# To Queer or not to Queer: Hadewijch's poetry as a case study for a queer read of history

BY TAYOR JEROMOS

Imagine a historian flipping through the pages of a medieval Dutch manuscript which contains the poetry of Hadewijch, a mystic and beguine. The poetry strikes the academic with its intense religiosity and simplistic, yet powerful, language, which describes God as a noble lady whom a knight is courting.  Scenes play out in the scholar's head like a period film: The woman wears a lovely dress and looks down from a castle window at her knight, his armor shining in the afternoon sun. Though they suffer through their intense feelings of mutual longing, they fall in love and ascend to a higher, purer plane of existence, for the divine love between humans and God is the most wholesome kind of love attainable.

Many contemporary Western historians might likely agree with this initial interpretation of Hadewijch's poetry. The beguine, whose theological writings were meant to instruct and encourage her female followers, used courtly love rhetoric to describe the human relationship with the divine. She employs vocabulary that seems, on the surface, to be heterosexual in nature. However, when one examines Hadewijch's poetry with a more carefully constructed queer lens, this male/female narrative is destabilized both by her gender-bending language and descriptions of relationships between a female worshipper and a female God. Furthermore, historians must grapple with the mere fact that a poet seems to have written poems in which the speaker is (possibly) a female knight. These are some of the conclusions I have reached when doing what is termed a "queer read" of Hadewijch. This paper will contend that "queer reading" historic sources will help historians cast off their heterosexual frameworks in order to reveal the non-normative messages or ideas that people such as Hadewijch might have been trying to express in their writings.

This paper is an attempt to advocate the process of queering history through the lens of beguines, and one beguine in particular: Hadewijch. Using her poetry and the female-only community in which she lived as an analytical lens, I argue that there is need for an extensive queer read of historical sources. I have found that the kinds of questions and assumptions— mainly heteronormative lifestyle expectations and gendered categories—with which many historians operate today do not often allow for the non-normative or queer to reveal themselves in historical sources. Queer reads investigate anything out of the ordinary in the writings or actions of historical figures in their historic context. For example, the subversion of patriarchal norms by beguines in female-only religious communities was abnormal in its context, and therefore deserves a queer read. Reading through a queer lens encourages historians to ask: How can this be considered in a non-normative light? These kinds of reads analyze, on a deeper and more inclusive level, written sources like poetry, or historical organizations, like convents. Queer reading historical sources will provide historians with a more complete picture of the nuances in their sources, thus creating a more comprehensive historical narrative.

In this paper I bring together theories of queering history and primary research on Hadewijch and beguine communities. In doing this, I give Hadewijch, and beguines as a whole, a more nuanced read, as well as a stronger presence in queer history. Hadewijch, who lived in thirteenth century Antwerp or Brabant, serves as the focal point of this essay. Little is known about her, as there are no surviving biographical sketches of her. Moammers, one of the first to examine Hadeiwjch's writings, notes that though the figure of Hadewijch is mysterious, her advanced writing indicates she was highly educated. Moammers argues that "the words and themes a writer uses are more likely to be determined by literary than by social background, and one need not be a member of the aristocracy to write courtly poetry. Nonetheless…Hadewijch's mode of expression appears

aristocratic."[1] Hadewijch left behind a number of letters, visions, and poetry written primarily in her native Middle Dutch. It is perhaps her anonymity as a historical actor that gives a queer read of her even more appeal. Her writings reveal an abundance of intense emotions couched in descriptive language, yet her person has been hidden by the shadows of history. Queer reads of her poetry are thus both more and less tenable. They are less reliable because there are fewer opportunities to incorporate her personality and biographical information into the queer read. However, that same anonymity allows for more flexible and speculative analyses of her poetry.

      I will first discuss the importance of queering history and the various processes, methods, and discourses that exist within it in the section entitled "Queering History." In "The Beguines: A Historical Context," I will sketch out who the beguines were and why their lifestyle was considered by some to be commendable and by others to be deviant and dangerous. In the section "Gender Fluidity and Courtly Love within Hadewijch's Texts" I will analyze the historiography of Hadewijch's use of courtly love rhetoric and how she employed it in her poetry as a gender-bending tool, the framework of which I will employ to analyze her poetry in the section called "Hadewijch's Poetry." I conclude with "Beguines, Hadewijch, and Queer Readings: The Intersections and Conclusions," which discusses why Hadewijch and the beguines serve as a useful case study for a queer reading.

## Queering History

      Though it is outside of the scope of this paper, I find that in order to legitimize my definition of "queering," I must acknowledge that adopting the term "queer" weighs my paper down with a loaded historical narrative. "Queer" is a term that has shifted from being a word to describe an oddity to an insult that was (and still is) thrown at those in the LGBT community, particularly gay

---

[1] Paul Mommaers and Elisabeth M. Dutton. *Hadewijch: writer, beguine, love mystic.* (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 9.

males. It was reclaimed in the early 1990s by the LGBT community in order to create a more inclusive, overarching sense of identity and to desensitize the word's insulting nature. According to Robin Brontsema,

> the queer…emphasized the inclusiveness that the more traditional gay and lesbian were seen to lack, advancing beyond their restrictive limits of gender and sexuality to include anything outside of the guarded realm of normalcy, any disruption of the male/female and heterosexual/homosexual binaries…Difference was not a challenge, but an invitation.[2]

This explanation of "queer" has greatly influenced my reading of Hadewijch. The word itself creates space for recognizing non-normativity in historical sources, as it invites persons/places/ideas/etc. that challenge overarching, non-inclusive societal constructions to consider themselves queer.

There is debate among medievalists about when and how to queer medieval texts, and what "queering" really means for the practice of history. Judith Bennet's canonical article "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms" seeks to capture the lives of real women and "the possibilities of same-sex love between actual women in the Middle Ages."[3] She critiques some of the preeminent medieval historians who attempt to queer medieval literature based on mystical texts, noting that "although these analyses offer insightful commentaries on how we might better imagine the sexual mentalities of the Middle Ages, even the best of them can give me pause. As literary criticism, these readings reach plausible conclusions, but as guides to social history, they are considerably less convincing."[4] Though Bennet's basic tenets—privileging the nuances in the phrase "lesbian-like" over the anachronistic term "lesbian" and the idea that "lesbian-like" can delineate

---

[2] Robin Brontsema. "A Queer Revolution: Reconceptualizing the debate over linguistic reclamation." *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 17, no. 1 (2004): 4.

