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Wy willen dit kindeken wermen met onser minnen gloet

A multidisciplinary approach to inner performance
and experience in Late Medieval devout songs

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Picture front page: Mary with Child, accompanied by various undefined female saints. New York, Morgan Library, M.659 (single folio).

Title: 'We wish to warm this little child with the glow of our love': A multidisciplinary approach to experience and internal performance in Late Medieval devout songs.

Content

1. Introduction

> So also the taste, the hunger and thirst, for things sensible can by analogy wondrously draw a sensible man to things divine, to a hunger, thirst, and taste for things spiritual. (…) Thus all sensible sacraments contain spiritual signs proportionate to the invisible grace operative in them. For that reason, words and signs of things touched, tasted, or smelled make strong impressions (…), and they thus compel the soul to join itself and to adhere to spiritual realities all the more firmly.[1]

> The sound of the godji penetrates and makes us feel the presence of the ancestors, the ancients. We hear the sound and know that we are on the path of the ancestors. The sound is irresistible. We cannot be unaffected by it and neither can the spirits, for when they hear it cry, it penetrates them. Then they become excited and swoop down to take the body of the medium.[2]

Through time, space and culture, sensational experience has been seen as an outstanding path to contact with the divine. As can be seen in these two quotations, both in the 14th century, West-European religious movement of the Devotio Moderna as well as in the 20th century, West-African Songhai community, sensational experiences are centralised in religious practices because of their ability to 'draw a sensible man to things divine'. As the first quotation shows, according to Geert Grote, these sensational experiences did not need to be actually physical, but 'words and signs' of sensations could even so 'adhere [the soul] to spiritual realities'. In spite of this universal character, some moments in time and culture present an exceptional flourish in the focus on *experiencing* devotion. The religiosity of the Late Middle Ages in the Low Countries can be considered as such: starting in the late 13th century and developing in strength and popularity during the 14th and 15th century, the aim of the devotee became to share the *experiences* of the human Christ, as if he or she was at his side, or even was Christ himself.[3] The objective of the emotional and physical *internalisation* of Christ's experiences crossed the borders between various religious orders and even between the clerical and lay world. This

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[1] Geert Grote, *De Quattuor Generibus Meditabilium, (*transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 114).
> *Immo sic sapor, sic sitis et fames rerum sensibiles secundum analogiam mirabiliter trahunt ad divine sensibilem hominem et ad sitim, famem et saporem spirituales.(…) Sicque omnia sacramenta sensibilia secum signa spiritualia habent in quadam proportione ad eam quae operantur invisibilem gratiam. Inde est quod verba et signa rerum tangibilium et saporum et odorum, quae fortius imprimunt (…) fortius cogunt animam spiritualibus se coniungi et adhaerere.* (Latin edition: Tolomio 1975).

[2] Stoller 1989:109: personal communication between Stoller and Sohanci Adamu Jenitongo, member of the Songhay community and participant in the Songhay sound ritual here described. In this ritual, the godji, a two-stringed fiddle made from a gourd bowl covered by a lizard skin, is played by the musician and it's sacred 'cry' sounds. By this cry, the earthly as well as the heavenly participants will be moved and connected (Stoller 1989: 108-109).

[3] Bestul 2012: 161-162.

development of experience-orientated devotion is reflected in the large number and great variety of devotional texts, images and practices that emerged and spread extensively.[4]

Part of this development of devout textual, visual and practical culture was the relatively sudden expansion of the genre of vernacular devout song. Many Late Medieval song collections can be dated in the second half of the 15th century, and seem strongly inspired by the rapidly spreading Modern Devout movement.[5] About eighteen different manuscripts with Middle Dutch and Low German devout song collections have come down to us,[6] most of which originate from female contexts, i.e. they come from women's institutions or were owned by religious and semi-religious women.[7] Previous research to these song collections has been concerned with questions surrounding the use (as part of a meditational practice, collectively or individually, sang out loud or silently read), the public, the structure of the collections and the aimed influence of the songs (do they want to teach their users, point them in a certain direction or stimulate them to think or meditate on a specific theme?).[8] The current study will be concerned with the functioning and influence of devout songs: how do devout songs 'work' as devotional instruments, i.e. what is their intended functioning and how is this related to an overarching aim for spiritual growth?

The corpus of this study consists of the 44 Middle Dutch songs in the manuscript Paris BN Ne39, better known as *The songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*,[9] which can be dated between 1475 and 1525 and in all likelihood originates from an Urbanist Poor Clare order around Brussels.[10] It consists of 44 Middle Dutch songs, one Latin song and one Middle Dutch prayer. The songs are predominantly Christmas songs (frequently combined with praises toward Mother Mary) or songs dedicated to saint Francis, saint Clare and saint Barbara. The collection furthermore contains some songs on eschatological, moralistic and Biblical themes. Examples of these songs are songs on the spiritual detachment from the world (e.g. song I),[11] the desired turn toward God (e.g. song XL) and on more specific Biblical places, such as on Jesus'

[4] Kieckhefer 1988: 75.
[5] An overview of the Late Medieval devout song culture and its connection to the Devotio Moderna can be found in Van der Poel 2011.
[6] Vroomen 2017: 12.
[7] Van der Poel 2011: 71.
[8] An overview of these concerns in previous research can be found in Vroomen 2017: 17-25.
[9] Sister Liisbet Ghoeyvaers' name can be found in an ownership mark on f. 22v. A second ownership mark on f. 80v shows that she later gave the songbook to sister Johanna Cueliens. This second mark can probably be dated in the second half of the 16th century (Van Seggelen 1966: 10).
[10] Previous dating (on the basis of the script) has been verified by an analysis of the watermarks by De Morrée (2017: 108).
[11] The song numbers given are based on the edition of Van Seggelen 1966.

statement that whoever is thirsty should come to him and drink (based on John 7:37-38; song XI).[12]

I have chosen this specific songbook as the corpus of my study because of several practical as well as content-related reasons. Firstly, I chose to study a collection of songs which has indeed functioned as such. Because of the aim to discuss the intended reception and functioning of devout songs, I decided to study a collection of songs from a single manuscript, in order to receive valid and coherent results. Practical concerns led me to the manuscript Paris 39. It contains 44 songs, written down on approximately 80 folia, which is a considerable number and thus enables the mutual comparison of songs. At the same time, analysing 44 songs is achievable within the fairly short period available for writing a master thesis (roughly six months). In addition, dr. A. J. M. van Seggelen published a diplomatic edition of the song collection in 1966, which makes the songs easily accessible for research.

Besides these practical issues, *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* is interesting because it seems to be narrated regularly from the perspective of a 'we'. This strong preference for the 'we' has been noticed by Cécile de Morrée (2017) with regard to the Christmas songs in this song collection.[13] Previous research has focussed mainly on the role of the 'I' in meditational texts, as I will further discuss in paragraph 2.3. If the songs – both the Christmas and saint songs - do indeed present a 'we' as frequently as seems at first glance and on the basis of De Morrée's study, the question arises what this means for the interpretation of the songs intended functioning, as well as the reception of the songs.

The experience-orientated and meditative character of devout texts has been studied previously. In this thesis, the studies of Sarah McNamer, Barbara Newman and, especially, Thom Mertens and Dieuwke van der Poel are important points of departure and comparison. I will therefore shortly discuss them in this introduction, after which I will explain the multidisciplinary approach that characterises the current study.

In *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (2010), Sarah McNamer discusses the very popular and influential literary genre of the 'affective meditations': texts in various shapes and forms, mainly concerned with the passion, that are richly emotional and script-like and ask the reader to 'imagine themselves present at scenes of

[12] A comprehensive description of the codicological, structural and content-related aspects of the manuscript is provided by De Morrée 2017: 107-119. I will further discuss this characteristics of the manuscript in paragraph 4.1.
[13] De Morrée 2017: 191.

Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart'.[14] Christ is presented in these texts as a vulnerable *human* victim, and the response of the devotee to him can and should, therefore, be strongly emotional. Various characteristics of the texts *performatively* constitute the affective, emotional response. As McNamer explains, various meditational texts present 'intimate scripts': they are often scripted as 'first-person, present-tense utterances, designed to be enacted by the reader.'[15] In addition, some affective meditations hail the reader as 'you' and direct an affective response, for example by prescribing compassionate gestures (such as the order to 'embrace him'). Still others present the reader a role of eyewitness or participant: while reading, he may see before his mental eye a detailed, vividly imagined scene, regularly enhanced performatively through the use of exclamations, 'deictic rhetoric' ('here' or 'there') and the use of the dramatic present tense (the narration of past events in the present tense).[16]

In these various ways, the reader is stimulated for a compassionate, emotional and 'experiencing' response through the performative characteristics of the texts. Directed by the texts, the reader can imagine him- or herself present at the scene depicted – whether as eyewitness, participant or by taking on the role of the 'I'-persona – and accordingly gain a 'first-hand' experience of the object of devotion. Thom Mertens and Dieuwke van der Poel have studied the script-like and meditational character of Middle Dutch devout songs in their article 'Individuality and Scripted Role in Devout Song and Prayer' (2017; yet to be published). Mertens and Van der Poel adopt the concept of 'visionary scripts' from Barbara Newman in order to understand the performative 'working' of script-like, 'I'-persona songs. Newman (2005) developed the idea of 'visionary scripts' in order to describe the performative texts in which visualization of the supernatural might stimulate actual visionary experiences. As she explains, the meditational technique of inner visualisation was prominent in many Late Medieval devotions: through visualisation the scriptures and scriptural themes could be deeply internalised and the created inner landscape could then facilitate new visions.[17] These 'cultivated visions' could be initiated by literary means. Visionary scripts are writings meant to help the reader to 'visualize the life of Christ so vividly that pious imagination would shade into visionary experience'.[18] The internally depicted image ought to be so very vivid that the

[14] McNamer 2010: 1.
[15] McNamer 2010: 12.
[16] McNamer 2010: 12.
[17] Newman 2005: 17.
[18] Newman 2005: 25.

readers task is to 'make herself present' within it. From these experiences, visions may sprout, surpassing the porous boundaries between visualising and seeing.[19]

Mertens and Van der Poel relate the concept of visionary scripts to the Late Medieval idea of the threefold structure of devout practice: lectio, meditatio and oratio. They study the 15th century song collection *Die gheestelicke melody* in order to show how these theories on meditation are implemented in devout song. The exceptional song collection presents a coherent series of songs, each accompanied by a prose introduction (ending with a Bible quotation), and arranged according to the days of the week. Mertens and Van der Poel show that the songs frequently use qualifications referring to sensory experiences (such as taste or vision) as well as emotional experiences (such as joy or fear).[20] The songs furthermore present an 'I'-persona, which can be adopted by the singer as a scripted role and in that way enable her to experience the meditational process of lectio, meditatio and oratio, and sensationally and emotionally engage in the meditation.[21]

As Mertens and Van der Poel point out, the introductions in prose and explicit references to the Bible are not found in any other song collection in the entire corpus of Middle Dutch devout song.[22] Nevertheless, they expect that further research will confirm their results. In this thesis, I will depart from this hypothesis and test as well as nuance it on the basis of a newly developed structural approach to the content and structure of the devout songs in *The songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers.* Furthermore, as I have mentioned before, I will use the analysis to position the functioning of the songs in a broader field of the devout aims in the spiritual context in which the song collection was established and used.

In pursuit of understanding the interconnections between structural and textual features of devout texts, the functioning of the songs with regard to inner performance and experience, and the broader context of the devout aim of spiritual growth, I propose a new multidisciplinary approach in this thesis. I will combine previous research in both literary-historical as well as anthropological studies to gain insight into the role performativity plays in religious practice and how religious practices can stimulate, create or strengthen feelings of experience in the participants. In order to fully understand the intended working of, for example, emotion words or the narrating instance on the feelings of the singers, I will occasionally also refer to

[19] Newman 2005: 27-29.
[20] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 7-12.
[21] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 13.
[22] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 13.

neurological or linguistic studies, concepts or theories. In combining these various disciplines, I hope to add a new layer to the study of the functioning of devout songs by considering them performative, textual religious practices (rather than mainly literary expressions) and, furthermore, connect them to the broader context of experience-orientated religious practice in religion in general.

As the quotes at the beginning of this introduction underline, experiencing divinity, for instance through sensational impulses, but also through emotions or performances, seems a universal aspiration in religiosity. According to the German philosopher Rudolph Otto, experience of the divine, shaped by emotions such as awe, dread and amazement, is the heart of what religion *is*.[23] Furthermore, the exceptional role of the experience of the divine is also underlined by neurological research. Neuroscientists Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg have shown that, during the moments that are perceived as experiences of the divine by Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns in meditation or prayer, a sharp decrease of activity takes place in the area of the parietal lobe that functions as 'orientation area'. This *posterior superior parietal lobe* usually monitors and distinguishes input from the external reality from the internal reality, i.e. it distinguishes the surrounding space from the 'self'. When in intense meditation or prayer the divine is experienced, individuals experience their 'self' becoming boundless or *at one* with the spiritual reality.[24] Inner and outer sensations seem to be blurred in the experience of divinity.[25] It is this perfect closeness with or even absorption in the divine that devotees in various religions strive toward.

As already became clear in discussing the works of McNamer, Newman and Mertens and Van der Poel, as well as in the two quotations at the start of this introduction, devout experience and inner performance is firmly connected with feelings, emotions and sensations. In order to enable a transparent discussion, I would like to shortly define these four concepts. The concept of 'feelings' can be considered the broadest of the four. A feeling is an internal experience which is recognized by its differences or similarities to previous experiences. It is therefore personal and biographical: previous experiences affect the interpretation and labelling of feelings.[26] In addition, how specific circumstances are experienced and, therefore, *felt*, differs per culture. Feelings can be defined on a scale ranging from exclusively physical to exclusively mental, on

[23] Crapo 2003: 15.
[24] D'Aquili and Newberg 1999, 2001.
[25] Further on inner and outer sensations in Late Medieval devotion, see Largier 2003: 14.
[26] Shouse 2005: 3.

which most feelings experienced can be found somewhere in between. Lastly, feelings *happen*: they occur spontaneously and are difficult to adjust or feign.

Opposed to feelings, 'emotions' can be adjusted or feigned, if the subject considers that necessary in a specific social situation. An emotion is the projection or display of a feeling and depend heavier on cultural determined social 'rules' than feelings. This is clearly underlined by an experiment carried out by psychologist Paul Ekman. He studied the reactions of American and Japanese subjects to a film depicting facial surgery. Although the subjects of both groups showed similar facial expressions when watching alone, their expressions followed different social and cultural 'scripts' when they watched in groups.[27] Emotions are thus not only projections of internal states, but also culturally determined ways of communicating that state to the world. Furthermore, which emotions are – and *can be* - felt and expressed, is based on language. Although it is generally accepted that there are some emotions or categories of emotions that can be considered universal – such as anger, sorrow and joy -, the availability of specific emotion words in a specific language enables the existence of that emotion for the community using that language. The fact that the English vocabulary has the word 'indignancy' to describe a feeling of annoyance or slight anger caused by what is seen as unfair treatment by someone else against you, makes this feeling a separate emotion, and not just a subtype of annoyance or anger.

