Mechthild as "sentimental" and "naïve", we find illustrated here a complicated reading of genre against a biased analysis of stylistics. Mohr essentially divorces Mechthild's stylistics and language from the genres present within her work, contradicting a fundamental understanding as described by Bakhtin: "Where there is style there is genre."[240] On multiple occasions, Mohr describes Mechthild's language in terms of "sensuality, visuality, and thoughtfulness" [*Sinnlichkeit, Bildlichkeit und Gedanklichkeit*], often establishes examples of genres within her work and then demotes their efficacy due to her naiveté and sentimental qualities.[241] Mohr even goes as far as paralleling concepts within her writing and understanding to that of a child's experience with a picture book, reinforcing his denouncement of her naiveté and further distancing her work from that of the male-authored mystical literary tradition.[242]

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[240] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres", 88.

[241] Mohr, 382–383.

[242] Mohr 390–391.

Mohr lists more than one example that he compares to the image of the child with a picture book that is holding a book with a picture of a child holding a picture book. I make the association between the child and Mechthild because, rather than employ a scholarly explanation of her text, Mohr uses an example from the mundane, but more so from childhood. The fact that he repeatedly uses the adjective "naïve" to describe Mechthild and then reflects upon childhood to explain a literary phenomenon in her work, in my opinion, is suggestive of a comparison.

At the heart of Mohr's reading of Mechthild's genre choices lies a preexisting understanding of her text as separate from that of the German male-authored mystical texts, despite the fact that he later demonstrates her ability to draw upon the same or similar literary traditions and vary their style, usage, and language to suit the needs of her work. Bakhtin connects style and genre fluency to creative output and stylistic and linguistic variation.[243] In turn these nuances reveal the speaker-writer and reflect the transformed experience in its literary form. Mohr's (mis)reading of Mechthild's language and stylistics therefore impedes a fuller understanding of speech genres, both primary and secondary, and the ways in which these genres engage as a whole. In the next section, I shift focus to an explanation of genres listed within Mohr's article that have been recognized as genres that commonly appear in beguine mystical texts. Not only a description of the form and application but also the function(s) of these genres are discussed to provide a detailed understanding of textual expectation. An introduction to these genres and their medieval definitions is crucial to help complicate how scholars have previously approached genre and in turn missed the internal message of the text.[244]

III. Medieval Genres and Their Motifs

In order to address potential misunderstandings about genre and its function from Mohr's article, in this section I discuss the common medieval genres and motifs found within the beguine-composed texts. The genres I discuss here reflect the medieval understanding of their uses and I base my analyses upon texts from eleventh through thirteenth centuries (largely), with some occasional reference to more ancient sources. I approach these forms also with some evidence of expectation in mind. In other words, I pair compositional motivations with the reader's expectation. I argue it is significant to address both aspects of form due to Bakhtin's argument that the author employs genres with the intention to evoke a certain reaction or establish an expectation from the text by way of its form (also echoed in Jauss's "horizon of expectations"). My aim in this section is to create a basis of understanding contemporaneous to the beguine authors within this dissertation on key genres and their functions as conceptualized within the medieval period. By relying upon scholars who focus on early Christian and medieval sources, I attempt to stage a web of knowledge that supports and illuminates possible readings of the beguine-composed writings that is congruent with the mentality of the time.

The discussion and explication of these generic forms and their functions also serves a dual purpose of demonstrating the complex and malleable presence and appearance of genre throughout the medieval period, even ones with ongoing popularity such as "prayer/*oratio*" or "letter/*epistola.*" With this overview, I also intend to shape discourse concerning the potential recognition of genre and anticipation of a reader-listener during Chapters Three through Five. In the following chapters, the definitions outlined in this section are revisited and compared to the extant manuscript transmissions, which then are discussed in relation to the concepts outlined in Chapter One (i.e. "invagination", "heteroglossia", and the "horizon of expectations").

III.1 *Visio/*Vision

Visio, as both an experience with the divine and a literary art form, has a lengthy and varied history. For the medieval period, St. Augustine of Hippo is a key figure in the categorization of visions, which I believe also impacted the literary forms of these experiences. Also known as *revelatio,* Augustine's tripartite hierarchy of visions placed greater emphasis on

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[243] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres", 91.

[244] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 14.

knowing rather than seeing.[245] Outlined in the twelfth chapter of his treatise *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis,* Augustine situates his typology of visions upon the concept of inner and outer senses. The lowest form of vision, *visio corporalis*, is seen through the external eye or the eye of the physical body (hence the "corporalis"—of the body). The second form of vision, *visio spiritualis,* shifts from the exterior eye of the body to the inner eye, or the "organ of perception of the human soul."[246] With *visio spiritualis*, the encounter or images from the divine are perceived in the imagination (*imaginatio)*, which "stores information perceived by the individual sense organs and binds it into a coherent mental representation."[247] The *imaginatio* is similar to the inner mind that one has the ability to access through meditation and memory (*memoria*).

The highest form of vision, *visio intellectualis,* is perceived through the eye of the mind (*mentis oculis*), which connects directly to the intellect (*intellectus* or *mens*). Only at this stage is the visionary "capable of receiving the grace of divine illumination and directly perceiving divine truth."[248] Augustine's theory influences centuries of theologians and ecclesiastical leaders in the medieval period. And the connection between experience and form is largely absent from Augustine's discussion. Later, during the twelfth century, monastic movements place significant emphasis upon the contemplative life, particularly the acts of prayer (*oratio*) and meditation upon religious texts (*meditatio*). *Contemplatio* is "the meditational praxis [that] facilitated the grace of contemplation in which one sees the face of God."[249] Achieving that level of meditation or even the divine lesson (*lectio divina*) according to the Scriptures became a central aspect of spirituality within the writings of William of St. Thierry and the Victorines, in particular Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.

Select monks of the twelfth century, therefore, encourage mystic contemplation and demonstrate the pedagogical and didactic nature of vision, both as experience and text. Richard of St. Victor, for example, melds the didactic explanation of vision with text from the Bible. In the twelfth chapter of *Benjamin major,* Richard creates an exegetical analysis of the story of the Queen of Sheba when she is to meet Solomon to parallel the stages of contemplation. As Veerle Fraeters notes,

> First, the queen is looking for Solomon and she listens (*prius quaerit et audit);* this is meditation. She then sees him and understands (*postea videt et intelligit)*; this is contemplation. Next her seeing him stupefies her (*stupet*) and makes her transcend her spirit (*a spiritu deficit*); this is ecstasy (*extasis, excessus mentis*).[250]

The initial stage is straightforward, and in many ways reflects the process of reading-listening (*prius quaerit et audit)*. Moving beyond the physical page and corporeal experience, the next stage (*postea videt et intelligit)* marks the internalization of the message, text, or experience through reflection upon the text. Finally, the last two stages reflect the reaction of the reader-listener to the process of internalization: seeing and understanding the true nature of the text (or

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[245] Veerle Fraters, *"Visio/ Vision"* in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 178.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid, 179.

[249] Ibid, 180.

[250] Ibid, 181.

in this case, Solomon) causes an ecstatic moment. Richard shifts the Biblical, the word of God, into an experience through writing an exegesis on a mystical experience found within the Scriptures. In essence, Richard's text is a reflection upon a mystical moment as mirrored in a holy text. This representation of, on the one hand, reading and meditation upon a text, but moving beyond the text to remark upon the experience itself lies at the heart of much of Hadewijch's writings. The power of mediation of the text or the writing as an extension of the intermediary between the divine and the mystic is a powerful concept within medieval understanding of revelations.

As a genre, the vision is fairly malleable in form, and may appear by itself, in conjunction with a larger text such as a hagiography, or in a collection of visions, at times organized with specific reference to a didactic principle (such as the imitation of Christ/*imitatio*).[251] Reference to the liturgical calendar (i.e. feast days or saint celebrations) are common within thirteenth- and fourteenth-century visions, and the experience of communion often precedes a vision or ecstatic moment in these writings. Other collections of visions are melded with reflections upon daily life or meditation upon the Scriptures. One example of such is Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita et Revelationes,* which was written in collaboration with her Franciscan confessor, and includes ongoing attempts at understanding the experience and expressing those sentiments in words. In many ways, genre of vision, particularly in the later Middle Ages, appears as varied as the individuals who penned or inspired such writings. Whereas saints' lives or hagiographical texts preclude a certain degree of authority through emulation of authoritative figures previously recognized within Christianity (i.e. Jesus, Mary, etc.), visions often establish authority through the verity of their teachings.

Many visions often display key motifs, although even those differ depending upon whether *visio* is the primary genre or one found within a larger collection of genres that also contain visions. One common motif is the "drawing away from the body", which marks the shift from the physical body to a different level of consciousness, often related in reference to the inner body and its senses. After the transition to the inner senses, the vision reveals a lesson or message, at times in the form of a conversation with a Biblical figure, other instances the information appears in the form of an allegory with corresponding exegesis. The vision concludes in a variety of ways. In some examples, the vision includes a "return to the body", which can be marked by an ecstatic state or a sense of pain and suffering. As we will see in the following chapters, *visio/*vision as a genre has a wide array of expressions that are at times linked to the function and mode of the text as a whole.

III.2 *Letter/Epistle*

As mentioned in the discussion of Mohr's article, the genre of the letter is extensive and complex. Paul's letters in the New Testament were a natural source of inspiration for medieval writers, but the history of letters as a didactic medium extends further back to Socrates and other ancient philosophers.[252] Private correspondence followed specific forms of address to signify respect. Benjamin Breyer notes that within the medieval period, "[it] is long established that letters were a means of creating and maintaining spiritual friendship" and that "there are many examples that attest to this in the monastic tradition."[253] The spiritual friendships developed both

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[251] MeGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 30.
[252] Benjamin Breyer, *In That Instant I Saw Myself,* Columbia University dissertation (2015), 29.
[253] Ibid., 30.

within and outside of religious communities and fostered connections between persons who were unable to congregate together (such as the case in the days of early beguines during the twelfth century).

However, in the early Middle Ages, the concept of the letter "did not refer to some personal or even subjective expression, but a document intended to impart information, frequently of an official nature."[254] In fact, Debra L. Stoudt notes that "letter" and "document" were almost synonymous in usage until the sixteenth century, further reflecting the official nature of "*epistola*" and the prominence of the form within both ecclesiastical and more secular settings (i.e. chancelleries, courts, etc.).[255] Yet due to the church's position as central location of education during the Middle Ages, church schools and ecclesiastic teachers "dictated the form and language of these documents", using "the Latin tradition of the *ars dictandi*" as the foundation for letter writing and Latin as language of choice.[256] Not until the twelfth century did the form and function of the letter begin to change. As Stoudt explains, "the expression found in letters became more poetic and, for the first time…appeared in the vernacular."[257] While Latin remained the language of official church and court correspondence, the vernacular "came to be associated with emotional and personal love poems and letters", highlighting the affective nature of the vernacular letters beginning in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[258]

During the thirteenth century, the letter also represented "a form of discourse amenable to the pedagogical practices" of the time, during which "people were accustomed to presenting and receiving knowledge and insight through interactions between two people."[259] The genre of the letter, therefore, encompasses varied functions depending upon the needs or relationship between the writer-speaker and reader-listener. As we will see with Hadewijch, the letter signifies a direct communication between herself (as reflected in the text) and the reader-listener, an addressee that differs frequently throughout her thirty-one letters and commonly remains unnamed. And yet, with the example of Hadewijch, the letter converges the above-mentioned functions, and the epistle expresses aspects of both spiritual friendship and guidance, as well as didactic instructions concerning piety, charity, and other characteristics of *imitatio Christi*.

Thomas of Capua outlines a definition of the epistle ("epistola") in his *Ars dictandi* (The Art of Letter Writing). In his manual, he characterizes the letter as a genre first based upon the etymology of the word "epistola" before engaging in an explanation for the correspondence between form (i.e. linguistic features) and meaning.

> [T]he letter is a different kind of literal embassy, which is capable of having an effect (effectu) on a person's health. Epistola is derived from "epi-," which is "in preference to", and "stolons", which is a "dispatch;" hence it is said the epistola is a dispatch in preference to, because it seems to announce the intention of the sender's message in a way that is more elegant and richer in the mind in the affects (affectu) it expresses, and frequently in the

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[254] Debra L. Stoudt, "The Vernacular Letters of Heinrich von Nördlingen" in *Mystics Quarterly* 12:1 (March 1986), 19.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid.

[257] Ibid.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Breyer, 31.

information it conveys [than a message conveyed verbally by a messenger].[260]

According to Thomas of Capua, the epistle/letter designates a direct link of communication between two persons, one that, although conferred in writing, suggests a level of intimacy unlike a message relayed verbally by an intermediary source.

One tactic that medieval writers employed to establish a congenial and intimate tone was through the initial lines of address commonly found at the start of each letter. Traditionally in a*rs dictandi* a letter includes a three-part address or salutation, "which would include her name and attributes (*intitulatio*), the name and attributes of the recipient (*inscriptio*), and a greeting (*salutation*)."[261] As we will see in the following chapter, the mystics often do not follow this formal three-part address, which suggests a certain level of flexibility concerning the vernacular letters or potentially the nature of address within religious communities. Within the beguine-composed texts, the address in the initial lines of the letter mimic aspects of the liturgy, often emulating similar phrases common to those spoken during Mass (e.g. "God be with you"). Furthermore, Breyer demonstrates the use of familial relationships in conjunction with the writer-speaker and reader-listener communication in Hadewijch's collection of thirty-one letters. He explains that "[t]he domestic relationships Hadewijch invokes function as commonplaces that situate her in a position from which she can authoritatively persuade or dissuade the reader."[262] In short, the form of address in the letter connects closely to the form and function of the entire letter, whether didactic or pedagogical in nature with a more personal and shortened address, or the traditional (and more official) three-part address found within Latin correspondence.

Another significant feature of the letter is voicing. As Thomas of Capua outlined, the letter was envisioned as a more personal communication than a message relayed by a messenger. The letter as a genre employs the singular or plural second person form, in the informal or formal forms. The directness of this voicing establishes a conversational tone to the letter that the vision might not include. Through the use of the second person, the writer-speaker also maintains a very personal form of address that seeks to persuade or dissuade the reader-listener in didactic letters and inform him/her in more official forms.

One final aspect of the letter lies in its rhetorical structure and elements. Vernacular letters, particularly those written by mystics, sought to guide or convince the reader-listener of a particular practice or towards a specific mindset. At times, the writer-speaker achieved these means through the use of mnemonic devices, often in the form of allegory with exegetical explanation, to assist the reader-listener in the internalization of the message, lesson, or practice.[263] Another common structure for the letter was the *sermo absentium*, which edified through the use of a more personalized form of the sermon and enabled a "quasi presence and quasi-speech between [sender and recipient]."[264] Regardless the chosen form of address or

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[260] Ibid.

Est ergo epistola litteralis legatio diversarum personarum capax, sumens principium cum effectu denominate est autem epistola ab "epi" quod es supra, et "stolon", quod est nuntiantis, id est elegantius et locuplentius in ea mentis explicatur affectus, quemadmodum faceret aliquotiens ipse nuntians vel delegans (Thomas of Capua, *Die Ars dictandi des Thomas von Capua,* ed. Emmy Heller, *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1928–29* 4 (1929): 15–16.

[261] Breyer, 77.

[262] Ibid., 87.

[263] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 224–225.

[264] Constable cited in Breyer, 70.

message, the letter remained a crucial genre within medieval society throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century.

III.3 *Song/Canticum/Minnesang*

Lyric or song is a popular genre through the medieval period, appearing in both religious and secular contexts (based upon subject matter). The metered rhythm of the song provides a different experience with the text than a letter or vision, based in part of the organization of the words, the voicing of the text (especially the choice of first or second person over third person), and imagery. The Bible includes several examples of song, the most prominent of which being the Psalms and the Song of Songs (*Canticum Canticarum*). Like most medieval genres, songs appear singularly, in a collection, or, as is the case with Mechthild of Magdeburg, interspersed between prose sections and within prose as well. The development of lyric poetry finds its roots in both Roman and Germanic traditions, with the Roman art of flute and lute accompanied song inspiring early Christian lyrics written in Latin.[265] Song as a genre transcends courts, churches, and everyday activities alike. As St. John Chrysostom in the fourth century noted,

> By nature we take such delight in song that even infants clinging at the breast,
> if they are crying and perturbed, can be put to sleep by singing…So too
> journeymen, driving their joked oxen in noonday, often sing as they go,
> making the way less weary with their songs…And the sailors likewise, as
> they pull the oars. Again, women who are weaving, or disentangling the
> threads on their spindle, often sing: sometimes each of them sings for herself,
> at other times they all harmonize a melody together.[266]

Although undisputedly romantic in his description, the underlying emphasis St. John depicts with his narrative is difficult to ignore: lyric accompanies us throughout walks of life, by work, sleep, or praise. In addition, St. John illustrates the highly diverse nature of lyric, whether sung or recited, and that the form, meter, and language adjusts according to the intended function of the piece.

However, as the medieval period begins and develops its own forms of tradition, lyric poetry shifts from popular song and dance to more reverent forms of praise, reflection and thanksgiving during the early Christian church.[267] While this trend was in no way universal, the division between religious and secular literature was tumultuous at times, at others the separation was either markedly reduced or practically absent. During the twelfth through early fourteenth centuries, the rise of vernacular literature in written form marked a parallel rise in hybrid lyrical forms. Authors such as Hadewijch and Mechthild employ motifs and common tropes from courtly lyric and combine them with elements from the Song of Songs (*Canticum Canticarum*) and more popular folksongs.

Within the German lyric tradition, the prominent form is found within *Minnesang,* often described as "love lyric", although the term *minne* denotes a broad range of expressions of the sentiment "love", from paternal/maternal and familial to erotic and divine (i.e. love for God). Despite the rather simplistic-sounding term, *Minnesang* encompasses "a variety of expression,

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[265] Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric,* 13, 14.
[266] Dronke, 15.
[267] Ibid.

and individual poets come into their own with a remarkable diversity of form and content."[268] Similar to other genres discussed within this section, courtly love lyric appeared throughout Europe, and at time beyond, with specific regional and linguistic variations that both complimented other traditions and sought new avenues of expression.[269]

One trait of courtly lyric is meter, which is arguably a vital component to the genre, and scholars use their knowledge of meter to support the assumption that courtly lyric was sung.[270] As Marion Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson outline, meter has two main components: stressed and unstressed syllables.

> Essentially the principle is one of stress, and the normal metrical unit ("foot")
> which corresponds to the normal speech pattern is a stressed syllable (*Hebung*),
> indicated "/", following by an unstressed syllable (*Senkung*), indicated with "x".[271]

The basic structure of meter finds its roots in natural speech patterns of the language, in particular stressed and unstressed syllables. However, lyric changed in form over the course of the medieval period, increasing in complexity and expanding subject matter from love and faith to social commentary and didactic concerns. Dating from the mid-twelfth-century, the earliest examples of Germanic lyric are "mostly in the eight-beat line, sometimes broken by a caesura."[272] Other characteristics of the earliest stage of lyric include rhymes in couplets, assonance, and the appearance of a short, unrhymed line, which is sometimes called the "orphan" (*Waise* in German).[273]

Over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in part due to the influence of the Occitan and Provencal lyric, lyric altered in its emphasis, shifting towards a concern for a variation of themes and altered language usage. In order to reflect these changes, lyrical form developed a tripartite division and the anticipated structure of the form become more complex. In the tripartite form,

> …there are two identical groups of lines, the *Stollen, w*hich together form the
> *Aufgesang,* followed by a third section which is different in form (the *Abgesang*).
> The first four lines, rhyming ab, ab, constitute the *Aufgesang*, the remaining
> four the *Abgesang*…The *Aufgesang* and *Abgesang* are linked here by meter
> and by the fact that the ab rhyme continued into the *Abgesang,* followed by
> the cc of the last two lines.[274]

As the themes developed more diversified expressions of emotion, sentiment, and virtues, so too did the form alter to reflect the linguistic expression, demonstrating the dialogic relationship between form and content. The construction of the tripartite form above provides some insight

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[268] *Medieval German Literature,* eds. Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2000), 224.

[269] "We are dealing, moreover, with a European, indeed a worldwide phenomenon, the German manifestation of which shows both liberal borrowings and substantial individuality" (*Medieval German Literature,* 224).

[270] Ibid., 230.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid, 232.

[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid.

into the significance of organization and to build upon the reader-listener's expectations of how lyric should function and the ways in which the content is developed—from the *Aufgesang* to the *Abgesang*—by way of rhyme and meter. In fact, Gibbs and Johnson note that a key element in the recognition of *Minnesang* as an art form within courtly circles lies in "a virtuosity in the manipulation of metrical form which matched the increasing diversity of theme and language", suggesting that "the handling of metrical pattern became…a vital component of the poet's expertise."[275]

Due to the connection between form and content, within Germanic lyric there are numerous subgenres. Below I provide a brief overview of some of the most prevalent forms.

Frauenklage: the woman's lament, frequent during the earlier stage of lyric. This presents the situation form the point of view of the woman. As the form developed, the lady's emotion disappeared from the forefront, replaced by an acknowledgement of the devotion for her from her knight.

Tageliet: also known as "the dawn song", in which a more mutual love between the pair is represented and can include dialogue/conversation, although actual dialogue becomes more prevalent with Wolfram von Eschenbach and Heinrich von Morungen.

Wechsel: the exchange between a man and a woman, but not a direct conversation between the two. *Wechsel* represents both the male and female perspectives on a single situation, and the strophes are linked together through the reference to the other speaker's language and thoughts, as well as a single, unified metrical pattern.

Botenliet: a variation of the *Wechsel* in which a messenger acts as an intermediary between the pair. There are two different types of the *botenliet,* one in which the messenger speaks, and one in which the messenger is spoken to but never speaks himself.

Crusading song: a development of lyric presenting the conflict between allegiance and service to a lady and that to God. The *Crusading song* is only a slight variant on Minnesang that represents how the Crusades (and crusaders) influenced song form.

Spruchdichtung: a type of poetry that is usually didactic in nature. As Gibbs and Johnson note, *Spruchdichtung* is "poetry that makes a statement, a pronouncement, an observation, or a saying."[276] There are a variety of themes associated with *Spruchdichtung,* a significant collection of which written by Walther von der Vogelweide. Topics range from religious and biblical themes, laments concerning the decline of standards (both personal and universal), eulogies, and accounts of events of the time.[277] One key motif or characteristic is an earnest tone that connects to the poet's role as a counselor, "as possessing a special gift from God, which enables him, indeed obliges him, to offer advice and warnings to his fellow men."[278]

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[275] Ibid., 233.

[276] *Medieval German Literature,* 296.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid, 298.

Leich: a sequence of unequal strophes that was developed during the thirteenth century. Originally this type of lyric was sung with instrument accompaniment and has connections to the French form *lai* and the Old Provencal *descort.* There are two thematic foci of *Leich,* religious and secular.

As outlined above, Minnesang or German lyric employs aspects of poetry from the Provencal and Occitan traditions, along with elements specific to Germanic languages and, potentially, folksong from well beyond the manuscript transmission history. Similar to other genres within this section, the development of lyric remains complex throughout the medieval period, and form adjusts to meet the altered function, potential motivation, and intended readership of a work.

III.4 *Prayer/Oratio*

During the Middle Ages, prayer (*oratio*) referred to various forms and functions, some of which contradicted each other even within Biblical explanations. The most basic definition of prayer states that it "was defined as an act of speech and, therefore, of reason", leading Cassiodorus (d. ca. 585) to iterate that "prayer (*oratio*) is spoken reason (*oris ratio*)."[279] Although its active sense is emphasized, prayer or *oratio,* has recognized forms throughout the medieval period. Set or standard prayers represented in the Bible include rhythms common to oral speech or recitation, but also qualities that aid memorization. For this reason, the Church Fathers believed that prayer was accessible to everyone, "even the unlettered knowing only the words of the Our Father (*Pater Noster*) or the Hail May (*Ave Maria*)."[280] Unsurprising the root for the word "oration", or the highly skilled ability to deliver (and craft) a speech, is the same as that for prayer in Latin (*oratio*), illustrating in its very etymology the oral-auditory nature of prayer.

In many ways, the etymological connection between *oratio* and oration exposes one of the underlying contradictions of the practice of prayer: while often outlined as an accessible action, prayer "was also considered an art or discipline requiring long experience and great skill that even specialists (e.g. monks and nuns) could not realize without grace."[281] The multifaceted nature of prayer, as both a practice and a form, then had limited functions depending upon the education, spiritual training, and divine intervention (i.e. grace) one experienced. The highest forms of prayer were "beyond reason", according to Hugh of St. Victor, a twelfth-century Augustinian canon, which coined "pure prayer" (*pura oratio*). Unsurprising, Hugh composed a manual on the art of prayer, *De modo orandi* [Concerning the Manner of Praying], which detailed the forms, functions, and levels of prayer. Hugh classified prayer into three kinds:

Supplicatio, or "humble and devout prayer (*precatio*) without determination of petition
       (*petitio*);"
Postulatio, or "undetermined narration (*narratio*) for a determined petition;"
Insinuatio, or "indicating what is wanted without petition but solely through
       narration."[282]

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[279] Rachel Fulton Brown, "*Oratio/* Prayer" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 167.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid, 171.

The distinction outlined between these three forms is based upon formal rhetorical modes that reflect the intended function of the writer-speaker by way of its form of address. Hugh of St. Victor develops these modes based upon well-known forms found within the Biblical explanations by the apostle Paul and writings of early Church Fathers, such as John Cassian (d. ca. 435).

Paul names potential forms of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1, including supplications [*obsecrationes*], prayers [*orationes*], intercessions [*postulationes*], and thanksgivings [*gratiarum actiones*].[283] In comparison to Hugh of St. Victor's kinds, we see some differences in the extent of variation but also how the forms are differentiated. Whereas Hugh places emphasis on the rhetorical mode, which he then connects to the form of the prayer, Paul situates greater importance upon the intention of the writer-speaker in deciding the form of address/speech. John Cassian, on the other hand, classifies the type of prayer based upon the spiritual maturity of the writer-speaker.

> …supplication or confession 'seems especially appropriate for beginners
> …goaded by the memory of past sin,' while prayer or promises are
> 'appropriate for those making progress in the acquisition of virtue and in
> the exaltedness of their souls.' Intercessions or pleas are 'suitable for those
> who live as they have promised to do, who see the frailty of others and who
> speak out for them because of charity that moves them,' and thanksgiving
> 'suits those who have pulled the painful thorn of penitence out of their hearts
> and who in the quiet of their purified spirit contemplate the kindness and
> mercy that the Lord has shown them in the past, that He gives them now and
> that He makes ready for them in the future.'[284]

As detailed above by John Cassian, the concept of prayer reflects not only modes of speaking, but the intention and motivation of the writer-speaker and their relationship with the divine by means of contemplation and understanding of the mysteries of the divine. John Cassian draws upon forms as outlined by Paul but expands the definition of each term to clarify the unstated hierarchy of these forms, as well as the relationship between form of address and spiritual maturity of the writer-speaker.

On another level, John Cassian exhibits that prayer in all forms necessitates repetition and continued practice, a point that fails to cease even for the most spiritually exalted individuals. During the medieval period, prayer was considered a crucial step in the practice of contemplation, one that often followed spiritual training via reading [*lectio*] and meditation [*meditatio*]. In fact, Hugh of St. Victor listed prayer as the third step upon his five-stage process of spiritual ascent: reading [*lectio*], meditation [*meditatio*], prayer [*oratio*], composition [*operatio*], and contemplation [*contemplatio*].[285] Other variations of the practice of contemplation include Guigo II the Carthusian (d. 1193) whose "ladder of monks" had only four "rungs" the third of which was prayer [*lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*] and the Franciscan

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[283] Ibid., 170.

[284] Ibid.
Fulton Brown cites directly from a translation of John Cassian in this section. I used her citation for this section.

[285] Ibid., 171.

Bonaventure (d. 1294) three-stage version [*meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*].[286] Despite these slight variations in the organization of the contemplative process, the underlying sentiment remains clear: prayer in its purest sense [*pura oratio*] can only be achieved via spiritual maturation, diligence and preparation, and only made possible after extended training through listening-reading and meditation or thinking.

Thomas Aquinas remarks upon the difficulty of prayer and its impact upon the twined bodies of humans, inner and outer. Aquinas explains that

> By praying man surrenders his mind to God, since he subjects it to Him with reverence and, so to speak, presents it to Him…wherefore just as the human mind excels exterior things, whether bodily member, or those external things that are employed for God's service, so too, prayer surpasses other acts of religion [in showing honor to God].[287]

Prayer, in its purest form, exalts the inner mind towards God in an act that, although initially connected to concepts of reason and speech, extends beyond corporeal speech acts and transforms into utterances fitting for communication with the divine. As Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 254) explained, the act of prayer was not intended to alter God's opinion or the outcome of a situation but to prepare them to receive the Word of God, which might be interpreted as grace or deeper understanding of the Living Word [i.e. Christ].[288] Based upon these descriptions, prayer in its various forms depicts a concern for communication with the divine but, perhaps more importantly, reflects a process of preparation, an internal readiness, to *receive* rather than *provide* explanation, thanksgiving, or penitence.

As Rachel Fulton Brown notes, "whatever else it might be, prayer, above all, was an act of worship, an offering rising like incense to God", reflecting Psalm 140:2: "Let my prayer rise up like incense before your face and my hands like the evening offering."[289] Prayer, therefore, represents a multifaceted and multiform expression during the Middle Ages, one that superficially appears contradictory in form but one that reflects characteristics of both speaker-writer and divine "receiver." As a genre, prayer shifts between pre-scripted forms, such as the *Lord's Prayer,* the Psalms, and the liturgy, to rhetorical modes beyond the concept of human speech itself.

III.5 *Hagiography/Vita*

Hagiography remained common throughout the medieval period, both as a genre and a means of intended beatification and subsequent canonization of its subject. Despite its popularity, hagiography differs greatly in form and function depending upon the author, the personality of the speaker-secondary author, and the period within the Middle Ages. Some types of hagiographies sought to imitate a depiction of reality, not in a documented or factual sense, but more so a representation of life that reflects everyday experiences without relaying them verbatim. More commonly, hagiographies or saints' lives "involve a heightening of the presentation of events according to certain conventions that were…well understood by their

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[286] Ibid.

[287] Ibid., 176.

[288] Ibid., 169.

[289] Ibid., 176.

medieval audience."[290] Often the motifs within hagiography mimic well-known examples drawn from Biblical figures, such as saints, apostles, and even Jesus Christ, establishing a certain level of authority based upon the correlation of details and events with recognized and orthodox personages.

Early medieval forms of hagiography often rely upon a mixture of biographical narrative with embellishments common to holy persons from the Bible or other saints, as well as some aspects of visions and miracles completed after the saint encounters the afterlife or purgatory. As discussed previously in the "Vision/*Visio*" section, hagiography often included reports of visions within its contents. Earlier forms of hagiography contain the vision subgenre that depicted a tour of heaven and hell, one that would later be expanded in Dante's Divine Comedy.[291] During the early Middle Ages, reported visions within hagiographies depicted "a seer as dying and going on an extended journey to the other world, before miraculously returning to life and helping effect conversions by telling what he or she had seen of eternal punishment or reward."[292] So, although visions are found within hagiography, the emphasis lies not upon the vision as the central genre within the work, but a source of authority or proof of a person's miraculous life, death, and sometimes reawakening. McGinn also notes that while visions are revelations from the divine, not all visions are mystical. The form of vision depends upon several factors, according to McGinn, including the impact upon the recipient and the type of communication received during the visionary moment.[293]

In the thirteenth century, there is a notable shift that begins with the genre of hagiography that detracts from the previous tradition. As Bernard McGinn notes, "…not only do hagiographical accounts begin to portray women as mystical models in ways not found in the previous tradition…but women also start taking on the role of mystical teacher."[294] Although restricted in their ability to preach to the laity, female medieval mystics could serve as meditators between the divine and humans by way of visions, ones who found their authority not in their human writer-speakers but communications with the divine. For example, Thomas of Cantimpré, author of several hagiographies, including one for Christina the Astounding, "adapts and alters" the visionary genre typically found in hagiographies in the previous centuries, with an aim "to demonstrate that Christina teaches penance more powerfully than anyone else."[295] Rather than initiate the hagiography with a chronological retelling of a destined spiritual enlightenment, Thomas situates the beginnings of Christina's "special religious vocation" with death and then a journey in another world before she returns to earth "to become a living example of the necessity of purgatorial punishment for sin."[296] Hagiography develops during the thirteenth century to include elements developing in vernacular theology. In fact, much of our current understanding of medieval vernacular theology is extrapolated from hagiographies of the Late Middle Ages,

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[290] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 20.

[291] Ibid.*,* 27.

[292] Fulton Brown, 161.

[293] "The mystical element within Christianity, as I have argued throughout this history, centers on a form of immediate encounter with God whose essential purpose it to convey a loving knowledge (even a negative one) that transforms the mystic's mind and whole way of life. […]Hence, it is not so much the fact that someone makes claim to visionary experience as it is the kind of vision presented, the purpose for which it is given, and the effect it has on the recipient that will determine whether or not any particular vision may be described as mystical" (McGinn, 26–27).

[294] Fulton Brown, 155.

[295] Ibid., 161.

[296] Ibid.

which, although common, continues to be investigated and, according to McGinn, still misunderstood, despite its ongoing popularity amongst medieval scholars.

In the following section, I continue the investigation of hagiography as a genre in order to discuss the ways in which it differs from the genres found within the beguine-composed texts. I situate the comparison primarily through the lens of modern scholarly discourse in contrast to this section. I demonstrate the shift in focus concerning the function and expectation of these medieval writings, as well as highlight how these differ from both the theories outlined in Chapter One (Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss) and medieval conceptualizations of those genres.

IV. Scholarly discussion of beguine-composed texts and genre

I initiate the discussion in this section with a question of genre and the comparison of beguine texts with that of hagiography in an attempt to transition the discourse from the previous section on common medieval genres to one of more modern scholarly analysis. While these interpretations reflect only aspects of the scholarly studies, I aim to situate the feminist position of these scholars against genre classifications to show how the question of genre, in many ways, also becomes a question of gender and textual authority. Superficially the works discussed in the following pages relate to genre choice. On a deeper level, however, the question of genre barely scratches the surface within these studies, and content and motivation become central forces within the description and classification of beguine-composed texts and their interpretations. As outlined in the previous section, hagiography, or the life and revelations of a holy person, appears often for the primary intention of beatification and possible canonization of its subject. The tradition of hagiography is extensive and well documented throughout literary history, and, despite variations in experience, location, and native language of the holy person (that said, most hagiographies were composed in Latin), exhibits common themes, topoi, and even ages that connect the multitude of texts under a genre heading.

Due to the subject matter, as well as the appearance of hagiography early in the history of the beguines[297], scholars discuss the comparison of hagiography and beguine-composed texts. In her 1988 monograph, Ursula Peters examines the possible conjunction between hagiographical texts and writings authored by beguine mystics. In *Religiösische Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum (Religious Experience as Literary Fact)*, Ursula Peters states that *Flowing Light of the Godhead* and other religious texts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were created for specific purposes and constructed as literature meant to instruct, inspire, and entertain like other hagiographic-type works.[298] The main support for Peters' argument is the comparison of Mechthild's work with hagiographies of the period, particularly the *vitae* from Brabant of the thirteenth century, through which she demonstrates strong similarities in structure and references to life events. Characteristic experiences such as early religious calling, desire to leave the 'comfortable life' at home, and retreat from the world are examples that Peters used to support her claim.[299]

There is also evidence within *Flowing Light of the Godhead* to further Peters' argument, namely the lack of substantial text concerning Mechthild's life as a beguine. While *FLG* includes

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[297] James of Vitry, often recognized as an early supporter of the beguines and advocate for the holy women with the pope, wrote the life (hagiography) of the first woman labeled a beguine, Marie d'Oignies, in the late twelfth century. Another beguine, Beatrijs of Nazareth, is detailed in a hagiographical text, as well as a short religious text composed (or at least dictated) by her.

[298] Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), 56–7, 120–1.

[299] Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung,* 57.

censure of the clerical practices in Magdeburg (and the clergy themselves), Peters notes that throughout the course of her work, Mechthild revises her opinion of clergy due to opposition to her work from clerics. Living under a high degree of scrutiny and opposition, Peters considers it unlikely that Mechthild would fail to describe her life as a beguine. In Peters' opinion, the lack of this information coincides with the conception that *FLG* is simply an altered form of hagiography.[300] Peters therefore comes to the conclusion that beguine mysticism seems to have created nothing more than "a particular type of conventional, unofficial, excluded literature", which has influenced the way in which modern scholars interpret literary production in the Middle Ages.[301]

Peters' reading of *FLG* in many ways ignores concepts of both folds (Derrida's "invagination") and the complex understanding of primary and secondary genres, style and speech genres, and language as described by Bakhtin ("heteroglossia"). In essence, Peters reduces Mechthild's *bůch* to set, socially-constructed understandings of textual forms, eliminating the nuanced and highly complicated reading that both Derrida and Bakhtin would propose. Peters furthermore limits the potential function of the "horizon of expectations" as outlined by Jauss. Hagiography as an established genre is, first and foremost, not without its issues in that it is portrayed by Peters as a static generic form. As I previously discussed, hagiography may or may not include vision (*visio*) as a subgenre. That vision, as Bernard McGinn explained, is not always considered mystical, depending upon the function of the genre within the overall setting/writing and how it interacts with the whole.[302] In essence, Peters delegates a singular function to a multitude of texts, which in turn negates the significance of how motifs and characteristics from diverse genres interact to create a hybrid form.

The expectation of the reader-listener may be realized through the given generic label of hagiography, but several key factors distance Mechthild's work from hagiography, namely 1) voicing (first, second, and third person vs. third person, particularly the vision-inspired sections); 2) organization or lack thereof within Mechthild's *bůch*, which is more emulative to the collection of writings over time than an orchestrated, cohesive whole; 3) language—while there exists examples of vernacular *vitae,* the majority employ the lingua franca of ecclesiastics and with good reason; and 4) mystical and didactic emphases within Mechthild's *bůch* —Mechthild does not simply use herself as an example, her text outlines *one* potential path towards *unio mystica* and provides counsel and advice, as well as critical condemnation, of practices to achieve that goal. In other words, Mechthild is not used as an example of divine intervention on earth, she outlines the processes through which one might achieve those ends themselves. Read within a mystical-mystagogic and didactic function, the claim of a modified hagiographic model for *Flowing Light* does not hold.

Not unlike Mohr, Peters aligns Mechthild's work with other female-focused writings of the period, rather than a comparison with other religious compilations, treatises, secular and biblical narratives. As has been discussed within this and the previous chapter, modern genre theory contends Peters assertion that, due to the appearance of hagiography-similar traits within Mechthild's text, the entirety of *Flowing Light* reflects hagiographical forms. Hagiography as a genre is conflated with hagiography as a stylistic expression and depiction of set thematic

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[300] Ibid.*,* 64–5.

[301] "Beginenmystik scheint damnach einen Spezialtyp von konventikelhafter, nicht-offizieller, ausgegrenzter Literatur hervozubringen—ein Literaturverständnis, das merkwürdig quer zu unseren sonstigen Informationen über die literarische Produktion im Mittelalter steht" (Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung,* 58).

[302] McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism,*12, 28–29.

motives. Not only are the specific motivations for these generic utterances excluded from this discussion, Peters furthermore negates the existence of primary and secondary genres within the text, diminishing the individualized personality present within *Flowing Light* and the reflection of Mechthild and her conceptualized listener-reader.

Similar to Bakhtin in many regards, Jauss proposes an approach to genre and aesthetic reading that moves beyond singular or univocal texts types to expressions of varied and combined genre types.[303] In addition, Jauss suggests that the appearance of a genre should be understood within the context of the overall textual structure; an examination of how that genre (in this case, hagiography) functions in relation to the text and what the very appearance of the genre expresses intertextuality, or contributes to the ongoing dialogic orientation of the text.[304] Intertextuality, also expressed in Bakhtin and Derrida with his "folds" (*les pli*), complicates Peters's analysis and questions of thoroughness of her study and comparison. Unsurprising, Peters's monograph garnered significant response amongst feminist scholars, challenging further the concepts of genre classification and beguine-composed texts.

In her 1997 monograph, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, Amy Hollywood highlights briefly the presence of generic variation within Mechthild of Magdeburg's *FLG*. Hollywood refers to Mechthild's book as "a compendium of visions, prayers, dialogues, and mystical accounts."[305] Arguing against Peters's hagiographical comparisons, Hollywood explains that the complex formulations found in beguine mystical works reject the anticipated feminine notions housed within the hagiographical form type to something more unique, broader in scope and treatment, and representative of very different aims.[306] For Hollywood, form is reflective of the "relationship and tensions between the active and contemplative lives", which she deems a "pivotal issue" in the beguine milieu, the demonstration of such tensions "attested to by the mixed form of life itself, the hagiographical literature, and the beguine writings."[307] Hollywood positions her approach to the beguine writings face-á-face Herbert Grundmann's interpretation, signifying the role of femininity within the creation of and motivation for varied form types within beguine mystical writings as central to textual analysis and understanding.

Before her in-depth comparison of *FLG* and the writings of Meister Eckhart, Hollywood compares and contrasts Mechthild's work with that of hagiographical literature written about other beguine mystics. Upon conclusion, Hollywood remarks that there were many differences that separate Mechthild's text and the autobiographical work of other beguine mystics. She states that it was the "theological daring" and "anti-narrative language of union without distinction that distinguishes works on and for beguines from hagiography.[308] For example, the understanding of how the pre-created soul transforms the relationship between the active and contemplative lives is prominent in the works of Mechthild and Marguerite Porete.[309] The active and contemplative lives were often represented in biblical pairs—Rachael and Leah, Mary and Martha—in the hagiographies of early beguines, whereas Mechthild expressed her actions and thoughts through descriptive passages and dialogues from her visions. According to Hollywood, there are some basic similarities between hagiographies and works of/about and for beguine

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[303] Hans Robert Jauss, "Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature" in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception,* transl. Timothy Bathi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 80.

[304] Jauss, "Theory of Genres", 83.

[305] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995), 1.

[306] Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife,* 6.

[307] Ibid., 7.

[308] Ibid., 40.

[309] Ibid.

mystics due to the fact that biblical analogies were often used to validate the religious experience confessed within the text and to provide authority to the author.[310] Hagiographies were often written prior to the canonization of a saint in an attempt to assert the validity of divine favor and inspiration. Biblical analogies therefore provide a similarity between hagiography and Mechthild's work.[311]

Hollywood's analysis of beguine-composed and –focused texts demonstrates a more detailed reading and showcases some textual aspects that aid to define these works as unique and worthy of scholarly attention. Yet Hollywood's classification of non-hagiographical texts is content- and gender-based rather than situated in the discussion of genre and style. Like Derrida, Hollywood places the emphasis of the textual production within the biological feminine, explaining that it is the mystic's body, or person, that is the basis for a hagiography during the thirteenth century, whereas the internal experience is the text for the mystic herself.[312] A scribe compiling the text for a hagiography relied upon the accounts of the saint, as well as the fashioned conception of the mystic based upon her actions. Therefore, an author of a hagiography, in Hollywood's opinion, recorded only outward experiences and not the unique experience within the mind of the mystic. The works for and about beguine mystics, on the other hand, recalled the experiences of that person with the divine, whether written through a confessor or by the mystic herself.[313] The underlying tone of Hollywood's argument implies that works such as *Flowing Light* should be given different consideration from hagiography, and while she does connect the composition of the text to the individuality of the speaker-writer, Hollywood situates that individuality in content and experience rather than form and genre, in lived and physical encounters rather than reflected and revealed shadows of reality.

Rooted within her feminist readings of beguine-composed texts, Hollywood centers gender with genre, as mentioned above, in attempt to validate the significance and authority of female-authored texts. However, placing emphasis on the corporeal rather than textual traditions of stylistics and genre distances comparison and brings to mind again Mary Eagleton's critique of the question of gender and genre in literary study.[314] Both Hollywood's and Peter's classification of beguine mystical texts vis à vis hagiography suggest an understanding of genre that reinforces predetermined notions of genre classifications that support rather than refute the rigid taxonomical organization reminiscent of Romantic ideas and readings. Furthermore, by recasting the textual difference upon the biological body, the physical and sensual experience of the mystic, Hollywood positions her argument within a gendered discourse that reconfirms a bodily-emotional-sensual reading of beguine mystical texts rather than the cerebral-analytical-objective reading often unfairly attributed to the masculine. Interestingly, Hollywood suggests readings free from gender classifications, implying that mysticism and mystical language could be accessible to both males and females in a similar manner.[315] Despite her comparison of male-authored mystical works, such as by Meister Eckhart, the use of the body as definition and defining factor for the genre demarcation of Mechthild's text dispels the possibility that comparison can occur on equal or even similar grounds. It lies upon the point of the body, particularly the gendered body, that we see the ongoing impact of the interwoven understanding of genre and gender.

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[310] Ibid., 36.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid., 36.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Eagleton, 259.
[315] Hollywood, 36.

In addition to Amy Hollywood's studies, during the last decade of the twentieth century, Frank Tobin wrote extensively about the connection between the work of Meister Eckhart and *Flowing Light*. Whereas a prior citation of Tobin in this chapter focused on the understanding of genre and the motivation for textual conception/composition, with his comparisons of Mechthild's writing with Meister Eckhart the emphasis lies not on genre but audience, the question of textual authority, and how these concepts contribute to scholarly understanding (and readings of Mechthild's understanding) of authorship. Based upon references within the text, Tobin argues that clergy and members of religious orders were intended as the primary receivers of the book (i.e. intended audience).[316] Looking back to Bakhtin, if we shift the framework of speaker-writer and listener-reader from that of the real interaction between text and listener-reader to a more Bakhtinian conceptualization of speaker-writer's imagined reader and their response, we encounter a reading of the text not only situates Mechthild in the center but portrays *Flowing Light* in terms of a reality within itself. Approaching her writing in terms of a reflection of reality or textual "becoming" of experience, reflection, and history into tangible existence, we see an "intended audience" (or as Bakhtin phrases it, the addressee) encapsulated within the text.

Applying Bakhtin's concept of speech genres also garners the possibility for more than one addressee (listener-reader) and a mutli-functional, multi-purpose text. A speech-genre-based reading of *Flowing Light* furthermore corresponds with Tobin's assertion that Mechthild's *bǔch* was written for a public audience. According to Tobin, Mechthild's use of courtly lyric and other literature forms emphasize that Mechthild may have intended her book to be read aloud or recited.[317] The performative aspect of song-lyric points to a multi-skilled addressee: reader and listener present that, I would suspect, might alternate or coincide simultaneously depending upon the genre or genres of a particular section. A multi-skilled addressee harkens back to Derrida and his theory of "invagination", underlying the possibilities for new readings but also new modes of reading and reception (i.e. reading, reading aloud/listening, singing or chant with or without music). With secular literature, the authority of the work is 'embedded' within the format through association with great secular authors of the period. Using secular literature forms, Mechthild includes spiritual advice toward specific groups (clergy and members of religious orders, for example) but also advice in a general sense toward her audience. Tobin explained in detail particular connotations to '*du*' and '*ir*', noting that '*du*' coincided with highly authoritative sections with advice and '*ir*' expressed a desire for understanding from the audience.[318]

There is a second strategy through which Mechthild sought authority. Tobin defined it as "authority by association" and discussed similar aspects to that of Amy Hollywood's comparison of hagiography and mystical works. Yet, while Hollywood specifically noted hagiographic or mystical association with biblical females, Tobin points out that Mechthild aligned herself with five male prophets, many of whom were authors of parts of the Bible. When she created that powerful association, Mechthild appears to have given *Flowing Light* a 'quasi-canonical' status, and Mechthild is merely a recorder of the divine voice of God.[319] Playing upon the recognized genre of hagiography and biblical textual references, the variation of speech genres within her text suggests, according to Tobin read via Bakhtin, that Mechthild shaped her narrative to align with theological tradition and traditional genres of that ilk.

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[316] Frank Tobin, "Audience, Authorship and Authority in Mechthild von Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Godhead*" in *Mystic Quarterly* 23:1 (1997), 9.

[317] Tobin, *Audience*, 14.

[318] Ibid., 10.

[319] Tobin, 10.

Peter Dinzelbacher has a different explanation for the difference between hagiography and works such as *Flowing Light*. Dinzelbacher argues that while other visionaries reported their experiences, Mechthild revised or reworked these experiences into literary forms.[320] Literary recollection of lived experience acknowledges the verbal acts (primary genres) that are translated and transformed in order to create the literary (secondary genres). While Dinzelbacher shies away from the application of modern genre theory with his reading of Mechthild, his reading is more akin with Bakhtin than Mohr or other scholars who attest more rigid and taxonomical categorization of literary forms and their lived sources. Although he cited Dinzelbacher on this point, Tobin disinclines further discussion concerning the extent of actual experience recorded within the literary forms to focus instead on the effects of the literary reworking on the public audience.[321] Concluding his article, Tobin comments on the variety of genres represented in *Flowing Light*, stating that only the ambiguous term "religious" would be an appropriate description.[322]

Based upon the theories of Bakhtin, Jauss, and Derrida, categorizing beguine-composed texts as simply "religious" due to the diversity and complex variation of genres found within their texts poses a multifaceted issue. First, literature attributed to the label "religious" is expansive and so highly diverse that the possibility of comparison is nothing short of problematic. Furthermore, the time scale, even within the medieval period, encompasses around one thousand years of literature, some written in the vernacular, most written in Latin. As we have seen with Jauss and Bakhtin, contemporaneous history at the time of composition and transmissions, as well as the historical understanding of the life of the speaker-writer undoubtedly impacts the speech genres selected, mixed, and dominant within a text. As Bakhtin notes, each epoch has speech genres and forms of utterance unique to the age and perhaps even assist in the definition of an epoch through the establishment of conventional and semi-conventional forms. Bakhtin clarifies that

> Each epoch, each literary trend and literary-artistic style, each literary genre within an epoch or trend, is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the literary work, a special sense and understanding of its reader, listener, public, or people.[323]

Literary trends, styles, and genres require multifaceted comprehension of application of genre, modulation of genre and style, the fluency of the speaker-author with respect to genres and styles and the ways in which that fluency interacts with the conventional and semi-conventional forms that inadvertently create the generic or typical.

Variation or the presence of diverse genres and styles within a text should not, therefore, result in the application of more generic terminology but, as I think Bakhtin would argue, lead to a more nuanced reading that rejects the rigid, classical categorization of literature. Retreating to the label "religious" in reference to beguine-composed texts diminishes not only the beauty of their textual diversity but also the reflection and representation of the speaker-writer—that is, the individual personality—embodied within the text. Secondly, "religious" expresses only one aspect of the text, ignoring the socio-political commentary and critique, the descriptions of everyday life within these women's communities, and the representation of speech (genres) that

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[320] Ibid., 13.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid., 15.
[323] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres", 94.

(we may very well assume) were real and uttered. Tobin read through the lens of Derrida and double invagination or the ellipsis, beginning and ending, reflecting the nature and the history of the text simultaneously. So, while "religious" serves as a "fold" or layer within the complex architecture of the beguine-composed text, delegating solely "religious" and the associated genres to these texts does it no more justice than the terms "visionary" or "mystical.

The third and final point is that the association or labeling of beguine-composed texts as "religious" forces a "belonging" that cannot be upheld. As Derrida hypothesizes in his lecture, genre certainly exists within texts but no text belongs to a single genre or genres.

> …a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre.
> Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genre less text;
> there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts
> to belonging.[324]

Derrida confirms the existence of genres, the presence and participation of genres within the literary text with this hypothesis. However, that present and participation eludes a sense of belonging precisely because the designation of a labeling or classing of a text eliminates the potential exploration and new readings of the text via its folds. While I have selected Tobin's analysis of Mechthild's writings to dissect, this conflict is in no way extraordinary and, I hope, has helped to expose the inaccuracy and incorrectness of traditional genre categories to reflect the whole text.

IV. Conclusion

Throughout the course of this chapter, I have highlighted some of the key scholarly discourses concerning genre and the beguine-composed writings. As we have seen, Wolfgang Mohr outlined genre in Mechthild's *bůch* based upon his interpretation of her intention and motivation, which he limited in function and success of application (as well as truncated scope of textual knowledge and reference) due to her gender and divergence from his "horizon of expectations" of the genres referenced. In contrast, an overview of common genres found within beguine-composed writings exposes the fact that many genres portray a wide range of variances depending upon intended readership, function of the text, and whether the writer-speaker chose to reinforce or alter the reader-listener's "horizon of expectations." From *visio* to *vita*, we see the evidence of potential "invagination"—folds of memory and possible readings within a single text; "heteroglossia"—the referencing of textual knowledge beyond the confines of a given writing, but also the possibility of extracting elements of genres within other genres; and "horizon of expectations"—conflating temporal aspects of a genre, based upon past encounters with that genre, established motifs common to a genre in the present, and the future readings that, in combination with "invagination", create a unique and memorable literary experience.

Despite the apparent variation found within contemporaneous definitions of medieval genres, modern scholars of medieval literature often depart from questions of genre and generic function within a given text. With the addition of a female writer-speaker, scholarly discourse has shown a tendency to emphasize gender in their research on genre, generalizing certain generic functions within female-authored texts when, as was outlined with the example of hagiography, simplifies a diverse genre to a solitary function (i.e. the beatification of the subject by an ecclesiastical authority). In the following chapter, I continue the discussion of beguine-

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[324] Derrida, 212.

composed writings and highlight the historical connections between "invagination", "heteroglossia", and "horizon of expectations" as means to ground the investigation of genre and its function within an understanding of genre that is both present and relevant to its origins. I place specific importance on the textual tradition, primarily because the transmission record of beguine-mystical texts serves as our main bridge into these writings. It is also necessary, in my opinion, to recognize and fully acknowledge the potential layering of these writings, whether through emendations at the hands of the scribes or through the influence of those who compiled and organized the contents we find in these manuscripts. As Sara Poor has aptly noted, the physical text in the transmission record is deeply related to textual structure and the overall genre (and generic function) of the entire work.[325] In addition to the concepts of "invagination", "heteroglossia", and "horizon of expectations", my analysis of genre is rooted within the physical text, in particular because those texts become the means through which Hadewijch's, Mechthild's, and Agnes's writings internalize into memory and the locus of the connection between the writer-speaker and reader-listener.

For the above-outlined reasons, Chapter Three delves into the writings of Hadewijch of Brabant, uncovering the ways in which scholars such as Veerle Fraeters have broached the question of genre and the ongoing division of her work within scholarly studies based (in most cases) solely upon the overarching generic category. I emphasize in Chapter Three the interconnectivity of Hadewijch's writings as a cohesive unit that becomes self-referential. In other words, the various genres within her corpus outline the potential for unlocking the mysteries of the divine. While Erik Kwakkel elegantly demonstrated the lack of an established corpus in Mss. A and B, I argue that Ms. C, a slightly younger manuscript reconfigures the mélange of texts to create a cohesive corpus and, I would argue, an integrated didactic program. Genre holds a key role within the reshaping of this manuscript transmission because it reinforces the "horizon of expectations" based upon the organization of genre by means of expressive clarity and introspective study. Furthermore, the illuminated initials and collation of Ms. C point to the longstanding practice of textual format supporting and aiding the memorization-internalization of the text.

I demonstrate the importance of reading Hadewijch's corpus as a single entity through the close reading of Vision One, followed by its relation to the other visions in the cycle, and finally, her letters and poetry. What becomes apparent is the recycling of didactic principles and the direct correlation between the organization and expression of those principles in various genres. I argue that the choice of genre for Hadewijch implies a versatility that allows the expression of the ineffable, the explication of the complex, and the psychology of longing, suffering and desire. In addition, I build upon Veerle Fraeters' reading of Hadewijch's Book of Visions. In her article "Gender and Genre", Fraeters explores the construction and organization of the writings included within the collection of Visions, arguing that Hadewijch's visionary cycle reflects Richard of St. Victor's "four degrees of love" and "displays an intense intertextual dialogue with Richard's text."[326] In my reading, I expand Fraeters' argument to include the larger understanding of intertextuality both between Hadewijch's other Visions and writings but

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[325] Poor cites Mechthild of Magdeburg as a key example of the shift over time from single work or *bůch* to shorter excerpts within a larger compilation of mystical and religious texts. For a lengthier discussion of transmission and the shifting understanding of genre over time, see "Transmission" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia C. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[326] Veerle Fraeters, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions"* in *The Voice of Silence: Women's Literacy in a Men's Church,* eds. Thérèse de Hemptinne and Maria Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishing, 2004), 77.

also the layering of textual references to works by Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Theirry, liturgical practice, and, of course, Richard of St. Victor. Reflecting upon Bakhtin's speech genres, I discuss the ways in which Hadewijch's use of secondary speech forms interweave didactic principles on several levels and the function of genre choice and combination in the expression of the connection to the divine.

Mechthild of Magdeburg is of focus in Chapter Four and continues the discussion of genre and its role within the composition/production and reception of her *bůch*. Unlike Hadewijch, Mechthild's book includes seven books, complete with chapters, and Books One and Two display the most intense examples of vision, courtly lyric, and dialogues between allegorical figures. Similar to Hadewijch, Mechthild layers genres within each book and often each chapter, playing upon the reader-listener's expectations for a given section based upon the initial form, rhyme structure, and language. In Chapter Four, I argue that the sense of community-readership and speech genres are central to a generic reading of Mechthild. But the presence of Mechthild's book as an entity with a name and continued reference suggests a larger form. I therefore posit Derrida's notion of birth and bringing to light ("donner le jour") alongside Mechthild's underlying didactic sensibilities in *Flowing Light.* Her book is not simply her testimony to divine revelations or the biography of her human existence. Rather, I suggest that Mechthild's work is the literary offspring of her real, lived experience of the divine contemplated, constructed and translated for community literary consumption. The varied use and application of genre mimics the complexities of life (i.e. speech genres) as well as the origins of the Bible with the presence of "secular" forms for a religious function. The numerous references to the allegorical nature of her book as a divine representation and the remarks of blessing for those scribes who copy (Book IV) or read her work (Prologue) suggest the ongoing significance of the text as an entity and the reflection of Mechthild and the divine within its pages.

The third and final body chapter illustrates the significance of historical contextualization and community readership with the case of Agnes Blannbekin. Chapter Five discusses the disconnect between expected generic form and the labeling as such against the function of a genre or genres within a text. Agnes Blannbekin's visions and life experience are recorded by her confessor within the tradition of hagiography, although the text is labeled as a "vita" (saint's life or hagiographical text) and "revelations" (the recording of a visionary or mystical treatise). Despite the initial classification of her work as a *Vita et Revelationes,* Bernard McGinn aptly notes that Agnes' text assumes the function of a "spiritual diary", recording everyday life occurrences in Vienna and visions.[327] Therefore, I argue that modern scholars who classify these writings by beguine mystics upon one aspect or generic trait create a misleading assumption as to the nature of the text (e.g. listing Mechthild's *Flowing Light* as visionary literature, when social commentary, allegory and others preoccupy sections within each book).

Of the three mystics, Agnes Blannbekin represents a more conservative reflection of beguine spirituality (if one can discuss beguines as having a cohesive and unified theological dogma) with her writings in Latin, recorded by her confessor and following the traditional form of hagiography and *revelatio.* As my central evidence, I cite the fact that one of the largest excerpts of Agnes's *Vita* appears in Ms. Ra at the Basel Staatsbibliothek sandwiched between sections of the Latin translation of Mechthild's *Flowing Light* (entitled *Lux divinitatis*). The textual addition appears without designation or mention of Agnes's name. I argue that the relative silence concerning Agnes in the discussion of beguine mystical corpus finds its origins in the generic categorization of her text as *Vita et Revelationes* and the hesitancy to cross linguistic

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[327] McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism,* 22.

(vernacular to Latin) and generic boundaries. In addition, the appearance of a Latin, male-confessor-penned text in the fourteenth-century garners less surprise when one considers the historical contextualization of the text's composition and the motivation for production and possible reception. Just as Hadewijch and Mechthild represent examples of female authors who (presumably) translated their lived experiences with the divine for specific readership, Agnes Blannbekin marks a stage increasingly concerned with orthodoxy and reiteration of specific generic formulations to express the sanctity and veracity of a vision-inspired text. In my opinion, the underlying motivation for Agnes' text is acceptance and the preservation of an example of a beguine whose expression of religiosity is both orthodox and cleric-supported. With Agnes, the choice of genre takes precedence precisely because it attempts to shape or define audience reception of her life and text.

Agnes's *Vita* also reworks our "horizon of expectations" of hagiography and what appears a plausible anticipation of the genre's function. By using genre as a tool with which to unlock the text, we have the opportunity to encounter Agnes through a range of expressions, from *visio* to *oratio*, that complicate contemporaneous textualizations of hagiography. On several levels, Agnes's *Vita* questions the validity of the label and yet also encourages modern readers, rather than reject or criticize the usage of *vita*, revise and complicate our understanding of how a *vita* functions in the wake of beguine mysticism and, perhaps, increasing condemnation of lay religious sanctity in the fourteenth century.

The investigation of beguine-composed texts through the lens of genre theory engages in a discussion that has the potential to extend well beyond the confines of beguines and the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. While my study cannot be exhaustive in its depiction of known genres during a given temporal and geographical scope, I integrate as thoroughly as needed to support my hypotheses and illustrate (albeit on a limited level) the specific literary community of the time. In my conclusion, I discuss the ways in which didactic and ontological motivations are deeply entrenched within genre and genre choice, as well as the significance of variation for beguine mystics. Variation, in my opinion, is central to the understanding not only of the beguine lifestyle, definition, and religious practice, but also the composition and construction of the beguine literary corpora. As Bernard McGinn remarks,

> The fact that some, or even many women may tend to use language in a certain way, or to adopt distinctive kinds of symbols, or to construct their gender identity and its relation to God according to particular patterns, does not necessarily mean that all women or no men will do so…it is difficult to imagine that there could be *one single* form of mysticism characteristic of all women, and only for women, either in the late Middle Ages, or in any other period in the history of the tradition.[328]

McGinn raises several significant points that have appeared within secondary scholarship on beguine mystics and their writings. Many scholars would hesistate to create an exclusive relationship between language and gender. While it may be true that some female authors chose set ways to depict their relationship with the divine, similar to the texts from which they drew, there exists a multipilicity of potential reasons beyond the form, format, and phrasing of a given text, gender being only one of several possible influences. As I will outline in the following three chapters, the mystic relationship with the divine is as individual as the ways in which they choose to rely those divine mysteries and lessons. Hadewijch's corpus is divided into four

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[328] McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticsim,* 15.

distinct groupings, loosely centered upon a core genre type. Yet at the same time, within each of these core genre types—vision, letter/epistle, song, and rhyming couplet—other genres and genre hybrids appear, complicating the exclusive division between the texts based upon genre. What is more is that these genre groupings exhibit themes and tropes, which are incorporated in various ways throughout all four groups.

Variation, it would seem, lies at the heart of these works; not simply in the languages and genres each writer-speaker selected, but also in the function and method they chose to deciminate the meditated experience and lessons from the divine. Just as gender cannot remain a sole determinant of how a writer-speaker will construct a text, so too should scholars resist the urge to compile all mystical and/or visionary texts within one oversweeping generic category. With the introduction and these first two chapters, I have sought to complicate the ways in which scholars approach beguine writings and even the understanding of the community, culture, and faith within which these texts were composed. To highlight the individuality of these writings, I now turn to the body chapters and concentration on one writer-speaker per chapter.

Chapter Three
Recapitulations of *Memoria*: Hadewijch, Her Textual World and "Literary" Pilgrimage

*"*It is not carelessness when Christian mystics do not want to make a distinction between
mystical experience and the meaning or the teaching about this experience; it is intentional.*"*
-Alois M. Haas[329]

I. Introduction

Whereas in the previous two chapters, I outlined how genre theory can intersect with
beguine writings and other medieval literature, this chapter shifts into the discussion of three
single writer-speakers, beginning first with Hadewijch of Brabant. It is notable from the onset
that Hadewijch's writings are divided by genre (in the broadest sense of the word), and
scholars often focus their efforts on one generic group rather than approach all writings as an
integrated corpus. The function of genre and genres gains precedence with Hadewijch. As I
reveal over the course of this chapter, Hadewijch's writings are in fact a corpus, the integrated
collection of visionary, epistolary, and poetic writings in dialogue with each other. Therefore,
rather than setting out to show what genres are present, I begin by asking what genre is for
Hadewijch. While some scholars might look at pure form (i.e. poetry or lyric vs. prose in its
many forms), genre becomes something more than a set form type. I argue, instead, that these
genre groupings signify different representations of worlds and hybrid worlds; realms that the
inner and outer bodies encounter separately and in tandem.

"A genre", Peter Seitel explains, "presents a social world or a partial view of one that
includes configurations of time and space, notions of causality and human motivation, and
ethical and aesthetic values."[330] Advocating for the use of genre as an interpretative tool,
Seitel draws upon concepts that resonate heavily with "invagination" and "horizon of
expectations" that were outlined in the first two chapters of this dissertation. Due to the
dialogic nature of both "invagination" and the "horizon of expectations", the connection
between the reader-listener and writer-speaker are formulated by way of the text and its
inherent structure. The question then becomes more than simply a literary or linguistic
expression of the writer-speaker but also the representation of reading cultures and textual
interpretation as understood by the writer-speaker and the anticipated reader-listener response.
As Duncan Roberston remarked in regard to Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermon on the Song of
Songs,* the text underscores reading and writing practices "from within, heard as originary
speech…which [the writer-speaker] conveys…to his own reader through oral conventions…in
writing."[331] Reading and writing become an intertwined activity that blends the lines between
reader-listener and writer-speaker in that the text houses the potentiality for present and future
reading in its "folds" (*les pli*), while incorporating the textual culture and assumed literary
foundations of both the active and passive participants in the reading of texts.

And yet genre as the building blocks or structure[332] to a work holds the potential of

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[329] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 26.

[330] Peter Seitel, "Theorizing Genres: Interpreting Works" in *New Literary History* 34:2 (Spring
2003), 279.

[331] Duncan Roberston, "The Experience of Reading: Bernard of Clairvaux's 'Sermons on the
Song of Songs'" in *Religion and Literature* 19:1 (Spring 1987), 2.

[332] "Genres are storehouses of cultural knowledge and possibility. They support the creation of
works and guide the way an audience envisions and interprets them. The idea of generic worlds directs a

reflection, as Bakhtin expressed, both in terms of writer-speaker and reader-listener. Seitel expands this concept to include a microcosmic world within a work, the reflection not simply of "author" and "consumer", but their "horizon of expectations" for a genre and text, the society and its ethics and mores. In the previous two chapters, I outlined how "invagination" connected to memory, "heteroglossia" to the dialogic nature of the text (both interiorly and exteriorly), and the ways in which the "horizon of expectations" builds upon the anticipated knowledge and response of the reader-listener, choosing to affirm those anticipations or defy them (which I argue induces a more memorable encounter with the text).