[3] Judith M. Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisims," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol 9. No. ½ (Jan.-Ap., 2000): 9.

[4] Ibid, 8.

more than same-sex sexual relations (female companionship, for example)—are useful for historical inquiry, other historians, myself included, disagree with Bennet's assumption that queer readings of mystical texts are merely theories of "literary criticism," and are thus less useful than other forms of "social history." Amy Hollywood also takes issue with Bennet's suggestion that these literary critiques are somehow less able to "give access to 'real women'"[5] [read: lesbian-like women]. Hollywood forthrightly asserts that "no matter how implausible it might seem to us to understand Christ's side wound as a bloody slit that feminizes and eroticizes his corporeality, this is in fact what some medieval women (and men) did."[6] It is not a fantastic notion to consider that these kinds of writings can reflect something of the lives and thoughts of mystic poets. Oftentimes these were the only forms of emotional expression, and cannot be discounted merely as fiction disassociated from their writer's context. Rather, they might reveal more—or at least different—facets of historical knowledge than other sources. For, if mystic texts were a somewhat safe space for medieval writers—because they were an acceptable application of a woman's feelings in a theological context—it might have been that these writers were able to "let loose" in their writings.

These mystic texts are more than just sources available for literary critique. Tison Pugh argues that genres (the genre of this paper being mystic poetry) can "communicate cultural meaning by their very presence" and that historians can do a service to the field by "investiga[ting] the ways in which genres inform…readers about the ideological position of women."[7] Therefore, a queer reading of medieval texts, while not as tangible as finding "lesbian-like" actions within medieval women's experiences (the kinds that Bennet is searching for), will do a great service to social history by allowing historians to call into question the very inherent existence of people's actions within the

---

[5] Amy Hollywood, "Sexual Desire, Divine Desire; Or, Queering the Beguines," in *Queer Theology: rethinking the Western body.* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 164.

[6] Ibid., 120.

[7] Tison Pugh, *Queering medieval genres*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7.

larger historical narrative. By queering medieval texts, historians are inserting another form of critique into the analysis of women's actions: we look back, queering the space in which "lesbian-like" actions take place.

Queering historical space, for many authors, is a practice that helps to weaken the normalized (read: heteronormative) conception of history. Pugh argues that

queering genres, as a matter of practice, involves destabilizing the audience's typical expectations with the purpose of subverting subject positions. Within the historical trajectory of many genres, heteronormativity privileges certain actors, while others are denied the full force of their agency due to their perceived failures to act within the range of the sexually normative.[8]

Sheila Jeffreys, in her essay "Does It Matter If They Did It?" gives a narrative example of how heteronormativity invades the psyche of historians, asserting that "women who have lived in the same house and slept in the same bed for thirty years have had their lesbianism strongly denied by historians. But men and women who simply take walks together are assumed to be involved in some sort of heterosexual relationship."[9] With this example, we see how the existence of Pugh's "privileging" heteronormative practices pervades historical methods and thought processes. While male/female romantic relationships are assumed to be the norm in historic sources and narratives, queer reads of history bring to the forefront the possibility that the long-standing friendship of the women in Jeffrey's text could be romantic in nature.

Other authors have argued that the use of the word "homosexual" in medieval history is fraught with issues, but that "heterosexual" as a term and concept is used freely and without question. James Schultz contends "that scholars can even write about a Middle Ages in which

---

[8] Pugh, *Queering,* 3.
[9] Sheila Jeffreys. "Does It Matter If They Did It?" in *Not a passing phase: reclaiming lesbians in history 1840-1985.* (London: Women's Press, 1989), 23.

homosexuality is impossible while heterosexuality is inevitable illustrates the extent to which, even in

their minds, heterosexuality remains the unquestioned norm."[10] He asserts that just because our

mere existence reveals there was procreation between men and women does not classify their

actions or those people as heterosexual. Medieval (Christian) moral codes do not place

"heterosexuality" as the normal sexuality with all other "homosexual" desires falling into the deviant

category; rather, it classifies many different kinds of sexual acts as either moral or immoral. He thus

maintains, controversially, that "the Middle Ages had no notion of sexual orientation,"[11] and that

"heterosexuality is a product of history—and a relatively recent one at that."[12] It is clear that serious

issues arise when historians, without regard to their own contemporary biases, study source material.

Therefore, it is essential to examine historical sources in their medieval context while employing

contemporary theories that appropriately question the biases of the source and the reader.

Some medievalists have argued that queer readings of history are objectionable due to the

distance between historians and their subjects. Those who subscribe to this theory maintain that

"past phenomena cannot be read in the light of our experience."[13] Some authors have grappled with

this idea more deftly than others. E. Ann Matter's "My Sister, My Spouse" barely acknowledges the

claim that the term "lesbian" might be a problematic term for medieval authors. While her

examination of Hadewijch generates a number of valuable conclusions, her queering of the space is

not nearly as complex enough when she categorizes "lesbian" experiences in the Middle Ages. [14]

Caroline Walker Bynum's seminal text *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (1987) maintains that contemporary

thinking encourages historians to quickly assume that erotic medieval texts were very much bodily as

---

[10] James A Schultz. *Courtly love, the love of courtliness, and the history of sexuality.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 51.

[11] Ibid., 57.

[12] Ibid., 62.

[13] Anna Kolsowska. *Queer love in the Middle Ages.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 84.

[14] E. Ann Matter. "My Sister, My Spouse: Women-Identified Women in Medieval Christianity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* Vol 2, No. 2 (Fall, 1986).

well as spiritual. She urges historians to distance themselves from reading into medieval texts their own contemporary beliefs of erotic experiences, and argues that they should view them in their medieval context—i.e. as less physical and more spiritual.[15] Many authors—such as Lochrie, Rambauss, and Hollywood—have argued that "Bynum is in danger of denying even the metaphorically sexualized nature of many women's…religious writings."[16] Authors that have refuted Bynum's stance on medieval eroticism label her arguments as dangerously de-sexualizing and non-nuanced. Karma Lochrie offers a cautionary, though beneficially intricate, viewpoint on queering medieval texts. She argues that queer reading "unsettl[es] the heterosexual paradigms of scholarship" and "produc[es] readings of medieval texts that trouble our assumptions about medieval culture and textual practices."[17] But she takes her analysis a step further by positing that "'queer' is not simply a reconstructed term for homosexual or homoerotic, but a category marking the sexual as a site of a variety of cultural struggles."[18] In this, queer becomes not just an expression, but a place where historians can examine tensions within medieval culture and the historic sources available to them.