Thirdly, the concept of 'sensations' is used to define, more specifically, physical feelings: both the sensory perception of circumstances via visual, audible, tasteable, odorous and touchable clues, as well as internal physical feelings such as pain, hunger or thirst.[28] Sensations are thus the internal experiences that result from physical stimuli, or 'sense data'. The interpretation of the sense data and therefore the felt sensations are shaped by personal and cultural backgrounds and previous experiences and are, furthermore, often closely related to mental feelings and emotions.[29] This is indicated, for instance, by the numerous examples of sayings that describe an emotion by referring to a specific sensation, such as feeling butterflies in your stomach or having a broken heart. These expressions can be incorporated in the own system of feelings and be internalised.[30] Although which emotions are connected to which physical states differs per language and culture, the mutual influence of sensations and emotions is universal.

[27] Shouse 2005: 4.
[28] Goody 2002: 22-23.
[29] Goody 2002: 20.
[30] Goody 2002: 26.

Religious experiences, lastly, are moments in which a subject both emotionally and sensationally feels a connection to the divine, such as in moments of trance or in visionary 'dreams', or evoked and experienced during a religious practice or ritual, for instance by participating in the eucharist. As previously mentioned, neurological studies reveal how in religious experiences, inner and outer sensations seem to be blurred, and the self appears boundless.[31] Religious experience, whether mainly physical or emotional, serves as an important way to maintain and produce meaning and belonging. Although experience is not necessarily an important instrument in every religious practice, many practices aim for bodily involvement and emotional engagement to a greater or lesser extent.[32] This thesis particularly regards the possible invocation of these feelings through textual aspects of religious practice, such as the text of songs.

The first two chapters of this thesis will be dedicated to the methodological background of this study. Firstly, in chapter 2, I aim to provide an account of the role played by the emotional and physical experience of the divine in Late Medieval devotion, and especially within Franciscan spirituality, in order to sketch the circumstances and broader cultural context in which the songs central in this thesis were created and functioned. In addition, I will – on the basis of some important previous studies - discuss the textual tradition of 'affective meditations' and similar performative texts that rose from the developments in Late Medieval religiosity. At the end of the chapter, I will shortly summarise what, according to previous historical and literary-historical studies, the important characteristics of experience-orientated, performative religious practices and texts are and how these are relevant for the current study. These points serve as important aspects of my methodology, but in order to develop a methodological approach which leads to a more complete understanding of the intended functioning of devout songs, I will discuss the other part of the multidisciplinary approach of this study in the following chapter. I shall elaborate on various anthropological views upon and approaches toward experience and performativity in religious practice and, in accordance with the preceding chapter, conclude by shortly outlining what characteristics of performative and experience-orientated are distinguished within the anthropological field and how these relate to my study.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the corpus and methodology of the current study. This multidisciplinary method is an instrument for the analysis of the intended functioning of devout songs, both on the actual moment of singing as well as in the broader

[31] D'Aquili and Newberg 1999, 2001.
[32] Furseth and Repstad 2006: 128-129.

context of spiritual growth. The methodology will then be applied to the corpus in chapter 5. In this core chapter of my thesis, I will analyse the text of the songs in *the songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* on the basis of the structural, narratological and discourse-related aspects outlined in the methodology. Furthermore, I will examine what these textual aspects imply about the intended functioning of the songs. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will view the results of my analysis in comparison to the results of Mertens and Van der Poel. In addition, I will discuss the functionality of the developed methodology for the current and future research.

2. Experience in Late Medieval devotion

Late Medieval religious culture came to emphasise that individuals have a personal responsibility to live a Christian life, to shun sin and seek virtue, and especially to engage with and *relive* the life of Christ. With pivotal roles played by the Devotio Moderna as well as by movements like the Franciscans that remained popular over centuries, believers learned how to meditate on Christ's life, for example by reading various devotional and meditational texts.[33] Van Engen and Oberman explain in the introduction to *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (1988) that in the spirituality of the Devotio Moderna, partly derived from the Cistercians and Franciscans, the aim for the devotee was 'to orchestrate, as it were, all of one's mental and emotional faculties around devotion to him to [Christ]'.[34] Related to this Christocentrism was a strong focus on 'inwardness' or 'interiority': the aim to develop a great desire toward Christ and to subdue oneself of earthly desires and impulses was embedded in an internalisation of scripture and thus 'living in Christ'.[35]

Related to this strong focus on Christ and internalisation was an increasing flourish of all kinds of devotions from the 12th century onwards: pilgrimages, veneration of relics, Marian devotions, meditations on the passion of Christ, penitential exercises and various other forms and shapes of devotional expression became popular and widespread, in and outside clerical life.[36] This led to a proliferation of various forms of devotional literary expression, artistic depictions and performative practices and exercises.[37] Overarching, however, was its contents rather than its forms: devotions were usually directed to a particular saint, the Virgin Mary, to the suffering Christ or a related object or theme, such as the eucharist.[38] By using these devotional themes, the devotee could focus on Christ's humanity and experience God's presence in an emotional and physical manner. This focus differs from the perception up to the twelfth century, in which contemplation was considered to be a 'purely spiritual experience of the enlightened intellect of the soul.'[39]

In this chapter, I aim to provide an account of the place of the emotional and sensational experience of the divine in Late Medieval devotion. I will start by introducing how experience

[33] Pollmann 2011: 30.
[34] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 25.
[35] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 27.
[36] Kieckhefer 1988: 75.
[37] Kieckhefer 1988: 77.
[38] Kieckhefer 1988: 76.
[39] See for a short overview Fraeters 2017: 28.

and feeling were embedded in devotion according to a treatise by the writer Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1367-1398). Zerbolt of Zutphen was the most influential theoretician of the Devotio Moderna[40] and his treatise *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*[41] serves as an encompassing representative of the devotional tradition. In his explanation of a 'spiritual ascent', Zerbolt of Zutphen combines a number of traditional elements in medieval spirituality into one overarching and intelligible scheme.[42] In addition, it provides a clear account of the assumed connections between emotion, devotion, meditation and spiritual growth. The text was highly popular and has come down to us in at least one hundred hand-written copies and twenty-nine printed editions, and was, furthermore, translated into Middle Dutch and Middle High German early in time.[43] Because of its significance and conciseness, a main focus on this treatise is justified.

I will continue by focussing more specifically on the religious context of the songbook central in this thesis. The manuscript Paris 39 originates in all likelihood from the St Clare cloister of the Urbanist Poor Clares of Brussels.[44] Although the various songs in the collection are not necessarily bound to the Franciscan spirituality, the manuscript as a whole has indeed functioned in that context.[45] In order to understand the whole of spiritual and devout ideas that would have determined the functioning and reception of this songbook, I will outline the characteristics and developments within the spirituality and devotion of the Franciscan

[40] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 2.
[41] In this thesis, I will quote the Latin text of *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* from the Latin-Dutch edition by J. Mahieu, Brugge 1941.
[42] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 57.
[43] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 56.
[44] The search for the origins of this manuscript is described in detailed in Van Seggelen 1966: 10-25. On the basis of the high number of songs dedicated to Saint Barbara, the focus on Saint Francis and Saint Clare and the dialect, J.A.N. Knuttel (1906) argued that the origins of *The Songbook of Liesbeth Ghoeyvaers* lie in Barbara-dael or Eykendonk, a cloister close to Den Dungen (a small village nearby 's-Hertogenbosch). However, the presence of Barbara-songs does not necessarily mean that the convent in which the manuscript functioned was dedicated to Saint Barbara. On the basis of four facts (the manuscript dates from approximately 1470-1510, it originates from a Poor Clare or Third Order convent, sisters Elisabet Ghoeyvaers and Johanna Cueliens (in the second half of the 16th century) have lived there and the residents were interested in the early 17th-century text added to the manuscript), Van Seggelen determines various possible convents for the origins of the manuscript. Most probable is the St Clare cloister of the Urbanist Poor Clares of Brussels. Johanna Cuelens is mentioned as the prioress around 1580. Furthermore, a calendar of the convent shows a special interest in Saint Barbara. De Morrée (2017: 172-173) agrees with Van Seggelen.
[45] The origins of the manuscript are not identical to the origins of each of the songs in it. Various songs in the manuscript can be found in other song manuscripts from around the same period. These manuscripts can all be placed within a Modern Devout context. The songs should, therefore, not be seen as characteristically 'Fransiscan': they were probably orally transmitted texts that surpassed the lines between monastic or lay life as well as between various religious orders. Because of the great similarities between the content of *The Songbook of Liesbeth Ghoeyvaers* and several Modern Devout song collections, De Morrée (2017) uses it as part of the corpus of her study to song collections of the Devotio Moderna.

movement and, moreover, the roles played by experience and feeling in devout practice within that context.

In the light of the foregoing, I will discuss the practical, textual consequences of these devout objectives by considering the textual tradition of devout and affective texts in the Late Middle Ages. On the basis of previous research by, amongst others, Sarah McNamer, Annie Sutherland and Mertens and Van der Poel, I will outline the 'state of the art' with regard to the shape and functioning of devout texts from the perspective of experiencing and 'feeling' the divine. On this basis, I aim to distinguish what qualities these texts possess that make them successful devout instruments. These serve as an important point of departure for the method developed for this study (chapter 4).

2.1. A treatise on the role of experience and emotion

According to 14th-century modern devout writer Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen, every rational being ought to feel the natural desire to make his or her ascent and reach the heights of devotion.[46] The point of this ascent is not to reach a *new* state of being, but rather to return to mankind's original state of rectitude.[47] By three ascents, the human person can rise from the three falls of men: the fall from the state of natural rectitude through the original sin, the fall from purity of the heart through concupiscent desires and thirdly the fall through mortal sin into the 'region of dissimilitude'.[48] By the analogous ascents, a human person can climb back up toward the original and desired state.

In *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen systematically explains what steps need to be taken by the devotee to make these three ascents. He explains what practices, exercises and methods are suited in pursuing the aims for ascent. The practices for the first ascent concentrate around the sincere practice of penance and confession. The ascent from the next fall, toward the restoration of the purity of the heart, is much more complicated and accounts for roughly half of the text. Pivotal in this ascent are the feelings of fear, hope and love. Zerbolt of Zutphen provides exercises on death, the last judgement and the pains of hell

[46] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap. 1.
> *Novi, homo, quod ascensionum sis cupidus quodque exaltationem vehementer concupiscis. Rationalis enim ac nobilis creature es et magni cuiusdam animi, ideoque altitudinem et ascensum naturali appetis desiderio.* ('I know, O man, that you wish to make your ascent and ardently desire to reach the heights. For you are a noble and rational creature endowed with a capacious soul, and you have therefore a natural desire for ascent and the heights', transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 245).

[47] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 57.

[48] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap. 3-5.

to stir up fear, which should then be balanced by hope and desire for divinity, mainly by meditating on the life of Christ. The threefold exercise of holy reading, meditation and prayer can furthermore serve as a necessary form of 'refreshment': it ought to 'admonish toward constant ascent and exhort to progress'.[49] The third ascent, lastly, concerns the reformation of the faculties of the soul. The devotee should battle persistently against each of the eight capital vices: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, envy, tedium, vainglory and pride.

It is primarily Zerbolt of Zutphen's account of the second ascent which yields insight into the role played by experience and feeling in devotional practice. As Zerbolt of Zutphen explains with regard to this ascent, the devotee should first and for all shun his or her earthly desires and emotions and then – by careful and frequent reflection on various aspects of the divine – fill his or her heart with desired emotions of fear, hope and desire.[50] As mentioned above, Zerbolt provides an exercise for stirring up the first of these: fear. Focussing with all one's senses on the scene of the last judgement will invoke feelings of fear. This experience-orientated form of meditation will thus stimulate the desired ascent. In order to gain profit from the meditation, Zerbolt recommends an all-sensational inner depiction of the last judgement. A slightly lengthy quote of his words might be elucidative here:

> Turn your *mental eye* next upon the last judgment so that its most *bitter* recollection may *embitter* all *sweetness*. Think of the great *fear, clamour,* and *wonder* that will arise when the Archangel's trump *sounds*, when lightning *flashes* so terribly, thunder *booms*, the sun becomes *darkened* to the fright of sinners and the moon *no longer gives forth its light*. (…) *Step out then and meet him* [the Judge] in your meditation. *See* the Judge coming with great power, with the leaders from among the people and accompanied by all the saints and angels. (…) Then the Judge will pronounce the definitive sentence which no one can appeal, contradict, elude, or ward off. Think what *bitterness, grief, and horror* is contained in that sentence, 'Go, you accursed'. Think what *sweetness, wonder, and joy* there is in *that voice saying*, 'Come, you blessed'.[51]

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[49] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap. 44, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 286.
… ita videlicet ut te semper ad ascendendum admoneat, ad proficiendum hortetur.

[50] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap. 18.
Haec si in corde tuo studioso ruminaveris; et ex istis vel eorum aliquibus frequenter cor tuum repleveris, omnia dulcia fient amara, tunc transit mundus a corde tuo, et concupiscentia eius, sed et concupiscentia carnis, et concupiscentia oculorum inde evanescit nullamque foris sentries amaritudine, huiusmodi amaritudine interius adimpletus. ('If you carefully reflect on all this in your heart and frequently fill it with some or all of these considerations, everything sweet will turn bitter, the world and its desires will pass from your heart, and then the desires of the flesh and of the eyes will also disappear, and you will sense no bitterness without, saturated as you are with bitterness within', transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 261).

[51] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 20, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 263-264 (the italic markings of references to sensations and experiences are my own).
Deinde oculum mentalem verte ad extremum iudicium, ut ex ejus memoria amarissima amerascant omnia dulcia. Cognita igitur quantus timor, quantus clamor, quantaque fiet admiration, cum tuba Arcchangelica

As this passage shows, during meditation, the devotee should imagine the scene as if he or she was actually there. He or she needs to imagine the scene before the 'mental eye', and *experience* its sounds, flashing lights and darkness as a first-hand witness. Zerbolt of Zutphen refers to the senses of taste (bitterness and sweetness), of hearing (the clamour, the sounds of the Archangel's trump and the booming of thunder) and of vision (the flashing lightning, the darkened sun and moon and seeing the judge himself). Furthermore, the meditator should think of the strong emotions of fear and wonder and – after the final judgement has been given – possibly grief and horror or wonder and joy. In this exercise, the internal depiction thus brings the scene to life and within the meditation, the devotee ought to make himself subject to the judgement: 'Step out then and meet him in your meditation'. By this inner 'performance', the desired emotion of fear will be invoked in the devotee.