"Generic worlds", as Seitel terms them, represent more than simply the formulaic understanding of genres and their functions. "A generic work evokes a characteristic world to an audience and then may enrich that portrayal by including other worlds within itself."[333] Genre and generic worlds may be simple or complex, but always rely upon a pre-knowledge of genre, conscious or not, which guides the reader-listener towards an anticipated outcome. Therefore, memory/*memoria* is present at the time of composition and takes the figure of genres known within a given society or culture. Memory/*memoria* also appears within the text as a literary representation of a divine encounter. This "remembering" evokes a meditative response, in turn causing a "call to write". However, at least with the beguine-composed writings, the texts are far from simple reiterations of events, and the visions are transformed into reflections of the mystical encounter; they represent both actions and actors, surroundings and utterances. Finally, memory/*memoria* becomes the motivating factor in the reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*), thus encouraging a cyclical process of reading, meditating upon the text, internalizing its message, reflection upon the message as Word, and, hopefully, a new encounter or knowledge of the divine.

As we will see throughout this chapter, Hadewijch's writings house generic worlds, which were intended for contemplative exploration or travel. The generic and literary landscapes of Hadewijch's visions, letters, and poems represent a type of pilgrimage through the texts, one that assists the reader-listener to define her own path towards the divine and *unio mystica.* Furthermore, the structure and organization of generic motifs encourages memorization/internalization. Similar to Robertson's study of the *Sermons on the Song of Songs,* Bernard of Clairvaux constructs a mode of reading that complicates the division between written page and the message contained therein: "…the written text of the Song dissolves into a wholly inward reality, nothing more than the presence to each other of the reader and the Word."[334] I propose a similar approach to Hadewijch's writings to argue that, through genre and generic motifs, Hadewijch encourages an exploration of her texts that centralizes the success of their understanding by the reader-listener by means of meditation and internalization that are written within the structure of the texts themselves. Through a landscape of genre types and textual references, Hadewijch demonstrates and implores "a way of reading which engages the full range of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual faculties", one that provokes the reader-listener to "take possession of the text and be taken by it."[335] In essence, Hadewijch's guidance through her three sets of genre groups dispels the boundaries between binaries of external and internal, reader-listener and text, writer-author and composition, to create an ongoing and living contemplation of the Word as divine.

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genre-savvy critic to the dimensions of these collective representations—including time, space, categories of actors and settings, causality, and motivation—and the interpretation they call for" (Seitel, 279).
[333] Ibid., 280.
[334] Robertson, "The Experience of Reading", 15.
[335] Ibid., 16.

Hadewijch expresses the constant duality through her acknowledgement of inner and outer bodies and the relationship between these two aspects. Since the body (in this case, Hadewijch's body) appears in dual form, her language proposes at first a separation between inner and outer before a blurring of those boundaries can occur. For example, in her first vision, Hadewijch begins,

> *Het was in enen sondaghe Ter octauen/ van pentecosten dat men mi onsen here/ heymelike te minen bedde brochte, Om/ dat ic gheuoelde / soe grote treckinghe van binnen/ van minen geeste/, Dat ic mi van buten onder/ die menschen soe vele niet ghehebben en conste/ dat icker ghegaen ware./*

> [It was on a Sunday on the Octave of Pentecost that our Lord was secretly brought to my bedside, because I felt such a great pulling from within from my soul that was so strong I could not go amongst others.][336]

This incipit initiates the reader into a world rife with sensuality, profound feelings, and, perhaps most significantly, *minne* or love. The liturgical setting ("Sunday on the Octave of Pentecost") establishes a multifold or heterglossical reference to the communal understanding of Biblical teaching (i.e. Acts 2:1 and the celebration of Pentecost), to the experience of the Pentecost as societal phenomenon (i.e. church feast), and to the personal association of memory, whether on the level of writer-speaker (i.e. interaction with the divine as vision/*visio*) and the reader-listener's recollection of Pentecost as text and event. Moving beyond the liturgical setting, Hadewijch illustrates a stark contrast between "amongst others" and the "great pulling from within [her] soul", suggesting a duality of her being (i.e. exterior physical body as part of a community and interior thoughts and soul), while also demonstrating that this two-fold nature exists within a single world. As the vision progresses, Hadewijch transcends the confines of the outer body and moves inward toward the inner senses: the level upon which the divine can speak directly to the human soul. However, through the construction of her vision/*visio* as a physical object (i.e. the manuscript) and as literary work, the genre of vision also shifts from an external experience to a form of *experientia* via reading; the text becomes a part of the reader-listener via reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*), through which process new readings and meditations can occur. The genre of vision/*visio* through reading returns to its origins, the inner body and mind as soul, fully expressing the duality of exterior and interior, human and divine, while blurring the division between the two.

As discussed in Chapter Two, although fairly diverse in nature, the genre known as "vision" (*visio* in Latin) has ties that extend well beyond the medieval period or even antiquity. The seminal works of leading theologians within Christianity sought to classify and describe these mystical experiences, the most notable and influential of which being St. Augustine.[337] However, as seen in the previous chapter, Augustine's concept of visions is affective, highlighting the lived experience of the mystic rather than the means by which that person (or in many cases his or her confessor) recorded those divine encounters for reader-listener

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[336] Hadewijch, *Visioenen,* ed. J. Van Mierlo, ll. 1–7. My translation.

At times I use my own wording when I want a more literal translation of Hadewijch's text. While Mother Columba Hart's volume is well considered and polished, there are often emendations that alter the tone of Hadewijch's prose and poetry.

[337] Veerle Fraeters, "*Visio/* Vision" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 178–179.

consumption. Hadewijch translates experience into a literary form, thereby also shifting the concept of the vision/*visio* from a static representation of divine intervention to an embodiment of text that lives through reading and meditation. In other words, she modifies the genre as anticipated by the reader-listener and understood within previous literary models into a mutable expression of communication between the inner and outer bodies of the writer-speaker, the reader-listener, and the divine as the Word of God.

With the overwhelming focus on the contents and inspiration for visionary composition, how do we conceptualize the vision as a genre? What are the underlying motifs that typify a vision as distinct from a *vita* or saint's life? And related to the *vita*, how might the extensive collection of *revelationes,* the revelations that commonly accompany or are integrated within a saint's life, differ in genre from the vision?[338] While I introduced the debate of *vita et revelationes* vs. *visio* in the previous chapter, this chapter situates the discussion within the scholarship of Hadewijch's writings and within the texts themselves. The visions of Hadewijch, at times described as a *Visioenenboek* (*Book of Visions*), propel my discussion of the vision as a genre. Although complex in its generic references and layering of speech genres, Hadewijch's visions incorporate a distinct organization and form, one that plays upon literary motifs within individual visions, within the collection of visions, and in Hadewijch's corpus as a whole. To cite Seitel once more, the creation of Hadewijch's writings into an integrated and self-referential corpus is the convergence of several generic worlds into a single literary environment. In particular, Veerle Fraeters, Frank Willaert, and Patricia Dailey's research on Hadewijch's visions prove monumental in the development of my argument, although I expand and extend some initial points (and contend a few others) to include the breadth of Hadewijch's corpus and the significance of organization and form within the manuscript transmission of her works.[339]

What is particularly distinct in Hadewijch's visions is the literary style that develops from the initial lines through the excipit of Vision 14. Whereas visions found within earlier hagiographical texts report the visionary experience in simple detail and recount the "what" and "how" of the divine encounter, Hadewijch's visions are constructed and composed for a readership.[340] N. de Paepe's 1967 dissertation first posited the notion that Hadewijch's writings

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[338] In Chapter Two, I began discussion of this topic in a more general way, looking in particular at the question of a *vita* versus *visionary literature.* See Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*; Sara S. Poor*, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: The Making of Textual Authority*; and Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum*. The discussion of vision and vita appears pp. 34–54 in Chapter One of this dissertation.

[339] Veerle Fraeters, "Visioenen als literaire mystagogie. Stand van zaken en nieuwe inzichten over intentie en functie van Hadewijchs Visioenen" in *Ons geestelijk erf* 73 (1999), 127–130.

Fraeters supports (to a certain degree) the theory that Hadewijch's Visions are didactic, but states the claim that, although there are didactic and pedagogical elements to her text, due to the overall mystical nature of her visions, neither term fully expresses what takes places within those lines. For this reason, Fraeters develops the term "mystagogical" to describe Hadewijch's visions and argues that the mystical impetus should be reflected in our understanding of any potential pedagogical or didactic function. The main support for this argument is the comparison between Hadewijch's visions and that of contemporaneous didactic texts. Unfortunately, Fraeters provides no concrete analysis of these didactic texts in comparison to Hadewijch's visions, posing distinct questions as to the specific aspects upon which those didactic texts (largely unnamed) differ from Hadewijch's.

[340] The most significant example of the visions constructed for an intended readership is the fourteenth vision, which does not take the usual form of vision found within Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek.* In fact, the narrative voice speaks directly to the reader, informing him/her of other visions not found within the book, a newfound power, and knowledge that she dare not relay.

were composed on behalf of a group of other *mulieres religiosae* (religious women) within the Brabant area, presumably those who intended to follow Hadewijch's example in mystical enlightenment and striving towards *unio mystica* (mystical union).[341] Textual evidence supports the proposed didactic nature of Hadewijch's visions and, in fact, her entire corpus.[342] Whereas hagiographical texts, such as *Vita Beatrijs* or the *vita* of Elizabeth von Schönau, report chronologically the visions of religious lay women and nuns, Hadewijch constructs her visions as a cycle, with a distinct development from vision 1 through the epistolary-styled Vision 14. As Veerle Fraeters notes, "Hadewijch explicitly states in [Vision 14], the closing chapter of the *Book,* that it is only now that she reached perfection…This is exactly what she was asked to do by Christ in Vision 1. The circle is full; the book can close."[343] Although Fraeters states that Hadewijch exhibits textual evidence of reflection upon the visionary experience within Visions 11 and 14, I would argue that careful treatment and organization of Hadewijch's visions—and the fact that these visions construct a complete cycle—suggest that the entire cycle reflects upon the visionary experience—agreeing with Patricia Dailey's reading of the visions. Referring to the initial citation of this chapter, Alois Haas aligns the didactic and literary, the experience with textual representation of said experience (the "distinction between mystical experience and the meaning or the teaching about this experience"[344]), and illuminates the "intentional" nature of this composition. Generic worlds per Seitel portray a dynamic landscape, one learnt through encounter (i.e. reading and meditation) that both reflects and modifies the understanding of the society in and for which a text was composed. The role of the reader-listener therefore remains active, dialogic, and constructive.

In particular, Hadewijch's *Book of Visions* constructs worlds of continuing variety via its compilation and mixing of genres. Vision as genre is complex but not impossible to describe and define with reference to Hadewijch's corpus. Bakhtin's "The Problem with Speech Genres" provides a potential guideline with which to unravel the superficial obstacles apparent in the classification of vision as a genre. While this initial overview of vision as genre is in no way complete, it provides an important reference to the contents of this chapter and the manner in which I propose to approach, digest, and conceptualize Hadewijch's corpus beyond the experienced to the *reflected* and *constructed* literary representation. Before further discussion of the intricacies of Hadewijch's writings and her overall didactic-mystagogic program, I provide in

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[341] Frank Willaert, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den Visionen" in *Abendländische Mystik des Mittelalters,* ed. Kurt Ruh (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 368.

"Erst nachdem N. de Paepe in seiner i. J. 1967 erschienenen Dissertation nachweisen konnte, dass nicht Hadewijchs Beichvater—wie J. van Mierlo und St. Axtens glaubten—sondern ihre Freundinnen das intendierte Publikum der Visionen dargestellt haben müssen, wurde diese Meinung von niemanden mehr bestritten."

Bernard McGinn classifies *unio mystica* as "a human being [becoming] one with a god", and in the case of Christian belief, Paul's epistles portray that "the language of union…'in Christ' is a central motif." Bernard McGinn, "*Unio mystica/* Mystical Union" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 200, 201.

[342] Willaert, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis", 368.

[343] Veerle Fraeter, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions*" in *The Voice of Silence. Women's Literacy in Men's Church,* eds. Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 73.

[344] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 26.

the following sections an overview of Hadewijch's corpus and the scholarly response to her visions with respect to genre. In Chapter Two, I outlined the most prevalent genres in beguine-composed texts in order to provide a basic understanding of the form and function of these genres. In the following sections, I reference the information as provided in the previous chapter in order to connect Hadewijch's corpus to the existing understanding of medieval genres found in mystical texts.

Hadewijch's corpus

Hadewijch of Brabant, a "beguine" mystic, possibly lived in the environs of Antwerp[345] during the first half of the thirteenth century. Writing in the dialect of Brabant, Hadewijch's corpus survives in three fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts and two fragments. As previously mentioned, her corpus includes a collection of fourteen visions (*Visioenen*), thirty-one letters (*Brieven*), forty-five strophic poems or songs (*Strofische Liederen*), and twenty-nine poems mostly in rhyming couplets (*Mengelgedichten* or *Rijmbrieven*).[346] Hadewijch's poetry is among the earliest examples of the courtly lyric tradition in Middle Dutch.[347] Utilizing elements from the literary genres of the court, the rhyme scheme and use of loan words suggest influence not only from Flemish courts, but also from French courtly literature, specifically the Provençal tradition.[348]

Although scholars focus predominantly upon the strophic songs, the prose works of Hadewijch also exhibit the use of various genre forms, often playing with the anticipated intention or use of these forms. For example, Hadewijch employs the form of the didactic letter in her collection of *Brieven*, and yet these letters detour from the normalized format and structure. Whereas St. Bernard of Clairvaux composed letters for the sake of a broader or generalized audience, Hadewijch's letters begin with minimal address and appear in the form of a response to and elucidation upon previously prompted questions, rather than the typical structure of topic introduction, clarification of key elements, terms or aspects, and finally an exegetical explanation for the sake of the reader. Yet, although there is some initial confusion concerning Hadewijch's use of terminology and dogmatic principles of union, maturation, etc., the *Brieven* as a modified version of the genre address questions of spirituality that inform other genre groups within her corpus. The direct language and use of second-person singular mimic a dialogic interplay between Hadewijch's text and the reader, one that promotes further reflection and often clarifies elements within her strophic poems and visions.[349]

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[345] Scholars seem unresolved about the exact location and dialect of her writing. Some cite the possibility that she lived and worked in Brabant, others—due to a fifteenth-century reference—that she was in Antwerp, and yet there is another possibility that she was near Brussels (Vanderauwera 186).

[346] Ria Vanderauwera, "The Brabant Mystic: Hadewijch" in *Medieval Women Writers,* ed. Katharina M. Wilson, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 186.

[347] While several scholars have previously argued that Hadewijch emulated the French and Provencal courtly lyric tradition liberally, I will argue later in this chapter that her use of lyric is in fact distinct and merely drew upon elements but never directly borrowed from these traditions.

[348] van Cranenburgh 163; Petroff 182.

[349] Benjamin Breyer notes that "Hadewijch's use of the second-person plural (*u*, *ghi*, *uwes*) in some of her letters suggests that these were addressed to multiple people and that they may have been read and experienced communally…Understanding the correlation between intention and mode of discourse highlights the differences in affective stylistics among the modes Hadewijch uses, and this is turn indicates the different functions that her Letters, Songs, and Book of Visions served in her community" (Breyer, unpublished dissertation, 16, 17).

Along similar lines, Hadewijch's cycle of visions plays with the anticipated structures and forms prevalent within the broadly-termed genre of "visionary literature." On the one hand, her visions display common trends within literary dream visions and follow the structure of setting, transition to alternative consciousness, and allegorical dream. On the other hand, however, Hadewijch departs from the commonality of form when she encounters the divine. A poignant example of this departure lies in Vision One, a vision brimming with complex allegories, Biblical tropes, and a lengthy monologue from Christ. Written from the perspective of Hadewijch's soul/inner body, the final two-hundred lines depict an absence of her voice, replaced instead by "the Beloved" or Christ (as recorded by Hadewijch) with an explication of Christian behavior, achieving divine union, and the maturation of the soul. Christ's monologue borders on the structure of a lecture or sermon, and the vision concludes with his instructions, not returning Hadewijch to her body or the initial setting.[350]

Despite increased interest in Hadewijch's corpus over the past few decades, scholarly discourse concerning genre and her writings are minimal, and many of such works discuss form without analyzing genre nor do they make any attempts to define the specifics of a genre within Hadewijch's corpus. As with many genre studies of historical literature, the topic of genre relates to larger discourses concerning gender studies or seeks to banish generic labels altogether, demonstrating the complex and irregular nature of any given genre category.[351] In Chapter Two, I initiated discussion about this topic, citing Frank Tobin's proposed use of "religious literature" for all of Mechthild of Magdeburg's book.[352] In the following section, I will briefly discuss some of the more recent scholarship on Hadewijch and genre. I highlight three articles in particular: Veerle Fraeters "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions*", Frank Willaert's "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den 'Visioenen'", and Patricia Dailey's "Children of Promise: The Bodies of Hadewijch of Brabant." Although there are many other potential works, all three engage with form in some way as it is found in the visions. Poetic form and genre will be discussed, but I highlight discussions of the visions first due to their significance, I argue, to the construction of the entire corpus as conceptualized in Vision 1.

With a discussion of these three articles (with some brief reference to other scholarly approaches to genre and function), I outline how scholars evoke genre yet rarely discuss it in its complex and often confusing forms. I intend to demonstrate where genre lies within the works of Fraeters, Willaert, and Dailey, how it corresponds with the function of a text, and how these readings limit the potential reading(s) due to their restrictive conceptualization of genre and how it functions within a text. Following the analysis of the three articles, I explain my proposed reading of Hadewijch's corpus and genre for this chapter, as well as the ways in which the theories of Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss provide the potential for a multifaceted reading that is reflective of the varied functions and contents of Hadewijch's writings.

II. Hadewijch Scholarship and Genre

II.1 Fraeters: "Gender and Genre"

In her 2004 article entitled "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of*

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[350] Veerle Fraeters discusses the different concluding elements found within visions 1 and 2 in her article, "Genre and Gender."

[351] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 5.

[352] Frank Tobin, "Audience, Authorship and Authority in Mechthild von Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Godhead*" in *Mystic Quarterly* 23:1 (1997), 15.

Visions", Veerle Fraeters proposes a revised reading of Hadewijch's *Visioenen* based upon the analysis and understanding of that cycle as a complete literary expression (rather than a loosely related set of writings). Employing the research on *visio* or *revelatio* by Peter Dinzelbacher, Fraeters explains that there are two types of visions within the genre: Typus 1 focuses on the "detailed descriptions of the geography of the other world"; and Typus 2 details "the intimate encounter, in the inner space of the visionary's psyche, with God."[353] A shift occurs during the twelfth century from Typus 1 to Typus 2 within "visionary literature", paralleled by a change in the presence of revelatory texts by religious women. Fraeters explains that contemporaries viewed women as having an "inferior bodily constitution (women are moist and cold, rather than dry and hot)…[which made] them susceptible for ecstatic experiences and for visitations."[354] The permeability of the female physical body, therefore, exposed women to a greater probability that the soul might be encountered by spiritual entities.[355]

While initially concerned with gendered bodies and literature associated with and attributed to women, the focus of Fraeters' article remains upon the text's body (here focusing solely on the Visions), its formation and function, within the understanding of Hadewijch's visionary collection. Fraeters rightly notes that the anthologies of thirteenth-century visionary literature "shows that there was no strict literary model according to which ecstatic experiences were fixated."[356] Variation, as I have discussed in Chapters One and Two, is a prominent feature or aspect within the discussion of beguine mystic texts. Fraeters continues her analysis to state that the medieval vision was not in fact "a well-defined literary genre" but rather "a well-defined phenomenon."[357] What is unclear in this discussion is how Fraeters aims to define "genre", leading to the question whether genre, as we as seen with Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss, is ever "well-defined". Rather than provide a definition, Fraeters shifts to a discussion of typologies of visions, highlighting Augustine's influential triad: *visio corporalis* (visions experienced by the bodily senses); *visio spiritualis* (the interior senses, meaning the translation of corporeal experiences into imagination and memory, and therefore more removed from the body); and finally *visio intellectualis* (Fraeters defines it here as "immediate grasping of spiritual truth", although elsewhere the definition centers upon the understanding of the divine as the divine perceives of it).[358]

Visio corporalis, literally "vision by means of the body", serves as St. Augustine's description of the lowest in his three kinds of visions. This "seeing by means of the eye" served as the gateway into encounters with the divine, but with limited capabilities in the visionary's

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[353] Veerle Fraeters, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions"* in *The Voice of Silence. Women's Literacy in a Men's Church,* eds. Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 57.

[354] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 58.

[355] Although in this chapter, I focus on the orthodox and divine spiritual encounters, there were obvious concerns that women might have encounters with satanic or dark spirits. Without a doubt, the understanding of the humors as laid out by Galen and continually promoted by medical texts and philosophers well beyond the medieval period influenced inquisitions and witch trials. The sanctity of ecstatic moments was at times doubted and in need of proof. For further discussion on ecstatic moments in mystical literature and their definitions, see Dyan Elliott's "*Raptus/* Rapture", Bernard McGinn's "*Unio Mystica/* Mystical Union", and Patricia Dailey's "The Body and Its Senses" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 189–199; 200–210; and 264–276 respectively.

[356] Fraters, "Gender and Genre", 59.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid, 60.

ability to fully "perceive God's eternal truth".[359] Due to the corporeal nature of the vision, the "outer eye" as Augustine referred to it, dominated the visionary's conceptualization of divinity and tied the images heavily to the earthly, human experience and understanding. Augustine ranks his three kinds of visions from the lowest (*visio corporalis*) to that of greater perception (*visio spiritualis*—the spiritual vision, one seen through the inner eye, the "organ of perception of the human soul") and finally *visio intellectualis*—the "intellectual vision by the eye of the mind".[360] This typology of visions, as outlined by Augustine, seeks not only to classify the innerworkings of the visionary experience, but also to approach, as Veerle Fraeters notes, the "epistemological question of how a human being can know and correctly understand the meaning of God's Word."[361] It is therefore unsurprising that Augustine would assess visions distanced from the corporeal functions (i.e. seeing, hearing, etc.) as having greater proximity to the divine and thus an increased ability to grasp its truth in revelation.[362]

Although Augustine highlights content, the form is also impacted by the level of visions. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Bakhtin's theory of speech genres, along with a comprehensive analysis of visionary literature, could provide the connection between content and genre needed to describe and define the diverse presentation of the "vision." For example, the *visio corporalis* emphasizes the sensory experience—in particular that of sight and sound—relying upon speech genres that evoke description of sensory conceptualization and typically abstain from more complex genre forms for reference and/or rhetorical emphasis. In other words, the form of *visio corporalis* reflects the simplicity of its contents, varying from *visio spiritualis* or *visio intellectualis*, which reference other literature (intertextuality) and engage with the understanding and reflection upon divine encounters in more complex speech genres or multiple genres simultaneously. As Bakhtin notes,

> The vast majority of literary genres are secondary, complex genres composed of various transformed primary genres (the rejoinder in dialogue, everyday stories, letters, diaries, minutes, and so forth.[363]

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[359] Veerle Fraeters, "*Visio/ Vision*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia R. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 178.

It should be noted that while St. Augustine's triadic typology of visions dominated Western Christian mysticism, there were other notable typologies throughout the medieval period. One such example is Richard of Saint Victor (d. 1173), who altered the understanding of visions to be twofold rather than triadic. His typology differentiated between the corporeal and spiritual visions. Fraeters notes that "according to Richard…the highest form of spiritual vision is…anagogic in nature: the soul temporarily contemplates the glorified Christ and understands everything from his point of view" (p. 181).

It should also be noted that Fraeters relies upon chapter 12 from Richard of Saint Victor's *Benjamin major* for "*Visio/* Vision", which includes a reading of the biblical passage in which the Queen of Sheba is looking for Solomon. Richard interprets "the queen looking for Solomon" and her listening as meditation; "she then sees him and understands" as contemplation; and "her seeing him stupefies her and makes her transcend her spirit" as ecstasy (p. 181). This excerpt from Richard of Saint Victor differs from the excerpt from *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love*, which Fraeters relies upon for her article "Gender and Genre."

[360] Fraeters, "Visio/ Vision", 178.

[361] Ibid.

[362] Fraeters notes that the "hierarchy of vision categories [is] based upon 'veracity and trustworthiness.'"

[363] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres" in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (New York: Routledge, 2014), 94.

Literary genre varies in function and purpose from primary speech genres. The very presence of a presumed or intended reader-listener alters the nature of the text, and I would argue with the case of Hadewijch encouraged a sophisticated reflection upon the lived experience.

Returning to the discussion of genre and visions, Fraeters elucidates that, due to the fact that the medieval vision had no "concrete tradition as a text…[it] is most often transmitted within other textual genres, such as *chanson de geste,* letter, and *vita.*"[364] Fraeters eliminates the possibility of vision as a generic form for the simple fact that she limits her reading to layered genres and intertextuality as non-generic in nature—a point Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss refute.[365] Derrida astutely summarizes the difficulty with complex genres that remains a legacy from the Romantic taxonomical understanding of the word.

> First, it is possible to have several genres, an intermixing of genres or a total genre, the genre "genre" or the poetic or literary genre as genre of genres. Second, this re-mark can take on a great number of forms and can itself pertain to highly diverse types. It need not be a designation or "mention" of the type found beneath the title of certain books (novel, *récit,* drama).[366]

What is remarkable remains the overarching premise that the genre of a complex literary work would be or must be simple to define and discern. There is no denying that visions appear transmitted within other genre traditions, but the primary example in question—Hadewijch's fourteen visions—poses a problematic aspect of such analysis precisely because it fails to conform to the above explanation. In fact, Fraeters's article proceeds to detail the regimented organization of Hadewijch's visions at length, at times describing these structures as "quite conventional", in the ways that they reflected common literary practice during the thirteenth century.[367] And yet the specifics of the conventionality of the visions remains unmentioned, calling into question the refutation of a genre tradition, or that conventionality could even exist within this context. The overarching message Fraeters conveys is that generic hybridity, or the existence of a genres referenced within other genres, complicates a reading of Hadewijch's visions. Fraeters questions the motivation and appearance of varied genres within Hadewijch's text, and yet she avoids discussion that two or more genres can and do coexist within a text.

Fraeters explains that, despite the titular concentration on gender and genre, the "heart of

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[364] Fraeters, "Visio/ Vision", 178.

[365] Derrida's "Law of Genre", Bakhtin's articles on "Epic and the Novel" and "The Problem with Speech Genres", and Jauss's "Theory of Genre and Medieval Literature" all discuss the complexity of genre that points to genre combinations and the ability for texts to include references to other texts and genres. The rigidity of genre classification and textual function—and the issues therewith—are best described with the citation above from Derrida.

[366] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre" in *Modern Genre Theory,* ed. David Duff (New York: Routledge, 2014), 229.

[367] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 65.
Mary Carruthers remarks that commonplaces and topoi for the use of communal memory and thus help account for the replication of motifs within a given genre. "Where classical and medieval rhetorical pragmatism diverges from modern, I think, is in assigning a crucial role to a notion of common memory, accessed by an individual through education, which acts to 'complete' uninformed individual experience. This notion is basic to Aristotle's view of politics as the life of the individual complete in society" (Carruthers, 28).

[the] essay is how Hadewijch of Brabant worked her visionary experiences into text (*causa formalis* in the medieval *accessus* tradition)"[368] or the "medieval *accessus* (prologue) of literary texts".[369] Fraeters compares Hadewijch's *Book of Visions* to "a limited body of contemporary visionary reports", which she classifies as a "lateral corpus".[370] The motivation behind the creation of this "lateral corpus" remains the intention to "use gender as an instrument of analysis in [her] conclusion".[371] In actuality, the question of form in Fraeters' article promotes further categorization rather than expanded articulation of genre use and aesthetics *without* gender constraints. Through a concentration on gender first and genre second—in conjunction with the hand selected nature of references from the "lateral corpus"—Fraeters's study is fraught with rigidly defined conditions before any analysis occurs. The triad of categories within the "lateral corpus" are outlined as follows:

1) Women authors who, like Hadewijch, have written down their visionary experiences in the first-person singular, in the vernacular;
2) Women authors who wrote *Visiones* in Latin;
3) Male authors, clerics, who wrote about a visionary woman in the third person singular, in Latin.[372]

Following each named category, Fraeters admits to the limited choices and difficulty in finding texts appropriate for comparison with Hadewijch's *Book of Visions.* From the offset, the "lateral corpus" proves problematic on several levels, and the brief comparison of works from these three categories situates them awkwardly within the rest of the article.

Despite a problematic introductory section, Fraeters' examination of the structure of individual visions (the *causa formalis* or "reason for the form") and the *ordo libri* (order/organization of the book as a whole) is highly informative.[373] Fraeters classifies five distinct aspects within the individual visions of Hadewijch's collection.

1. Situation in time and space: liturgical feast, meditation
2. Vision "in the spirit"
3. Fruition "out of the spirit"
4. Return to pain and exile
5. Reflection.[374]

While all five elements or aspects are not present in each of Hadewijch's visions, at least one aspect appears. Visions 1–4 and 12 include aspects 1 and 2, Visions 5–6 and 10 have aspects 1-4, Vision 7 and 8 are combined with only aspects 1, 2, and 4. Vision 9 and 13 have aspects 1-3, omitting aspect 4: the return to pain and exile. Of all Hadewijch's visions, only Visions 11 and 14 exhibit the presence of aspect 5 (reflection) according to Fraeters.[375]

Through Fraeters's analysis of the above aspects, the emphasis upon content in the

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[368] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 60.
[369] Ibid, n. 11.
[370] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 60.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid, 60–61.
[373] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 63.
[374] Ibid, 78 (cf. Appendix 1).
[375] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 78–79.

definition and description of Hadewijch is overwhelmingly clear. Fraeters employs "form" in the broadest sense, adhering more to the medieval *accensus* tradition mentioned above than an investigation into the use of *visio*/vision in its various forms in contemporaneous literature. In fact, although Fraeters argues that *visio*/vision is not a literary tradition but a phenomenon due to the presence of other genres within visionary literature, Fraeters's discussion of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions* does not include the analysis or even description of other genres present within Hadewijch's Visions.[376] Fraeters employs a new sense of expectation from the text with her definition of visio/vision, one that aligns with her own argument and seeks to classify the genre based upon a checklist of elements and motifs from a limited and problematic set of sources. What is further challenging is the historical element of interpreting a text. Based upon the research of Bernard McGinn, Elizabeth A. Andersen and others, the thirteenth century marked a time of change, a shift within the use of the vernacular, changes in literacy for certain levels of society, and developments in theology (and their respective writings). McGinn notes a distinct shift in the form of the vision, hagiography, and the mixture thereof during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[377] Taking into consideration the potential malleability of genres during this period, as well as the reflection of the historical implications of shifting mindsets and varied understanding of divine teaching and doctrine, it seems to me bold to suggest new classifications of genre when the existing forms—those extant in manuscript transmissions—are not as well understood as they might be.

   Despite the above concerns with form vs. genre, the greatest scholarly contribution Fraeters provides in her "Gender and Genre" article is the analysis of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions* as a literary construction based upon Richard of St. Victors' text *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love* (*De quattour gradibus violentiae charitatis*). Although based primarily upon the contents rather than genre of Hadewijch's visions, Fraeters establishes a plausible and persuasive argument that reflects an underlying motive behind the composition and organization of Hadewijch's vision cycle. Fraeters parallels the four steps of divine love according to Richard of St. Victor with those seen within Hadewijch's visions. In his writing, Richard creates a threefold understanding of the four degrees of love. Fraeters organizes the information into three set groupings, however she does not fully explain how these fit together or the specific references within the texts for these (or even whether these represent a hierarchy):

	Type One	Type Two	Type Three
Stage One	Meditation	God enters the soul and it turns inside itself	Ascension
Stage Two	Contemplation	The soul ascends above itself and is lifted up to God	Transcendence
Stage Three	*Jubilus*	The soul passes over altogether into God	*Conformitas* to God's glory
Stage Four	Compassion	The soul goes forth on God's behalf and descends below itself	*Conformitas* to God's humility[378]

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[376] Ibid, 60.

[377] McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism,* 29.

[378] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 76.

As shown above, Richard explicates the four stages of divine love threefold, establishing a connection between an acknowledged progression within the visionary experience (meditation-contemplation-*jubilus*-compassion) with the specific description of what occurs to the soul during that step (middle column above), and finally the spiritual significance of these steps and the relation or status of the soul with regards to divine understanding.

In Fraeters' reading, Hadewijch's visions reflect not only the above concepts as outlined by Richard of St. Victor but also her "personal spiritual growth from child in Love to bride and mother of God, and thus functions as an exemplary mirror for her spiritual friends."[379] Hadewijch's design of her *Book of Visions* fits Richard's pattern of the four steps "so perfectly" that in Fraeters' opinion, "it may well have been deliberately designed according to it."[380] The progression of "1) meditation, desire (*begheerte, orewoet*), 2) vision *in spiritu,* 3) fruition *super spiritu,* 4) return" certainly aligns with Richard's four steps of "ascension-transcendence-*conformitas* to God's glory-*conformitas* to God's humility" on some levels. On other levels, Fraeters extracts the steps from the three columns above as it supports her reading, as the model of "meditation-contemplation-*jubilus*-compassion" is not completely fulfilled with Fraeters' reading of Hadewijch's visions. While meditation, *jubilus* and compassion occur, contemplation is replaced with the more complex notion of "vision *in spiritu"* (vision in the spirit) and "fruition *super spiritu"* (fruition above or beyond the spirit).

Although Fraeters's reading of Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek* certainly provides new insight into the plausible ways in which scholars can approach intertextuality and composition design, the definition of the key concepts, such as *meditatio/*meditation, *contemplatio/*contemplation, etc., both within Richard of Saint Victor's text as well as Hugo of Saint Victor's writings, any contextualization as a written form remains absent. According to Thomas H. Bestul, "[m]editation was understood as both physiological and mental activity, with the goal of absorbing the complete meaning of the text, implanting it in the memory for future use."[381] There is a distinct disconnect between the practice of *meditatio* outlined by Bestul above and that understood within Fraeters's analysis of Hadewijch's visions and Richard of Saint Victor. In fact, another Augustinian Canon of Saint Victor in Paris, Hugo of Saint Victor, offered yet another interpretation of *meditatio,* one influenced by the writings on mystical theology by Pseudo-Dionysius. Hugo states that,

> Meditation is sustained thought along planned lines: it prudently investigates
> the cause and the source, the manner and the utility of each thing. Meditation
> takes its state from reading but is bound by none of reading's rules or precepts.
> …There are three kinds of meditation: one consists in a consideration of morals,
> the second in a scrutiny of the commandments, and the third in an investigation
> of divine works.[382]

Meditation therefore becomes a modified form of reading that remains more fluid in its function and impact in this sense. Hugo of Saint Victor, although not Richard of Saint Victor himself,

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[379] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 76.

[380] Ibid.

[381] Thomas H. Bestul, "*Meditatio/* Meditation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 158.

[382] Bestul, "*Meditatio/* Meditation", 161.

preceded Richard as a Canon of Saint Victor, but the more significant factor is the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on the Victorines. While Hugo's definition of meditation differs slightly in its emphasis on reading, there lacks a congruency between Fraeters's interpretation of Richard of Saint Victor's *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love,* Hadewijch's visions, and the broader understanding of meditation as a physiological and mental activity. That is not to say that Fraeters's reading of meditation/*meditatio* is not plausible, but her specific understanding of the term and its usage within the two texts remains unclear.[383]

Bestul offers another plausible reading of *meditatio,* one that describes more concretely the affective aspect of the term rather than the connection between *meditatio* and *memoria* (memory). Bestul clarifies that,

> As in Bonaventure (and the Victorines), the recommended course of meditation
> is to proceed from exterior things to interior, and to ascend from lower things
> to higher; through knowledge of self, one can attain knowledge of God.[384]

The above definition affords a reading more in line with the one posited in Fraeters's article, but illuminates the importance placed not on genre or form, but on the emotive experience encapsulated within Hadewijch's visions. The description above is of a spiritual activity, "regarded as an intermediate stage" but one that is "preceded by a more elementary, if essential practice, such as attentive reading of scripture."[385] In essence, what Fraeters describes in her comparison of Richard of Saint Victor and Hadewijch's visions is affective spiritual activity used as a motif with which to discern the design of a literary work. While I would not go as far to say that Fraeters's argument is implausible, I do find fault in the absence of reading and writing within her understanding of Hadewijch's visions. Because Fraeters entitled her article "Gender and Genre", the reader assumes that a discussion of genre will ensue, as well as a comparison of Richard of Saint Victor's compositional organization with that of Hadewijch's. In the end, although the term "genre" is used, a detailed discussion of genre does not actually materialize.[386]

The primary significance of Fraeters's article lies not in her discussion of genre, per se, but in her ability to demonstrate a complex system of organization that reflects the composition of each individual vision and the entire vision cycle simultaneously. Later in this chapter, I return to Fraeters's concept of *ordo libri* on a larger scale—Hadewijch's entire corpus—in order to discuss that her initial analysis of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions* is applicable beyond the limited confines of genre classifications (i.e. vision, letter, poem, and rhyming letter). While Fraeters constructs a parallel between the organization of Hadewijch's visions and Richard of Saint Victor's four degrees of love, I elucidate in this chapter that the careful structured prose

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[383] There are later definitions of *mediatio* that might fall in line better with Fraeters's reading of the term, but, at the same time, it would be difficult to discern whether Hadewijch encountered these texts and which version of meditation had more credence. I did not go into detail about another significant term in Fraeters's article, *contemplatio*/contemplation, simply because it illustrates similar complexity as *meditatio*/meditation. For more information on the diversity of the medieval understanding of *contemplatio*/ contemplation, see Charlotte Radler "*Actio et Contemplatio*/Action and Contemplation" and Charles M. Stang "Writing", both in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism.*

[384] Bestul, "*Meditatio*/ Meditation", 165.

[385] Ibid.

[386] There is certainly the initial discussion of genre and potential motifs, but the explanation and completedness of the arguments are truncated. The brevity of explanation of genre supports K.S. Whetter's statement that when gender and genre are discussed in tandem, the emphasis is usually on the former and the latter is all but absent (*Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance,* 5).

and verse extends beyond the confines of the *Visioenenboek* and encompasses a larger program including the entire corpus.

In the end, it is a question of analytical emphasis: the composition had to take place because the text exists. The motivation for composition and the contents of said text are significant but should be read in tandem with an analysis of the construction of the text in terms of genre(s) and intertextual references. Shifting focus to a different approach to genre and composition, I turn now to Frank Willaert's analysis of Hadewijch's visions to demonstrate that genre and form appear within scholarly discourse even when those are not the central focus, as well as the significance of genre for her community or circle of her readers.

II.2 Willaert: "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den 'Visioenen'"

Frank Willaert describes in his 1986 article, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den 'Visionen'", the significance of intended audience upon the function and composition of Hadewijch's collection of visions. Referencing the 1967 doctoral dissertation from N. de Paepe, Willaert argues that the prospective reader(s) of Hadewijch's visions were her circle of female "friends" (*Freundinnen*) and aims to contend the theory that her visions were merely "visionary reportings".[387] Similar to the argument later made in Fraeters's 1999 article, "Visioenen als literaire mystagogie",[388] Willaert posits that Hadewijch's visions served an "exhortative-dialectic" function for her friends, much like the collection of prose and rhyming letters and her strophic songs.[389] Willaert ingeniously demonstrates the ongoing features of the didactic nature of Hadewijch's visions, while at the same time referencing the other three genre grouping within her corpus. Although primarily concerned with the function of Hadewijch's visions and its intended audience, Willaert provides an alternative reading of the visions, one distanced from a forced concentration on gender and that, despite different interests, illustrates the significance of engaging with Hadewijch's entire corpus in terms of the discussion of genre, function, and compositional motivation (i.e. reception of the text).

Unlike Fraeters's emphasis on gender (primarily) and genre (secondarily), Willaert allows the structure of Hadewijch's visions to guide his interpretation. In Willaert's opinion, the

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[387] Frank Willaert, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den 'Visioenen,'" in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter,* ed. Kurt Ruh (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 368.
Benjamin Breyer's 2015 dissertation argues that there was a sole reader or potential recipient for the book of visions, a point which he links to the composition of the letters. However, this argument is complicated by the fact that he admits in Chapter Two that these letters were addressed to various women in her circle. Breyer cites the use of the second person singular *ghi/u* in Middle Dutch as evidence of his claim. I believe, however, that he does not provide sufficient weight to his argument to substantiate his claims. See Chapter Three of Breyer's dissertation for his discussion of Hadewijch's visions.
[388] Veerle Fraeters, "Visioenen als literaire mystagogie. Stand van zaken en nieuwe inzichten over intentie en functie van Hadewijchs Visioenen", in *Ons geestelijk erf* 73 (1999), 111–130.
Although there is a similar argument made, Fraeters does differ in her use of terminology. She contends that didactic and pedagogical are insufficient in their ability to describe the Hadewijch's use of highly sensual and descriptive language. In later article by Willaert, "Registraliteit en intertextualiteit in Hadewijchs 'Eerste Strofische Gedicht'", he uses the term "mystagogie" (p.172) but it is unclear when or where this term developed. Willaert still initially uses didactic to describe the poem, with "mystagogisch" in parentheses.
[389] "In diesem Aufsatz möchte ich nachweisen, daß eine derartige Anschauung die Visionen Hadewijchs in einem falschen Licht erscheinen läßt und daß diese Texte, wie auch ihre Reim- und Prosabriefe und ihre Strophischen Gedichte, in bezug auf ihre Freundinnen eine wichtige exhortativ-didaktische Funktion erfüllt haben." [sic in the original: I looked it up] (Willaert 368).

relationship between Hadewijch's visions and the intended audience has strong connection between her experiences and the composition of her texts.[390] Willaert asserts that the composition of Hadewijch's visions included a conceptualization of her prospective readers, their understanding of contemporaneous literature, and the structure and composition of her texts.[391] Through the description and detail of her visions, Willaert places Hadewijch in a position of authority due to her ability to draw upon her experience and translate those divine encounters and lessons into texts for literary consumption.[392] Willaert notes,

> Aber gerade deshalb, weil sie sich dazu bereit erklärt hatte, konnte sie von Gott selbst ausdrücklich erwählt werden, ihren Freundinnenkreis in der Nachfolge Christi und *doet* und *onghenade* zur wahren Freude der *enicheit* [sic in original] mit Gott führen.[393]

The example, or "mirror" that Hadewijch provides in her visions textualizes the visionary experience, reflects upon its significance and molds those divine lessons into a working, living model that her intended audience, her "Freundinnenkreis", could read (*lectio*), meditate upon (*meditatio*), and potentially lead them to a personalized experience of ecstasy or fruition (*unio mystica*) through Hadewijch's example.

Willaert's article and construction of his argument exemplify a textual reading that dwells closer to a discussion of genre—in this case, speech genres—than Fraeters foray into gender and genre. In "The Problem with Speech Genres", Bakhtin explicates the significance of the reader-listener reflected within a text during the process of composition, which I believe corresponds well with Willaert's argument. Bakhtin explains,

> This question of the concept of the speech addressee (how the speaker or writer senses and imagines him) is of immense significance in literary history. Each epoch, each literary trend and literary-artistic style, each literary genre within an epoch or trend, is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the literary work, a special sense and understanding of its reader, listener, public, or people.[394]

Willaert's reading of Hadewijch's visions, although not explicitly stated within his article, reflects Bakhtin's notion of speech genres and the intended audience. Hadewijch's understanding of her intended addressees, her *Freundinnenkreis*, presents them within her texts indirectly, impacting the ways in which Hadewijch constructs and explicates the literary reflection of her lived experience. Hadewijch's *corpus*, the embodiment of experience within the text (which will

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[390] Willaert, 368.
"Unsere Aufmerksamkeit, die der Beziehung zwischen Hadewijchs Visionen und dem intendierten [sic in original] Publikum gilt, impliziert, dass man das Verhältnis zwischen ihrer Erfahrung und ihren Texten in einem anderen Licht sehen sollte, als oft geschehen ist." (368).
[391] Ibid, 369.
Willaert notes that there was an underlying premise that Hadewijch's experiences were real and the composition of her visions reflects this understanding by way of their organization ("van buten, in den gheeste, buten den gheeste"). Willaert short description of Hadewijch's visions corresponds with what Fraeters later details at length in her article "Gender and Genre" (see previous discussion).
[392] Ibid, 373.
[393] Ibid, 380.
[394] Bakhtin, "The Problem with Speech Genres", 94.

be discussed in the following section) becomes interwoven (*texere, textus*) with both text and her intimate understanding of her audience.

Reading Willaert through Bakhtin exposes that an underlying notion of genre theory and speech genres exists within medieval scholarly discourse and coincides with their illustrated arguments, even at times when they are not explicitly expressed as such. In contrast to Fraeters's analysis of genre and compositional design, Willaert demonstrates through his research the plausible intersection between genre theory and medieval scholarship. Although unintentionally linked in his "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis in den 'Visionen'", Willaert's later article, "Registraliteit en intertextualiteit in Hadewijchs 'Eerste Strophische Gedicht'", bridges the divide between modern theories on genre and intertextuality with scholarship on medieval literature. In conclusion, Willaert demonstrates that an analysis of form with a lens toward function reveals a complex reading of content and the significance of textual cues directed toward the intended audience suspended within a text. In the following section and final article in this brief discussion of Hadewijch scholarship, I shift to textual representations of the body, memory, and elements of time as exemplified in Patricia Dailey's article, "Children of Promise".

II.3 Patricia Dailey: Hadewijch's Bodies, Time, and Text

The third article within this initial discussion is Patricia Dailey's "Children of Promise: The Bodies of Hadewijch of Brabant" (2011). The significance of Dailey's research on the understanding and revised readings of mystic texts cannot be understated, and her sophisticated interweaving of elements of the mystical bodies, time, and memory are nothing short of revelatory in their capacity to expose previously unexplored *pli* (folds) of mystical writings. Like Willaert, Dailey rejects the simplistic interpretation of Hadewijch's visions as reported experience and instead proposes a more complex and nuanced analysis that reflects the composition and resulting textuality of mystical writings. Dailey critiques previous scholarly discourse, exposing the tendency

> to engage broad and contingent categories within these texts as unifying
> principles and thereby fall into the trap of essentializing mystical writings
> as examples of women and their work in a way that posits them in opposition
> to a literary tradition complicit with an unwitting marginalization of women's
> texts.[395]

Concentration on gender and the body in scholarly discourse often leads to conclusions that limit the literary expression within mystical texts to visionary reporting. Dailey cites David Ayers, remarking that "any focus on 'the body' (especially in the name of the feminine) risks reemphasizing and reifying the patriarchal power that produces it."[396]

However, the marginalization of female-authored texts lies not only in the broad categorizations in rhetorical and linguistic terms but also in form. In addition to the scholarly missteps above, I would include that the conceptualization of genre—though at times broad and nebulous, at others rigid and unspecified—further contributes to the unintentional othering of these mystical texts, despite attempts to secure more relevancy in medieval literary discussion. As outlined in Chapter One, textuality, intertextuality, and speech genres are heavily

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[395] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 317.
[396] Ibid., 318.

intertwined, aligning Dailey's critique with that of my own.

Highly related to the concept of genre is textuality and embodiment of the bodily experience within the mystical text. Dailey contends that "bodily experience should be understood as a form of textuality, albeit in a very particular way."[397] Rather than an emphasis on the "'natural' part of experience", Dailey recasts "focus on the material and phenomenal accounts of embodiment" with a lens toward the "experience of reading…[a] reading [which] promises bodily unity only through the text itself."[398] Dailey carefully interweaves the Pauline and Augustinian concepts of inner and outer bodies (and with it inner and outer senses, organs, etc.) with Hadewijch's use of the terms *materie* (material, or here, outer body) and *lichame* (body, but here, inner body).[399] In Dailey's reading, the composition of Hadewijch's visions, letters, and poems are tied to her concept of *werke* ("works"), which she notes "embody what exceeds the individual yet can be enacted through her, like visions themselves."[400] Charlotte Radler echoes this concept, remarking that, for Christian mystics, through the experience of divine presence, the mystic's "interior journey" is altered but also "radically transforms their exterior life."[401] The supposed separation between inner and outer bodies diminishes as the mystic understands that both these separate but interconnected bodies are necessary for spiritual maturation. In addition, the visionary experiences of the inner body and its senses are intended to inform the daily practices. Dailey connects these daily practices to *werke,* which could take the form of penitential work, manual labor, or prayer. Even the composition of Hadewijch's writings are seen as a *werk*, particularly in the five-step contemplative practice—*lectio-meditatio-oratio-operandi-contemplatio.*

Within Dailey's analysis, the connection between inner and outer body and *werke* is central. *Werke* reflects not only an enactment of *imitatio Christi,* but also engages, compels, pleads the mystic to compose her *corpus* into text. Thus, *werke* become not only an act or acts on behalf of a community (i.e. good works and imitation of Christ's suffering), it also expresses a need for *werke* in a textual sense: the embodiment of the inner body's experience into text.[402] Dailey explains that,

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[397] Ibid.

[398] Ibid, 319.

[399] Ibid.

In a more recent article, Dailey explains this concept at greater length: "In the Christian tradition, the body is not presented as a united whole but is divided into at least two parts, inner and outer, united only in an unknowable future. When medieval mystical texts write of the body, they require that we make sense of the body in its multifaceted nature. Within these texts, human beings are composed of both inner and outer bodies and inner and outer senses, a model that finds its paradigmatic expression in the writings of Origen (ca. 185–254) and Augustine (354–430)" (Patricia Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 264).

[400] Ibid.

Dailey clarifies elsewhere that "[t]he goal of affective mysticism is not to excite the outer body into a Bacchic frenzy, but to allow one's affective and thus embodied experience to stimulate the construction of the inner body and then to allow the heart, innards, or inner senses to speak and act through the outer body" (Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses", 269). With this understanding, the affective experience translates into the *werke* of the outer body, which in turn enriches and matures the inner body (the soul).

[401] Charlotte Radler, "*Actio et Contemplatio/* Action and Contemplation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211.

[402] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 319–20.

> This process of allowing the inner body to be translated into terms applicable
> to the outer is part of a process of reading and interpretation that ensues with
> the event of a vision and continues beyond the event itself.[403]

Through reading and interpreting her visions, Dailey argues, Hadewijch's corpus manifests itself?, allowing the extended possibility for reading and re-reading, interpreting and meditating upon the embodiment of her experience. In reading the inner and outer senses, Niklaus Largier adds that "[the inner and outer senses] are not to be seen as a set of allegorical poetic means of expressing and representing spiritual experience. Rather, the texts argue, they constitute and construct a specific reality of the mind."[404] The meditation on the inner body's vision, made physical in the composition of the text, and again the source of meditation (now from and of the outer body) is the key to spiritual perfection (in the inner body).[405]

Yet, the composition of the text provides further significance, according to Dailey: the creation of a physical embodiment of the inner body allows a means of connection between the inner and outer bodies that can be revisited *and* felt. Dailey explains that "[t]he reading of and meditating on her own vision enables a bridge between inner and outer bodies; it renders them coherent, in touch with one another."[406] The divide between inner and outer body, soul divine and corporeal human, oneness in divinity and oneness in community conjoin within the text, providing direct correspondence between Derrida's notion of ellipsis and invagination of genre and text and Dailey's notion of text, intertexuality, two selves, and spiritual maturation in Hadewijch's writings. Similar to Derrida's concept of genre, Hadewijch's visions participate in the reading, interpretation, and meditation of the inner body, but, just as no text belongs to a genre, the inner body fails to belong to the mystic but rather reflects and is an expression or aspect of the divine.[407]

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[403] Ibid, 320.

[404] Niklaus Largier, "Inner Senses, Outer Senses; The Practice of Emotions in Medieval Mysticism", in *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter/ Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages,* eds. C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 8.
Also referenced in Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses", 271 n. 19.

[405] "By letting the outer body be mediated or regulated by its inner form, one reaches embodied spiritual perfection. When analyzing and reading the more 'corporeally' minded aspects of medieval mystical texts, we have to be careful to understand the complexity of their relation to textuality, materiality, and agency and their implications for identity, especially because the inner body attributed to the mystic cannot be called his or her own."
Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses", 272.

[406] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 322.

[407] "To formulate it in the scantiest manner—the simplest but the most apodictic—I submit for your consideration the following hypothesis: a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genre less text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging…Nor is it simply extraneous to the corpus. But this singular tops places within and without the work, along its boundary, an inclusion and exclusion with regard to genre in general, as to an identifiable class in general" (Derrida, "The Law of Genre", 212).

Dailey also reflects upon this two-fold, multidirectional element of definition and understanding: "*Werke* reflect a righteousness and embodiment of divine truth in action that demonstrates a person's complete adoption into the divine will. *Werke* and perfection in love also accomplish a transformation of the outer body into the inner" (Dailey, "Children of Promise", 329).

For the purposes of this dissertation and my desired argument (as will be outlined shortly), one aspect of Dailey's argument provides the needed fodder to satisfy both potential readings of genre (via Derrida and Bakhtin) as well as the historical contextualization and reception as reflected in Jauss's theory of medieval genre. Remarking upon the concept of reading and interpretation, Dailey aligns the interplay of inner and outer bodies, vision and corpus/text, with stages outlined for contemplative life by the Victorines, Cistercians, and Carthusians. Through the process of perfecting the inner body—and I would read this in the Latin sense of *perfectus* meaning complete and lacking nothing, thereby creating a distinct parallel between completedness, maturation, and union with the divine—the composition of the corpus/text/body allows for connection to an audience and a continued process of reading (*lectio*), interpretation, and meditation *(meditatio)*. Dailey explains that

> The closer the outer body conforms to a linguistic referent, the more united and perfect it becomes, and the more substantial the inner body becomes as it approximates the living substance of consciousness. The link between *lectio-meditatio-oratio-operatio* and *contemplatio* seen in Victorines, Cistercians, and Carthusians is elucidated here in terms of how inner and outer bodies relate to one another and is supplemented by the final term *werke*.[408]

Hadewijch's visions promote the connection not simply between inner and outer bodies via the composition of the text, but seek to instill "a hermeneutic process that links reading with understanding."[409] The reader-listener encounters the embodiment of the text through reading, promoting interpretation and meditation upon the inner body's experience and creating a physical, visible object (the text/*corpus*) that has the potential to promote further meditation, recitation (*oratio*—in this sense, speaking aloud), and further internalized once again, compelling the reader-listener to do good works and imitate Christ *(werke)*. This cycle of encounter-digestion-inspiration-realization echoes, as Dailey demonstrates, throughout Hadewijch's works.

Dailey's treatment of Hadewijch's vision, and in fact, her entire corpus/text/body, illuminates the potential engagement with text that affords great complexity and intertextuality than prior discourses concerning the body and text. While Dailey does not specifically engage with genre theories, her analyses and approach to Hadewijch's writings employ fundamental aspects of modern genre theories from Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss without distinct reference. The translation of experience into literary composition, reflected and transformed, resonates with Bakhtin's descriptions of speech genres. In similar context, acknowledgement of an audience and

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In another article, Dailey explains further the connection between time, memory, and the true owner of the inner body. She remarks, "The vision promises Hadewijch a form of afterlife—in its prefiguration of the ultimate triumph, to be recalled away from the body, once and for all, and be delivered from historical time in the eternity of salvation. This inversion of recall also shows that the memory does not fit its origin in the mystic, but in God. It is not her memory, but the memory of God, in the strange sense of the subjective and objective genitive. Although the mystic makes use of her memory of the divine, often through contemplation of the living memory of God, who is Christ himself, ultimately the mystic attests that it is the divine that recalls her back to her origin, leaving behind her earthly body."
Patricia Dailey, "Time and Memory" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 350.

[408] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 322.
[409] Ibid, 324.

anticipated reaction, reading or interpretation by a reader also aligns with Bakhtin and the choice of genre (termed in that instance as primary and secondary genres or utterances). Dailey remarks,

> Reading, beholding, contemplation, meditation, understanding, and prayer are all integral parts in Hadewijch's visionary texts and demonstrate the critical role of figuration as a means to combine letter, body, interpretation, act, and the surrounding world… [her visions] are the means to envision and enact literate (and Trinitarian) identities from the sermon, song, or the manuscript page, to the affective, religious, and interactive world in which the mystic or visionary lives.[410]

Dailey reads the textuality of the mystic, in this case Hadewijch, in terms respective of a historicized approach to textual expression and makes aware the importance of religious practice in the composition of the text, as well as the significance of reading within the spiritual edification of the inner and outer bodies. With her use of historical contextualization, Dailey corresponds well with Jauss's theory of genre and textualization and allows the complexity of Hadewijch's composition, reading, interpretation, and textual reception to remain intact to explore.

II.4 Chapter Overview and Argument

In looking at the recent literary criticism concerning genre and textual function, scholars approach Hadewijch's writings in diverse ways; at times promoting sharp binaries between "acceptable" and "unlikely" interpretations, functions, and forms of the works in her corpus, at others venturing down paths that glimpse but do not explicitly explicate the workings of genre within Hadewijch's writings. The discussion of more recent scholarship by Fraeters, Willaert, and Dailey above provides the necessary context within which to initiate new avenues of research concerning Hadewijch's corpus and genre theory. These limitations translate into truncated analyses of Hadewijch's writings, constrained either by genre type (Vision, *Brief*, *Lied*/Poem or *Mengelgedicht/Rijmbrief*), presumed function of a text, the intended audience vs. reception of the works, and the elevation of content over form. Of the above scholarly examples, Patricia Dailey's ingenious weaving (*texere*) of bodies and corpus/text affords the most concrete demonstration that an investigation based upon an understanding of genre and genre theory is needed to promote new readings, explorations into the folds of book and genre, of Hadewijch's corpus/textual embodiment.

While Fraeters has initiated some discussion of genre, as K.S. Whetter notes in his 2008 monograph, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance,* genre is often tied to gender study, "with a detailed emphasis on the latter, or simply to deracinate genre altogether."[411] While Fraeters' article above, "Gender and Genre: The Design of Hadewijch's *Book of Visions*", reflects upon form and its connection to Richard of St. Victor's theoretical treatise "On Four Ways of Loving", the presence of "gender" in the title is certainly telling. Using gender as a lens with which to limit and mold her cases for comparison, the topic of gender becomes not just an aspect of discussion but the central feature of argument. Genre is approached only by way of gender and the analysis of its imprint upon the composition of the text. In addition, the demotion of "*visio*/vision" from generic type to simply a mode of expression falls in line with an ongoing

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[410] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 338.

[411] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 5.

trend within medieval studies to reject genre due to its complexities rather than develop and refine our understanding of genre dialectics. Therefore, not only does a sharp division between genres exist within scholarly discourse, the acknowledgement of said genres is questioned and often dissolved for larger aims of proving an overarching concern with authority or the potential didactic nature of *a* genre.

In this chapter, I seek to reaffirm the connections amid and between genres within Hadewijch's corpus, highlighting the occurrence of variation within her texts, while also displaying the ways in which these variations play into a larger didactic system intended to guide, inform, and exemplify the wide of range of emotions and experience in the process of spiritual maturation leading to *unio mystica*. I resituate the significance of genre as a central aspect within the expression of Hadewijch's dogmatic program, one carefully constructed and described for her intended audience, which, I argue, includes reflection upon Hadewijch as ungrown child as well as Frank Willaert and de Paepe's suggestion of a circle of "friends". However, my analysis is not singular in focus. The close reading of Hadewijch's works by way of genre reveals the multifaceted nature of genre choice and mixes—generic layering and excerpting—that house the potential folds of functions and motivations within her writings. As Whetter puts it, genre can only be a beginning and not the sole means to interpreting aesthetic uses of genre.[412]

The end result of her composition, reflection, and construction is the creation of a diverse and multifaceted literary landscape, embodied within her choices of genres and the reader's recognition or awareness of the function of those genres in that time. Hadewijch's corpus, in my opinion, cannot and should not continue to be divided conveniently upon restrictive generic categorization. And while I concede that the individual groups are significant unto themselves and represent completed cycles and collections at times, these generic groups are part of a larger whole—similar to Fraeters' argument of Hadewijch's design of her *Book of Visions* (*Visioenenboek*)—and that the internal organization suggests connection to other parts of Hadewijch's corpus, both on the level of each vision, letter, or poem, as well as the visions, letters, and poems acting together as a group by genre.

In my reading, the *Visioenenboek* functions as the gateway into Hadewijch's dogmatic and didactic construction/creation. I argue that the significance of organization of genre groups as found in Ms. C reflect a shift in the understanding of Hadewijch's writings as an interconnected program. The scribes of Ms. C (Codex 941 at the Ghent Universiteitbibliotheek) reconfigured a set of writings by a single author to a corpus that sought to reinforce understanding of specific themes and tropes and emphasize the significance of spiritual maturation by way of reading (i.e. exploration via *lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio* of the inner senses and mind). I contend that the reorganization of the genres in Ms. C—initiating with the Visions—results in a shift in the way that the reader-listener first encounters the text, and thus, becomes acquainted with the motifs and themes encapsulated within its pages.

In accordance with Fraeters, I read the *Visioenenboek* as a complete cycle of visions, or at least inspired by visionary experience and then translated into text with layered speech genres for literary consumption. The visions outline the central ontological and didactic principles that run through all of Hadewijch's writings, but the choice of genres and the heavy use of allegory, I argue, were intended as mnemonic devices—landscapes of memory—which propagate an internalized set of references to Hadewijch's interpretation of spiritual maturation accessible throughout the reading of the rest of her corpus. In essence, Hadewijch creates a literary landscape intended to be explored by way of reading, a pilgrimage completed via words/the

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[412] Ibid., 14.

Word, one that guides the reader from spiritual childhood towards maturation, allowing the reader to encounter and experience literarily the visionary, all the while rendering these vignettes to memory, as well as their lessons in acclimation of spiritual growth. This concept of memory and literary landscapes in order to aid internalization of the text is exemplified through the research of Patricia Dailey, Mary Carruthers, and Frank Willaert's article in *Op reis met memoria.*

As outlined above in my discussion of Fraeters' article on gender and genre, *meditatio* and *contemplatio* have specific meaning within Richard of St. Victor's *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love.*[413] In a broader sense, throughout the medieval period "meditation" and "contemplation" are seen as paramount to the means through which one may achieve union with the divine (*unio mystica*). Referencing the research by Mary Carruthers (*The Book of Memory,* 2nd edition 2014) and others, I compare Hadewijch's Vision 1 through the lens of meditational or devotional literature, seeking to demonstrate the ways in which the allegory of "the space of perfect virtues" initiates the meditative process, a process often defined "with the goal of absorbing the complete meaning of the text, implanting it in the memory for future use."[414] In this sense, *lectio* (reading) leads to *meditatio* (internalization of a text and transference into memory [*memoria*]). Hadewijch's Vision 1 exemplifies the use of allegorical landscapes and, in the case of Ms. C, ornate, illuminated lettering to assist her reader-listeners to commit her text to memory. The underlying intention, then, is that the vision guides the audience towards fruition/perfect union, beginning with the reading of her text, the transference to memory, reflection upon the text and an internalization leading to higher degrees of understanding and union with the divine (*contemplatio*).

While Fraeters addresses these concepts in an affective expression of spiritual encounter, I situate my argument within the text, composition of the text, and the use of genre to structure, guide, and nurture specific reactions from the reader-listener (according to Bakhtin's speech genres). While the visions initiate this journey, the genres and motifs introduced within the *Visioenenboek* reappear and are redefined, clarified, and reiterated within the *Brieven.* This repetition and return reflects the second stage of *meditatio*: the concept that "the text read was gone over with concentrated intensity, perhaps murmured aloud."[415] The *Brieven* are followed by the collection of *Strophische Liederen/Gedichten*, which Frank Willaert has demonstrated employ more biblical elements, particularly references to Job and Solomon, than previously thought and infuse aspects from the court.[416] The dialogic nature of the poems has a performative or recitative quality, one that I argue aligns them with psalms and prayers (*oratio*), which Rachel Fulton Brown states, "at its most basic level, was defined as an act of speech and, therefore, of reason; as Cassiodorus (d. ca. 585) put it, 'prayer (*oratio*) is spoken reason (*oris ratio*).'"[417] Following the outlined progression from Guigo II of Chartreuse's *Scala claustralium* (*The Ladder of Monks*), there are four spiritual activities, "leading from one to another in an ascending order. There are *lectio, meditatio, oratio,* and *contemplatio,* which together form the 'ladder' by which monks can become closer to God."[418] Along these lines, the *oratio*-nature of

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[413] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 76.

[414] Bestul, "*Meditatio/* Meditation", 158.

[415] Ibid.

[416] Willaert, "Registraliteit en intertextualiteit", 186–188.

[417] Rachel Fulton Brown, "*Oratio/* Prayer" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism,* eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 167.

[418] Bestul, 160.

the *Strophische Liederen* and then the *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven* thereafter, suggests to me that the scribes of Ms. C intended to create Hadewijch's triad of genre-grouped writings into a didactic-ontological program leading towards contemplative life and, eventually, *unio mystica.*

The four generic groups establish stages or steps along the path toward contemplative life, a path that I would suggest is more a pilgrimage through her literary landscape (as outlined in Letter 15), allowing the reader-listener to not simply read and digest Hadewijch's works, but venture through the rich and vivid textual landscapes of her creation. For these reasons, Hadewijch's corpus represents the marriage of Derrida's "Law of Genre" and Bakhtin's speech genres, illustrating the ability of generic hybridity and layering to enrich textual representations of the ineffable and evoking the senses, the inner and outer eyes (according to Augustine's typology of visions), and the intersection between the soul, love and the divine. Through speech genres and the "folds" of the text, the reader faces infinite potential readings and interweaves text with experience, playing upon the understanding of text (*texo, texere*—to weave) and corpus (body or collection of texts) in Latin language and literature.[419]

Reflecting this emphasis on the text as corpus and experience, I begin my analysis of Hadewijch's use of genre and intertexuality through the manuscript transmission history, highlighting the uniform appearance of four distinct genre groups within Hadewijch's corpus. A discussion of the manuscript transmissions also allows for questions concerning the organization of the four genre groups and the significance of the textual evidence within Ms. C that suggest the motivation for the creation of the transmission and its distinct layout. I argue that the order found within Ms. C (Visions, Letters, Strophic Poems, Poems in Couplets/*Rijmbrieven*) more aptly represents Hadewijch's overall didactic program and the construction of her textual landscape of layered and interwoven literary and generic references.

Following the discussion of manuscript transmissions, I focus on Hadewijch's Vision 1. Within Ms. C, Vision One is the reader's first encounter with Hadewijch's writings and introduces the reader-listener to the visionary and allegorical world of her construction. The placement of this vision within the manuscript should not be lightly dismissed. In comparison, Hadewijch's Letter One (which starts Mss. A and B) opens without introduction or explanation and engages in a conversation that begins as if mid-conversation or thought. In my reading of this vision, I highlight the wealth of textual references from the onset, from the biblical to the allegorical often typical within more courtly forms of literature. Within Vision 1, the central tenets of Hadewijch's didactic-mystagogic program are set into place, supported by the rest of her vision cycle, before proceeding to the letters.