Scholar Ulrike Wiethaus queers Hadewijch in light of her association with beguinages and the ways in which beguines enacted a great deal of female agency. She argues that Hadewijch's unique intersectional positions as mystic—which gave her "greater flexibility to express individual creative impulses"—and member of the female-only beguine community—"where she lived surrounded by women"—allowed her to operate in a safer space for writing down feelings or experiences that might have been seen as immoral. Weithaus asserts that "it is likely that at least some women did venture into creating homoerotic aesthetics and practices," or at least write about

---

[15] Caroline Walker Bynum. *Holy feast and Holy Fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[16] Hollywood, "Sexual Desire," 164.

[17] Karma Lochrie, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies," in *Constructing medieval sexuality*. ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). 180.

[18] Ibid., 181.

those feelings, in these kinds of situations.[19] Furthermore, as some medievalists have argued, it is our duty as historians to acknowledge that "the 'silence of the Middle Ages' in the matter of sex between women may also be a testament to these women's success in maintaining necessary secrecy" and that historical reads "attempt to make visible those who had every reason to ensure their survival by making themselves invisible."[20]

However, for many medievalists, it is not the presence of same-sex acts that matters. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of the *possibility* of queer actions/feelings/etc. that is most important for conceptions of historical method and thought. Tison Pugh's distinction between "queer" and "homosexual" provides a framework for how historians, who are looking to queer medieval texts, ought to be practicing:

> 'To queer' means to disrupt a character's and/or reader's sense of self by undermining his or her sense of heteronormatively inscribed sexuality, whereas 'homosexual' and 'homosexuality' are used to describe sexual relationships between members of the same sex…My hope is that [my book *Queering Medieval Genres*] will contribute to a widened view of the implications of medieval queerness beyond the somewhat limited arena of sexual contact.[21]

Herein lies the key to what I believe is most useful about queering history: it is an attempt to expand what historians should be thinking about medieval history. It is not concerned with imposing contemporary views of homosexuality onto those who lived in the past. Rather, it looks at a source, group, movement, etc., and examines it within a queer framework. "To queer" is a verb which calls for historians to ask deeper questions and promote more nuanced readings of texts that are

---

[19] Ulrike Wiethaus. "Female Homoerotic Discourse and Religion in Medieval Germanic Culture," Farmer, Sharon A.,and Carol Braun Pasternack. *Gender and difference in the Middle Ages*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 290.

[20] Kolsowska, *Queer Love,* 83.

[21] Pugh, *Queering,* 5.

seemingly heterosexual or normative. It encourages them to ask: "does this source destabilize the overarching, normalized narrative within which the source is supposed to be contextualized?" With these kinds of examinations, the historic narrative will be more complex and complete.

## **The Beguines: A Historical Context**

Carol Neel's assertion that "thirteenth-century description of [beguines] often centers on what they were not, rather than what they were [sic]" grapples with the longstanding comparisons between nuns and beguines.[22] In general, medieval nuns are much more easily defined; they were cloistered, directly under the control of the Church, and almost always affiliated with a convent. Beguines are more difficult to delineate; this stems from the various ways beguinages were organized (a few women in a townhouse to a few hundred in a specifically built beguinage)[23] and the large geographical area over which they were spread. As a general framework, beguines can be seen as a group of "Christian laypeople" who were "striving…to live according to the apostolic model of chastity, poverty, and simplicity."[24] Activities such as work, teaching, and charitable deeds situated these women within urban settings and allowed for the women to interact with townspeople and villagers. This also set them apart from nuns who were often isolated from society.[25]

Many scholars have argued that beguinages formed spontaneously in the late 12th and early 13th centuries throughout the Low Countries (near modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands), an allegation that makes little sense, given the similarities between beguinages across Europe and the relatively similar timeframes of their formation. Carol Neel asserts that beguinages are a result of the

---

[22] Carol Neel, "The Origins of the Beguines," *Working Together in the Middle Ages: Perspectives on Women's* Communities 14 (1989): 323.

[23] Jennifer Deane, "'Beguines' Reconsidered: Historiographical Problems and New Directions," *Monastic Matrix* (2008).

[24] Ibid.

[25] It should be noted that there was a male counterpart to the beguine movement—these men, called beghards, were fewer in number, but often engaged in the same activities as beguines.

upsurge in female piety in two specific groups—the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians—throughout Europe in the High Middle Ages. Neel asserts that there were specific characteristics of each of these institutionalized religious movements—such as the uncloistered lifestyle, mysticism, and the emphasis on charity work—that the beguines adapted to fit their own lifestyle. Cistercians were often uncloistered, and some Cistercian women were mystics. Premonstratensians were encouraged to perform charity work, though the order often insisted that they remain cloistered.[26] Her conclusion is that "the novelty of [the beguines] therefore was in their phenomenal numbers, not in the originality of their roles as….nurses…or their chastity outside the cloister."[27] In this, she argues that beguines did not invent their roles, but rather adapted some of the earlier religious movements' lifestyles to fit their own.

Beguinages were spread throughout Europe, though they were chiefly concentrated in the Low Countries. Simons describes beguinages as "informal communities" because they were not part of an institutionalized religious movement, but rather arose from women who grouped themselves together in order to have more control over their own lives.[28] They consisted of a wide demographic of women—rich and poor, urban and rural—who were called to these groups for various reasons, including, but not limited to, religious fervor, desire for chastity, and/or the independence that beguinages offered to single women. As there was an emphasis on education and charity within these communities, it is likely that many women were attracted to the philanthropic lifestyle. Many beguinages had affiliations with town hospitals, where they cared for the sick.[29] Others were involved in teaching the children who were associated with the beguinages, though the teaching was

---

[26] Neel, "Origins," 333.

[27] Ibid., 339.

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

[29] Ibid., 76. There is a discrepancy in the historical record about the types of care that beguines gave to the communities. Simons notes that originally, beguines did care for men and women and sometimes (though not often, as it was mostly permitted) they came to the assistance of pregnant women. Geybels, on page 117, states that "beguines were never allowed to take care of men and/or pregnant women."

not limited to moral education; it could include instruction in foreign languages, music, Latin, and, at least in a few cases, Bible study."[30] Theological instruction for children was uncommon because women were discouraged from becoming well-versed in spiritual teachings; it was seen as unnatural for women to be too educated in religious matters. Additionally, because these were not convents, women who joined beguinages were expected either to have funds already or work to support themselves.[31] Mistresses frowned upon their beguine charges if they "spen[t] their time idling,"[32] and so beguines were often employed in the textile industries of their respective towns.[33] Kittell and Suydam argue that, because the beguines were involved in the community and in supporting themselves through manual labor, "economic self-sufficiency defined their movement,"[34] and allowed the women a greater involvement with their town or village.