Zerbolt of Zutphen connects various biblical scenes to the desired feelings that form the ascending path: fear, hope and love. By internally experiencing these scenes, the desired emotions can be developed, which will help the devotee in its ascent. If the devotee is able to feel hope (by 'raising their whole soul with all its affections to the celestial regions and to dwell there in hope'),[52] he is drawing near to the perfection of purity and charity.[53] This perfection can merely be reached by the devotee by taking upon him- or herself the divine affection for virtue (and therefore not to perform virtues out of fear, but because of inner affection and

sonuerit, cum fulgura terribiliter splendescent, tonitrua mugient, cum ad terrendum peccatores sol obscurabitur et luna non dabit lumen suum. (…) Egredere deinde et speculando occurred et vide iudicem venientem cum potestate magna, cum senioribus populi, comitantibus Angelis universis et Sanctis. (…) Deinde proferet judex sententiam diffinitivam, a qua nullus appelara potest, nullus contradicere, nullus supterfugere, nullus se defendere valebit. Cogita quid amaritudinis, quod doloris, quid horroris contineat sentential illa: Ita maledicti. Cogita quid dulcedinis, quid admirationis et gaudii habeat vox illa: Venite benedicti.

[52] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 271.

… deinde totam animam et affectiones quantum ad hunc gradum pertinet ad caelestia erigere, et per spem in caelestibus habitare.

[53] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26.

Sed qui hucusque bene profecerit, jam vicinius puritati et caritati propinquat, licet adhuc per aliquos gradus eum ascendere oporteat. ('But he who has advanced well thus far is drawing nearer to purity and charity, though he still has some steps to ascend,' trans. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 271).

triving toward goodness)[54] and thereby rejecting all that is evil and embracing all that is good out of fervent love for and longing toward the divine.[55]

It is thus the reading of the holy scripture which can serve as the basis for this process of ascent. By thinking about, imagining and depicting Biblical scenes or topics before one's mental eye, by thinking how various characters within the stories operated and, furthermore, by comparing that to your own ingratitude and shortfall of affection and desire, one can develop the emotions that will bring one further in his or her ascent.[56] However, this journey, this *perfectus ascensus perfectionis*,[57] can be made only by constant exercise.[58] Enormously helpful in sustaining and advancing the spiritual ascent is, according to Zerbolt of Zutphen, the threefold exercise structure of lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation) and oratio (prayer). The choice what to read ought to be determined by what will 'speed your ascent toward purity and charity, show you the way through holy exercises and works, warm your affections for the ascent, instil fear, or raise hope.'[59] In order for the reading to invoke the desired affections, it should be evident and simply enough to understand. As Zerbolt expresses, the devotee should concentrate upon 'reading what will inflame your [his/her] affections toward spiritual progress and ascent rather than obscure or enticing matters that illuminate the intellect or sharpen curiosity, as in disputations. Reading more difficult writings does nothing to refresh the more tender souls and may even crush their good intentions'.[60]

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[54] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26.
Primum quod homo jam induit affectum virtutum, et ipsum guodammodo in naturam transformavit, ita quod virtutes operator, non jam ex timore poneae coactus, non ex spe remunerationis attractus, sed solo bonitatis affectu indito delectatus. ('First, a man should now put on the virtuous affection, making it in a certain sense into his own nature, so that he will not perform the virtues as one driven by the fear of punishment or enticed by the hope of reward but rather as one delighted simply with an affection for goodness,' trans. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 271).

[55] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26.
Secondum est, quod sicut affectus virtutum est in eo habituates modo praedicto, ita affectus sit per ardentem amorem accensus et ad divinae voluntatis beneplacitum semper ex fervore paratus, et in divina speculation erectus. (…) omne denique tanquam naturaliter, et quod malum est, respuunt, et quod bonum est, amplectuntur. ('Second, just as affection for virtue becomes habituated into him, so through ardent love that affection will be inflamed, fervently ready at all times to please the divine will and rise toward the divine vision. (…) In sum, as if by nature, he rejects all that is evil and embraces all that is good,' trans. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 272).

[56] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 28.

[57] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26.

[58] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 26.
… et diutinis exercitiis appropinquare ('and draw nerare only by constant exercise,' trans. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 272).

[59] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap 44, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 286.
… ad ascensum puritatis et caritatis tibi proficiat, vel viam ascensus per sancta opera et exercitia ostendendo, vel affectum tuum ad ascendendum inflammando, timorem incutiendo, vel per spem sublevando.

[60] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 44, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 287.
Unde illarum scripturarum lectionibus magis debes incumbere, quae tuum affectum magis inflammant ad spiritualem profectum et ascensum, quam quae in rebus difficilibus et curiosis illuminant intellectum et

According to Zerbolt of Zutphen, the functionality of devout exercises lays in spiritual progress via experience and emotion, and not in intellectual improvement. However, the outcome of emotional and sensational experience is only to be reached if the devotee has the right intentions. He or she ought to be 'struck by fear and depressed with remorse, yet also inflamed with affection and desire for the ascent'.[61] The right intention is a premise for the devout reading to 'work' and be fruitful to the spiritual ascent.

The reading may provide material to meditate, for instance in such a way as described by Zerbolt with regard to the last judgement. Useful material could be, for example, the 'recollection of your sins, of your death, the last judgment, the pains of hell, heavenly glory, the benefits of God, the passion of our Lord, and so on.'[62] The choice of topic should be shaped around the matters of the church calendar and thus be related to the Biblical material that is read.[63] In meditation, the devotee thinks, wonders and reflects upon the material, for example by imaging it in great vivid detail. Again, it is the intention which enables the functioning of the meditation: one should meditate while simultaneously keeping once's soul filled with spiritual and devout affections. Zerbolt of Zutphen emphasises this even more strongly with regard to the final step of the triple exercise, i.e. prayer:

> First, the vigor and virtue of prayer proceeds from the intent of the person praying: God hears the desire of the heart more than the noise of the voice. Therefore, always assume an intention and desire like that of the exercises and meditations with which you are occupied, so that your prayer may proceed from the roots of your heart, and not just from the lips of your mouth, always from a feeling of *fear or sadness or love or wonder or gratitude*.[64]

The emotions invoked and strengthened by the experience-related meditations thus serve as stepping stones for the right intentions necessary for prayer. The fear, sadness, love, wonder or

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acuunt curiositatem, sicut sunt materiae disputabiles. Lectio etiam difficilium scripturarum non reficit animum teneriorem, sed nonnunquam frangit ejus intentionem.

[61] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 44, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 286.

Igitur timore percussus et compunction depressus, affectu quoque et desiderio ascendendi inflammatus.

[62] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 45, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 289.

Sunt enim memoria peccatorum tuorum, memoria mortis, extremi judicii, poenarum infernalium, memoria coelestis gloriae, beneficiorum Dei et passionis Dominicae et si quae hujusmodi.

[63] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap 45.

[64] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap. 46, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 288 (the italic markings of the desired emotions of intention are mine).

De primo igitur scias, quod vigor orationis et virtus surgit ex affectu orantis. Magis enim audit Deus desiderium cordis, quam clamorem oris. Ideo semper affectum aliquem et desiderium tibi assumes et indues secundum modum exercitii vel meditationum quibus pro tempore occuparis, ut semper oratio tua procedat de radice cordis, non tantum ex labiis oris procedat, semper vel ex affectu timoris, moeroris, dilectionis, admirationis, congratulationis.

gratitude stimulated by the meditations prepare the heart. Furthermore, the functionality and quality of the prayer rely on this emotional preparation and inner motivation. In addition, Zerbolt of Zutphen explains the various shapes that prayer can take: it can be long or short, and should generally take the shape of a conversation with God or Christ 'in your very presence'.[65] However, when one's conscience troubles somebody, one may also direct the prayer toward one of the saints or to Mary and plead them to pray for you.[66]

To sum up, Zerbolt of Zutphen argues in his description of how to ascent from the second fall that emotion is of crucial importance. Emotions of fear, hope and love enable the devotee to purify the heart and thus restore its original features. It is, furthermore, through emotions that the heart of the devotee can be shaped toward the right intentions and desires to enable prayer. These desired *affections* can be invoked through *experiencing* devout scenes before the mental eye. As Van Engen and Oberman (1988) describe, the devout heart should be 'purged of carnal affections and evil desires but full of godly affections and goodly desire'.[67] To fully develop such heart and to approach the divine from it was the ultimate aim of the way of life for the Modern Devout.

As Zerbolt's example of the last judgement meditation reveals, the devotee should actually imagine him- or herself to take part and be subject of the scene imagined. He or she should internally depict the sensational and emotional surroundings and thus fully internalise the value, meaning and benefits of the devout content. If feeling like the actual subject is difficult, one should focus on the emotional experiences of characters within the stories. As Zerbolt explains with regard to meditating on Christ's ascension, the devotee should for instance 'think of the apostles' sadness and joy, or of the angels returning to console them'.[68] It is, in conclusion, via experience and emotion and the strong interconnection between both that the devotee can succeed in his aim of ascending.

[65] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 46, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 291.
… ita te habeas in oratione quasi Deo praesenti colloquereris.
[66] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap 46.
[67] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 33-34.
[68] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus,* cap. 40, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 285.
Cogita de tristitia Apostolorum et gaudio. Cogita de angelis redeuntibus et Apostolos consolantibus.

2.2. Experience in Franciscan spirituality

The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers probably originates from a convent of Urban Poor Clare nuns, the Second Order of St Francis, located in Brussels.[69] Although the developments in religious culture - the growing focus on the individual and 'experiential' devotion, a pivotal role for Christ's humanity and the aim of internalisation – cross the lines between various religious orders, each of the large variety of Late Medieval orders would follow its own spiritual ideology and thereby differ in focus. Which texts are considered central in contemplation and devotion differs per order, as does the interpretation of specific spiritual concepts and devout texts. The songs that serve as the corpus for this study have been used in the context of Franciscan spirituality and corresponding ideals, viewpoints, and intertextuality. It is, therefore, relevant to dive deeper into Franciscan spirituality and discuss what place the inner performance and experience of the divine has in that context.

The Franciscan spirituality centres around the writings of St Francis of Assisi (1181/82-1226). Francis of Assisi's turn to faith and his conversion to a life of poverty, prayer and submission has been of great importance in his spirituality: as he describes in his writings, he found great love and compassion to Christ after feeling great mercy and deep compassion for poor lepers and beggars. In the religious rule he develops later, he encourages his brothers to develop the same feelings toward the poor and to follow the humility and poverty of Christ.[70] Francis of Assisi left twenty-eight writings, in addition to various letters and blessings. The best known are his *Earlier Rule*, the *Later Rule*, the *Testament* and his *Canticle of Brother Sun.* In each of his writings, Francis focusses on the 'incarnation' of the gospel of Christ. This incarnation asks for the devotee to empty the own being of 'self-will', for it to be fully filled by the inspirational spirit of Christ and his holy manner of working.[71] This can only be reached through humility and poorness. As Francis explains in his *Testament,* the contemplation on the poor baby Jesus, the poor living Christ and the poor Christ at the cross should be central in a devout life, because poverty is the key to union with Christ.[72]

In other words, Franciscan spirituality is not just *knowing* Christ on the cross, but taking part in and experiencing the humility, vulnerability and poverty of the suffering Christ in

[69] See Van Seggelen 1966: 10-25 (explained in footnote 44 at the beginning of this chapter).
[70] Wayne Hellman 1988: 33.
[71] Wayne Hellman 1988: 34.
[72] Wayne Hellman 1988: 37.

contemplation. John Moorman, who wrote an extensive history of the Franciscan order (1968), explains that the goal of Franciscan devotion was not merely to imitate Christ in deeds or practice, but to be close to him internally, i.e. to share in his joys and his sorrows as much as a man's soul would enable him.[73] Through identification with the gospel narratives and, by doing so, to fully know and appreciate the humanity of Christ, the soul can develop a deeper apprehension of God.[74] Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274), one of the most influential writers of the Franciscan tradition, wrote in his *Letter to a Poor Clare* the following with regard to identifying with and experiencing the passion as close to Christ as possible:

> Draw near, dear handmaiden, with loving feet to Jesus wounded, to Jesus crowned with thorns, to Jesus fastened to the gibbet of the cross; and be not content, as the blessed apostle Thomas was, merely to see in his hands the print of the nails or to thrust your hand into his side; but rather go right in, through the opening in his side, to the very heart of Jesus where, transformed by most burning love for Christ, held by the nails of divine love, pierced by the lance of profound charity, and wounded by the sword of deep compassion, you will know no other wish or desire or hope of consolation except to die with Christ upon the cross, so that you can say with S. Paul: 'I am crucified with Christ… I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'.[75]

One should not only *see* or *touch* Christ, but fully experience his pains and emotions by 'going in', i.e. by 'becoming' him through identification. In *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (1996), Sarah Beckwith discusses the metaphor of Christ's body, an structuralising concept in various Late Medieval devotional writings, and how this symbol shaped and was shaped by the 'social vision' of the religious culture in the Late Middle Ages. According to Beckwith, this symbol is crucial in Franciscanism. She argues that Christ's body was a strong symbol which could evoke a 'startling interpenetration': the devotee is enabled to identify with Christ through the medium of his body and be transformed by that.[76] On the basis of an analysis of the Middle English text *The Prickynge of Love*, once attributed to St Bonaventura, Beckwith reveals how the body of Christ is presented as a welcoming, open,

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[73] Moorman 1968: 256.

[74] Moorman 1968: 260.

[75] *Letter to a Poor Clare*, transl. Moorman 1968: 260-261.

> *Accede ergo tu, o famula, pedibus affectionum tuarum ad Iesum vulneratum, ad Iesum spinis coronatum, ad Iesum patibulo curcis affixum, et cum beato Thoma Apostolo non solum intuere in* manibus eius fixuram clavorum, *non solum mitte* digitum tuum in locum clavorum, *non solum mitte* manum tuam in latus eius, *sed totaliter per ostium lateris ingredere usque ad cor ipsius Iesu, ibique ardentissimo Crucifixi amore in Christum transformata, clavis divini timoris confixa, lancea praecordialis dilectionis transfixa, gladio intimae compassionis transverberata, nihil aliud quaeras, nihil aliud desideres, in nullo alio velis consolari, quam ut cum Christo tu possis in cruce mori. Et tunc cum Paulo Apostolo exlames et dicas:* Christo confixus sum cruci. Vivo iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus (*Opera Omnia*, edition Cuaracchi: vol. 8, cap. VI, p. 120).