I differ from Dailey on this point because she includes a form *lectio-meditatio-oratio-capactio-contemplatio* and finally *werke* for her model of embodiment of the text. While *werke* as the final stage works well within Dailey's argument, the more conservative *lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio* plays more to the tune of my reading, particularly if one considers that Hadewijch's writings do not exhibit a singular trajectory, but a cycle re-presenting and re-newed understanding of the corpus.

[419] Patricia Dailey has written extensively on the topic of the body as text. While I will not engage primarily with theories of the body, gender/feminist readings of Hadewijch, the concept of textuality as embodied experience appears in Bakhtin's theories of intertextuality and reflection of reality within the text as a literarized form.

"Bodily experience should be understood as a form of textuality, albeit in a very particular way. Explicating a poetics of embodiment in the visions of the thirteenth-century Brabant mystic Hadewijch, a mystic often noted for her sensual union with Christ or passionate verse, [Patricia Dailey shows] how embodiment and immediacy in women's mystical texts—qualities that are consistently misread—are critical for understanding a poetic and textual operation at work" (Dailey, "Children of Promise", 318).

Due to the importance of memory landscapes and the reader's first encounters with the text, I focus the majority of this chapter on Hadewijch's use of literary form within her Visions, in particular Vision One, to exemplify the utilization and expansion of these forms for a didactic-mystagogic purpose. First, a discussion of the transmission history assists to place the text within its paleographical context, as well as to demonstrate the particular significance of the Visions and, in addition, Vision One. The transmission history then shifts into an overview of Vision One's structure, outlining a tabulated overarching format that exemplifies the format of other visions within the cycle. Following the rudimentary explanation of form, I analyze the combination of literary form and content and the ways in which the form enhances the conveyance of the content. Finally, I compare the key themes and elements of Vision One to the other visions within Hadewijch's collection, highlighting how Hadewijch employs varying genre types to exude different aspects, perspectives, and interpretations of her centralized themes. Hadewijch's use of intertexuality expresses the breadth of aspects inherent in Hadewijch's concept of "maturing in Christ"—from psychological torment and longing, allegorical visions, dialogic letters with an emphasis on instruction and guidance to reflection upon her personal experience with the divine and glimpses into the ecstatic union. The textual representation of Hadewijch's dialectic response to visionary encounters with the divine infuses real and lived experience with literary fluency, providing readers with the ability to encounter the divine literarily, to journey through the allegorical and mystical experiences of Hadewijch's visions, receive instruction and guidance along their path towards spiritual maturity, and feel the intense longing and suffering reflected in Hadewijch's collection of poetry.

Vision 14, which Veerle Fraeters aptly describes as epistolary in form,[420] serves as the gateway into the *Lijst der Volmaakten* (*List of the Perfect*), [sic in Columba Hart] which could be seen as an appendix to the *Visioenenboek*, and prologue to the *Brieven*. Although I will resist contending the labeled genres for each group, partially for the fact that the medieval understanding of these genres should not be discounted nor dismissed, I do acknowledge the presence of other genres and genre hybrids within the broader generic groups, a point well noted in modern genre theory. Hadewijch's *Brieven,* like the *Visioenenboek,* retain a didactic undercurrent, one that remains more in the forefront than the visions, but yields a different tone and emphasis. Following the exploration of Hadewijch's literary-constructed landscape, the *Brieven* speak directly to the reader, instructing the reader in the second person and offering advice often in the form of a tract, sermon-like address, or allegory. In addition, the *Brieven* plays with the reader-listener's "horizon of expectations", employing aspects of *sermo*/sermon and allegory within its lines.

Near the heart of Hadewijch's collection of letters lies Letter 15, also entitled "The Pilgrimage of Love"—an allegory on the journey of the pilgrim as representative of the journey towards maturation of the soul in preparation for the divine. Frank Willaert highlights the importance of Letter 15, noting the allegorical qualities of the letter and the significance of the image of the pilgrim and nine steps (three in three) in his article "Pelgrims naar het land van minne" (2004). The overarching genre of Letter 15 breaks with the premise of the didactic tract or epistle and instead employs allegory as its main generic form. The use of allegory within a sea of tracts, sermons, and letters reflects back upon the visions preceding the letters and reiterates the significance of spiritual exploration and journey by way of allegorical journey and themes of pilgrimage. The location of this reiteration—near the center of the collection of letters— suggests, in my opinion, a literary reminder of the lessons of the *Visioenenboek* and the concept of *meditatio* following the initial *lectio* of the visions and *Lijst.* With this reminder, this re-

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[420] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 72.

collection, Willaert argues—with which I firmly agree—establishes a connection between the composition of Hadewijch's texts and memory/*memoria*. The break in generic form expectation (i.e. labeled as a *Brief* but expressed as an allegory, for example) signals a shift in function and potential response for the reader-listener, and the presence of an unexpected form elicits a new response, one that is made more memorable through its exceptionality and break with the anticipated form and outcome.

I organize this chapter with an increasingly broadening trajectory, beginning with one vision, relating that vision to the vision cycle, and then to the rest of her corpus—the letters, strophic songs, and *Rijmbrieven.* I seek to demonstrate the intertextuality and concept of organization on multiple levels to support my argument of a didactic-mystagogic program based upon literary-experienced pilgrimage.

III. Transmission History: An Argument for Ms. C

Understanding textualization and textual form necessitates a knowledge of the physical texts and transmission history. As Patricia Dailey has discussed, the physical form of the text, its creation by way of *werke,* holds a central importance to the consideration and interpretation of Hadewijch's writings. In this section I briefly outline my reasoning for focusing on the Book of Visions first and why the text form and format is significant to memory and the contemplative life. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Patricia Dailey's studies of Hadewijch's writings situate heavily within the written text, reflecting not only the stage of composition but the act of reading and meditating upon the text. In my opinion, this places emphasis on the physical text. Mary Carruthers has also noted the significance of textual production and memory, highlighting the importance of manuscript illuminations upon the mnemonic profess of reading.[421] Placing Hadewijch's writings within its extant textual tradition, I believe, holds weight within the consideration of forms and how modern scholars might interpret their existence. Furthermore, paleographical study of Hadewijch's texts demonstrates that no two manuscripts are identical in illumination, format or hand. Based upon these considerations, I argue to evaluate the manuscript based on its intended purpose (if discernable) and how this impacts the way in which the manuscript and its contents should be approached. As we will see, the only complete manuscript (with all poems in couplets/*Rijmbrieven* and *Strophische Liederen*), Ms. C, makes a shift within the transmission record, one marked by reorganization of the genres and, I argue, a conscious effort to establish Hadewijch's writings as a unified corpus.

III.1 Rediscoveries

In 1838, three Dutch medievalists, J. F. Willems, F. J. Mone, and F. A. Snallaert, reported the discovery of two Middle Dutch manuscripts in the Royal Library, which contained four works, two prose and two verse/songs, written in a fourteenth-century hand.[422] These manuscripts, Mss. A and B, comprised the bulk of works that are attributed to Hadewijch. A third manuscript was purchased by the library at the University of Ghent in 1878.[423] Known as Ms. C, it also dates to the fourteenth century, albeit a bit later than Ms. B, and comprised the

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[421] Carruthers discusses this at length throughout her monograph *The Book of Memory.*

[422] Hadewijch, *The Complete Works of Hadewijch*, transl. Mother Columba Hart (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 1. From this point onward, I will refer to this volume as "CWH" with the page number.

[423] Ibid., 2.

basis for the first two editions of Hadewijch's corpus: the first volume with her poetic works was published in 1875, the second volume of prose in 1895.[424] Ms. C is the only complete manuscript of Hadewijch's works. Ms. C is the basis for the oft-cited Van Mierlo edition of Hadewijch's works. The fourth manuscript (Ms. R) is held in Antwerp at the Ruusbroec Genootschap Bibliotheek 385 II. Ms. R dates from the first quarter of the sixteenth century, however the exact provenance of the manuscript is unknown. The fifth manuscript, Ms. D, is also found at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Brussels—similar to Mss. A and B—yet it dates from a later period, roughly the second half of the fifteenth-century. It is speculated the manuscript originated in the Rooskloster, however, Erik Kwakkel (discussed shortly) contradicts the plausibility of that hypothesis with paleographical evidence.

There are slight variants in the organization and contents of each manuscript. What is notable about the manuscript transmissions is the fact that several were copied by one hand, and the similarities that? occur in organization and content.[425] The first alphabetically in the list of transmissions is **Manuscript A**: Located in Brussels at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Manuscript A is listed as number 2879-80. The manuscript is written on parchment, in one hand, and 101 folios. Contents of the manuscript are as follows: Letters, Visions, List of Volmaakten, Strophic poems 1–7, 9–20, 8, 21–45, *Mengeldichten* (rhyming couplets) 1–16. As mentioned above, Manuscript A was discovered in 1838, along with Ms. B. Very closely related in reception and discovery is the next transmission on the list: **Manuscript B**. Also located in Brussels at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. B is listed as number 2877–78. Written on Parchment, in one hand, the manuscript contains 166 folios, which shows a significant difference in length from Ms. A (sixty-five folios longer, to be exact). The order of the contents is as follows: Letters, Visions, List of Volmaaken, Strophic poems 1–7, 9–20, 8, 21–45, *Mengeldichten* (rhyming couplets) 1–16, blank folio verso, *Tweevormich Tractaetken*, *Mengeldichten* poem 17–poem 18 line 162; 18:63–poem 19, poems 20–21, 22–24:60, 24:61–144. As one can see from the contents, Ms. B contains additional *Mengeldichten,* as well as the *Tweevormich Tractaekten.* These differences between the manuscripts signify varying source manuscripts, a point which may be related to the provenance of each manuscript (a more detailed comparison is found below). Ms. B was rediscovered, along with Ms. A, in 1838.[426]

Manuscript C is located in Ghent at the Universiteitsbibliotheek under the number 941. Similar to Mss. A and B, the manuscript folios are parchment, written in two hands; however it is shorter in length and has 91 folios. Contents include the complete collection of Visions, List of *Volmaakten*, Letters, Strophic songs 1–45, *Tweevormich Tractaekten*, *Mengeldichten* 1–29. Ms. C is the only complete copy of Hadewijch's works extant and was rediscovered in 1878.[427]

Manuscript D is the first of two longer fragments within the collection of Hadewijchian transmissions. Also located in Brussels at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. D is listed under number 3093–95. Written on Parchment with 187 folios, there is more than one hand noted. The contents are not exclusively Hadewijch's works, containing some works by Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm, Augustine and Bonaventure, *Mengeldichten* 17–18:162, 18:163–poem 19,

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[424] Ibid., 2.

[425] The information concerning the manuscript transmission of the four main Hadewijch manuscripts was taken from the S.M. Murk Jansen book listed below. Due to the repetition, I will cite the book here and then at the end of each paragraph.
S.M. Murk Jansen, *The Measure of Mystic Thought: A Study of Hadewijch's Mengeldichten* (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1991), 9–11.

[426] Murk Jansen, *The Measure of Mystic Thought,* 9–10.

[427] Ibid.

poem 20–21, poem 22–24:60, poem 24:61–144. This manuscript contains only the fragments of Hadewijch's *Mengeldichten,* and none of the Visions, Letters or Strophic poems.[428]

The final manuscript fragment, **Manuscript R**, is located in Antwerp at the Ruusbroec Bibliotheek, under number 385 II. Unlike the other manuscripts, this manuscript is written on paper with 113 folios. The contents include the *Strofische Gedichten* 1-45, List of *Volmaakten*, *Mengeldichten* 1–12, poem 13–14, 16, 15, 25–26, 27–29.[429] Neither the Visions nor the Letters are included in this transmission, which is the reason it is considered a fragment. Ms. R is a more substantial fragment than Ms. D.[430]

Erik Kwakkel notes that Murk Jansen relies upon a mixed theory concerning the origins and dating of the manuscripts, one that is echoed in Frank Willaert's research. Kwakkel states that Murk Jansen (whose study I cited above) refers to De Vreese's dating for Ms. A (listing the second half of the fourteenth century), follows the suggestions of De Vreese and Verheyden for Ms. B (roughly 1380 for a date), and references Van Mierlo's theory for Ms. C, which he dates around the second half of the fourteenth century.[431] Since the nineteenth century, scholars place precedence upon Ms. C, locating the origins of the transmission to Ghent and potentially the Roosklooster, which places it within the theory promoted by Kurt Ruh and others that Hadewijch's writings first gained renewed interested during the mid- to late fourteenth century by the late medieval Dutch mystic, Jan Ruusbroec.[432] Kwakkel, based upon paleographical evidence and an investigation of production vs. use intentions within the physical manuscript culture, proposes an earlier start to the Hadewijch transmission history and places Ms. A in the second quarter of the fourteenth century and cites Ms. C as a later copy, most likely near the end of the fourteenth century.[433] Kwakkel's revision of manuscript dating plays a significant role in my argument later this chapter and how I suggest scholars ought to approach Hadewijch studies.

As shown above, the contents and organization of works in Mss. A and B differ only slightly, beginning with the entire collection of 31 letters, followed by the Visions, the so-called *Lijst der Volmaakten*, Strophic poems and finally *Mengeldichten*. What is notable is not only the exclusivity of the manuscript dealing with Hadewijch's works, but also the fact that these works are organized by genre. True the religious tract *Tweevormich Tractaetken* interrupts the *Mengeldichten*, but overall the organization is very genre specific in Mss. A and B, beginning with prose (the Letters and the Visions) before continuing on to poetry (Strophic poems and Poems in couplets). Furthermore, Ms. C, the prized complete manuscript of Hadewijch's works, has even clearer separation and organization of genres: Visions, Letters, Strophic poems, and *Mengeldichten*/Poems in couplets.

Whereas Mechthild of Magdeburg (discussed in Chapter Four) alternated between prose and verse, Hadewijch's collection of works vary due to the interior organization of her works and, in response, how her collection is assembled and appears in manuscript transmissions. In other words, the construction of Hadewijch's visions for example are intended to be read as a set,

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[428] Ibid.

[429] Ibid., 9.

[430] Ibid.

[431] Erik Kwakkel, "Ouderdomengenese van de veertiende-eeuwse Hadewijch-handschriften", in *Queeste* 6 (1999), 27.

[432] Kwakkel, "Ouderdomengenese", 35, 37.

[433] Ibid., 29–35.
Kwakkel also mentions that De Vreese attempted to place Ms. C in the first half of the fourteenth century with an earlier provenance than Ms. A. This incorrect assumption, Kwakkel implies, connects to the scholarly preference to place more credence in Ms. C (Kwakkel 26).

with a distinct introduction (Vision 1), climax (Visions 10-12) and conclusion (Vision 14). Grouping the visions together is logical due to the literary progression within that generic subset, but also necessitates that the visions remain separated from other genres within Hadewijch's corpus, in order to be fully understood. The *Brieven, Strophische Liederen,* and *Mengeldichten/Rijmbrieven* do not exhibit this sense of cohesiveness or precise organization within each generic group. While scholars speculate upon how and by whom these works were organized and selected for inclusion within the manuscript transmission, discussion of genre theory and paleographical evidence helps shed some light on the connection between form and contents, organization and selection of materials.

Each genre type or mélange thereof contributes a varied portrayal of her dogmatic program: Hadewijch's *Brieven* explicate theological and ontological concerns that at times have an almost scholastic tone to their composition; her *Strophische Liederen* together function as a performative demonstration of her desire and longing for union, set upon the language and tropes characteristic to courtly lyric and romance; her poems in couplets (*Mengeldichten/Rijmbrieven*) serve to continue her instruction for those desiring divine union in a varied tone from the stanzaic poems; and finally her *Visioenen* combine the literary construct of a speculative vision—a theological explication of mystical understanding—with affective mystical experience derived from real life occurrences (i.e. her visionary encounters with the divine).[434]

S.M. Murk Jansen notes that based upon a 1936 article concerning Godfridus de Bloc—the Brussels scriptor and bookbinder—there is evidence that Ms. B originated from de Bloc's scriptorium before 1383.[435] In fact, Ms. B has "*Godfridus scriptor me fecit*"[436] written in the binding, further solidifying the claim that he may in fact be the scribe or at least narrows down the location. What is more, the page layout in Ms. A suggests that it may have been planned as a source manuscript intended for copying: each body of texts are contained within a distinct number of quires and hints that it may have been the property of a scriptorium.[437] Yet although there is a relationship between Mss. A and B based upon organization and construction of texts, the story behind the appearance of Ms. A and the copying of Ms. B, or rather how Ms. A fell into the hands of de Bloc's scriptorium is unclear. What is apparent, however, is that, although both manuscripts are written in a single hand, that hand is not the same for both manuscripts, suggesting that they originated at different scriptoria.[438]

In contrast, the provenance of Ms. C is even more closely noted. It originated in the monastery of Bethlehem near Leuven during the second half of the fourteenth century.[439] There is some speculation that Ms. C may be even older than Ms. A, since the possible dating for Ms. A lies between 1375 and 1383, which is fairly late in the second half of the century. Murk Jansen and also Van Mierlo suggest that Ms. C may be closely related to the original (and naturally lost) manuscript; then Ms. C would then reflect the intended organization and construction of Hadewijch's corpus as portrayed in the first manuscript copies. However, Kwakkel demonstrates that based upon ligatures found within the script, it is highly unlikely that Ms. C predates Ms. A, diminishing the strength of Van Mierlo and Murk Jansen's theory and the precedence placed

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[434] Bardoel, 4.

[435] S.M. Murk Jansen, *The Measure of Mystic Thought*, 10.

[436] "Godfridus the scribe/ author, made me." [That's what the Latin says. The 'speaker' is the book.]

[437] Ibid.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid.

upon Ms. C as related to the source manuscript.[440] Despite a lack of scholarly consensus, the appearance of the genre groups in all manuscripts suggests that at the very least, the separation between each generic group is native to Hadewijch's writings. Furthermore, all manuscripts organize the texts from prose to verse—with Visions or *Brieven* beginning the collection—and there is an internalized structure not only to the individual genres but also the entire group of works.

Looking again at the contents of Ms. C reveals a distinct difference between that transmission and the other manuscript transmissions of older provenance. Whereas Mss. A and B begin with the collection of Letters, followed by the Visions and List of Perfects (*Volmaakten*), Ms. C begins with the Visions, before embarking upon the didactic discussions contained within the Letters.

Comparison of the manuscript transmissions Mss. A, B, and C

Ms. A	Ms. B	Ms. C
Brieven	Brieven	Visioenen
Visioenen	Visioenen	Lijst der Volmaakten
Lijst der Volmaakten	Lijst der Volmaakten	Brieven
Strophic songs/poems	Strophic songs/poems	Strophic poems/songs
Mengelgedichte 1-19	Mengengedichte	Tweevormich Traakten
		Mengelgedichte

One must ask whether there is significance in the difference between the manuscripts' reorganization; an answer to such question can only be broached with further information about each genre and what they entail.

Following Kwakkel's study, Ms. A as the oldest manuscript includes works only attributed to Hadewijch and omits the *Twee-vormich Traectakten.* In contrast, Ms. B, although related to Ms. A, includes the *Twee-vormich* and the later *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven;* however these works appear as a supplement and the two anonymously-authored texts appear after Hadewijch's texts. What we find with Ms. C is a drastic reorganization of contents from Mss. A and B, despite the fact that Ms. B dates within a decade (or less) from Ms. C. Distanced temporally and geographically (Ms. C was most likely copied at the monastery in Bethlehem), the organization of writings and their genres sheds light upon a shift in function and understanding of the cohesion within these manuscripts. Whether these works were organized into genres by Hadewijch or by a scribe in the decades following her death, the appearance of these generic groupings within all Hadewijch manuscripts suggests that the classification is not a singular occurrence and denotes a certain level of intention to the organization of her corpus by genre type. Every manuscript transmission includes separate groupings of Hadewijch's collection based upon genre, posing the possible question that these manuscripts, although perhaps not copies of the original manuscript (if a single source does actually exist), were thought of in distinct genre groupings before the manuscript transmissions existed. Although

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[440] Kwakkel, 35–36.

modern scholars cannot be certain, the ways in which textual subdivisions are presented may reflect that of the first manuscript transmissions and, thus, the intended audience consumption by Hadewijch herself or her earliest reader-listeners.

However, Benjamin Breyer and Erik Kwakkel propose an alternative reading of the appearance of these generic groups. Kwakkel cites that in Ms. A there are three production groups—the Letters, the Visions, and the *Strofische Gedichten* and *Mengeldichten*, whereas Ms. B has two production groups—1) Hadewijch's writings and 2) the *Twee-voormich Traectakten* and *Mengeldichten* 17-29.[441] In contrast, Ms. C has a single production group in two hands, suggesting that the two anonymous texts (*Twee-voormich* and *Mengeldichten* 17-29) were incorporated into the overall function of the manuscript, unlike Ms. A and B. As Benjamin Breyer notes, the fact that,

> …both in the earliest tradition Hadewijch's text groupings were not seen as having a causal relationship with one to another and that they may have been regarded as independent collections of texts…indicates that early users of the three text units may have seen them as fulfilling different didactic functions.[442]

Both Breyer and Kwakkel make valid points concerning the early manuscript tradition found in Mss. A and B, suggesting that these writings, although attributed to Hadewijch, form a loosely connected grouping of texts, separated by genre with independent functions.

Although it is difficult to decipher the motivations behind altering the manuscripts' contents, there are several points that support following the cues of Ms. C. The first argument for following the organization of Ms. C is the distinct quality difference in rubrication and decoration of Mss. A and B with Ms. C.
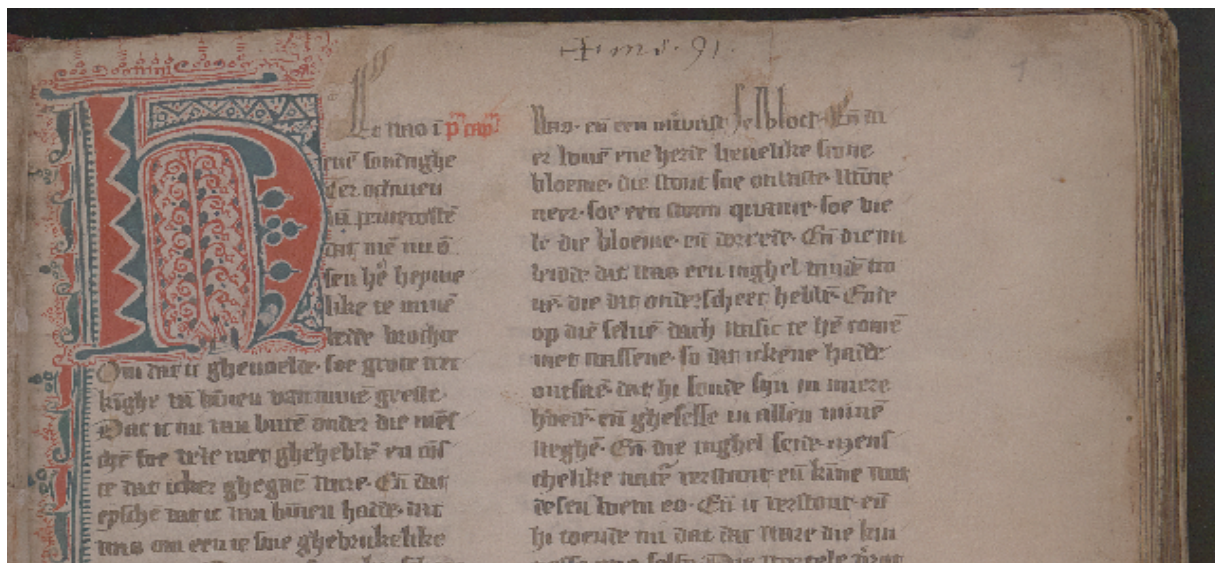

Image 1: The first page of Ms. C with text. The large initial begins the *Visioenenboek.*[443]

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[441] Kwakkel, 30 (Ms. A), 33 (Ms. B).

[442] Benjamin Breyer, 2015 dissertation, Columbia University, 23.

[443] Digitized manuscript available online: https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01%3A000755566/items/910000094763.

The simple styling in Ms. A, as well as the fact that it begins a new vision, poem, or section on a new quire, shows some signs that it may have been intended as a source manuscript. Also typical of a source manuscript, Ms. A has very simple initials and marking, often only a fine red line or lettering for the onset of a new section or poem. The simplicity of the manuscript would enable the production of copies, perhaps illuminated, with greater ease due to the clearly marked sections and the straightforward aesthetics of the text. Ms. C, on the other hand, includes ornate initials, more elaborate rubrication and higher quality binding and parchment.[444] Paleographic evidence would suggest that Ms. C is a more exemplary copy of Hadewijch's collection. The use of ornate initials and red lettering or lines to denote a new poem or section supports another significant function of the text: visual cues to assist the reader-listener in the transference of text into memory.[445] While I elaborate on the importance of memory and the construction of the literary landscape and subsequent pilgrimage later in this chapter, the appearance of detail and decoration, in my opinion, alters the intended function and usage of Ms. C, one that is inherently tied to memory, the development of piety, and the didactic nature of Hadewijch's corpus as a single entity.

Secondly, out of the works attributed to Hadewijch, her collection of Visions is the most complete structurally, with a definite beginning, middle, and end. Whereas the *Brieven* progress through various topics, edifying and clarifying at various stages, the Visions stand as an entity that could be read with or without the other genre groups. While the *Brieven* enact the ongoing dialogue with an unknown reader or readers, the Visions emphasize the significance of the sensory in the religious experience and maturation. The Visions function as one aspect of a larger learning program (a point also noted by Kwakkel in his investigation of the paleographical evidence), one that demonstrates for the reader the potential for growth and spiritual erudition through the imitation of Christ. The *Brieven*, on the other hand, engage in densely compacted subject matter, with allegories and explications which play upon the themes introduced in the Visions more explicitly. If the ornate detailing and lettering suggest, as I have hinted, towards aiding the reader-listener's transference of text (*textus*[446]—that which is interwoven or layered)

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[444] S.M. Murk Jansen, *The Measure of Mystic Thought*, 10.
[445] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

In the early twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor, instructing some young students on how to remember, explains clearly the mnemonic utility of manuscript page layout and decoration…he says:

> "it is a great value for fixing a memory-image that when we read books, we strive to impress on our memory…the color, shape, position, and placement of the letters, …in what location (at the top, middle or bottom) we saw [something] positioned, in what color we observed the trace of the letter or the ornamented surface of the parchment. Indeed I consider nothing so useful for stimulating the memory as this" (Carruthers 10).

[446] "The Latin word *textus* comes from the verb meaning 'to weave' and it is in the institutionalizing of a story through *memoria* that textualizing occurs…*Textus* also means 'texture', the layers of meaning that attach as a text is woven into and through the historical and institutional fabric of a society. Such 'socializing' of literature is the work of *memoria,* and this is as true of a literate as of an oral society" (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 14).

into memory (*memoria*[447]), the ability to draw upon the knowledge of the Visions during the *Brieven* is paramount to deeper understanding and internalization. With the *Strophische Liederen,* the voicing shifts to the first person again, reflecting the interior emotions resulting from a desire and striving towards spiritual exploration and maturation. When read or sung aloud, the voice speaking and that of the writer-speaker merge briefly, creating moments of multifold reference and communal suffering (which I later connect to emotional and corporeal suffering as necessitated through *imitatio Christi* and the passion of Christ). The *Rijmbrieven/Mengeldichten* complete the set through reiterated lessons of piety found from throughout the other writings, which causes the reader-listener to reflect upon previous sections and evoke *memoria* to deepen their understanding of Hadewijch's overarching didactic program.

Ms. C revises the order of the genres because I believe the scribes sought to create an interconnected set of texts into a self-guided reading. Just as someone selected and arranged Hadewijch's letters in particular order, the distance from writer to reader-listener requires a revised understanding of what her larger dogmatic program entailed. The restructuring does not mark a failing in the case of Ms. C, but a shift in the intended use, readership, and assumed readership expectation and understanding that occurred in the later fourteenth century. In contrast, Breyer asserts that the reorganization is the result of an attempt to situate Hadewijch's texts first upon her source of authority (her visions) and the scribe sought to create a connection between the Visions and the Letters.[448] While I concede that the scribe may have sought to create a connection between the first two generic groups, I argue the motivation for placing the Visions first in Ms. C is far more straightforward and emblematic of fourteenth-century religiosity.

As mentioned previously, the Visions comprise the only generic group that expresses a sense of completeness, with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. I believe the significance of the Visions as a complete literary construct and redefined concept of a *Visioenenboek* places importance on that grouping. However, as I will demonstrate in the second half of this chapter, the motifs, theological concepts, and divine lessons are repeated and variously reiterated throughout the other genre groups. Effectively, I argue that the scribes of Ms. C sought to transform Hadewijch's writings across three distinct genre groups into a corpus aimed to encourage *imitatio* and contemplative life via *memoria*, as illustrated in the paleographical evidence (i.e. higher quality parchment, colored and detailed initials, folio layout).

For these reasons, I begin the investigation of Hadewijch's corpus with her cycle visions. Taking into consideration the overall length and scope of Hadewijch's visions, primary focus is placed on Vision 1 with supplemental references to other visions and parts of Hadewijch's corpus to illustrate the provocative nature of the first vision, as well as how Hadewijch manipulates the broadly-termed visionary literature genre to highlight the wide spectrum of sensory and psychological responses. Genre selection and intertextuality remain central in my reading to the concept of *textus* (text) and its translation into *memoria*; "the layers of meaning" developed via *textus* as "texture" are gained through *memoria* and genre alike.[449] Genre provides texture to Hadewijch's literary landscape and intertextuality deepens the possibility for meaning-making through motifs and complex utterances, allowing the transference from *textus* into

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[447] "*Memoria* meant, at that time, trained memory, educated and disciplined according to a well-developed pedagogy that was part of the elementary language arts—grammar, logic, and rhetoric…So a book itself is a mnemonic, among many other functions it can also have" (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 10).

[448] Breyer, 22.

[449] Carruthers, 14.

memoria that can be meditated, contemplated, and retrieved in later acts of reading. Vision 1 is significant because it begins the reader's journey into Hadewijch's literary representation/description of the transformation from "child-like" to "grown-up", as well as the entire corpus, in the case of Ms. C.

Finally, Vision 1 initiates with a *locus amoenous,* a pastoral scene of idyllic nature, often utilized in courtly literature as the opening setting for a romance or poem.[450] *Locus amoenous* has strong connection to Eden and the Book of Genesis. There are distinct parallels between Genesis 2[451] and Vision One—the numerous trees, the naming of all living things in Eden/"Space of Perfect Virtues", and a singular, symbolic tree at the center of the space that is also connected to a concept of divinity, knowledge and maturity. In addition, recent scholarship on Origen's and Bernard of Clairvaux's commentaries on the *Song of Songs* reveals textual connections between the forced departure from Eden and the return to a sort of paradise in the *Song of Songs.* As I will outline in the following section, the themes of literary, divine landscapes, memory, and spiritual exploration resound heavily through Hadewijch's entire corpus, establishing distinct connections between folds of reading and memory ("invagination"), internal and external references to other works and the reader-listener response ("heteroglossia"), and the anticipated reception of the text's divine composition ("horizon of expectation").[452]

IV. Vision 1 and the Cycle of Visions

Following the discussion in the previous section about the basis for my reliance upon Ms. C, this section investigates the form and contents of Vision 1 and the rest of the manuscript in three main sections. The first is an overview of Vision 1 and an argument for its importance (which ties to the end of the previous section). The second section includes deeper analysis of the contents of the vision, first through motifs common throughout Hadewijch's writings and then motifs that are exemplary to the visions themselves. The final section compares Vision 1 to the rest of the Book of Visions, demonstrating why Vision 1, although deemed an incomplete vision form by Veerle Fraeters, is emblematic of the first step of writing and "journeying" toward the divine.

A basic synopsis of Vision 1 reveals aspects about the structure and potential function of

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[450] Ernst Curtius was the first notable scholar to write extensively about the pastoral and idyllic nature of opening scenes in Classical and Medieval literature, and even coined the term "locus amoenous".

[451] Anne Winston-Allen remarks that "From the earliest days the archetypal symbol of the garden has been associated with the image of paradise, that ideal blessed state to which humankind has sought to regain access. In the Christian tradition, the gardens of Eden, Gethsemane, and the celestial paradise constitute significant stations in the story of humankind's origins, fall from innocence, and redemption…In the secular tradition, paradise was depicted in Homeric times as a kind of 'locus amoenus', an idyllic sport like the garden of Alcinous of the grove of Calypso in the *Odyssey*" (Anne Winston-Allen, "Gardens of Heavenly and Earthly Delight: Medieval Gardens of the Imagination" in *Neuphilologische Mittelungen* 99:1 (1998), 83).

[452] I use "composition" here in the sense of the text's origins. The text is constructed and composed through the essence of the visionary experience, but the writing of the piece begins at that point and the experience itself does not and cannot house the vision as literature.

the work within the cycle of Visions (and I would argue that they are in a fact a cycle[453]) and Hadewijch's corpus as a whole. The rudimentary outline of the vision can be easily tabulated to create a generic format, allowing a readily available form type for the purpose of comparison. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Veerle Fraeters organizes the format of each vision according to its contents, beginning first with a liturgical setting and meditation, followed by a vision "in the spirit", a fruition "out of the spirit" and finally a return to pain and exile in the body.[454]   However, we have seen that this description is not uniform and varies widely throughout Hadewijch's cycle of visions. In Fraeters' reading, the explanation for these differences is the design of the cycle following Richard of St. Victor's four steps of love.[455] I initiate my analysis of Vision 1 with an overview of the structure and format of the vision in terms of motifs in order to establish a working model of how genre functions within Vision 1. Following this overview, I discuss the connection between genre and motifs with content, which provides a basis from which I conduct an analysis of the entire cycle of visions.

IV.1 Structure and motifs

Vision 1, as Fraeters correctly noted, begins with a liturgical and physical setting that quickly shifts into a description of the thoughts and sensations Hadewijch perceives at the onset of her encounter with the divine. She admits her desire for fruition and the fact that she is "still too childish and too little grown up", a point made to recognize insufficient suffering and/or wisdom through life experience. The first 14 lines are an introduction, simply put, that outlines some basic concepts which are referenced later in the vision and detailed more extensively both within Vision 1 and in the other visions. Line 15 begins the transition from the physical to the spiritual realm, marked by a reciprocal "receiving" of Hadewijch to the Lord and Lord to Hadewijch, as well as withdrawing of senses before entering a new location: "the space of perfect virtue." Line 24 marks the first tree, its physical description, and the introduction of the angelic guide (lines 29-34).

Textually the voice of the angelic guide (lines 34-35) provides the first use of the second-person singular (although in the imperative) within the text, although the references to the "you/*jouw*/*jij*" are replaced by lengthy addresses denoting respect and more formal conventions of speaking. Lines 36-41 illustrate the first exegetical explanation of the allegorical trees. It should be noted this definition is not spoken (aloud) but rather stated in the text. The second tree and description begins in line 42. The angel speaks in lines 48 to 52, and the exegetical response to the allegorical tree appears in lines 52 through 59. The passing from one tree to the next increases with complexity, but the overall structure of tree description, angel's address, and exegetical response remains fairly constant. Even the fifth (or sixth tree, depending upon whether you read the previous tree as one or two trees), despite the fact that there are three sorts of branches and three of each sort, still adheres largely to the above format.
Structure of first 5-6 trees in vision: 1[456]

[453] Gerald Hofmann discusses how the cohesiveness of the visions and the completed nature of the collection has led scholars to refer to it as a "*Visioenenboek/ Visionsbuch*". This is also echoed in Fraeters research, as well as Willaert and others (Hadewijch, *Buch der Visionen,* ed. Gerald Hofmann, vol 1. (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromman Verlag, 1998), 12).

[454] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 78.

[455] Ibid, 76–77.

[456] All references to lines are taken from the Imme Dros and Frank Willaert 1996 edition and translation of Hadewijch's visions. See Hadewijch, *Visioenen,* ed. and transl. Imme Dros and Frank

	First Tree	Second Tree	Third Tree	Fourth (and additional) Tree	Fifth Tree
Tree description:	lines 24–29	lines 42–47	lines 60–62	lines 71–73	lines 80–83
Angel speaks:	Intro: 29–34 Speaks: 34–5	lines 48–52	lines 62–67	lines 73–77	lines 83–90 100–23
Exegesis of Allegory	lines 36–41	lines 52–59	lines 67–70	lines 77–79	lines 91–99 124–176

With the exception of the fifth tree, the lines devoted to each tree range from around 10 up to 17 lines (first tree: 17 lines; second tree 17 lines; third tree 11 lines; and fourth tree 10 lines). The equal distribution of lines between the first two trees and the second two trees creates a textual balance, which is interrupted by the fifth tree.

Drawing closer to the center of the "Space of Perfect Virtues", the fifth devotes space twofold to the double triadic groupings within the description of the tree ("three sorts of branches and three of each sort"). At first glance, the continuous section of the angel's speech, beginning in line 100 and ending in line 123 fails to mimic the "three in three" model of the description, but the address is actually divided into two, marked only by the short line "*Ende ic verstont*" ("And I understood") in lines 111 and 123. In fact, "*Ende ic verstont*" marks the end of each of the angel's addresses, providing a distinct marker to highlight the transition from one speaker (the angel) to the next (the narrator). For the reader-listener, "*Ende ic verstont*" also signals the onset of the exegesis of the allegorical tree and, with it, a declaration of a set of virtues needed to achieve *unio mystica*. Furthermore, as Patricia Dailey aptly notes, each tree (and in some cases also its leaves or other parts) are not simply viewed/seen but also read, both in the literal act of reading the text of Hadewijch's visions but also figuratively through the detailed description and exegetical response to that description.[457]

A further element of reading and textuality occurs with the third and fourth trees, upon whose leaves messages in the first person are written: "I am the power of the perfect will; nothing can escape me"; (ll. 68–70) and "I am discernment: without me you can do nothing" (ll. 78–79) respectively. The use of the first person enveloped between the exegetical response to the tree and the description of the next interweaves a type of interjection between description and address. Furthermore, other than "*Ende ic verstont*" and the first 24 lines of the vision, "ic/I" is seldom used. Later in this chapter, I will return to this aspect of voice, person, and textual marker within Vision 1, at which point I explicate the nuanced significance of these utterances at greater length.

Beginning with line 177, the imagery shifts from that of nature (pasture, trees, etc.) to traditional topoi[458] related to mass and the Bible. Rather than a tree, the narrator Hadewijch finds a chalice full of blood (*enen kelc al vol bloets*), but the format of description, angel's address, and exegesis/explanation holds steadfast. The "chalice of blood" is the shortest marked section with only 7 lines (ll. 177–184). What is notable is that in lines 183–4, the narrator again uses the

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Willaert (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 1996). I use this edition because it revises the line numbering form the Van Mierlo edition, thus increasing the accuracy.

[457] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 323. "The text of a vision models how scriptural truths should be understood, respected, and embodied both as virtue and as affective response."

[458] Topoi, as used in its original sense, denote places of communal memory, a collection of understanding of the text. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 60.

first person "*ic*/I", marking a shift from the previous section with the trees (it is not formatted as an exclamatory remark but a statement imbedded within the text) with a vow (*Daer dede ic gheloffenesse…*) before entering the center of the space in line 185. Within the center, the narrator encounters another tree (line 185), however the previous format for description-address-exegesis is broken: the hidden meaning or "reading" of the tree occurs without address by the angel (ll. 189–191). Following the "reading", the angel once again speaks (ll. 191–196) before further/deeper understanding of the tree appears in lines 196–198.

The narrator mentions a final, seventh tree with a brief description (ll. 199–200) but the angel's address that ensues breaks in both format and address from previous sections. In place of a reference such as "O soul/O mistress/O great one", the angel abruptly speaks in the imperative and initiates the use of "*ic*/I", which previously only designated the narrator (ll. 201–217). This marks the final appearance and address by the angel in the vision, preceded by several uses of the verb *varen* ("to go or to travel"). The angel's final use of the imperative *Kere di omme van mi* ("Turn yourself away from me") (line 214) is mirrored in the narrator's description of her action *Ende ic keerde mi van heme* ("And I turned myself from him") (ll. 217–18).[459]

Upon this "turning", the narrator Hadewijch lacks a guide, and due to this, the narration shifts from interior monologue with dialogic imperative to solely narrated description and explication of described images (ll. 218–255). Lines 218 through 235 includes the image of a cross like crystal (*een cruce…ghelijc cristalle*) through which a great expanse was visible (l.220), a seat like a disc (*enen zetel ghelijc eere sciven*) (ll.221–222) under which three pillars stand (burning fire, topaz, and amethyst)—*ghelijc*[460] is used for the description of all three aspects—and finally a whirlpool under the seat (*een wyeel*)[461] (ll. 232–235). Note that *ghelijc* does not appear in the description of the whirlpool. Without the assistance of her angelic guide, the narrator commences with the "reading" of the previous descriptions. *Ende ic verstont* is absent, as well as the use of the first person "*ic*/ I" from the passage, until the narrator attempts to describe the person (her beloved) seated on the "seat like a disc".

Lines 246–264 mark a further shift from the initial pastoral setting of the space and delve into an encounter with both the divine ("her beloved"/*mijn lief*) and the ineffable. Characteristic of ineffable moments with the divine or attempts to describe his appearance, the narrator Hadewijch exclaims

> *Daer ne maghic niet af te woerde bringhen. Want die ontelleke grote scoenheit*
> *ende dit oversoete soetecheit von die werdeleken wonderleken aenscine, dat*
> *benam mi alle redene van hem in ghelikenessen* (ll. 255–259)[462]

> [I cannot bring it into words. Because of the untellable great beauty and the sweetest sweetness of the lofty, wonderful appearance, that took from me all (or any) ability to

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[459] It should also be noted that when Hadewijch reaches the center of the "Space of Perfect Virtues", the reader arrives at the center or middle of the work as far as the number of lines. The space devoted to the journey towards the center of this landscape is also marked by a shift from angelic guide to encounter with the divine.

[460] Augustine also makes reference to "like" or "similar to" within his writings to denote something that is divine and therefore inexpressible in human language.
Fraters, "*Visio/*Vision", 180.

[461] Mother Columba Hart translates "een wyeel" as "whirlpool", although the most straightforward translation would be "wheel". Although the translation is a bit of a stretch, I can understand the imagery here. The image of the spinning wheel, not upright but on its side, evokes a similar image to a whirlpool.

[462] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 24–25.

utter a comparison to him.][463]

The description of the ineffable and the inability to put a description into speech appears commonly within contemporaneous literature, both secular and religious, particularly when beauty surpasses the ability of human speech.[464]

What is interesting about the narrator Hadewijch's attempt to describe the ineffable lies in the fact that her description is simple and recounts only key features. The ineffable divine in Hadewijch's Vision 1 pales in comparison to later visions, imbuing it with a child-like simplicity following more complicated allegories earlier in the vision. In addition, the narrator Hadewijch references biblical descriptions (John 12:32 referring to his eyes, for example) to guide her, and she admits at the onset as well as the end the inability to speak/write of this sight (*Sine vorme was onseghelec enegher redenen/* "His form was unspeakable in any speech" ll. 248–9). The section concludes with an expression that approaches the fruitful union the narrator craves, but remains incomplete because the narrator recognizes the immaturity in herself (ll. 261–264).

> *Maer doen ichkene sach, doen viel ic hem to voeten. Want ic bekinde dat ic al dien wech te hem was gheleidt dar noch alsoe vele toe te levene was.*[465]

> [But when I saw him, then I fell to his feet. Because I realized that I had been led to him all that way, upon which so much was yet to be lived.][466]

The vision concludes with a long monologue by the "Beloved" (ll. 265–426). Comprising almost half of the vision, the "Beloved" (often cited to be Christ by scholars) outlines the steps by which the narrator Hadewijch ought follow in order to achieve perfect fruition with him. He promises her continued conversation or connection (*'Ic sal di,' seghet hi, 'liefste gheminde, gheven mi heimeleke alse du mi hebben wils.'/* "I will give myself to you secretly, dearest of mine", he said "when you want to have/possess me" ll. 382–383) and declares aspects of her future (*Met verstannesse saltu wise minen wille werken in all dien die behoeven van di te wesene minen wille /* "With understanding you shall wisely carry out my will, in all those who need to know, through you, my will, which is unknown to them" ll. 390–392).[467]

Not until line 403 is the name of the final, seventh tree revealed, following a promise that at some point in the future, the beloved and narrator will be united in perfect fruition (*Dus saltu mijns ghebruken /* "Thus you will [have] fruition of me" l. 403). Textual fruition, or the promise thereof, and the tree are aligned (*Dit es die boem van dien woorden die ic di nu seide, die heet: bekinnesse der minnen./* "This is the tree from the words, which I have now said to you, which is called: knowledge of love" ll. 403–405). The tree is "read" and "spoken" within the text,

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[463] My translation. I at times use my own translation when the published translation is fairly emended and distant from the Middle Dutch.

[464] A classic example of ineffability in secular literature is found in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and the description of the saddle made by an unknown master. In the case of Hartmann, there is a self-referential nature to his attempt to describe the ineffable handiwork of the saddle-maker, for the fact that it is by way of his compositional mastery, his profound ability as a writer and poet (an elevated or high art) that the reader can encounter the saddle's beauty. Here, the emphasis does not lie with Hadewijch as mistress or master of speech, but that her master—her beloved, the divine—is the source of all beauty, language, and text.

[465] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 25.

[466] My translation.

[467] CWH, 270.

becoming more than simply a tree but a "knowledge of love."[468]

In lines 407–426, the beloved explains what the narrator Hadewijch must do: return "quietly" with remembrance of the lessons relayed to her during the vision. Acknowledging the difficulty of separation, the beloved concludes instructing and? the narrator Hadewijch parts from the tree and/or flower "from its summit" that she might take to combat the feelings of longing and sadness in his absence. And yet, within the list of these objects, the reader encounters further allegory and symbolism, connected both to the tree at the center of the space and the promises made and wisdom recounted during the beloved's long monologue. The final lines, *Minne sal di alsoe machtech maken. Ghef al, want al es dine* ("Love will make you able [to do it]. Give all because everything is yours" ll. 425–6), evokes a message of hope and potential, expressing faith that the narrator Hadewijch (whom he refers to as his *lieve*/beloved) will carry out his bidding by way of love. The certainty and strength of the ending of the vision is paralleled by the uncertainty and lack of control expressed in the initial lines:

> *…omdat ic ghevoelde soe grote treckinghe van binnen van minen gheeste,*
> *dat ic mi van buten onder de menschen soe vele niet ghehebben en conste*
> *dat icker ghegaen ware.*[469]

> […because I felt such a great attraction inward from my spirit, that I could not control myself outwardly enough to go amongst other people.][470]

Having experienced her beloved and received instructions to continue his will, the ability to remain solitary becomes impossible, if the narrator Hadewijch intends to fulfill her potential as outlined in the vision. The transformative journey through the *Space of Perfect Virtues* represents aspects of allegory and dialogue, descriptive narrative, and poetic explication of allegorical elements. The motif of nature, the pastoral, and courtly romantic language (*mijn lief/lieve)* reflects topoi both secular and religious, and, as will be discussed in the following section, develop the texture, the depth of intertextuality to both enliven the senses, and render the episodic encounters with persons and objects (trees, chalice, cross, and beloved) to memory.

As Veerle Fraeters correctly points out, Vision 1 lacks two elements often found within the genre of *visio/*vision: fruition "out of the spirit" and return to the body in pain and exile.[471] In Paul Mommaers's reading, Vision 1 outlines the mystical experience as a "question of awakening" ("Mystiek is een kwestie van bewustwording"),[472] in which Hadewijch reaches a summit with her beloved (reflected in the description of the trees and later in Visions 6 and 7 as

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[468] There are direct ties between the tree called "the Knowledge of Love" and the "Tree of Knowledge" found within Genesis. However, unique from the initial book of the Bible, the reader waits until almost the final lines of the first vision to encounter the name of the tree at the heart/ center of this landscape. In many ways, this ties to the Song of Songs use of imagery from Genesis in order to establish a revision or balancing of the exile from Eden. The emphasis here and in the Song of Songs is one of love and potential fulfillment rather than loss. See additional scholarly discussion of this comparison in Francis Landry's article "The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden" (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 98:4 (December 1979), 513-528.

[469] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 9.

[470] My translation.

[471] Fraeters, "Gender and Genre", 78.

[472] Paul Mommaers, "De Brabantse mystiek. Allen met God op een berg? En dan?" in *Medioneerlandistiek. Een inleiding tot de Middelnederlandse letterkunde,* eds. Ria Jansen-Sieben, Jozef Janssens, and Frank Willaert (Hilversum, 2000), 155.

she climbs and descends a mountain/hill). While Fraeters's interpretation reflects the literal contents based upon the generic form Hadewijch later develops in the other visions, Mommaers's comparison of Hadewijch's *mystiek* to a *kwestie* proves fruitful in my overall reading of her corpus. *Kwestie* in contrast to *vraag* ("to ask, enquire, request") ties to the Latin *quaestio,* "questioning, inquiry, investigation".[473] Although the word usage displays a difference that is only slight, "to investigate or question" connects to an image of active participation with the text and what the text embodies (i.e. the inner body's experience). In this sense, *kwestie* likens to the word "quest", which often denotes a searching or seeking for a specific object, person, or proof/truth. This fairly etymological reading of Mommaers's use of *kwestie* constructs deliberate ties between a "searching or seeking", "an investigation" and "a questioning", all of which are tied to the practice of *lectio* (reading) and re-reading (*meditatio*) when one commits an image or imagined thought to memory (*memoria*).

Before continuing the connections between *lectio, meditatio,* and *memoria,* one last note on Fraeters's interpretation of Vision 1. Rather than interpreting the absence of these two aspects (fruition *buten gheeste* and return to the body) as uncharacteristic of "vision", in the following section I outline how the function of Vision 1 fulfills these aspects intertextually and by means of reference towards the greater whole, that is, the entire *Visioenenboek.* Fruition and return, I argue, are promised and implied through the beloved's monologue.[474] The function, the *kwestie/*investigation or questioning, differs in Vision 1 for a fundamental reason: the first vision serves as a map, an "ark" or *silvia* (forest)[475] of *memoria,* past, present, and future, outlining the entire corpus and, as a memorial landscape or mnemonic device, creates structure and organization for the conceptualization and retrieval ("re-collecting") of the lessons and virtues inherently ingrained within Hadewijch-her beloved's literary re-presentation of the inner body's and eye's workings. Their presence of fruition and return are felt through the expression of the potential future and the promise (by way of description, exegesis, and declaration) from the beloved. If, as Dailey suggests, *werke* dwells high within the hierarchy of spiritual maturation, it does not appear (nor should it) within the text. But as Dailey also notes, the suspensions and play with time and inner body "experience" were recounted, reiterated, and rendered into memory through textual embodiment as *lectio* and *meditatio* simultaneously.[476]

IV.2 Intertextuality, Function, and Memoria

While the previous section outlined the overall structure and some elements of form

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[473] Notre Dame Online Latin Dictionary reference. Also related to the verb meaning "to question, to inquire, to investigate."

[474] The concept of promise Patricia Dailey discusses at length in her article, "Children of Promise", particularly in the final sections of the article (pp. 335–338). She argues that the presence of the text and the oscillating use of past and subjunctive tenses creates a manifold expression of time, one that depicts what might be should one follow the guidelines outlined in the text. The text, then, is the physical representation of the promise made to those who wish to become united with the divine in *unio mystica*.

[475] In Chapters 2 and 3 of *The Book of Memory,* Carruthers explicates the complex terrain of metaphors used within ancient and medieval texts to describe the process of reading and transferring to memory, as well as the organizational techniques used to enhance recollection and increase one's ability to retrieve mental images (*phantasma* or *imagi*) in any order within the brain. The construction of a mental "store-room" (theasaurus), arc (as in Noah's Ark, but also the Ark of the Covenant), or forest (*silvia*)/landscape to collect, re-collect, organize, and materialize something to *memoria.* Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 78 (reference to *silvia,* "forest").

[476] Dailey, "The Body and Its Senses", 267–268.

within Vision 1, this section highlights specific functions and motifs that reflect how the composition of the vision incorporates (literally *in corpora*) expressions of reading, the reader, and the cyclical nature of the vision cycle and the act of composition for the sake of spiritual maturation and edification (i.e. the didactic function of the text). In order to fully conceptualize the larger dogmatic-didactic (or mystagogical,[477] in Fraeter's usage) function of Vision 1—both within the *Visioenenboek* and the corpus as a whole (as represented in Ms. C)—a more in-depth discussion of memory is necessary, particularly in conjunction with *lectio* and *meditatio.* The connection between memory (*memoria*) and text/corpus (*textus*) appears briefly in my discussion of Patricia Dailey's research on Hadewijch and textual embodiment. Dailey highlights constructs of time and memory in tandem, expounding upon the presence of atemporal and historical features within the mystical text and the potential reading of the text/corpus as reflections of *memoria* (both of the mystic and through the mystic by way of the divine).[478]

While Dailey emphasizes the act of composition and embodiment in the text, I instead reference the use of genres to create texture within Vision 1 and demonstrate the reception, intertextuality, and historical contextuality that extends beyond the confines of the mystic, her inner and outer bodies, and even her composition/corpus. *Lectio* through the lens of genre becomes reading of the written word and, by extension via genre, the connection to a web of other literary works as referenced textually within Hadewijch's writings. Yet just as the multiplicity of leaf colors and inscriptions provide significance within Vision 1 (a point which I return to in a moment), the layering of genres provides a deeper and broader-reaching texture, establishing not only a foundational structure from which Hadewijch can refer in her other writings, but also the potential to recall and reflect upon outside works that helped to shape her own narrative structure. In this sense, reading is a twofold event, one that is both present in the act of reading, and past/memory through the act of recalling previously encountered texts reflected in this act of reading.

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[477] While Fraeters posits a solid argument for the use of mystagogical and the concept of mystagogy for her reading of Hadewijch's visions, I continue to emphasize didactic for a very simple reason. There is a twofold understanding of Hadewijch's writings (and potentially many more than simply twofold). One aspect is stressed by Patricia Dailey concerning the reading of memory (both the mystic's of the visionary event of the inner body and the divine through the mystic), the ensuing embodiment of the text and reading of that textual body—the inner body made tangible—which occupies the central place for Hadewijch of fulfilling divine instruction (as per vision 1, for example), connecting the outer body to a concept of community (which could also be read twofold as the mystical body and the textual body in the sea or sphere of literary texts), and allowing her to express *imitatio Christi* by way of *werke.* [This sentence is confusingly long: could you break it up? Thanks!] *Werke,* as Dailey elaborates, reflects upon the re-presentation of the inner body's experience made textual and the physical text, the readable text that provides her readership with a promise of that described in her visions.

On the one hand, mystagogical fits within that regard. On a different level, the term emphasizes the affective experience of the mystic, which in turn uses an interpretation of the "mysteries" to lead and teach. Emphasizing the textual, and in looking at genre, the construction of memorial landscapes, and the concept of a literary pilgrimage, I refute an attempt to distill Hadewijch's writings to the mysterious-interpretative-teaching for the very fact that they express a knowledge and skill that extends beyond the affective and re-collects her personal *memoria* and that of the community for whom she writes (*memoria communae*). Finally, in his article "Pelgrims naar het land van de minne", Frank Willaert retracts his previous use of "didactic", aligning with Fraeters that the term exudes an overwhelming intellectual tone and overemphasizes the process of reading and learning (Willaert, "Pelgrims", 73). However, with my analysis I aim to demonstrate that, like Hadewijch's bodies, the text is both mystagogical and didactic. To deny one completely would be a misstep and portray Hadewijch's writings steadfastly in the affective.

[478] Dailey, "Time and Memory", 350.

As outlined in Chapter One, the transference of *lectio* into *memoria* is both physiological and mental in medieval conceptualization of the subject.[479] The written word is etched into the memory of the reader-listener through the process of *meditatio*,[480] mediating the sensory (seeing or listening, and in some cases uttering or reciting) into the physical to be recalled and re-collected at will. The presence of *lectio* and *meditatio* within Vision 1 aligns with memory practices from the Middle Ages through its use of landscape to organize and explicate virtues deemed necessary for fruition with the divine. As I have discussed, the importance of memory occurs not only on a formulaic level through the use of allegory and set structural motifs, such as landscape, to aid internalization of key concepts and lessons, but also in the paleographical record in the form of initial illumination and the visual organization of the Ms. C to assist the reader-listener in productive storage and later retrieval of information from the text. In Chapter One, I tied the contemplative process to "invagination" and the folds of memory, but I will now discuss of genre and memory connect to the contents by way of "heteroglossia" and the "horizon of expectations."

IV.2a: Liturgical References

It is worth taking some time to dissect the opening lines of Hadewijch's first vision. Not only do these lines mark the incipit of the entire Ms. C, the reference to the liturgical calendar relies upon the reader-listener's "horizon of expectations" in terms of a potential theme for the vision. Vision 1 begins,

> *Het was in enen sondaghe ter octave van pentecosten dat men mi onsen here,*
> *heymelike te minen bedde brochte, om dat ic ghevoelde soe groete treckinghe*
> *van binnen van minen geeste, dat ic mi van buten onder die menschen soe*
> *vele niet ghehebben en conste dat icker ghegaen ware. Ende dat dat eyschen*
> *dat ic van binnen hadde, dat was om een te sine ghebrukelike met gode.*[481]

> [It was a Sunday, in the Octave of Pentecost, when our Lord was brought
> secretly to my bedside because I felt such an attraction of my spirit inwardly
> that I could not control myself outwardly in a degree sufficient to go among
> persons; it would have been impossible for me to go among them. And that
> desire which I had inwardly was to be one with God in fruition.][482]

The day (Sunday) and the specific point on the liturgical calendar (the Octave of Pentecost) presents the reader with both the significance of a holy day and what thoughts might preoccupy a lay religious person at that time. On yet another level, the reference is multifaceted in that it

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[479] Bestul, "*Meditatio/* Meditation", 158.

[480] Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 32.
"Metrodorus of Scepsis, a man famous for his memory, said that he wrote down things to be remembered in particular places in his mind, as if he were writing letters on wax tablets. The contemporaneous *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* which gives us the most detailed description of the ancient architectural mnemonic, also contains the fullest elaboration of the metaphor that likens writing on the memory to writing on wax or papyrus" (Carruthers 32).

[481] Vekeman 33; Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 9.

[482] CWH 263.

refs not only to the liturgical calendar but the season (Spring) and layers the additional reference to Arthurian literature and the romances initial scenes during Pentecost. From the onset, a very distinct scene is set for the reader: "[h]*et was in enen sondaghe ter octave van pentecosten*" embarks upon a journey in the height of Spring, a time referenced in literature for new life and love. In fact, the Pentecost is a standard feature to the settings of Arthurian legends and many romances from the period, calling to mind both the unveiling of a love tale but also providing the anticipation for *aventiure*, or adventure in the medieval romance sense.[483]

The mention of the liturgical calendar and, in particular, Pentecost recollects the broader textual community, ranging from Arthurian romance to images from the *Song of Songs* and the birth of the Christian church. The Pentecost feast encouraged baptisms, confession, and was one of the three mandatory feasts during which Christians in Europe should receive communion. In addition, the Germanic countries tied Pentecost with rites of Spring, decorating the church with boughs from trees, especially the birch tree. When taken in conjunction with the allegorical landscape that follows, we begin to see the connection between the potential inspiration for the vision but also the lessons upon which Hadewijch meditates during the composition and reflection upon the visionary experience. Playing upon well-established literary and social traditions, the first vision evokes imagery which connects to Genesis and Eden, Song of Songs, and the celebration of Pentecost within secular works. Based upon the construction and length of this first introduction in Ms. C, I would argue that Hadewijch consciously referenced the imagery and motifs of the feast celebration and therefore creates a more dynamic texture to her writing in Vision 1 through her multi-source citations of both image and word around her.

Vision 1 embodies the concepts of "invagination" (that is, folds of memory and potential readings), "heteroglossia" (multi-referential motifs), and "horizon of expectations" (anticipated forms and expressions related to those forms) from its very first lines. Pentecost relies upon institutional memory constructed upon notions of the birth of the church and the earliest teachings. Through confession, baptism, and communion, the cyclical nature of the liturgical calendar also interweaves with personal memory through set experiences during that feast celebration and reflection upon the readings and lessons of the time. Through these elements (as well as the use of the past tense), "invagination" is present within the folds of memory and possible readings of the allegory, the feast celebration, and Hadewijch's role within the text.

Simultaneously, "heteroglossia" expresses the multifaceted symbolism and reference, which aids the writer-speaker to provide textual references that both rely upon a fluency in (or minimally, acquaintance with) literary themes and concepts circulating during the period and the potential for more intimate understanding of these tropes through meditation and subsequent memorization. On a different level, "heteroglossia" incorporates a dialogic nature within and between texts, suggesting that Hadewijch's introduction of motifs and terminology in the first lines of Vision 1 act as an introduction, not just to Vision 1, but to the entire *Visioenenboek* and, I will argue, the entire corpus of her writings.

IV.2b: Vision 1 as Model for *Visioenenboek*

These first lines of Vision 1, in contrast to her other visions, are an extended explanation that incorporates not only of her feelings "*ic ghevoelde soe groete treckinghe van binnen minen geeste*" ("I felt such a great call inwardly from my soul") but also the motivation or explanation

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[483] The legend of *Tristan* also sets its tale during Pentecost, paralleling the blossoming springtime in Nature, the "birth of the Church" as seen with the Holy Spirit appearing to the Apostles, and the developing love between Rivalin and Blancheflor.

of such feelings "*Ende dat eyschen dat ic van binnen hadde, dat was om een te sine ghebrukelike met gode*" ("and that desire that I had from within, that was one to be in union with God"). Those lines would suggest that this mystical experience was not simply documented or recorded but digested and constructed to portray a specific function: that is, a vision that serves as the incipit upon a pilgrimage of spiritual growth and divine understanding. In order to demonstrate the significance of these initial lines, the following table outlines the parts that comprise the introduction of Vision One. What is important to note here is how Hadewijch layers motifs and references, as well as the question of the particular significance of this organization and its relation to the other visions in the cycle:[484]

Line 1–2	*Het was in enen sondaghe ter octave van/ pentecosten*	Liturgical reference and setting
Lines 2–7	*...dat men mi onsen here./ heymelike te minen bedde brochte, om dat/ ic ghevoelde soe groete treckinghe van/ binnen van minen geeste, dat ic mi van buten onder die menschen soe vele niet ghehebben to/ en conste da ticker ghegaen ware.*	Physical setting, emotional-spiritual description Explanation for remaining in bed despite Octave celebration
Lines 7–9	*Ende dat/ eyschen dat ic van binnen hadde, dat was /om een to sine ghebrukelike met gode.*	Clarification of "groete treckinghe" and first mention of "ghebrukelike"—a key term within Hadewijch's writings
Lines 9–12	*Daer wasic te kinsch toe ende te onghewassen, ende ic en hadder niet ghenoech/ toe ghepijnt noch gheleeft int ghetal van soe /hogher werdecheit alse daer toe behoerde.*	Introduction of terms „childish" and „not fully grown" with short explanation of the manner of "ungrownness"
Lines 12–14	*Ende /als mi daer wel vertoent wart doen ende mi noch /wel scijnt.*	Declaration of verity of the vision.
Lines 15–18	*Doen ic onsen here ontfaen hadde, doen ontfinc /hi mi te heme, Soe dat hi mi op nam alle mine /sinne buten alle ghedinckenisse van vremder /saken omme sijns te ghebrukene in enecheiden.*	Shifting from corporeal description to inner senses and connection to the divine by way of the spirit.
Lines 19–21	*Ende ic wart gevoert als in enen beemt, Jn een /pleyn dat hiet die wijtheit der volcomenre doechde.*	Transition to visionary plane and the given name of this new location.
Lines 21–23	*Daer in stonden boeme dar ic toe wart ghe/leidt. Ende mi worden ghetoent haer namen ende /de nature van haren namen.*	Description of new surroundings and reference to

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[484] The table is based upon Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 9–10.

		the overarching plot/ concern of the vision.

Vision 1 is unique in the fact that its introduction provides a multifaceted look at the shift from corporeal to spiritual consciousness, from the outer to the inner body. Hadewijch develops several motifs in this first introduction that reappear within other visions and other sections of her corpus. The mention of "*ghebrukelike*" (noun *ghebruken*) connects to a central experience in Hadewijch's writings that is synonymous with the fruition (akin with Latin *perfectus*) of *unio mystica.* The themes of being "childish" or "not fully grown" occupy significant space within Hadewijch's *Brieven,* particularly in letters that refer to the reader-listener as "*lieve kint*". In contrast, the other visions dedicate a substantially less amount of space to these introductions, usually ranging seven to thirteen lines.[485] However, the guidelines or organization of content, as well as the forms and motifs prevalent within the introduction of Vision 1, do provide the outline or basis upon which the other visions are constructed.

The initial twenty-three lines of Vision 1 establish a more complex transition between introductory information and the vision with a divine message or lesson. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Veerle Fraeters classifies five sections or motifs within Hadewijch's visions:

1. Situation in time and space: liturgical feast, meditation
2. Vision "in the spirit"
3. Fruition "out of the spirit"
4. Return to pain and exile
5. Reflection.[486]

Described as simply the "situation in time and space", Vision 1 demonstrates that the initial setting reveals more details than simply the location and liturgical feast. Although Fraeters has attempted to illustrate the format and function of elements within Hadewijch's visions, the designation of these five elements or motifs further regiments a classification of what can and does constitute a vision and what is lacking or incomplete. Fraeters explains that Visions 1 and 2 only contain the first two situations 1). Situation in time and space, 2) Vision in the spirit.

Through Fraeters's outline of five motifs, the emphasis lies upon what is recorded or written rather than the function of each vision or how these components connect to one another and to the other visions. If, as Fraeters argues, the collection of fourteen visions comprises a *Visioenenboek*, which I am compelled to support, how do these five motifs support this thesis and what part (if any) does the form of the *visio* take in Hadewijch's writings? As we have seen, although the first twenty-three lines do not develop or exhibit motifs 3, 4, and 5 on Fraeters's list by the end of the vision, over two hundred lines are devoted to core messages that resonate throughout the rest of the *Visioenenboek.* Highlighting what the vision "lacks" in terms of a regimented list of generic characteristics points to an inaccurate or misleading approach to the text rather than a failing on the part of the genre. This tactic of forcing genre definitions or classifications upon a text is not surprising, however.

As outlined in the previous chapter, scholars of medieval literature conflate discussions of genre in medieval literature with attempts to classify and exclude, rather than clarify how a specific writer-speaker modifies a given genre to model their own understanding of said genre.

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[485] Appendix 2 has the complete introductions for Hadewijch's fourteen visions, listed in tabular form as with Vision One above.

[486] Ibid, 78 (cf. Appendix 1).