However, what beguines are most well-known for is their piety. In these communities, women would don outfits similar to those of nuns and attend daily religious services led by local ecclesiastical leaders. Geybels translates an "acrostichon from a treatise about beguine life in Middle Dutch" which helps emphasize the importance of beguines living simply and devoutly:

> "B = …bride of the Lord
>
> E = …simplicity
>
> G = …benevolence

---

[30] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 82. This religious teaching relates to the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages and the tensions concerning female involvement in theological teaching.

[31] "Nuns renounced their property when they entered the convent and from that moment on the community supported them." Geybels, *Vulgariter beghinae,* 114.

[32] Ibid., 115.

[33] Ibid., 85-87. Geybels notes that the work of beguines, which was un-taxed, was sometimes contested by guilds. McDonnell relates German author Bücher's idea that beguinages sprung up when guilds began to reject women's participation. Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture: with special emphasis on the Belgian scene* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 84. Additionally, Kittell and Suydam mentioned less well-known work of beguines, such as selling real estate outside of the beguinage. Ellen E Kittell and Mary A. Suydam, *The texture of society: medieval women in the southern Low Countries* (New York: Palgrace Macmillan, 2004), xiv.

[34] Kittell and Suydam, *The Texture of Society*, xiv.

$$Y = \ldots\text{intimacy towards God and the saints}$$

$$N = \ldots\text{humility''}[35]$$

Both beguines and their supporters wrote on the piety of these women. Hadewijch composed many letters offering religious advice to the beguines who followed her. In one letter, she responds to a person's request for spiritual guidance: "Although you ask me to write to you about this, you yourself know well what one must do for the sake of perfection in God's sight."[36] She recommends that the beguines fill their lives with love in order to strive for spiritual contentment. Her writings often contain personal advice or musings on how faith should be a lifestyle, indicating that theological discussions were common in beguinages.

The life of another beguine, Marie D'Oignies, was chronicled by Jacques de Vitry, who is supposed to have been so devoted to her that he "abandoned his life at the University of Paris to become [her] disciple."[37] In his writings, it is clear that he admires her holiness. Describing one of her reactions to a moment of reflection about Jesus's crucifixion, Vitry utilizes a gentle and admiring tone: "when she considered how great was He…her sorrow was redoubled and her soul renewed with sweet compunction and fresh tears."[38] Vitry's portrayal testifies to the wide-spread religiosity of the movement and the intense spiritual influence that these women had on some of those around them.

Religious and secular authorities responded to the female nature of a movement—one which was not directly controlled by a patriarchal religious system—with denunciations and satire. Anke Passenier has categorized the four types of criticisms of beguines, which "inform us about society's

---

[35] Geybels, *Vulgariter beghinae,* 124.

[36] Hadewijch, "Letter 12" in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 70.

[37] Jacques de Vitry, "Book I, Chapter 16," in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, 173.

[38] Ibid.*,* 179.

reactions and attitudes towards [beguines] and towards women in general."[39] These four stereotypes

reveal the duality between what were considered good and bad beguines. The first, "women on the

loose," is a categorization in which male writers see two types of beguines—those who are pious,

cloistered, and chaste versus idle women with false faith who flirt (or worse) with friars. The

acrostichon included earlier demonstrates the ideal beguine—humble, kind, and pious.  These

"loose" women were essentially free from male control and domination and were therefore

dangerous to the medieval female ideal. Second, Passenier sees "the seductible woman" who, falling

prey to her fickle female nature, descends "into the hands of heretical preachers."[40] Passenier argues

that this stereotype was spurred by a supposed relationship between heretical immorality and female

indecisiveness and gullibility.

Passenier's third stereotype is "The Simple Woman." As authorities attempted to prevent the

beguine movement from flourishing, they worked to expose the beguines as uneducated and their

work with the Bible as heretical; "the simple, humble beguine who obeys clerical guidance, who does

not meddle in theological speculation and does not propagate new spiritual and theological insights

among the public" is the one that the authorities sought to protect. [41] Fourth, Passenier relates the

mysticism of some beguines to the idea of "women's emotional, sensitive, sensual nature" being "in

need of the control of…men."[42] This "sensitive woman," Passenier asserts, is why beguines were

associated with mysticism (a full-bodied and emotional experience), and why some believed the

movement had a need for increased control (read: male, rational thought).[43] These two different

types of condemnations—heretical and female—were often so intertwined it is difficult to determine

---

[39] Anke Passenier, "'Women on the Loose': Stereotypes of Women in the Story of the Medieval Beguines," in *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, ed. Ria Kloppenborg & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (The Netherlands: 1995), 64.

[40] Passenier, "Women on the Loose," 72.

[41] Ibid., 79.

[42] Ibid., 88.

[43] My summary of her four categories is merely a small glimpse of the arguments and evidence that she presents. Her essay is well worth a read in order to gain a fuller understanding of her thesis and research.

causation. Passenier's work reveals that the attacks on beguines were not essentially about the female nature or the heretical nature of the women, but rather the combination of the two that made the beguine movement especially dangerous.

There was support for beguines during their medieval existence, most of it praising the religious nature of the beguinages. Petroff argues that Vitry, mentioned previously, chronicled D'Oignies's life in order to protect the beguines and "make them seem harmless…by making them seem traditional or by assimilating them to a medieval stereotype, the holy nun."[44] This interpretation posits de Vitry as a perpetuator of the ideal image of a pious, cloistered woman. In Simon's analysis of the heated debate centering on beguines, he argues that the mere presence of such discussions originated not from the fear that beguines might become more powerful than they, but because "the ecclesiastical milieu was itself divided on this issue."[45]

Period criticisms of beguines stemmed from an anxiety of both female sexuality and the very real threat of theological ideas originating from women. Gautier de Coincy, "one of the founders of the biting satirical tradition targeting beguines,"[46] was extremely devoted to the Virgin Mary. Historians differ in their interpretations of de Coincy's denunciations, but each argument reveals that de Coincy struggled with an internal apprehension of female sexuality and women interpreting scripture. He reviles nuns in his writings, but his main focus is on the possibility of homosexual relationships between beguines, which he says is a concept that "bewilders Nature."[47] Simons argues that Gautier's dislike for beguines arose from their supposed lack of learnedness, and that they must be mistaken when they try to "join hic and hic without discrimination," because it is both ungrammatical to join those two words together, and it is thought to be impossible that two women