[76] Beckwith 1996: 49-50.

and safe harbouring place for the soul.[77] To describe how Christ's body can function as a 'role', Beckwith consequently uses the metaphor of theatre. In this form of Franciscan spirituality, the human body of Christ functions both as a representative and an experiential medium, and both an image and a physical presence, similar to what an actor presents on stage. The simultaneously symbolic, representing functioning and the experiential, bodily functioning, make Christ's body a meaningful and strong 'costume' in Franciscan 'theatre'.[78]

Related to this physical identification with Christ and the *first-hand experience* it vitalizes, the Franciscan movement laid great emphasis on the efficacy of sensational and emotional experience in meditation.[79] In his *Lignum Vitate,* St Bonaventure confirms the usefulness of experience for affectivity. In the text, Bonaventura prays Christ for the feeling of compassion as once felt by the virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene for the suffering Christ. He wants to be able to actually experience the passion, even though he 'did not merit to be present at these events in body'.[80] As St Bonaventure's aim emphasises, the devotee is expected to recreate the Gospel events in its inner being in contemplation. In this inner performance of the story or image, the devotee may be able to truly experience the events 'first hand'. It is through the emotions felt in this experience that the devotee can fulfil its contemplative journey: to reach the deepest level of likeness to God in poverty, humility and great compassion.[81]

In this contemplative journey, Christ's body can be seen as the medium of transformation, i.e. by identifying with it, the devotee will change in some sense. According to Beckwith, the imitation of the feelings and sensations of Christ's suffering is not merely trying to duplicate what Christ and the people around him once felt, but is in itself newly creative.[82] In impersonating Christ, the devotee actually becomes more and more a depiction of the power of the divine himself.

Within Franciscan communities, a rich textual culture was established in which imitative and meditational schemes for the production of emotional experiences of poverty, remorse and desire were developed.[83] By imitation, it was possible for the devotee to engage in religious events that usually transcended ordinary human experience.[84] As described by Beckwith, the

[77] Beckwith 1996: 52-60.
[78] Beckwith 1996: 57-58.
[79] Despres 1985: 13.
[80] Cousins 1978: 158.
[81] Wayne Hellman 1988: 42, Despres 1985: 14.
[82] Beckwith 1996: 50-57.
[83] Beckwith 1996: 49.
[84] Despres 1985: 13.

textual culture of the Franciscans was inspired by the popular texts of various pseudonymous authors – such as the Pseudo-Bernardine *Liber de passione Christi et doloribus et planctibus matris* and the *Meditatio in passionem et resurrectionem Domini,* the Pseudo-Anselmian *Dialogus beatae Mariae et Anselmi de passione Domine* and the Pseudo-Bedean *De meditatione passione Christis per septem diei horae tibellus* -, that all encouraged the reader – for example through the form of a dialogue – to use the text as a device for dramatic identification and reenactment. The reader is asked to 'contemplate the passion as a first-hand witness'.[85]

Beckwith further explains that, related to its 'dramatic' functioning, many texts treated the passion as a narrative sequence. Often – but not always- narrated from an I-persona, who can be seen to identify the devotee,[86] the texts encourage a response that 'collapses past and present time'. The reader is urged by the text to imagine him- or herself present in the narrative, for example by encouragements to take on the role of one of the characters (even Christ himself) or to internalise the feelings and sensations (such as pain) that are detailly depicted. Strong emotionally coloured images and metaphors are often mentioned in the texts, such as the comparison of Christ's side wound with a mother's breast. As Beckwith summarises, many Franciscan texts are thus not merely descriptive, but require an active engagement by the readers to actually take on the role provided.[87] Many Franciscan texts were translated from Latin into the vernacular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and became highly popular, both within and outside the Franciscan orders. The focus on the *hybrid character* of the passion narrative and the experiencing of or via Christ made the texts highly interesting for a much broader public than solely the Franciscan order.[88]

In conclusion, the Franciscan meditation on Christ's humanity was strongly affective and focussed on the creation on concrete inner visual images through the imagination. By meditating on the events of Christ's life and death as though one were actually present, a deeply felt love for Christ increased by the feeling of the close presence of God.[89] The popularity of this form of meditation and textual meditations of this type spread across various religious orders. The earlier mentioned Pseudo-Anselmian meditation as well as various works by the very influential St Bonaventure, for instance, were not only highly popular within Franciscan

[85] Beckwith 1996: 50-51.
[86] Beckwith 1996: 55.
[87] Beckwith 1996: 143.
[88] Beckwith 1996: 51-52.
[89] Bestul 2012: 162.

contexts, but were also some of the works most read by the Modern Devout.[90] The spread of devout texts across various religious orders and in both clerical as well as lay contexts is also reflected in the corpus of this thesis. Not only are four Christmas songs also found in other 15th-early 16th-century song collections, but the thematic character of the songs in general is also comparable to Modern Devout song collections. The manuscript is therefore even often considered a Modern Devout song collection in the research tradition.[91]

2.3. Textual instruments to experience divinity

As mentioned in the short introduction to this chapter, the developments in Late Medieval religiosity lead to an outburst of manifestations of devotion in text, image and performance (i.e. practice).[92] Concerning the textual expression of devotion – to which the scope of this thesis is limited - Richard Kieckhefer, professor in religious studies, has distinguished four fairly broad categories of texts. Firstly, he mentions meditational works, among which prayers, reflections on the life of Christ, personal accounts of spiritual grow et cetera can be counted. Second are the texts mainly meant for public performance, such as religious drama. Furthermore, he defines a category of sermons, delivered both to lay as well as to clerical members of society. The fourth and last category he discerns consists of 'compilations', for example of sermon exempla or anecdotes.[93]

It is mainly the first category in which the entity of texts can be found that Sarah McNamer refers to as affective meditations: 'richly emotional, script-like texts that ask their readers to imagine themselves present at scenes of Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart.'[94] These texts should not be considered mere representations of a (non-textual) devout development and practice, but rather as active *instruments* in stimulating the experience-orientated devotion. McNamer explains that the first texts to be counted part of this 'genre' emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and continued to develop in richness and variety during the following centuries: prose meditations on the life of Christ, lyrics, poems, Marian laments and various other sorts of texts developed and became widely popular. What they had in common was their very practical aim: to teach their readers, through iterative affective performance, how to *feel* with regard to Christ's life

[90] Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 25.
[91] De Morrée 2017: 27.
[92] Kieckhefer 1988: 75-77.
[93] Kieckhefer 1988: 77-79.
[94] McNamer 2010: 1.

and passion.[95] The popularity of these texts is closely connected to the above mentioned increasing focus on the humanity of Christ. Rather than depicting him as a triumphant saviour – still victorious at the cross -, he became a vulnerable, poor human being, covered with blood and arousing a deeply felt compassion in whoever saw him.[96]

Typical to the affective meditations is, according to McNamer, a regular use of the 'impassioned I'. Although she does not explicitly define this pivotal concept, the meaning of the 'impassioned I' unfolds from her analyses of various texts, amongst which Augustine's *Confessions* and John of Fécamp's *Libellus de scripturis et verbis patrum collectus, ad eorum praesertim utilitatem qui contemplativae sunt amatores.*[97] On the basis of her analyses, the 'impassioned I' can be interpreted as an important part of both the rhetorical style and the devotional strategy. It is a 'role', which can make the text into an affectively effective script.[98] The impassioned I can be distinguished from the autobiographical I: whereas the latter refers to the self-expressing author him- or herself, the first is primarily a 'performance position', an emotional and sensational role scripted for the readers of the text.[99] As McNamer shows on the basis of Anselm's *Prayers and Meditations*, the impassioned 'I' is an affective method to increase feelings of passion and 'closeness' in the reader: it functions as a position to be entered into and through which to feel the expressed emotions and sensations. While praying or meditating with these texts, the reader *performs* the role of the 'I', rather than reading about the author's experiences.[100]

According to McNamer, this origins of the impassioned 'I' lie in Augustine's *Confessions*, in which an 'I' referring to Augustine telling his life story can be distinguished from the 'I' used as 'a vehicle for prayer'.[101] McNamer mentions that the most familiar representative of such an 'I' in medieval prayer is the psalmic 'I'.[102] Explained by Annie Sutherland in her contribution to *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture* (2010), the psalms are 'deeply felt and wide-ranging first person utterances'[103] that will stimulate the reader to *adopt* the narrative voice of the 'I', the Psalmist, as its own.[104] She argues that it is especially this performative character of the psalms that is emphasised by various Late Medieval readings,

[95] McNamer 2010: 2.
[96] McNamer 2010: 2.
[97] An introduction on this fairly unknown tekst (which has never been critically edited or translated) can be found in McNamer 2010: 62-67.
[98] McNamer 2010: 67-68.
[99] McNamer 2010: 66-68.
[100] McNamer 2010: 70.
[101] McNamer 2010: 68.
[102] McNamer 2010: 68.
[103] Sutherland 2010: 17.
[104] Sutherland 2010: 18.

editions and adaptations of the psalms: they demand an engaged and actively penitent reader that takes on the role of the psalmist and 're-enact' the spiritual development, desires and penitence of the 'I'.[105]

The concept of the impassioned 'I' might be associated with the 'exemplaric I'. In *'Mi smelten mine sinne in minnen oerewoede': Reflecties over genre en subjectiviteit in de liederen van Hadewijch*' (2013), Veerle Fraeters discusses the narratological structure of Hadewijch's songs. The lyrical 'I' in the songs plays two distinguishable roles: a magistral, didactic role, primarily referring to the spiritual leader Hadewijch herself, and a exemplaric role, presenting an archetype of the expressing 'loving soul'. The second functions as a model for identification, open for the author (Hadewijch), the performers (Hadewijch or other members of her spiritual group) and those listening to or reading the songs. The 'I' is supra-personal, collective and a-historical and provides an allegorical character for each person to identify with.[106] However, Fraeters' narratological analysis reveals that both the magistral and the exemplary position are available to different subject positions and narrative view points, and not exclusively linked to the 'I'. The internal narrator ('linker either implicitly or explicitly with the name of the creator') as well as external narrator ('the voice of any persona purportedly distinct from that associated with the poet') may take on these two roles.[107]

Fraeters' analysis of Hadewijch's work is based upon the knowledge that Hadewijch's songs are rooted in the tradition of courtly literature. The communicative circumstances in which courtly lyrics were presented – and to which the presentation of Hadewijch's song was probably comparable – differ, most likely, from the circumstances in which the collective performance of the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbeth Ghoeyvaers* may be placed. The exemplary position is, to my interpretation, a more general model of identification, which provides an archetype or example for the author, singer or listener to recognise oneself in and to strive towards. The concept of the impassioned 'I' is developed specifically for meditative texts and is connected to the script-like character of these texts. Rather than being based on identification, the impassioned 'I' functions as an actual role for the devotee to take on, a 'skin' to be dressed in. In this role, the 'impassionedness', i.e. the 'I' being filled with and expressing strong emotions and desires, may actually be transferred to the devotee. Because the meditational and script-like functioning of devout songs is in the centre of attention of this thesis, I will mainly use the concept of the impassioned 'I'.

[105] Sutherland 2010: 25-26.
[106] Fraeters 2013: 431-432, 445-446.
[107] Fraeters 2013: 427 and 432-433.

However, as has been demonstrated by Lisanne Vroomen in her recent study to the functioning and themes of devout songs, sermons and biographies (2017), some devout songs may, in spite of their meditational character, present a magistral 'I': a leading 'I' that gives advices to the public of singers.[108] Besides a short discussion of the autobiographical 'I' when considering Augustine's *Confessions*,[109] Sarah McNamer does not refer to any other 'I''s that may play a role in affective meditations besides the impassioned 'I'. One might wonder, however, if the impassioned 'I' is indeed the only relevant 'I' in meditative texts. Therefore, I will take into account the concept of the magistral 'I' in my analysis, to refer to possible 'I''s that are not impassioned and script-like, but that present a reflective, leading position.

In addition to the use of the impassioned 'I', the script-like affective meditations described by McNamer are often present-tense utterances. McNamer does not explicitly explain why the use of the present tense is preferred. However, a clear statement on the performative character of the present tense can be found in the article 'The verse inscription from the deposition relief at Santo Domingo de Silos: word, image, and act in medieval art' (2009) by art historian Peter Scott Brown, in which he discusses the writings on Late Medieval crucifixes. Although the medium differs from the affective meditations McNamer studies or the songs central in this thesis, his explanation of the performativity of the present tense is clarifying. He argues that 'the persistent use of the present tense (…) paints a mental picture in the imagination of the listener. With each phrase, another vivid dramatic or scenic detail resolves into view of the mind's eye'.[110]

With regard to the performativity and script-like character of affective meditations, McNamer also argues that the reader might also be addressed as 'you', who is stimulated to affectively respond on the content, for example by the prescription of specific compassionate gestures. In addition, affective meditations may stage vividly imagined scenes in great detail and in that way cast the reader as eyewitness or participant in the scene. Lastly, McNamer mentions the enhancement of the performative character of these texts through the use of 'apostrophes and exclamations, deictic rhetoric ("here", "there"), and the regular use of the dramatic present'.[111]

[108] Vroomen 2017: 88.
[109] McNamer 2010: 67-68.
[110] Brown 2009: 96.
[111] McNamer 2010: 12.

These characteristics enable the texts to work as 'intimate scripts'.[112] The intimateness is related to the expression of strong emotions from deeply within the heart of the reader. It is script-like because it provides the reader with a performative role to take on, whether as the 'I' or as an eyewitness. In other words, they are 'scripts for the performance of feeling'.[113] The performative functioning of these 'scripts' might be elucidated by looking into the concept of 'visionary scripts', developed by Barbara Newman (2005), that I mentioned already in the introduction. Through the vivid inner visualisation of images and scenes depicted in visionary texts, and by imagining oneself present within it, the vivid imagination may shade into visionary experiences. From the perspective of an I-persona and by providing highly detailed and vivid descriptions, the reader is stimulated to take on the scripted role. As mentioned before, Thom Mertens and Dieuwke van der Poel (2017) have studied this script-like, performative character in the Middle Dutch songs in *Die Gheestelike Melody*. Their results reveal that the songs enable to singer to experience the meditational process by taking on the role of the 'I'-persona and by 'feeling along' with the emotional and sensory experiences this 'I' expresses. The 'I' offers a scripted role, enabling the singer to 'imagine and re-experience the entire process, and to use of all the senses in the process'.[114]

As these previous studies show, there are some important aspects that characterise the texts that encourage an experience-orientated, performative and emotional response in its devout users. The presence of an impassioned I will stimulate the user of the text to take on that role and to experience the devout content as a first- hand witness. The invocation of a feeling of 'direct' experience is strengthened by the depiction of the role in a vivid, highly emotional and sensational manner, presenting the user of the text with emotional and sensational 'images' to internalise and make his or her own. The content of these meditational, affective 'scripts' may differ, although a focus on the passion and human suffering of Christ is favoured in the affective meditations McNamer describes. Through the depiction of a devout (Biblical) scene before the mental eye and by imagining oneself to be actually playing a part in the scene, the devotee may perform a first-hand encounter with the feelings and experiences described. Consequently, the desired *affections* can be aroused in the devotee, along which an 'elevation' of the mind to God might take place.[115]

[112] McNamer 2010: 66.
[113] McNamer 2010: 12.
[114] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 13.
[115] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 13.