Hadewijch's reflection and meditation upon her physical and spiritual/interior sensations also reiterate lessons about theological concepts (i.e. an "inward pulling" aligns with Augustinian theory of a dual-bodied human, with both an inner and an outer body), as well as attempt to clarify her dual-corporeal experience for the reader-listener. I would argue that Hadewijch provides some clues to the nature of the vision through her mention of the liturgical feast, but she also utilizes the initial lines to incorporate additional terminology and concepts that are central to understanding her vision cycle. Furthermore, as we look beyond Vision 1, we find that almost all visions (with the exception of Visions 8[487] and 14) provide some context, at times personal and others liturgical, within which to approach and comprehend her vision.

While at times fairly repetitive, the consistent mention of the liturgical calendar provides a basis from which the reader-listener can anticipate the potential theme, setting, and incorporated motifs within a vision. Therefore, Hadewijch not only builds upon her anticipated expectation of the reader-listener's memory-comprehension of the liturgical calendar and Biblical teachings but she also utilizes this knowledge to instill a "horizon of expectations" that is unique to her visions but provides a cohesive nature to each episode/vision within the collection. In other words, the institutional memory of the church's liturgical calendar, with its yearly repetition, helps to guide the reader-listener toward specific themes and motifs that are directly linked to the Biblical writings. Furthermore, Patricia Dailey remarks that,

> The liturgy enacts a reorganization of the human experience of time through cyclical forms of spiritual recall and trains the body to voice the words of the spirit and to host the divine language that passes through it.[488]

The concept of time as seen by humans and via the divine connect within the liturgy because of its repetitive nature (e.g. the hours read daily, the complete cycle of hours read yearly). Focusing on a set point in the liturgical calendar connects the writer-speaker and the reader-listener to an endless cycle of meditation on both the passing of time and the timelessness of the divine itself. Through this sense of unifying human and divine—and even of human transcending the temporal world to be united with the divine—"the form of the text itself promises unity there where experience can only anticipate or elliptically recollect."[489]

Unsurprisingly, the second vision in the *Visioenenboek* follows suit from Vision 1, and helps to establish the significance of the liturgical calendar within the setting of the visions and lay claim to a different sense of temporality. Vision 2, for example, although significantly shorter than Vision 1, employs similar motifs in its introduction, contributing to the reader-listener expectation of the visionary form in Hadewijch's cycle of visions. Vision 2 begins,

> *Het was op enen chincsen dach dat ic den heyleghen gheest also ontfinc dat*
> *ic verstont alle den wille der minnen in allen/ Ende alle die seden vanden*

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[487] Fraeters argues that Vision 8 includes the description of "situation of time and space". I disagree with the assertion because the first lines of the vision begin with "I saw". There is no transition and no liturgical context provided. Fraeters also attempts to reclassify what constitutes a vision within Hadewijch's writing. I find this logic problematic because it suggests that modern scholars have a better grasp of the medieval visionary genre than medieval contemporaries to Hadewijch. There is no doubt that Vision 14 constitutes a part of Hadewijch's vision cycle or *Visioenenboek.* I prefer to reframe the question to investigate how a specific work might classify as a certain genre rather than if that generic label applies.

[488] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 83.

[489] Ibid.

*wille der hemele ende der hemelscher/ ende al die volcomenheit der volmaecter
gherechtecheit/ ende alle ghebreke der verloerne/*[490]

[Once on Pentecost Sunday I received the Holy Spirit in such a manner that
I understood all the will of Love in all and all the modes of this will of the
heavens and of heavenly things, and all the perfection of perfect justice, and
all the shortcomings of the lost;][491]

As we can see based upon the format, there are distinct similarities between Vision 1 and Vision
2, although the above excerpt remains more truncated in its description of the writer-speaker's
shift from outer senses to inner before the onset of the vision. A significant point to note is the
temporal organization of the visions. Despite the fact that Vision 1 took place on the Octave of
Pentecost—or the Sunday following Pentecost—Vision 2 does not follow the liturgical calendar
linearly but instead remains within the celebration of Pentecost. Altogether four of fourteen
visions take place shortly before or during the celebration of Pentecost. As Carolyn Walker
Bynum has noted, extant or recorded visions show a connection between communion and a
visionary experience.[492] Three feast celebrations required church attendance and communion:
Epiphany, Christmas, and Pentecost. It is therefore unsurprising that Pentecost would appear in
almost one-third of visions. And yet, as we have seen with Vision 1, the liturgical calendar
supplies the reader-listener with "pre-knowledge", that is, an understanding of the celebration or
feast day and the key symbols and components connected to said day. At the same time, the
reoccurrence of specific liturgical days assists the reader-listener in the re-call and meditation
upon Vision 1, suggesting not only the reading (and potential re-reading) of that vision mentally
but new readings/understandings of Vision 1 in conjunction with the encounter of other visions
within the cycle.

The appearance of references to Pentecost occur in seemingly strategic positions: Visions
1 and 2, Vision 7 (roughly the middle of the cycle), and Vision 13 (the final vision that follows
the incipit structure of Vision 1). The liturgical setting of the fourteen visions are as follows:

Vision 1	Octave of Pentecost	Vision 8	No reference
Vision 2	Pentecost Sunday	Vision 9	Nativitate Beatae Mariae
Vision 3	Easter Sunday	Vision 10	Christmas Octave, Feast of St. John the Evangelist
Vision 4	Feast of St. James	Vision 11	Christmas night
Vision 5	Assumption	Vision 12	Epiphany
Vision 6	Epiphany	Vision 13	Sunday before Pentecost
Vision 7	Pentecost Sunday	Vision 14	No reference

[490] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 9.

[491] CWH, 271.

[492] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern
Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 14. For references to food,
see another work by Bynum, "Medieval Women and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century", in
Women's Studies 11 (1984): 179–214.

References to Pentecost occur far more frequently than other liturgical settings and coincide with crucial points of growth within the vision cycle, often (but not always) followed by a vision without a liturgical reference. In my opinion, what this illustrates is not simply the significance of a set liturgical calendar reference at the onset of the vision, but that the specific feast days and celebrations play into a larger didactic program. However, this could also indicate that Hadewijch was moved to vision during the celebration of the Pentecost in particular. The only final point to keep in mind is the fact that she selected (or some unknown editor(s)) the visions that are included in the *Visioenenboek,* a point that Hadewijch reveals in Vision 14.[493]

Specifically, Pentecost as a religious celebratory reference and its corresponding Biblical verses (Acts 2:1–3:1) works to help shape the structure of the cycle of Visions and reiterate the act of speaking (reflecting the apostles speaking in the many tongues of man) and the significance of memory in teaching and spiritual maturation, through the example of institutional memory (i.e. the celebration of the Pentecost) and religious narrative (i.e. the Bible).

For example, the incipit of Vision 2 cited above places significant emphasis on knowledge and understanding that Hadewijch receives while "in the spirit". Not only does she comprehend the "perfection of perfect justice" [*die volcomenheit der volmaecter gherechtecheit*], but also "all the languages that are spoken in seventy-two ways" [*ende doen verstondic alle redenen/ die men sprect in lxxij. manieren/*].[494] The mention of language connects directly to the verses in Acts 2, which references Pentecost and the birth of the church: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Unsurprisingly, Hadewijch names the Holy Spirit as the inspiration for her knowledge, creating a direct parallel between the transition of Jesus's disciples into apostles and their abilities to speak the languages of those around them. In addition, the motivation for this linguistic competency is the ability to "[declare] the wonders of God" to call others to "repent and be baptized…in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:11, 38). Although Vision 2 consists of only twenty-one lines, it establishes an important connection between language, Biblical narrative, and potential motivation and inspiration for Hadewijch's writings.

While some critics contest whether Vision 2 constitutes a true vision/"*visio*", discussing the importance of genre and its motifs within Hadewijch's writings is not simply a question of defining or establishing the appearance of a recognized genre. Rather, through the concept of the "horizon of expectations", we see how a genre functions by way of its motifs, specialized characteristics that mold the text into a "generic world". Although I outlined medieval concepts of genre and their scholarly reactions in Chapter Two, Hadewijch's *Visioenen* retain enough elements to lead the reader-listener to identify the texts as "vision/*visio*", but also aims to push the reader-listener's "horizon of expectations" to recognize and anticipate the form of "vision/*visio*" as devised by Hadewijch. Even Fraeters identifies reoccurring elements within Hadewijch's *Visioenen* (although I feel her groupings require some revision). Through the repetition of elements/motifs, such a liturgical setting and shift from outer to inner senses, Hadewijch establishes a new norm for her visions, enticing the reader-listener towards spiritual maturation as they journey through the literarily constructed visions, following the repeated and revised motifs like guideposts along a path. This structuring assists the reader-listener in the internalization/memorization of the lessons of the text. The creation of a mystically-informed landscape further frames the "horizon of expectations" in that it situates the reader-listener upon

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[493] "…but what I have from him, I received from the Transfiguration and from other visions in other forms of his Countenance, about which I wrote you recently; and from many others, about which I have written you nothing" (CWH, 304).

[494] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 38.

specific points/locations along a spiritual journey (I prefer pilgrimage) toward *unio mystica* and spiritual maturation.

IV.2c: Structure and Content Convergence

The success of Hadewijch's didactic program lies in her ability to construct a detailed description that both aligns with the visual image *and* elements of spiritual awakening and virtues to create a specific affect in the reader. While numerous scholars have successfully argued in favor of an affective *response* cultivated in the reader-listener, the overwhelming focus has been placed upon the response rather than the means by which Hadewijch engages with form and language to elicit the desired (and potentially, anticipated) response. Benjamin Breyer's dissertation (2015) persuasively establishes a reading of Hadewijch's writings that combines an argument for her knowledge of genres and their "horizon of expectations". Breyer even cites this concept yet does not fully engage with Jauss's theory.[495]

Another significant difference in Breyer's approach and my own is the manuscript transmissions. Whereas Breyer situates his approach in line with Erik Kwakkel's assessment of the extant manuscripts and fragments of Hadewijch's writings chronologically, I highlight the importance of Ms. C as the first manuscript to attempt to construct Hadewijch's writings into an integrated corpus.[496] The shift in intended function also alters the reading and interpretation of the text from earlier forms. Considering that no autograph copy of any of Hadewijch's writings exists and scholars remain unsure how the letters and poetry were collected and organized, I find it highly problematic that we can access without any shade of doubt the specifics concerning how the texts initially circulated and thus, the form of reception as first devised by Hadewijch. What does provide potential "evidence" to assist scholarly interpretation is the concept of *ghebruken*, a term which appears throughout Hadewijch's writings and depicts a fairly multifaceted experience of spiritual union with the divine and ecstatic sensation.

IV.2d: *Ghebruken*—Perfect Fruition in the Spirit

The term *ghebruken* is central to understanding Hadewijch's individualized approach to Christianity. In her works, particularly her letters, visions and strophic poems, *ghebruken* is the highest of achievements and moments within her human and anticipated divine experience: the union of human with the divine and the point through which the longing for love fulfillment from the divine is satisfied.[497] Hadewijch writes in her sixteenth letter,

> *Ende dat ghebreken van dien ghebrukene dat es dat suetste ghebruken.*[498]

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[495] Breyer, 6 (dissertation abstract).

[496] There are other significant differences in our readings of Hadewijch's corpus. I, for example, do not agree that the Visions were written for one reader, for the simple reason that the extensive composition of the vision cycle suggests a work that was intended to circulate throughout the other women religious of the area. A good comparison of such is Mechthild of Magdeburg's writings (discussed in the following chapter), as well as the fourteenth-century women's groups that participated in more austere forms of spirituality (Margaret Ebner and Heinrich of Nördlingen being two persuasive examples that come to mind).

[497] Mommaers, *Hadewijch,* ix.

[498] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 132.

[And that lack of the fulfillment/fruition, that is the sweetest
　　　fruition/ecstasy/realization.][499]

Paul Mommaers translates *ghebruken* as "fruition" in this passage, although he also notes his preference for the "enjoyment" and "satisfaction".

　　In Vision 7, also sometimes referred to as "Oneness in the Eucharist", Hadewijch begins by setting the scene, a common occurrence in her visionary writings, explaining that it was on a Pentecost Sunday when she had a vision as the day was beginning.

　　*...ende man sanc mettenen inde kerke **e**nde ic was daer /; **e**nde mijn herte /*
　　ende mijn aderen / ende alle mine lede scudden ende beueden van begherten/;[500]

　　[...and someone sang Matins in the church and I was there; and my heart and
　　my veins and all my limbs shook and trembled from want;][501]

The desire that causes this trembling is revealed as her desire for union with her Beloved or the divine.
　　Aldus maghicker af segghen/: Jc begherde mijns liefs te vollen te ghebrukene /
　　ende te bekinnenne ende te ghesmakene in allen uollen ghereke/; Sine menscheit
　　ghebrukeleke mitter miere/[502]

　　[About this I can say the following: I desired to have full of
　　fruition/experience/satisfaction of my love and to understand and to taste him in all full/
　　completeness; [I desired that] his humanity be *ghebrukeleke* [fully realized/
　　completed/enjoyed] with mine.][503]

Even from these brief examples, of which there are numerous more, the understanding of *ghebruken* is complex and varies slightly with each passage.

　　When one looks at the etymology of *ghebruken* however, the answers fail to solidify. *Ghebruken* is a weak verb with both transitive and intransitive usage. The modern Dutch equivalent is *gebruiken,* a verb that varies greatly in meaning from "to use or take" to "to eat/feed" and "partake". The *Etymologisch Woordenboek van het Nederlands* glosses *ghebruken/gebruiken* to the verb *genieten*, "to enjoy, relish or savor". Yet while *genieten* and *gebruken* initially appear fairly unrelated, the connection lies not in Germanic word roots, but the Latin understanding. The Latin verb *frui*, mentioned here in the first person singular present indicative form, encompasses meanings such as "to need, use, want and enjoy", also etymologically related to *gebruken* and *genieten* above. However Latin *frui* also accounts for the prevalent translation of *ghebruken* as *fruition* or *to realize fruition* within Hadewijch's and other mystical works, considering the heavy reliance upon Latinate ecclesiastical and spiritual texts during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

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[499] My translation.

[500] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 75.

[501] My translation.

[502] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen*, 75.

[503] My translation.

Even from the first lines of Vision 1, the reader-listener encounters the struggle between the inward and the outward experience: the inward desire for fruition—*ghebruken*—God compels the author to such a degree that her outward or corporeal life is impacted. Here there is the suggestion not only of the spiritual/visionary altering the physical experience, but rather that the spiritual sensations and understanding overwhelm all other sensations. From the first lines in Vision 1, Hadewijch exposes the audience to several central themes that extend throughout her corpus: 1) the conflict between body and soul, humanity and divinity; 2) the all-consuming desire (*orewoet*) to be in union with God; 3) the emphasis of fruition (*ghebruken*) or love union with God.[504] The "drawing away" from the outward physical life is indicative of a literary as well as visionary transition, the inward focus moving the reader deeper into the vision and altered perception. It also denotes an impending shift in perspective, understanding, and setting or backdrop. Furthermore, the recognition of a division between inner and outer "bodies" establishes a break between the corporeally-defined senses and the spiritual-divine senses. Through *ghebruken* and the tension between inner mind and outer, corporeal suffering, Hadewijch demonstrates Augustinian and Pauline concepts of the connection between the inner mind or soul and the divine.

As Hadewijch's first vision develops, her senses are withdrawn "from every remembrance of alien things" enabling her to take inward joy in her experience of closeness with God, as well as fall away from her bodily, earthly ties in order to be transported inwardly to a different realm.

> *Ende ic wart geuoert als in enen beemt /, Jn een pleyn dat hiet die wijtheit der volcomenre doechde/. Daer in stonden boeme dar ic toe wart gheleidt/. Ende mi worden ghetoent haer namen / ende de nature van haren namen.*[505]

> [Then I was led as if into a meadow, an expanse that was called the space of perfect virtue. In it stood trees, and I was guided close to them. And the name and the nature of its name were explained to me.][506]

Even in the vocabulary there exists a gradual departure from the "real" to that which is "seen" in a mystical sense: "Then I was led *as if* into a meadow."[507] The trepidation perceived linguistically in this excerpt rapidly disappears and is replaced with greater confidence. Growing comfort within this otherworldly, spiritual realm is often tied in direct conjunction with the concept of becoming "full grown" or maturing/becoming wiser in mystical affectations. However, on a different level, the new landscape refers back to the initial Pentecostal setting, creating plausible connections to courtly romance[508] and the religious celebration of birth (of the church) and resurrection (as the last feast in the celebration of Easter). Both the secular and ecclesiastical literature combine Spring and pastoral themes with newness/birth/rebirth. The

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[504] Willaert, "Hadewijch und ihr Kreis", 371.

[505] Van Mierlo, 10.

[506] CWH, 263.

[507] Caruthers 24.

[508] In Arthurian legend, it is not uncommon for the setting of a meadow or other pastoral scene to serve as the indication that the lives of the protagonists will be altered or some knowledge will be passed along to the reader. In *Iwein*, the tale of the journey through the magical woods is recounted by Kai; in *Tristan*, the illicit romance between Rivalin and Blancheflor commences, Rivalin almost perishes and Blancheflor conceives Tristan in her attempts to heal Rivalin and save him from death.

treatment of this newness has varied outcomes. From a religious context, Pentecost indicates a personal connection to the divine by way of the Holy Spirit (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-31), which seems highly appropriate for the onset of a visionary journey. Yet, similar to courtly romance, Hadewijch's Vision One signifies a shift in consciousness and understanding, a broadened knowledge of her Beloved, and thus literarily ideal for the first vision within a cycle.

This layering of imagery recalls several traditions of memory. Structurally the liturgical reference outlines the expected organization of each vision in the cycle. Thematically the liturgical reference prepares the reader-listener for an anticipated set of images upon which the writer-speaker might engage (i.e. trees or tree boughs for Pentecost, baptism, communion, etc). Just as Acts 2:1-3:1 explains the transformation of the disciples to apostles and new teachers of the church, so Hadewijch matures throughout the vision, recognized in her angelic guide's form of address and concluded with a monologue of instruction from Jesus himself.[509]

Pentecost as the birth of the Church begins what will compel the traditions in the New Testament, but also reaffirms both a communal connection as fellow Christians and a hope for direct communication with the divine in one of its Trinitarian forms. Finally, the imagery of speaking, both in Acts and in Hadewijch's first vision replicates a present and yet timeless understanding of language and religiosity. As Patricia Dailey notes, the question of temporality and lack thereof (atemporality) leads to a concept of time and space that is both present and personal, as well as communal and universal.[510] Through the concept of "invagination", we experience in Hadewijch's first vision the folds of potential readings and meditations that play upon the folds of memory. That is, Hadewijch relies upon a universal message of Christianity as taught through the Bible and employs this pre-knowledge within her framework of reader-listener expectations. The initial lines of Vision 1 weave (*texere*) the expected with the unanticipated; the comfort of the familiar in the images of Pentecost, courtly romance, and Song of Songs with the new—the guided journey inwards towards the soul. In essence, we see a double "invagination" or ellipsis, just as Derrida implied, but rather than the genre of one marking the beginning or end of another genre, we experience a layering of genres within the larger concept of *visio.* The result is a dynamic and multifaceted textual experience, bridging motifs from institutional memory (via the Bible and theologians' commentaries and other writings) with the personalized, meditative readings necessary to mature spiritually and grow in knowledge of the divine.

Moving beyond the initial lines and through the meadow, Hadewijch broadens her scope as she comes to the first tree.

> *Die yerste boem hadde ene verrotte wortele die ouerbroesch was ende een*
> *ouervast selbloct ende daer boven ene herde lievelike scone bloeme, die stont*
> *soe onvaste, wanneer soe een storm quame soe viele die bloeme ende dorrede.*
> *Ende die mi leidde dat was een inghel vanden Tronen*[511]

> [The first tree had a rotten root, which was very brittle and a sturdy trunk and
> there above a very tender, sweet blossom, which stood so frailly that, should
> a storm come, thus the blossom would fall and wither. And he who led me that

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[509] Landy, 513.

[510] Dailey discusses this at length in her chapter entitled "Space and Time" in *A Companion to Christian Mysticism*, but also connects aspects of time (temporality and atemporality) in the chapter "The Mystic's Two Bodies" from her monograph, *Promised Bodies.*

[511] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 10–11.

was an angel of the Thrones.][512]

Despite the initially mundane pastoral setting, the vision quickly reveals to the reader that it could not take place in reality, with the *"verrotte wortele"* turned up towards the sky and brittle, calling into question how the tree could live with the absence of roots to sustain it. The details of the tree and its significance are quickly revealed as each allegorical tree is described and explained through the voice of the mystic protagonist. Even within these vignettes for each tree, the language seeks to edify but also balance the mystery of the divine revelations with the experience of life on earth, and the potential path through which the inner spiritual experience elevates by means of corporeal suffering.

"And this same day, having grown up, I had come close to him, so that I had received him." [Vision 1, line 15] This statement provides not only a lengthier explanation of the means to achieve union with God through love is revealed to "Hadewijch" (the protagonist in her vision), but also what characteristics are necessary for that union to occur, most likely included for the sake of the text's audience. On another level, the action of Hadewijch receiving Christ is reminiscent of the occasion of communion and the belief in transubstantiation. Whereas New Testament imagery commonly depicts Christ taking the "flock" of Christian believers under his care, here Hadewijch is the consoler; she takes him to her, similar to that of a mother or lover. This seemingly simple sentence also reflects the connection between the process of growing up and the potential closeness to the divinity, as if to exact a relationship between maturity and ability to achieve divine union. When compared to the underlying premise of Bride mysticism as outlined by the *Song of Songs* and St. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons, the question of maturity mirrors the process of bridal preparation: as the Christian matures in Christ, through aspects of *imitatio Christi*, so too does the Christian (i.e. bride) ready herself for sacred union.

As Hadewijch ventures deeper into the *Space of Perfect Virtues,* accompanied by her angelic guide, the previous format of tree, angelic proclamation, and then exegesis from "Hadewijch" continues for five additional trees before encountering a seventh and final tree at the center of the space. Although the basic format of each tree's description is almost identical, as Hadewijch wades deeper into the plain, the complexity of the trees' allegories increases, and each tree comes to serve as a short overview of one aspect or "stop" upon the spiritual journey toward maturation. In addition, the way in which the angel guide references Hadewijch alters throughout the course of the vision. The forms of address grow in formality and often suggest a sense of higher status. Because the angel's words are reported throughout his appearance—in addition to the fact that the second-person form is used—this suggests, in my opinion, a growth in spiritual maturation in Hadewijch, one that naturally leads toward the ability or readiness to "meet" the Beloved. As we will see in the following section about the Letters or *Brieven*, the form of address remains integrally tied to the spiritual maturation of the addressee, a point which holds greater significance in the "traditional" conceptualization of the letter as a genre and its motifs.

Yet it is not only the suggested status of the writer-speaker Hadewijch that increases within the first vision, but the use of scriptural references, in particular from the book of Revelations. All too appropriately, the initial references from St. John's vision of the apocalypse come from Book 1, used in conjunction with the first glimpses of the Beloved. Whereas the initial descriptions of the trees were succinct, as Hadewijch approaches the center, the visualizations become more elaborate with multifaceted elements, often with three-fold allegorical exegesis. For example, the description of the fifth tree begins in line 80 and lasts until

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[512] My translation.

line 176, whereas the description of the first tree takes place in lines 24–41. Appropriately, as Hadewijch (and the reader-listener literarily) venture(s) towards the center of the space, the allegories and their exegetical explanations become more complex and thus require more words and lines to complete. The result of these lengthier explanations is that motion through the space slows, which in turn impacts the concept of time and the amount of "physical space" journeyed between descriptions. In my opinion, this "slowing" of literary time and expansion of space by way of more detailed descriptions illustrates a motif that ties to questions of the divine and the human concept of time and space. Hadewijch creates in this first vision an example of exploration that mimics the physical movement of pilgrimage: the meditative and contemplative journey with emphasis on atonement and spiritual maturation.

Quite appropriately, before Hadewijch enters the center of the *Space of Perfect Virtues*, she receives communion and takes a vow, tying not only to concepts of purification prior to encountering the divine but also relating to the celebration of Pentecost from the initial liturgical setting and prevalence (and requirement) of communion during that feast.

> *Doen leidde hi mi voert / daer wi vonden enen kelc al vol bloeds/. Ende die*
> *inghel seide noch te mi; Grote met groten wille/, alle onghehoerde pine /*
> *ende ghehoerde sonder quetsinghe / ende met sueter rasten ouerlidende,*
> *drinct/. ende ic dranc ende dat was die kelc der verduldecheit; daer dedic*
> *gelofnisse gode ghestadelike ghenoech te sine in verduldegher trouwen/.*[513]

> [Then he led me onwards to where we found a chalice full of blood. And the
> angel said then to me; "Great one with great will, having overcome all
> heard of and unheard of suffering without injury with sweet repose, drink!
> And I drank and that was the chalice of patience; where I made the vow to
> content God steadfastly in patient fidelity.][514]

The chalice of blood (*kelc al vol bloeds*) marks a significant shift from the tree allegories within the vision, as well as a marked change in the necessity of an angelic guide after Hadewijch drinks from the chalice. Linguistically, the omission of angelic explanation or clues towards the hidden textual and spiritual meaning of the object projects a sense that Hadewijch, upon drinking from the chalice, takes communion on a mystical level. Furthermore, the act of communion resonates with images of the Last Supper and the transformation of those select followers to become disciples of Christ. On an even deeper level, the act of communion presents the acknowledgement of the corporeal suffering and crucifixion, or Passion, of Christ. I believe Hadewijch intended this motif as multi-referential, drawing upon the liturgy, the recollection of the text (i.e. Biblical narrative of suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, as well as the connection to the Pentecost), and marriage as a sacrament with a desire for purity prior to union (and thus creating a further textual reference with the *Song of Songs*).

On several levels, the process of preparation for the Beloved and impending fruition lie at the heart of the *Visioenenboek* and establishes through its imagery the implied allegorical understanding for the reader-listener that, through the landscape of visionary moments, the true path toward the Beloved is spiritual maturation, *imitatio Christi* in corporeal life, and internalization of the virtues highlighted within Vision 1. It is through these series of images, motifs personalized and realized in visual form, that Hadewijch constructs an example of one

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[513] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* ll. 177–184.
[514] My own translation.

way towards perfect fruition [*ghebruken*] in *unio mystica.* While initially Hadewijch places emphasis upon seeing in an earthly sense, as she approaches the center of the *Space of Perfect Virtues,* the reader-listener is distanced from images that reflect the physical world. This shift represents not only a change in what visualizations are reported but *how* these images are seen: from corporeally-tied sense of vision to an inner sight that is more in tune with the divine. After the departure of the angelic guide, Hadewijch inducts the reader-listener into these new senses:

> *Ende ic keerde mi van heme ende ic sach een cruce voer mi staen ghelijc cristalle, claerre ende witter dan cristael. Daer mochtemen dore sien ene grote wijtheit. Ende voer dat cruce saghic staen enen zetel ghelijc ere sciven ende was claerre ane te siene dan die sonne in haerre claerster macht;[515]*

> [And I turned from him, and I saw standing before me a cross like crystal, clearer and whiter than crystal. And through it a great space was visible. And placed in front of this cross I saw a seat like a disk, which was more radiant to see than the sun in its most radiant power;][516]

Whereas the beginning of the vision was rooted in the earthly, physical, outward consciousness, as "Hadewijch" progresses further into the realm of this first vision the more her earthly sensibilities fall away and alters her ability to "see" in the mystical sense.

Similarly, the entire *Visioenenboek* makes a shift from more earthly and corporeal descriptions and settings to those linked to celestial spaces and ineffable experiences. The basic structure remains while the language and setting are elevated. Moving through the text—physically on the page and mentally via the unfolding of the narrative—the reader-listener joins the "*ic*-narrator" on a journey that compels visualization through its vivid descriptions thereby promoting meditation-internalization on/of the text. What is particularly telling about Vision 1 is that the gradual progression through the "Space of Perfect Virtues" leads to a long oration from the "Beloved". Generically the second half of Vision 1 resembles a *sermo* or homily than a vision-*visio* because the "Beloved" speaks directly using the "*ic*/I" and "*u*/you" forms, encouraging a line of direction communication between reader-listener and "Beloved" as voiced in Hadewijch's writings. The emphasis of his speech is guidance and edification for the path ahead (i.e. the journey toward spiritual maturation), as well as a comparison between the Christ's lived experience and his identity as part of the Trinity. As Duncan Robertson notes,

> By Bernard [of Clairvaux's] time, *sermo* has become synonymous with *homily,* "intercourse", speech to an audience from a point of departure in scripture…Text and audience anchor the sermon as a bridge, a meditation between them.[517]

Roberston outlines a crucial function of Bernard's *sermo* with this passage, which anchors the text to the reader-listener through the process of reading and meditation. In this way, Bernard's *sermo,* and I would also argue Hadewijch's visions, retain an active role within an ongoing process of reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), and speech (*oratio*). Interaction with the text

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[515] Vekeman, 39.
[516] CWH, 267.
[517] Robertson, 3.

begets a sense of interaction with the writer-speaker as encapsulated within the text, as well as composition of the text signifies an anticipation with the reader-listener that will be present in the future act of reading after the text has been completed. These elements of time and timelessness return in Vision 14, marking the end of the *Visioenenboek* but also anticipating the form and function of Hadewijch's collection of letters. This is also a glimpse at what will come, a promise of future encounter, with aspects of the past (as seen in the preterite in the Visions), present (the act of reading), and the future (what may come to pass if one continues along one's path toward perfect fruition/*unio mystica*).

Several scholars question the appropriateness of labeling Vision 14 a *visio*, for the fact that it breaks from the established form of liturgical reference, movement of the spirit, etc. On several levels Vision 14 connects to the previous vision. Vision 13 concludes with a "return into the spirit" but only after Hadewijch has experienced full fruition with her "Beloved". Vision 14 continues these sentiments, stating

> *Jc was ende ben noch in groter begherten ende in oerewoede/, so dat ic*
> *waende ende oec wel wiste dat ic niet leuen ne mochte met so groter*
> *ongheduricheit alse daer ic in was/ ende noch ben, god en gaue mi nuwe*
> *cracht/; ende doe dede hijt, danc hebbe hi.*[518]

> [I was and am continually in great desire and in the madness of love, so that
> I thought and was well aware that I could not live any longer with such great
> inquietude as I was in then and continually am, unless God gave me some
> new strength. And then he did so, thanks be to him!][519]

The spiritual situation of the previous vision carries over into the final vision thematically and disrupts the anticipated introductory format of the previous thirteen visions. However, this break in the "horizon of expectations" does not necessarily denote a "lacking" or "failure" of genre expression. Rather, a shift in expectation marks a change in function or intention on the part of the writer-speaker, one that can create a memorable (or more easily internalized) section of text precisely because it defies the anticipated outcome. Whereas with previous visions, the reader-listener is guided by way of the liturgical references, to promote reflection upon the liturgy of the calendar, the vision of Hadewijch, and how the two intersect, Vision 14 marks the end of the genre *visio* as Hadewijch had previously devised. The liturgical reference as incipit promotes meditation upon the reading-listening of these texts individually and simultaneously, guiding the reader through textual markers and a rich literary experience towards their own path to the divine and spiritual maturation. In contrast, Vision 14 highlights a knowledge that is beyond the thirteenth vision and extends past the limitations of human language and thus the text. The mysteries of the divine can no longer transcend the barrier between the outer and the inner bodies, as the writer-speaker has tasted the perfect fruition/*ghebruken* with the divine.

Later in Vision 14 Hadewijch comments upon the elusive nature of her current status, speaking directly to the reader-listener. What is important to note is that this is the first instance of direct communication with the reader-listener in the visions. She explains carefully:

> *Jc maect te lanc om dat ghijt gherne hoert in wat gheualle dat was dat soe*

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518 Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 157.
519 CWH, 302.

scone was ochte soe onmenscheleec ende der menscheit gods soe ghelijc/;
van allen bleuic ie seder onuerwandeleec/.[520]

[I am continuing this too long, because you are glad to hear in what that
happiness consisted which was so beautiful, or so beyond human nature, and
so conformed to the Humanity of God; but since that day I have remained
unwavering in all things.][521]

The experience of the thirteenth vision is "beyond human nature", which is rendered in Middle
Dutch as "*onmenscheleec*" [inhuman] that Hadewijch parallels with the "*menscheit gods*" [the
humanity of God]. This duality of divine and human appears throughout the visions, as we have
seen with the "inward pull" of the spirit in Vision 1. Also similar to Vision 1, Hadewijch devotes
the majority of Vision 14 to the explication or exegesis of Vision 13, as well as its impact upon
her spiritual experience in its aftermath. The result is a mix of recollection—marked by past
tense verbs—and ongoing meditation upon these experiences (in the present indicative).
Hadewijch continues,

Ende ic plach alse god dede/, die al sine werke sinen vader op gaf daer
hise af hadde/; ended dat ic hebbe van heme/, dat ontfinghic van diere
transfiguratien/, ende van anderen siene, in anderen manieren van anschinen/
daer ic v lest af screef ende v eer ghescreuen hebbe, ende vele meer daer ic
||v niet af gheschreven en hebbe; dats mi nochtan leet, na dien dat ic uwen
wille begare te doene / Ende na dien dattuut mi gherne al wists/, soe eest mi
ouerleet / dattuut niet en wets dattuus weten wils/.[522]

[I did as God did, who delivered back all his works to his Father, from whom
he had them; but what I have from him, I received from the Transfiguration
and from other visions in other forms of his Countenance, about which I
wrote you recently; and from many others, about which I have written you
nothing. I am sorry, nevertheless, because I desire to do your will. And since
you wish to know all that concerns me, I am very sorry that you do not know
everything you wish to know.][523]

The "*ic/*I" of Vision 14 creates a position in opposition to the "*u/*you", who seeks to understand
and desires to obtain more knowledge concerning Hadewijch's personal journey towards *unio*
mystica and spiritual maturation.

What is surprising—and perhaps also revealing of Hadewijch as the writer-speaker
persona within these texts—is the reflection upon the anticipated expectation of the reader-
listener present in the text. Through the process of composition, Hadewijch seeks to edify the
reader-listener(s) through the meditation upon the encounters with the divine, translated for her
intended audience, and reconstructed in a way which is intended to promote a similar affect in
the reader-listener. Patricia Dailey remarks that only after the process of *lectio, meditatio,* and
oratio can composition take place as *operatio:* the works fulfilled through the ongoing emulation

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[520] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 163−164.
[521] CWH, 304.
[522] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 164.
[523] CWH, 304.

of Christ's suffering (*imitatio Christi*).[524] Dailey connects the creation of the physical text with that of the extension or embodiment of Hadewijch's divine experience, a manuscript that can be re-read and re-collected infinitely to promote the concept of a living Word of God.[525]

There is another element to Hadewijch's confession to the reader-listener above. On the one hand, she reveals that the visions recorded for the reader were chosen, when she states, "and from many others, of which I have written you nothing/ *ende vele meer daer ic ||v niet af gheschreven en hebbe*." Some scholars have interpreted these lines as the admission that the visions found within the *Visioenenboek* were carefully selected for readership, setting it apart from the *visio* found in hagiography that seek to verify the mystic's authority through his/her relation to the divine. At the same time, the verb in both the citation above and the sentence preceding encompasses the aspect of composition. Hadewijch does not explain "of which I have told you nothing" but rather "of which I have written you nothing". Here we get the sense that Hadewijch does not intend to reveal all the mysteries and knowledge obtained upon her journey towards spiritual maturation. The reader-listener desires more and yearns for the knowledge of divine love, but, like Hadewijch's figure in Vision 1, that can only be obtained after one undertakes the pilgrimage through the landscape of the "Space of Perfect Virtues" and is deemed ready to face the Beloved directly. And thus, just as the Beloved instructs Hadewijch at the end of Vision 1 that she must return her body and further the teachings impressed upon her, now Hadewijch by extension of her text—like the bridge between reader-listener and scripture in Bernard's *Sermon on the Song of Songs*—guides the reader-listener toward their own path utilizing her own as an exemplum. However, as we will see in the following section, the literarily-constructed landscape through which the reader-listener must travel is incomplete and he/she requires a deeper knowledge and greater level of spiritual maturation—in addition to better sense of self—before new depths become within reach.

Tied to the concept of reading, meditation, and pilgrimage, in the next section, I turn to the letters—in particular, Letter 15—to demonstrate not only the centrality of the pilgrimage imagery as akin to spiritual maturation but also to highlight the ways in which the *Brieven* support and reiterate the motifs and lessons from the *Visioenen*, thus continuing her didactic-ontological program in a different genre. Through my analysis of Letter 15, I connect the organization of the *Visioenenboek* to both the *Brieven* and my discussion within this section of Vision 1.

V. *Brieven*—Letter 15

Whereas the previous section outlined the cycle of visions and how the tropes and motifs of Vision 1 created a map or arc through which to interpret the other visions in the cycle or book, this section moves on to the letters or *Brieven*. In Chapter Two, I outlined how the epistle was conceptualized during the Middle Ages and the connection between its form in the twelfth century and its message (i.e. a dialogic text form that addressed the reader directly rather than through a messenger). Similar to the *sermo* or homily seen with Bernard of Clairvaux, Hadewijch's letters are not simply instructional or mere attempts at persuasion towards a contemplative life. Rather Hadewijch's collection of Letters encompasses an even broader array of genre types than her visions, which many suggest were organized chronologically (Van Mierlo and Breyer, for example).[526] Somewhat more contested is the question who collected

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[524] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 337–8.
[525] Ibid, 338.
[526] Breyer, 22, 24.

these texts for the *Brieven* section of her works and for whom these letters were written. B.M. Breyer has provided some convincing evidence that these letters were written on behalf of a number of recipients, which is reflected in his study of Pauline epistolary writing and the almost ceremonial forms of address.[527] Breyer cites that, although shortened in form, Hadewijch's letters follow the epistolary style well known in Paul's letters, which includes a four-part address. While his argument is certainly persuasive in terms of correspondences between her writings and those of Paul, the letters as part of a manuscript or taken within the context of literary culture seem a misstep. For example, the beginning of Letter 1—which also serves as the inicipit of Mss. A and B—reads,

> *God die de clare minne / die onbekint was verclaerde bi siere doghet daer hi*
> *alle doghet bi verlichte in siere claerheit der minnen / Hi moet v verliechten*
> *ende verclaren metter claerre claerheit daer hi hem seluen claer met es ende*
> *al sinen vrienden ende sinen naesten gheminden.*[528]

> [Since God has manifested by his virtues that radiant love which was
> uncomprehended, whereby he illuminated all the virtues in the radiance of his
> love, may he illuminate you and enlighten you by the pure radiance with which
> he shines resplendent for himself and for all his friends and those he most
> dearly loves!][529]

Note the formality of this opening address, as well as the lack of specific context or reference to a conversation or a particular person. The formal second person singular *u* is used, but it is unclear to or for whom this was written. "…may he illuminate you and enlighten you" expresses well Hadewijch's didactic tone, as well as imply the underlying function of her text.

At the same time, when taken in comparison with the first lines of Vision 1—"It was a Sunday, in the Octave of Pentecost, when our Lord was secretly brought to my bedside"—the function of these lines and introductions into Hadewijch's literary world lie in stark contrast. While B.M. Breyer argues that the scribes of Ms. C chose to reorganize the genres with the understanding that the *Visioenenboek* attested to Hadewijch's source of authority as a mystic,[530] I reiterate that the scribes may have seen a logic in this reorganization that was more formulaic and closely tied to the perceived function of the genres within Hadewijch's writings. As we saw in the previously section, the cycle of visions, or *Visioenenboek,* displays textual evidence that they should be read as a single group of texts, rather than a compilation of singular, visionary episodes. With Vision 1's lengthy introduction, including a *locus amoenus* and other motifs of initial settings and births (i.e. Pentecost and the birth of the Christian church, pastoral scenes found in courtly romance, etc.), I find compelling textual evidence that the scribes of Ms. C responded to these textual clues and interpreted them as an informative incipit, not just for the *Visioenenboek,* but Hadewijch's entire corpus.

Although Hadewijch did not organize the genres in the order of Ms. C, the fluid organization and gradual progression of themes, in my opinion, suggest that the *Visioenenboek* was intended as a gateway into her spiritual and generic world, to quote Peter Seitel. Using the

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[527] Ibid., 25–26, 29, 54, 70–71.
[528] Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 16.
[529] CWH, 47.
[530] Breyer, 22.

Book of Visions as a gateway into the motifs and concepts central to her writings, Hadewijch creates references to messages found within her visions through the use of strategically placed motifs that are recycled yet reiterated in a new form. Similar to the specific reference to Pentecost as a liturgical setting in Visions 1, 2, 7 and 13, Hadewijch's *Brieven* engage in a recurring dialogue about the potential path toward spiritual maturation as outlined by Pauline letters in the Scripture. As I outlined in Chapter 2, the letter or epistle has deep ties within secular and religious writings, often recognized by its initial lines of address and desire for gentle instruction of the reader-listener. Benjamin Breyer notes the strong Pauline and Augustinian influences within Hadewijch's letters, suggesting that, as opposed to what was previously proposed, the letters were composed in response to numerous questions and concerns, as well as various recipients.[531] Despite Van Mierlo's supposition that there was a sole recipient of the letters, Breyer provides ample evidence that Hadewijch's letters addressed multiple persons at varying stages of spiritual growth.[532] At the same time, the format and motifs within the *Brieven* provide evidence of an intended reader-listener (although not a sole reader-listener), which guides scholars towards the potential "horizon of expectations", as well as the presence of the reader-listener in modern understandings of pre-knowledge and anticipation of the epistle form.

While scholars might not have enough textual evidence to designate the organizer of the collection of letters or specific recipients, the majority of the letters begin in a similar form, which often includes a general greeting to the reader-listener (*salutatio*) that mimics liturgical calls to worship or greetings within the congregation during Mass (e.g. *God si met u* "God be with you"). As Breyer noted, reader-listeners requiring more guidance or those who were potentially more immature spiritually receive the reference "*lieve kint*" ("dear child"), denoting not only a fondness or familiarity between writer-speaker and reader-listener, but also the child-like state of the reader-listener that parallels Hadewijch's description of herself during the introduction of Vision 1.[533] Reader-listeners of more elevated spiritual status, in particular those who might have been closer to Hadewijch within the beguine community, were given references to the Scripture or advice/teachings imparted to Hadewijch by the divine.[534]

According to medieval treatises on epistolary style, a combination of proper diction, syntax and form enabled "the epistle [to have] the power to affect the disposition of the recipient because it can stimulate an appeal made in person by the writer."[535] The epistle therefore represents direct communication between writer-speaker and reader-listener to the extent that, I would argue, the letters in Hadewijch's collection assume the role of a speech act, rather than a more passive speech genre (as outlined by Bakhtin). A speech act, as I state above, is the presentation of speech in action, resulting from direct communication between one speaker (here the writer-speaker) and the reader-listener. Hadewijch's use of the epistolary form extends beyond the concept of a missle, which suggests that the reader-listener receives something passively from the writer-speaker or messenger. The writer-speaker interacts directly with the reader-listener, responding to questions and concerns they may have voiced in person or via

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[531] Breyer, 23.

[532] Ibid., 24.

[533] Ibid., 81–82.

[534] Breyer states that Hadewijch was a figure of authority by way of the convergence between her own voice and that of reported speech on behalf of the divine. He adds, "[t]he women she addresses are characterized as spiritually immature in comparison to her, and she presents herself as someone who has achieved perfection and acts in accord with God's will when she exhorts, counsels, and consoles" (Breyer 28).

[535] Breyer, 32.

some other form of communication. What I want to stress here is that Hadewijch's modification of the epistolary genre depicts glimpses into a conversation or conversations that were vibrant and ongoing, moving through various topics, but a form that necessarily breaks from the formal formulaics in order to portray the care and intimacy between the writer-speaker and reader-listener.

The dialogic nature of the *Brieven*—in contrast to the *Visioenenboek* with its use of "*ic*/I" and rarer instances of direct address to the reader (mostly in Vision 14)—remains rooted not simply in speech but also reading, both in the sense of reading the physical manuscript containing Hadewijch's works, but also in her exegetical method of reading her experience and guiding the reader-listener to read Scriptural references in a new light. Furthermore, the practice of reading and speaking are both expressed in the word *sermo,* and the presence of non-epistolary forms within the letter collection.[536] Letters that break the anticipated introduction and epistle form also alter the anticipated outcome of the letter. In other words, the "horizon of expectations" is shifted and the unexpected becomes the premise for a memorable literary encounter. This break from the anticipated textual form and outcome becomes memorable (and thus internalized) because it defies expectation, and, as I outlined in the previous chapters, *memoria* marks a crucial element upon the path toward meditation and eventually contemplation.

Letter 15 exemplifies such a break from expectation in both form and content, but also manages to reiterate and recycle elements from the *Visioenenboek* and provides additional support for my argument that the reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) on Hadewijch's writings are intended to function like a path or pilgrimage towards spiritual maturation. Spatial organization of significant information complements the physical understanding of *memoria* that persisted throughout the ancient and medieval periods. As Mary Carruthers notes, the process of *lectio* and *meditatio* is multifaceted, in that reading (*lectio*) for the sake of true learning and knowledge expresses a physical response in the form of etching information on the brain (expressed in the common image of the wax tablet), but in addition that the "read" experience, through *lectio* and *meditatio*, becomes a "lived" experience for the reader-listener.[537] In many ways the connection between the physical and the experienced corresponds to the motivation to hold memory and reading with high regard.[538] If one follows *lectio* and *meditatio* as a means to approach a fuller knowledge of the divine, the contents of a book or even Holy Scripture is not simply memorized in order to be referenced at any given time. The reader-listener becomes part of the narrative, or more simply put, the text, by meditating upon the text, etching it upon his or her brain, and integrating the text into the body of the reader-listener.

Hadewijch's landscape of textures that aid the reader-listener to embody the text as memory and experience does not simply represent a collage of images selected by Hadewijch but the crafted structure of literary elements and genres that intend to assist the reader-listener upon a journey towards spiritual maturation and readiness as the bride of the Beloved. Although the visions are not specifically mentioned, in this section I demonstrate the connection between the organization of the *Visioenenboek* and the contents of Letter 15. Unlike many of the other letters in the collection, the generic form of Letter 15 bears strong resemblance to Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermon on the Song of Songs*, with its explicit exegetical explanations from the *Song of Songs*. What is perhaps even more striking is the s*ermo* as a generic form during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the convergence of the use of allegory-exegesis (primarily a written generic motif) and *sermo,* verbal generic form aimed at the gentle guidance and edification of its

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[536] Robertson, 3.
[537] Carruthers, 32.
[538] Robertson, 3.

reader-listener.[539] In many ways, *sermo* and *epistle* convey similar motifs concerning the reader-listener and their anticipated response as constructed by the writer-speaker. In fact, in Breyer's chapter on Hadewijch's letters, he describes the paraenetic[540] style as linked to the medieval interpretation of the *epistle* as "*sermo absentium*",[541] a speech act of the writer-speaker transmitted in a way that overcomes the distance between him or her and the reader-listener, as well as the function of the *epistle* as *sermo conversis,*[542] alluding to the persuasive style of the letter as a genre.

The relationship between *epistola* and *sermo* further demonstrates the fluid nature of Hadewijch's collection of letters. Despite the categorization of "*Brieven*", not all "letters" follow the structure of the *epistola* as outlined by classical and contemporaneous theorists on the genre. In fact, the fifteenth letter entitled "The Pilgrimage of Love", in which Hadewijch instructs her readers on the proper way to journey towards Christ, omits the *salutatio* or established form of address and begins directly with an allegory of pilgrimage and subsequent exegesis. The fifteenth letter begins,

> *Neghene poenten horen ten pelgerim die verre te varen heuet. Dat eerste*
> *es dat hi om den wech vraghe/. Dat ander es dat hi geode gheselscap kiese.*
> *Dat derde es dat hi hem hoede voer dieue. Dat vierde es dat hi hem hoede*
> *uan ouerate. ||Dat vijfte es dat hi hem hoghe scorsse ende vaste gorde. Dat*
> *sesde es, alse hi den berch op gheet, dat hi sere nicke. Dat seuende es, alse*
> *hi den berch neder gheet, dat hi dan rechte ga. Dat achtende es dat hi*
> *goeder liede ghebet beghere. Dat neghende es dat hi gherne om gode spreke.*[543]

> [Nine points are fitting for the pilgrim who has far to travel. The first is that
> he ask about the way. The second is that he choose good company. The
> third is that he beware of thieves. The fourth is that he beware of gluttony.
> The fifth is that he don short dress and tight belt. The sixth is that when he
> climbs a mountain, he bend far forward. The seventh is that when he descends
> the mountain, he walk erect. The eighth is that he desire the prayers of good
> people. The ninth is that he gladly speak of God.][544]

Similar to the function of Hadewijch's other letters, the fifteenth letter seeks to provide advice and guidance for the reader-listener who desires heightened spiritual maturation and eventually to achieve *unio mystica* with the divine. The "for the pilgrim who has far to travel" [*...ten pelgerim die verre te varen heuet*] creates a connection between the reader-listener, Hadewijch's own experiences as outlined in the *Visioenenboek,* and the allegory from its initial line. Rather

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[539] Ibid.

[540] Paraenetic style refers to paraenesis, stemming from the Greek word, parainein "to advise." In this style, the reader-listener is advised to abstain from something (or pursue something) through moral exhortation.

[541] Breyer, 69.

[542] Ibid., 54.

[543] Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 124–125.

[544] CWH, 77.

than the dialogic interplay between *ic-u/I-you* that occurs in many of the other letters, Letter 15 maintains a distanced tone, employing the more neutral *hi/*he.[545] To provide further clarification about the allegorical nature of pilgrimage and these nine points, Hadewijch references Matthew 6, instructing the reader-listener of the similarities. What is significant, in my opinion, is that, despite the initial neutral or ambiguous references in the opening lines to the subject (i.e. using *hi/*he), Hadewijch evokes a communal pilgrimage, a shared desire or goal through the use of the first-person plural:

> *Alsoe eest oec met onser godleker peregrinatien, daer wi dat rike gods in*
> *soeken selen ende sine gherechticheit in volcomenen werken der minnen.*[546]

> [So it is likewise with our pilgrimage to God, in which we shall seek *the*
> *kingdom of God and his justice* (Matt. 6:3) in perfect works of love.][547]

The understanding of the word "pilgrimage/*peregrinatien*" shifts from the conventional connotation with an emphasis on physical travel to one of spiritual growth and movement towards world divine (i.e. "the kingdom of God/*dat rike gods*"). In this sentence, we see an echoed sentiment from the *Visioenenboek.* Unlike forms of *visio* that report a mystical experience with the divine, Hadewijch's *Visioenen* comprise a complete cycle that journeys through the landscapes of *memoria* and *imitatio Christi* in order to prepare the soul—both of the writer-speaker and the reader-listener—for perfect fruition with the divine. Here we find a reiteration of that seeking, that traversing of a literary landscape of genres and motifs that compel the reader-listener to experience introspectively the trials and tribulations of spiritual maturation through the process of reading and meditation (*lectio et meditatio*).

Thus, within this letter there is a direct parallel between the depicted literary travel in the *Visions* and the process which the reader is to follow in order to achieve success in their desire for fruition. The first of the nine points mirrors that of Vision 1, and Hadewijch exegetically unfolds her initial allegory to illustrate the hidden meaning of the allegory of the first lines. With this section, the voicing shifts from "*wi/*we" to "*ghi/*you."

> *Dat eerste es: ghi sult vraghen omme den wech; dat seghet hi selue: Jc ben*
> *de wech; ay na dien dat hi de wech es, soe merket sine weghe die hi ghinc*
> *…Hi wrachte met wakender caritaten, ende hi gaf ter Minnen al sijn herte ende*
> *al sine ziele Ende al sine crachte. Dit es die wech dien ihesus wiset…*[548]

> [The first point is: You must ask about the way. He himself says this: *I am*
> *the way* (John 14:6). Oh, since he is the way, consider what ways he went.
> …He worked with vigilant charity, and he gave to Love all his heart and all
> his soul, and all his strength. This is the way that Jesus teaches...][549]

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[545] As we will see in the next section about the *Liederen,* the mixing of voices and voicing becomes even more apparent. It is not uncommon to see a shift from *ic/* I to *u/* you to *hi/* he between strophes.

[546] Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 125.

[547] CWH, 77–78.

[548] Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 125.

[549] CWH, 78.

The pilgrimage of love is not some wayward process with which to understand the greater dogmatic program of Christian mystical spirituality, but rather the complex and complicated self-redefinition of becoming an example of *imitatio Christi*—the imitation of Christ. Hadewijch continues her explication of her first point—"you must ask about the way"—informing the reader to seek out the direction and guidance of the saints and those who have followed in Christ's example, as she frames it: "...[those] who have followed him up the mountain of the noble life from the deep valley of humility..."[550] Throughout the visions, the guides for her literary pilgrimage are angels, saints (Vision 11 discusses St. Augustine) and others who have followed a religious life that encapsulates the divinity and humanity of Christ's life on earth.

At the same time, the ability to comprehend what the "*wech*/way" might symbolize for each individual reader-listener lies in themselves, suggesting that a self-knowledge precedes the recognition of the divine. In the previous letter, Hadewijch directly addresses this concern, advising the reader-listener that an introspective investigation constitutes the first step towards *unio mystica* and *ghebruken*/perfect fruition with the divine. Letter 14 reads,

> *Wildi dese volmaectheit bekennen, soe moeti te alre eerst v seluen leren*
> *kennen Jn sake, Jn wille, Jn onwille, Jn seden, Jn minnen, Jn haten, Jn*
> *trouwen, Jn ontrouwen, Ende in allen dinghen die v ontmoeten. Ghi sult v*
> *proeuen hoe ghi verdraghen moghet dat ghi life hebbet. Dat es oec die meeste*
> *mesquame die ene ionghe herte doghen mach, dies te ontbeerne dat si gherne*
> *name.*[551]

> [If you wish to experience this perfection, you must first of all learn to know
> yourselves: in all your conduct, in your attraction or aversion, in your
> behavior, in love, in hate, in fidelity, in mistrust, and in all things that befall
> you. You must examine yourselves as to how you can bear the loss of what
> give you pleasure; for to be robbed of what it gladly receives is indeed the
> greatest sorrow a young heart can bear.][552]

In preparation for impending perfection, the way, Hadewijch instructs, lies within the knowledge of oneself, a knowledge that must first be obtained before one is able to progress onwards to the path to the knowledge of love. Paralleling the experience in the *Visioenenboek,* Hadewijch as writer-speaker and through the process of *meditatio* upon her own journey towards spiritual maturation alerts the reader-listener that the path/*wech* to love and perfection (i.e. complete and full fruition) encompasses the complex range of human emotions: hate-love, pleasure-pain, fulfillment-loss. These direct sentiments intended to prepare and forewarn the reader-listener reinforce the messages from within the *Visioenenboek,* while calling their attention to the crucial aspect of inner senses and their perception of the world.

I believe the placement of Letter 15 near the center of the *Brieven* is not coincidental. Similar to the *Visioenenboek,* Hadewijch's collection of letters are not only chronological in

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[550] CWH, 78.
[551] Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 121.
[552] CWH, 77.

nature[553] but reflective of the didactic-ontological program as outlined within the *Visioenen.* Vision 7, located near the center of the *Visioenenboek,* depicts the union of Hadewijch with Christ as the Eucharist. Whereas in Vision 1, Hadewijch partakes of a "chalice full of blood/*kelc vol bloeds*", a sort of oath and purification before she enters the center of the *Space of Perfect Virtues,* here again Hadewijch renews her pledge of faith. However, in this sequence Christ becomes the form of the Eucharist and the wine from which she drinks. The body and blood are internalized, the sensation mirrors Hadewijch's physical description earlier in the vision:

> *ende mijn herte/ ende mijn aderen /ende alle mine lede scudden / ende beueden van begherten/; ende mi was alst dicke heeft gheweest/ Soe verwoeddeleke/ ende soe vreeseleke te moede…dat ic steruende soude verwoeden ende al uerwoedende steruen…Jc begherde mijns liefs te vollen te ghebrukene/ ende te bekinnenne ende te ghesmakene in allen uollen ghereke/*;[554]

> [My heart and my veins and all my limbs trembled and quivered with eager desire and, as often occurred with me, such madness and fear beset my mind …so that dying I must go mad, and going mad I must die…I desired to have full fruition of my Beloved, and to understand and taste him to the full.][555]

The "trembling" and "quivering" in anticipation of a potential moment of *unio mystica* excites and awakens the physical body, while the inner senses writhe in uncertainty and longing. Contextually, the final line of the above excerpt mirrors a future and promised moment of communion and union, first through tasting and internalization, and later through the melding of two bodies until the distinction between the two becomes undiscernible.[556]

Climbing the proverbial mountain returns in Hadewijch's sixth point in Letter 15, advising her readers: "When you climb a mountain, you must bend forward, that is, you must

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[553] Breyer, 35, 128.

[554] Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 74, 75.

[555] CWH, 280.

[556] *Daer na quam hi selue te mi, ende nam mi alte male in sine arme/ ende dwanc mi ane heme/; ende alle die lede die ic hadde gheuoelden der siere in alle hare ghenoeghen na miere herten begherten/ na miere menscheit/. Doe werdic ghenoeghet van buten in allen vollen sade/. Ende oec haddic doe ene corte wile cracht dat te draghene. maer saen in corter vren verloesic dien sconen man van buten in siene in vormen /, ende ic sachene al te niete werdene Ende alsoe sere verdoiende werden / ende al smelten in een/, Soe dat icken buten mi niet en conste bekinnen/ noch vernemen/, Ende binnen mi niet besceden/. Mi was op die vre ochte wi een waren sonder differencie/* (Van Mierlo, *Visioenen,* 77–78).

[After that he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity. So I was outwardly satisfied and fully transported. Also then, for a short while, I had the strength to bear this; but soon, after a short time, I lost that manly beauty outwardly in the sight of his form. I saw him completely come to nought and so fade and all at once dissolve that I could no longer recognize or perceive him outside me, and I could no longer distinguish him within me. Then it was to me as if we were one without difference" (CWH, 281)].

give thanks in all the pains that come to you on account of Love, and you must humble yourself with all your heart". In this vein, Vision 8 "The Mountain" places the physical strain of climbing to the summit of a mountain within the allegory of spiritual enlightenment, making a parallel between becoming "grown" in the love and moving toward fruition (*ghebruken*) with the physical exertion of summiting a mountain. It states, "I saw a great mountain, which was high and broad and of unspeakably beautiful form", and at the summit of this mountain "was the highest of all and the highest Being himself."[557]

Hadewijch's pilgrimage from this first encounter with the Beloved in Vision 1 intensifies as the visions continue, all of varying lengths, until they reach a high point in the tenth through thirteenth visions. Grounding her spiritual literary voyage within the New Testament, the literary Hadewijch moves onward, always keeping her sights not only on union with her Beloved, but the ultimate concept and location of fruition: the New Jerusalem of Revelations and marriage to the Godhead.[558] And yet on several levels, the path or pilgrimage of Hadewijch through these literary landscapes parallels that of Letter 15, wherein most points connect to the overarching theme or motif of a vision. In the following table, I outline how the text of the *Visioenenboek* and Letter 15 intersect:[559]

Dat eerste es dat hi om den wech vraghe/. [The first [point] is that he ask about the way.]	Vision 1 outlines the entire *Visioenenboek* through its example of moving through the "Space of Perfect Virtue." The Beloved details at length in the final 200 lines of Vision 1 what Hadewijch will encounter and what is expected of her following that moment. If we are to understand that Ms. C conceptualizes Hadewijch's writings as a single corpus, the first point of "ask[ing] about the way" takes place when the reader-listener engages with the text and begins the process of reading and meditation (*lectio et meditatio*).
Dat ander es dat hi goede gheselscap kiese. [The second is that he choose good company.]	Breyer notes that this point references the significance of the beguine community within which Hadewijch is a mistress.[560] However, this also indicates those who are driven to seek a relationship with God along similar lines to Hadewijch. By reading Hadewijch's writing and entering into that dialogue/conversation, the reader-listener is initiated into the group, the "*wi*/we" of Letter 15, and therefore made the choice of "good company."

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557 CWH, 282.

558 CWH, 26–27.

559 All citations from the table taken from Van Mierlo, *Brieven,* 124–125. The translations are my own.

560 Breyer, 35.

	These sentiments are also reflected in Vision 4.
Dat derde es dat hi hem hoede voer dieue. [The third is that he be wary of thieves.]	Vision 5, or "Digressions on Lucifer", discusses false persons and actions that can lead others to be misled.
Dat vierde es dat hi hem hoede van ouerate. [The fourth is that he beware of gluttony.]	Rather than the topic of overeating, Vision 7 emphasizes the concept of "tasting" the divine and a desire for a union without distinction between the two bodies.
Dat vijfte es dat hi hem hoghe scrosse ende vaste gorde. [The fifth is that he ought don short dress and gird [himself] tightly.]	This is the sole point that does not have a corresponding vision, but this may be for good reason. As the fifth point, it lies at the center of Letter 15's allegory and reflects a larger theme that extends throughout the collection of visions and letters.
Dat sesde es, alse hi den berch op gheet, dat hi sere nicke. [The sixth is, as he goes up the mountain, that he bow very much.]	Vision 8 describes the paths one might follow up the mountain as well as its symbolism.
Dat seuende es, also hi den berch neder gheet, dat hi den rechte ga. [The seventh is that as he goes down the mountain, that he then go upright.]	Vision 11 is the descent into the abyss, which contrasts greatly to Vision 10 in which Hadewijch encounters "New Jerusalem."
Dat achtende es dat hi goeder liede ghebet beghere. [The eighth is that good people pray for him.]	Vision 12 uses the Bride in comparison of Mary to depict women as an intermediary between those who have sinned and the divine.
Dat neghende es dat hi gherne om gode spreke. [The ninth is that he gladly speak of God.]	Visions 13 and 14 proclaim the ongoing gifts and power of God.

While not all visions correspond with a point found in Letter 15, the relative parallel structure of the *Visioenenboek* and? the fifteenth letter suggests, in my opinion, that Hadewijch's collection or cycle of visions serves not only as a representation of a path towards *unio mystica* and heightened spiritual maturation, but that this path—and that of the reader-listener—emulates a pilgrimage of love that exists through text (i.e. Hadewijch's writings and the reading and meditation thereof) and Word (i.e. the scriptures and also imitation of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) as the "living word").

By placing the Book of Visions prior to the collection of letters, the reader-listener is led through new landscapes of genres, ones that recycle motifs and concepts from the Book of Visions while adding further clarification and guidance. The *Visioenenboek* emphasizes seeing and the shift from the outer to inner bodies, as well as their corresponding senses. The collection of Letters, on the other hand, establishes a connection between the "seeing" of the Visions and the proclamation or "hearing" of lessons and spiritual guidance. While not identical to the initial readers of the texts, the reshaping of the textual expectations falls in line with expectations of the texts situated historically more distant from Hadewijch and thus approachable solely through the

text. The aural nature and consequential emphasis on orality through the epistolary genre corresponds with the concept of speech acts and genre categorization as outlined by Bakhtin. As referenced in Chapter One, Bakhtin upholds that there are only two ways to classify genre types: primary speech genres which are performative and exist in daily life; secondary speech genres are therefore the intermixing of one or more primary genres, more complex in nature, and hold the ability to reflect, respond, and contradict primary genres due to their largely literary nature.[561]

In turn, the hybridity of these more complex genres—such as Hadewijch's versatile *Brieven* interwoven with rhyming couplets, exegesis, and sermons—evoke the core of Bakhtin's "heteroglossia": the multi-referential and multi-functional appearance of genre that allows both the ability to speak freely as inspired or requested, while following a set of self-imposed guidelines that are inspired by the commonly held literary characteristics of the time. The "horizon of expectations" allows the reader-listener to approach these texts with the conceptual background of the basic function and form of these generic forms, while at the same time allowing for the ability to engage with altered or more complex versions of said genre with minimal adjustment to approach and understanding. Taking into consideration that the *Brieven* appear after the *Visioenenboek* in Ms. C, I would further argue that the scribes intended to reestablish or support the accessibility of Hadewijch's works based upon a reorganization of content and genre. While admittedly purely supposition, the reader-listener of Hadewijch's later manuscripts is distanced temporally and, to a certain degree as outside the beguine community, culturally from the initial reader-listeners. It is therefore understandable that the function and organization of Hadewijch's corpus would change over time. Erik Kwakkel notes the shift from three distinct textual groups in Mss. A and B and a single textual body in Ms. C, which further supports my hypothesis that the function and understanding of Hadewijch's corpus changed over the passage of time.[562]

In the final section of this chapter, we turn now to the poetic forms. In all three main manuscripts, the *Liederen* and *Rijmbrieven* appear in the latter half of Hadewijch's corpus, as we saw in the paleographic discussion of manuscripts with Hadewijch's writings. As seen in the sections up to this point, genre hybridity continues to hold a central place within the form of these writings, but also impact that function and the assumed reader-listener comprehension. However, unlike the *Visioenenboek* and the *Brieven*, the performative aspect of poetry compels the reader-listener to read aloud, and in this process, merges the voice of the writer-speaker with that of the reader-listener.

VI. *Liederen* to *Rijmbrieven*: Renewing the Cycle, Re-living the Word in *Memoria*

As we have seen, the Visions and the Letters connect through both motifs and references to genres. In this section, I focus on the poetry of Hadewijch and how the poetic form resonates through its mutability and functions as speaking and prayer. Minnesang, the German-language incarnation of courtly lyric and the sentiments of *amour courtois*, reaches new heights in popularity and variation during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Yet at the same time, *Minnesang* is notoriously elusive to define and the personality of the singer evokes vastly different expressions of desire, longing, complaint, and rejection. As Peter Frenzel has noted, courtly love/*amour Courtois,* at least in *Minnesang*, is an imaginary construct, one that is rarely

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[561] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", 82; 85.

[562] Chapter Three "Transmission Lessons" in Sara Poor's *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book*, as well as Chapter Four on later medieval readership, outline well how the construction and function of the text alter over the centuries to meet the needs of a changing readership.

if ever requited or consummated.[563] It is precisely that element upon which Hadewijch plays with the form and sentiments of *Minnesang*. The overwhelming premise of playing, of Love as a game, as searching "the land of Minne" and seeking her counsel to find relief from the desire to be unified with the divine (but without wanting to lose hope of such fulfillment).[564]

Function and form parallel and complement each other in Hadewijch's poetic writings, employing tropes and motifs from the *Visioenenboek* and *Brieven* alike. Speech forms and acts are blended together to create oscillating references between writer-speaker, personified Lady Minne, and the reader-listener of the text. Even in the first Strophic song we see an example of multi-generic hybrids, between Latin sequences from the church and tropes from *Minnesang* and *amour courtois* in the French tradition, such as a description of nature to introduce the poem's setting. The first stanza begins,

> *Ay al es nu die winter cout*
> *Cort die daghe ende die nachte langhe*
> *Ons naket saen een somer stout*
> *Die ons ute dien bedwanghe*
> *Schiere sal bringhen dat es in schine*
> *Bi desen nuwen iare*
> *Die hasel brinct ons bloemen fine*
> *Dat es een teken openbaere*
> *Ay vale vale milies*
> *Ghi alle die nuwen tide*
> *Si dixero non satis est*
> *Om mine wilt wesen blide*[565]

> [Ah! Even if winter is now cold
> Short the days and long the nights,
> A spirit summer soon approaches
> And will bring us out of that constraint
> Speedily; that is clearly shown
> By this new year:
> The hazel brings us delicate blossoms,
> That is a sure sign.