---

[44] Petroff, *Visionary Literature,* 174.
[45] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 126.
[46] Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Satirical Views," 240.
[47] Ibid., 239.

would be intimately involved with one another.  In this assumption, Gautier insinuates that the

beguines, whose intelligence was deficient due to their sex, should not be allowed to be spiritual

teachers or leaders. Blumenfeld-Kosinski's read of Gautier relates de Coincy's satire to his devotion

to the cult of St. Mary—she believes that his devotion to the "perfect Virgin" is juxtaposed with

what he considered the "overwrought and unacceptable forms of piety" of beguines.[48] However,

what is clear in both of these examples is that Gautier had an intense fear of women in power and,

in particular, female-only communities where women with religious agency relied primarily on other

women.

Other attacks on beguines focus on their supposed lust towards men and the distraction that

women caused the male sex. Beguines were rumored to "burn with love under their large robes,"

and, though they took vows of chastity, knew "how to dress for love."[49] Nicholas of Bibera wrote

this of beguines: he first described pious and chaste beguines, and then contrasted them with

beguines that would go about "seeking the cloisters of monks / and then again visiting the choir of

clerics / and perhaps even their bed."[50] Not only were the women lustful themselves, they were also

looked down upon for public preaching because it was likely that "by their very appearance" that

they would "constitute a distraction to a male audience."[51] Each of these criticisms originated from

medieval standards that demanded female sexuality be confined to the private sphere. Without social

control, the carnal feelings inherent in women might provoke men's lustful actions, causing women

to surrender their chastity and thus render them unclean and faithless. Additionally, a female

preacher would have contradicted the perception that women were unfit—or even intellectually

unable—to espouse logical religious thoughts, especially in public. The importance of women fitting

---

[48] Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Satirical Views," 239-240.
[49] Ibid., "Satirical Views," 243.
[50] Passenier, "Women on the Loose," 66.
[51] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 127.

within the gendered norms of behavior is evident in the increasingly oppressive rules that beguines were subjected to in the late Middle Ages and into the Early Modern era. For instance, "fourteenth- and fifteenth-century rules regulated more strictly than before the circumstances under which beguines could leave the court, limited contact with men, and prescribed…their…outward behavior."[52] Therefore, female-gendered expectations of chastity, submissiveness, and domesticity were reinforced specifically for beguines, and the sexual deviances of women were at the forefront of male regulation and public attention.

These criticisms of beguines reveal why it is worthwhile to use them as a case study for queering history. Adrienne Rich's seminal essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" asserts that beguines operate on the lesbian continuum simply because they clearly represented a threat to the patriarchal society in which they lived, primarily—I would argue— because of their solidarity and strength as a self-governing, female-only community. Furthermore, Gautier's accusation that beguines engaged in same-sex acts reveals fears of connections between females in ways that might have been seen as threatening to medieval patriarchal control. Though he was likely attempting to discredit the movement as a whole, it is clear that some were distressed that all-female communities might encourage alternative sexual practices. A woman's choice to be a beguine can thus be considered a queer act, and historians today do a disservice to beguines by not acknowledging that their mere presence and agency as self-sufficient theologians and laborers marks a moment in history that reveals something outside of the patriarchal, heterosexual framework.

**Gender Fluidity and Courtly Love within Hadewijch's Texts**

---

[52] Simons, *Cities of Ladies,* 136.

With the advent of gender history, some historians have begun to focus on the gender fluidity of Hadewijch's poetry. It is essential to note that "for most of the [Middle Ages], men and women tended to be perceived as the ends of the same continuum rather than as diametrically opposed to each other as they are today."[53] Hollywood further contends that in the space of medieval texts, "gender becomes so radically fluid that it is not clear *what* kind of sexuality—within the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy most readily available to modern readers—is being metaphorically employed to evoke the relationship between humans and the divine."[54] With these two conceptualizations of medieval gender/desire in mind, those examining Hadewijch's poetry have begun to categorize how she shaped, shifted, and often merged male and female. On occasion, Hadewijch's gender-fusing is so complete that it is difficult to decipher to whom Hadewijch refers in her writing.

Some scholars have argued that this gender-fluid language was utilized by Hadewijch in order to teach her followers about how women could engage with religious texts. Murk-Jansen argues that "this fluidity…underlines the profound otherness of the relationship between the creature and its Creator, a relationship quite unlike any human relationship" and that the use of gender reversal allowed for her female audience to relate to the text. Murk-Janson here refers to the reversal of courtly lovers' genders in Hadewijch's poems: "it is the lady who has all the power [as the pursuer], and the knight who has none [as the person on whom affection is to be showered]."[55] One might see how medieval beguines would be attracted to this kind of rhetoric, for their own theological ambitions would have been legitimized by the female knight pursuing a waiting, willing, and powerful God.

---

53 Saskia Murk-Jansen,"The Use of Gender and Gender-Related Imagery in Hadewijch" in *Gender and text in the later Middle Ages*, ed. Chance, Jane. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 53.
54 Hollywood, "Sexual Desire," 165.
55 Murk-Jansen, *The Use of Gender*, 53-54.

The courtly love rhetoric in Hadewijch's poetry often serves as the analytical lens by which historians examine the gender fluidity in her writing. Paul Moammers, one of the historians who first researched Hadewijch's life and mystic texts, identified her use of courtly love terminology. Though Moammers is a canonical text, Barbara Newman's examination of Hadewijch's use of courtly love rhetoric is unparalleled. Her essay "*la mystique courtise*" investigates gender theory, courtly love's intersections with erotic mysticism, and Hadewijch's relationship with the personified Love (capitalized by Hadewijch in order to emphasize that Love was the proper noun representing a personified feeling). For Newman, "*la mystic courtise* was a hybrid of court and cloister, of bridal mysticism and *fin amour* [courtly love]."[56] Newman argues that "adopting the language of *fin amour,* the prevailing ethos in courtly lyric and romance, [beguines] drew on a discourse that assumes a male protagonist and a female object of desire."[57] However, Newman argues that this kind of gender binary was not always upheld by these writers; "[courtly love writing] could encourage women writers to experiment with gender roles," and that Hadewijch, along with several other female mystical writers, "developed [this] art to its highest and subtlest pitch" of the Middle Ages.[58] Various authors have identified some medieval texts in which courtly love rhetoric has influenced homoerotic subtexts. For example, Anna Kolowska insists that *Yde et Olive* and Bietris's *canso* are medieval texts which adopt the language of courtly love; they "are both examples of a conscious reinvention of homoeroticism in courtly love that participates in the fashioning of a lesbian literary voice in the Middle Ages. The *fin amour* script is tailored to represent a same-sex couple."[59] While Hadewijch's poetry is not an explicit example of a tale of two lovers, this theory—that courtly love

---

[56] Barbara Newman, *From virile woman to womanChrist: studies in medieval religion and literature.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 143. Her chapter entitled "*La mystique courtoise*: Thirteenth-Century Beguines and the Art of Love" is a treasure trove of useful analysis of beguines' use of courtly love tropes in their writing.