These characteristics serve as important ‘signposts’ in studying the roles of inner performance and experience in the intended functioning of devout songs. That they are capable concepts for this cause has been proved by previous research. However, some questions still remain unanswered. What is, for example, the experience-related and performative quality of the plural first person? Is an impassioned ‘we’ possible, and if so: how would it function? And, furthermore, if the user of the text can indeed take on him- or herself the scripted role, how exactly does this enable the transfer of emotions and sensations from the textual ‘I’ to the actual reader or singer? Researchers have emphasised the importance of the invocation of emotions but the question remains how textual features can enable this invocation and, furthermore, how this is connected to performativity. Lastly, what function has this process of performing a scripted role and emotionally and sensationally experiencing devout content in the broader context of spiritual growth? In order to answer these questions, I will add an anthropological dimension to the methodology of this study, which I will outline in the following chapter.

3. An anthropological approach

In order to thoroughly understand what roles emotion, experience and performativity might have played in the functioning of Late Medieval devout songs, I propose a multidisciplinary approach in this study. Experiencing the presence of holiness via emotional, physical and performative means is – according to various scholars from different disciplines – pivotal in religious practice. In the current chapter, I aim to elaborate on the connection between experience, performativity and religion from an anthropological perspective, in order to develop a methodological instrument for the study of the role of performativity and experience in Late Medieval devout songs.

I deem it essential to wonder why emotions and sensations are considered useful and influential in religious practice and why a participant in that practice should actually 'experience', 'feel' or 'perform' the content, rather than just seeing it or hearing about it. What is it in the process of internalisation that provides meaning to these practices? And, furthermore, how does this process of emotionally and sensationally internalising religious content take place? How is, furthermore, this internalisation related to performance? These crucial questions underlie this entire study and cannot, in my opinion, be sufficiently answered from a merely literary-historical perspective.

In this chapter, I will discuss important anthropological views on experience and performativity in religious practice. In the first two paragraphs of this chapter, I will discuss, respectively, the anthropological views on the emotional experience and the physical experience of the divine in religious practice. In the third paragraph, I will elaborate on the anthropological ideas about the performativity of religious practice. In the last paragraph, I will provide an overview of the characteristics of performative, religious practices that stimulate the invocation of feelings of experience, according to anthropological studies, and present how these characteristics relate to the current study.

3.1. Emotional experience in religious practice

Defining what religion *is* has been a concern for scholars in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology and other disciplines for decades. The extreme diversity amongst all these definitions makes achieving a consensus about its most important characteristics almost

impossible. In other words: each definition of religion is as true for some aspects of religion as another might be for others and the fruitfulness of a definition relies greatly upon the point of view as well as the aims of a specific study. One of the definitions of religion that appears to play an exceptionally influential and fruitful role in various current anthropological, sociological and psychological studies is developed by the German philosopher Rudolph Otto (1869-1937), who I already shortly mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, in his book *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationele in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (1917), or – in the English translation – *The idea of the Holy* (1923). According to Otto, it is the emotional experience of the presence of holiness and the amazement about that which is the heart of religion. This religious experience is created and shaped by emotion, in particular by powerful emotions such as the awe and dread related to believing and feeling the presence of holiness.[116]

The emotions that create and shape the sensation of 'experience' can be invoked in various kinds of religious practice. Cultural anthropologist Birgit Meyer, professor Religious Studies at Utrecht University, uses the term 'sensational forms' to describe all different kinds of religious practice that share an emotional function. Sensational forms can be understood as 'relatively fixed, authorised modes of invoking, and organising access to the transcendental'.[117] In other words: they are emotional practices through which participants can experience the presence and power of the transcendental. The sensational forms *organise* the possible religious emotions, experiences and feelings.[118] The notion of sensational form can be applied to collective rituals but also to reading a holy book, praying in front of an image, or dancing around the manifestation of a spirit.[119] These sensational forms invoke emotions and feelings in the religious practitioners that create the sensation of a transcendental entity with which the practitioner can connect.

The invocation of emotional feelings of experience in these sensational forms is stimulated in various ways. Its working can be understood by considering these sensational forms to function as *emotives*: emotional expressions that are not only descriptive but also performative speech acts. The concept has been introduced by anthropologist William Reddy, who defines an emotive as 'a type of speech act different from both performative and constative utterances - that both describes and changes the world - because emotional expression has an

[116] Crapo 2003: 15.
[117] Meyer 2006: 9-10.
[118] Meyer 2006: 11.
[119] Meyer 2006: 11.

exploratory and self-altering effect on the activated thought material of emotions'.[120] In other words, the expression of emotion simultaneously *communicates* as well as *forms* these emotions.

Although Reddy's concept of emotives is developed quite recently, the performative qualities of emotional speech have long been recognised. Anthropologists Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz explained in 1990 that emotional discourse is a form of social action that creates effects in the world: emotions. Emotions can be said 'to be *created in* speech'.[121] Reddy would, approximately one decade later, call the speech-acts that do indeed have this creating 'power' emotives. Although Reddy's definition of 'emotives' mainly emphasizes verbal expressions, scholars have argued that physical movements (gestures, facial expressions, poses) and automatic physical reactions (fast breathing, sweating) can also be considered 'emotives': the display of these physicalities has a performative influence on both the agent himself as well as on a possible public.[122] They share the creative power of emotional discourse, as mentioned by Abu-Lughod and Lutz. Similar to the meaning of verbal expressions, the interrelationship between emotions and physicalities will, however, only be recognised and thus functional in specific contexts, because it is culturally determined (see furthermore chapter 3.2).

In this study, I will use the concept of emotives to understand the influence and 'working' of references to emotion or to the expression of emotion (via, for example, gestures or facial expressions) in the text. The last is, however, also consequently a textual expression, because the corpus of this study consists of song texts. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that textual depictions of a gesture or expression and the thereupon following internalisation or inner depiction of this act, trigger the invocation of emotions and sensations like the actual act might do. The roots of this 'transmission' of the imagined emotions and sensations of a character or an impassioned 'I' to the actually felt state, lie in the functioning of *mirror neurones*. This process of sharing or mirroring emotions of another person is based on neurological studies, amongst others by neurologists G. Rizzolatti and C. Sinigaglia. As they explain, the mirror mechanism 'is a basic brain mechanism that transforms sensory representations of others' behaviour into one's own motor or visceromotor[123] representations concerning that behaviour. According to its location in the brain, it may fulfil a range of cognitive functions, including action and emotion understanding.'[124]

[120] Reddy 2001: 128.
[121] Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990: 12.
[122] See Hoegaerts and Van Osselaer 2013: 454-455.
[123] The visceromotor system is concerned with the movements of the viscera, i.e. of the internal organs.
[124] Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2016: 757.

A clear example is given in a study of neuro-scientist Christian Keysers e.a. (2004): when people witness someone's else leg being touched by a washcloth, they do not just *see* it but also *understand* it through an automatic link with their own experiences of touch. As Keysers states it, 'the brain implicitly transforms the sight of touch into the inner representation of touch'.[125] This neurological mirror function does, however, not only result in this 'tactile empathy', but also in a mirroring and internal 'understanding' of emotions and emotional expressions. As Keysers' study proves, when people see the facial expressions of someone being disgusted of something, the same areas in their brain are stimulated to when they actually feel that disgust themselves.[126]

This neurological concept has already been used in the study of medieval literature by literary-historian Frank Brandsma. According to Brandsma, the success of Arthurian romances in the vernacular, from the 12th century onwards, may very well depend upon their use of references to emotions.[127] Because of the mirroring processes in the brain, a reader's instinctive impulse when encountering references to the emotions of a specific character is to share in the described emotions.[128] With regard to this use of the concept, it is important that neuro-scientists have confirmed that the 'sensory representations' upon which the mirror neuro-system reacts may also be *imaginary*: imagining others to be doing something 'triggers the same neural structures that are responsible for our own actions and emotions'.[129] Forming an inner picture of a literary character crying may thus arouse feelings of sadness in oneself. Brandsma argues that the 'mirrored' emotions are usually those of a less important character –a 'mirror character - , although it is also possible that the emotions of the main character are shared by the public.[130]

The process of mirroring emotions may serve as an explanation for the functioning of emotives or emotional discourse, including emotion words or emotional expressions that are mentioned in the text of the songs. When singing the song, the singer is 'witnessing' the emotions and sensations expressed, which will automatically invoke emotional responses.[131]

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[125] Keysers e.a. 2004: 343.
[126] Keysers e.a. 2004: 342.
[127] Brandsma 2016: 320.
[128] Brandsma 2016: 321.
[129] Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008: 190.
[130] Brandsma 2016: 322.
[131] According to the concept of the mirror neuron system, the emotional responses invoked are similar to the emotions witnessed. This is, however, debated in recent discussion within the neurological field. Some recent studies argue that the invocation of emotional responses has more to do with *empathy* than with mirroring. A thorough discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this thesis, as well as surpassing my personal expertise. A short summery of the current scientific discussions surrounding mirror neurons and empathy is given by Professor Francesca Happé in the podcast 'A neuroscientist explains: the need for 'empathetic citizens'', presented by columnist and neuroscientist dr. Daniel Glaser and published by *The Guardian* on 5 February 2017:

To sum up, the functioning of sensational forms – transmitted via verbal but also visual or, for example, tangible means – can be considered to rely upon emotives: the emotional expressions they display (for example in images or descriptions of emotional facial expressions or gestures, or in emotion words) have an active effect on the participants in the religious practice through the neurological process of mirroring. What exact emotional responses this effect includes and through what means they are invoked, differs from ritual to ritual, culture to culture and time to time. Moreover, what emotions are desired and stimulated through religious practice is related to the value and meaning of the emotions in the broader context of the participant's lives and social experiences outside the religious setting.[132]

The values and meanings that are given to specific emotions and emotional expressions vary per community. Barbara Rosenwein, arguably the most important advocate for the history of emotions within Medieval Studies, explains that 'no one is born knowing appropriate modes of expression, or whether to imagine emotions as internal or external, or whether to privilege or disregard an emotion'.[133] Being able to be moved mentally by external factors might be considered a universal quality that all humans share. However, in which forms these movement are felt and *ought* to be felt, expressed and shared is determined by cultural 'scripts' that are formed in the social context and shared within a specific group of people, i.e. what Rosenwein has defined an 'emotional community'. These are 'largely the same as social communities', although defined by 'the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognise; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore'.[134]

The influence of these cultural differences on the invocation of emotional experiences through sensational forms can be illustrated by the example of laughter. Despite the appreciation and stimulation of the emotion of joy as a response to Christ's love for the devotee and his greatness in Late Medieval devotion, the physical expression in laughter was approached with caution and even suspicion, as various contemporary sources confirm. Although laughter could be initiated by the grace of God, it had a great risk of becoming uncontrolled and, therefore, a channel for the devil. In general, the essence of the fine line between laughter by divine or by demonic initiation laid in self-control. Being able to control

https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2017/feb/05/a-neuroscientist-explains-the-need-for-empathetic-citizens-podcast?CMP=share_btn_link.
[132] Crapo 2003: 120.
[133] Rosenwein 2006: 15.
[134] Rosenwein 2010: 11.

one's laughter was pivotal: laughing might be expressed by a subtle smile, but laughing aloud was considered inappropriate.[135] Sensational forms such as devout meditations or sermons, therefore, did not simulate or expect a response in great laughter and uncontrolled joy, but rather in quietly smiling appreciation. However, this preference of solemnity and reverence, that is common in various other religious practices within the Judeo-Christian tradition, is not necessarily reflected elsewhere. In Hopi rituals, the gods are represented by clowns – played by members of the community – during sacred ceremonies. The clowns are supposed to draw laughter from the audience, which is considered necessary for the functioning of the ritual; without loud laughter, the gods will not answer positively on the requests for rain and good growth of the crops. The ritual is thus shaped to invoke this reaction: the clowns dress up and act funny.[136]

The reaction of laughter by the public in this Hopi ritual can be explained by the amusing acts of the clowns. The amusement is rooted in the fact that they act very differently from what the public might usually expect from their group members.[137] In *The Passions* (1993), the influential professor of philosophy Robert Solomon argues that it is through the gap between expectation and reality that emotions are created. He calls this gap the 'Absurd' and he considers it the main stimulus for 'passions' (amongst which he counts emotions, moods and desires).[138] As Solomon emphasises, it is important to realise the great relevance of these absurdities in religious thinking. The encounter with absurdities may strengthen devotion and, simultaneously, the devotional interpretation may strengthen the emotional meaning of the absurdities.[139]

The emotional functioning of these 'gaps' might explain why paradoxes and unexpected movements within various religious traditions can have such a strong effect in religiosity and 'devout meaning': the 'absurdity' of the paradox invokes strong emotional responses, by which it gains meaning. Simultaneously, however, this effect emphasises the wonder of the supernatural.[140] Furthermore, the concept of 'absurdity' may serve as an explanation for spiritual 'mysteries', such as the unrisen bread of the eucharist actually turning into Christ's body: the strong emotions the absurdities invoke, give meaning to the absurdity itself *and* to

[135] Hanselaer and Deploige 2013: 491-492.
[136] Simmons 1942: 76.
[137] Crapo 2003: 120.
[138] Solomon 1993: 49; 70.
[139] Solomon 1993: 40.
[140] Crapo 2003: 161-163.

the person who is object to it. Solomon argues that every human being prefers meaning above meaninglessness and, hence, absurdity above 'dullness'.[141] The meaning provided in the emotional quality of religious paradoxes or mysteries might fulfil this wish.

3.2. Physical experience in religious practice

As the influential anthropologist Jack Goody explains, 'all experience of the world outside is mediated by the senses (…); the senses are the means of communication, operating at both a physiological and at a cultural level.'[142] It is because of the crucial role the senses have in experiencing the world that they are often used in religious practices to stimulate the experience of the *divine* world in a similar manner. In addition, sensory, physical experiences are often strongly related to emotional experiences. The bodily involvement in a religious practice - literally or by *imagining* to be bodily involved – can lead to an increase in the intensity of the emotional experience of the practice as well.[143] In the classical – but initially revolutionary - article 'What Is an Emotion' (1884), psychologist William James argues that '… our feeling of the [bodily] changes as they occur *is* the emotion'.[144] Although his universalist approach to emotions is outdated,[145] the strong connection between physical and emotional experiences is broadly recognised.