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[563] Frenzel, 337.

[564] Hadewijch states famously in Strophic song 44,
Selc heeft ter minnen inden beghinne/ Dore spelen gheleert sine sinne/ Dat hi so es verseilt daerinne/ Dat met hem uten spele gheet/ Weder hi verliese ochte winne/ Hem sijn die kere wel onghereet (Van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch,* 284).
[Someone has, in the beginning, learnt to/ Give his heart full play towards love,/ Until he had drifted into love so far/ That he was past all play./ Now whether he loses or wins,/ Turning back in [is, not in?] beyond him (Van Baest, *Poetry of Hadewijch,* 285)].

I use Van Baest's monograph with both the Middle Dutch (based upon Van Mierlo's edition) and English translation because I find her understanding of Hadewijch's language to be much closer to a more literal translation than Mother Columba Hart. With translation, meaning and feeling are sometimes approximated and in Hadewijch's poetry in particular, the sounds of the words and the ways that words and sounds play with one another is signature to her style.

[565] Van Baest 42.

--*Ay vale vale milies*—
All of you who in the new season
---*Si dixero non satis est*—
Would be glad for the sake of love.][566]

The initial lines introduce a paradox between the state of nature or the season and the symbols or signs of hope despite the cold and shorter days. The hazelnut bush as sign of hope ("*Dat es een teken openbaere*") has roots back into antiquity, connecting to ideas of fertility due to the fact that the blossoms can grow despite the cold and that nine months following the appearance of the blossoms, the nuts or fruit of the bush appear.[567] But here in Hadewijch's usage, the resilient nature of the blossoms that appear during the snows of winter develop another connotation, one that reflects the dominant force within the poem: *minne*.

Just as the Beloved outlines tasks and a path for Hadewijch as writer-speaker in the *Visioenen*, which she reiterates in Letter 15, here the hazel blossoms depict more than a hope, but a promise of fruit, a premonition of the fruition of completion and fullness in the time ahead. With the insertion of the Latin sequence, the tone shifts not only from the nature setting but also in voicing. The Latin appears interwoven or interlaced with Middle Dutch, speaking directly to the reader-listener, passing along goodwill and ongoing support to those who read/hear these lines. These interjections also speak to the active memory of the reader-listener, calling to mind the sequence of the church and intertwining textually the lines of *Liebesklage* with sentiments of welcome and community. The multi-lingual and –textual references speak to the overarching premise of "heteroglossia" prevalent throughout Hadewijch's corpus. What is more, similar to Bakhtin's interpretation of speech acts, both primary and secondary, the reader-listener engages with the text on levels that are communal, personal, and blended between the human and divine experience of the word (i.e. Christ as Word, Christ as Human, and Christ as God).

More specifically, when read in conjunction or following the *Visioenenboek,* there is a connection between the setting of Latin within Middle Dutch verses and the setting within which Hadewijch receives inspiration for her mystical episodes: the church and Mass. As we have seen with the *Visioenen,* Hadewijch develops liturgical references as an introduction to almost every vision, creating a connection between the church calendar and the motivation for specific feast days and celebrations. What is more, the nature setting aligns with the underlying premise of the *Visioenenboek*, in which almost all visions include nature as an allegory for the realm of the spirit, as well as the place of intersection between human and divine.

The oral nature of Hadewijch's poetical works, and in fact some prose collections as well, as we have seen in the *Brieven*, has been noted and researched at length by Anikó Daróczi, Tanis M. Guest, Frank Willaert, and Veerle Fraeter (amongst several others). Song is naturally linked to performance and orality, but these scholars approach the question of speech acts through text as both a bridge and a representation of potential and present speech. As Jeffrey Kittay noted comments on the misleading assumptions associated with orality and speech acts when read in conjunction with literary works:

> Literacy is the knowledge of encoding from *what* into writing? decoding
> from writing into *what?* The simple answer is "orality", but "orality" may

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[566] Ibid., 43.
"*Ay vale vale milies, si dixero non satis est*" can be rendered as "Ah! Fare thee well, fare thee well! If I say it a thousand times it will not be sufficient" (modified from Van Baest, 294).
[567] Ibid., 294–5.

be a more troublesome term than we think, because while it has one meaning
as everything that is spoken, it has, in the distinction with the literate tradition,
another meaning that is purely residual only: everything a literate culture
looks back upon, everything that is communicated, whether sounded by
mouth or not, as long as it is uninscribed.[568]

Kittay complicates a simplistic explanation that attributes writing into a speech act without taking into consideration how or why this might relate to speech. And if so, in what ways can we understand this speech and the translation thereof for the writer-speaker and reader-listener?

My goal in this section is to outline how the last two genre groupings in Hadewijch's corpus—the *Strofische Liederen* and the *Rijmbrieven* or *Mengeldichten*—function within their respective collections and with the corpus as a while. I begin this discussion first by outlining some of the research pertinent to the discussion of "song" as a genre and its understanding during the medieval period. I will then connect the song genre to the songs/poems themselves, highlighting motifs and themes established during the prior two genre groups in order to discuss how these motifs and themes function within the genre and in which ways the recasting of these topics and tropes alters how we have previously understood them. Throughout this section, I seek to establish that both the *Strofische Liederen* and the *Rijmbrieven* exhibit continued and newly nuanced aspects of *oratio,* and thus continue the journey towards *contemplatio* and *unio mystica.* The pilgrimage of love, as outlined through the careful development of the *Visioenenboek* and reiterated in Letter 15, speaks directly to *Minne* and the reader-listener; the text acting as a bridge towards speech, presentness of voice, and the converging of the inner and outer bodies and senses, human and divine. I argue that poetry and song as forms function to join the writer-speaker, reader-listener, and the divine as Love and God together.

Whereas the visions anticipated a passive reception of text and visuality, the *Brieven* engaged with the reader-listener directly, at times unifying the writer-speaker and reader-listener through "*wi/*we." But at that stage, the relationship between speaker and listener remained guarded, as Hadewijch represented their direct connection between human (inner mind) and the divine. With the *Strofische Liederen* and then the *Rijmbrieven*—both of which complete the collection of Hadewijch's writings in all three manuscript transmissions—Hadewijch oscillates rhythm and rhyme, speaker and addressee with incredible fluency.[569] The result, I posit, is a new level of relationship between writer-speaker and reader-listener, one that mirrors the elevated stage/progress towards *contemplatio*. Through the joining of voices textually between human speaker, human listener, and the divine *Minne*, love, desire and longing are not only expressed but represented through speech. The singer-writer unifies with her song, the singer-listener renews those voices, and *minne* becomes the inspiration, the expression, and the mode through which the songs are made real and present. It is through form, both physically as text and structurally as genres, that *oratio*, song, and singer blend together.

VI.1 Poetic Form in the *Strofische Liederen* and *Rijmbrieven*

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[568] Cited in Anikó Daróczi, *Groet gheruchte van dien wondere. Spreken, zwijgen en zingen bij Hadewijch* (Antwerpen: Peeters, 2007), 19. Originally published by Jeffrey Kittay, "Thinking through literacies" in *Language and Orality,* eds. David R. Olson and Nancy Torrence, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 166.

[569] Tanis Guest notes an astounding 36 different stanza forms in the 45 Strophic Songs, nearly a different form for each song (Tanis Guest, *Some Aspects of Hadewijch's Poetic Form in the 'Strofische Gedichten,'* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 21.

In her recent monograph, Anikó Daróczi outlines the biorhythmic structure of not only her *Liederen* and *Rijmbrieven,* but also Hadewijch's prose, in particular her collection of letters. The connection between song as genre and performance has been well established within secondary research, as well as the underlying premise of orality or oral forms within poetry particularly in vernacular writers-speakers. However, while I will focus on musical form and its potential connections to Hadewijch's poetry, my first focus is literary form. That is the written form we encounter in manuscripts containing Hadewijch's poetry. Over twenty years prior, Tanis M. Guest published her thesis entitled *Some Aspects of Hadewijch's Poetic Form in the Strofische Gedichten.* My main concern in this section is to determine central aspects of form, in terms of motifs and tropes, and how these aspects correspond to the concept of pilgrimage and spiritual maturation. Through this discussion I intend to demonstrate how genre choice and combination remains an integral element of Hadewijch's didactic program, a point which the scribes of Ms. C (I argue) recognized and sought to illustrate more clearly for the reader-listener.

The Choice of Form and Genre Borrowings

Scholars such as Van Mierlo, Tanis M. Guest, N. de Paepe, and Frank Willaert—to name only a few—have illustrated various viewpoints concerning the decision by Hadewijch to use a modified form of courtly lyric for her poetry. Drawing upon the established lyric genre of the troubadours, the *Strofische Liederen* employ tropes and motifs common within the Occitan and Provencal traditions, as well as recognized rhyme schemes, stanza organization, and other aspects of poetics (e.g. the tornada in the concluding lines). Similar to her *Visioenenboek* and the collection of *Brieven,* Hadewijch references form without exact emulation, modifying the form to suit the needs of the text's function (hortative, didactic, etc.) and establish its contents or overarching thematic element. As Tanis Guest notes, Hadewijch expresses her fluency as a writer-speaker through her modulation and emendation of recognized and established poetic form; her poetry is not simply a religious rendition of courtly lyric but a recasting, a translation that modifies the "horizon of expectations" for the reader-listener and places emphasis upon a potential realization.[570] Guest argues that it is precisely due to the difference in content and function that Hadewijch loosely adapts courtly lyric/*Minnesang* for her *Strofische Liederen*.[571] Whereas Peter Frenzel has outlined fairly persuasive evidence that the *Minnesänger* composed lyric about love because song was love, Hadewijch's *Minne* is not the same lofty, idealized figure as in *Minnesang*.[572] As Guest iterates, Hadewijch's poetry outlines a love (i.e. *Minne*) that resonates with the very motivation for her spiritual maturation, her pilgrimage, and her writings.

The *Liederen* represent the stage on the writer-speaker's journey toward spiritual maturation that extends beyond the process of reading the divine lessons as experience and text, beyond the practice of meditation and internalization of these messages through *memoria*. The strophic songs are the psychological discussion and processing of *oratio,* which re-calls and re-assesses that which has been committed to memory by way of *lectio* and *meditatio.* Similar to the *Visioenenboek,* the *Liederen* compel the reader-listener to explore textually-constructed landscapes, first through aspects/motifs characteristic of *Minnesang* and *amour courtoise* (i.e. initial descriptions of nature), and furthermore through the development of voicing that both contrasts and unites the writer-speaker with the reader-listener with the use of *du/u/ghi* and *wi*

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[570] Guest, 21, 24.
[571] Ibid., 29, 35.
[572] Frenzel, 336.

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(you/you (pl.) and we). *Minne* remains the motivation and inspiration for, and vehicle with which Hadewijch as writer-speaker initiates the reader-listener into an active and participatory role within the *Liederen.*

Amour Courtoise and Minnesang

In Song 2, the concept of singing and speaking becomes even more present than in the previous example from Song 1 of *"Ay vale vale milies."* If we take into account the potential performance of this poem with music, perhaps sung before a small group or circle of Hadewijch's fellow sisters, we see the conflation between *amour courtoise*[573] elements and spiritual lyrical forms, such as prayer.[574] Not only does Hadewijch refer to "singing" and "songs" directly, the rhyme scheme directly connects the concepts of "song", "singing", "labor", "suffering", and "embodiment." Lines 46-54 of Song 2 read,

> *Mi sijn mine nuwe sanghe*
> *Intoe in groten wenene bracht*
> *Die ic hebbe ghesonghen langhe*
> *Ende van minnen scone hertracht*
> *Al hebbic te clene ghewracht*
> *Mi doet wel wee ende anghe*
> *Dat ic niet ne ommevanghe*
> *Die onverwonnen cracht*
> *In ghebrukenne van Minnen bedwanghe*[575]

> [Now my joyful songs
> Have changed into great weeping,
> And yet long have I sung them
> And fair poetry I have composed on love.
> Although I have labored too little,
> It causes me woe and worry
> That I do not embody
> The never yet conquered power
> Inherent in the fruition of being well in
> love's hand.][576]

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[573] Barbara Newman has coined the term "*la mystique courtoise"* to denote the type of textual hybridity of mystic authors such as Hadewijch, Mechthild, and Marguerite Porete.

[574] Patricia Dailey discusses at length the impact of researching Hadewijch's poetry without an understanding of the rest of her writings and the time within which she wrote. Dailey states, "In addition, in reading her songs and poetic work as testimony to the immediacy of experience (inasmuch as she is a woman, beguine or mystic), once again we tend to lose sight of how her material works insofar as it is a literary text and how the representation of experience is conditioned by the letter" (Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 125).

[575] Van Baest, 50.

[576] Ibid., 51.

"Composing/composed" [*hertracht*] is structurally connected to "labor" [*ghewracht*] and the change that has taken place due to the presence of *Minne*. The worry [*anghe*] expressed in the inability to embody or possess [*ommevanghe*] that which the singer/speaker desires—to be in perfect fruition through the guidance or power [*cracht*] of Minne—is established through the balanced form that plays upon rhyme schemes from within the *Minnesang* and *amour courtoise* tradition. And yet at the same time, these references are merely that: references to thematic elements and rhyme structures extant in a larger literary corpus. To disqualify the connection would be naïve, to overemphasize the inspiration or borrowing on Hadewijch's part would inappropriately lessen the ingenuity of her poetic fluency and creativity.[577]

In addition, several prominent themes appear in these lines that unite the *Visioenenboek* and *Brieven* with the *Liederen.* Love/*Minne,* continual work towards understanding, and the desire for *ghebruken*—the perfect fruition/realization of union with the divine—melds with the imagery and practice of singing, both as language in the text and oral act as text read or sung aloud. As Peter Frenzel notes, the *Minnesänger* becomes an integral part of his song as the performed persona through which love is uttered, but also in the concept of embodiment of words as text.[578] Hadewijch remarks, "*Mi doet wel wee ende anghe/ Dat ic niet ne ommevanghe/ Die onverwonnen cracht/ In ghebrukenne van Minnen bedwanghe.*"[579] In this stanza, the ABABBAABA rhyme plays with couplings of emotion and song, suffering and the embodiment of fruition (*anghe-ommevanghe-bedwanghe, hertracht-ghewracht*). At the same time, the references to time—new [*nuwe*]—represents a very present and ongoing struggle, one that can be recapitulated through the reading and/or singing of the poem. Similar to prayer, the strophic poem as a form unites a sense of past, present, and potential future, one that is real and lived and represents the characteristics of the *Liebesklage* [love/lover's complaint] with that of a desire for perfection in the sense of utter fulfillment and feeling of completeness. Time melds with verse because the *Liederen* reflect the lived experience with the divine (past), the melding voices of reader-listener and writer-speaker during recitation (present), and the potential future of union with the divine as promised throughout the *Visioenenboek* and *Brieven*, if one heeds the warnings and guidelines from within Hadewijch's corpus.

Throughout the *Liederen* there are six key passages that present the idea of singing, silence, and even mention the verb *claghen*,[580] corresponding both to a form common within the *Minnesang* tradition (*Liebesklage*) and guidance for the affective response Hadewijch solicits from her readership/listeners by way of reference to this genre.[581] Similar to Hadewijch's

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[577] Dailey discusses this concept of borrowing from the courtly lyric tradition more at length (*Promised Bodies,* 140).

[578] Frenzel, 339, 345.

[579] "It causes me woe and worry/ that I do not embody/ The never yet conquered power/ Inherent in the fruition of being well in love's hand."

[580] *claghen* translates as "lamentation, complaint," which is related to the German Minnesang tradition *Liebesklage,* "lamentation of love." The *claghen,* as well as the *Liebesklage*, became a highly popularized form, as I discussed in Chapter 2.

[581] Strophic Songs 10, ll. 1–18; Song 11, ll. 7–14; Song 14, ll. 61–66; Song 21; ll. 46–54; Song 22, ll. 64–70; and Song 31, ll. 25–32, 39–40, and 41–48, include specific references to singing, the composition of songs, and the need to break silence or issue complaint on behalf of oneself or others in a similar situation. Due to the fact that the reference to singing is ongoing throughout the collection of Strophic Songs, I would support Fraeters, Willaert, and other scholars in their assertion that these should not be labeled "Gedichten" or poems, but rather "Liederen", not solely based upon the possible musical element or accompaniment, but the presence of these references to form throughout the song cycle. For

Visioenenboek and the *Brieven,* the *Liederen* repeat key motifs and themes throughout the cycle, dwelling upon the subject and/or imagery more significantly at some points of the poems longer than others. Strophic Songs 10 and 11 employ motifs and language of singing to transition from the introductory imagery into the central themes of the songs. In contrast, Strophic Songs 21 and 22 devote strophes near the end of songs to singing, often remarking on the situation of the first-person speaker/singer in relation to a more neutral or nondescript third person masculine singular subject. The height of singing and song motifs occurs in Strophic Song 31, which is coincidentally the last significant reference to song and singing in the *Liederen*.

Louis Peter Grijp uncovered the melody behind Song 31, further supporting the claim that Hadewijch's ode to *Minne* and singing was meant to be performed or at the very least uttered melodically.[582] Grijp explains that the strophic schema of Song 31 appears in the northern French lyric tradition, most commonly found in the songs of Blondel de Nesle (1175–1200/10), Conon de Béthune (1219/20) and Thibaut de Champagne (1201-1253). In particular a song from Blondel, "S'amours veut que mes chans remaigne" matches Hadewijch's song in both strophic schema and metrics. The popularity of this song and its melody can be attested to its appearance in at least eight manuscript transmissions. However, Grijp warns that Hadewijch's use of the schema and metrics found in this song, like most of her songs and poetry, are creative entities that reference rather than directly borrow.[583] Music, singing, and song play throughout Song 31, beginning line 21 and continuing on to include not only reference to sound/melody but also Solomon and sermon.

> *Der minnen biddic ende mane*
> *Dat sie die edele herten spane*
> *Dat si in minnen toene dus bleven*
> *In nederen twivele in hoghen wane*
>
> [I bid and request of love
> That she urge the precious hearts
> To remain therefore in the key of love,
> In deep doubt, in high expectation.][584]

To remain "in the key of love" (*in minnen toene dus bleven*) creates a parallel imagery to that we have seen in the *Visioenenboek* and the *Brieven*. Steadfastness despite "*twivele"* and in the face of *"hoghe wane"* corresponds to the depths and heights of the mountain (Vision 8) and the abyss (Vision 11); it speaks in light of episodic and brief glimpses of joy (*bliscap*) and fruition (*ghebruken*) uttered in the previous genres. But here these sentiments resonate beyond simple reading-aloud or listening. Here the "*toene*" and rhythms transcend into real time, with breath, song, and melody like the living, breathing reader-listener present at the moment of the song's performance.

Dailey observes that the *Liederen* transform the reader-singer into the voice of the song,

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further discussion of the use of *Liederen,* see the introduction to Willaert and Fraeters's edition of Hadewijch's Strophic Songs entitled *Liederen.*

[582] The chanson strophe reads as 4a 4b 4a 4b 4a 4a 4b 4a. This strophic structure also appears in Song 34 but has a different metric than Song 31. (Fraeters and Willaert, *Liederen*, 404–5).

[583] Ibid., 405.

[584] Emended from Van Baest, 216–217. Both the English translation and the Middle Dutch are cited in this footnote.

which portrays an affective re-telling of Hadewijch's writings for an audience. Singing therefore becomes communal and, like the Psalms, allows the performance of song to envelope the listener with the rhythm, sound, and words/Word, if only ever briefly.[585] The psalm-like nature of the *Liederen*—particularly those songs with reference to singing and composing—make reference to the presumed writer-composer of the psalms: Solomon. Lines 25 through 30 hypothesize Solomon's reaction to his treatment at the hands of love and place song in the highest of all sounds.

> *Troest ende meslone in enen person*
> *Dats wesen vander minnen smake*
> *Al levede die wise Salamoen*
> *Hi liet te ontbindene so hoghe sake*
> *Wine werdens berecht in gheen sermoen*
> *Die sanc verhoghet allen toen*
>
> [Comfort and discomfort in one person,
> That is the essence of the taste of love.
> Even if the wise Solomon still lived,
> He would suffer unravelling such high matter
> We are never informed in any sermon about it:
> That song raises up all sound.][586]

Singing and tasting, two fleeting and very proximate[587] sensory experiences, conjure and exemplify the momentary experience of the divine as Hadewijch has outlined here in the *Liederen,* but also in the *Visioenenboek* and the *Brieven*. The mix of joy and pain, suffering and ecstasy abound in Hadewijch's lyrics, enhanced by her use of parallel word structure and placement within the chosen rhyme schema: *Troest* perpendicular to *smake, Salamoen* followed by *hoghe sake* at the end of the next line, and *sermoen* rhymed with *toen* and connected by way of *sanc*. The ABABAA rhyme schema establishes a direct line between *persoen, Salamoen, sermoen,* and *toen*, which could be interpreted as a reference to Solomon as the poet of the psalms (*toen,* which implies sounds, tones, and utterances precluding to recitation), a testimony and declaration of the love (*persoen,* here) for the divine and its teachings (or *sermoen*).

As Patricia Dailey has noted, the psalms hold a special place within the liturgy, which Hadewijch used as her introductory section in most of the visions within her cycle. Here liturgy, sermon, and song detail the worldly and real-time presence of the divine as spoken or sung with

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[585] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 136–7.

[586] Van Baest, 216–217; English translation emended by me. Again, like the previous citation from Van Baest, but the English and Middle Dutch are taken from her volume.

[587] I use the word "proximate" to describe the sense of taste and hearing because you need to be within a certain distance of the object experienced in order for the senses to register or recognize the sensation. Taste, or *smaken* in Middle Dutch, is one of the most intimate of the senses because it requires the subject to physically take in an object and allow it to enter the body via the mouth. Touch would be the next most intimate and proximate sense. While hearing can be done from a distance, a live performance, such as is implied with the sounds and references to song, would suggest a close proximity of the singer-speaker-reader and the listener.

the Word (i.e. Christ).[588] In the next section, the presence of the genre prayer or *oratio* centers the messages of Hadewijch's *Liederen* upon the Word and the liturgy. However, as we will see, *oratio* envelopes not only a sense of Bakhtinian speech acts as complex genres, but also an effort to represent the communal voicing of concerns, joys, and desires concerning the divine. Hadewijch's voice guides and shapes the motivations and teachings of the reader-singer and reader-listener alike, prompting them to connect through song, unite through sound.

Prayer*/Oratio*

Unsurprisingly, the genre of simple prayer is also present within the *Liederen*, often appearing within the final lines in an art *envoi* or message that hints towards the underlying theme or motivation throughout the poem. Unlike the previous example from Song 2, the *envois* in Hadewijch's poetry often change in address (from second person, first person plural or singular, or third person singular [e.g. *Minne*]) to a generalized imperative form. Song 4 closes with such an *envoi*, shifting focus from misguided ones who fail to correctly interpret their actions and intentions to a general blessing to those who continue to strive toward spiritual union. The final six lines read,

> *God moete den edelen redennen gheven*
> *Die hen verlichte dellendeghe leven*
> *Die nu ghequetset sijn ende sere verdreven*
> *Onder der wreder vremder slach*
> *Alse lief in lief sal werden verheven*
> *Hoe wel dat hem dat liken mach*[589]

> [May God grant to those gentle the insight
> That will enlighten their life of banishment for them,
> Who are now driven off far and very wounded,
> Under cruel, alien strokes.
> When the beloved shall be drawn up into the beloved,
> How well will be like that!][590]

The "*edelen*" in the first line reflect aspects of treasure and precious worth, while at the same time appears directly next to the "*redennen*" from God, designating a sense of closeness to the divine but still separated by divine action or willingness for that intercession to take place. "*redennen*" also expresses a sense of communication, direct speech, that is unmediated or censored, much like the presentation of Hadewijch's *Liederen*: her voicing is heard through other voices, the words recounted and repeated and yet present and current. The form of each verse line connects further elements, such as "*verlichte*" and "*dellendeghe*" [enlighten and banished], "*ghequetset*" and "*verdreven*" [wounded and on a quest], and "*wreder*" and "*vremder*" [cruel and alien]. Through these structural pairings, an image of necessitated suffering and alienation emerges, a search or quest for knowledge, understanding, and ultimately love union between the

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588 Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 135; 150.
589 Van Baest, 62.
590 Ibid., 63.

beloved [*lief*] and the precious or treasured ones [*die edelen*].

The rhyme scheme further participates in the establishment of ties between the final words in a verse line. *gheven-leven-verdreven-verheven* [to give-life-driven away-to raise/draw up] illuminates an underlying Christic element to the final lines, drawing together both divine and human elements, while ending with positive sentiments and potential futuristic moments of union. Both "*leven*" and "*redennen*" originate with the divine per Hadewijch and Biblical narrative, but in this "*leven*", one must choose alienation and exile—mentally, spiritually, socially—amounting to suffering as wounds [*ghequetset*]. The rhyme schema emphasizes the correlation between these three terms for the simple fact that they are grouped together without an alternating rhyme. The penultimate line returns to this schema as the tone from the poem shifts from that of alienation, wounding, and isolation to union, love, and fulfillment. The "*slach*" of the previous line opposes the "*liken mach*" of the final line, only separated by the "*verheven*", which is represented in the "*lief in lief.*"

The parallel structures created by the "*lief in lief*", von Baest translates as "the beloved drawn up into the beloved," in my opinion, fails to emulate the univocal repetition of "*lief in lief*", suggesting grammatically and syntactically a union so complete that there is no distinction between one entity or word from another. Hadewijch's corpus is no stranger to this type of linguistic coupling which results in the discussion of and literary representation of complete or perfect union. In both the *Brieven* and the *Visioenenboek,* Hadewijch employs duplication of statements such as "God with God" to syntactically and visually/orally connect two elements or bodies (human and soul, soul and God, inner and outer bodies). Playing upon Patricia Dailey's research on Hadewijch's writings, the progression from *lectio* to *contemplatio* also includes a stage *operatio* prior to the final stage in the process. In her reading, Dailey places the significance of the textual embodiment as a timeless marker, of both something seen and something yet unrealized.[591]

Song 4 is one of several examples of prayer or blessing motifs within the *Liederen*, with Songs 12, 30, 32, 39, and 45 as further examples. What is interesting about the structural organization of these songs is the fact that the prayer motif often occurs within the final strophes of the song, in which Guest notes as reminiscent of a classic tornada form within courtly lyric traditions. Dailey connects the song and prayer-like elements of Hadewijch's *Liederen* to the tradition of psalms, both in their varied tones and voicing (i.e. first person singular, plural, and often second-person and third-person addresses), as well as the emphasis upon reading the psalms aloud, recitation, and communal understanding.[592] The final strophic song, number forty-five, resonates a feeling of conclusion, not simply through its hymn-like structure, but also its last words: "Amen. Amen." Despite the appearance of other prayers or blessings in the *Liederen,* "Amen" only appears in the final lines of Song 45. Not only does the utterance of "Amen" create a sense of conclusion to the songs but it further establishes the connection between Hadewijch's songs and elements of prayer or *oratio*.

Furthermore, it supports Dailey's analysis of a connection between the contemplative life and the organization/orchestration of Hadewijch's writing. If we read the *Visioenenboek* as an introduction into the reading of Hadewijch's works (*lectio*) and the *Brieven* as a meditation upon those themes and further understanding and internalization (*meditatio*), the *Liederen* then become a form of prayer, oration (*oratio*), speaking at once to the community of reader-listeners, the divine, and *Minne.* I would take this a step further and state that the scribes, in reorganizing the texts/genres in this particular order in Ms. C, sought to imbibe a sense of a larger structure or

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[591] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 331, 338.

[592] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 150.

corpus that ties all aspects of Hadewijch's writings together. Kwakkel's analysis of the manuscripts and their parts also supports the notion that Ms. C is one integrated group, whereas Mss. A and B have three distinct parts. We are in essence discussing the emergence of a new manuscript tradition, one that may or may not have a predecessor.

While textual evidence to support Dailey's theory certainly exists and presents a solid reading of Hadewijch's Visions, I would argue that the physicality of the text and the significance of visualization in the process of memorization and meditation proposes a process that initiates with the text and the physical page (or hearing) and extends onward, beyond the page, into a literary-constructed landscape. The exploration, *aventiure*, or quest through this landscape is the reflection of the process of spiritual maturation, the height of which is the verb and other forms of *ghebruken* (often translated as "perfect fruition"). Within the *Liederen,* Hadewijch employs motifs from courtly lyric and romance, particularly imagery of quest, *het minnen lant* and the parallels between physical foreignness as an outsider within a different land/area to the mental and spiritual foreignness of living between two realms.

Het minnen lant and pilgrimage

In the previous section, I looked at an example of how courtly lyric tropes and themes appear in the *Liederen,* and how these examples resonate are mere references to the larger courtly lyric and *Minnesang* traditions, rather than existing as significant evidence of generic borrowings.[593] In this section, I shift to highlight the use of landscape—both physical and mental-spiritual—to provide the needed variation of form and language to construct a textually rich poetic genre hybrid. Genre choice in the *Liederen* compels the reader-listener to associate singing with prayer, individual with divine and community (through the performative speech act), and connect an understanding of spatial and time fluidity with the process of spiritual maturation central to Hadewijch's vision of spirituality. As Dailey argues,

> I read Hadewijch's poetic work in relation to the larger literary and theological
> framework that underlies her corpus in order to demonstrate that the poetic
> fabric of her songs and poems is intimately related to an immanent textuality
> that ideally structures an individual's life, situated as it is in the historical
> time of the *exo anthropos,* the outer person, but that hopes to synchronize
> the time of life with the measure of the divine.[594]

Whereas Hadewijch's visions emphasize the internal senses—the soul and its encounter with the divine—the songs voice outwards to the community and highlight the ways in which those in her community—those following the way of *Minne* towards perfect union with the divine (*ghebruken*)—might achieve the need growth and education to be one with God.[595] Those ways or paths towards the divine are manifested twofold as good works within the community and spiritually-interiorly as a quest (*avontuere*) of the difficult spiritual landscape upon which one seeks out the divine. In Song 2, she utters,

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[593] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 140.
[594] Ibid.*,* 125.
[595] Ibid., 126.

Soe suete es minne in hare natuere
Dat si alle andere cracht verwint
Die mint hi doghet swaer avontuere
Eer hi hem ane minnen sede bekint[596]

[So sweet is love in her nature
That she prevails over every other power
Whoever loves endures difficult adventure
Before he knows love's usage.][597]

The journey towards love and the divine is difficult (*swaer*) and uncertain, a point that Hadewijch reflects upon in Visions 8 and 11 in her journey to the heights (the mountains in Vision 8) and the depths of an abyss (Vision 11). Letter 15 provides further example of the heights and depths of the spiritual experience and the necessary motivation and perseverance despite challenges. Alleviating the discomfort of suffering and disappointment of *Minne*'s inconsistency results in seeking something Hadewijch refers to as "alien/strange comforts" (*vremde troeste*) in Song 11, which only comes at the detriment of understanding love's school and lessons.

On a deeper level, Hadewijch remarks that one should not just be concerned with the journey towards love, but love herself because love is in fact the motivation for the *avontuere,* the end destination, and the journey itself. In Song 34, she outlines the complexity of this quest and also portrays the multifaceted nature of the term *minne:*

Hets oversoete in minne verdolen
Hare wilde weghe die minne doet gaen
Het blijft den vremden wel verholen
Maer die met waerheiden mine ghestaen
Si selen mit minnen in minne doregaen
Al dat rike daer minne es vrouwe
Ende al dat heerscap een met hare ontfaen
Ende doresmaken hare edele trouwe
Die smake die trouwe in minnen ghevet
Wie el iet seghet dat weelde si
Die hevet ye sonder weelde ghelevet
Na dien dat ic versinne mi
Want hets hemelsche ghenoechte vri
Te vollen sonder ghebreken
Du mi al lief ende ic al di
Daer nes gheen ander spreken (Lied 34, ll. 33–48).[598]

[It is more than sweet to wander and stray in love,
Along the wild ways love makes us go.
It remains well concealed from the strangers,
But those standing to love with truth

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[596] Van Baest, 48.
[597] Ibid., 49. Translation emended.
[598] Van Baest, 232.

They shall, with love in love, travel
Throughout the realm where love is lady
And receive all sovereignty in unity with her
And savour to the full her gentle faith.
As to the gusto that faith in love gives,
Whoever says of anything else it is wealth,
Has ever lived without wealth,
As far as I can imagine.
For this is heavenly rapture, untrammeled,
To the full, lacking nothing:
'You are all mine, beloved, and I all yours."
There is nothing else to say.][599]

Minne is the object of love, or *minne*, and the means by which (i.e. verb, *minnen*) through which an enlightened understanding and union with the divine can be achieve. The verb *verdolen* in the first line contains the root *dolen*, commonly rendered as "to quest" in English, but used with the *ver-* prefix which constitutes an oversight in arrival at the desired destination (such as *verlaufen* in Modern German). Hadewijch balances this "wandering and straying" with the *wilde weghe* ("wild paths or ways") that *minne* compels one to traverse. However, the underlying message speaks/sings of the necessitation of suffering, the fundamental desire to prepare oneself to enter the *rike* ("realm" or "kingdom") of *minne.*

Later in *Lied* 34, Hadewijch returns to the image of the realm/kingdom of love, expounding upon the previous message of journey and quest to include an explication of this hidden method or means by which to embark and carry out this quest/*avontuere*:

Dat rike daer ons die minne toe riet
Ende dambacht dat si ons werken heet
Dats minne pleghen ende anders niet
Met alden dienste die daertoe gheet
Die dit met trouwen wel versteet
Te werkenne in allen sinnen
Hi eest dien minne al beveet
Ende hi wert al een in minnen
(Lied 34, ll. 65–72).[600]

[The realm to which love commends us
And the craft she charges us to carry out
That is: practicing love and nothing else,
With all the service this involves.
Whoever truly and faithfully understands
How to work this, in every sense,
He is the one completely to captivate love,
And he becomes all one in love.][601]

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[599] Ibid., 233.
[600] Van Baest, 234.
[601] Ibid., 235.

Again, *minne* represents both the allegorical figure of love and the means through which one might dwell in the kingdom of love in unity with the divine (i.e. *minnen in minne in ghebruken*). *Minne pleghen* ("practicing love") denotes inner motivation and action. At the same time, Hadewijch alludes to a further means, one that precedes the *minne pleghen,* which lies at the heart of both the beguine movement and Hadewijch's unique dogma and teaching: good works and service. Both *dienst(e)* (service) and *werken* appear in the strophes immediately following the mention of *minne pleghen*. Patricia Dailey aptly reads these tropes within Hadewijch's *Liederen* as the *modus operandi* her teachings, or the corporeal, practical means by which the inner senses-mind prepare for perfect union with the divine.[602] Another reading is the two-fold imitation of Christ—*imitatio Christi*—which lies at the heart of Hadewijch's dogmatic program: the inner, spiritual maturation by means of reading, meditating, and internalizing the text (i.e. the embodied teaching and gateway into a literary exploration or pilgrimage (spiritual *avontuere,* if you will); and the physical toil of good works performed on behalf of the community and "unknown persons" (*vremde*) who are unacquainted with the hidden teachings within the school of *minne.*

For the very reason that Hadewijch's writings—and the reading thereof—represent an exploration for the inner body and senses, *avontuere* exists not simply in the language and theme, but in the very structure and rhyme scheme within the *Liederen.* As mentioned at the beginning of this section, there exists a high degree of variation within the *Liederen* in terms of rhyme schema and metrics. Language usage and thematic approach aside, every song is unique in its combination of structural elements, melodic references (as suggested by Grijp), and use of voicing. This highly diverse compilation of songs crosses a large expanse of emotions and anticipated reader-listener response. Read as a stand-alone song cycle, Hadewijch's *Liederen* have prompted scholars to highlight questions of gendering, courtly lyric borrowings, and genre choice.[603] Removing or distancing the *Liederen* from Hadewijch's other poetic and prose works, I would argue, negates an underlying feature of her works: the interconnected literary experience and teachings on one's individual path toward the divine.

In my final example from the *Liederen,* I cite Lied 41, which, I believe, reflects upon the difficult uncertainty of the journey and provides a further example of the variation of verse form found within this collection of songs. Within Lied 41, numerous references to *weghe, avontuere* and *dolen* (quest) are present.

> *Ay die verre verzeylt hi moet ghedoghen*
> *Dat hem daventuere ghevet*
> *Also die mint moet nauwe poghen*
> *Eer hi der minnen ghenoech vollevet*
> *Hi moet willen in allen tiden*
> *Haren hoghen wille ende anders niet*
> *Ende els niet verdroeven noch verbliden*
> *Wat hem anders meet ghesciet* (Lied 41, ll. 49–56)[604]

> [Ah! Who sails far and wide, he must endure
> Whatever the adventure brings him.

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[602] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 338.
[603] Dailey, "Children of Promise", 125.
[604] Van Baest, 272.

Likewise, whoever loves must painstakingly keep
up that attempt, Ere his way of living fully contents
love. At all times he must want
Her high will and nothing else,
And nothing else should grieve or gladden him
Whatever happens to him besides.][605]

Avontuere signifies an inner or spiritual quest, one that tests the strength and perseverance of their intentions. *Minne* becomes the noble lady, the harsh mistress, the unwavering gauge with which one combats and confronts the heights and depths of spiritual experience.

      Minne can appear as noun, as verb (minnen), and as adjective and adverb (minnend-). The diversity of minne's grammatical useage depicts the multifaceted roles minne performs within Hadewijch's writings. *Minne* is also the means through which Hadewijch inches closer to complete unity with the divine. In many ways, *minne,* in its multifaceted grammatical role and possible connotations, is an embodiment of the bridge between human and divine. Just as the "Tree of the Knowledge of Love" stood at the heart of the "Space of Perfect Virtues" in Vision 1—as well as structurally at the middle of vision—*minne* and its oscillating features are employed by Hadewijch to connect various motifs and themes throughout her writings. In turn, the connection of thematic elements across the genres is intended to establish an "education" in potential paths toward the divine, one that is achieved through reading, meditation, prayer/song, and finally contemplation. These acts are of the mind, edification of the inner senses, which is paralleled and reinforced by the physical acts of good works towards others (emphasized at length throughout the *Strofische Liederen*). The visuality of a pilgrimage of the mind allows the possibility for maturation while remaining true to the physical demands of serving one's community, without which the connection between reading and union could not take place. As Dailey notes, the reading of the *Strofische Liederen* aloud creates momentary episodes of unity by way of the speaker voicing Hadewijch's words to the reader-listener, creating word repetitions, and evoking the emotions through the form of song that imbibe an affective response.[606]

      In the final section on Hadewijch's writings, I turn to the *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven* and remain with the concept of communal reading and episodic union with the divine and *Minne* by way of the text. As we will see, the *Mengeldichten* exude a character/personality unique from the *Liederen,* while still pivoting upon the same central elements of *ghebruken, minne,* and longing.

Rijmbrieven /Mengeldichten

      The *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven* are a recapitulation of the elements from the *Visioenenboek, Brieven,* and the *Liederen*, but just as with musical form, a recapitulation designates a recasting or reworking, a new perspective or telling of a previous motif or theme. Similarly, the *Mengeldichten* function as an integrated and interwoven expression of Hadewijch's spiritual awakening and maturation, but these poems cannot simply revisit previous themes. This time the expression of spiritual unity occurs post song; it has transcended beyond utterance and *claghe* about the communal suffering of those who seek to achieve fruition

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[605] Ibid., 273.

[606] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 150, 151.

(*ghebruken*) with the divine through *Minne.* In contrast to the previous genre groupings, the *Mengeldichten/Rijmbrieven* strive towards contemplation and aim, I argue, thus to completing the cycle of narratives interwoven with numerous genres and motifs without approaching the point from the same direction.

Mengeldicht 15, situated at the heart of the collection of 29 *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven* in Ms. C, embodies the word play and didactic fervor of the previous three genre sections, while adding the elements of shortened verse lines and more simplified rhyme schemes. And yet, what may superficially appear less complex, the repetition of sounds and entire words produces a fabric of song that weaves around the reader-speaker and reader-listener, uniting them through the figures of *minne* and *lief.* In the second half of Mengeldicht 15, the repetition intensifies until a dynamic conclusion that merges subject, object, and verb.

> *Ic hake ic wake ic smake*
> *Die sake die mi dunct soete*
> *Ic kinne met sinne daer es inne*
> *Die minne mijns euels boete* (ll. 33–36).

> [I long, I keep vigil, I taste
> The things that seem sweet to me
> I know, intellectually, that relief
> For my adversity is found in Love.][607]

The use of endings such as "-*ake*" and "-*inne*" are reminiscent of the earlier excerpt from Lied 31 about singing, connecting song to all sound. Patricia Dailey argues that these walls of sound function within the poetic corpus as momentary experiences of union that beyond touch or physical experience, but yet imply aspects of unions through the language of the speaker.[608] In lines 45–52 of Mengeldicht 15, waves of "overlapping sounds" escalate *lief* to *minne*, spiraling into an abyss of sound around the reader-listener:

> *Ah lief hebbic lief een lief*
> *Sidi lief mijn lief*
> *Die lief gavet omme lief*
> *Daer lief lief mede verhief*
> *Ay minne ware ic minne*
> *Ende met minnen minne u minne*
> *Ay minne om minne gheuet dat minne*

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[607] CWH, 351.

[608] "While Minne seems constantly out of reach, temporarily out of synch with human measure, unity and patterns appear within Hadewijch's poetic works that provide performative unions for the reader…These unions are impossible to touch, impossible to lay one's finger on, but they acoustically touch the reader in the way Minne touches the one who experiences her…The poem touches the reader through overlapping sounds in the figure of overlapping movements between lover and beloved, imitating the identity of humans in the divine" (Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 154, 155).

Die minne al minne volkinne

[Ah love I have beloved a love
Be you love, my love
Which beloved gave through love
There, love, love with you uplifted
O love, were I love,
and with love, love, you, love,
O love, for love, give that love
which love may know wholly as love].[609]

Love and Beloved (*lief en lief*), Lover and Beloved sound in close repetition, heightening the inability to distinguish one reference (love, lover, or Beloved) from another. The tightly woven and interwoven rhyme and rhythm structure are unlike the stylistic underpinnings from throughout the *Liederen* and more highly performative than the *Visioenenboek* or *Brieven*. Hadewijch, rather than instructing by way of explication or exegesis, provides a sensory phenomenon, punctuated by repeated phonemes, that replicates union on an interior level.

Appropriately, Mengeldicht 15 concludes with *minne*—as speaker, means or method, and recipient of affections. The fact that the speaker—as Hadewijch or voiced through reading—appeals to *minne* directly in a tone both hopeful and anxious. As Dailey remarks,

The only host of a present unity that can be immediately manifested is that
of a poetics of Minne in the figural body of the song. The song itself
represents, in a figurative way, a body that promises to bridge the gap
between the cognitive and the performative, between the anticipation of
being Minne and the actual *happening* of this event.[610]

Therefore, the *Mengeldichten* close the writings of Hadewijch with a glimpse of experiencing *minne* and union, but it is not fully realized, not yet *ghebruken.* Just as Ms. C began with the *Visioenenboek,* a testimony to the fleeting encounters of union with the Beloved and the journey through the visually rife landscape of vision, here too we conclude with an episodic *avontuere,* one that houses only a small glimpse of the potential that lies beyond the mortal coil. In the end, contemplation is never truly achieved, just as union lies beyond human-corporeal capability. It is inaccessible for extended time, but Hadewijch demonstrates, as outlined in Vision 14, that true contemplation is achieved off page precisely because it transcends the physicality of the page, the tangibility of the body. The corporal limitations prevent the fullness of fruition as long as the inner and outer bodies are tied through human experience.

VII. Conclusion

With this chapter, I have intended to highlight the relationship between the varied genres within Hadewijch's corpus to demonstrate how these texts interact and intersect each other amid

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[609] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 155. Both the Middle Dutch and English translation are from this page.

[610] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 155–6.

a larger didactic and ontological motive: the desire to assist or guide others to achieve oneness/union with God and the broad range of emotions and experiences associated with such union as depicted by the language of pilgrimage. A second motive is the recapitulation and revisiting of the encounter with the divine and the lessons therein made physical through the production of the text. The recollection and reflection upon her soul's/inner body's experience links the ethereal and the earthly; it bridges the ineffable with the tangible in the physical presence of the text. Hadewijch instructs herself as well as others, climbing and descending the mountain of faith's journey, her spiritual, literary pilgrimage, yet always viewed through re-newed eyes with the process of recounting, retelling (formulating), and reading the text. Through this reasoning, the path toward a contemplative life *cycles* rather than simply *repeats.* It spirals upward, building upon that which has been transferred to *memoria* by way of *lectio* and *meditatio* and heightening understanding with each reiteration and revisitation of the text.

Hadewijch's corpus as represented in Ms. C becomes, therefore, not just a reflection upon or an embodiment of an experience, but a living source, a locus to re-collect, renew, and reaffirm love for the divine. This corpus embarks upon a new genre hybrid, one that is mystagogic and didactic, part of two worlds, multiple expressions of time and timelessness (past-present-future; eternity and mortal lifetime), and two bodies—inner and outer. The multiplicity of the bodies (*corpora*) manifests into a multitude of texts and readings, which, through the process of reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) are etched into the mind like a wax tablet and transformed into *memoria*. This etching or the inscription recalls the image of writing on tree leaves in Vision 1, marking the presence of text and writing within the embodied text of a vision.

The key to perfect fruition is the union first experienced in one's humanity and the union of the inner and outer bodies (the "Ideal" and "Created Selves" according to William of Saint Thierry) through *lectio* and *meditatio,* through the living word, which reflects *imitatio Christi* both interiorly and physically as good works. Reading and re-reading as *meditatio* into *memoria* becomes a part of the physical body (*corpus*) and subsequently the physical text (*textus* and *corpus*), which is then read again, thus creating a cycle; a cycle which connects the reader to the source of textual embodiment and commits oneself to the power of the abyss. Hadewijch's literary style creates a series of voices within these texts, which demonstrates her unique spirituality, and yet still allows her audience to encounter a multifaceted mystical process that describes and explicates her complex agenda leading towards love union.

More specifically, the *Visioenenboek, Brieven, Liederen,* and *Mengeldichten* together embody the guided journey, a literary pilgrimage, from the earthly confined realm to a post-apocalyptic heavenly city of New Jerusalem, from a childish love for Christ as God to a broadened, "full- grown" understanding of Christ in both his divinity and his humanity. Her literary journey is one through the stages or realms of love-union with Christ—travelling to the highest city ("New Jerusalem") from the blackest abyss—that mirrors the apocalypse in its ability to strive towards marriage to Christ, to be fully united to the Godhead, to become "God with God" for eternity.

Similarly her set of fourteen visions includes the admission that, although some visions have been recorded at length, there are "many others, about which I have written you nothing".[611] The visions are at once programmatic and performative, and the logical progression from naivete—with regard to the oscillating mystical states of active and contemplative experience and process towards divine union—to a sense of "becoming full grown" through visionary episodes conveys the idea that these visions were composed and constructed for specific didactic purposes, rather than simply recorded. Furthermore, the fact that not all mystical

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[611] CWH, 304

encounters are present within the collection, as per the admission by Hadewijch in Vision 14, suggests that episodes were chosen which demonstrated a particular situation and "fit" within her larger dogmatic schema. Vision 1 is a lengthy introduction into the spiritual realm of Hadewijch that sets the stage for the generic form used for all subsequent visions other than Vision 14. Vision 7 depicts ascending to the summit of a mountain, Vision 10 Hadewijch encounters the New Jerusalem of Revelations, followed by a plunge into the abyss with St. Augustine in Vision 11. Vision 12 and 13 describe a return to New Jerusalem and at long last the union of bride and groom in complete/perfect fruition. It is, in many respects, a complete vision cycle that charts the progression from inexperience and naivete to the realization of longing.

As mentioned above, the collection of *Letters*, or *Brieven* in Middle Dutch, provides the introduction into the carefully designed dogmatic themes contained within all of the works attributed to Hadewijch. The letters are written in a quasi-dialogic form, addressing an unspecified second person or at times novice religious lay women, simply designated as "*lieve kint*." Within her letters, the central concern is instruction and guidance of others "through the mystical progress of the soul".[612] In many ways, the letters within Hadewijch's corpus serve as a gateway into her spiritual-intellectual realm, promoting both a connection to an established tradition in literary form, as well as the central figures associated with the epistolary and visionary literature, and the revisionist writings of eleventh and twelfth century writers.

Song and poetry complete the corpus through the representation of the blissful yet frustrated lover, striving for ecstatic union—fruition or *ghebruken* in Middle Dutch—with his beloved, relishing in his longing and moments of utter abandon at the hands of Lady Love or *Minne*.[29] The *Mengeldichten* or *Rijmbrieven* deepen the literary experience through their use of generic motifs and tropes unique within the tradition of courtly-lyric referenced poetry, while situated in the carefully demonstrated and explicated narrative of two-fold (inner and outer) preparation for the divine. From reading (*lectio*) to song and poetry (*oratio*), the process of becoming *minne* lies in finding *a* path, mentally and physically, through the example of Christ and the genres represented within the corpus. In the next chapter, I turn to the writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg and her *bůch*, expanding the discussion and context of my argument to include Middle High German and new literary tropes of the mid- and later thirteenth century.

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[612] de Vroom, 6

Chapter Four
Living the *bůch:* Generic Variation and Intertexuality in *Fliessende Licht der Gottheit*

I.   Introduction and Argument

The previous chapter highlighted the murky textured corpus of Hadewijch, playing upon the nuanced yet complex nature of her visions and how the dialogic and didactic premise of their composition created a literary landscape aimed to strengthen *memoria* and enlighten her readers. Similarly, Mechthild's sole work, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (or *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*) is as complex in its variety of literary genres and construction as its contents are for some readers to grasp. It has long been a source of fascination and symbol of ineffability for scholars of medieval German literature. In Sara Poor's recent essay, she outlines the collection of writings, stating that,

> The writings, as they have come down to us in the one surviving complete manuscript, are divided into seven large books that consist of narratives of visions; dialogues between the soul and god as well as personified faculties, like Lady Love, the senses, and Conscience; instructions to other religious; and critiques of corrupt clergy.[613]

These highly diffuse genre types represented within *Flowing Light* reflect upon the various stages through which Mechthild traverses as a mystic and, as we have seen in Hadewijch, as she develops her understanding of her path or way towards the divine and *unio mystica* (union with the divine). Similar to the work of Hadewijch, there appears to be a conscious effort by Mechthild to incorporate contemporary literary styles, such as courtly lyric, throughout the work to reflect upon her experiences and not simply report her visions.[614] Poor comments upon the form of *Flowing Light,* cautioning scholars and readers to resist the temptation to falsely attribute Mechthild's *bůch* to a purely autobiographical text type.

> Although some of the chapters have an autobiographical quality, *Das fliessende Licht* should not be read as a private journal that was later made public. Indeed, the book was meant from the start for the edification of others…The chapters often offer specific instructions about devotional practices, and when they contain narratives of visions or dialogues, they are meant as examples or as material for meditation.[615]

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[613] Sara Poor, "Transmission and Impact: Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*" in *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages,* eds. Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann, and Anne Simon (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 74.
[614] *Flowing Light*, 10.
Sara Poor also comments upon the appearance of poetic forms, even in sections that are typically categorized as prose forms.
"The writing can be characterized as highly poetic, with most of the prose displaying internal rhyme (assonance), with some passages written in rhyming couplets, and with much of the poetic language showing influences from contemporary courtly lyric" (Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 74).
[615] Sara Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 74.

As noted in the above citation, the function and the form of *Flowing Light* are closely tied. In fact, one could argue that Mechtild's *bůch* exists as a compilation of literary genres, intended to play heavily upon the experience of the reader-listener within the constellations connecting divine inspiration and the setting down of Mechthild's reflections and meditations onto parchment.

As I argue more at length later in this chapter, the connection between the form(s) from which Mechthild drew during the meditation and composition of her *bůch* mirrors the shape of said text. Furthermore, as Elizabeth A. Andersen has argued, the significance of "heteroglossia", or as she deems it "intertextuality" via Julia Kristeva's work inspired by Bakhtin, situates within the biblical tradition of the four Gospels, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs.[616] All of these works from the New and Old Testaments are themselves compilations, all of these are considered "books" in their own right within in the larger concept of the "Holy Book" (i.e. the Bible).

Yet, just as with Hadewijch, to simply narrow down the purpose or intended use of *Flowing Light* to a record of her experiences and the contemplation thereupon would deny and ignore the significance of the production/composition of the text, how it was set into human language, and the period of reflection and meditation—as well as spiritual maturation—pivotal to the setting down of the work. Some have described her book as a *Visionenbuch* (a book of visions), while others refer to it as a "theological reflection of experiences of a Christian soul."[617] Yet, it has been accurately noted by a few scholars[618] that the genre of a piece is linked more with the modern methodologies of interpretation than the creation of the work. When scholars classify *Flowing Light* in a particular genre, the text is interpreted in a manner appropriate to the said genre. *Flowing Light* is comprised of so many different styles (mystical treatise, socio-historical commentary, etc.) that one set method of interpretation would be unsuitable for another genre within *Flowing Light*.[619] Chapter Two discussed at length the genres Mohr listed as integral parts of Mechthild's *bůch*. As I discussed previously, Mohr cited Mechthild's experience as the main source of reference for the genres that appear within her writings, classifying divine encounters as "awoken archetypes of experience" that meld with a larger sense of prehistory to inform her generic choice.[620] Furthermore, Mohr organized the genres into three larger categories—religious, courtly, and other—which could include anything from "vision/*visio*" to drama and parody.[621] The complexity of the imagery and allegory in *Flowing Light,* in addition to its high fluency in genre and theological understanding, implores the reader-listener to consider her *bůch* more than simply visions, visionary literature, or a mystical treatise. As Patricia Dailey remarks with regard to Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek,* "…the text traces the

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[616] The third chapter of Elizabeth A. Andersen's *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg* details at length the importance of the Psalms and the Song of Songs within *The Flowing Light.* Her reference to Kristeva is found on p. 147 in the introduction to the chapter.

[617] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 57.

[618] Amy Hollywood is one of the main scholars to champion this idea, to name only one.

[619] For example, if a scholar classifies *Das fließende Licht* as a visionary text, that scholar would have to interpret all sections of the book as Mechthild's personal experience. The sections in which Mechthild provides commentary could not be considered her experience and would therefore warrant a different approach to that material.

[620] Mohr, 376.

[621] Tobin, 10. See section II in Chapter 2 for the complete list of genre types as outlined by Mohr in his article "Darbietungsformen der Mystik bei Mechthild von Magdeburg".

discrete growth and anatomy of the soul."[622] Similar to Hadewijch, the *bůch* reflects both the reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) upon encounters with the divine, which are transfigured into text and language through the process of *translatio*: the translation of the inner sensory experience to the outer physicality in the text.

The composition of the *bůch* signifies—perhaps also deemed as a signifier—evidence of the spiritual maturation that has occurred post-divine encounter, which enables the seer to comprehend and construct a physical object (the *bůch*). Within the *bůch* dwells its secondary function: words, sounds, and voices encapsulated within the text that speak beyond the outer, physical body into the realm of the inner senses, the mind, the soul.[623] Dailey explains, that,

> The person writing—that is, the outer person associated with the time of
> the outer body—responds to and is responsible for bringing the inner body,
> the body represented (the inner body that experience the mystical union) into
> the realm of language in the writing of the text. This does not mean that the
> inner person is "present" in the text in some magical way, but that the text
> *represents* it truthfully.[624]

A text cannot replace nor completely replicate the source interaction with the divine, but the embodied text allows the reader-listener to encounter a reflection of that interaction, one that draws upon the messages and lessons communicated between mystic and divine, but one that is translated into speech (and speech genres) accessible to a broader audience than the mystic. Mechthild, as we will see with excerpts from her *bůch*, represents her soul as various figures and voices it through the numerous genres and genre hybrids. The complexity of the generic mixing present in *Flowing Light* furthermore demonstrates the high fluency with which the *bůch* was composed, a point that Bakhtin notes enables the writer-speaker to expand upon and combine primary speech genres into a multitude of secondary speech genres.[625]

It is this use of literary styles and an apparent knowledge of major works in literature that set *Flowing Light* and Mechthild apart from her contemporaries.[626] Therefore, it seems that Mechthild may have used interactions with the divine as the basis for *Flowing Light* but then expanded the information revealed during these experiences to address certain issues. Kurt Ruh reflects upon her composition technique in his volume on thirteenth century mysticism, commenting upon the fact that her style, although less "educated" or perhaps even traditional than other mystics before her, lent an ingenuity to form and vocabulary usage that was not seen prior to that work.[627] Even Hadewijch displays a more intimate knowledge of classic poetic and prosaic structures, in part possibly due to the high level of education for burgher classes in the

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[622] Dailey, *Promised Bodies,* 86.

[623] Dailey discusses the connection between inner and outer body in the text in *Promised Bodies,* pp. 85–87.

[624] Ibid., 86.

[625] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", 91–92.

[626] There are references to some of the most influential works during that time, including Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on the "Song of Songs". Frank Tobin argues that Mechthild had access to all the texts that an author would have at that time (The Flowing Light, 10–11).

[627] Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik: Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit* vol. 2 (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1993), 283.

Brabant urban areas.[628] The ingenuity of Mechthild's lyrical prose style[629] suggests more than simple reporting, but rather a reading (*lectio*) of any experiences with the divine, a meditation (*meditatio*) upon its potential teachings, and a verbalization and translation into lyricisms common to many through the rudimentary education of the Psalter.[630] Similar to the choice of using the vernacular so clearly demonstrated through Sara Poor's research, the choice of genres and genre mixing shaped the function and form of textualized and meditated experience into a *bůch.*

bůch and Genre

In this chapter, I focus on the writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg and the ways in which the process of contemplation (*lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*) weaves into a physical manifestation that embodies aspects of the inner and outer bodies and senses of the writer-speaker as the *bůch*. Whereas Veerle Fraeters, Frank Willaert, Patricia Dailey, and others opened up scholarship on Hadewijch to meld various textual traditions, Mechthild scholars—with the exception of a small few—have not connected the *bůch* of Mechthild with contemplative reading and mnemonic practices. In particular, Patricia Dailey's scholarly investigations employ interwoven and overlapping questions concerning memory, the body, voicing in the text, and the promise of *unio mystica* absent from the page. Dailey situates the construction and composition of the text with the embodiment of the meditated and read experience. Just as the scriptures describe Jesus as the incarnation of God's word, here the body (*corpus*) of the text (*textus*) reflects both the inner sensory understanding of divine encounters and the continued, atemporal memory (*memoria*) and promise of those divine interactions. As mentioned in previous chapters, the early generic classification of Mechthild's writings as a *bůch* and also naming of the work—*Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit / Flowing Light of the Godhead*—creates a connection between the existence of the book as a physical entity and bridges a gap between the divine naming of said work and its composition.

For the reader-listener, the "horizon of expectations" for Mechthild's *bůch* coincides with this classification or genre naming; before one encounters her visions and poetry, the reader-listener is informed that the writings are a *bůch* and that the divine is the source of all knowledge held within its pages. The short preface or prologue to Book 1, following the Latin and Middle High German prefaces, begins with reference to work as "this book" (*dis bůch*):

> *Dis bůch das sende ich nu ze botten allen geistlichen luoten * beidú bosen*
> *und guoten wand wenne die súle vallent so mag das werk nút gestan * und*
> *ez bezeichent alleine mich und melder loblich mine heimlichkeit* Alle die*
> *dis* bůch *wellen vernemen die soellent es ze nún malen lesen.*

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[628] Walter Simons comments upon the influence of education upon the beguine movement and the significance that this had upon the emphasis on accessibility of Biblical works in the vernacular and the interpretation thereof (Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 43, 82–3).

[629] "However, Mechthild's lyrical German prose clearly is [new]. Mechthild uses poetic language both to soften and to reinforce her critiques of the clergy, providing further evidence of her active role in composing the text. […] Mechthild's agency, her active 'transmission' of God's message, underscores the point not only that dissent is a relative term, but also that religious devotion can be an art" (Poor 22).

[630] Poor, *Mechthild,* 28.

Dis bŭch heisset ein vliessendes lieht der gotheit (folio 3v, 20–26).[631]

[This book I send to you now on all spiritual people, both bad and good,
for if the pillars fall the structure cannot stand and it demonstrates me
alone and it proclaims my mystery praiseworthily. All those who desire to
take up this book, they should read it nine times.

This book is called a flowing light of the godhead.][632]

This introduction to *Flowing Light* unveils function, genre, and potential readership within a few lines, calling to attention the central nature of the *bŭch* as a message from God, intended for edification (i.e. spiritual maturation) and internalization via *memoria*. It also draws upon a later passage in *Flowing Light* from Book V, 34, using the phrasing almost verbatim, playing with the concept of time between composition (*werke*)[633] and reading (*lectio*) similar to that found within Mechthild's *bŭch* in the expanse of time between divine intervention, promised or potential union (*unio mystica* or *gebruchunge*), and divine atemporality.[634]

     Whereas Hadewijch initiated her Visions with a shift from the outer to inner bodies, the physical world to a heightened spiritual realm, *Flowing Light* signifies a direct address to the readership, an acknowledgement that these writings evoke more than simple recitation or reporting of spiritual encounters. In addition, the reader/listener is not limited to a finite group of women within a community, evidenced by textual references to critical reception of the *bŭch* and remarks upon contemporary culture. Unlike Hadewijch's corpus, these opening lines of Book I establish an ongoing reception (*die soellent es ze nún malen lesen*), and the function of this text as direct connection between the lessons of the divine and, one might infer, the edification of the inner self—the soul—that would in turn transform the outer body and one's actions. One final point to note is that the *bŭch* is "a flowing light of the godhead" [*ein vliessendes lieht der gotheit*] not "the", a point which most scholars have overlooked. While the semantic distance between definite and indefinite article may seem slight, the indefinite "a/*ein*" aligns with a larger, overarching principle within the theologies of Mechthild and Hadewijch: there is no singular path to *unio mystica* and spiritual maturation, but many, and the text—the *bŭch*—serves as a messenger/guide to the reader-listener to transform the inner body and senses to follow their path.

     André Néher, cited in Andersen's *Voices*, frames it similarly, noting the emphasis on the striving and longing toward the union with the divine as the emphasis within "mystical theology":

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     [631] Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das Fließendes Licht der Gottheit: Nach der Einsiedler Handschrift in kritischen Vergleich mit der gesamten Überlieferung,* Band 1:Text, Ed. Hans Neumann (Munich: Artemis, 1990), 4–5.

     [632] *Flowing Light,* 39.

     [633] Patricia Dailey refers to this as "*werke*", which includes composition, good works, and other physical acts done within a person's physical life and through the outer body.

     [634] "*Dis bŭch sende ich nu ze botten allen geistlichen lúten, bedú den bosen und den gŭten, wan swenne die súle vallent, so mag das werk nit gestan*"

["I send now this book as a messenger to all religious people, both the bad and the good, for if the pillars fall the structure cannot remain standing"] (Book V, 34: 41–3; Referenced from Andersen, 122).

Il y a toute la longue et minutieuse préparation spirituelle, le chemin, le pèlerinage, de l'ascèse à l'illumination et passant par la nuit obscure avant d'accéder à l'union dans la rencontre.

[There is all the long and thorough spiritual preparation, the path, the pilgrimage, from asceticism to illumination and passing through the dark night before arriving at a union in the encounter.][635]

The "pilgrimage" and "path" that leads to *unio mystica* is therefore the essence of the "spiritual preparation" [*la longue et minutieuse préparation spirituelle*] and anticipates the need for knowledge/wisdom/spiritual maturation (in *Flowing Light, bekanntnise*] before *gebruchunge/*perfect union. Along these lines, the *bůch* becomes a necessary element of the path [*der weg*] to the divine, instituted by the spoken and felt obligation to birth *Flowing Light* into physical textuality. In Book VII, God consoles an ailing Mechthild reminding her,

Alle dine wege sint gemessen, allú dinú vosspor sint gezellet, din leben ist geheliget, din ende das wirt vroelich und min rich ist dir vil nahe (VII 4, 5–6).[636]

[All your paths are measured, all your steps are counted, your life is blessed, your end that will be joyous and my kingdom is very close to you.][637]

The plurality of "paths" [*wege*] and steps correspond with the word "life" [*leben*], "end" [*ende*], and "kingdom" [*rich*]. The fact that *wege* appears in the plural sends, I believe, a powerful message to the reader-listener about life as a Christian, *imitatio Christi,* and the underlying lessons within Mechthild's *Flowing Light.* The paths that Mechthild treads throughout her life become the combination of spiritual and physical life, her inner senses and soul guiding the feet of her physical body and outer senses. Appearing in Book VII as Mechthild nears the end of her life, her *wege* begin to approach the end of her earthly existence and mark the potential onset of her ethereal one. The progression from the *wege* that form a life on earth to an eternal existence with the divine signifies the importance of finding one's way without that path including a strict singularity.

Mechthild's book becomes an example of these paths, both by example and to demonstrate the plurality of these paths. In essence, *Flowing Light* is a bridge between the inner and outer bodies, the human and divine languages and understanding, and divine lessons to human reader-listeners. Textually, the embodiment of the inner body's encounter with the divine, the reading and meditation thereon, produces a dialogic effect within the language of the *bůch*, which is further reverberated through the lens of the reader-listener, translators, and scribes. Through dialogue with the text by way of reading and meditation (*lectio* and *meditatio*), a literary path is journeyed, at first within the inner body (i.e. the mind and soul) and later the

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[635] André Néher, *L'essence du prophétisme,* (Paris, 1972), 97. Cited from Andersen, *Voices,* 185.

[636] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 261.

[637] I disagree with Andersen that there is an emphasis on a singular path to God within *Flowing Light.* She states, "[Mechthild] records the path to the experience of *unio mystica* as a way accessible to all loving souls, while also foregrounding her own personal experience (cf. I, 44)" (Andersen, 177). As seen in the above citation, later reflections upon life and deeds depict a plurality in the transformation of the inner and outer bodies in preparation for perfect fruition. A path ['*wege*'] might lead to one instance of *unio mystica* but it is fleeting and unsustainable.

outer/corporeal body through good words and the practical application of the lessons found within *Flowing Light.*

By reading *Flowing Light,* the reader-listener initiates an interior dialogue with his/her own inner body with the understanding that the process of reading (*lectio*) develops into physical memory (*memoria*) through meditation (*meditatio*) upon what has been read. Since the mind is the seat of the inner senses, the contemplation upon Mechthild's *bůch* necessitates an internalization of the text. The desire for deeper comprehension of *Flowing Light* is suggested in the prologue, when the scribes (perhaps at Mechthild's request) recommend reading the book nine times ["*Alle die dis bůch wellen vernemen die soellent es ze nún malen lesen*" (German prologue, 3–4)]. Thus, the *bůch* represents a guide/guidebook and the potential *wege* one might follow toward the divine.