[57] Ibid., 138.

[58] Ibid., 138-139.

[59] Kolowska, *Queer Love,* 115.

and homoerotic subtexts might have been a way in which medieval authors conceptualized life, thus providing a framework for their medieval texts—is central to the argument of this paper.

Two authors—Amy Hollywood and Ulkrie Wiethaus—stand out in their attempts to queer Hadewijch in light of her gender fluid writing. They also acknowledge her use of courtly love rhetoric. Hollywood argues that "the interplay of suffering and desire is crucial" to Hadewijch's work "in ways that ultimately disrupt the heteronormativity between the soul and the divine."[60] She notes that "Hadewijch's work undermines associations of masculinity with the divine and femininity with human, for it includes a series of poems in which the divine is represented as Love (minne, which is feminine), the unattainable female object of desire, and the soul as a knight-errant in quest of his Lady."[61] Hollywood identifies other writings by Hadewijch that can be considered queer; for example, she pinpoints moments in Hadewijch's visions in which Hadewijch and Christ become indistinguishably merged. In one vision, Hadewijch writes that "I wholly melted away in him and nothing any longer remained to me of myself," a moment which Hollywood posits as being "heterosexual in its imagery." However, though it is male/female, "the melting away of the soul into the divine radically undermines any stable distinction between male and female."[62] Without a distinction between male and female, Hadewijch allows for patriarchal societal power norms to shift. These kinds of moments in her writings are decidedly queer.

As noted before, Wiethaus argues that the beguinages and mysticism allowed Hadewijch the possibility of queering her narrative. She also asserts that the concept of a male/female bride/bridegroom relationship between the soul and the divine "allowed Hadewijch to speak of female homoerotic desire and then to disguise it safely under the cloak of her ambiguous and

---

[60] Hollywood, "Sexual Desire," 168.
[61] Ibid., 169.
[62] Ibid., 169.

unstable gender identity."[63] However, as Hollywood's argument ends with the intense gender-bending that Hadewijch employs, Wiethaus takes her analysis a step further and creates a complex argument centered on the idea of Minne (another word for the personified female Love) within Hadewijch's gender-bending framework. According to Newman, "Hadewijch had the most complex and multi-faceted concept of Minne."[64] Within her mystical texts, Minne is Hadewijch's Beloved, a mirror image of herself (as Moammers describes it, "the personified experience of Hadewijch's own love for God")[65] Jesus, a noble woman whom one should worship, or some combination of these categorizations. Wiethaus argues that:

> the imaginary bigendered figure of Minne plays a three-fold role: as a spiritual guide,
> she models esoteric same-sex student mentor relations[66]; as a symbol of love, she
> becomes a foil on which to project a specific form of female desire for another
> woman; as an idealized alter ego, she can speak Hadewijch's own desire.

It is clear that Hadewijch's Minne is a complex figure for historians, and depending on an author's analytical lens, Minne represents a variety of concrete feelings and abstract thoughts. However, what cannot be denied is the way in which Hadewijch uses fluid gender to represent Minne. For this queer reading of Hadewijch, I will insert myself into the conversation primarily with Wiethaus and Hollywood in order to show that though their analysis on gender fluidity is useful for historical inquiry, it does not go far enough in

---

[63] Wiethaus, "Female Homoerotic Discourse," 302.

[64] Newman, *virile woman,* 154.

[65] Moammers, *Hadewijch,* 5.

[66] This teacher-mentor relationship between Sara and Hadewijch is not one that will be fully explored in this paper, but does give an interesting dimension to conceptions of female/female erotic feelings in beguine communities. Wiethaus argues that this relationship was a kind of mentorship that may likely have had some sort of erotic bent, as the writings from Hadewijch to Sara display intense affection. However, like all queer reads of medieval writings, there are myriad questions raised with often very few answers. See Wiethaus, *Female Homoerotic Discourse,* 307, for more information.

emphasizing how much courtly love rhetoric serves to intensify our ability to queer read Hadewijch's poetry.

## **Hadewijch's Poetry**

Hadewijch wrote 45 stanzaic poems,[67] all of which were likely written for her beguine followers.[68] In these, she attempts to impart moral lessons on the proper way to worship Minne or personified Love and how to manage the overwhelming feelings which this celestial body imparts upon the worshipper. Within these poems, the rhetoric of courtly love and Hadewijch's use of gender-bending is so intensely interconnected that to analyze one is to analyze its relation to the other.

Hadewijch's voice calls out of the pages of the past in her poetry, as she beseeches readers to learn from her own struggles and experiences:

> My distress is great and unknown to men.
>
> They are cruel to me, for they wish to dissuade me
>
> From all that the forces of Love urge me to.

---

[67] She also wrote visions, letters, and poems in couplets.

[68] Columba Hart, *Hadewijch: The complete works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 20.

> They do not understand it, and I cannot explain it to them.
>
> I must then live out what I am.[69]

In this poem, the narrator is distanced from the surrounding men, who cannot understand the driving pull toward what might likely be read—in a Western, hetero-patriarchal framework—as a mystic's visionary relationship with God. Her language employs the courtly love rhetoric of intense longing to be with the object of desire (i.e. Love). However, a queer read of this poem might emphasize the distinct acknowledgement of dissociation from men and the lack of understanding that the narrator garners from those men around her. Feelings of exclusion are clearly not a singularly medieval experience. But with a queer read, this sense of exclusion might have been caused by erotic feelings that differed from those around her. The poem's speaker—who feels misunderstood and argues that they "must live out" who they are—may be a reflection of Hadewijch's internal feelings. The rhetoric of longing for Love helps to emphasize the emotional attachment that the speaker has with the object whom she is condemned for loving. This could be one instance of Hadewijch "letting loose" in the safe space created by mystic poetry.