The close connection between physical and emotional experiences is not only playing an important role when religious practices require evident and active bodily involvement but is also a significant notion to understand the *symbols* that are used in religious practice. The most important scholar on the topic of religious symbols and their meanings is the Scottish anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983). His complex writings are summarised and discussed by John Bowen in *Religions in Practice: An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion* (2014). As Bowen explains, Turner derives the meaning of a symbol from an analysis of three aspects:

[141] Solomon 1993: 50.
[142] Goody 2002: 17.
[143] Furseth and Repstad 2006: 128.
[144] James 1884: 189-190.
[145] James' view on emotion is still strongly rooted in the psychological, biological and phylogenetic (focussing upon evolutionary development) tradition that view, in the footsteps of Darwin (1872), emotions as common, highly physically, primitive states in animals and men. These scholars share the conception of emotion as a non-cognitive phenomenon that is not dependent upon complex and historically conditioned factors such as culture or language, but argue for universality, e.g. by distinguishing 'universal emotions' (Harré 1986: 2-3). From the late 1980's and early 1990's onwards, anthropologists such as Rom Harré (1986), Lila Abu-Lughod (1986), Catherine Lutz (1988) and Benedicte Grima (1992) have developed a 'social constructionist' approach to emotion, around the notion that emotions are culturally determined constructs, related to various social standards, expectations, morals et cetera. Although they do recognise the strong connection between physicality and emotion, they argue that this connection is not universal but regulated by culture, language and tradition.

the connection between a symbol in religious practice and how the symbol is understood by the members involved, the symbol's place in the practice and, lastly, its place in the broader system of symbols used within that specific religious context. This analysis results in a positioning of this meaning between two poles: a cluster of meanings that relate to general human emotions and desires (especially those that relate to physical sensations), and a cluster of meanings that relate to social norms and values.[146]

Turner argues that the first pole is predominant in the meaning of – what he calls - *sensory symbols* and the second pole is predominant in *ideological symbols*.[147] These symbols serve as abstract representations of larger fields of meaning and are generally understood in that way by every member of the group, i.e. the group Rosenwein calls the emotional community. Both sensory and ideological symbols foster feelings of commitment to other members by drawing upon well known, shared values, imaging and expectations. However, the way in which they do so differs. Turner considers ideological symbols to be conventional signs that are usually based upon well-known images, such as Judaism's menorah (seven-branched candelabra) or the Christian cross. Their meaning strongly depends on social 'agreements' of meaning. Sensory symbols, on the other hand, can be described as signs referring to physiological facts and processes, by which they produce strong feelings in the participants in the religious practice. Examples are references to mother's milk, blood, birth, sexuality, physical pain and death.[148] Their predominant meaning is related to the strong emotions they invoke in the participants of the practice through physical and bodily 'images'.

I aim to understand the role of sensations in the possibly experience-orientated and performative intended functioning of the songs. The concept of sensory symbols provides a tool for analysing references to physicalities mentioned in the songs, such as blood or wounds related to Christ's suffering, or breast milk related to Christ's birth. These references may not be solely descriptive, but function as sensory symbols that invoke emotional responses in the singers. Furthermore, references to sensations might be internalised by the devotee when the song stimulates him- or herself to imagine actually experiencing these sensations. Because of the described strong connection between (imagined) bodily involvement and emotions, this may add to the possibilities of a song to arouse strong emotional responses.

[146] Bowen 2014: 29.
[147] Turner 1967.
[148] Crapo 2003: 122.

The interrelations between the senses, sensations and emotions within religious practice have predominantly been studied with regard to sight and the visual. Moving away from a mere art-historical perception of what and how religious subjects are visualised – the study of images - toward a focus on the act of *engaging* with what is visual, has led to a focus upon seeing as an 'embodied practice of engaging [with] what it refers to as 'the sacred''.[149] David Morgan, professor of Religious Studies and Visual Studies at Duke University (Durham, North Carolina) characterises religious images as 'mediators' between the viewer and the divine unseen.[150] In his books *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (2005) and *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling* (2012), Morgan discusses the meaning of images and seeing in religious contexts, interpreting the process of seeing as a historically, culturally and socially determined operation that is strongly connected to emotion.

When speaking about seeing religious images, Morgan discusses both the acts of looking at actual images as well as evoking imagery within the *imagination* as religious and ritual practices.[151] The imagined imagery can be stimulated, for example, via descriptions in texts, such as stories. Both external as well as internal imagery is and has been used by religious peoples around the world to 'communicate with the unseen, mysterious, and potentially uncontrollable forces that are understood to govern life'.[152] Morgan quotes art historian Hans Belting (2005) to elucidate his statement: 'internal and external representations, or mental and physical images, may be considered two sides of the same coin'.[153] The feelings of visual experience invoked by internal or external devout imagery can serve as instruments to come closer to the divine

However, as Morgan explains, the devout internalisation of images depends upon the 'gaze' with which the visual media (whereas in actual images or described) are approached. He argues that 'objects operate in tandem with gazes as visual media for the sacred to take place'.[154] The *devotional gaze* can 'evacuate personal consciousness by inducing absorption in the object of contemplation'.[155] Morgan provides the example of a devout object being exhibited on a museum wall: it will be admired for its artistic properties, rather than for its devout or magical powers. When the same object is used and witnessed in a religious practice, it is 'animated' by

[149] Morgan 2012: xiii.
[150] Morgan 2005: 48.
[151] Morgan 2005: 51.
[152] Morgan 2005: 59.
[153] Belting 2005: 304.
[154] Morgan 2012: 80.
[155] Morgan 2012: 81.

the gaze from which it is seen.[156] In is in the collaboration of medium and gaze that media gain their 'enchanted' character and that by mediation - the working of media in religious practices – the boarders between the self and the medium seem to disappear. Using the metaphor of consumption, Morgan explains that 'mediation as consumption means that what one consumes becomes part of oneself'.[157] Although Morgan does not speak about religious experiences, this process seems comparable to the definition of religious experience: the self becomes boundless and the external and internal realities appear to interfere. This experience can be stimulated through sensational media, such as images (real or imagined), provided that these media are approached with the desired devotional 'gaze'.

3.3. Performativity in religious practice

As discussed in paragraph 3.1, religious practices can evoke emotions during performances. Through the emotional expressions they display, they function as performative utterances that shape emotions in its participants. However, 'performativity' has a double meaning. In addition to referring to the performative utterances such as emotives, performativity can be related to characteristics of drama and performance. In this paragraph, I will focus mainly on the latter: the dramatic character of religious practices, that fosters feeling of experience. Religious practices, and rituals in particular, often generate a feeling of experience – both on an emotional as well as on a physical level – through some form of dramatic acting and dramatic embodiment.[158]

Drama can be understood as a 'human process whereby we think and act in an 'as if' fiction while, simultaneously, we are engaged in the living process.'[159] According to scholar in drama studies, psychology and anthropology Richard Courtney, 'spontaneous drama' (that can be found in playing social roles, creative drama or drama therapy) can be distinguished from 'formal drama'. Formal drama is used in religious practices: they provide means for a codified, symbolic drama which can activate feelings in a powerful way.[160] Both forms of drama have in common that they enable transformation: the engagement in mental dramatization or external

[156] Morgan 2012: 80-81.
[157] Morgan 2012: 165-166.
[158] Courtney 1995: 38.
[159] Coutney 1995: 3.
[160] Courtney 1995: 4, 12.

dramatic acts transforms things, ideas, other people, the participant's themselves and the world around them.[161]

The repetitive 're-play' of Christ's last supper, that takes place in every service in which the Holy Communion is shared, is evidently such formal drama. The priest speaks Christ's words and reflects his gestures is breaking and sharing the bread, which is thereafter shared among the participants in the ritual, who are like the apostles. The ritual does not only enable a transformation in identify during the ritual, but also deems to have an influence afterwards: to provide some form of longer lasting spiritual nourishment. In addition, the visionary scripts - the previously discussed concept developed by Barbara Newman – might present such a form of formal drama: the text provides a codified drama, with a role for the devotee to take on, in order to stimulate feelings of experience and thus change the visionary potential of the devotee.[162] Formal dramas in religious practice may be presented as well as function in various different media and manners.

In order to understand the effects of the inner performance of devout content in meditation, I propose to look at the anthropological ideas of the role performance plays in religious practice and how it effects the participants. This topic has been discussed from both the perspective of theatrical studies as well as anthropological studies, and both disciplines have been brought together by representatives of each sides: the anthropologists Richard Schechner and Victor Turner have developed the idea of 'performing anthropology' and theatre scholars Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba explored 'theatre anthropology'.[163] I will focus mainly on the anthropological perspective.

According to Richard Schechner (1985), six points of contact and similarity can be recognised in artistic performance and religious or ritualised performance. Firstly, both in artistic and religious performance, the performers – and sometimes spectators too – are changed either permanently or temporarily by the activity of performing itself.[164] In the double role the performer plays during the performance or religious practice – being simultaneously the other, the character, and nevertheless always also him- or herself – the performer undergoes changes in consciousness.[165] Secondly, in all kinds of performances 'a certain definite threshold is crossed': an 'intensity' is brought to life which affects people – both those performing and those

[161] Courtney 1995: 11.
[162] Newman 2005.
[163] Schechner 1985: 4.
[164] Schechner 1985: 4.
[165] Schechner 1985: 4-10.

spectating – and brings forward some sort of 'collective energy'. A performance is therefore something distinguishably different: it is a moment of intensity in time and space, which is experienced by people as such. This intensity draws participants in the performance and colours their experiences and actions.[166] The third point of similarity is related to the audience-performer interactions: all performances and many religious practices demand a participating group to function.[167] Next, attention should be paid to the 'whole performance sequence': performances – both in and outside religious practice – do not stand on their own, but are preceded and followed by, for instance, training, prologue and epilogue.[168] Fifth, both performances and religious practices transmit, in some sense, 'performance knowledge': they use, share and transmit a pre-existing 'script', a 'blueprint for the enactment' through performance.[169] The last point of contact is concerned with evaluation: performances may 'work' or may not and may thus be 'good' or 'bad', which can and will be evaluated, either explicitly or implicitly.[170]

These characteristics of enabling change, bringing forth 'intensity', inviting the audience to participate, being part of some sort of sequence, transmitting 'scripts' and enabling evaluation are recognised in both secular and religious performances. These distinguish performances from any other habits and routines. Artistic as well as religious practice also both have great symbolic power, with which it can generate strong feelings that surpass the *literal* information they transmit.[171] This evocation of feeling can transform the participant and, in the case of religious practices, the participant's ability to connect with the divine. It is on the basis of this transformative characteristic that Victor Turner inclines religious performances 'liminal-like'.[172] Liminality is the term developed by the French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) to describe the second stage in 'rites of passage'. These 'rites of passage' are transition rituals that are structured temporally as three distinct stages: the first stage separates the person in some way from the ordinary social environment (e.g. by purification rites or actual social separation), the following stage is one of marginality; the 'liminal' (derived from the Latin *limen*, which means 'threshold' or 'border') stage during which the person is outside of his or her normal environments and is transformed in bodily or spiritual status or consciousness, and, lastly, the individual will be reincorporated into society, possessing a new status, during the last

[166] Schechner 1985: 10-14.
[167] Schechner 1985: 14-16.
[168] Schechner 1985: 16-21.
[169] Schechner 1985: 21-25.
[170] Schechner 1985: 25-26.
[171] Courtney 1995: 37-38.
[172] Courtney 1995: 41.

stage. The liminal period plays a pivotal role: the individual and subject of the ritual can, in this state of separation, undergo processes of change that are not limited by the usual restrictions society and nature impose.[173]

Performances share various characteristics with this phase of liminality. Although they do differ in various ways, such as that performances do not – opposed to liminal phenomena in rites of passage – necessarily always take place collectively and that performances are more 'idiosyncratic' and 'quirky' than ritualized liminal phenomena,[174] they do, nevertheless, share the defining characteristic of enabling the subject to *change*. As is the case in rites of passage, the subject gains a higher status level or an altered state of consciousness or social being by passing the liminal or liminal-like state.[175] In the liminal-like performance, the participant in religious practice can for a moment take on a role that differs from himself, while simultaneously still being him- or herself. In this ambiguous shape, changes can be made that surpass the restrictions of literality and 'normal' life.

To sum up, the use of performances in religious practices can influence the participants in the practice substantially. Artistic and religious performances share important characteristics that distinguish both from any other habit or routine and that enable the performance to generate meaning that surpasses the literal information transmitted. In the analysis of the songs, which will follow in chapter 5, I will use the idea of the liminal-like religious performativity to understand what influence singing performative songs may have on the conscience or 'being' of the singers, and how this relates to the devout aim for spiritual growth.

3.4. Characteristics of experience- and performance-enabling practices

In the previous paragraphs, various aspects of religious practice are explained that shape the potential for religious practice to stimulate a performative and experience-orientated use. Emotions as well as physical sensations play a pivotal role in enabling the participant in the practice to vividly experience the meaning of the practice. In specific cases, furthermore, these experiences will take the shape of a performance – again whether actually or in one's imagination – in which the religious practices provide a script for that devout experience.

The invocation of emotions is the core of what Meyer refers to as 'sensational forms': religious practices that invoke emotions in various ways, whether in groups or in individual

[173] Bowen 2014: 49.
[174] Turner 1979: 492-493.
[175] Turner 1979: 467.

practice. These expressions of emotion, both verbal and non-verbal, in these sensational forms can be considered 'emotives': they can actively evoke emotional responses through verbal or sensational means. What emotions that are and how they are exactly stimulated, relies upon culturally determined emotional scripts and thus differs per culture. The functioning of these emotives may depend upon the working of the mirror neuron system: when witnessing the expression of emotion, whether verbal or physical and whether in reality or in the imagination, that emotion is mirrored by the witness. In addition, the use of 'absurdities' might also invoke emotional responses: paradoxes, unexpected aspects or 'mysteries' within religious practice may serve as significant stimuli for meaning through their emotional-invoking character.

Furthermore, religious practices can use forms of bodily involvement or references to strong physical symbols (for example via the sensory symbols as described by Victor Turner) in order to underline the feeling of experiencing the religious content of the practice. As David Morgan highlights, sensational experiences of devout content can also be stimulated by gazing upon an internal image. The development of these images may, for example, sprout from verbally transmitted images, that can be turned into vivid, dynamic and sensational mental images by the imagination. Since physical and emotional experiences are strongly interrelated and have proved to have a vitalising effect on each other, the centralisation of sensational and physical aspects in imagination or through bodily experience is a useful stimulation for experience in religious practice.