Elizabeth A. Andersen discusses the first lines of the prologue within the framework of Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" and remarks upon the dialogic voicing found in *Flowing Light.* Borrowing from Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin, Andersen notes the term "intertextuality" in an attempt to establish corresponding elements between the *bůch*'s multi-referential nature (e.g. with Biblical, theological-philosophical and secular references), the varied voices in the work (Lady Minne, Soul, narrator, and many others), and the diverse mix of genre borrowings Mechthild employed.[638] However, Andersen rejects any scholarly ability to generically categorize *Flowing Light,* despite the fact that the text itself attempts to do so. Andersen remarks in the introduction to *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg* (2000) that,

> As an integral work, the *FLdG* eludes categorization in terms of an overarching genre, containing as it does visions, auditions, dialogues, prayers, hymns, letters, allegories, parables, narratives as well as features of the courtly lyric, magic spells, the tract, the hagiographical life and the disputation.[639]

Without question, as argued in Chapter Two, the mélange of genres represented within *Flowing Light* could present issues when modern scholars attempt to categorize the text in terms of genre. That said, the overarching generic category of *Flowing Light* already exists within its pages: the *bůch*.

To add more confusion to the question of generic classification, Andersen continually upholds the concept that *Flowing Light* constitutes a book, often inserting the disclaimer of citation marks to emend the strength of the claim's validity.[640] Employing aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory on dialogism from his study of Dostoevsky's novels, Andersen pursues a line of questioning that plays upon "[t]he concepts of dialogism, polyphonic discourse, heteroglossia and intertextuality" to "[illuminate] aspects of Mechthild's text".[641] The motivation for her inquiry, Andersen states, is to uncover how *Flowing Light* "functions as a literary text" and to enlighten new readers about the nature of this diverse text and its cultural context.[642] Beneath her threads of argument, Andersen implies that a *bůch* cannot function as a genre, but rather

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[638] Elizabeth A. Andersen, *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg,* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 147.

[639] Andersen, *The Voices,* 15.

[640] "Through her 'book' Mechthild engages in a dialogue simultaneously with the eternal and with the temporal" (Andersen, 89).

[641] Ibid.

[642] Ibid., 17; 18.

constitutes a label employed by Mechthild as co-author to describe and not classify her text.[643] Her primary evidence to refute the substantiation of *bůch* as a genre lies in her investigation of "heterglossia" and the dialogic nature of *Flowing Light.*

Certainly, the dialogic element (which Andersen discusses as "voices") entails a prominent feature of *Flowing Light* and appears early in Mechthild's *bůch*. Dialogism remains fairly constant throughout the first five books of *Flowing Light,* and like Hadewijch, its presence varies depending up on the genre and voices of a particular chapter. In fact, immediately following the section cited above, further introductory information about the work occur through a dialogue between what one presumes to be God and the narrating voice—the writer-speaker. Lines 27 of folio 3v through line 2 of folio 4r read,

> *Eya herre got wer hat dis bůch gemachet • Ich habe es gemachet an míner unmaht • wan ich mich an míner gabe mir enthalten mag • Eya here wie sol dis bůch heissen • alleine ze dínen eren • Es sol heissen ein vliessende lieht míner gotheit• in allú dú herzen dú (4r) da lebent ane valscheit •*[644]

> ["Oh, lord god, who made this book?"
> "I made it in my unworthiness, for I cannot restrain myself as to my gifts."
> "Oh, lord, what should this book be called alone in your honor/name?"
> "It should be called a flowing light of my godhead in all hearts that live without falsity."][645]

The conversation represented in the above lines establishes several key aspects concerning the divine authority of Mechthild's texts, the role of *minne* and "the queen", and the relationship between text (*dis bůch*) and message. Whereas Andersen classifies the co-author as the soul, I find it highly beneficial to reference Patricia Dailey's research on the inner and outer bodies and how the dialogic interplay between divine revelation and composition informs the text and the overall function of the text. The soul, as we have seen with Hadewijch and through Augustinian and Victorian theologies, interacts with the divine on a level beyond human comprehension and language. In fact, while '*die minnende sele*' may function as an authorial persona, to reference Andersen, *Flowing Light* often weaves (*texere*) voices of the divine, the soul, narration, and criticism with that of a concern for all souls (i.e. reader-listeners of the *Flowing Light*), as well as all those who are friends of God.[646] As Sara Poor has noted, the question of divine authority and denial of human authorship occupies a central place within the function and language of *Flowing Light.*[647] It is therefore unsurprising to find divine admission of authorship so early in the text [*Ich habe es gemachet*] and that it seeks to confirm the source of knowledge and its corresponding teachings.

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[643] Andersen, in reference to a discussion on Marguerite Porete, mentions the role of Mechthild as co-author: "Like Mechthild, Marguerite always refers to her discrete writing as a unified 'book' and, as in the *FLdG,* it is made clear in the *Mirouer* that God and the soul are co-authors of the book" (Andersen, 41).

[644] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 5.

[645] *Flowing Light,* 39 (emended).

[646] Even Andersen remarks that Mechthild "bears witness to her individual experience while representing the community of loving souls" and that "the primacy of the individual soul gives way to an increased incidence of a plural conception of the bride (Meyer 1951:24)" (Andersen, 177).

[647] Poor, *Mechthild,* 11–12.

Similar to the previous chapter, I will refrain from a discussion concerning questions of authorship, but rather focus on the produced texts, those that are extant and accessible by the modern scholar, to inform my research. As the focus of this dissertation is the function and form of Germanic beguine mystical writings, I only address authorship in situations where scholarly interpretation has conflated or confused the generic function(s) of a text with the purpose of an author. Sara Poor and Balazs Nemes have published numerous articles and monographs on the question of authorship, some of which are referenced in this chapter.[648] The question of textual authority and *auctoritas* lies well beyond the confines of this dissertation and one that has occupied over a thousand pages within recent scholarship by the above experts. That stated, I follow Sara Poor's lead and acknowledge the complex nature of Mechthild's role as the writer-speaker and translator (from inner to outer senses). Similar to Hadewijch, I infer that the kernel of these works, if not the vast majority, were composed by these beguine mystics. While I will discuss the intricacies of transmissions, translations, and scribal activity in Chapter Five, this chapter aims to provide a reading of *Flowing Light* akin to that of Hadewijch's corpus in the previous chapter. As in the chapter on Hadewijch, contemplative reading practices, *memoria,* and genre/textual form are a central facet to my analyses.

In the previous chapter, I focused on how Patricia Dailey's work on embodiment, inner and outer bodies, and contemplative life revealed a more complex and theologically informed reading of Hadewijch's writings. Looking specifically at genre, I argued that form not only shaped the literary experience for the reader-listener by playing upon their expectations (i.e. Jauss and his "horizon of expectations") but also provided the gateway to the reception and comprehension of her writings based upon the genres and genre hybrids that Hadewijch chose to represent textually and enact her teachings. Referencing his article about memory and pilgrimage, I critiqued Frank Willaert's argument that Hadewijch's corpus is not representative of a literarily constructed pilgrimage and instead posited that Hadewijch's mystagogic-didactic motifs were intended to describe paths toward *unio mystica* through the process of contemplation on love.[649] Those potential paths, I argued, were mirrored within the text through the presence of varied genres and the diversity in rhyme, theme, and hybrid forms. *Imitatio Christi*—the imitation of Christ—lies at the heart of Hadewijch's corpus with the two-fold instruction of paths within life on earth through good works and the edification of the mind/soul through the reading experience encapsulated within the text.

Mechthild's *bůch* requires a slightly different approach for several reasons. Firstly, the organization of Mechthild's *bůch* displays seven smaller sections, the first two of which she describes as "*teil*" and the following sections are all labeled "*bůch*."[650] The seven sections are

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[648] Sara Poor's 2004 monograph *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Authority*, her 2014 article "Transmission and Impact" in *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages,* and Balazs Nemes's impressive tome *Von der Schrift zum Buch—vom Ich zum Autor* (2010) extensively discuss the question of authorship and authority in *Flowing Light* both in the Alemannic dialect and in Latin.

[649] In particular, I reference Frank Willaert's article "Pelgrim naar het minnen lant".

[650] There is significant manuscriptal evidence that Mechthild's *bůch* circulated at various points during the decades of its composition. The use of *bůch* for both the later five parts as well as the whole may in fact be by design. Mechthild drew heavily from the Psalms and the Song of Songs, as well as the four Gospels and Revelations. All of these are considered "books" of the Bible, and yet the Psalms and the Song of Songs include fairly diverse generic types and modes of poetics. Hans Neumann (1993) suspects that there were numerous circulating copies at varying stages, including Book I, Book I–II, Books I–IV, Books I–V, and possibly also Books I–VI. More thorough discussion of these elements will occur in the transmission section later in this chapter.

further divided into 276 chapters of varying lengths, often a mixture of genres and voices. Secondly, the first two parts of her *bůch* contain the most visions and allegorical dialogues. It is also in these first two sections that we learn the name of her book (Book 1, Chapter 1), the famous mass vision (Book 2, Chapter 4) and the allegory of her book as the Holy Trinity (Book 2, Chapter 26). Furthermore, the stylistic organization of her chapters includesa a mixture of prose and poetry, at times elements of prayer and rhyme, and there are numerous examples of genres interwoven within one chapter. Unlike Hadewijch's corpus, with its separate groupings of larger generic categories, *Flowing Light* cannot be so easily categorized by generic form because it oscillates between prose and poetic genres without a regimented guideline or structure. That stated, I have no intention of defying the attributed label of her writing as a "*bůch*." Rather, following Jauss's lead to some degree and K.S. Whetter's reading of Jauss, it is significant to look at how form is used and where, which may lead us to consider why medieval readers considered this a *bůch* or why it was classified as such.

For over a century, scholars sought to clarify what they felt was the actual form of Mechthild's composition. From mystical treatise to spiritual diary, the question of form enticed and eluded scholars, leading Frank Tobin to declare that Mechthild's writings could only safely be labeled "religious". In line with Löser's more recent work on Mechthild's writings, I argue there is more to Mechthild's *bůch* than a simple textual reference. As Andersen has remarked, Mechthild consistently considered her *bůch* a unified textual expression. In contrast to Andersen, however, I do not place Mechthild and her concept of authorship (or the "persona of the author", as Andersen calls it) at the center of my argument. Rather, the biblical inspiration from the Psalms, Song of Songs, and the Gospels, in combination with the practice of contemplative reading, *memoria,* and textual embodment, suggests to me something larger and more profound in which *bůch* accurately and appropriately describes the generic classification of *Flowing Light.*

Taking cues from Patricia Dailey's research and Derrida and Bakhtin's theories of genre, I propose a new reading of Mechthild's *bůch*, one that weighs the significance of her repeated references to Trinitarian mysticism and the significance of the composition of her text. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the creation of her *bůch* is like a birth, the melding of inner and outer senses, expressed through various generic forms that were known to the intended readership. I theorize that Mechthild's writings adjusted to her expanded readership. Mechthild mentions in Book Five that anyone who reads her book nine times should be blessed. In addition, any scribe who copies her book should also be blessed by God. These utterances would suggest a certain desire to have the text copied and circulated to a broader audience.

However, there is a further aspect of continued copying and reading of the text. As I outlined in the previous chapters, reading (*lectio*) was considered a significant step towards a contemplative life. In Chapter One, I connected Derrida's term "invagination" to the concept of memory (*memoria*) and the reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) upon the text for both the writer-speaker and the reader-listener. Heavily tied to the medieval contemplative reading practices, "invagination" allows the possibility for readings of the text beyond those intended on the page's surface, readings hidden within the *plis* ("folds") of writings much like the folds within a physical book. The Victorines (Hugh and Richard, in particular) encouraged contemplative reading practices, as did William of St. Thierry (student of Bernard of Clairvaux), and there is distinct textual evidence to support the influence of these theologians within *Flowing Light*;[651] the triad of love, understanding, and will were central to achieving an enlightened

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[651] "The influence of William of St. Thierry is palpable in Mechthild's writings (Ruh 1993: 285). Hugh (c. 1096–1141) and Richard (c. 1123–73) of St. Victor, whose influence has also been clearly

relationship with the divine. With *Flowing Light,* the process of *lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio* in conjunction with *memoria* takes a different shape than what we saw in the previous chapter on Hadewijch. The fluid interaction between genres, the lyrical nature found even within prose sections, and the oscillation between moments of reading, meditating, and expressing in various oral generic forms create a corpus of writings with less linear progression. As I discussed with Hadewijch in the previous chapter, speech genres associated with lyric or lyric-type texts increases the sense of connection between the writer-speaker (embodied on the written page) and the reader-listener. Yet at the same time Mechthild's *bůch* interacts with the reader more directly and consciously throughout her writings than Hadewijch. The simple fact that Mechthild responds to criticism of a vision from Book II in Book IV attests to the dialogic nature of her prose, but also the significance of writing-reading as joint activities.

Reading as a practice and direct address/interaction with the reader-listener remain constant throughout *Flowing Light.* Even in the first book, we find direct address to the reader-listener, calling for understanding but also meditation (*meditatio*) and consideration of the points, in which the path or way to love (*minnenweg*) is described:

> *Lieber gottes frúnt, disen minnenweg han ich dir geschriben, got muesse*
> *in an din herze geben• amen* (I, 44: 94–95).[652]
>
> [Dear friend of God, I have written for you this path of love. May God
> infuse it into your heart! Amen.][653]

The combination of address with the prayer-like "Amen" instills a hybrid genre that mixes prayer with aspects of formal introductory address similar to those found within the epistle tradition.[654] In addition, the use of the second-person singular draws the reader-listener into the text on a highly personal level, yet one accessible by any who encounter the text promoting an almost universal "you" within these lines. "Amen" further resonates with the liturgy, psalms, and hymns, all of which had a prominent place within the daily spiritual activity of lay religious persons and in particular the *mulieres sanctae* to which the beguines belonged. Andersen comments upon the prevalence of the generic forms common to the liturgy, remarking that

> There is a productive tension that runs throughout the *FLdG* between the
> personal experience of the *unio mystica* and the public witness to it. In many
> of those passages which have the *unio mystica* as their focus Mechthild
> employs literary forms which have a close affinity to the language of liturgical
> hymn, that is to the language of public and collective worship.[655]

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detected in Mechthild's thought, made a considerable contribution to the development of a more personal and often more affective interpretation of the Song of Songs" (Andersen, 154).
Later Andersen notes that "[t]he influence of the Benedictine Rupert of Deutz, of the Cistercians Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, as well as the Augustinian canon Hugh of St. Victor is unmistakable, even if precise source identification is not possible (Ruh 1993: 25)" (Andersen 155).

[652] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 32.

[653] *Flowing Light*, 62.

[654] See the "Epistle/ Letter" and "Brieven" sections in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively for more discussion on the genre of letters and the different forms of introduction.

[655] Andersen, 173.

One could argue that, at least in part, the ongoing awareness and reference to a readership encourages the appearance of more generic variety, what Andersen labels polyphonic or double-voiced. On a different level, the acknowledgement of a reader-listener (Bakhtin)—as well as the implied understanding of said text woven within the very body of language—precludes the meditation on divine intervention by Mechthild. On an even further level, continued reference to the liturgy—psalms, hymns, scripture—firmly constructs a "horizon of expectations" (Jauss) for the reader-listener, one that plays upon the pre-knowledge of divine teachings and the understanding, the memory of collective worship that continually revisits and meditates upon the foundations of Christianity.

Reflections upon potential readership and the fluid nature of time extend into Mechthild's acknowledgment of scribal activity concerning her *bŭch*. In Chapter 26 of Book II, Mechthild pleads with God to bless those who scribes who copy the work, stating:

> *Eya herre ich ſúfzen vnd gere vnd bitte fúr dinen der daſ bŭch na*
> *mir habe geſchriben daſ du im ŏch welliſt die gnade geben ze lone die nie*
> *menſchen wart gelúhen·* (II, 26: 34-36).[656]

> *O Domine, cum gemitu, cum desiderio peto pro scriptoribus, qui hanc*
> *librum post me conscripsserint ut gratiam tuam eis in mercede conferas.*[657]

> [Alas, Lord, I sigh, desire, and beg on behalf of your writers who write this
> book after me, that you see fit to give them, too, as a reward a favor that has
> never been bestowed on human beings.][658]

Mechthild requests the highest honor for those who continue to "write this book", signifying the possibility that the copying and circulation of her work is the underlying message within its pages, in addition to the desire to teach/educate all—rich or poor, learned or unlearned—about the divine experience of true union and love with the Godhead. The description of the scribes as "your writers who write this book after me" implies that this is a continuing message and story, a universal one that does not belong solely to Mechthild but to all those who open themselves to this teaching. If this is the case, her *bŭch* would transcend its physical pages into the *memoria* of numerous persons, thereby enlivening the text and making it twofold—both on parchment (outer body) and in *memoria* (inner body).

Similarly, Derrida's concept of ellipsis, marking both a birth and death of genre, resonates with Augustinian and Pauline concepts of inner and outer bodies, as well as the concept of the mystic-authored text as a bridge, mediator or mirror between those halves.[659] The textual form, the genre, through its gradual maturation as the book progresses marks the birth and life of a text, played out in gradual stages for the reader-listener to encounter outwardly in order to create a transformation inwardly through the physical imprinting into one's memory. The process of birth read on the page and birth/imprinting in the memory initiates an ongoing process of renewal. In other words, I argue that Mechthild's text, like a literary offspring,

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[656] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 69.

[657] *Revelationes Gertrudianae et Mechthildianae,* 444

[658] *Flowing Light*, 98.

[659] Patricia Dailey discusses these concepts at length in Chapter One of her monograph, *Promised Bodies*.

becomes alive with the reading (*lectio*), copying, and meditating (*meditatio*) upon the text of the reader-listener. Similar to the concept of the "Living Word",[660] each reader touched and changed by her *bůch* continues the message and transformation towards *unio mystica*.

Genre is just a gateway into my analysis, however, and in order to get at the heart of what I argue to be Mechthild's motivations as writer-speaker for these textual forms and its relationship to content, I first establish how these forms interact within her work and what these generic forms signify to the reader based upon textual cues and recognized motifs. Through a detailed reading of recent scholarship, I construct the foundations for questions concerning the evidence of "heteroglossia" within the Psalms, the Song of Songs, the four Gospels, and Revelations. Furthermore, textual references support not only Mechthild's awareness of inner and outer senses, but also the connection between these and the process of textual embodiment (i.e. composition of the physical text). The dialogic nature of *Flowing Light* draws strong parallels to Bakhtin's theories on speech genres, which I outlined in Chapter One. The existence of speech forms within *Flowing Light* is no longer the reflection or reporting of primary speech forms, but has transcended to secondary speech forms, ones that occur following the process of reading and meditating upon divine encounters to become the text. These speech genres are woven (*texere*) into the body (*corpus*) of the text, culminating in a physicality that resonates with the birth of God as Christ and with Christ, the human embodiment of the Word (*Logos*). In this sense, Mechthild plays upon the beginning of 1 John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God", a verse well known to beguines and most Christians during the thirteenth century. Therefore, the concept of the "Word" or message of the divine becoming a physical text—or body in the case of Christ—has a strong precedence in medieval Christian imagination and understanding of the translation between message/lesson and text; between writer-speaker (God/divine) and reader-listener-writer (the mystic). The transfiguration of the inner body's encounter with the divine is expressed most strongly in the vision of the Mass (Book II, 4), the allegory of the *bůch* (Book II, 26), Book IV 2, Book V 34, and Book VI 31, to name only a few examples.

I initiate discussion of genre and generic categorization with a reading and critique of Elizabeth Andersen's monograph *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg.* Andersen's use of Bakhtinian theory—most prominently "heteroglossia"—allows a gateway into further discussions of genre, generic hybridity, and the significance of intertextuality with *Flowing Light.* While my approach differs from Andersen's on several levels, the ways in which she engages with Mechthild's *bůch* prompts deeper questions about the nature of textuality and the place that authorship holds within the choosing of genre and the hybridization of those forms. Following the section on Andersen's research, I turn to Sara Poor and her work with the transmission history of *Flowing Light*, as well as the impact of said transmissions upon the contemporaneous and more recent readership of the text. In *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book,* Poor illustrates the significance of the female body in the creation of textual authority through her reading of Book II, 4: the vision of the mass. I extend her initial discussion beyond

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[660] Christ is described throughout the Bible as the "living word", meaning that he is the embodiment of the divine on earth, but also the continuation of the biblical narrative from the Old Testament. Connected heavily to this concept is *imitatio Christi,* the imitation of Christ's life and suffering in its human form. As we have seen within Hadewijch's writings and will find similar reflections in *Flowing Light*, salvation and understanding of the divine are espoused within the writings of the beguine mystics. This would suggest that while the text is a gateway into greater comprehension of the divine, the physical enactment of those lessons remain a necessary step along the path or paths toward union with the divine. Therefore, physical embodiment creates a bridge between the outer body as text and corpus with the inner body as soul and mind.

the confines of the physical, biological body to that of the dual inner and outer bodies and senses. The inner senses, what Mechthild refers to as the "eye of the soul", bridge from the interior consciousness to the physical world by way of composition. As Dailey has so eloquently argued, the act of textual embodiment is imbued with the memory (*memoria*) of divine encounters, manifested in the inner body and translated to the outer through reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*), rumination (perhaps also seen as *oratio*) and composition that then allow a continual process of contemplation upon the fleeting yet timeless experience with the divine.[661]

Finally, I focus on readings of key passages from throughout *Flowing Light* to illustrate the validity of "invagination", "heteroglossia", and "horizon of expectations" within the text and to bring together the influences of contemplative reading practices with the appearance of genres and generic hybridity. Due to the highly diverse use of genres and their organization in *Flowing Light,* I highlight specific thematic elements: the "eye of the soul", Mechthild and the role of Mary, and finally the composition and creation of her *bůch* as the product of divinely inspired teachings through *unio mystica*. In turn, this discussion fuses together the above elements to substantiate my reading of *Flowing Light* as a literary offspring of Mechthild with her inner body's interaction with and meditation upon the divine and their teachings.

II.   Dialogic Interplay: Elizabeth A. Andersen's *Voices*

In her 2000 monograph *The Voices of Mechthild of Magdeburg,* Elizabeth A. Andersen references Bakhtin's theories on dialogism and "heteroglossia" in order to categorize *Flowing Light* based upon the voicing found within the text rather than the broader generic label of *bůch*. Based upon her analysis of the historical literary context within which *Flowing Light* was composed, Andersen argues that, although

> Mechthild herself quite clearly had a sense of the unified context of her writings…the simplicity of [*bůch*] belies the complex resonances that she evokes in her use of the term.[662]

In considering the above citation, it seems that the "horizon of expectations" lies in conflict with Andersen's proposed reading of the text. What is interesting in Andersen's analysis is the fact that she never defines the term *bůch* as a genre nor do comparisons between that term and its usage outside of *Flowing Light* occur.

Rather than an investigation of the term and its potential validity as a generic categorization, Andersen prefers the even broader heading of "devotional literature", with reference to Petroff's interpretation of Mechthild's and other mystical writings. Andersen includes the following citation from Petroff to underscore the premise of her argument:

> Devotional literature in the Christian tradition may be defined as literature written for the faithful and intended to develop or heighten feelings of devotion toward God or the saints. …Moreover, devotional literature, though not specifically intended to present theological issues, is didactic in that it speaks about the proper Christian life and about the proper relationship between the individual soul and the divine.[663]

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[661] Dailey, *"Children of Promise"*, 338.
[662] Andersen, 104–105.
[663] Andersen, 98 cited from Petroff (1986), 3.

'Devotion' as defined in the above citation implies a reverence to the divine, one that is carried out through "the proper Christian life" .Later in her monograph, Andersen returns to the topic of devotional literature, stating that the appropriateness of the term to describe *Flowing Light* extends beyond concepts of authorship but also the "pre-knowledge" of her readership. Devotional literature, Andersen remarks, "has as its intended readership a community of the faithful", but beyond this a certain familiarity with the scriptures and other theological texts are assumed, demonstrated in the fact that devotional literature "is not concerned with defining points of doctrine in a systematic way".[664] With the Bible serving as a basis, devotional literature, Andersen argues, "assumes that its readership or audience is familiar with the life of contemplative prayer" and has a central function of "develop[ing] or heighten[ing] feelings of devotion towars God or the saints".[665] However, I would argue that Mechthild's *bůch* seeks more from its readership than contemplative prayer, but rather contemplative reading practices and internalization of the messages within her *bůch* via memory/*memoria.*

Even Andersen suggests that Mechthild's text is largely didactic in nature, a point that she previously contradicted in her comparison of Mechthild's *bůch* with Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer.*[666] In reference to Book I, 44: 94–5, Andersen explains that "Mechthild presents the mystical path to God as a way that is accessible to all loving souls, even if it does not always culminate in mystical union" (*unio mystica*).[667] The lines *Lieber gottes frúnt, disen minnenweg han ich dir geschriben, got muesse in an din herze geben*[668] [Dear friend of God, I have written for you this path of love, may God give it into your heart][669] signifies for Andersen that not all will achieve *unio mystica*. In contrast, I read a direct address to the reader-listener to take these teachings to heart, to transfer them to memory (*memoria*), which may lead to union with the divine. With regards to genre, there appears no dissection of the appearance of direct address or its purpose within the function of the entire chapter as a generic hybrid. Bakhtin, in his theories on the novel, formulates the initial paradigm of speech genres and their place within the construct of the novel. Despite a concern for the dialogic nature of *Flowing Light* and the presence of "heteroglossia" in Mechthild's *bůch*, Andersen never discusses the concept of speech genres, individual genres within the *Flowing Light,* nor does she provide definition or usage within the medieval period.

As Andersen's argument develops, it becomes increasingly clear that the emphasis in her reading—and consequently the use of Bakhtin as a theoretical lens—lies in the role of Mechthild as author, rather than the text and its generic classification and function. Andersen remarks,

The unity and coherence of the *FLdG* as a work of literature resides, then,

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[664] Ibid., 194; second citation is from Petroff (1986:3).

[665] Ibid.

[666] "Mechthild's book, although it also has a didactic function, is much more differentiated in its profile…but […] Mechthild is always careful not to undermine the authority of the established Church" (Andersen, 41).

Andersen also remarks that, while one can consider Marguerite's book "mystagogical", Mechthild's book cannot in the same way, something that becomes more apparent with her consideration of *Erlebnismystik* and the connection between experience and the source for composition of the *bůch.*

[667] Ibid., 186.

[668] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 32.

[669] *Flowing Light,* 62.

in the persona of the author and her spiritual biography. The two dominant
structural features of the book are the interface between Mechthild and
God on the one hand and Mechthild and her contemporaries on the other.[670]

Gisela Vollman-Profe, secondary editor and translator of the most recent edition of *Flowing
Light*, came to a similar conclusion about the role of Mechthild as author and the significance of
a "spiritual biography" in the composition of the text.[671] Sara Poor contradicts the
"*Autorengestalt*" ("author figure or persona") in Mechthild's *bŭch*, highlighting the significance
of the female body being "cloaked in text" in Book II, 4. Poor refutes the claim, clarifying that,

> In the vision of the mass, Mechthild's negotiation of the problem of authority
> proves to be closely linked with the problem of the female body. Because
> the discovery of and interaction with God in the soul happens in the body,
> the body becomes the site where the drama of the mystical relationship must
> take place.[672]

In Sara Poor's reading, the question of authority extends to a physical body and, through the
process of composition, becomes a physical text and not the elusive "persona of the author".
While I discuss Poor's research at more length in the next section, I find her argument the most
persuasive, in contrast to Andersen's consideration of Mechthild's authorship and its portrayal.

The question of Mechthild's role as an author and the literarization of her soul within the
text leads Andersen to interpret *The Flowing Light* as "double-voiced" and polyphonic because
both "[Mechthild] and God are the authors of it."[673] The dialogic element in Mechthild's *bŭch* is
undeniable, a point that we saw in the preface/prologue to Book I. However, the understanding
of *The Flowing Light* as double-voiced is far more complex than a dialogic interplay between
textualized voices. As Andersen notes,

> There are chapters in this book [Book 2], and indeed in subsequent books,
> where it is not always apparent whether we are meant to interpret the
> speaker of the passage as God or Mechthild, as there are no *verba dicendi*
> or *cogitandi* ['words of saying or thinking'] to introduce the passage.[674]

The lack of distinction between the voice of the divine and that of earthly author defies the more
comfortable division between speaker and addressee. As we have seen with Hadewijch, the
conflation between divine and mystic constitutes a particular role within the act of *unio mystica*
and, more extremely, in perfect fruition (in Hadewijch *ghebruken,* in Mechthild *ghebruchunge*).
Kurt Ruh remarks upon the use of *gebruchunge* in *Flowing Light* and its connection to another
term in Book I, Chapters 21 and 44: *bekantnisse* (knowledge, cognition, thought).[675] *bekantnisse,*
according to Ruh, corresponds with the remembrance of and meditation upon the moments of
union with the divine (*unio mystica*), without which the full appreciation and manifestation of

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[670] Ibid., 105.
[671] Cf. Ibid., n. 31.
[672] Poor, *Mechthild,* 159.
[673] Andersen, 111.
[674] Ibid.
[675] Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendlandischen Mystik,* vol. 3, 270.

God's creation could not take place.[676] The merging of voices, of experience with remembrance and meditation, and the translation from inner senses to outer speaks in my mind to a purposeful use of this lack of definition; a melding between the inner and outer bodies, the divine and soul.

However, a lack of distinction between speakers or voices within a text may in fact signify several things. The desire for unity with the Godhead—merging of soul/inner body and divine—is not uncommon in beguine mystical writings, but there also exists a sense of continuation with the larger narrative of human salvation and the teachings of the scriptures. "Heteroglossia" or "intertextuality" denotes dialogue between texts, references interwoven that may take the form of direct citations or simply elude to a passage or concept in another piece of writing. Much like Hadewijch, Mechthild's *bŭch* is multi-referential and polyphonic,[677] meaning that the dialogic elements expand beyond occurrences of dialogue between two or more voices within the text. "Polyphonic", as derived by Bakhtin, eludes to the layering of personalities and/or influences within a text that stem from a variety of writer-speakers. Andersen cites "the eternal voice of God" and the "temporal voice of her editors" as two possible voices that layer into the voicing of the text.[678] As in Hadewijch's corpus, *Flowing Light* draws inspiration and motifs from works in circulation during the period of composition. Andersen successfully demonstrates in her third chapter, "Two Intertextual Voices", the importance of the Psalms and the Song of Songs as sources from which Mechthild drew inspiration.

Andersen remarks early in the chapter that, despite the fact that there exist reflections and meditations upon the writings of contemporary theologians, as well as references to the "wide variety of literary models current in her day", the central "source of reference inspiration remains the Bible."[679] In Andersen's reading, there are two voices that dominate Mechthild's role as author (or in my reading, writer-speaker): an ecstatic-mystical voice and an authoritative prophetic voice.[680] The two voices are represented by the Psalms and the Song of Songs, and Andersen designates the Song of Songs as the central inspiration for the ecstatic-mystical voice and the Psalms for the authoritative prophetic voice.[681] In her modern German translation, Margot Schmidt identifies the biblical references in an index, citing 152 references from the Song of Song of Songs and 149 references to the Psalms.[682] Other references within *Flowing*

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[676] Ruh, *Geschichte,* 268, 269.
Ruh notes that "*bekantnisse,* Erkenntnis als Vorgang und als erfolgte Einsicht, ist das übliche Übersetzungswort von *cognitio,* so auch regelmäßig in den <Revelationes>" (Ibid., 268).

[677] Andersen uses relies upon Bakhtin's terminology for her book, but reads "monologic" and "polyphonic" solely in terms of the position of the author, without reference to genre choice or hybridization that occurs in order to construct the text via these voices.

"Bakhtin uses the terms 'monologic' and 'polyphonic' to describe the position of the author in a novel in terms of how the meaning of the work is transmitted to the reader. In monologic works it is ultimately the author's truth that is conveyed; sometimes a given character may express it, at other times it may be dispersed through a variety of characters. In some works it may not receive direct or explicit expression; nevertheless, the author's truth informs the entire structure of the work, which cannot be comprehended without it. By contrast, in polyphonic works several consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in dialogue. The direct power to mean, which in a monologic work belongs to the author alone, belongs to several voices in a polyphonic work" (Andersen, 90).

[678] Ibid.

[679] Ibid., 148.

[680] Ibid., referencing Margot Schmidt (1988:41).

[681] Ibid.

[682] Ibid., 150, referencing Schmidt (1995: 413).

Light include 309 total references to the four gospels (107 from Matthew, 88 from Luke, 83 from John, and 31 from Mark), as well as 72 references from Revelations.[683]

Psalter references are fairly well distributed across the seven books within Mechthild's *bůch*, with 23 references in Books I, II, III, and V and eight in Book IV with thirteen in Book VI. Book VII, the last section in *Flowing Light*, has the highest number of references to the Psalms with 37 in total. In contrast, the distribution of references from the Song of Songs appears more frequently in Books I, II, and V (54, 31, and 20 respectively), with 16 references in Books II and VII, 11 in Book VI and only eight in Book IV.[684] Andersen admits that these numbers are only approximate due to the fact that most references draw upon imagery and motifs rather than direct citation. In fact, there are only two known direct citations (Book III, 20: 16–17 and Book VII, 35), corresponding with the Song of Songs and the Psalms respectively.[685]

The lack of direct quotation is not surprising. Medieval reading practices, as I have discussed throughout the previous chapters, comprise a mix of forms from listening, quiet reading, and reading aloud. In addition, contemplative reading practices encouraged ecclesiastics and laypersons to reflect upon and internalize key texts, such as the Psalms. Andersen remarks that the Psalter held a central place within public and private worship, with the emphasis on "praise and adoration, repentance, intercession, and petition" in public worship and personal meditation for private.[686] In thirteenth-century Europe, in particular German-speaking regions, both lay religious and cloistered women relied upon the Psalter for daily devotion, and the Psalter was often used to teach reading to the laity.[687] Furthermore, beguines and nuns read through or recited the Psalms weekly in accordance with monastic reading of the Hours, and, as we have seen with Hadewijch's liturgical references, the Psalms were a regularly accessible source of inspiration and meditation.

Meditation practices, in accordance with monastic contemplative reading, also preclude memorization or internalization of the text, a point that weighs heavily in hagiography, specifically in the mention of Psalter memorization in saints during early childhood.[688] As Mary Carruthers and Patricia Dailey have demonstrated, reading, meditation, and memory are highly linked, and the ability to recite or recall a section of text at will was a highly regarded skill during the Middle Ages.[689] Similarly, the Song of Songs—as both text and extensive commentary by Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry—captivated male and female readership during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[690] There is also evidence from the *St.*

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[683] Ibid.

[684] Ibid.

[685] Ibid.

[686] Ibid., 151.

[687] Ibid., 152.

[688] Andersen notes Beatrijs of Nazareth, Juliana of Mont-Cornillon, and Ida of Louvain as three examples of women religious who are associated with the memorization of the entire Psalter at a young age (Andersen 152–3).

[689] "In their understanding of the matter, it was memory that made knowledge into useful experience, and memory that combined these pieces of information-become-experience into what we call "ideas", what they were more likely to call 'judgments'" (Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 2).

"*Memoria* meant, at that time, trained memory, educated and disciplined according to a well-developed pedagogy that was part of the elementary language arts—grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The fundamental principle is to 'divide' the material to be remembered into pieces short enough to be recalled in single units and to key these into some sort of rigid, easily reconstructable order" (Ibid., 8).

[690] Andersen, 154.

Trudperter Hohelied, as well as the numerous references in beguine mystical writings, that the Song of Songs "was considered an appropriate biblical text in the pastoral care and education of nuns" (and I would add beguines).[691]

Andersen posits that the use of the Psalms and the Song of Songs for literary and theological inspiration helped to shape Mechthild's *bůch* into the eclectic mix of genres and thematic motifs that it became. Although the Psalter is depicted as a singular work, scholars have identified various thematic elements—including mixtures of elements—across the 150 Psalms. The Psalms contain forms of "hymns, prayers of various sorts, liturgical pieces, dithyrambic poems, epic poems, moralistic pieces, and religious-philosophic poems."[692] Along similar lines, the Song of Songs "is perhaps best regarded as the result of the skillful compilation of many short poems rather than a work" of "structural unity".[693] Shifting to questions of genre and generic hybridity, based upon the high frequency of references to the Psalms and the Song of Songs, it would seem that Mechthild may have drawn inspiration from these works, not simply on a thematic but also structural level. Andersen states that,

> A further structural feature shared by the Psalter and the Song of Songs, in addition to their compilatory nature, and fundamentally characteristic of both texts is their construction as dialogue.[694]

The presence of diffuse genres interwoven into her *bůch* and the dialogic nature of said genres, it would appear, coincide with the "heteroglossia"—the intertexual references—within the work. However, there is an additional aspect that connects Mechthild's *bůch* with the Psalms and the Songs of Songs: song or lyric.

"Psalm" derives from the Latin *psalmus* through the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *mizmôr*, meaning "song with stringed-music accompaniment".[695] The Psalter later became known as *tᵉhillîm* in Hebrew, meaning "praises or songs of praise, hymns."[696] Similar to Hadewijch's *Liederen* and *Rijmbrieven*, the undercurrent of oration (*oratio*) as song and praise remains a crucial aspect throughout Mechthild's *bůch*. References to music coincide with dialogues between the soul and the divine, especially in terms to describe the role which the soul/Mechthild holds within *Flowing Light*. Book III, 2: 11-13 God explains to the writer-speaker,

> *Du bist ein lieht vor minen ogen, du bist ein lire vor minen oren, du bist ein stimme miner worten* (III, 2: 11-13).[697]

> [You are a light for my eyes, you are a lyre/harp for my ears, you are a voice of my words.][698]

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[691] Ibid., 155.

[692] Ibid., 158, citing Kittel (1959: 325).

[693] Ibid., 157.

[694] Ibid., 159.

[695] Ibid., 163, n. 39.

[696] Ibid.

[697] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 79.

[698] *Flowing Light,* 107.

The above citation resonates with not only the ongoing "light" imagery, of which even the title of the *bůch* makes abundantly clear, but also with the importance of song in conjunction with praise (i.e. the Psalms and the Song of Songs) and the source of information or inspiration: Mechthild as the voice for the divine. Oral forms—speech genres á la Bakhtin—weigh heavily within Mechthild's *bůch*, which Andersen noted, along with numerous other scholars, in terms of the dialogic nature of the text. However, speech and song, with their heavy use of first- and second-person singular and plural forms are intrinsic to the genres employed with *Flowing Light* as well.

As her primary textual example, Andersen references Book III, Chapter 20, which provides explicit evidence that Mechthild was aware of the ascribed authors of the Psalms and the Song of Songs. In this chapter, Mechthild refers to the five "*liehten"* [lights] of her *bůch,* naming Kings David and Solomon as two sources of „*lieht.*" As the second light, King David is listed, "*Kúnig David ist in diesem bůche das ander lieht mit dem salter"* [King David is the second light in this book with the Psalter] (III, 20: 12). What is more the role of David as author-composer and teacher is emphasized, when Mechthild describes that he "*leret und klaget, bittet, manet und got lobet"* [teaches us and laments, pleads, exhorts and praises God] (III, 20: 12-13). Mirroring the generic categorization found within the Psalms, the function of the text and the actions of the writer-speaker are parallel, a point that, due to the connection to Mechthild's *bůch* as one of its "*liehten*" provides textual evidence to a knowledge of the importance of function and desired affective response by the reader-listener. It is also significant to recognize the role of the naming of these *liehten* and the recalling of their books: King David is the second light "with the Psalter" [*mit dem salter*] through which he teaches us [*da ine er vns leret*].

With the example of Solomon, the third light of the five, the connection between text, writer-speaker, and name (of both book and prophet) becomes even more profound:

> *Salomones wort lúhtend und sine werk nit, wan er selber vervinstert ist, in*
> *dem bůche canticis, da dú brut so trunken kuene vunden ist und der*
> *brútegôme so rehte noetlich ir zuo sprichet: du bist alles schoene, min*
> *fruendine und kein flekke ist an dir* (III, 20: 13-15).[699]

> [Solomon's words illumine—but not his deeds, for he is himself darkened—
> from the book of songs, where the bride is found to be so drunkenly bold
> and the bridegroom says to her so passionately: "You are so exquisitely
> beautiful, my Darling, and there is no flaw in you."][700]

Solomon is named by way of his words that "shine in the book Canticles (i.e. Song of Songs)" [*lúhtend…in dem bůche canticis*], establishing the distinction between known work or book and the person who penned that verse. By designating them *propheten* and their books as *liehten*, Mechthild skillfully reminds the reader-listener of the memory [*memoria*] from biblical narrative and tradition. With the use of a direct quotation from Song of Songs [*du bist alles schoene, min fruendine und kein flekke ist an dir*], makes allusions to both her knowledge of Solomon's book and cites the inspiration for her own writings; the re-calling of verse from memory is a sign of the internalization of the text, its wisdom, and guidance. Furthermore, referring to the Song of Songs as a book [*bůch*], I argue, lays claim to Mechthild's use of *bůch,* not simply as a label but as the genre of her writing akin to the Psalter and the Song of Songs.

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[699] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 99–100.
[700] *Flowing Light*, 127.

In this section, I have outlined a few of the numerous arguments from Elizabeth Andersen's *The Voice of Mechthild of Magdeburg*. Central to the discussion is the ways in which genre, genre choice, and "heteroglossia" weave (*texere*) together a narrative with several lines of thought and modes of expression. Pinpointing the dialogic nature of *Flowing Light*, Andersen sought to illuminate the importance of textual voicing and intertextual reference within what may initially appear a diffuse and highly varied grouping of texts. Andersen argues that sole unifying factor of *Flowing Light* lies within the persona of the author and her spiritual biography. In the next section on Sara Poor's research, another line of argumentation is followed, specifically the importance of the body for the text and as text. As we have seen previously in Patricia Dailey's scholarship, reading the body and reading the text are complimentary actions and infused with contemplative reading practices and *memoria.*

III.   *Dis bůch:* Genres, Body (*Corpus*) and Text

In 2004, Sara Poor published *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority*, which comprised an incredible amount of paleographic research and journeyed far into the history of the text itself. In the beginning of her book, Poor articulated that authorship is a central problem not only for Mechthild but also for most of her readers, translators, and editors.[701] On the one hand, editors have presented the book as a message from God sent to a holy maiden. This portrayal causes debate concerning the connection between the literary representation of Mechthild as author of the text and a 'real' historical Mechthild. On the other hand, modern feminist scholars have championed Mechthild's authorship as a moment of patriarchal resistance. While the one extreme chooses a literal reading of the text that removes Mechthild from the text yet also attributes her authorship, the feminist scholars elevate the performance of gender and its modern connotations to a level that often sits in contrast to the contemporaneous and personal writer-speaker's experience as a woman during the period. Notably, Poor sees Ursula Peters' monograph (1989) primarily as a reaction to the feminist literature of the period, yet it still promulgated an extreme interpretation of *Flowing Light*. In fact, Ursula Peters argues that Mechthild should be viewed more as a fictional personality than the author of all statements in the text, and that scholars must assess the validity of the experiential recordings within *Flowing Light*.[702] Poor acknowledges Peters' work to have done the field of history "a great service" by reminding scholars of the danger when speculation is taken as fact merely because enough scholars have accepted the theory. Despite this acknowledgement, Poor promotes a reading somewhere between the extremes of literal and allegorical readings of the text; she reads the *bůch* as represented in the extant transmissions, while retaining a certain degree of skepticism.

Throughout the monograph, Poor focuses on the complicated manuscript traditions, with particular emphasis on the excerpts that appear in *Sprachsammlungen* and compilations of mystical works.[703] The fragmented history of *Flowing Light* causes Poor to investigate the idea

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[701] Poor, *Mechthild*, 1.

[702] Ibid., 11.

[703] With the more recent discovery of the Moscow fragments, Poor revised her previous argument that there were "traditions", and points to the fact that there is now textual evidence to support the circulation of *Flowing Light* in both its German and Latin translations to the Erfurt-Central German region.

of authorship within the text. Poor concludes that the persistence of a single-author mentality is a modern attribution to the text that denies potential alterations to the text over time.[704] The fact that there are minimal examples of "original" manuscript texts written by the author suggests that there may be multiple voices of one text: the initial creator of the text, the copyist(s), and the translator (when applicable). As we have seen with Elizabeth Andersen's scholarship, the presence of various voices or textual influences presents the potential for layering of speakers within the text. From modern genre theory, Derrida provides guidance in the presentation of this phenomenon with "invagination" and the presence of *les pli* (folds) in the text. While the overarching premise and genre(s) of the text remain stable to a certain degree, "invagination" and ellipsis signify the possibility and presence of other readings folded within the text itself. I would argue, therefore, that these voices are, rather than constructs that obstruct or emend the text's interior function and message, supplement its overall textual body, working as layers (to use Bakhtin's analyses).

Whereas Andersen aligns the dialogic nature of Mechthild's *bůch* with intertextual voices from the scriptures, Poor provides significant evidence to dialogisms that permeate *Flowing Light* due to its transmission history and the changing shape of the text's function over the course of the later Middle Ages. Relying upon more recent scholarship, namely "Transmission and Impact" by Sara Poor and articles and a monograph by Balázs J. Nemes, *Von der Schrift zum Buch—von Ich zum Autor*, I now outline the history of the embodied text as seen in the transmission history as a means to illustrate yet another level upon which *Flowing Light* is dialogic and aware of its readership.

Transmission History

Mechthild's *bůch* is transmitted in nineteen manuscripts. There are at least two substantial Latin translations (containing Books I though VI)[705] and one complete transmission of the text (Books I through VII) in a Middle High German text of the Alemannic dialect. The Middle High German transmission is also a translation of Mechthild's text, and scholars initially believed the original was written in Middle Low German because Magdeburg is located in northeastern Germany and some textual evidence of Middle Low German forms within metered sections. More recently, the discovery of a fragment in Moscow has altered previous scholarship on the proposed language of *Flowing Light,* because of the early date of this fragment (c. 1300) and its mix of Middle Low and High German characteristics.[706] Although a Latin translation of *Flowing Light* began during Mechthild's lifetime, Hans Neumann transformed previous scholarship with his assertion that the Middle High German translation (Ms. E) was closer to the

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Sara Poor, "Transmission and Impact", in *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages,* eds. Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähemann, and Anne Simon (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 87.

[704] Poor, *Mechthild,* 10.

[705] Balázs Nemes in his work as co-editor of *Lux divinitatis* and in his monograph has uncovered three additional transmissions of the Latin translation.

[706] Poor, "Transmission", 83.
The discussion of the most recent German fragment is discussed at length in the following article: Natalja Ganina and Catherine Squires, "Ein Textzeuge des "Fließenden Lichts der Gottheit' von Mechthild von Magdeburg aus dem 13. Jahrhundert: Moskau, Bibl. der Lomonossow-Universität, Dokumentensammlung Gustav Schmidt, Fonds 40/1, Nr. 47", *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 139 (2010): 64–86.

archetype than the Latin translations (Mss. Ra and Rb).[707] The basis for Neumann's argument is the lack of Book VII in the Latin translations, as well as a complete reorganization of the chapters in order of thematic similarities.[708] Another significant difference between the Latin and Middle High German translation is the apparent omission by the Dominican translators of the Latin text of seemingly erotic imagery concerning Christ and opinions contradictory to orthodox Christian dogma.[709] For this reason, some scholars, including Ursula Peters and Sara Poor, speculate on the extent of Mechthild's own voice within the work, while others (Hans Neumann) contend that the "real" Mechthild only speaks through the vernacular translation.

The disappearance of the original manuscript leaves a void between both traditions because there is no way to demonstrate concretely the original language or text arrangement (i.e. chapter organization) that Mechthild intended for the text.[710] In fact, the precise wording that Mechthild may have used eludes modern scholars because *Flowing Light* survives *only* in translation and resulted from circulating copies of the text, which increases the probability of alteration to the text. Modern scholars are already distanced temporally from Mechthild and her text, but the gaps in the manuscript tradition make it virtually impossible to place *Flowing Light* within its historical context. Around the time Mechthild retreated to the convent at Helfta (c. 1270), the Dominican monastery at Halle obtained a copy of the first six of seven books. These six books were then rearranged according to subject matter and translated, a process that began during Mechthild's lifetime and were completed sometime before 1298.[711]. Copies of this text would establish the provenance for Mss. Ra and Rb, which were created in the area of Basel. Ms. Rb dates from about the middle of the fourteenth century, while Ra is from approximately the early fifteenth century.[712] Both manuscripts contain Books I through VI, although the chapter organization in Rb is thematic and differs from both Ra and the Einsiedeln manuscript. The fact that only Books I through VI were brought to the monastery at Halle for translation suggests that they arrived about the time Mechthild arrived at Helfta and certainly before her death/completion of the text.[713] Scholars argue that Mechthild most likely completed Book VI prior to her arrival at Helfta.

Contemporaneous Circulation

There is textual evidence of possible circulation groupings for the Low German copies during Mechthild's lifetime. The prologue, for example, only includes the contents of Books I through V and may have comprised one grouping. Within the text, there are two examples of statements, which appear to act as a concluding sentence for the work. A comment in the last chapter of Book IV—"This book was begun in love, it shall also end in love" [*Dis bůch ist begonnen in der minne, es sol ŏch enden in der minne*]—hints that these books may also have been circulated as a unit.[714] Another sentence at the end of Book II, asking for the protection for

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[707] Hans Neumann, "Beiträge zur Textgeschichte des "fliessenden Lichts der Gottheit" und zur Lebensgeschichte Mechthilds von Magdeburg", in *Altdeutsche und altniederländische Mystik*, ed. Kurt Ruh, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 176.

[708] Neumann, „Beiträge", 176.

[709] Ibid.

[710] Sara S. Poor, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 2.

[711] Ibid.

[712] *Flowing Light*, 9.

[713] Poor, *Mechthild,* 79.

[714] Ibid., 80.

all who copy and read the book, comprises a third circulation possibility.[715] Therefore, the manuscript taken to Halle for translation may have actually been a compilation of the circulating "editions" available at the time.[716] Considering the number of "editions" and circulation units, Mechthild most likely received a degree of authority preceding and following her retreat to Helfta. The sisters at Helfta apparently saw Mechthild as a spiritual advisor and an authority on mysticism, suggesting that they had access to her book.[717] Although Mechthild's work may have been popular during her lifetime, no transmission in Middle Low German survives today. It has been suggested that the missing Low German edition may have been lost from the library at Helfta within years of Mechthild's death due to warring nobles who often invaded the convent.[718] There is also the possibility that her work was suppressed or banned following the Council of Vienne in 1312 due to Mechthild's association with the beguine movement and her criticism of church leaders in Magdeburg. It would also explain why *Flowing Light* survives primarily as excerpts in mystical compilations without any reference to Mechthild's name. As a potentially controversial figure, her work appears to have survived in fragments that retained no reference to Mechthild as the author or the title of her work. In a way, the "disappearance" of *Flowing Light* illuminates the hesitation that some scribes and writers may have felt to associate themselves with Mechthild. Yet the fact that fragments of Mechthild's work remained in circulation also attests to its importance. At the same time, scholars are able to appreciate the significance of these fragments because a full edition of Mechthild's *bůch* exists, albeit in the Alemannic dialect.

Codex Einsiedlensis 277: Vernacular Transmission

The Middle High German edition is the only complete transmission and is located in the library of Einsiedeln (the Bibliothek des Benediktinerstiftes). Codex Einsiedelnsis stems from the area around Basel due to Heinrich von Nördlingen and his acquaintances, who undertook the task of translating and circulating the text after a transmission in a German dialect fell into Nördlingen's hands. In many ways, the history of Codex 277 in Einsiedeln begins with Heinrich von Nördlingen, a priest active in modern-day southwestern Germany and Switzerland during the fourteenth century.[719] In a letter to the Dominican nun Margaret Ebner in 1345, Nördlingen discusses *The Flowing Light* and states that a copy will be sent to her upon translation from a "*fremde*" German into the Alemannic dialect of Middle High German.[720]

Ich send euch ain buch das haisst Das liecht der gothait....wan es mir das

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[715] Ibid.

[716] Ibid.

[717] "*Ir wellent lere haben von mir und ich selber ungeleret bin. Des ir ie gerent, das vindent ir tusentvalt in úweren bůchen*" ["You wish to have instruction from me though I myself am unlearned. All that you could ever wish for, you will find a thousandfold in your books" (translation emended)] (VII, 21: 2–3) (Poor, *Mechthild,* 81).

[718] "Two years after Mechthild's death, for example, Gebhardt of Mansfeld violently invaded the cloister with a band of followers. In 1342, Albert of Brunswick invaded Helfta with a large army over a dispute about his failed election to the episcopacy. He set fire to the convent and his men destroyed books, vestments, and whatever else they could find. These two invasions alone could account for the loss of any manuscripts the nuns may have had, the complete Low German version...among them" (Poor, *Mechthild,* 81).

[719] Poor, *Mechthild,* 2.

[720] *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, Transl. Frank Tobin, (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 78.

lustigistz tützsch ist und das innerlichst rürend minenschosz, das ich in tützscher
sprach ie gelas. ...und wolchiü wort ir nit verstandint, die zeichend und
schribentz mir, so betützsch ichs euch, wan es ward uns gar in fremdem
tützsch gelichen, das wir wol zwai jar flisz und arbeit hetint, ee wirs ain
wenig in unser tützsch brachtint.[721]

[I am sending you a book which is called '*The Flowing Light of the Godhead*'
…It is the most wonderful German and the most profoundly touching fruit
of love that I have ever read of in the German language…and those words
that you do not understand you should mark and send to me, I will explain
them to you. For it was handed down to us in a most unfamiliar German so
that we had to spend a good two years of hard work and effort before we could
put it a little more into our own German.[722]]

The fact that Nördlingen translated from a foreign dialect of German connects his translation
directly to a manuscript in a dialect other than that of Alemannic, possibly one from a more
northern region, such as Magdeburg. Nördlingen would have considered the dialect '*fremd*' due
to the distant differences between the dialects in southern regions and that of the North (Middle
Low German, Low German, and Middle Dutch). Recent research on the language of the northern
German-speaking area has "[determined] that few of the numerous linguistic influences in
evidence could be identified with precision."[723] The dialect spoken within the area of Magdeburg
displays not only aspects of Middle Dutch, but also Central German dialects, causing a mélange
of elements that are not easy to classify definitively.[724]

 This letter also illustrates the provenance of the Einsiedeln manuscript and the Basel
manuscript tradition that occurred in the Alemannic region. Nördlingen's statement in the letter
credits Nördlingen with the accessibility of *Flowing Light* via his Alemannic translation. Had
Nördlingen not translated the text and circulated it to his female charges in the regions around
Basel, it is unlikely that a complete vernacular transmission would exist today. It is a
transmission of Nördlingen's translation that survives in Einsiedeln. As Poor has noted, although
the Einsiedeln manuscript was "translated" into the Middle High German Alemannic dialect,
there still exists remnants of the original linguistic mixture in what we suppose might have been
in the previous transmissions from the Magdeburg and surrounding areas.[725]

 The provenance of the Einsiedeln manuscript is closely tied to Heinrich von Nördlingen
because of his acquaintance, Heinrich von Rumerschein, priest at St. Peter in Basel and
confessor to women of the area. Affixed to Cod. Einsiedelnsis 277 is a letter from Heinrich von
Rumerschein advising the "forest sisters", beguines living in the front meadow of the upper

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[721] Philipp Strauch, *Margaretha Ebner und Heinrich von Nördlingen*, (Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers N.V., 1966), 246.

[722] Margot Schmidt, "An Example of Friendship: The Correspondence Between Heinrich of Nördlingen and Margaretha Ebner", in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. Ulrike Wiethaus, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 75–6.

[723] Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 79.

[724] Ibid.
Poor notes that scholars have compared copies of the same text that were written only 40 kilometers apart and the documents displayed "significant linguistic differences" (Ibid.).

[725] "*Das fliessende Licht* itself, as it has survived in Middle High German, displays remnants of this linguistic mix; the text also exhibits Middle Dutch, Middle Low, and Central German accents. The Central German elements appear more frequently in the more lyrical sections" (Ibid.).

reaches of the valley near Einsiedeln, on the circulation and perusal of the manuscript.[726] Rumerschein also mentions in his letter that the codex belonged formally to "*der zem Guldin Ringe*", who was identified by Hans Neumann as Margareta zum goldenen Ring.[727] Margareta was a friend of Heinrich von Nördlingen living in Basel, who became a beguine later in life and willed her possessions to the Dominicans in Basel in 1376.[728] Heinrich von Rumerschein was her confessor, linking Rumerschein closely to the movement of Ms. E between beguine communities and to the history of the manuscript itself. As late as the sixteenth century, the Einsiedeln manuscript still belonged to the Einsiedeln beguines, and it is a local chaplain for these women who includes a statement of their ownership on the first folio: *Diss bůch gehörtt in dass Schwesterhuss zuo Einsidlen* [This book belongs to the sisterhouse at Einsiedeln].[729] The chaplain then signed his name (*Anthony Mathiae Caplan zuo Attighausen*) and adds a title before the prologue on the recto of the second folio: *Von der Offenbarungen einer liebhabenden Seele*.[730] The close proximity of the "Waldschwestern" to the Benedictine monastery in Einsiedeln is most likely the explanation for the transference of Ms. E to that particular library and not to a Dominican monastery. It may very well be that the "Waldschwestern" left their possessions to the nearby monastery upon their death, albeit to a Benedictine and not a Dominican library.

Yet the history of the Einsiedeln manuscript also reveals important information about the development of Mechthild's *bůch* and the possible ways in which the text circulated prior to its translation. For example, the Latin prologue of the Einsiedeln manuscript is from an unidentified author, and the index of the chapters according to subject refers only to Books I through V. Neumann argues that the author of the prologue and the other scribes were aware of only this section of the text, yet this does not coincide with the complete text found in Codex 277.[731] The Middle High German translation of the Latin prologue included in the text introduction is by no means a literal translation and provides perhaps an excellent example for the alteration of the entire text via translation into Middle High German (i.e. the method of translation employed by the scribes and/or Heinrich von Nördlingen). Perhaps for this reason, there is a debate concerning the proximity of the Einsiedeln manuscript to the original created at Helfta. Apart from "the Basel tradition" of *Flowing Light*, no other transmissions of the text provide evidence for the history of the text following its creation until its appearance in Basel.[732] Yet it is important again to note the "disappearance" of *Flowing Light* from the manuscript tradition, despite many claims that the text achieved considerable popularity during and following Mechthild's lifetime.

Poor devotes two chapters in her monograph to the transmission history of Mechthild's *bůch*, implying not only the importance of the extant manuscripts and fragments for modern readers, but also the inherent way in which the text's function shifts over time. Paleographical research, therefore, sheds light upon the form and function of a work, as we have seen with Hadewijch's corpus and Ms. C in the previous chapter. Poor notes that,

> The exchange of books and conversation evident in Heinrich of Nördlingen's
> letters and in the ownership history of the Einsiedeln manuscript is emblematic
> of the dialogic exchange that structured devotional life and the texts that

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[726] Tobin, 10.
[727] Ibid.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Poor, *Mechthild,* 93.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Tobin, 10.
[732] Ibid., 9.

promoted it.[733]

Similar to Andersen, Poor cites the Song of Songs as "the most dialogic book of the vulgate Bible", but also the fact that it became increasingly popular during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, leading to translations into the vernacular.[734] As we saw in the previous section on Andersen's *Voices,* speech forms that express suggestions of orality (e.g. hymns, prayers, songs of praise, etc.) play heavily within the generic forms in *Flowing Light.* On a further level, these speech genres establish a direct connection with the reader-listener through contemplative reading practices. As Walter Haug has argued, "the mystical dialogue" found in *Flowing Light* "opens the way to a renewed mystical encounter even though, as speech, it cannot represent or actualize the encounter itself."[735]

Speech genres, in particular secondary forms according to Bakhtin, exist solely in the text, as they are representations of and meditations upon primary speech acts that are present in everyday speech. In turn, Poor suggests, the dialogic nature of the text and the direct address between writer-speaker and reader-listener compels further dialogue or conversation that extends beyond the page. These "unseen" dialogues, while at times made seen through marginalia in extant manuscripts or "heteroglossia" in other writings (i.e. Heinrich von Nördlingen's letters, references to Mechthild's *bůch* in other texts, etc.), embody *les pli*, the "invagination" of the text, as outlined by Derrida. Poor notes that,

> While the dominant form in *The Flowing Light* is dialogue, the book also facilitated dialogue with and among its medieval readers, the conversation we "overhear" when we examine devotional anthologies. Indeed, the transmission of Mechthild's book tells us that the act of reading can itself be conceived of as part of a dialogue.[736]

Reading, Poor explains, becomes dialogue, suggesting an active rather than passive consumption of the text. Her point falls in line, not only with the contemplative reading practices encouraged during the medieval period, but also shape, form, and function of *Flowing Light* itself. In the next section, the body (corpus) of the text and writer-speaker converge in the vision of the mass (Book II, 4), highlighting not only the significance of composition and reading, but the nature of the two bodies and their part within the larger story of salvation and *unio mystica.*

Corpus, Body, and Text: Book II, 4

Based upon the textual evidence, scholars believe that Mechthild began to receive visions around the age of twelve. yet it is not until around 1250 (some thirty years later) that Mechthild finally reveals her mystical experiences to her confessor. Her confessor assures her of the validity of her visions and pushes her to record them in writing (IV 2, 128-33). During the next ten years, the first five books of *Flowing Light* are believed to have been formulated under the guidance of her confessor, whom Hans Neumann identifies as the Dominican monk, Heinrich von Halle. It is believed that Mechthild composed her treatise as the mood compelled her on

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[733] Poor, *Mechthild,* 94.
[734] Ibid.
[735] Ibid., 95. Haug is cited in Poor.
[736] Ibid.

loose sheets of parchment.[737] Some scholars argue that these sheets were collected and preserved by Heinrich von Halle who may have organized the pages into the order found in the Einsiedeln manuscript. Over the course of the following decade, Mechthild completed Book VI, although there is minimal textual evidence in reference to writing this section of her text. Around 1270, Mechthild enters the Cistercian convent at Helfta and remains there until her death in 1282/1287, completing Book VII during this time.[738]

The question of Mechthild's authorship also challenges modern scholars to separate the present definition of an author and authorship with that of the medieval period. Whereas modern scholarship draws a distinct line between the work of the author and that of previous scholarship, that line was often neither distinct nor existent in the Middle Ages. As Sara Poor points out, the modern word "author" stems from the Latin noun "*auctores*", meaning authority, but there existed no medieval equivalent to the modern definition of the word. Throughout *Flowing Light*, Mechthild displays concern about the authority of her text and the validity of her visions. In response to her concern, God is represented as replying that her text is her authority.

The vision of the mass, Book II, 4, houses ample imagery and symbolism concerning the difficulty of female authorship and authority during the thirteenth century. Poor cites the vision as not only a response to or navigation around proposing a woman as teacher and preacher, but also "the cultural meanings of the female body circulating at this time."[739] In Poor's reading, the location of "the discovery of and interaction with God in the soul happens in the body", and because of this fact, "the body becomes the site where the drama of the mystical relationship must take place."[740] In the vision of the mass, a poor maid [*eine arme dirne*] is unwell and cannot attend mass, but through divine intervention she is transported to a beautiful church [*ein schoene kilchen*].

> *In dirre begerunge benam ir got alle ir irdensche sinne und brahte si*
> *wunderlich hin in ein schoene kilchen* (II, 4:9-10).[741]

> [In this desire God took from her all her earthly senses and brought her
> miraculously into a beautiful church.][742]

The process of "taking away earthly senses" parallels to the language from Hadewijch's *Visioenenbuch,* depicting a shift from the corporeal understanding and senses to the spiritual or inner ones. Similar to Hadewijch, the loss of outer senses also marks the transportation to a different setting, in this case a church where mass will take place.

As Poor notes, the voicing in the vision of the mass is careful and distanced, with Mechthild as writer-speaker fulfilling the role of third-person narrator within the episode. However, despite the fairly common use of dialogue throughout *Flowing Light,* here the reader-listener is viewing the scene from the outside, along with Mechthild. This distanced perspective,

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[737] Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 78.

[738] Although Helfta followed the Cistercian Rule, it was never formally accepted into the Cistercian Order. For this reason, many scholars refer to the convent near Eisleben as Benedictine (Andersen, 77).

[739] Poor, *Mechthild,* 58.

[740] Ibid., 59.

[741] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 41.

[742] *Flowing Light,* 72 (emended).

I would argue, corresponds with the reality that *Flowing Light* was composed only after the visions—and in fact many visions and interactions with the divine—took place, signifying, I believe, the presence of reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) of this experience as text. Mechthild recalls the vision from the outside, reading it through the expanse of time and following the rumination upon the symbolic force of its images. Reading, as we will see, plays a prominent role within this vision on several levels.

The church begins to fill with notable figures from biblical tradition, such as John the Evangelist and St. Peter. The increased bodies within the church force the poor maid become aware of her inability to adhere to a particular group or place in the church.

> *Do kame in grossú schar, das was das kreftige gesinde des himelriches, und*
> *fulleten die kilchen also vol, das die arme dirne dekeine stat konde vinden,*
> *da si bliben moehte* (II, 4:31-33)[743]

> [There came a great host that was the powerful company of heaven, and they
> filled the church so full that the poor maid could find no place in which she
> could remain.][744]

The full capacity of the church motivates the maid to search out other areas, leading her to a tower area away from the altar. There too she is overwhelmed by three large groups, each of whom signify those who portray good will and intent, all of whom are already in heaven. After encountering these groups, the perspective within the vision shifts and the maid reflects upon the state of her garments [*úbel gekleidet*] and her body [*krank am libe*][745], causing her to recognize herself as unfit to remain in any of those groups.

As the vision progresses, the maid moves back to the nave of the church where she finds saints, angels, and the Virgin Mary along with notable female saints from the Middle Ages, Cecilia and Catherine. Again, the maid pauses to wonder at the appropriateness of her attendance in the presence of such revered and respected figures:

> *Do dirre arme mensche dise grosse herschaft gesach, do besach si ovch sich*
> *selben, eb si bliben getoerste vor ir snoedekeit* (II, 4: 46-48).[746]

> [Then the poor person saw this great group, she then viewed herself as well,
> if she should dare remain due to her wretchedness.][747]

The poor maid remarks her dress, status, and overall condition in comparison to others within the church. Her actions signify, in my eyes, an awareness of the situation, a socialized awareness that can only takes place when one "reads" the situation at hand. In addition, when "she viewed herself as well" [*do besach si ovch sich selben*] layers a sense of self-referentiality to the figure, but only one that occurs when the narrating voice obtains the omniscient role in the text.

Sara Poor reads this excerpt as reflecting "a sense of awe in the presence of so many holy men and women but also a response to the clerical apprehension about women's presence in

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[743] Poor, *Mechthild,* 66.