As noted earlier, the figure of Minne plays a distinctly queer function in Hadewijch's poetry. Hadewijch uses the male/female role of courtly lovers to narrate stories in which the knight (a religious person) seeks his/her lover (God). However, God is most often described as Minne—or, in the case of many poems, "Love"—who has a distinctly female persona in Hadewijch's writing. Courtly love was an ideal that many medieval persons would have had at least an awareness of. Thus, using this kind of rhetoric to mirror one's personal relationship with God permits Hadewijch to emphasize the importance of religious worship. It also allows for the gender fluidity Hadewijch

---

[69] Hadewijch, "To Live Out What I Am" 1st stanza, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 186.

employs to represent a kind of "nudge nudge, wink wink" about how women might be able to gain and employ power in their own lives.

Minne plays a more substantial role in Hadewijch's poetry than does the male Christ figure; in many medieval mystic visions, Christ is the central, often erotic, focus. Wiethaus notes that "erotic encounters with Minne far outnumber descriptions of fusion with Christ."[70] For example:

> Alas, noble Love! in what season, when,
>
> Will you restore serene days to me
>
> And change from my darkness?...
>
> > You alone know
> >
> > How I mean this:
>
> Whether I wish anything but your pleasure.
>
> O powerful, wonderful Love,
>
> You who can conquer all with wonder!
>
> Conquer me, so that I may conquer you…
>
> And I am firm in confidence
>
> > Through which I know
> >
> > That Love one day
>
> Will embrace me in oneness.[71]

It is clear here that even in the context of this poem, Hadewijch is playing with relationships in a way that ought to be read as queer, as the reader is left wondering about the exact gender position of the narrator. Her approach doesn't undermine notions of gender on the surface, but rather destabilizes it. She asks readers to skew what they know about courtly love and Christian worship

---

[70] Wiethaus, "Female Homoerotic Discourse," 302.

[71] Hadewijch, "The Defense of Love," stanzas 7-10, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 178.

while still falling within the acceptable gender roles. By doing this, she uses the safe space of mystic

poetry to play with gender without fear of persecution.

As has been noted, Hadewijch's gender-bending does not always distance itself from

the male/knight female/love object binary framework. For example:

> He who wishes to serve Love must surrender himself
>
> Into her power, in accord with her commands…
>
> He feels himself wholly in Love.
>
> When she also fills him with the wondrous taste of Love…
>
> Alas! Soon awakens Desire.[72]

The seeds of this sensual male/female rhetoric can be found in the *Song of Songs*, a book in

the Bible which "sets the stage for an intensely erotic and, at least on the surface,

heterosexualized understanding of the relationship between the soul and God."[73] Though

Hadewijch was likely familiar with the *Songs* and adapted them in her work, the heterosexual

categories in the Biblical text are undercut by Hadewijch's insertion of herself into the

narrative, in which she gives herself a role in the courtly love romance. In the following

poem, Hadewijch distinguishes the narrator as a woman who is taking agency in a narrative

of a male/female courtly Love romance:

> He is in woe because of Love;
>
>> For he sorely burns
>>
>> In hope and in fear
>
> Incessantly renewed;
>
>> For all his desire is

---

[72] Hadewijch, "Reason, Pleasure, and Desire," stanzas 2-4, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 196.

[73] Hollywood, "Sexual Desire," 166.

To partake of and to enjoy

And to have fruition of Love's nature…

They who live thus in hunger for Love…

They are robbed of everything:

And so she stirs up un them such a fear!…

What must I—poor woman—do?…

Her touch has been death to me![74]

Here Hadewijch singles out the female narrator whose touch of Love has affected her in the same way that it affects the male in the poem. The rhetoric of courtly love's intense pain and desire in relation to the object of desire—in this case the female "Love"—thus gives a structure which destabilized the male/female dichotomy. By inserting a female-identified person into the story, Hadewijch creates a non-normative narrative which employs the rhetoric of courtly love to intensify the emotion and create framework of non-hetero feelings.

In other poems, the female-identified narrator explicitly states her choice to follow a female God to court:

I bid farewell to Love now and forever.

He who will may follow her to court; as for me, I have had too much woe.

Since I first chose her, I expected to be a lady of her court;

I did everything with praise: I cannot hold out.

Now her rewards

Seem to me like the scorpion

---

[74] Hadewijch, "'Sure Reward," stanzas 6-7, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 166.

>That shows a beautiful appearance,

>And afterwards strikes so cruelly. [75]

Hadewijch's use of courtly love tropes intensifies the narrator's affection toward female Love. In this narrative, Love is a dichotomous figure who gives great rewards along with great pain, much like a noble lady who might tease and then subsequently spurn the knight venerating her. In this stanza, Hadewijch highlights the agency of the female speaker in tandem with the men who are pursuing love. Furthermore, this narrator is female. It is clear that the female speaker is making an intentional choice to follow female Love to her royal/divine court so that the narrator may worship the same way as men. Here Hadewijch makes an explicit attempt to spotlight a female who chooses to pursue another female entity. A queer read of this poem should highlight the ways in which that kind of relationship might undermine the hetero-patriarchal framework of the medieval church and society as a whole.

Not only is Hadewijch pushing gender boundaries in this poem, there is veiled sexual imagery in the way that the female narrator relates to female Love. In the Middle Ages, scorpions had sexual connotations. It had an association with both penetrative sexual organs and women's sexuality in general. Ecclesiasticus 26:10 says this: "he that hath hold of her [wicked woman] is as he that taketh hold of a scorpion."[76] The scorpion in this context evokes the danger of female sexuality. In Hadewijch's poem, the female narrator is penetrated by Love's sting and emotionally suffers because of it. A queer read of that stanza might note that a scorpion, representing women's sexuality, was penetrating—though whether physically or spiritually we cannot determine—the female narrator. This act of penetration causes great emotional anguish, which is concurrent with courtly love rituals of

---

[75] Hadewijch, "The Noble Valiant Heart" 6th stanza, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 184-186.

[76] George B Pace. "The Scorpion of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 26(3) (1965), 371.

emotional distress from longing. This poem allows for readers to ask deeper and broader questions about Hadewijch's message, conceptions of gender, and ideas about female sexuality.