Thirdly, these vivid experiences can, in some cases, be characterised as performances. Religious practices might provide a script for a 'formal drama': one or more of the participants in the practice might take on a different role and *perform* the religious content, in real life or in their imagination (or, often, in a combination of both, e.g. in the sacrament of the eucharist). According to Schechner and Victor Turner, one of the main characteristics of both artistic and religious performance is that they can temporarily or definitively change the participants. This change-enabling feature is an essential element in performative religious practices and it defines religious performances as 'liminal-like' according to Turner.

The anthropological views upon experience and performance in religious practice that I have discussed in this chapter provide the means for an in-depth analysis of the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*. They provide a new layer of meaning to the analysis because they give answers on the question to how performative and experience-related aspects actually *work*, i.e. how they influence the singers and improve the possibilities for spiritual growth. The concepts of emotives and the mirror neuron system, for instance, might function as an explanation when the songs would describe emotions or depict emotional responses, such as

crying. However, most of these anthropological concepts have not been used for any literary research before and especially not in relation to the concepts discussed in chapter 2. I have, therefore, developed a structural approach to the songs, in which literary-historical and anthropological elements complement each other. I will explain this method in the following chapter.

4. Corpus and methodology

In the preceding two chapters, I have sketched the multidisciplinary, theoretical background and context of this study. I have discussed what the benefits of previous studies are as well as what questions still remain unanswered. On the basis of this background, I have developed a methodological approach in order to study what performative, experience-related responses devout songs invoke in their users and how these responses are related to an overarching aim for spiritual growth. The aim of this analysis is to 'reconstruct' the imaginary, performative use of the songs and the related invocation of 'experiences' by closely analysing verbal means, with regard to structure, narratological and discourse-related aspects. In the current chapter, I will discuss this methodology. First, however, I shall elaborate on the specific corpus for this study.

4.1. Corpus

As introduced at the beginning of this thesis, the corpus of my study consists of the songs in the manuscript Paris BN Ne39, known as *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*. Before the diplomatic edition of the manuscript by A. J. M. Van Seggelen in 1966, the manuscript was mentioned in C. Lecoutere's 'Middelnederlandsche Geestelijke Liederen: naar een Parijsch Handschrift' (1899), J. A. N. Knuttel's *Het Geestelijk Lied in de Nederlanden vóór de Kerkhervorming* (1906) and J. van Mierlo's *De Letterkunde van de Middeleeuwen II* (1943). In addition, some songs were edited in J. J. Mak's *Middeleeuwse kerstliederen* (1948). However, Van Seggelen's edition presented the only full edition of the manuscript, which he complemented with a detailed codicological, provenance-related and content-related introduction and commentary. In my analysis, I will use Van Seggelen's numbering to refer to specific songs.

Besides playing a minor role in some articles,[176] the manuscript has since then only been studied thoroughly in the very recent study *Voor de tijd van het jaar: Vervaardiging, organisatie en gebruikscontext van Middelnederlandse devote liedverzamelingen (ca. 1470-1588)* (2017) by Cécile de Morrée. De Morrée has carried out a precise codicological study to the manuscript, in order to determine how the manuscript grew during time, which is important in understanding the clustering of the collection. De Morrée reveals that the songs are mainly

[176] The manuscript is mentioned in Verzandvoort 1989, Lievens 1970, Drewes 1969 and Van Buuren 1980. None of these articles provide any insights on the manuscript that cannot be found in Van Seggelen's edition.

written down by two copyists, A and B. Hand A wrote down songs I until XXV, and the main part of song XXVI. Hand B finished song XXVI and wrote down songs XXVII until XLIII. Four loose leaves (with the songs XLV and XLVI) in hand D have been added later to the manuscript, although it is unknown when. Hand C, lastly, wrote down a well-known prayer on the first of the added leaves. Copyists A and B have probably worked simultaneously or very close in time. They also follow the same layout and use structuring rubrication and paragraph signs in a very similar way.[177] On the basis of hand B's continuation of hand A's work, De Morrée states that the sub-collection of A was probably finished when B added her part, aiming to complement the sub-collection of A. Because of the close connection between both, the songs written down by A and B can be considered the initial song collection. Hand C and D added their texts later.[178]

In my study, I will analyse the initial collection of songs, consisting of 42 Middle Dutch and one Latin song.[179] I will not take into account the texts by hands C and D, because I will study the intended functioning and reception of the song collection. When hands A and B compiled the collection, they were naturally not yet aware of the later additions of C and D. Furthermore, as De Morrée proves, there is no thematic difference between the sub-collections of A and B, and, hence, no indication of a content-related division in two parts. Alike De Morrée, I will, therefore, not make a distinction between the sub-collections of hands A and B in my analysis.

De Morrée shows that the song collection is thematically organised around two main themes: Christmas and saints. With regard to the Christmas songs (divided in a cluster by hand A and a cluster by hand B, that are, however, thematically similar), she pays specific attention to two motives that stand out in comparison to the other song collections she studied: the great attention for the annunciation and for the theological meaning of Christ's birth.[180] Secondly, the collection contains an exceptional number of songs dedicated to saints. As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the saints addressed are Saint Francis (in songs XIII until XVII), Saint Clare (in songs XVIII until XX) and Saint Barbara (in songs XXI until XXVII). The saint cluster is written mainly by hand A. De Morrée explains that all of these songs combine praises with biographical, historical elements.[181] Although I will not study the Christmas cluster and

[177] De Morrée 2017: 108-109.
[178] De Morrée 2017: 110-112.
[179] Song V is practically identical to the first stanza and the chorus of song X. I will, therefore, not discuss song V separately, but I will discuss its textual aspects while discussing song X.
[180] De Morrée 2017: 112-115.
[181] De Morée 2017: 115-117.

saint cluster separately in my analysis, I will take it into account when specific results seem to be exclusively or significantly reserved for one of the two clusters. Lastly, De Morrée notices the total absence of passion songs in this collection.[182] Although this full absence is exceptional in comparison to De Morrée's other sources, both she and Lisanne Vroomen (2017), who were both involved in the VNC research project *In Tune with Eternity*, emphasise that there are generally much more Christmas songs than passion songs.[183] Singing seems thoroughly connected to Christmas. Although a further discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of the current research, the absence of passion songs within the corpus of this study is relevant when considering the intended functioning and reception of the collection.

4.2. Methodology

The analysis of the songs in the described corpus centralises around various aspects of religious practice that, according to previous literary-historical as well as anthropological studies, have the potential to stimulate a performative and experience-stimulating functioning. I will discuss these diverse qualities under the larger headings of structural, narratological and discourse-related textual aspects. These serve, however, mainly as a practical tool: the textual aspects in those three categories are naturally always connected to each other.

First, I will analyse the structure of the songs by defining what steps are taken in the song (e.g. from the introduction to the actual description of a devout scene) and how these are mutually connected. As Mertens and Van der Poel have argued, the songs in *Die Gheestelike Meldoy* have a threefold structure that can be explained by the three components in the Late Medieval devout practice of lectio (reading a Biblical passage, or – in a less literal sense – become acquainted with a specific Biblical theme), meditatio (thinking and rethinking about the Biblical passage or theme, fully internalizing it) and oratio (praying directly toward a divine being).[184] In my analysis, I will examine if a similar threefold structure is present in the songs of *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers.* Furthermore, if this or another clear structure can be distinguished, how could this serve as an indication for the intended functioning of the songs? I will also take into account other structural characteristics of the songs, such as the presence of a chorus, and what these imply with regard to the intended functioning. In paragraph 5.1, I will discuss my results concerning these issues.

[182] De Morrée 2017: 118.
[183] De Morrée 2017: 200-202 and Vroomen 2017: 184.
[184] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017.

In addition to structural means, I will analyse the songs on the basis of various textual aspects. These aspects are derived from earlier research on the performative, experience-driven functioning of religious practice and, more specifically, devout texts. I will study two important elements of the narratological aspects of the songs. Firstly, I will analyse, the narrative voice in the songs in the corpus. Is the impassioned 'I' (see paragraph 2.3) used in these songs? Is there also a magistral 'I' that takes a leading and reflecting role? Furthermore, I will study if there is indeed a regular use of the 'we', and, if so, what this means with regard to the script-like character of the songs and the role they present. In paragraph 5.2, I will thus try to analyse in what way the narrator or various narrators indicate a specific intended functioning of the songs.

In the following paragraph, I will analyse which grammatical tenses are used in the songs. As mentioned before, previous research by McNamer and Brown has recognised the use of the present tense as an important instrument for the experience-orientated, performative character of religious texts. I will examine what grammatical tenses are used in the songs and if the present tense indeed plays a pivotal role. Furthermore, I will again wonder what this reveals about the intended functioning of the songs.

Hereafter, I will move from structural and grammatical aspects of the texts to the level of vocabulary and discourse. As discussed before, vocabulary and discourse can have an active effect on the feelings of experience in the users because it can make someone depict lively, internal images before his or her 'mental eye'. In addition, the verbal depiction of emotions might stimulate the mirror neuron system. I will discuss what textual stimuli imply an experience- and emotion-orientated functioning of the songs in paragraph 5.4. Forms of vocabulary and discourse that might influence emotional responses are the depiction of emotions and emotional expressions, sensations or other physical experiences (some of which may be considered 'sensory symbols', according to Victor Turner's concept), as well as stylistic matters such as strong paradoxes or antitheses. The emotional functioning of the last category might be understood from Salomon's idea of 'absurdities': because paradoxes or antitheses might present a reality that differs from what one would expect, they can possibly evoke emotional responses.[185] Are such textual elements present in the songs and if so, how do they 'work'; i.e. in what circumstances do they occur and what do they say about the intended functioning of the texts?

Lastly, I will analyse the discourse-related aspects of the texts that imply an intended performance- or drama-like functioning of the songs in paragraph 5.5. As has been shown by

[185] Solomon 1995: 49.

anthropological research, religious practices can provide a script for a ‘formal performance’: a scripted performance that is shaped for an improvement of devotion. What textual aspects might have helped or stimulated the user to ‘perform’ an internalised drama and thus gain the desired ‘first-hand’ experience with the devout content? According to Victor Turner, religious dramatic acts can be considered ‘liminal-like’, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. The concept is based on the threefold structure of ‘rites de passage’, as defined by ethnologist Arnold van Gennep: the idea that rituals usually consist of a pre-liminal phase of separation, a liminal phase of transition, and a post-liminal phase of re-incorporation. If the dramatic act itself analysed as ‘liminal-like’, would it also be possible to distinguish ‘pre-liminal-like’ and ‘post-liminal-like’ phases that surround the liminal-like drama? And if so, what indicates this for the intended functioning of the songs?

5. An analysis of the inner performance and experience of devout songs

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the songs in *the songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* with regard to their intended functioning. As described in the preceding methodological chapter, I will discuss structural, narratological and discourse-related aspects and explain what these may imply about the intended functioning of the songs. Central in my analysis will be the performative and experience-orientated

5.1. Structure

As explained in the introduction and paragraph 2.3, Mertens and Van der Poel (2017) argue that the devout songs in *Die Geestelike Melody* are structured around the devout, threefold prescription for meditation and prayer, consisting of lectio, meditatio and oratio. According to Mertens and Van der Poel, the heart is brought into the desired condition for praying through the arousal of affect during the meditation-orientated part of the song.[186] In the current paragraph, I will discuss how the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* are structured, what this implies about their intended functioning and how it relates to Mertens and Van der Poel's results. As I will show, most song present a threefold structure of an introductory section, a descriptive and meditative section, and a prayer-like section. Furthermore, some songs have a chorus. I will discuss these four sections in this order.

5.1.1. Introductory section

Five Christmas songs in the corpus (all in hand B's part) are accompanied by a heading, which shortly mentions the main theme of the song: 'de sancta maria [virgine]',[187] 'vanden kerstdach'[188] and 'van ihesus kerst marine sone'.[189] Furthermore, three saint songs by hand A have a heading, namely 'tot sinte claren'[190] and '[dits] van sinte berbelen'.[191] However, as has been mentioned by De Morrée before, two of these were probably used to indicate the

[186] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017: 11.
[187] 'On the holy [virgin] Mary: songs XXXII, XXXIV and XXXVIII.
[188] 'On the day of Christmas': song XLII.
[189] 'On Jesus Christ son of Mary': song XLIII.
[190] 'Toward Saint Clare': song XVIII.
[191] 'This is on Saint Barbara': songs XXI and XXVII.

beginnings of the clusters of songs on Saint Clare and Saint Barbara.[192] The third may accordingly indicate the ending of the Saint Barbara cluster.

In the rest of the songs the subject is introduced in the first or first two stanzas. In more than half of the songs, namely 24 out of 43 songs, the introduction of the topic of the song takes place by performative requests or statements. In eight cases, the first or second stanza of the song explicitly expresses a desire or invitation be involved in some form of devout activity around the central theme or person in the song.[193] This is often expressed by phrases starting with 'let us…', after which then follows the specific form of devout activity that is requested. In songs VI and XXXII, the participants are invited to join the singing. In other songs, the participants are invited or stimulated to honour, be joyful about and praise God, Mary, Jesus or saints Barbara, Franciscus and Clara. The verbs used are 'minnen',[194] 'eren',[195] 'loven',[196] 'glorie geven',[197] 'benedieën',[198] 'vermeyen gaen'[199] and the Latin verb 'congratulor'.[200] An example is the first stanza of song XVI, dedicated to Saint Francis:

1 Laet ons eeren ende loven
Eenen hogen sant.
Hi siert met edelen doechden,
Al dat hemels lant.[201]

The narrator invites as well as stimulates the participating 'children' to praise saint Francis. The necessity of this activity is, furthermore, directly motivated by referring to Francis' exceptional virtuous being in heaven. The performative character of these 'invitations' is clear. In singing these very lines, each individual participant is answering upon the invitation. While singing 'laet ons eeren ende loven', one has already started doing so. Because of this immediate answer and fulfilment of the request, the participant becomes part of the 'we' or 'us' addressed in the invitation. The singers take on themselves, as it were, the role of the 'we'. I will discuss the meaning of this 'we' in paragraph 5.2, but for now it is important to notice that such a large number of songs begins with an evidently performative 'invitation'.