[744] Ibid.

[745] Book II, 4: 43–44; cited in Poor, *Mechthild,* 67.

[746] Ibid.

[747] Ibid., translation altered slightly.

sacred spaces."[748] In conjunction with her argument from the previous chapter, this conclusion is both logical and supportive of her overarching thesis in the monograph. For my purposes, however, I view this as a conflicted reading between the experience of the inner body and soul within the vision and the outer body/writer-speaker reflecting upon the experience in the process of composition and meditation. "Seeing" and "sight", as we have seen with the discussion on Augustine's classification of visions, lies with the more corporally-based visions (*visio corporalis*). Reading the vision and the inner body performing within said vision constructs a further layer, one that, with the presence of Mechthild as third-person narrator, took place between the divine intervention and the composition: the embodying of the text in its physical form.

What occurs next in the vision ties embodied text, inner body, and reading into direct dialogue. Upon noticing her dejected state in the church, the maid finds herself transformed in both garments and bodily appearance. As Poor describes,

> To the maid's surprise, though, she sees herself suddenly transformed: She wears a beautiful crimson cloak adorned with gold and embroidered with a love song. She looks like one of the noble virgins and is crowned by a garland of gold on which another song is inscribed. Further, her face suddenly resembles the face of an angel.[749]

When the maid transforms, the reader-listener is made aware that it is not solely the cloak that alters but her countenance (i.e. outward appearance). The presence of text embroidered upon the cloak and the garland are excerpts from Book II, 2 in *Flowing Light.* Cloaking the body in holy vestiges represents only one level of the change that occurs to the maid, the text (*textus*) woven (*texere*) into the very fabric of the signs of holiness reveal a connection between the divine word as text and the body clothed by those words. Again, the reaction of the maid is accounted in the vision, stating,

> *Owe ich unselig phuol, wie ist mir nu geschehen? Joch bin ich leidor so selig nit, als ich mich da han gesehen* (II, 4: 55-56).[750]

> [Alas, I foul puddle, what has happened then to me? Unfortunately, I am not so blessed as I have seen myself there.][751]

The reaction from the maid layers another perspective, or gaze, as Poor calls it, to the vision, complicating the distinction between third-person narrator and the maid in the vision.[752] On the one hand, the mix of tenses increases the confusion between voices with the use of present indicative ["ich bin"] and perfect tenses ["ist…geschehen" and "han gesehen"]. The perfect tense

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[748] Poor, *Mechthild,* 67.

[749] Ibid.

[750] Ibid.

[751] Ibid., translation slightly emended.

[752] "As the narrator describes the maid experiencing the vision of the church, the reader 'sees' the maid among the impressive throngs of people in a large church. Suddenly, however, the maid having the vision sees *herself* in the church, adopting the perspective of the narrator. Thus not only are we faced with the ambiguity of who is speaking, as discussed earlier, but also we must consider whose gaze is being presented to the reader, who is seeing whom" (Poor, *Mechthild,* 68).

use of "see" [gesehen] hints that time has passed between the vision and the composition, a chance to meditate on the meaning depicted therein; an ability to read the experience of the inner body before embodying it in text.

On the other hand, the reflexive "*als ich mich da han gesehen*" demonstrates the complex nature of the writer-speaker and participant within the vision. The writer-speaker, in this instance, views herself acting within the vision, opening up the possibility that she is re-calling and re-collecting the experience of the inner body with the divine via meditation. Therefore, the body of the text as *textus* and the body of the mystic as *lichame* or Latin *corpus* merges within the embodied text where she finds not only the ability to read and re-read her inner body's experience, but also reenact the teachings of the divine for the reader-listener. Furthermore, this utterance from the maid, whom Poor deems "the new narrator", reveals a lyric quality, depicted through its similar line endings of "*geschehen*" and "*gesehen*", but also in the mirrored structure of a dependent clause combined with a main clause. Lyric qualities, as seen in Andersen's research, corresponds with a musical element, to the Psalms and the hymn- and song-like qualities they possess. Read in correspondence with the setting of the vision within the church, a lyrical element—whether song of praise, hymn, or psalm recitation—establishes a layering of genres between liturgy of the mass, vision (*visio*), direct address, and the narrating voice.

Reading takes yet another form with the inscriptions on the garland and the cloak, as well as highlighting the lyrical element of Mechthild's prose and *bůch* as a whole:

> *Der mantel was gezieret mit golde und ovch mit einem liede…ich sturbe gerne von minnen* (II, 4: 50-51).[753]

> [The cloak was adorned with gold and also with a song…I would gladly die from love.][754]

lied holds the ambiguity of both potentially lyric (i.e. poem) or a type of song. The fact that the maid, as the new narrator, reads an excerpt from the text embroidered upon her cloak situates textual reference within the text, causing a textual awareness of itself through this citation. *Flowing Light* thus speaks dialogically not only to the reader-listener, but also to itself through intertextual references within its pages. On another level, the symbolism for the cloak, deeply entrenched within the theology and imagery of the New Testament, bodes well with the preparations that precipitate the "wedding" of bride and bridegroom, soul and divine, at the final resurrection. Poor remarks that,

> Mechthild's transformation into what she will look like at the final resurrection and wedding banquet is clearly appropriate and, in a certain light, conventional.[755]

Throughout Books I and II, the use of bride imagery corresponds with the depiction of *unio mystica*, making the appearance of the cloak, potentially read as bridal vestments, not only appropriate but necessary before union with the divine can occur.[756] In Poor's reading, the

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[753] Ibid., 70.

[754] Ibid.

[755] Ibid.

[756] "The maid's body, the questionable surface of which has been covered by the authorizing cloak, must nevertheless be present in order for union to take place" (Poor, *Mechthild,* 75).

maid's recognition of her transformation and the reading of the text upon her cloak and garland are demonstrations of her "self-image", which gives her "the courage to stand with other in the vision, to claim the right to appear in this 'public.'"[757] Self-recognition and reading lie at the heart of the maid's alteration in both mind and body, realizing that she is no different than the women in the choir for whom she holds such great esteem.

In contrast to Poor's reading, I view the significance of the bodies of Mechthild and the reading thereof—both as inner body experience and embodied text—worthy of additional interpretation. As Poor later remarks that the mystic's body shifts from the deeply entrenched discourses of biological and cultural connotations to the body as text[758], I would add that the body, as seen in the vision, is not the physical body of the maid but the inner one, the soul and its senses able to perceive and comprehend the divine. Mechthild comments upon this aspect in Book VI, 36 in a response to a critical reading of the vision in the church, stating,

> *Das Johannes Baptista der armen dirnen messe sang, das was nit vleischlich,*
> *es was also geistlich, das die sele alleine beschowete, bekante und gebruchte;*
> *aber der licham hatte nit da von, denne er von der sele edelkeit in sinen*
> *menschlichen sinnen mohte begriffen; darumb muessent dú wort*
> *menschlichen luten* (VI, 36: 8-11).[759]

> [That John the Baptist sang mass for the poor maid, that was not corporeal,
> it was therefore spiritual, so that the soul alone witnessed it, understood it,
> had fruition of it; But the body had nothing from it other than what it could
> grasp from nobility of the soul in its human senses. Because of this the words
> must sound human.][760]

The denial of the human body and its ability to comprehend the mysteries of the divine mass are clearly outlined by Mechthild in this passage. I believe the above excerpt demonstrates her conceptualization, at least to some degree, of the separation between that which the soul can sense and that tied to the fleshly body on earth. In her rebuttal to critics, we see not only the guided reading of a passage from her own book, but also the careful treatment of reader-listener response to their own reading upon her *bůch.* Evidence of dialogism lies both within the text as intertextual references, within a vision or episode as the mystic reading—responding and constructing the narrative of the physical text—and with the reader-listener as active participants within the creation of the embodied text.

The inner body, the spiritual body as soul, not only witnesses and understands the visionary episode, but has fruition within it [*gebruchte*] connected to another term Mechthild uses in her *bůch* to represent the perfect fruition or union with the divine: *gebruchunge.* Furthermore, the exegetical tone, almost in tune with the *sermo humilis* of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs,* illustrates Mechthild's voice as teacher, preacher, and guardian of her *bůch*. The cloak which shrouds the maid, transforming her from "wretched puddle" to "likened to a noble virgin" [*einer edelen jungfrowen glich* (II, 4:50-51)], I read as the embodiment of the text before its conception. Much like the corporalization of God's word in Christ, which was prophesized throughout the Old Testament, the maid and Mechthild as dual

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[757] Ibid.

[758] Ibid., 78.

[759] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 244.

[760] Poor, *Mechthild,* 77 (emended translation).

writer-speakers and readers extract the word woven into the very body of the text, the inner body's experience, and into itself. However, this is no simple reporting of visionary experience. As I have argued through the revision of Sara Poor's reading, the mediation of the text as seen by Mechthild at various stages, the text at various stages, and with the reader-listener all coalesce into the diverse fabric of the embodied text.

IV. Unlearned teachings, learned tongues: *bůch* as tradition and innovation

Continuing the discussion from the previous section, I now turn to the textual examples of the ways in which Mechthild conceptualizes her *bůch* within the text, as well as the instances of dialogic nature that shape the rhetoric of instruction and divine authority. In the third chapter of Book II[761], Mechthild discusses the tongue of the Godhead, which she reports "has spoken many a mighty word to [her]".[762] She goes on to describe phenomena which she calls "The Light of Truth" and "The Four Rays of God", as well as the Virgin Mary. As Mechthild describes the four rays of God, similar elements to Hadewijch's seventh vision are employed, when she comments upon the sensory aspects of experiencing God's love via touch, sight and taste.

> *...der helig geist rueret si mit der durchfliessunge der wunderlichen schoeppfunge der ewigen wunne; der vngeteilet got spiset si mit dem blikke sines heren antlútes und füllet si mit dem unlidigen ateme sines vliessenden mundes; und wie si gant ane arbeit als die vogele in dem lufte, so si keine vedren ruerent, und wie sie varent, swar si wellent, mit libe und mit sele und doch in ir satzunge blibent unvermischet...*(II, 3: 17–23)[763]

> [The Holy Spirit touches them with the flood of the marvelous abundance of eternal bliss. Undivided God feeds them with the shimmer of his glorious countenance and fills them with the joyful breath of his flowing mouth. They glide effortlessly, as birds in the air do when not moving their wings, and they fly wherever they want, body and soul, and yet they remain separate in their own order…][764]

Mechthild's careful choice of words establishes connections between elements and characteristics that one might previously deem counterintuitive. A flood that "touches" [*rueret*] someone of "eternal bliss" [*ewigen wône*] rings somewhat implausible because a flood suggests and excess beyond comfort or expectation. Yet, as I argued in the previous section, these senses are not those of the physical body but the spiritual one, which is more intrinsically connected to the divine.

Here again we see the discussion of body and soul, traveling together, "and yet they remain separate in their own order…" [*und doch in ir satzunge blibent unvermischet*], which, I believe connects strongly to the parallel yet interwoven nature of the mystic's two bodies: the

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[761] The birth of the text (i.e. composition) is actually a re-birth in that the source was born in the inner body with the divine and then made physical memoria in the mind-heart, corporalized into a physical text which then could be read and born anew in the reader and their own process of memoria.

[762] *Flowing Light,* 70.

[763] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 39–40.

[764] *Flowing Light,* 71.

inner body—to emend Poor's remark slightly—is the site where mystical drama ensues, without which neither the interaction with the divine nor its teachings are accessible. In contrast, the outer body, wholly connected yet "unmixed" [*unvermischet*], marks the stage upon which the drama of *imitatio Christi* occurs, through which one performs good works, and within which—through reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*)—the inner senses witness and experience the divine, thereby taking on greater meaning within the text's composition because it transcends the divide between ethereal-ineffable to human language.

The abstract nature of eternal bliss is made tactile as it floods from the Holy Spirit. Spiritual sustenance from an undivided God feed all, "whether rich or poor" (FL 70) with a shimmering light, and yet the souls are not sated from the feast of God's countenance but from the "joyful breath of his flowing mouth" [*dem unlidigen ateme sines vliessenden mundes*]. Mechthild concludes this section by stating,

> *Nu gebriset mir túches; des latines kan ich nit; so was hie gůtes an light,*
> *das ist min schult nit* (II 3,48).[765]

> [Now my German fails me; I do not know Latin. If there is something of
> merit here, it is not my doing.][766]

Here it is not a question again of which language or language choice, but that any human language can fully express that which is not uttered. The nature of this utterance shifts the tone through its change in function from explanatory, prophetic voice to that of direct address to the reader-listener. With the use of "now" [*nu*], there exists a temporal construct that depicts not the initial reception of this divine wisdom, but the process of composition. In her attempt to translate or mediate between the teachings received by the inner body and the physical construction of the *bůch,* Mechthild expresses the difficulty with which she faces in putting this into human language, marking not only an acknowledgement of her reader-listener but of the difference or separation between the inner and outer bodies.

Later in Book II, in the final chapter, Mechthild expresses concern to God about the criticism received from the presumed readership consumption of her *bůch*. Through the use of allegory, God explains the symbolism of *Flowing Light,* precluding to the divine authority within its pages. Book II (chapter 26) discusses the book and the writers of *Flowing Light*, which particular concern for the vocal critics of the *bůch*. Mechthild reports:

> *Do offenbarte sich got zehant miner trurigen sele, und hielt dis bůch in siner*
> *vordern hant und sprach: lieb minú, betrůbe dich nit ze verre, die warheit*
> *mag nieman verbrenen. der es mir vs miner hant sol nemen der sol sterker*
> *dene ich wesen. De bůch ist drivaltig und bezeichent alleine mich. Dis bermint,*
> *de hie vmbegat bezeichent mîn reine wîsse gerehte menscheit, die dur dich*
> *den tot leit. Dú wort bezeichent mine wunderliche gotheit, dú vliessent von*
> *stunde ze stunde in dine sele us minem gôtlichen munde. Dú stime der worte*
> *bezeichent minen lebendigen geist und vollebringent mit ir selben die rehten*
> *warheit. Nu sich in allú disú wort, wie loblich si mine heimlicheit melden und*
> *zwifel nit an dir selben!*[767]

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[765] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 40–41.

[766] *Flowing Light*, 72.

[767] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 68.

[At once God revealed himself to my joyless soul, held this book in his right hand, and said: 'My beloved, do not be overly troubled. No one can burn the truth. For someone to take this book out of my hand, He must be mightier than I. The book is threefold and portrays me alone. The parchment that encloses it indicates my pure, white, just humanity that for your sake suffered death. The words symbolize my marvelous Godhead. It flows continuously into your soul from my divine mouth. The sound of the words is a sign of my living spirit and through it achieves genuine truth. Now, examine all these words--How admirably do they proclaim my personal secrets! So have no doubts about yourself!']⁷⁶⁸

Even within the first lines of the citation, we see a distinction connection between the divine and the text ["*hielt dis bůch in siner vordern hant"*/ „…held this book in his right hand"]. Within the mystical text, as Dailey argues, time is both present and absent. The reading, meditation, and composition of the text occurs following the divine intervention, and yet what commences within said visions often predates events that have not yet transpired. The simple fact that Mechthild's *bůch* exists within her vision creates a twofold imagery between the act of composition and the embodiment of the text both by the inner body (first) and then the outer body as text. The *bůch* both exists and has not yet come to fruition, presumably in its full or complete form (*corpus perfecta*).

At the same time, although the text may be in an infant form at the end of Book II, this passage reflects the commentary from reader-listeners even at this stage. The fact that Mechthild expresses concern for her critics and the fear that her *bůch* may be burnt, suggests that the text was already in circulation. Of course the extent of this circulation and the extent of its readership is uncertain, but that her reflection should appear within the composition of the text implies that it was significant enough to warrant her response and to seek guidance from the divine.⁷⁶⁹ The dialogic nature of *Flowing Light* therefore extends beyond the page, defying the assumption that the reader-listener maintains a purely passive role within the process of composition, and, furthermore, that the embodiment of Mechthild's own reading and meditation upon experience with the divine led to further reading and meditation that cycled or circulated back to her and influenced her encounters with the divine. Without recognition of this criticism, the allegory might not appear within the text nor before that as visionary moment.

Allegory as a generic type appears heavily within biblical narratives, as well as ancient writings that emphasize their function as didactic and instructional. As was seen with Hadewijch's corpus, allegory employs a visual aspect to the text, one that assists the memorization/internalization of the messages within the text. Without question, the most striking aspect of this passage is the correlation between *Flowing Light* and the Holy Trinity, which could perhaps also be extended to include the Bible as an extension of God as his word. According to this section of the text, not only truth but also God in his tripartite form is represented in *Flowing Light*. The parchment [*dis bermint*] of the book symbolizes Christ in all his humanity and

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⁷⁶⁸ *Flowing Light,* 96–97.
⁷⁶⁹ "Such statements about the open disapproval of some clerics clearly suggests the book had achieved a significant readership and had become known beyond Mechthild's immediate community, at least among clerics" (Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 81).

suffering [*bezeichent mîn reine wîsse gerehte menscheit*]. Parchment is furthermore significant because it can be made from the skin of a sheep,[770] creating a complex double-fold allegory that represents not only Christ in his passion but also Christ as the Lamb of God and reaches back into the prehistory of Christ in the Old Testament.The parchment is flesh that one can touch, which makes the connection between the Passion of Christ and Mechthild's *bůch* in a physical, tangible form. One could also argue that the tactile aspect of the Trinity translates a once ineffable experience into a very real and present one. Furthermore, parchment like the analogy of the wax tablet holds the concept of reading and writing simultaneously; the writer-speaker embodied through the words on the parchment, while the reader-listener reads and meditates upon that example, using their own voice and understanding. On another level also parchment symbolizes the recording of memory, etched physically onto its skin/leaf, one that impresses itself upon the reader-listener and becomes an embodied experience within his/her memory.[771]

Upon the parchment the word of God, or truth, is imprinted [*Dú wort bezeichent mine wunderliche gotheit*] and they become one entity—the book, which was mediated through Mechthild. The image of the Godhead flowing through Mechthild [*dú vliessent von stunde ze stunde in dine sele us minem gôtlichen munde*], a predominant metaphor throughout the work and in the title itself, is utilized to allude to the authorship and the source of inspiration, and plays upon the symbols of both water and blood from the New and Old Testament texts. God as truth resonates with the first sentence of this section, "No one can burn the truth" [*die warheit mag nieman verbrenen*]. Truth, if one is to follow this tripartite symbol, is made into flesh, made into a physical thing that can be shared and deceminated to others and removed from its intangible and ethereal status. Yet at the same time, the origin of truth and the source of wisdom for *Flowing Light* can never be destroyed because it is God himself and no one, or rather, no man/human has the ability to obliterate the divine.

Parchment as a representation of memory—that is the physical impression of the "words" upon the inner body and senses—reflects *memoria* as both text and embodiment, but also a reflection of the divine and inner mind combined. *Memoria* of the divine initiates the process of composition through recollection, that is the reading of experience and meditation thereupon before translating experience to words. Similar to Mary's prayer in the vision of the mass represented as a beacon of light from her soul (II, 4), the inner senses are employed within the vision to speak but that speech takes varied forms, many of which include no words at all. Contemplation upon the images, upon the *memoria*, furthermore, permits the mystic to re-call and re-visit the experience of the vision, renewing its significance through the process of composition and transforming the read experience into flesh (i.e. words on parchment). Parchment, like Christ, is the word literally made flesh and the embodied text.

Finally, the third part of the Trinity is the sound of the words [*Dú stime der worte bezeichent minen lebendigen geist*], symbolizing the Holy Spirit. What is extraordinary about this analogy is the emphasis on the spoken word but also the possible intention for the book's creation. The fact that the original manuscript is believed to have been written in the dialect of northern German-speaking lands during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, places

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[770] Parchment is a general term for the animal skin used in codices. While vellum is specifically made from calf's skin, parchment can be made from calf, sheep or goat skin, dependent upon resources and investment.

[771] Mary Carruthers discusses at length the importance of memory as a physical entity within the mind of the reader-listener, a point which I discussed in previous chapters. With this interpretation, the embodied and meditated experience of the mystic as text becomes an embodiment within the reader-listener, connecting to the concept of birth and re-birth in Derrida's "Law of Genre."

importance on the intended audience for *Flowing Light.* True, the text addresses ecclesiastics directly in some sections, but the use of the vernacular would allow the laity to access the text without further mediation by means of translation from Latin, whether by reading in the literal modern or medieval sense (i.e. listening). There is also another aspect of significance concerning the third part of the book: if this book is a representation of divine truth transmitted directly from God, it states that Middle Low German or even the dialect of the only complete German manuscript is able to proclaim the truth of God, as well as Latin.

The language of the book increases in significance when God places the sound of the words within this Holy Trinity. Not only does this emphasize the action of hearing the words, the recitation of *Flowing Light,* but also the spoken language. If *Flowing Light* was intended to inspire all people in society, then the spoken language of the people in the area of its composition would have been the *Mischsprache* depicted within the Einsiedeln manuscript. In addition, the recent discovery of the Moscow fragments from the Gustav Schmidt collection by Natalja Ganina and Catherine Squires suggests that language of *Flowing Light* was potentially closer to the Einsiedeln manuscript than a strictly Middle Low German dialect.[772] Dated from around 1300, the Moscow fragments appear in much closer proximity to the end of Mechthild's speculated death (c. 1282), providing the closest textual witness to the date of composition than any other transmission. In Ganina and Squire's article, they outline the potential provenance for the excerpts, as well as the possible locations for which the transmissions were created. Near Mechthild's suspected home of Halberstadt—some 56 km southwest of Magdeburg—there existed several women's houses, which may have housed the text prior to its acquisition by Gustav Schmidt: St. Jacobia and Burchardi, as well as a beguine house are documented in the area c. 1302.[773] However the fate of Mechthild's *bůch*, which will be discussed at more length in Chapter Five, is similar to the Moscow fragments, which were used to bind another manuscript.

Despite the later fate of *Flowing Light*, the appearance of numerous transmissions and the presence of contemporaneous readership references within its pages suggests to me that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it achieved a certain degree of circulation and reception, making the appearance of the above-cited allegory even more extraordinary. In my opinion, setting the book within this allegory illuminates the intention of the entire work: to acquaint persons religious, both good and bad, with the truths of God in their own language. Through the lens of contemplative reading practices and genre theory, speech eludes to *oratio,* the third stage within contemplative reading, and speech genres from Bakhtin. Reading therefore suggests something beyond *lectio,* and also implores those who engage with the text to move beyond simple acquisition of knowledge. As stated in previous chapters, memorization in the medieval imagination was physiological; a memory transfers from page to brain to create a fold or connection that has the ability to be revisited, meditated upon, and connected to other aspects within the memory. Speech, in many ways, initiates the process of memory and text, whether as a primary or secondary speech genre. In turn these speech genres, embodied within the text, "speak" to the reader-listener through reading (*lectio*), which then promotes interior dialogue (*meditatio*), ultimately resulting in further conversations and/or compositions with (*oratio*). Speech and speech genres play within the cycle of text consumption and construction, it marks the beginning and the end, similar to Derrida's reference to the ellipsis marking both the birth of one genre and the death of another.

Yet the accessibility for those within society does not solely denote the laity, just as the prophet for God's message is not automatically a person of authority or high education. Later in

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[772] Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 83.

[773] Ibid., 84.

Chapter 26, the soul laments that she is not a learned religious man and there is an underlying statement that had this message been received by a man, its acceptance and authority as God's word would be taken up by earthly wisdom (i.e. wise and learned men). In his response, God declares that Christianity will be strengthened because

> …*der vngelerte munt díe gelerte zungen von mínen helígen geíſte leret·*
> (II, 26:32-33)[774]

> [… the unlearned mouth, aided by my Holy Spirit, teaches the learned
> tongue.][775]

While some scholars have pointed to this reference as a sign of language choice, that is Mechthild's native tongue rather than Latin, the description of her "unlearned mouth" aligns with the overarching message that Mechthild reports her lack of authority and lowly status as person without sufficient knowledge or means to express these complex sentiments. However, these need not point to characteristics specific to the female gender, but to the common mystic phenomenon of *imitatio Christi* –the imitation of Christ. Suffering and longing are fundamental to the theology of both Hadewijch and Mechthild, as much as the influence and recollection of their divine encounters. *Imitatio Christi* in its very definition is an active emulation of suffering, both physical and mental, that is experienced rather than discussed, felt rather than proclaimed.

The "unlearned mouth" teaching "the learned tongue" also reflects upon the idea mentioned about spoken versus written language, in the fact that it is an unlearned *mouth* which enlightens the learned *tongue* about the message of God. Since "tongue" is often connected to language, both written and spoken, whereas the mouth is related to speech, I posit the idea that it is the spoken word, "the unlearned mouth" that informs, perhaps even teaches, those that the soul/Mechthild considers wiser than herself. Poor has argued that Mechthild's relationship to the Dominican order caused her to "ally herself [to]...the mission to preach and teach the world, that is, to reform erring Christians, a mission for which the vernacular proved to be an essential tool."[776] Even in this interpretation, the idea becomes apparent that people are reformed by others and the message of Christianity is traditionally preached or spread by a select few privy to the message to a larger audience. This continuation of the text, albeit in altered form, is precisely the core message of Mechthild's *bůch*.

The Virgin Mary—as mother, bride, and maiden to God—held a central role during the High and Late Middle Ages as the interluctor between the physical and divine worlds, as well as between the divine and humans. As I will outline in the final section of this chapter, the role of Mary elaborates upon the concept of the unlearned mouth teaching the learned (i.e. trained) tongue. Speech, whether directly to the divine, in reference to the divine, or to the reader-listener, remains in the forefront as a means by which genre and generic worlds are established, but also the diadactic tool through which Mechthild as writer-speaker deceminates her meditated lessons from the divine.

V.   Mechthild, Maria, and the *bůch*: Bride, Mother, Teacher

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[774] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 69.

[775] *Flowing Light*, 97.

[776] Poor, *Mechthild,* 223.

The final section in this chapter turns to the role of Mechthild and the importance of the Virgin Mary within the text due to the various roles ascribed to her. One of the key textual excerpts of *Flowing Light* that discuss at length Mary's role within Christianity and with the Holy Trinity is Book I, 22. This passage is also the most circulated section of Mechthild's *bůch*, even in the decades and centuries when it appeared solely in devotional compliations.[777] Coincidentally, this excerpt is also included in the Moscow fragments, providing a more contemporaneous textual witness to the language and form of the *bůch*. As I will discuss in the flowing section, the importance of memory (*memoria*) on various levels establishes the basis from which Mechthild situates her *bůch* as an extension of the living word. In the previous section, I spoke at length about the significance of the allegory in Book II, 26, both as a symbol or sign of its divine origins and the depiction of the text within the allegory as foretold and existing within the inner body's interaction with the divine.

Throughout the medieval period and even earlier within antiquity, the importance of memory for pedagogical purposes is well documented. In fact, memory is "one of the five divisions of ancient and medieval rhetoric."[778] By extension, *memoria* "signifies the process by which a work of literature becomes institutionalized—internalized within the language and pedagogy of a group."[779] It is well documented throughout the ancient and medieval period that the concept of truth, that is God's truth, exists in fragmented form within language, books, and other human artifacts because they are, as John Wycliff notes, "the memorial clues and traces of a preexisting truth."[780] As these texts and artifacts only partially represent divine word, Wycliff notes that they must be "continually interpreted and adapted to what he calls the *liber vitae,* the living book or book of life in the actual person of Christ."[781] Although Carruthers cites Wycliff, she explains the concept is commonplace by the late Middle Ages and exists earlier in ancient rhetoric. Memory enters the concept of *liber vitae* through the reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) upon texts and human artifacts, allowing a text to be understood on a level beyond a solely superficial conceptualization. As mentioned previously, memorization denotes internalization, on a personal-devotional and institutional level, as well as a physical addition in *memoria.*

Reading Mechthild's *bůch* via the ancient and medieval concept of memory and text, we begin to unlock the layers of signs embedded within the embodiment of the text, woven (*texere*) into the memory of divine intervention, of institutional reading of specific texts (i.e. the Bible, notable theologians, and standard imagery), and of the reader-listener's reaction and criticism to the text. In a similar fashion, Derrida's concept of „invagination," the *pli* which house the potential and unseen readings of genres correspond strongly within the medieval definition of memory and reading. While on a surface level, institutional memory denotes a weaving together of persons into a community, „providing it with shared experience and a certain kind of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests,"[782] it also attains the ability to connect new texts that reflect upon this memory, potentially altering the previous understanding of a genre, term, or figure. As Carruthers notes,

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[777] Poor, "Transmission and Impact", 87–88.
[778] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 11.
[779] Ibid.
[780] Ibid., cited in Carruther's monograph.
[781] Ibid.
[782] Ibid., 14.

Textus also means "texture", the layers of meaning that attach as a text is woven into and through the historical and institutional fabric of a society. Such "socializing" of literature is the work of *memoria,* and this is true of a literate as of an oral society. Whether the words come through the sensory gateways of the eyes or the ears, they must be processed and transformed in memory—they are made our own.[783]

In this section, I explore the ways in which *texere* and *textus* work within Mechthild's depiction of Mary, and by extension, to herself and her *bůch*. The concept of the living word, both as *imitatio Christi* and an embodied text enlivened continually through memory, transforms into an ongoing process of births and deaths through genre and readings hidden within the *pli*. Mechthild's intricate understanding of the reader-listener's „horizon of expectations" remains ever present within the text, as well as its multi-referential focus on the institutional practices of memory and contemplative reading.

Mechthild as writer-speaker also births the text („*donner le jour*" as Derrida references in his lecture), translating divine encounter and language to an entity possible for human comprehension. The living word—both as text and Christ—remains constant through the continual dialogue between writer-speaker and reader-listener through the act of contemplative reading. On yet another level, a secondary dialogue between the inner body (i.e. mind and soul) of the reader-listener and the outer, physical body persists in the creation of memory concerning the text and the physical imprinting/internalization of the text that occurs in the mind. These dialogues extend even further through the impact of the didactic nature of *Flowing Light's* message/lessons on mundane actions to emulate Christ (what Patricia Dailey called *werke*). As I will discuss in the next section, the role of a mother and its symbol encourage the continued discussion of the living word and establish distinct parallels between the untrained, „unlearned" mouth and its influence on the „learned tongue."

Mary as mother and bride

The role of the mother, although biologically feminine, is emulated in visionary and mystical texts from throughout Christianity. Visions of breastfeeding an infant Christ child are not uncommon and the presence of traditionally feminine attributes—both physical and mental—were at times deemed as a sign of heightened spirituality and closeness to the divine. Blood is a prominent symbol of sacrifice and life throughout the Bible. Lesser known or recognized is the connection between blood and breastmilk. As Carolyn Walker Bynum notes, the connection between blood and milk was present on a physiological and spiritual level throughout the Middle Ages. In medieval medical theory, there was a belief that breast milk was processed or transmuted blood. From this concept, the idea was promoted that the loving mother feeds her child with her own blood (transformed into milk), like a pelican, which is coincidentally also the symbol for Christ.[784]   Yet the understanding of milk vs. blood changes over time, and the late Middle Ages marks a shift in the imagery of the nursing Christ from one of milk to one of blood, particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Mechthild is notable for her approach to the themes of milk and blood in relation to God and humanity as a whole, particularly in Book I, 22. Bynum discusses the imagery concerning breastfeeding in Mechthild's work, noting that for

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[783] Ibid.

[784] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus As Mother,* 132.

Mechthild blood and breast milk are conflated to the point that blood has a greater ability to heal and save.[785]

In this section, I aim to amend this argument with the concept of connectivity and continuation flowing directly from God to Christ to Mary to Mechthild. Just as Christ's blood is construed as a demonstration of his humanity and the shedding thereof a testimony to God's love for Christians, so too is Mary's milk divinity made accessible to humans; transformed much like "water into wine", sacramental wine into blood (in transubstantiation) and now, blood into milk. By delving closer into these sections concerning breast feeding, its significance to the greater work becomes more clear. Although superficially biological in nature, the underlying message is one that encompasses far more than blood or milk. Mechthild employs the powerful image of Mary as both child and bride of God, the mother of Christ and the beloved/lover of the Holy Spirit—playing upon the roles of women over the course of her lifetime, as well as depicting the significance of each role upon her duties and position within society. Mary as a mother suckles not only Christ, but "all banished children" and apostles with the "pure milk of generous mercy", while at the same time remaining the child and bride of God and desirous of continued ecstasy and intimate union with her bridegroom. Her portrayal as mother, bride and child are both complex and illustrative of her centrality within the medieval understanding of mercy, spiritual sustenance and the ideal Christian. While Carolyn Walker Bynum and others have focused on the significance of women as food, my focus is not on the positioning or importance of gender-specific expression within the selected depictions of lactation. Rather, I tie the imagery to Mechthild's overarching message for the human (albeit) Christian condition that desires for union with the Godhead, and the importance of the message within the larger scope of genre and textual representation within *Flowing Light*.

I read the appearance and discussion of Mary within Mechthild's *bůch* as a continuation or extension of the didactic nature and purpose of the text. Food, as Carolyn Walker Bynum explains in *Holy Food, Holy Fast,* becomes a metaphor for spiritual edification or growth that became so central within Hadewijch's corpus. Similar to Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek, Brieven,* and *Liederen/Rijmbrieven, Flowing Light* encourages the development of the inner senses and body by way of the mediated and embodied experience within the text. Mechthild's *bůch* nourishes the soul/mind through contemplative reading practices, it provides guidance and sustenance from the divine by way of the writer-speaker Mechthild. In line with the water imagery, the flowing of light from divine to soul (or Mechthild as represented within the text as writer-speaker) becomes encapsulated within the mind as memory (*memoria*). Through this process, the text becomes an aspect of the reader-listener, reborn (as it were) within *memoria*, to develop into a guiding hand within the reader-listener's corporeal life and good works.

Unsurprisingly, in Mechthild's *bůch*, the discussion of lactation is wholly tied to the depiction of and the conversation with and about the Virgin Mary, often referred to as "Our Lady". In Book 1, Chapter 22, Mechthild (depicted here as a generalized authorial voice) converses with the Virgin about her role as mother and how that came to be. Mary informs her that "[t]he Father chose me for his bride—that he might have something to love" [*Do erwelte mich der vatter zuo einer brut, das er etwas ze minnende hette* (I, 22: 45-46)], just as the Son would choose her as his mother and the Holy Spirit his beloved.[786] Acting within this role as bride, beloved and future mother, Mary describes how she was alone the bride of God and showed him the "many banished children", asking for his mercy upon them; that is, the many faithful believers who remained on earth far from his presence. Perhaps for this reason, as the

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[785] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 271.

[786] *Flowing Light,* 50.

mother of these "banished children", she states that "my breasts became so full of the pure, spotless milk of true, generous mercy that I suckled the prophets and sages, even before I was born" [*do wurden mine bruste also vol der reinen unbewollener milch der waren milten barmherzekeit, das ich soegete die propheten und die wissagen, e denne ich geborn wart* (I, 22: 51–53)].[787]

In her place with the Trinity, even "before [she] was born" [*e denne ich geborn wart*], she is a source of sustenance, of love and compassion for the prophets and sages, presumably of the Old Testament. The words are very clear that it is not simply milk, but rather the representation of "true, generous mercy" [*der waren milten barmherzekeit*] which feeds the "banished children" [*maniges ellenden kindes* (I, 22: 50)] and supports the depiction of Mary as the intermediary between earthly Christians and divine God. She goes on to describe that in her childhood she suckled Jesus as his mother. At this point, her description of her role as mother shifts once again to reflect the moment of crucifixion, as she nurses "God's bride, Holy Christianity" [*furbas in miner jugent soegete ich gottes brut, die heligen cristanheit, bi dem crutze*, (I, 22: 53–54)] whilst under the cross in a "desolate and wretched" state. Her suffering is spiritual as is her milk, flowing forth with the physical suffering and blood of her son.

Yet the translation of "the sword of the physical suffering of Jesus cut[ting] spiritually into [Mary's] soul" [*do das swert der vleischlicher pine Jhesu sneit geistlich in min sele*, (I, 22: 55–56)] does not complete nor conflate the connection between Jesus's blood and Mary's milk. Analogous to the sword cutting Christ's side, the text breaks from narrative/conversation to poetic interlude, melding the physical separation of Jesus and Mary through spiritual union.

> *Do stunden offen beide sine wunden und ir bruste;*
> *Die wunden gussen,*
> *Die bruste vlussen,*
> *Also das lebendig wart die sele und gar gesund,*
> *Do er den blanken roten win gos*
> *In iren roten munt* (I, 22: 56–58).[788]

> [Both his wounds and her breasts were open.
> The wounds poured forth.
> The breasts flowed.
> The soul was invigorated and completely restored
> As he poured the sparkling red wine
> Into her red mouth.][789]

Christ's physical suffering and draining of blood during crucifixion is depleting the vigor of the soul. In other words, the blood and the milk, the wine and the host, are both reflections of and representations of divine life source. For this reason, it is not one transformation—from blood into milk—which sustains Holy Christianity, but several continuous streams of love, compassion and mercy in its various forms. The wounds of the flesh made human in Mary's womb pour out to "invigorate" and "restore" the soul. In other words, "to make lively or alive again" and return the soul to its previous state. I would argue that the wording is purposefully ambiguous, connecting the idea of "the soul" not solely with Mary alone, but "the soul" which is reflected

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[787] *Flowing Light*, 51.

[788] *Fließendes Licht* (Neumann), 19.

[789] *Flowing Light,* 51.

and present within all Christians, the Soul as personified in *Flowing Light* and in Mechthild herself.

The blood from Christ on the cross flows as "sparkling red wine" into Mary's red mouth, causing milk to spill forth from her breasts. However, instead of focusing on the hierarchy—both in the fact that Christ is described as physically elevated and is closer to God as part of the Holy Trinity—the image of a continuous flow is created, beginning within God, as all things begin, and streaming forth toward Christ (God's humanity), Mary (God's human bride) and finally all humans who believe. The concept of continuity underscores this imagery on several levels as corresponding with depictions of eternity and timelessness, separation and unity, life and text. The streams pouring from God to Christ-Mary, from Christ-Mary to the earthly Mechthild are the source of her visions and the inspiration for literary creation, while her soul negotiates the limitations and distance from God, her beloved, bridegroom and "other self".

Following the poetic interlude, the focus shifts from an anonymous "she", which is most likely "the Soul" or Mechthild.

> *Do si alsust us den offen wunden geborn und lebendig wart,*
> *do was sie kindesch und vil jung. Solte si do nach irem tode und ir*
> *geburt volleklich genesen, so muoste gottes muoter ir muoter und ir*
> *amme wesen; es was und ist wol billich, wand got ist ir rechte vatter*
> *und si sin rehtu brut, und si ist im allen iren liden glich.* (I, 22: 58–62)

> [As she was thus born and made healthy out of the open wounds,
> she was like a child, very young. If she was going to recover
> completely after her death and birth, God's mother was going to have
> to be her mother and her nurse. This was and is as it should be, since
> God is her rightful father and she is his rightful bride. She resembles
> him in all parts.][790]

One must consider if the conflation of the pronoun "she" for both Mary and Mechthild, and possibly Soul, was an intentional rhetorical move to connect the human (i.e. Mechthild), human made divine (i.e. Mary), and the divine on earth (i.e. Soul). Mary is portrayed as the intercessor between God and Man, the facilitator of God's human birth, and, some might argue flesh, like Jesus in his human form, and mother to the New Testament and the Christian faith, In contrast, Mechthild is paralleled to Mary in her understanding and explication of divine mystery for the contemporaneous populous. "The open wounds" cause the birth and restored health of the "she", but her death and rebirth, her resurrection in accordance with her imitation of Christ would not be complete without the motherly guidance and sustenance in its many forms from Mary.

In this same vein, Mary goes on to "suckle" all those in the faith, from holy apostles with "motherly instruction and powerful prayer" to sinners with "patient hope". In the final paragraph of Chapter 22, the narrator tells Mary that she must also suckle "us", or else it would cause her pain. Going on to state,

> *Woltostu nit soegen me, so tete dir du milch vil we, wan werlich ich han*
> *gesehen dine bruste so vol, das siben stralen gussen alzemale us von einer*
> *bruste uber minen lip und uber min sele. In der stunde beneme du mir ein*
> *arbeit, die kein gottesfrunt mag getragen ane herzeleit,* (I, 22: 69–73).

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[790] *Flowing Light,* 51.

[For truly, I have seen your breasts so full that seven streams pour out at one time from one breast over my body and over my soul. In that hour you relive me of a labor that no friend of God can bear without inner suffering.][791]

Just as Christ cleansed the world of sin, here too Mary washes away the indiscretions against God through her abundant and overflowing mercy, compassion and love for Christianity. The suggestion of "inner suffering" compels the reader to connect the spiritual suffering under the cross in the previous section and the willful suffering (and even death) of a mother for the sake of her child.

As we have seen in the above example, Mechthild employs tropes and imagery from the institutional Christian memory to play upon the role of Mary within the conceptualization of the Holy Trinity and recasts her role not simply as the passive vessel within which Christ was developed and from which he was birthed, but that her existence predates her own birth and the constraints of her lived experience. On several levels, the role of Mary and her place within her relationship to the Holy Trinity and time resound strongly with the depiction of Mechthild's *bůch* within the previous section. In Book II, 26, the allegory of *Flowing Light* as a representation and reflection of the Holy Trinity fostered an image that conflated the socialized facet of Christian memory with her text; it birthed and extended the accepted and orthodoxical message of biblical narrative with the newness of Mechthild's *bůch*. Furthermore, the development of the text—both at its stage during the time of the vision in Book II, 26 and the subsequent forms—suggests an ongoing reading and meditation upon experience, the significance of the text within society, and Mechthild's own understanding of the translation of her inner to outer senses and bodies.

In Derrida's lecture on genre, he outlines the naming and reading of genre in several terms, one of which being the concept of ellipsis. Similar to Christian thought, the death of one genre entails the birth of another, just as the birth or death into human existence marks a shift from the inner to outer bodies. However, the separation between birth and death of a genre remains fairly fluid and complex, as demonstrated within Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and Derrida's image of "invagination". There is no singular birth or death of genre or life, rather, just as with the *pli* and the layerings of genre, an infinite number of readings, genre hybridity, and linguistic expression that defies the simplistic categorization of genre type and textual understanding. The multifaceted role of Mary within Book I, 22 and the ambiguous use of time in any linear conceptualization speaks to the complexity of Mechthild's depiction of a standard figure within Christian mythology. Mary is spoken to and spoken of, reflected within a text that was translated from the inner sensory experience with the divine through reading and meditation to the outer senses in the embodied text. In that text, Mary is birthed anew, made textualized and woven (*texere*) into the message encapsulated within Mechthild's *bůch*. In the final excerpt of this chapter, I turn again to the vision of the mass (Book II, 4) to demonstrate the ways in which Mechthild becomes a second Mary or an extension of the original figure, and how, through her interaction with a symbol of Christ, she births a new and ongoing message born into the text.

Mechthild as Mary, Mother, Bride, and Teacher

In the vision of the mass (Book II, Chapter 4), discussed in the previous chapter, it is Mechthild as "the poor maid" who gives of her body, heart, and soul to Christ. As we have seen previously, Mechthild as the "*arme dirne*" is lifted by God into a heavenly church and into the

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[791] Mechthild, *Flowing Light,* 51–52.

presence of John the Baptist, Lady Mary and Christ himself. "The poor maid" initially remarks upon her poor appearance and feels out of place in the presence of saints, martyrs, and choirs of angels, until her appearance is transformed by a cloak of fine threads embroidered with excerpts from her own text. Following her transformation, she is treated like a noble maiden and allowed to stand next to Lady Mary in the church. As John the Baptist performs a low mass, the Eucharistic host is transformed into a lamb bleeding on the cross. At the sight of it, "the poor maid" pleads with Lady Mary, God's mother, that Jesus give himself to her, to which he complies upon his mother's request. "The poor maid" approaches the altar and the lamb is placed between her teeth in her mouth.

> *Do leite sich das reine lamp uf sin eigen bilde in irem stal und sog ir herze*
> *mit sinem suessen munde. Ie me es sog, ie me si es im gonde* (II, 4: 100–101).

> [Then the pure lamb lay down…and began to suckle from her heart with
> its sweet mouth. The more it suckled, the more she gave it.][792]

Paralleling Mary as mother, as blood and milk were compared, here Mechthild becomes the vessel of mercy, compassion and love for Christ. Unlike Mary, Mechthild gives directly from her heart, whereas the source of the milk pours out from Mary's heart to her breast. The allegory in Book V, Chapter 23 explains that "sweet milk flowed forth from her pure heart without any pain" [*Do vlos du suesse milch harus von irme reinen Herzen ane allen smerzen* (V, 23: 73–74)] as Christ lay in his crib.

In contrast to Book 1 and Mary as mother (yet similar to Book V), in the above section Mechthild emulates the duties of a loving mother; however she suckles not prophets, virgins or sinners, but Christ himself. Reading again "the more it suckled, the more she gave it" one notices the emphasis on ongoing giving of oneself on the part of "the poor girl". Here it is not the continual compassion for all of Christianity, but the eternal pledge to Christ and desire for union. In this sense and as Bynum aptly noted, Mechthild utilizes the image of the nursing mother, of spilling blood or milk in order to describe her own suffering to the reader, her words a textual representation of her *imitatio Christi*, pouring and flowing from her life's source (i.e. God) and her heart (i.e. the place of transformation from blood into milk).[793] In a similar reading, Amiri Ayanna interprets Mechthild as "a consummate and passionate artist" who is "simultaneously immersed in and author of her text, even as she engaged dialogically with her audience."[794] While I agree with the underlining concepts outlined by both Bynum and Ayanna, I would argue that the importance of the two-fold bodies of Mechthild as they are represented and embodied within the composition of the text play a more significant role than the biological functions of breastfeeding, or in this case, the feeding of the lamb with one's own blood.

The contrast between the depiction of Mary in Book I, 22 and the vision of the mass in Book II, 4 illustrates more than the performance of the feminine body within the text as both bodily and spiritual. Whereas Ayanna read breastfeeding and the female body in Mechthild's *bůch* to evoke a paradoxical "fully-fleshed" body that "can be penetrated by Christ and nurse the lamb simultaneously",[795] I prefer to ground my focus within the text as body (*corpus*) and texture

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[792] Mechthild, *Flowing Light,* 75.

[793] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 272.

[794] Amiri Ayanna, "Renegotiating the Body of the Text: Mechthild's Terminology of the Sublime" in *Exemplaria* 20:4 (2008), 391.

[795] Ibid., 395.

(*textus*) through which the birthing of new readings occurs in the folds (*pli*). For Derrida, the appearance of ellipsis, a dual multi-directional understanding of genre, designates not only the complex relationship between and amid genres within texts but the birthing of literature itself. As I discussed at length in Chapter 1, the birth or creation of literature occurs at the hymen, as Derrida calls it, the line of demarcation upon which the limit of a text is marked. However in this space the subsequent phase of reading and deeper comprehension begins, which Derrida coins as "invagination". The concept is two-fold, reflecting both the process of literary composition and the physical act of encountering the text, through which one seeks understanding and attempts to unlock the hidden meanings of the text that exist beyond the physical page. The birth of the text, therefore, presents an inherent reading or comprehension of the message of the text as seen by the writer-speaker.

On a deeper level, Derrida's "invagination" reveals the two-bodied nature of the text as composition and read object, which further promotes new and unforeseen readings of the text unbeknownst to the writer-speaker. The connection between "invagination" and Mechthild's *bůch* lies in its ability to simultaneously imbibe the physicality of the written page and the reflections upon which that prompted its composition. Both the reading and meditation of the inner body before the onset of composition and the translation of inner senses and divine language to speech genres comprehensible by the outer senses. Mechthild's *bůch* has a two-fold birth, just as she consists of two bodies, inner and outer. The initial birth appears within the memory, the extensive reading and meditation upon the corpus of experience. The second birth comprises the process of composition, the embodiment of the inner body and senses into physical text, marking the onset of the next phase: consumption by the reader-listener, their subsequent readings (*lectio*) and meditations (*meditatio*), as well as reflections (both physical text and spoken word) on the text (*oratio*). Mechthild's suckling of the bleeding Christ-lamb, read in conjunction with Book I, 22 and the role of Mary, imparts a new message and births an unforeseen role of the spiritual feminine within the text. Mechthild does not simply reenact or attempt to replicate Mary's eternal role as bride, mother, and teacher, she extends its message, giving of herself and text to the reader-listener.

Throughout this section, the challenging and diverse roles of Mary and, in relation, Mechthild have been compared and contrasted to discuss the significance of spiritual lactation within the framework of Mechthild's textual spirituality. Mary as mother, bride, beloved and child personifies compassion, mercy, and love for all Christians, compelling and sustaining them through prayer, spiritual wisdom, and intercession on their behalf. Mechthild, by extending and revising the role of Mary, exudes and plays upon the embodiment of spiritual motherhood and the reflection thereof within the text as memory, reading, and meditation. The transformation from wine into blood, and blood into milk, reflects the centrality of Eucharistic devotion and transubstantiation in beguine spirituality, as well as the revision of God into a symbol of love and compassion via Mary and Jesus in the later Middle Ages. Mary is the mother of Holy Christianity, bride to God and beloved of the Holy Spirit. For Mechthild, her text is not only her testimony to her suffering in imitation of Christ but her creation, her offspring as recipient of God's divine will and fed with holy sustenance as divine intervention. In the end, the overarching message in Mechthild's work is one of the continued connection between human and the divine, the unfaltering desire for union and to achieve oneness with God.

VI.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted the ways in which genre choice and genre naming influence the function and form of Mechthild's *bůch*. Drawing upon the concepts of

"invagination", "heteroglossia", and "horizon of expectations", as well as Bakhtin's speech genres, I depicted potential motivations behind the appearance of Mechthild's diverse and diffuse set of writings and how together they constituted a *bůch*. From the influence of the Psalter and the Song of Songs to the emulation and use of Mary as mother, Mechthild's *bůch* draws heavily from the tradition of literary form and motifs. At the same time, *Flowing Light* embarks on a new series of paths towards the divine in its embodiment, mingling both the inner and outer bodies by way of the text in order to extend and expand upon institutionalized memory of Christian society. Mechthild's *bůch* in contrast to Hadewijch's corpus, depicts a birthing of new consciousness about herself, reader-listeners, and surroundings that coalesces with the truths experienced during divine interventions (i.e. visionary experiences). The two-fold birthing of the text, in both memory and embodiment, mirrors the two-fold nature of human experience within the divine, represented within the secondary speech genres employed within the *bůch* and its dialogic ability to speak to and interact with the reader-listener. The embodied text weaves (*texere*) the shared and personal memory with the extension and expansion of existing narratives, in turn creating an entity reflective of both the divine and Mechthild. This literary offspring renews and revives through reading and meditation, and, similar to the *liber vitae*, encourages ongoing reception and contemplation through internalization of the text's message.

The next and final chapter continues the discussion of Mechthild's *bůch*, but limited to a single manuscript, Ms. Ra. In this transmission, *Lux divinitatis*—the Latin translation of *Flowing Light*—appears interwoven with a larger excerpt from Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita et Revelationes.* The mixing of these two texts demonstrates not only the altered function of *Lux divinitatis* due to its translation and reorganization via thematic elements, it also speaks to the fate of beguine mystical texts.

Chapter Five
Corpora textae/ Woven Bodies: Mechthild, Agnes Blannbekin, and Codex Basilensis A VIII 6

I.   Introduction

Mechthild's *bůch* was the focus of the previous chapter. The fate of *Flowing Light* within the transmission history and its intersection (and in fact, intertextuality) with Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita et Revelationes* is the continuation of that discussion and my focus in this chapter. As was initially discussed in the previous chapter, *Flowing Light* exhibits references to critique and commentary from reader-listeners within the text, suggesting a circulation of the work at least to a certain degree. There is also paleographical evidence to support the various forms in which these copies circulated. Specifically, the Latin translation of *Flowing Light,* entitled *Lux divinitatis* (*Light of the divinity*), was completed some time before 1298 by the Dominican monks at Halle. Comprising of only the first six books in Mechthild's *bůch*, scholars assess that the monks obtained the copy sometime between the time Mechthild entered the convent at Helfta in 1270 but prior to the completion of her final and seventh book around the time of her death (c. 1282).[796] In addition, the table of contents found in the Latin forward to the Einsiedeln manuscript—the only complete transmission of *Flowing Light* and finished c. 1345— includes only chapters from Books I through V, suggesting yet another possible circulating form of the text.[797]

Beyond these paleographical references, textual clues from within Mechthild's *bůch* provide further evidence of potential circulation. As Sara Poor has remarked, the final chapter of Book IV states that "This book was begun in love, it shall also end in love", providing an additional possible grouping of the text for circulation. Finally, the two-fold reference in Book II, 26—discussed at length in the previous chapter—reflects both upon the warning about the creation of the text as well as its reception. On the one hand, admission of warning against the *bůch*'s composition exposes the notion that a readership of the text already exists (i.e. that Book I circulated initially as a single unit). On the other hand, Mechthild's reaction to critique of her *bůch* might also suggest that she felt it necessary to address these critics through the allegory of the book as seen through a visionary episode. What is more, it is not until Book IV that Mechthild reflects upon the interaction with her confessor that led to the composition of *Flowing Light,* noting that "he commanded me, a frail woman, to write this book out of God's heart and mouth.[798] The fact that the reader-listener first encounters the "call to write" topos in Book IV would suggest, in my opinion, that composition and readership reaction are intermingled, and opens up the possibility that there existed not only active readership an during the years of composition (c. 1250–1282) but that Mechthild felt inclined to dialogically interweave the reading of her past experiences with the contemporaneous reactions of the reader-listener.

Dialogic interaction with Mechthild's *bůch* also appears within the writings of two other mystics at Helfta, as well as two fifteenth-century mystics. Gertrud of Helfta writes in her book about a dying Mechthild, stating that while the latter lie on her deathbed, she prayed on her behalf and asked "why God has not performed any miracles through Mechthild in order to prove the truth of her revelations."[799] In this vision, God appears with Mechthild's *bůch* in his hand—

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[796] Poor, *Mechthild,* 79.
[797] Ibid.
[798] Cited in Poor, *Mechthild,* 85.
[799] Ibid., 80.

an image reminiscent to Book II, 26—and responds that "it is easier to convert people through the inner experience of his grace than through miracles."[800] The interplay between Mechthild's text and Gertrud's is worthy of pause and discussion because not only does the work confirm the former's presence at Helfta but also signifies that Gertrud was familiar with *Flowing Light* before her passing. Furthermore, the fact that Mechthild's *bůch* appears as a single volume and not a collection of papers or writings lays claim to the interpretation that *Flowing Light* is a single text—a *bůch*—that existed not only in Mechthild's visionary imagination but also in Gertrud's by extension of the physical, embodied text. Finally, the mention of an "inner experience" supports the importance of *memoria,* reading (*lectio*), and meditation (*meditatio*) with and about the text. The translation of inner sensory experience of the inner body to the outer senses and body during creation of the text provides a bridge between human and divine, one that, through the reading of and meditation upon *Flowing Light*, could also become present within the reader-listener. In fact, Gertrud's vision also employs the aspect of speaking about the text (*oratio*) through her dialogue with God and becomes a further method of her spiritual edification concerning the divine message(s) in Mechthild's *bůch*.

I.1   Transmission, Readership, and Function

The reception of Mechthild's *bůch* shaped its form and function during the process of composition, as well as the works of contemporaneous mystical writers. And yet, while *Flowing Light* did circulate in various forms during her lifetime and shortly thereafter, that form and function did not remain constant during the later Middle Ages. In this case, altered function shifted in the form in which Mechthild's *bůch* appears, in part owing to the increasing popularity of compilations for private devotion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even the Latin translation of *Flowing Light—Lux divinitatis—*alters the form and function from its previous copies, due not solely to the emendations resulting from the translation process but also to the restructuring and reorganization that ensued. Sara Poor explains that the Dominicans' Latin translation "is not merely an attempt to reach audiences whose vernaculars were other than German…[rather it] reconfigures the text for a learned male audience."[801] In fact, the Dominican monks reordered the text by subject matter, emended sections with more erotic imagery to reflect either the Song of Songs or the Psalms, and altered clerical critique.[802] The altered form found in the Latin translation reflects therefore not a potentially broader textual reception, but rather the conscious effort to change the function of Mechthild's *bůch* from an art *liber vitae* to a handbook or sourcebook for the composition of sermons and potentially preaching to the laity.[803]

The reordering and revision of Mechthild's *bůch* also takes place in the creation of devotional compilations or handbooks during the later Middle Ages. As was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Mechthild's *bůch* increasingly became part of mystical treatise compilations during the decades following her death, in which the author's name and the title of

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[800] Ibid.

[801] Ibid., 86.

[802] Ibid.

[803] Ibid., 84.

While Sara Poor does not explicitly express that *Lux divinitatis* might be used for preaching to the laity, I believe there is enough textual evidence to support such classification of the Latin translation as a guide that would aid monks and priests in preaching to the laity and spiritual guidance. If we take into consideration the active readership through at least the late thirteenth century, the existence of a Latin translation during this period would prove useful for the fact that it would permit monks and clergy to access the text in a form and function more palatable to the prescribed teachings of ecclesiastics.

the work do not appear (nor the work in its entirety).[804] The excerpts that have been included in compilations are often located in texts cataloged as *Sprachsammlung des Engelhart von Ebrach*, as Sara Poor discovered during her research.[805] A common format is known as a *Sammelhandschrift* and often incorporates short excerpts from works on a particular subject, of which the above title could be included in that definition. Of the fifteen manuscript transmissions of Nördlingen's Middle High German text, seven excerpts are included in transmissions of the *Spruchsammlung of Engelhart of Ebrach*, one is the life and collection of letters between Margaret Ebner and Heinrich of Nördlingen, and seven are excerpts included in mystical compilations.[806] Often Mechthild was included in compilations with claustrated nuns, such as Gertrud the Great and Mechthild of Hackeborn, most likely due to the fact that she is depicted in these manuscripts as Mechthild of Helfta and a professed nun, not a beguine. Some scholars have equated the disappearance with the common appearance of Mechthild of Magdeburg's work with that of Mechthild of Hackeborn, which led to the authorship of *Flowing Light* being attributed to Mechthild of Hackeborn. The confusion between the names of Mechthild of Hackeborn and Mechthild of Magdeburg may have aided the accreditation to the former because *Flowing Light* only refers to a "Mechthild", not Mechthild of Magdeburg.

As Sara Poor explains, the excerpts of *Flowing Light* function "as part of the dialogic devotional practices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries", mostly due in part as a reaction to the rise of a "new mysticism in the thirteenth century".[807] While some scholars, most notably Elizabeth Andersen and Gisela Vollmann-Profe, cite the lack of any notation of Mechthild's name as a grounds to question the authorship and subsequent claims for Mechthild due to the overall lack of textual evidence, Poor contends these assertions through thorough investigation of the manuscript transmissions. In fact, neither *Lux divinitatis* nor the Middle High German *Flowing Light* claim Mechthild as the author, and her name is rarely found within the text.[808] If it had not been for the references to Mechthild's name within the text, scholars would not have uncovered the connection between Mechthild and *Flowing Light*. The fact that Anthony Mathiae Caplan gave "*Von der Offenbarung einer liebhabenden Seele*" as the title to the text of the Einsiedeln manuscript signifies the importance of the text but not the acknowledgement of Mechthild as the author. Furthermore, Heinrich of Nördlingen's letters to Margaret Ebner never mention Mechthild by name, although it appears in the forwards of the Middle High German transmission which he includes with one of the letters.[809]

Many scholars would claim that the denial of earthly authorship was an attempt to protect Mechthild from possible (and existing) disbelievers and dissenters. That stated, the concern regarding the human authorship of divine texts is reflected within *Flowing Light* (most prominently in Books II, 26 and IV) and preoccupied the thoughts of whoever composed the prologue for the Latin translation. The prologue instructs the reader-listener that "they must read in a pious spirit", adding that,

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[804] Ibid.

[805] Poor actually located four other examples of *Das fließende Licht* excerpts through the use of this particular title, suggesting that Mechthild's work remained in literary circulation, although her name disappeared from record.

[806] Ibid., 206.

[807] Ibid., 84.

[808] In the Latin prologue to the Einsiedeln manuscript, as well as the introduction to the Latin text, Mechthild is mentioned in only one instance (in the Einsiedeln manuscript it occurs once in the Latin text and once in the Alemannic translation). The introduction to the first book solidifies this "displacement" of authorship by establishing God as the inspiration for the text and the true author.

[809] Poor, *Mechthild,* 89.

> …[the book] must be understood, as is the case with other holy writings, in a wholesome manner and in good faith. In this way, the reader will find nothing scandalous or offensive in it, and the writing itself will not be subjected to any perverse claim of falsehood.[810]

The appearance of this warning and instruction suggests that there was enough concern regarding the interpretation of and reaction to the text within the intended readership of the Latin translation that it warranted a detailed disclosure before the onset of the text. Interestingly, the dialogic premise of the Latin prologue ties in to the overarching style within *Flowing Light*—in part preparing the reader-listener for interaction with the text, while also anticipating any potentially negative reactions to its reading.

A dialogic element also appears in the devotional compilations, or mystical handbooks as Poor calls them. With the excerpts of Mechthild's *bůch* found within the *Sammelhandscriften,* "heteroglossia" or "intertextuality" exists on numerous levels, both within *Flowing Light* and between it and the other excerpts in the manuscripts. Poor outlines the significance of these dialogues in Chapter Three of her monograph, selecting as exempla three *Flowing Light* fragments—Würzburg, Budapest, and Colmar—to demonstrate the different ways in which Mechthild's *bůch* is placed in conversation within both German and Latin texts. She remarks that,

> In contrast to Mechthild's internal and personal dialogue with God, however, the scribes of these compilations participate in a *textual* dialogue by copying texts in which God speaks, and which are delivered to earth by His various messengers: prophets, apostles, saints, *auctores*, priests, preachers, and holy women.[811]

Conversation between and amid texts Bakhtin coined "heteroglossia", as noted in length in the previous chapters. However, in the case of the scribes creating these compilations, the reader-listener acts in the dual role of writer-speaker, not in the primary or initial state of composition but in a secondary function as interlocuter, directing textual excerpts to exist within one volume and to be read in tandem. Poor cites that by limiting the presence of exemplars, compilers could control the orthodoxy of the included writings—of paramount importance due to the "education or edification agenda implied by devotional handbooks"—and select portions of writings that would converse well with sacred texts, thereby altering the ways in which those texts would be interpreted.[812]

Compilations during the medieval period, also called miscellanies, were constructed due to two principle reasons, according to Poor: 1) "the availability of texts", and 2) "a desire to preserve them from loss or damage through use".[813] For vernacular compilations, these are only two of many potential reasons. Although Ralph Hanna states that medieval scribes often suffered from "exemplar poverty", meaning that they were limited in the availability of source materials, the selection of excerpts and the organization of such should not be considered random nor

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[810] Cited from Poor, *Mechthild,* 87.
[811] Poor, *Mechthild,* 98.
[812] Ibid., 99.
[813] Ibid.

hapless.[814] If we take Codex Basilensis A VIII 6 as an example, there is a specific theme and function to the compilation, with a focus on theological writings including the Latin translation of Mechthild's *bůch* and an excerpt from the first twenty-three chapters of Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita et revelationes*—an Austrian beguine living in Vienna during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In addition, the first part of the manuscript contains various theological writings and the second part, following an extensive excerpt of *Lux divinitatis* and Agnes's text, consists of Thomas of Cantimpré's *vita* of Christina the Astonishing/Miraculous, *Stimulus amoris,* and a tract on sin.[815]

The contents of Cod. Basilensis A VIII 6, or Ms. Ra as it is referred to in Mechthild scholarship, resembles other compilations of the period in that it sets these texts in conversation with one another. In this instance, Ms. Ra remains more consistent than other compilations which excerpt Mechthild's text because it is only in Latin. A further point to note is that most medieval compilations were created at the behest of a particular person, group or monastery/convent (i.e. special orders). Hanna notes that these requests could come from outside groups, as is the case with Ms. Ra and the Carthusian convent St. Margarethental in Basel, or by scribes for personal use in devotional and/or contemplative practices.[816] In fact, the second half of Ms. Ra was most likely the copy of another codex in the Basel University library—Codex Basilensis B IX 11—which also originated at the Carthusian convent of St. Margarethental, laying claim to the speculation that both these codices were created on behalf of the nuns at the convent, presumably for devotional and/or contemplative purposes.[817] However, in contrast to Cod. Basilensis B IX II, or Ms. Rb, Ms. Ra excerpts Agnes Blannbekin, not following or preceding *Lux divinitatis,* but between two sections. Questions of intertextuality—heteroglossia—emerge with this text placement, as well as the potential readings ("invagination"), genre mixing and hybridity, and the "horizon of expectations" inferred by the scribes during compilation. In many ways, the fate of Mechthild's *bůch* and Agnes's *Vita* are as interwoven as their texts in Ms. Ra, illuminating questions concerning the form and function these texts exude and the potential significance of this interweaving upon the interpretation of the writings.

I.2   Argument

Whereas the previous chapter devoted its space to the use of genre as a means to fuel the literary construction or birth of a spiritual offspring, the heart of this chapter focuses on the connection between the Latin transmission and translation of *Flowing Light* and the *Vita et revelationes* of Agnes Blannbekin. I think that with Agnes Blannbekin, the first key is to trace the connection between textuality and expression/resonating ideas through the physical text, i.e. Ms. Ra from the Basel University library. As many scholars of Mechthild's *bůch* have noted, the

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[814] Ibid.

[815] Balázs J. Nemes, Catalog description for e-codices, http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/ubb/A-VIII-0006.

[816] Poor, *Mechthild,* 99.

[817] Nemes, http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/ubb/A-VIII-0006. Nemes and co-editors of the forthcoming edition of *Lux divinitatis* have discovered two other excerpts of Latin translation (Cod. Basilensis A VII 68 and Cod. A 82 at the Bern Bürgerbibliothek). For more detailed information concerning these excerpts, refer to pp. 106 and 108 in Nemes's monograph, *Von der Schrift zum Buch—vom Ich zum Autor* (2010).

Latin translations Ra and Rb alter the organization and tone from that found within the Middle High German manuscript at Einsiedeln monastery. The shift in textual organization would suggest a different intended audience and, in conjunction, a slightly different intended use of the text due to the manner and form that the text would become. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are several textual clues to suggest that the Latin translations, including only Books I–VI of *Flowing Light*, were intended for preachers to the laity or those seeking guidance on specific subjects. The resetting and emendation of the German text suggests that, like the creation of medieval compilations, the scribes of the Latin translation and subsequent transmissions sought to reach a varied audience and thereby alter the form and function of the text from previous forms. Not only were the chapters reorganized topically but also the tone was lessened in sections where Mechthild criticized the ecclesiastics heavily.