**Beguines, Hadewijch, and Queer Readings: The Intersections and Conclusions**

This paper brings together gender, mysticism, queer theory, and medieval history in the hopes that historians might begin to think differently about sources they study. I argue that in order to complete a full historical analysis of beguines, historians should more closely examine the alternative lifestyles and thought processes of these women. Simply by being an all-female community without any male cleric in control of them, beguines were a queer entity in the medieval Low Countries. When looking at Hadewijch's poetry, historians must acknowledge that there is more beneath the surface of the male/female courtly love romance with God. My queer read has added significant depth to Hadewijch's intersection of gender bending and courtly love rhetoric, though her visions, letters, and poems in couplets are likely rich sources for further queer reads.

There is additional research and study to be done on queering historic sources, and it is safe to say that source material will likely never run out. For, as I hope I have revealed, sources can and ought to be re-examined in a queer framework. It is time to take up Shakespeare and read between the lines by queering the actions, thoughts, and speeches of the characters. Does Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet end because he is cruel, or does she decide that perhaps celibacy is a better option for her life? Might Rosencrantz and Guildenstern represent homosexual foils to Hamlet and Ophelia, their death revealing Shakespeare's idea on male homoerotic friendships? These are all queering questions, and the answers to them do not have to be "yes" for the questions to be considered legitimate or useful. A queer read is essential to every historic source, for without it, a source's significance may well be incomplete.

Thus, Hadewijch's gender-bending poems ought to make historians pause. Because these poems reveal something that is outside of the expected (read: heterosexual), their presence in the historical narrative can be queered. They are male/female, but they are also not. They employ rhetoric of courtly love relationships, but they are primarily focused on religious feelings. For historians, acknowledging the possibility of queerness thus gives credence to the theory that there is something to be discovered underneath the heterosexual and male/female gender binary surface read. By falling into heterosexual paradigms, queerness is ignored by historians and thus delegitimized as a lifestyle. Additionally, historians who encounter instances like these within historical evidence do a disservice to their sources by not giving them a complete examination. The sources are not stretched and bent to their fullest extent if heterosexuality is the only framework of analysis. This is not, as Judith Bennet might advocate, an attempt to search for "lesbian-like" feelings, but a call for acknowledging and accepting that sources might be queer (in any of the numerous ways that a source might be considered "queer"). Furthermore, a historian who pushes to the side the lens of "queerness" does a disservice to historical methodology and narratives as a whole. Just as Marx advocated class as a lens through which to analyze the world, so does queer reading call forth new paradigms of historical investigation.

It is time for us to queer read the internal movie created by Hadewijch's poetry. We must take this imagined film and ask: is there something here that is non-normative? Is there only one ending? Perhaps the knight pulls off their helmet to reveal that they are actually a woman. It could be that the film ends not with the male/female relationship triumphing but with the noble lady's decision to live a chaste lifestyle in the local beguinages. These queered alternative endings do not have to all come to fruition, but they all must be available for the audience. Without them, the story is incomplete.

**Bibliography**

Bennett, Judith M. "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisims," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol 9. No. ½ (Jan.-Ap., 2000), 1-24.

Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate. "Satirical Views of the Beguines," in *New Trends in Femine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liege and Their* Impact, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. European Union: Brepols, 1999.

Brontsema, Robin. "A queer revolution: Reconceptualizing the debate over linguistic reclamation." *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 17, no. 1 (2004): 1-17.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy feast and Holy Fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Deane, Jennifer. "'Beguines' Reconsidered: Historiographical Problems and New Directions," *Monastic Matrix* (2008).

de Vitry, Jacques. "Book I, Chapter 16," in *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*. USA: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Geybels, Hans. *Vulgariter beghinae: Eight Centuries of Beguine History in the Low Countries* (Brepols, 2004).

Hadewijch, "The Defense of Love," stanzas 7-10, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 178.

Hadewijch, "The Noble Valiant Heart" 6th stanza, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 184-186.

Hadewijch, "Reason, Pleasure, and Desire," stanzas 2-4, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 196.

Hadewijch, "Sure Reward," stanzas 6-7, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 166.

Hadewijch, "To Live Out What I Am" 1st stanza, in *Hadewijch: The Complete Works,* ed. Richard Payne (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), 186.

Hart, Columba. *Hadewijch: The complete works*. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Hollywood, Amy, "Sexual Desire, Divine Desire; Or, Queering the Beguines," in *Queer Theology: rethinking the Western body*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2007.

Jeffreys, Sheila, "Does It Matter If They Did It?" in *Not a passing phase: reclaiming lesbians in history 1840-1985*. London: Women's Press, 1989.

Kittell, Ellen E. and Mary A. Suydam, *The texture of society: medieval women in the southern Low Countries*. New York: Palgrace Macmillan, 2004.

Kolsowska, Anna. *Queer love in the Middle Ages*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Lochrie, Karma, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies," in *Constructing medieval sexuality*. ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 180-200.

Matter, E. Ann, "My Sister, My Spouse: Women-Identified Women in Medieval Christianity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* Vol 2, No. 2 (Fall, 1986), 81-93.

McDonnell, Ernest W. *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture: with special emphasis on the Belgian scene*, New York: Octagon Books, 1969.

Mommaers, Paul, and Elisabeth M. Dutton. *Hadewijch: writer, beguine, love mystic.* Louvain: Peeters, 2004.

Murk-Jansen, Saskia,"The Use of Gender and Gender-Related Imagery in Hadewijch" in *Gender and text in the later Middle Ages*, ed. Chance, Jane. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996.

Neel, Carol. "The Origins of the Beguines," *Working Together in the Middle Ages: Perspectives on Women's Communities,* (1989).

Newman, Barbara. *From virile woman to womanChrist: studies in medieval religion and literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

Pace, George B. "The Scorpion of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 26(3) (1965), 369-374.

Passenier, Anke. "'Women on the Loose': Stereotypes of Women in the Story of the Medieval Beguines," in *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, ed. Ria Kloppenborg & Wouter J. Hanegraaff. The Netherlands: 1995.

Petroff, Elizabeth Alvilda. *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*. USA: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Pugh, Tison. *Queering medieval genres*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Schultz, James A. *Courtly love, the love of courtliness, and the history of sexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Simons, Walter. *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200*-1565 (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

Withaus, Ulrike. "Female Homoerotic Discourse and Religion in Medieval Germanic Culture," Farmer, Sharon A., and Carol Braun Pasternack. *Gender and difference in the Middle Ages.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.