Yet as Sara S. Poor exemplifies in her book, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book*, as well as in several articles, the fate of? Mechthild's and other mystics' writings alters over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, due in part to reform initiatives for monasteries and convents and the increasing number of women's religious houses in German-speaking areas. In this chapter, I set Ms. Ra within this historical context, while also considering the Latin translation of *Flowing Light* as an initial stage towards the textual emendation and form-function alteration that develop during the centuries following its creation. In many ways, I view the Latin translation as the first evidence of the growing interest in compilations during the later Middle Ages and the desire to educate and instruct various houses on the spiritual and devotional matters in an altered and controlled way.[818]

In contrast to Mechthild and her *bůch,* the circulation of Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita et revelationes* is brief and limited in its expanse. Unlike Hadewijch and Mechthild, Agnes's *Vita* takes the form of recorded dialogues, written in Latin and recorded by her unnamed confessor. Despite a modern edition of the text, scholarly interest in Agnes and her *Vita* pale significantly in comparison to that of Hadewijch and Mechthild. In her *Vita,* Agnes Blannbekin is reported to have lived during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century in Vienna. Her death is recorded in the manuscript as either the tenth or fifteenth of May 1315 and is described in the Neresheimer manuscript as being a farmer's daughter.[819] Agnes's last name is believed to be derived from her hometown—the lower Austrian town of Plambacheck near Plambach.[820] At an early age, perhaps seven or eight years old, the *Vita* reports that she began a ten year-long fast and in the following years rarely at meat.[821] Unable to write herself, it is reported by her monk-confessor that she entrusted him with the task of recording her visions and biography while she lived in Vienna as a beguine.[822] For this reason, the text was composed in Latin and not the vernacular (i.e. common spoken language), yet this does not explain the scant bibliography on the text or Blannbekin's biographical information, as other mystics of the time created texts under similar circumstances with significant present interest (i.e. Angelia of Foligno).

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[818] In many ways, I am following Sara Poor's lead in this argument. Her careful explanation and textually based argument of the extant manuscript transmissions demonstrates, in my opinion, that these transmission should be viewed in their entirety and within a specified historical context.

[819] Anneliese Stoklaska, "Die Revelationes der Agnes Blannbekin. Ein mystisches Unikat im Schrifttum des Wiener Mittelalters" in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 43 (1987), 10.

[820] *Leben und Offenbarungen der Wiener Begine Agnes Blannbekin (d. 1315),* eds. Peter Dinzelbacher and Renate Vogeler (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1994), 4.

[821] Ibid.

[822] Stoklaska, "Revelationes", 10.

Agnes's *Vita* survives in only four different manuscripts, one of which was lost sometime after the mid-eighteenth century: N—Neresheimer manuscript, now lost but represented in Bernardus Pez's 1731 edition; Z—Codex Zwettlensis 384, a lengthy fragment (the first 189 of 235 chapters) dating from the first quarter of the fourteenth century; M—Codex I 115, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century; and M[1]—Codex I 117, dating from the late fourteenth century. Both Mss. M and M[1] are currently held at the Stadtbibliothek Mainz and originate from the Carthusian convent St. Michael near Mainz. Furthermore, both manuscripts are miscellanies or compilations, derived initially from several separate booklets on varying theological topics.[823] Mss. Z and M[1] are only fragments.[824] That said, Ms. Z is the earliest extant textual witness, dating from within ten years of Agnes's death in 1315. Similar to Mss. M and M[1], Cod. Zwettlensis 384 contains other texts—*Distinctiones sive illucidationes sacre scripture* (3r-–24v) and *Exempla aus Heiligenlegenden* (24v–28v)—however, Agnes's *Vita* comprises the remaining folios (29r–76v).[825] The codex originated from the collection of Otto Gnemhertl (d. 1349), who was chaplain at the Viennese church Maria am Gestade and was a monk at the Cistercian library there.[826]

In addition to the Latin transmissions, Joseph von Görres included a Middle High German summary of Agnes's *Vita* in his *Die christliche Mystik* (The Christian Mystic), published in 1837. The text was most likely copied during his years in Straßburg c.1819/1827, due to a reference in his volume (p. 245) naming the source for the text.[827]

> *Nach einem Pergamentmanuscripte, das die Aufzeichnungen ihres Beicht-*
> *vaters enthält, in der Stadtbibliothek von Straßburg, in die es aus der*
> *Johanniterbibliothek gekommen. Hinten steht geschrieben: des Jahrs nach*
> *Gottes Geburt 1315 starb diese Magd decimo May.*[828]

> [From a parchment manuscript, which included the markings of her
> confessor, at the Stadtsbibliothek in Straßburg, which came from the
> Johanniter library. Below it was written: In the year after God's birth 1315
> died this maiden, the tenth of May.][829]

The provenance of the source manuscript is uncertain, although Ruh surmises it was located at the Stadtsbibliothek in Straßburg, where von Görres copied and referenced the manuscript, as reflected in the above citation.[830] Even more perplexing than the source material is the appearance of a Middle High German text in the nineteenth century, particularly when no evidence of a Middle High German translation of Agnes's *Vita* is documented. Kurt Ruh echoes this skepticism, remarking that it is uncertain whether von Görres referenced a German text or whether he translated a Latin transmission into the then-antiquated Middle High German.[831]

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[823] Ibid., 19.
[824] Ibid., 17–21.
[825] Ibid., 18.
[826] Ibid.
[827] Ibid., 22.
[828] Ibid., 26; cited from Joseph von Görres, *Die christliche Mystik II* (Regensburg 1. ed. 1837), 245.
[829] Ibid., 22.
[830] Ibid., 23.
[831] Kurt Ruh, *Verfasserlexikon* 1 (Berlin, 1978), 888.

Despite the mystery behind Görres's Middle High German summary, the potential existence of a German translation of Agnes's *Vita* is not unprecedented. Not only does the Latin translation of Mechthild's *bůch* occur within a decade of her death, a later manuscript—listed as Rw—translates from Latin back into Middle High German.

As we have seen above, the appearance of both Mechthild's and Agnes's texts in a single codex reflects not only a similar textual example but also corresponding textual histories and fates. Thinking along the lines of genre and genre theory, the shift in the "horizon of expectations" according to Jauss and the precedence of "heteroglossia" amid and between the two textual histories intersect in Codex Basilensis A VIII 6. In other words, as K.S. Whetter rightly notes, the "horizon of expectations" within the discussion of genre relates not only to form as a norm that functions as one would anticipate, but also when the motifs that form a genre suggest one type (i.e. romantic epic, courtly lyric, prayer) that play upon the reader-listener's expectations to create something different.[832] Therefore, the "horizon of expectations" of Jauss read via Whetter includes both the expected and unexpected outcomes of a genre based upon the recognized motifs that would suggest one textual form over another. As we have seen with both Mechthild and Agnes, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries mark a shift toward compilations, often without any mention of the author or human messenger of divine teachings.[833]

Although much lesser known and studied than other beguine mystics, rather than contest the inclusion of Agnes's *Vita* with Hadewijch's and Mechthild's writings, I consider a) how this *Vita et revelationes* functions with respect to other hagiographical texts and b) why, if Agnes's *Vita* aligned with the reader-listener's expectations of a vita/hagiography, was a longer excerpt of her text interwoven within the Latin translation of Mechthild's *bůch*, *Lux divinitatis*? Relying upon the recent scholarship of Sara Poor and Balázs J. Nemes, I focus this chapter on the extant manuscript transmission in Ms. Ra, setting out to read not only Mechthild's *Lux* and Agnes's *Vita* intertextually with one another, but also place these works within the larger framework of Codex Basilensis A VIII 6. As previously discussed, the construction of medieval compilations, I argue, can shed light upon the appearance of Agnes's *Vita* amid the larger excerpt of *Lux divinitatis*. Furthermore, the fate of Agnes's text, although decades younger than *Flowing Light* and its Latin translation, correspond with that of Mechthild's *bůch*.

I first outline Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita* on its own, before comparing it with other examples of *Vita et revelationes* from the later medieval period. The tradition of hagiography is well documented, but as Peter Dinzelbacher and Anneliese Stoklaska have noted, the language and form of Agnes's *Vita* differ significantly. Whereas other hagiographical texts develop a particular narrative, often organized chronologically, Agnes's *Vita* engages in a series of reported dialogues between Agnes and her unnamed Benedictine confessor. Furthermore, although written in Latin, the grammar and syntax do not follow convention, causing Dinzelbacher to suspect whether it is a mix of Latin diction and Middle High German from the Bavarian dialect. There are numerous other textual examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of Latin hagiographical writings, composed by confessors, including that of Elizabeth of Schönau, whose *vita* is bound together with Mechthild's *bůch*, and Thomas of Cantimpré's *vita* about Christine the Astonishing, which appears in both Mss. Ra and Rb along with *Lux divinitatis*.

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[832] Whetter, *Understanding Genre,* 8–9.

[833] Poor discusses at length the possible interpretations of this occurrence in Chapters Three and Four of her monograph, *Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book.* While Poor situates her argument within the question of female authorship, in part a reaction to Gisela Vollmann-Profe and Ursula Peters, I remain concerned with textual forms and functions rather than the question of authorship or of gender and genre.

Following my discussion of Agnes, I turn to Codex Basilensis A VIII 6 (Ms. Ra), conducting a close of reading of Agnes's *Vita* within the context of and intertextual placement in *Lux divinitatis.* While some scholars have cited its appearance as a scribal error, I read this lengthy excerpt enfolded within *Lux* along the lines of compilation practices, providing Agnes's *Vita* with more authority and orthodoxy while simultaneously supplementing *Lux divinitatis* with a vision of creation. The first part of Ms. Ra focuses on texts—three epistles and one vita—about St. Jerome, highlighting a recognized orthodox textual tradition from an established authority on Christian faith and practice. The second part contains not only a long excerpt of *Lux divinitatis* and Agnes's *vita*, but also Thomas of Cantimpré's *vita* of Christine the Astonishing, and concludes with a tract about sin. Considering that Nemes and other scholars cite another manuscript at the Basel University Library, Codex Basilensis B IX 11, as potential source for Cod. A VIII 6 and that the transmission does not contain an excerpt of Agnes's *Vita*, leads me to consider the possibility that the inclusion of her text was conscious and deliberate. I conclude this chapter by drawing in the discussion from throughout this dissertation and placing them in dialogue with one another.

II   Agnes Blannbekin and her *Vita*: Questions of Genre

The Life and Revelations of Agnes Blannbekin captures medieval Vienna through the eyes of a religious woman living within the city. Amy Hollywood, who published a monograph on contemporaneous German mystics, notes that the meaning of the text, when composed by or for a mystic, alters when the focus is for society. Hollywood explained that it is the mystic's body, or person, that is the basis for a hagiography during the thirteenth century, whereas the internal experience is the text for the mystic herself.[834]A scribe compiling the text for a hagiography relied upon the accounts of the saint, as well as the fashioned conception of the mystic based upon her actions. Therefore, an author of a hagiography, in Hollywood's opinion, recorded only outward experiences and not the unique experience within the mind of the mystic. The works for and about beguine mystics, on the other hand, recalled the experiences of that person with the divine, whether written through a confessor or by the mystic herself.

As I outlined in Chapter Two, hagiography is a complex and diverse genre that encompasses a multitude of types depending upon the century or even decade during the medieval period. Although hagiographies may include aspects of *visio/*vision as a genre, the function of visionary episodes differ from other forms, Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek* being one example thereof. Whereas Hadewijch constructed an integrated visionary program, rife with reference to reading and meditative practices, hagiography places emphasis upon the external reading or interpretation of a potential saint's experience. Ursula Peters, in her 1988 monograph *Religiösische Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum*, categorizes hagiography and other religious texts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries under the same heading, explaining that because these works were composed for specific purposes and constructed as literature meant to instruct, inspire, and entertain, they fall under the same category.[835] However, Peters conflates the common thematic elements found within *vitae* and texts such as *Flowing Light* with genre, function, and the intended reader-listener. Unlike hagiographical texts, Mechthild's *bůch* engages in an ongoing dialogue not only with the divine, but with her experience, between sections of her text, and with critique from her readership.

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[834] Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife,* 36.
[835] Ursula Peters, *Religiösische Erfahrung,* 56–7, 120–1.

Unsurprisingly, Peters's research ignited heavy criticism from Sara Poor and Amy Hollywood. The scope and breadth of Peters's argument is limited to female-authored works compared to typically male-authored *vitae* about female mystics. This in itself exposes a problematic dichotomy between male and female voicing and subsequent questions concerning the presence of the female mystic voice within such texts. As I discussed in Chapter Two, viewing genre within confined—and admittedly comfortable and anachronistic—positions presents an uneven response to and interpretation of genre. Jauss explains that the appearance of a genre and the mixed forms thereof should be interpreted within the context of the overall textual structure. In other words, scholars should examine how a genre functions in relation to the overall text and what its appearance suggests concerning the intertexuality and ongoing dialogic orientation of the text.[836] Hagiography, in contrast to the writings of Mechthild and Hadewijch, functions as a meta-narrative, composed with the explicit intention to suggest canonization of the holy person in question. For this reason, hagiographies focus on the life, revelations, and works (as well as miracles), and, unlike Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek* or Mechthild's *bůch*, rarely engage in dialogue with the reader-listener, if at all.

Turning to Agnes's *Vita*, the form and function differs on several levels from both Mechthild's and Hadewijch's texts, as well as other *vitae* from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Like other religious texts of the period, Agnes's *Vita* begins with a prologue from her confessor and scribe of the text. However, the focus of his prologue is that of gratitude for the lessons he received through conversation with Agnes and the truths illuminated through her revelations. The confessor-scribe never names Agnes during the prologue and in fact often simply writes an ambiguous "*dixit*/she said" throughout the composition. It is his voice, written in the first-person singular, that dominates the prologue and its subsequent chapters, remaining an active participant within the text and as writer-scribe. That said, the text initiates with a title, in which Agnes is named: "*Prologus auctoris in vitam et revelationes venerabilis Agnetis Blannbekin*" ["Prologue by the writer of the Life and Revelations of the venerable Agnes Blannbekin"].[837]

The confessor remarks in the prologue that,

> *Igitur venerandar, adorandae et amandae majestati, veritati et bonitati tuae gratias referens, o beata Trinitas, ad laudem tuam, gloriam et honorem et ad aedificationem fidei et ad nutrimentum devotionis et ad divini amoris incitamentum, ego pauperculus et indignus frater ordinis fratrum minorum ea, quae a sanctis et fide dignis personis, te, domine, eis revelante, didici vel didivero…*[838]

> [Therefore, Blessed Trinity, I, a most insignificant and unworthy Brother of the Franciscan Order, give thanks to your venerable majesty, worthy of devotion and love, and to your truth and goodness. I will record for your praise, glory, and honor and for the edification of faith, the nurturing of devotion, and the stimulation of love for God which I have learned or will

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[836] Jauss, "Theory of Genres", 83.

[837] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 66.
It is perhaps important to note that this title does not appear in Cod. Basilensis A VIII 6. The transmission of Agnes's *Vita* initiates with the first line of the prologue "Confiteor tibi pater", marked with a large initial spanning three lines.

[838] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 66.

learn from the holy and trustworthy persons to whom you, Lord, have revealed yourself.][839]

The confessor and scribe of Agnes's *Vita*, unlike the source of his writing, remains unnamed and unknown, and he engages with the topos of working as God's mouthpiece that we saw in Mechthild's *bůch*. Similar to other hagiographies and the beguine texts discussed in this dissertation, the confessor-scribe highlights the significance and function of this text for its readership. However, he speaks directly to the divine rather than a reader, shifting emphasis from himself or Agnes to the inspiration for the composition.

As Sara Poor has outlined, *auctores* and *auctoritas* bespeak the modern word "authority", and yet I would interpret the presence of this word in the title before the prologue, not as an attempt to appropriate authorship of the text, but rather that the confessor-scribe serves as an eyewitness to Agnes's reflection-meditation upon her experiences with the divine. The confessor-scribe is the authority because he engaged directly with Agnes, using her as his source for composition. The textual evidence for my argument lies within the form and function that Agnes's *Vita* entails. Composed in a predominantly dialogic form, the confessor-scribe remains an active participant throughout the text by way of his recorded interaction with Agnes. Rather than a polished third-person account of Agnes's life and revelations, the confessor-scribe details his own experience with her, documenting his questions, concerns, and meditations upon the truths he feels she reveals to him.

In his article, "Die 'Vita et Revelationes' der Wiener Begine Agnes Blannbekin (d. 1315) im Rahmen der Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur ihrer Zeit", Peter Dinzelbacher highlights the nuanced and complex development of hagiographical and revelatory genres during the medieval period. Beginning with an overview of the textual history and contents of Agnes's *Vita*, Dinzelbacher examines the ways in which her text fits within a larger literary history from the mid- to late medieval period. He organizes the text by thematic elements, such as revelations concerning the New Testament (*Schauungen zur Heilsgeschichte*) and timeless allegories (*Überzeitliche Allegorien*).[840] What is made clear is that Agnes's *Vita* reflects a diverse grouping of genres, most of which occur with some amount of genre hybridity. For example, Dinzelbacher lists not only visions, auditions, and biographical elements within the text, but also critique of contemporaneous figures (in particular, the Franciscans in chapter 117), miracles (a communion wafer disappears from the alter and reappears in Agnes's mouth in chapter 41), and descriptions of political and social events, Vienna in the last decade of the thirteenth century, and circles within which she socialized.[841]

As Dinzelbacher rightly notes, the *Vita* of Agnes exhibits varied characteristics of traditional and hybrid genres of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, finding similarity in both Latin and vernacular texts that display a concern for the works and experiences of the inner and outer bodies of the holy person in question. Dinzelbacher balances his investigative approach by setting Agne's *Vita* against similar textual examples, while also contrasting her text to the larger traditions of hagiography and revelations. Based upon these comparisons, Dinzelbacher asserts that a new genre appears during the thirteenth century, one that combines aspects of both

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[839] *Agnes Blannbekin, Viennese Beguine: Life and Revelations,* transl. Ulrike Wiethaus (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 17.

[840] Peter Dinzelbacher, "Die 'Vita et Revelationes' der Wiener Begine Agnes Blannbekin (d. 1315) im Rahmen der Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur ihrer Zeit" in *Frauenmystik im Mittelalter,* eds. Peter Dinzelbacher, (Ostfildern: D. Bauer, 1985), 155.

[841] Ibid., 55–58.

hagiography and revelations.[842] Dinzelbacher classifies Agnes's *Vita* within the realm of this hybrid form ("Zwischenform"). However, in contrast to other textual examples he lists in the article—including Gertrud the Great's *Legatus divinae pietatis* and Mechthild of Hackeborn's *Liber specialis gratiae*—the *Vita et revelationes* of Agnes comprises two key form differences that sets the text apart from contemporaneous works.

The first is organization of the chapters. Whereas both Gertrud's *Legatus* and Mechthild's *Liber* begin with an overview of their early life and first revelations, following the prologue, Agnes's *Vita* begins not with an explanation for her interaction with the confessor-scribe nor with any details of her life before divine intervention, but with a vision about creation, a description of the celestial realm, and those who do and will reside there. Although the text is divided into 235 chapters, the first twenty-three chapters recount a single vision, which appears almost in its entirety in Codex Basilensis A VIII 6. In fact, the confessor-scribe first acquaints the reader-listener with details from Agnes's life in chapter 39. At the same time, the lack of an overarching structure similar to that of other hagiographical and revelatory works may lie in the process of composition and the voice of Agnes within the text. As Ulrike Wiethaus remarks in the introduction to her English translation of *Vita et revelationes,* "much of the text was written during or immediately after a meeting between [Agnes and her confessor-scribe], especially given the fact that much of its compositional structure is in the form of a 'diary'."[843] While Dinzelbacher makes no such claims concerning the text's genre, the lack of a chronological incipit may reflect more the progression and chronology of the interaction between Agnes and her confessor-scribe, rather than a re-telling of her life from childhood onwards.

Wiethaus continues to explain that much of the text is recorded without any "uniform overarching compositional intent", and furthermore that, the initial twenty-three chapters aside, much of the work follows the liturgical calendar, interspersed by "the random patterns of town scandals, unrest caused by military conflicts, times of illness and health, emotional ups and downs", and other moments within Agnes's life.[844] While Wiethaus situates Agnes's *Vita* in the genre of "spiritual diary", I hesitate to concede to that categorization. Unlike the traditions of hagiography and revelation, the diary as a genre presupposes a personal and private recording and remembering with oneself. Although later literary genres, the novel in particular, utilize this form as a secondary speech genre to convey the interior monologue of its characters, Agnes's *Vita* is dialogic in nature, whether it be between her and her confessor-scribe, inner dialogue reflecting meditation upon her revelations and concerns about disclosing them to her confessor-scribe, and between her experience with the divine and the institutional memory rooted in late medieval Christian textual and liturgical practices.

There is also the related question concerning how one might approach Agnes's *Vita* in light of its hybrid generic form and potential intended function. Dinzelbacher argues that the life and revelations of Agnes Blannbekin were preserved by her confessor and are accurately represented in the surviving texts. Anneliese Stoklaska, on the other hand, notes significant doubt in such an assertion. In her opinion, modern scholars are unable to distinguish the extent of truth

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[842] Ibid., 162.
"Wenn wir nun festgestellt haben, daß es um 1300 eine literarische Gattung gibt, die sich aus Offenbarungstexten einerseits und biographischen Abschnitten andererseits zusammensetzt, so müssen wir nun einen Blick auf die Entwicklung der beiden maßgebenden Gattungen werfen, in deren Traditionen die Autoren unserer Texte standen, also auf die der Heiligenviten und die der Offenbarungsschriften" (Ibid.).
[843] *Life and Revelations,* 7.
[844] Ibid.

within the surviving transmissions.[845] The primary difference between the two arguments is the way in which the text is viewed. Whereas Dinzelbacher reads the text as a piece of literature, therefore viewing Agnes as the protagonist and her confessor as the narrator, Stoklaska studies the text as a historical document. As Sara Poor suggested in her recent monograph, a reading between these two schools of thought would be the most desirable and logical. Therefore, it is a reading that acknowledges the potential shortcomings or alterations of the text, yet also allows for some level of credibility based upon its historical context and surviving manuscript transmissions.[846]

The second key difference that sets Agnes's *Vita* apart from other hagiographic-revelatory texts of the late medieval period is its conversational tone. Unlike the writings of Hadewijch and Mechthild, the confessor-scribe engages with Agnes directly, recording her revelations and musings, his questions for greater clarification, and her responses. As previously noted, the language of the text, although in Latin, does not follow the conventional rules of syntax and rhetoric found in other Latin *vitae.* Dinzelbacher remarks that the confessor-scribe's use of Latin is "not only simplistic, but…simply bad."[847] Anneliese Stoklaska interprets the presence of the scribe and use of Latin as an erasure of Agnes's voice within the text and any feminine perspective.[848] In fact, Stoklaska suspects that the confessor-scribe was largely untrained in more advanced forms of Latin rhetoric, syntax, and diction outside of the Latin used for the liturgy, masses, and in the Bible.[849] Stoklaska criticizes Dinzelbacher in his claim that the confessor-scribe acted as an art "Ghostwriter" for Agnes and his insistence that the contents of the text should be trusted as accurate and reflective of Agnes's voice.[850]

In contrast, Ulrike Wiethaus interprets the lack of structure and imperfect Latin as a sign of Agnes's voice within the text.[851] Wiethaus explains that,

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[845] Anneliese Stoklaska, "Die Revelationes der Agnes Blannbekin: Ein mystisches Unikat im Schrifttum des Wiener Mittelalters" in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für die Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 43 (1987), 15.

[846] Poor, *Mechthild,* 11.

[847] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 16; translated by Ulrike Wiethaus in her introduction, p. 7. Anneliese Stoklaska also chastises the Latin of the confessor scribe, stating, "Das sprachliche Niveau der lateinischen Version ist sicher kein hohes, die Konstruktionen wirken unbeholfen und der Wortschatz ist gering" ("Die Revelationes", 9).

[848] Ibid., 16.

[849] "…das hier verwendete Latin ist im allgemeinen zwar nicht hochstehend, läßt aber stellenweise doch auf einen Schreiber schließen, der mit der Sprache einigermaßen geschickt umzugehen versteht und sich vor allem geläufig der Kirchen- und Bibelsprache bedient. Dann wieder gibt es Textstellen, die stilistisch auffallend schlecht sind, einen sehr beschränkten Wortschatz aufweisen und grammatikalisch so völlig 'deutsch' konstruiert sind, daß sich der Gedanke an eine unzulängliche Übersetzung oder einen zweiten Verfasser mit einem viel schlechteren Sprachniveau aufdrängt" (Ibid.).

[850] "Und wenn P. Dinzelbacher von dem vorliegenden Text behauptet, er wäre im literarischen Trend gelegen, bestätigt das nur diese Vermutungen, den dafür mußte sich ja eine der beiden handelnden Personen, Agnes oder der Beichtvater, dieses Trends in irgendeiner Form bewußt sein und sich mit dem zeitgenössischen mystischen Schrifttum bis zu einem gewissen Grad vertraut zeigen, und es ist wohl eher anzunehmen, daß es sich dabei um den 'Ghostwriter' aus dem Minoritenkonvent gehandelt hat, um so mehr, da viele begnadete Frauen in Verbindung mit den Bettelorden bzw. Tertiaren wiederholt Förderung und Unterstützung erfahren haben" (Ibid., 15).

[851] As noted in the citation above, Stoklaska went as far as stating that the grammar of the Latin in Agnes's *Vita* is thoroughly "German" in structure, in addition to the rather simplistic word usage and stylistically rather "bad" (Ibid., 16).

I like to think that it is of such inelegant quality exactly because its grammatical and rhetorical structure is so close to Middle High German and thus Blannbekin's and her confessor's language of conversation and exchange.[852]

Although a scholarly interpretation of the text's language, Wiethaus grounds her argument in the extant transmissions of Agnes's *Vita*. Stoklaska thoroughly dissected the role of the confessor-scribe within the text, but, at the same time, the highly "German" nature of the Latin should not be quickly discounted. The linguistic structure, taken in conjunction with the overall diffuse and free organization of Agnes's *Vita*, could plausibly signify the presence of recorded conversations.

The First Vision: Chapters 1–23

Following the prologue, the first chapter marks the onset of Agnes's revelations. Similar to Vision 1 in Hadewijch's corpus, the first chapter begins with a drawing away of the spirit from the body and physical senses to the inner-spiritual plane with the divine.

Factu manu domini super unam sanctam personam post missam publicam in ecclesia, coepic suaviter viribus defivere et intus rapta in lumen inenarrabile vidit in lumine divino hominem speciosum prae filiis hominum et in homine illo illud lumen.[853]

[Since the hand of God came upon a holy person after open mass in church, she began to lose her strength with a sensation of sweetness. Experiencing raptures and enfolded in unspeakable light, she saw in that divine light a man, handsome before the sons of man, and in that man she saw that light.][854]

The description of the shift from outer to inner bodies is brief, but the description of the change—"she began to lose her strength with a sensation of sweetness"—is reminiscent of diction employed by both Mechthild and Hadewijch. In addition, the focus lies initially not on the vision of creation but on "unspeakable light" [*lucem inenarrabile*] in which she sees a man "handsome before the sons of man" [*vidit in lumine divino hominem speciosum prae filiis hominum*].

Even in this brief introduction to the vision, we encounter two key elements of the text: a) that the language is Latin but the structure is simple and reads much like the syntax of Germanic languages; and 2) the image of the man and the light present a cyclical aspect—the man is both seen in the light and the light is seen within him. With reference to the language found within the text, Peter Dinzelbacher remarks that the at times awkward or clumsy style of the confessor-scribe extends from the mode of composition. In Dinzelbacher's opinion, the "non-literary prose text" similar to a dictation reflect a conscious decision by the confessor-scribe during textual creation: the confessor-scribe sought to represent as accurately as he could the conversations in which Agnes revealed divine truths.[855]

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[852] *Life and Revelations,* 7.
[853] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 68.
[854] *Life and Revelations,* 17. Translation emended by me.
[855] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 34.

The figure of a man appearing in the light which also emits the "holy light" reflects aspects of unity. Later in the first chapter, Agnes reveals that the man is in fact Christ, in whom all created things and elements were and are born. Taking into consideration this information, one could read the cyclical interaction between Christ in light and light in Christ as man to be a reference of potential *unio mystica*. What is more, the fact that Christ appears as a man "more beautiful than any sons of man", could symbolize the human and divine connection that would take place during union. Finally, this initial creation imagery speaks to the larger narrative of timelessness, of both promised future and prophesy documented in the origins of the earth which appeared in the previous chapter during the discussion of Mary in Mechthild's *bůch* and in Chapter Three about Hadewijch's *Visioenenboek*.

Another similarity between Mechthild's and Agnes's texts is the prominent use of light and its flowing nature. In Chapter 5, entitled "Regarding the Wounds of Christ as a Whole", Agnes describes the wounds of Christ due to his crucifixion.

> *Vidit Christi vulnera benedicta inenarrabiliter gloriosa, perlucida et clara luce fulgida, ita ut omnes electi ad ipsorum praesentiam essent lucis illius pervii et transparentes. De vulneribus capitis dixit, quod multae puncturae essent et quod a singular puncture inenerrabile lumen sanctis fluxit, ita quod electi potius vellent omni gaudio patriae carere, dei vision excepta, quam carere intuitu vulnerum Christi beatorum.*[856]

> [She saw the blessed wounds of Christ inexpressibly glorified, translucent and radiating in a clear light so that in their presence, all the chosen were permeated by the light and made translucent. Regarding the wounds of the head, she said that there were many punctures. From one single puncture, an inexpressible light flowed toward the saints so that the chosen were willing to forgo all the joys of heaven except for the vision of God rather than to be without the sight of Christ's blessed wounds.][857]

The flowing of the light from Christ's wounds and its ability to entice the chosen ones to "forgo all the joys of heaven" shares several elements from Mechthild's poetic descriptions of flowing light in her *bůch*. Although the language of the text does exhibit traits of dialogue or conversation with the confessor-scribe (e.g. "*vidit*" and "*dixit*"), the vivid visual descriptions demonstrate that Agnes detailed her revelations with careful reflection. While the appearance of

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"Diese Änderungen erklären sich zum Teil leicht aus der Langeweile, die beim Abschreiben eines solchen nicht-literarischen Prosatexts (wohl nach Diktat) entsteht, zum Teil daraus, daß solche Abkürzungen reichlich anwendenden Handschriften auch für zeitgenössische Leser oft nur mühsam und mit der Gefahr von Mißverständnissen zu lesen waren…" (Ibid.).

[856] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 70.

[857] *Life and Revelations,* 19.

Wiethaus remarks in the footnote (p. 18, n. 2) that Agnes and her confessor use the Latin word *patria* to describe heaven or paradise, but also to mark "the existential sense of exile and alienation" (*Life and Revelations,* 18 n. 2). I have chosen to emend this translation to reflect that understanding rather than employ Wiethaus's translation as "fatherland", due to its nationalistic overtones. Another appropriate interpretation of *patria* could be "origins" or "birthplace", because, as the word suggests, it is a return to the divine and not a new or unknown location. The use of *patria* might also be interpreted as a reflection or acknowledgment of the soul as birthed in the divine and therefore reflecting an understanding of the inner and outer bodies, as outlined by St. Augustine and others.

"*vidit*" and "*dixit*" at times interrupt the stylistic re-telling and meditation upon previous visions, their presence remain a consistent reminder that the confessor-scribe sought to place emphasis upon his source of information, Agnes, rather than sculpt the text into a form more removed from its witness.

Reading Agnes through the lens of Bakhtin's speech genres and Derrida's concept of invagination, the presence of Agnes's potential voice within the text gains more strength and validity. As outlined in Chapter One, Bakhtin's speech genres are divided into secondary and primary speech genres. Primary speech genres reflect everyday speech patterns, such as simple speech and intimate utterances,[858] ones that do not appear in literature in their raw, base forms.[859] Secondary speech genres, on the other hand, are more complex forms that elaborate upon primary speech genres, create combinations thereof or genre hybrids. As Bakhtin notes, primary and secondary speech genres are connected yet different, secondary speech genres acting as shadows or reflections of primary speech genres in literature: "[Primary genres] enter into actual reality only via the novel as a whole, that is, as a literary-artistic event and not as everyday life."[860] The confessor's conversations with Agnes as depicted within her *Vita et Revelationes* become a literary-artistic event that can be consumed and contemplated upon by the reader through the complex process of contemplative reading practices. However, the reader-listener never hears or speaks to Agnes, as her revelations and reflections are further reflected and revealed by way to the speaker-writer.

The question of Agnes's voice or an attempt at the very least by the confessor to preserve some concept of her within the literary setting is well documented, but her words and voice have been transformed nonetheless. The reader-listener is unable to hear Agnes recite a poem or prayer, how she narrates the re-telling of her vision and meditations thereupon. What we as the reader-listener do encounter is the bridge between genres within the artistic moment of the text, i.e. meditation/contemplation upon the raw source material and the subsequent act of composition. The form of the *Vita* extends beyond simple reported speech—something made very clear within the prologue and introductory words of the text—or even recorded dialogue. The confessor interweaves his experience of encountering Agnes's recounting of her vision *after* the passage of time and the process of meditation. In essence, Agnes *reads* her meditation which stemmed from her divine experience. The confessor then *reads* both the memory of her recollection (i.e. her re-telling of a contemplated experience) and his own memory/internalization of the moment of revelation. These layers of readings within readings that culminate into the process of generic and textual composition coincide beautifully with Derrida's "invagination", the folds of memory, and the translation/transfiguration of experience, contemplation, and mediation into text.

Agnes cannot be physical present within the text or even within the speech genres of her *Vita.* And yet, exposure to shadows or reflections of her can exist in the syntax and grammar (e.g. what Dinzelbacher denounced as awful Latin), interjections of "*dixit*" and "*vidit*" to connect the sensory perception of a lived experience, and descriptions of sounds, smells, and speech patterns from everyday life. In many ways, it is precisely her speech (or speech as it has been recorded/reflected upon) that provides the greatest insight into her world and potential clues by

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[858] "The vast majority of literary genres are secondary, complex genres composed of various transformed primary genres (the rejoinder in dialogue, everyday stories, letters, diaries, minutes, and so forth)…As a rule, these secondary genres of complex cultural communication play out various forms of primary speech communication" (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres,* 94).

[859] Bakhtin, "Speech Genres*",* 85.

[860] Ibid.

which to *read* her experience and decipher the text and its form. In the next subsection, I look briefly at how Agnes's farming background expresses a unique perspective of beguine life within urban areas.

"Street Mysticism"

       Agnes also takes the role of witness in her depiction of life in late thirteenth-century Vienna. As previously noted, Agnes's *Vita* comprises not only a hagiographical re-telling of her life or her revelations, but also reflections upon daily life in Vienna and within the last decade of the thirteenth century. Ulrike Wiethaus discusses the significance of Agnes's secular and urban setting, explaining that,

> Her text abounds with references to the concerns of the city commune, to women's presence in the public urban space, and their observations of and contributions to the daily vagaries of town life…Blannbekin is shown roaming the streets with her female companions, crossing public spaces, visiting churches and leaving for out-of-town errands.[861]

Agnes's *Vita* takes on a new and varied role than simply hagiography or revelation. As Wiethaus has noted, the urban space becomes the *locus* for reflection and introspection for Agnes. The activities of her daily life interweave with her communing with the divine, her mundane activities such as bloodletting (chapter 78) or cooking (chapters 26–29), the site of inspiration and meditation. Whereas the work of Mechthild von Magdeburg or Hadewijch of Brabant exemplify the use of "courtly lyric" to express their relationship with the divine, Agnes Blannbekin represents Jesus in a very human form that is very unlike the style of the above-mentioned mystics contemporaneous to her. For these reasons, Wiethaus parallels Barbara Newman's coinage of "*mystique courtoise*" with what she terms "street mysticism", "an expression of female spirituality that takes as its sacred *locus* not the enclosed court…but the open spaces of markets, churches, shrines dedicated to the saints, shops, apothecaries, roads, and hospitals."[862] In my opinion, this shift from the court to the urban space also marks the growing importance of medieval cities, which was traditionally the chosen location for beguines and beguine communities. Even with Mechthild of Magdeburg we have seen increasing description of urban life during the later books of her *bůch*, at times interwoven in her critique of other beguines and ecclesiastics, others marking the onset of meditation upon divine truths and lessons.

       Textually, the presence of an urban setting may align with the fact that she was the daughter of a farmer (albeit a farmer with apparent wealth) that shifted the focus of Agnes' *Vita* from the literature of the court to images represented in everyday life. While the biographies of Hadewijch and Mechthild remain uncertain, their writings employ topoi and themes reminiscent of courtly romance and lyric. In addition, the highly stylistic quality of their texts exudes a more refined and educated background than that of Agnes, leading scholars to speculate whether Mechthild and Hadewijch were born into families of noble lineage. In contrast, Agnes's "street mysticism" fully embraces her life as a beguine within Vienna's walls, which she extends into her conversations with her confessor-scribe and weaves (*texere*) into the corpus of relayed text. In the next section, I take a closer look at the extant manuscript transmissions and the forms in which Agnes's *Vita* took in the century following her death and the text's completion. As

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[861] *Life and Revelations,* 172.
[862] Ibid., 170.

mentioned in the introduction, Mechthild and Agnes's fates, or at least those of their texts, are intertwined during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with the emerging popularity of compilation or miscellanies as a genre.

II.1   Manuscript Transmission of *Vita et revelationes*

The extant manuscript transmissions of Agnes's *Vita* reveal more details concerning the historical reception and possible popularity of the text by contemporaries. As mentioned previously in this chapter, there are only three extant manuscripts known to scholars: Z—Codex Zwettlensis 384, M—Codex I 115, and M[1]—Codex I 117. Ms. Z is the oldest manuscript, dating from the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and includes only the first 189 chapters, of which 189 ends abruptly halfway through the text. Agnes's *Vita* is found on folios 29r through 76v, almost two-thirds of the folios. The other texts in Ms. Z are from a different hand, but date from the same period as the scribe of *Vita et revelationes.* "*Distinctiones sive illucidationes sacre scripture*" is found on folios 3r through 24v, while a second text—*Exempla aus Heiligenlegenden* appears on 24v–28v. As we will see with Cod. Basilensis A VIII 6, Ms. Z mirrors the organization of Latin sacred texts and commentary with Agnes's *Vita.* At the same time, it is important to note that there is paleographical evidence (discoloration on the last page of Agnes's text) to support the notion that the completed booklet existed prior to binding. Based upon this evidence, Dinzelbacher speculates that this may explain the abrupt cut-off at the end of 76v, as the constructed booklet did not allow for any additional folios.[863]

Still in its original binding, Ms. Z originated in Vienna at the Cistercian monastery affiliated with the Maria am Gestade church there. The owner, a monk by the name of Otto Gnemhertl (d. 1349) marked his monogram within the book, solidifying its provenance.[864] In contrast, M and M1 originate from the Carthusian convent of St. Michael near Mainz. For the most part, M agrees textually with Z, despite the fact that it dates from the second half of the fourteenth century.[865] Although M was not bound until the fifteenth century, the script marks an earlier style—Gothic cursive—which fell out of usage during the mid-fourteenth century. A miscellany or compilation manuscript, M contains only a quarter of the original text, and what does remain is shortened.[866] Agnes's *Vita* is bound together with theological works, but Dinzelbacher suggests that the *Vita* circulated prior to binding, due to the discoloration on the last folio.

The related manuscript, M1, exhibits paleographical evidence that leads scholars to infer it is a copy, at least in part, of the M transmission. Dating from around the end of the fourteenth century, M1 is the youngest of the three manuscripts and is also a compilation of theological texts. In addition to the three extant transmissions, textual references provide evidence of two other (now lost) transmissions: the Neresheimer manuscript, a copy of which Bernardus Pez used to create his editio princeps; and a Straßburg manuscript, which Joseph von Görres referenced in order to "compose" his Middle High German summary. While it is suspected that the Neresheimer manuscript (N) dated from the fourteenth century, there is no indication of a possible age for the Straßburg transmission.[867] Peter Dinzelbacher has associated the Cod. Zwettlensis with the earlier period of the manuscript tradition. That point aside, Cod. Zwettlensis 384 is the most substantial existing copy of the text, although still a fragment itself. In fact,

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[863] Ibid.

[864] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 18.

[865] Ibid., 19.

[866] Ibid., 20.

[867] Ibid.

Dinzelbacher relied upon the Pez edition to create his own critical edition because Bernardus Pez utilized a manuscript, which has now been lost (or destroyed).[868] In places where scribal errors or emendations are present, Dinzelbacher relied upon Ms. Z to correct and expand upon the contents found within Pez's edition.[869]

Although the Neresheimer manuscript is lost, copies from Pez's earlier edition exist in several libraries. Dating from the eighteenth century, Bernardus Pez's edition under the title *Ven. Agentis Blannbekin* in 1731 caused an uproar due to a vision in which Agnes takes Christ's foreskin like a Eucharist. In addition to the existing copies of the edition, the correspondence from 1735 between Pez and a monk by the name of Garelli has been preserved, as well as another secondary source, *Agnes Blannbekin eine österreischische Schwärmerin* from Oscar Panizza (1898), which is located at the *Österreische Nationalbibliothek* (Austrian National Library). Dinzelbacher reports that Pez referenced the Neresheimer manuscript by way of a Carthusian monk, and either utilized a transcription of Ms. N or referenced the manuscript directly.[870]

The connection between the manuscript transmission history and genre is easy to explain. Due to the fact that scholars must rely upon extant copies of the text, the form in which the text appears impacts the ways in which the possible function is viewed. In the case of Hadewijch, I discussed at length in Chapter Three how the reorganization and emendation found in Ms. C implicated a change in interpretation and the construction of four distinct writing sections into one cohesive corpus. With Mechthild and her *bůch*, the prominent existence of compilations and translations within its transmission history illuminates later medieval genre forms and the altering function of theological and mystical texts as needs and readership change. Agnes and her *Vita*, the youngest composition discussed in this dissertation, have a similar fate to that of Mechthild. Of the three extant transmissions, two are compilations and heavily edit the textual example found in Ms. Z and Pez's edition of Ms. N. Although Ms. Z is also a fragment, the majority of the text was copied, and, owing to the fact that it belonged originally to a collection in Vienna and dates from the first quarter of the fourteenth century, it is possible to suspect that Ms. Z was not only limited in terms of space on the parchment, but also that the source manuscript itself may have been incomplete. While this is purely speculation, it would account for the fragmented nature of Ms. Z and tie it closer to Agnes's death temporally and geographically to Vienna.

Finally, in Peter Dinzelbacher's edition, there are no references in the critical apparatus to the fragment found in Ms. Ra. A forthcoming edition of Cod. Basilensis A VIII 6, as well as Ms. Rb, the Berner fragment, and Ms. Rw, the Middle High German translation of *Lux divinitatis*, may shed further light upon the potential paleographical connections between Agnes's *Vita* and the Ms. Ra. Unfortunately, the edition by Nemes and others is still under production and will not appear until late 2018 or early 2019.

III.   Codex Basilensis A VIII 6: Woven Bodies

In this final section, I return to the codex to take a closer look at the appearance of Agnes's *Vita* amid a lengthy excerpt of *Lux divinitatis.* Dating from the third quarter of the fifteenth century, Ms. Ra is a compilation of theological texts originating at the Carthusian convent of St. Margarethental near Basel. Cod. A VIII 6 is closely related to two other manuscripts at the University library in Basel, Cod. B IX 11 and Cod. A VII 68, as well as a third

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[868] *Leben und Offenbarungen,* 33.
[869] Ibid.
[870] Ibid.

manuscript at the Bern Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. A 82. As mentioned previously, Codex A VIII 6 consists of two parts: the first comprised of three letters and one *vita* about St. Jerome; the second part contains Mechthild's *Lux divinitatis* and Agnes's *Vita et Revelationes*, Thomas of Cantimpré's *vita* of Christina Mirabili, a tract about sin, and a theological text about divine love, *Stimulus amoris*. Written in two hands, the first hand appears in the first part of the manuscript (2r–97r), while the second hand completes the remaining folios (99r–219r). *Lux divinitatis* begins on 99r with an index of the chapters (99r–101r) and then continues 101v–154v, 159r–195v, and 209v. *Vita et revelationes* begins on 154v and ends on a partial folio, 158ra.

Each section of the book is marked with a red leather marker/tab, enabling the reader to find specific sections quickly. The elaborate initials of the first section are replaced by simpler initials in either blue or red in the second section. Despite the key markers of red lettering, initials, and leather tabs to mark sections, the first section of *Lux divinitatis* concludes and *Vita et revelationes* begins immediately there following without a leather tab or any introduction.[871] Although *Lux divinitatis* continues following the first twenty-three chapters of Agnes Blannbekin's *Vita*, the second section (159r–194r) begins without the table of contents listed for the first section and follows a similar layout to Agnes's text, omitting mention of the chapter number and displaying only the thematic heading for the chapter.

Although there is a lengthy index for *Lux divinitatis* (99r–101r), the introduction to the work is a single sentence, differing significantly from Ms. Rb. However, unlike Barbara Newman's argument that the Latin translations often remove the presence of the author's name, Mechthild's name does appear.[872] Agnes's text begins without introduction and is simply marked with a three-line-height blue initial. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the only initial mention of Agnes by name occurs in the title or heading for the prologue, without which a scribe might interpret the text to be the writing of a Franciscan due to the reference in the prologue. The only acknowledgement that Mechthild's work may be completed is the reference in red to mark the end of the section. All eighty-six chapters listed in the index are completed by this folio (154v): "*Expliciunt Capitula preallegata*" Explicit of Agnes's section reads: "*Sequuntur plura alia capitula eiusdem libri intytulati lux diuinitatis non scripta in exemplari quod solum fuit excerptum tocius libri.*" This explicit reference that the following folios contain *Lux divinitatis,* although in excerpted form, leads me to conclude that the scribes did recognize that Agnes's *Vita* was not a part of Mechthild's *Lux divinitatis*. What I suspect, and hopefully the forthcoming edition will elucidate, is that a transmission existed in which both *Lux divinitatis* and Agnes's *Vita* were a part and that this manuscript, in addition to Ms. Rb, were used as sources.

My reasoning for this conclusion is simple. First, the codex once had a red tab to mark Agnes's *Vita* on folio 155, which has since been lost or removed. This would suggest that the scribe or bookbinder intended it to mark that section, but for whatever reason later removed it. Second, the transmission of *Lux divinitatis* contains the eighty-six chapters listed in the index. While the index may be from a previous transmission and incomplete—similar to Ms. E, for example—the first part of Mechthild's text fulfills what it outlined to do. Third, the excerpt of Agnes's *Vita* highlights the first vision almost in its entirety. Although there are a number of scribal errors on the final folio (158ra)—and throughout the excerpt for that matter—it seems unlikely that the scribe would have mistaken Agnes's *Vita* for *Lux divinitatis*. Not only is there a

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[871] It appears that at one point there may have been a leather tab marking Agnes's *Vita* that has since been lost or was removed. The evidence for this is a rectangular mark on either side of folio 155. Based upon this mark, I would conclude that a leather tab once existed on this folio marking the beginning of Agnes's *Vita*.

[872] Barbara Newman, *From VirileWoman to WomanChrist,* 140.

large initial in blue ink at the start of the excerpt, each new sentence and chapter is marked by either a red mark or larger red initial. Finally, based upon the amount of work involved with scribal transmissions, I find it hard to believe that someone would only first recognize an error four double-sided folios into the copy.

Errors that result during the process of copying the manuscript are in most cases unintentional but nevertheless affect subsequent readers and copyists. The method employed in creating editions from manuscript transmissions is similar to the process of copying and translating the original text that occurred during the Middle Ages. According to Eugene Vinaver, there are four main points during the process of copying in which a scribe could potentially err in some way: a) the reading of the text; b) the passage of the eye from the text to the copy; c) the writing of the copy; d) the passage of the eye from the copy back to the text.[873] During movement "a", there are two possible errors that could occur: 1) the scribe's paleography is at fault; 2) the scribe felt the original needed correction.[874] When paleography is at fault, the scribe does not intentionally err, yet simply misreads an abbreviation or continues copying from a different place than the manuscript provides. The second possibility contends that the scribe intentionally altered the text, acting as an editor and copyist of the text.[875] Movements "b" and "c" are possible errors when the text is transmitted to the new copy. In these two situations, the scribe mistakenly writes one word or letter as opposed to another ("c") or alters the format somewhere between the text and the copy ("b").[876] The final movement "d" involves errors that occur as the eye is returning to the original, and often includes duplication of the text, an unintentional omission of the text, or alteration of the rhyme scheme due to misreading the text.[877] Often there is a combination of one or more of these movement sections, which creates a layering of error progressing through one part of the text.[878]

During the Middle Ages, there are many instances of "scribal errors" or alterations that occurred when a scribe-monk was copying or translating the text. Misinterpretation of a different dialect or obscure word usage has often led to manuscripts deviating severely from the original text, thereby influencing later manuscripts using the altered editions for reference. Ruth Morse in *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages* explains that, at the simplest level, "truth" meant something similar to "exemplary" or "representative".[879] In the Middle Ages, interpreting the text meant both translation and glossing for elucidation, either in the original language or a translation. A medieval translator, therefore, made audience-based decisions about how the translation would be used based upon the types of references included in the document.[880]

As I outlined above, the process of scribal error during copying and translation is complex. At the same time, the necessary time needed in order to complete two sides of a folio, in conjunction with the other points I mentioned above, makes the event of an accidental four folio excerpt of Agnes's *Vita* perplexing, if not highly unlikely. If we consider this line of

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[873] Eugène Vinaver, "The Principles of Textual Emendation (with an Appendix: Lancelot's Two Steps)", in *Medieval Manuscripts and Textual Criticism*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1976), 142.

[874] Vinaver, 143.

[875] Ibid.

[876] Ibid., 149.

[877] Ibid., 144–5.

[878] Ibid., 151.

[879] Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 180.

[880] Morse, 181.

argument to be correct, the question still remains why the *Vita et revelationes* appears in Ms. Ra and what purpose, what addition to the intertextuality, could it provide? While I don't anticipate that I can address these questions fully within this dissertation nor embark on a lengthy investigation of the transmission and history of both *Lux divinitatis* and *Vita et revelationes*, I see great potential in future research concerning this topic, in particular intertexuality or heteroglossic elements in religious texts of the later Middle Ages, I acknowledge the limitation in scope and length for this dissertation.

Before the conclusion, there is another point that relates to both the form and function of Codex Basilensis A VIII 6. In this chapter, I began a short discussion of medieval compilation and the motivation behind its creation and popularity during the late medieval period. As we have seen in the transmission history and as outlined by Sara Poor, by the fifteenth century compilation manuscripts appear with increasing frequency. Coined as mystical handbooks or devotional anthologies, Poor clarifies that these somewhat "haphazard" collections of texts relate to "the impulses to improve and reform religious practices that [arose] across Europe".[881] Specifically, it is the "reform of nuns that led most directly to the increased production and popularity of vernacular devotional literature", and German-speaking regions exhibit the greatest interest in such texts.[882] The function of these compilations is rooted in the increasing number of women's religious houses and the lack of sufficient priests and/or preachers to provide *cura monialium*: pastoral care in the form of communion, confession, and sermons.[883] Poor outlines the historical background to the devotional compilations or handbooks:

> While most women's communities were self-governed, they nevertheless required priests and/or preacher for the administering of the sacraments, the celebration of the mass, and spiritual guidance by way of sermon and confession…The reform-minded women in the new houses filled the void left by this imbalance with medieval devotional books. Because there were not enough friars to give sermons in person, the women resorted to reading written records of the sermons.[884]

The substantial number of late fourteenth and fifteenth century compilations, therefore, ties into the need for devotional guidance and spiritual edification. As the need outstripped the speed of production, Poor also remarks that copying manuscripts, in addition to reading devotional compilations, was viewed as another avenue for spiritual instruction.[885] However, removed from the careful supervision of mendicants and ecclesiastics, the production and distribution of texts "could quickly extend outside of clerical control".[886]

Although Poor focuses primarily on the vernacular compilations in the fourth chapter of her monograph, all three Latin translations held at the Basel University library and one at the Bern library are compilation or miscellany texts. In line with Sara Poor's discussion of medieval compilation practices, the first part of the manuscript is devoted to epistles and a vita, which have the potential function to be read as sermons or devotional lessons in a group or privately.[887]

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[881] Poor, *Mechthild,* 135.
[882] Ibid., 137.
[883] Ibid., 138.
[884] Ibid.
[885] Ibid., 157.
[886] Ibid.
[887] Ibid*.,* 100.

The fact that this first section is written by a single hand and the second by a contemporaneous but different hand suggests a number of possible reasons or intentions behind the dramatic difference between the two parts. The first part is relatively cohesive in its thematic and textual representation. St. Jerome remains the focus throughout all four texts of part one, and the genre of each text is complimentary and highly orthodox (epistle and vita).

Agnes's *Vita,* appearing first in the early fourteenth century, consistently appears in compilation or mystical handbooks. The very fact that the manuscript transmission history included only a couple of ? complete copies and numerous partial transmissions in compilations supports Poor's theory about the fate of not only Mechthild's *bůch* but other mystical-didactic/mystagogic writings. Based upon this increasingly popular practice during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I find it unsurprising that we find Agnes's *Vita* excerpted in a volume with *Flowing Light*. The more surprising aspect is the interweaving (*texere*) of two sets of writings, different in nature, that connect two embodied texts into a single body. In line with Elizabeth A. Andersson's reading of Mechthild in the previous chapter, the "voices" of Mechthild become even more complex during the later Middle Ages and beyond.

IV.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the provenance of the manuscript transmission and discussed the significance of textual proximity of Mechthild and Agnes's texts within a single codex with regards to genre theory and modern interpretaiton. I aimed to demonstrate how the textual layering of Mechthild and Agnes's texts reflects the changing attitude of clerics toward beguine-composed texts. Following Council of Vienne in 1311, the growing distrust of beguines and their communities, I argued, encouraged scribes to distance the beguine author from her text, resulting in an increasing number of compilations containing numerous beguine mystical texts without mention of their authors. I posited that the appearance of Agnes Blannbekin's text woven into Mechthild's *Lux divinitatis* supports Sara Poor's theory that clerical suspicion concerning beguine-composed texts encouraged the increased appearance of compilations because Agnes, as a lesser known mystic, is aligned textually with a more "acceptable" and recognized text from Mechthild.

Due to the use of similar language (medieval Latin) and voice (first person), scribes synthesized Agnes's vita with Mechthild's *Lux* and promoted an edited, orthodox version of their works appropriate for clerical readership. In essence, I argued that Ms. Ra exemplifies a growing concern for orthodoxy by ecclesiastics following the Council of Vienne, as well as the emendation of beguine-composed texts and omission of textual references to female authorship. At the same time, despite the fact that Agnes's *Vita* differs significantly in tone and structure, it is unsurprising that the first twenty-three chapters appear excerpted in Mechthild's *bůch*. Of all sections in Agnes's *Vita,* the first twenty-three chapters are the most cohesive and unified in theme and genre. Furthermore, Agnes's *Vita* omits a lengthy description of her life and works until after this initial section, making the text less identifiable to a single personality. While my theory warrants further textual investigation, I argue that the placement of Agnes's *Vita* within Mechthild's *bůch* was not a scribal error, based upon the outlined (and completed) table of contents for the first section of *Flowing Light*, the length of the excerpt from Agnes's *Vita,* and the placement of Agnes's text after the completed first section of *Flowing Light.* What is more likely—and more research on local scriptoria and the Basel codices might reveal—is that a secondary codex with Mechthild's *bůch* was located after the first section and Agnes's *Vita* had been copied onto the parchment. I hope that the forthcoming editions of Mechthild's *Lux* and

vernacular *bůcher* in the Basel library holdings will help to illuminate the transmission history, manuscript culture of nearby convents and monasteries, and reading practices and interests.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I traced the ways in which genre plays various roles within beguine-composed literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Looking at the theoretical works of Derrida, Bakhtin, and Jauss, I connected aspects from modern genre theory to thought processes and practices that existed during the medieval period that may have influenced the writers of that time. I outlined that the practice of composition and the choice of genre is connected to reading, and how reading in the Middle Ages spoke to the reader-listener in a variety of ways, some not even intended or foreseen by the writer-speaker at the time of composition. The translation from memory of the divine to physical text, and from physical text to the memory of the reader-listener is completed through genre. Although my study is by no means comprehensive, my central aim was to demonstrate how modern scholars of medieval literature might thoughtfully apply modern genre theory to older texts, which would in turn allow them to approach any older text through a new lens. Derrida's concept of "invagination" demonstrates how composition and readings of texts intersect with the anticipated understanding of a given genre. Bakhtin and speech genres aid the modern literary scholar in deciphering how speech and speaking via the text work through genre to communicate to the reader-listener. Finally, Jauss's focus on the historical settings within which literature is composed highlights how texts—and genres within a single text—speak with one another. Despite the fact that superficially the corpus of Hadewijch, the *bůch* of Mechthild, and street mystical-dialogic compilation of Agnes appears significantly varied, the core message of multifaceted paths to the divine resounds from the pages, all the while expressed through a diversity of genres and genre hybrids to speak to the reader-listener beyond the confines of the written page.

Through the practice of contemplative reading and contemplation as a whole—*lectio-meditatio-oratio-contemplatio*—a lifestyle emerges that blends cerebral activity (i.e. reading and meditation) with spiritual edification and, finally, the guidelines by which one lives a life emulating Christ (*imitatio Christi*). My aim with this discussion has been to demonstrate that the practice of composition and textual creation incorporates a range of aspects, and that a more complete understanding of the interaction between writer-speaker and reader-listener are needed to unlock the ongoing dialogues that occur within, between, and beyond the written page. What is more, the reader-listener response—whether medieval or modern—is guided by the text itself and the clues held within its written pages. While many scholars have focused on the affective response of the reader-listener, I sought to show that the affective response is part of a larger conversation housed within the text and—through meditative readings practices and memoria—within the reader-listener. The text becomes the messenger, speaking and interacting with the reader-listener, and reaches out from the memory that initiated its composition. My intention throughout this dissertation has been to show how genre theory connects to the physical text and the significance of extant manuscripts as historical artifacts and voices that can speak to modern scholars and compel continued study into the present day.

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A. Appendix: Vision Incipits

Vision 1:	
It was a Sunday, in the Octave of Pentecost, when our Lord was brought secretly to my bedside, because I felt such an attraction of my spirit inwardly that I could not control myself outwardly in a degree sufficient to go among persons; it would have been impossible for me to go among them.[888]	*Het was in enen sondaghe Ter octauen van pentecosten dat men mi onsen here heymelike te minen bedde brochte, Om dat ic gheuoelde/ so grote treckinghe van binnen van minen geeste/, Dat ic mi van buten onder die menschen soe vele niet ghehebben en conste dat icker ghegaen ware/.[889]*
Vision 2:	
Once on Pentecost Sunday I received the Holy Spirit in such a manner that I understood all the will of Love in all and all the modes of this will of the heavens and of heavenly things, and all the perfection of perfect justice, and all the shortcomings of the lost;[890]	*Het was op enen chincsen dach dat ic den heyleghen gheest also ontfinc dat ic verstont alle den wille der minnen in allen/ Ende alle die seden vanden wille der hemele ende der hemelscher/ ende al die volcomenheit der volmaecter gherechtecheit/ ende alle ghebreke der verloerne/[891]*
Vision 3:	
Later, one Easter Sunday, I had gone o God; and he embraced me in my interior senses and took me away in spirit.[892]	*Daer na eens paeschs daghes wasic te gode ghegaen/; ende hi omuinc mi van binnen mine sinne/ ende nam mi inden gheeste[893]*
Vision 4:	
I sat one day in May, ready to hear the Mass of Saint James, as was right, for that was his feast day. Then during the Epistle (Wisd. 5:1-5) my senses were drawn inwards with a great tempestuous clamor by an awe-inspiring spirit that from within drew me within myself. From within I was then wholly drawn into the spirit.[894]	*JC sat op enen mey dach/, ende soude messe horen / van Sinte Jacobe alst recht was /; Want het doen sijn dach was/ , Doen worden mi binnen diere epystelen mine sinne binnen ghetrect/ met enen groten verstormden ghelate van enen gruweleken gheeste / die mi van binnen trac In binnen mi/ . Van binnen mi werdic doen al op ghetrect inden gheeste /.[895]*

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[888] CWH, 263.

[889] Van Mierlo, 9.

[890] CWH, 271.

[891] Van Mierlo, 38.

[892] CWH, 272.

[893] Van Mierlo, 42.

[894] CWH, 273.

[895] Van Mierlo, 48.

Vision 5:	
At Matins on the day of Assumption, I was taken up for a short while in the spirit, and I was shown the three highest heavens, after which the three highest Angels are named— the Thrones, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim.[896]	*JC was in assumptie daghe te mettenen inden gheeste op ghenoemen ene corte wile/; ende mi worden vertoent die drie overste hemele / Daermen af noemt / die drie overste Jnghele /, die throne / die cherubinne / die cheraphinne /,[897]*
Vision 6:	
It was on a certain fest of the Epiphany: I was then nineteen years old, as was mentioned to me that day. Then it was my will to go to our Lord; for at this time I experienced desires and an exceedingly strong longing—how God takes and gives regard to persons who, lost in him and taken up in fruition, are conformed to his will in all circumstances.[898]	*Het was in enen dertiendaghe/; Doe wasic xix. iaer out, alsoe wordense mi daer ghenoemt/. Doe haddic wille/ te onsen here te gane/; ende ic was te dien tiden in begherten / ende in ouerstarken eyschene wie god nemt / ende gheeft in verlorenheiden van hem, in op || nemene van ghebrukenessen, die hem als in allen na sinen wille sijn/.[899]*
Vision 7:	
On a certain Pentecost Sunday I had a vision at dawn. Matins were being sung in the church, and I was present. My heart and my verins and all my limbs trembles and quivered with eager desire and, as often occurred to me, such madness and fear beset my mind that it seemed to me I did not content my Beloved, and that my Beloved did not fulfill my desire, so that dying I must go mad, and going mad I must die.[900]	*Te enen cinxen daghe wart mi vertoent inde dagheraet/, ende men sanc mettenen inde kerke / ende ic was daer /; ende mijn herte / ende mijn aderen / ende alle mine lede scudden / ende beueden van begherten; ende mi was alst dicke heeft gheweest/ Soe verwoeddeleke/ ende soe vreeseleke te moede dat mi dochte, / ic en ware minen lieue ghenoech ende mijn lief en uerwlde minen nyet, dat ic steruende soude verwoeden ende al uerwoedende steruen/.[901]*
Vision 8:	
I saw a great mountain, which was high and broad and of unspeakably beautiful form. Five ways went steeply upward to the mountain.[902]	*JC sach enen groten berch/ die hoghe was/ ende breet/, ende van onseggheleker scoender ghedane/.; tote dien berghe ghingen .v. weghe hoghe staen/, die alle dien edelen berch op ghingen/ ten hoechsten sittene dat daer bouen was.[903]*

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[896] CWH, 276.

[897] Van Mierlo, 58.

[898] CWH, 278.

[899] Van Mierlo, 65.

[900] CWH, 280.

[901] Van Mierlo, 74.

[902] CWH, 282.

[903] Van Mierlo, 83.

Vision 9:	
It was at Matins on the feast *In nativitate beatae Mariae*, and after the third lesson something wonderful was shown to me in the spirit. My heart had been moved beforehand by the words of love that were read there from the Song of Songs (Song1:1-16), by which I was led to think of a perfect kiss. Shortly afterwards, in the second Nocturn, I saw in the spirit a queen come in, clad in a gold dress (Ps. 44:11) and her dress was all full of eyes;[904]	*Ic was in natiuitate beate marie te mettenen/ ende na de .iij. lessen wart mi vertoent/ Jn enen gheeste een lettel wonders/. Mijn herte wart mi beroert te voren van woerden van minnen/ die men daer las in de kantiken/ daer mi bi ghedachte eens gheheels cussens/. Corteleke daer na in dandere nocturne/ Soe saghic inden gheeste/ dat quam ene coninghinne ghecleedt met enen guldenen clede/; ende dat cleet was al vol oghen/;[905]*
Vision 10:	
I was taken up in the spirit on the feast of Saint John the Evangelist in the Christmas. Octave. There I saw prepared a new city of the same name as Jerusalem and of the same appearance.[906]	*IC was op ghenomen inden gheeste in sinte Jans daghe ewangelists inde kersdaghe. daer saghic ghereiden een stat nuwe alse ierusalem hetende ende also ghedaen.[907]*
Vision 11:	
I was in a very depressed frame of mind one Christmas night, when I was taken up in the spirit. There I saw a very deep whirlpool, wide and exceedingly dark; in this abyss all beings were included crowded together, and compressed.[908]	*Jc lach op enen kerstnacht tenen male ende wart op ghenomen inden gheeste. Daer saghic enen ouer diepen wiel ende enen widen ende ouerdonker/; ende in dien wiel die soe wiit was/ So was alle dinc besloten/ so vaste/ ende so na bedwonghen.[909]*
Vision 12:	
Once on Epiphany, during Mass, I was taken up out of myself in the spirit; there I saw a city, large, and wide, and high, and adorned with perfections.[910]	*JN enen dertiendaghe wasic binnen der messen op ghenomen inden gheeste vte mi seluen/; daer saghic ene stat groet ende wijt ende hoghe ende ghesciert met volcomenheiden;[911]*

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[904] CWH, 285.

[905] Van Mierlo, 95.

[906] CWH, 287.

[907] Van Mierlo, 101.

[908] CWH, 289.

[909] Van Mierlo, 110.

[910] CWH, 293.

[911] Van Mierlo, 125.

Vision 13:	
On the Sunday before Pentecost, before dawn, I was raised up in spirit to God, who made Love known to me; until that hour, she had ever been hidden from me. There I saw and heard how the songs of praise resounded, which come from the silent love humility conceals; humility images, and says, and swears that it does not love, and that it gives honor and right to neither God nor man in love or service of veritable virtue. There I saw and heard how the songs of praise resounded and adorned the Love of all loves.[912]	*JC was tsondaghes vore cinxenen vore die dagheraet inden gheeste op ghenomen te gode /, die mi minne cont makede / die mi tote diere vren ye verborghen hadde gheweest/, Daer saghic ende hoerde wie die loue luudden die comen van stilre minnen / die oetmoedecheit berghet /, Die waent ende seghet ende swert, datse niet mint ende gode noch den menschen/ noch ere noch recht en doet van minnen noch van dienste van gherechter doghet/. Daer saghic ende hoerde wie die loue luudden ende cierden die minne alre minnen/.[913]*

Vision 14:	
I was and am continually in great desire and in the madness of love, so that I thought and was well aware that I could not live any longer with such great inquietude as I was in then and continually am, unless God gave me some new strength.[914]	*JC was ende ben noch in groter begherten ende in oerewoede/, so dat ic waende ende oec wel wiste dat ic niet leuen ne mochte met so groter ongheduricheit alse daer ic in was ende noch ben, god en gaue mi nuwe cracht/;[915]*

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[912] CWH, 297.

[913] Van Mierlo, 140.

[914] CWH, 302.

[915] Van Mierlo, 157.