The performative invitation for collectively joining the devout activity is, however, not

[192] De Morrée 2017: 117.
[193] Songs I, VI, VII, VIII, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXI and XXXII.
[194] 'To love': song I.
[195] 'To honour': song XVI.
[196] 'To praise': songs VII (part of the chorus), VIII (part of the chorus), XIII, XVI, XVII, XVIII and XX.
[197] 'Give glory': song XXIII.
[198] 'To worship': song XXVII.
[199] 'To joyfully be concerned with': Song XIX.
[200] 'To rejoice': Song XXI.
[201] 'Let us honour and praise / a high saint. / Hi adorns with noble virtues / the entire holy land'.

always as explicit as in this example. Rather than a collective expression of a request, desire or 'invitation', in seven other songs[202] the singers are addressed by a narrator outside the 'we' in a request, advice or order, such as 'Kinder loeft den ingel fijn' in song XIII. [203] In addition to these fourteen songs with a clear performative introduction, four songs state the activity of praising and honouring as an already ongoing activity, rather than a request or advice, in the first or second stanza.[204] An example is song XXXVIIII: 'Met herten ende met sinnen / Sinden wy u ewige lof'.[205] Although the form differs, these phrases are of the same performative character as the explicit invitations: while singing, the individual becomes part of the 'we' or 'us' and shares in the devout activity. Such sentences can be considered performative utterances: while singing, the activity which is described is carried out. Rather than representing a given reality, the lines thus *change* the social reality they are describing: i.e. 'the issuing of the utterance *is* the performing of the action'.[206]

In all these cases, it is the 'we' who is asked to be involved or states to be involved in devotion. In a minor number of cases, namely four songs, an 'I' is (also) expressing this wish or activity,[207] e.g. 'tot god wil ik my keeren' (XXXVII).[208] The working is similar to the previous phrases: while singing, the individual joins in the activity carried out or wished. In paragraph 5.2, I will discuss what the use of the singular or plural form imply about the intended functioning.

Lastly, performative phrases such as these explicit and more implicit requests or invitations are not present in every song's beginning. In 19 songs, the central themes or characters of the songs are introduced in a more descriptive manner, without being combined with clear performative utterances.[209] An example is song XXX:

1 Een kindeken es geboren,
Een volle vloet,
Die van hem es vercoren
Hy mach wel dragen hoogen moet.[210]

[202] Songs VII, XIII, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXIX and XXXI.
[203] 'Children praise the beautiful angel'.
[204] Songs X, XXV, XXXVIIII and XLI.
[205] 'With heart and with mind / We send you everlasting praise'.
[206] Austin 1962: 6-7.
[207] Songs I, XXVIII, XXXVII and XL.
[208] 'I want to turn myself toward God'.
[209] Songs II, III, IV, IX, XI, XII, XIV, XV, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXX, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXIX, XLII and XLIII.
[210] 'A child is born, a full flowing, who is chosen by him, he should be in a joyful mood'.

In this stanza, the theme is introduced by the explanation of what was happened, i.e. that Jesus is born. Other songs also describe what happened earlier, or introduce the current position of a saint in heaven. However, as the quoted stanza shows, the singers may implicitly be addressed. In this stanza, the singers may recognise themselves in those who are 'van hem vercoren' and, therefore, they are stimulated to be in a joyful mood. Phrases like these improve the involvement of the singer with the content of the song. In descriptive introductions, this is also done by the presence of a 'we' or 'I' that is involved in the description of what happened or where the saint is. An example is the introduction of song XXXIX, which begins with 'Dat scoenste kint es ons geboren / Dat alre soetste mannekijn'.[211] The child is not 'just' born, he is born to *us*. 13 out of the 19 descriptive introductions do indeed present such an involved 'we' or (implicitly) address the public.[212]

5.1.2. Descriptive, meditational section

In almost all songs, namely 36 songs, the introductory stanzas are followed by a descriptive section that elaborates on the theme of the song. As explained in the description of the corpus in 4.1, the content of the songs concerns the story of Christ's birth (including the annunciation) or his live, or praise and discuss the life, deeds, exceptionality and admirability of a saint. Generally, in this descriptive section, the narrator talks about the central characters in the third person singular or plural and the 'us' or 'I' is rarely explicitly mentioned. In this section, the text of the song draws an image of the central theme or character. In this paragraph, I will explain what these descriptions are generally about and how they are structured. I will also discuss their potentially meditational character.

The Christmas songs usually describe the story of Christ's birth in a narrative and chronological manner.[213] An example is song X, in which the descriptive section – following after an introduction in which mother Mary and her motherhood of Christ is introduced and in which she is praised - [214] focusses upon the annunciation (stanza 2-6), Mary's pregnancy (stanza 7), the response of the shepherds after they heard about Christ being born (stanza 10), the cold the baby had to suffer and how it was warmed by the animals (stanza 12), the star who led the

[211] 'That sweet child is born to us, that very sweet boy'.
[212] Songs III, IV, IX, XI, XII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXX, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXVI and XXXIX.
[213] Songs II, III, IV, VI, VIII, IX, X, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XLII and XLIII.
[214] *Geloeft soe si die maget marie / Van hemelrike / Her ihesus was van haer geboren / Op erterike. / Maria maget uutvercoren / Ghi hebt verlost dat was verloren / By uwer dracht* (X, first stanza). 'Praised shall be the virgin Mary / by the heavenly kingdom / Lord Jesus has been born from her / On earth / favourite Virgin Mary / You have saved what was lost / By your pregnancy.'

three magi to the baby in its crib (stanza 13 and 14) and – finally – how the wise men offered their gifts and returned home (stanza 15).

Some additional information is given in stanzas 8, 9 and 11 and in several separate verses of this song. These verses provide a more biblical, theological as well as legendary background to the narrative: they tell how the prophets (especially Isaiah) already predicted Mary's virgin birth (stanza 7), how prophet Balaäm predicted the exceptional star[215] (stanza 13 and 14), and, in addition, underline the importance of the story by referring to two miracles that occurred when Christ was born. Firstly, stanza 8 and 9 describe how a thousand-year-old building in Rome collapsed when the Mary gave birth to her child. As Van Seggelen explains, this story is based on the legend of the collapse of the Temple of Peace in Rome.[216] Stanza 11 describes another miracle at that moment, namely the legend of the 'fons olei' (oil fountain) in Transtevere, where oil suddenly spurted from the ground to signify Christ as 'oil of mercy' ('olye der ontfermherticheit', stanza 11:5). These two miracles were probably well known to the sisters who sang this song, and can be found in various Latin and Middle Dutch theological texts from the 12th until the 16th century, amongst which are works by Boendale, Dirc van Delf and Jacob van Maerlant.[217] To sum up, the descriptive section of this Christmas song consists of the story of Christ's birth, with some added context that provides a biblical, theological and miraculous context and emphasizes the great importance and extraordinariness of the story.

The content of the descriptive section in this song shows to be fairly typical for the Christmas songs in the corpus: the part consists mainly of a narrative of the Christmas story, with possible references to a broader Biblical (primarily the predictions of the prophets), theological or legendary context. [218] However, the lengthy references in song X are exceptional in comparison to any other song. Usually, if any references are made, they do not exceed the length of one or two phrases. Furthermore, there are some other exceptions in the Christmas song descriptions: song VII just shortly describes the Christmas story and is mainly concerned with a description of Mary's exceptional qualities and song XXXIV pays more attention than others to why God chose Mary to be his mother. Furthermore, there are Christmas songs of which the descriptive section is primarily concerned with the admirability of baby Jesus.[219]

[215] Book of Numbers 24:17: *I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near. A star shall rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel* (Douay-Rheims translation).
[216] Van Seggelen 1966: 48.
[217] See Van Seggelen 1966: 48-50 for a comprehensive overview of the medieval sources in which this story can be found.
[218] References to broader Biblical, theological or legendary contexts can be found in songs III (reference to saint John the Baptist), X (see the main text), XXXV (Christ as fountain) and XLII (again Christ as heavenly fountain).
[219] Songs XXIX, XXX, XXXV, XXXIX and XLI.

These songs describe in detail the poor circumstances in which he was born as well as various qualities he has, without paying much attention to the broader narrative of Christ's birth. Although these aspects can be found in many Christmas songs in the corpus, they are usually not the central concern.

The descriptive section of the Christmas songs thus closely 'rethinks' the story of Christ's birth. The story is described step by step, in detail and sometimes with references that add another layer of meaning. The elaboration on Christ's birth, depicted in the descriptive section of the songs, functions as a means for meditation. When singing the song, the devotee is stimulated to think about the story in detail. Furthermore, the fact that those Christmas songs are so thematically alike and do not present any 'new information' to the singers, implies that singing through this song collection was a process of thinking about and 'zooming in' on the same story again and again. The detailed rethinking of the devout content is stimulated, for instance, by emotional and sensory details, such as the cold circumstances of Jesus' birth, which I will discuss in paragraph 5.4. In addition, twelve out of the seventeenth Christmas songs in the manuscript present characters within the story that speak to each other in direct speech.[220] These dialogues are always part of the descriptive, meditative section of the songs. An example of such a dialogue can be found in song XXXI:

2 Hy sprac totten engel Gabriel
Doet my een bootscap ende sijt snel
Tot maria in eertrijc
Gruetse my seer ende ootmoedelijc.

3 Gruetse my seere in al den name mijn
Ende segt haer dat ic wil sijn
Geboren van haren reynen live
Nochtan soe salsi maget bliven.[221]

Although the shift of voice is not mentioned, it becomes clear that the next stanza presents Gabriel's answer: he will bring her the message (stanza 4). The thereupon following stanzas are spoken in direct speech by the angel to Mary (stanzas 5-9), upon which Mary answers that she is willing to take on the task (stanza 10). The angel reacts on that by explaining how she will receive the child and that she does not need to be scared (stanzas 11-13). Mary concludes the

[220] Songs VII, XIII, XXIX, XXXII and XXXIII.
[221] 'He spoke to the angel Gabriel / bring for me a message, and be quick, / toward Mary on earth. / Greet her very much and submissively on my regard. // Greet her very much from my name / and tell her that I shall be / born from her undefiled body. / Nevertheless, she shall stay a virgin'.

song by explaining her dedication to God and by stating that she shall be his mother: 'Tot nu toe was hy die vader mijn / Nu salic sijn die moeder sijn' (stanzas 14-15).[222] The changing narrator is not explicitly mentioned in this song, which makes for a high tempo in the dialogue.[223] One speech act directly follows upon another, as if the characters are actually talking to each other. The different voices of the characters can, in a certain way, be 'internalized' by the participants through singing their lines. The singers of the song can take on themselves the different voices and imagine the dialogue internally. The dialogues thus are a way to stimulate the intense rethinking of the subject, as vivid as possible. The internalisation of the characters' speech is a way of coming very close to the story: the devotee might almost hear the characters talking to each other. The Christmas songs in which these dialogues are present will stimulate the devotees to vividly meditate about the circumstances around and the story of Christ's birth.

The descriptive sections in the songs dedicated to the praising of St Francis, St Barbara or St Clare seem, at first glance, to have a less meditational character. They do, in general, not present a chronological narrative and characters do not speak to each other. However, they do elaborate in detail on the presented topic. The descriptive sections in the saint songs focus on various admirable or exceptional qualities as well as deeds of the saints.[224] Song XVII, for example, describes the praiseworthiness and (related) deeds of Saint Francis. After an inviting introductory stanza, the descriptive section discusses Francis' high position in heaven (stanza 2 to 4), his similarity to Christ (stanza 5 and 7) and that he has founded three religious orders (stanza 6). In these descriptions, an image of who Saint Francis was, and what made him so honourable, is sketched. In some songs, however, narrative elements are, amongst others, used in laying out the image of the saint. In song XX, the admirability and exceptionality of Saint Clare is described by mentioning her virtuousness (stanza 2) focusing on her special name and how it coincides with her character because she was indeed very 'clear' ('pure', stanza 3 to 5) and, lastly, by describing in a narrative manner how Clare laid in her sick-bed and died, guided by Mother Mary (stanza 6 to 10).

The descriptive sections in the songs dedicated to the saints Francis, Clare and Barbara do not present a coherent, chronological story, as in the case of Christmas songs. However, they

[222] 'Hitherto he was my father / Now I shall be his mother'.
[223] In various other songs (III, IV, VI, VII, VIII and X), the change of narrator is shortly mentioned by. However, the dialogue's high tempo is barely interrupted.
[224] Songs XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXV, XXVI and XXVII.

do imply an intended meditational functioning by the way they elaborate in detail on the saints' lives, deeds and qualities. Usually, each stanza – or every few stanzas - in the descriptive section describes another 'fact' about or quality of the saint. In that way, the singer is stimulated to think about the saint with regard to all of his or her characteristics and admirabilities. Rather than meditating on a Biblical theme – as is the case in *Die Gheestelike Melody* –, the devotee can meditate on all aspects of a saint by singing the song.

Furthermore, there are five songs that do present a distinct descriptive part but that do not focus on the Christmas story or a saint, but describe the gloriousness of heaven,[225] elaborate on a different Biblical story[226] or describe Jesus and Gods admirability.[227] The intended meditative functioning of these descriptions is, however, similar to these of the Christmas and saint songs. In addition, the narrative descriptions, the descriptions about the saints and these descriptions, have in common that they rely upon imagery and stories that will have been well known to the singers. This is underlined by the fact that various songs describe Francis, Clare or Barbara in almost similar phrasing, for instance, 'Inden alder oversten trone / Es dander ingel nu geset' (song toward Saint Francis),[228] 'Inden hoechsten troen geset' (song toward Saint Clare)[229] and 'Geset int scoenste vanden trone' (song toward Saint Barbara).[230] As mentioned in chapter 3, Zerbolt of Zutphen argued that the topic of devotion should be simple enough to understand, in order to 'inflame affections' rather than 'illuminate the intellect or sharpen curiosity'.[231] The repetitive phrasing, as well as the focus on the well-known Christmas story can be understood in that way: the recognisable topics can continue to invoke emotional responses, which is more urgent for the purpose of the devout practice than stimulated intelligence or teaching the singers something new. In the continuous 'rethinking' about these topics and all their aspects and details in meditation, the devotee can come closer to the devout content each time he meditates.

Lastly, not all songs show a distinct descriptive section. There are three songs that are mainly a personal account of spiritual concerns and desires.[232] Furthermore, the descriptions of qualities, characteristics and admirabilities are found in direct speech toward the saint in four

[225] Songs II and XII.
[226] Song XI, namely on Joh. 7:37-39.
[227] Song XL.
[228] 'On the highest throne / The other angel [Francis] has been placed': song XVII, stanza 2.
[229] 'Placed on the highest throne': song XIX, stanza 5.
[230] 'Placed in the most beautiful part of the throne': song XXIII, stanza 6.
[231] *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, cap 44, transl. Van Engen and Oberman 1988: 287.
> *... quae tuum affectum magis inflammant (...) quam quae in rebus difficilibus et curiosis illuminant intellectum et acuunt curiositatem.*.
[232] Songs I, XXVIII and XXXVII.

songs.[233] In these cases, descriptions and praise are expressed simultaneously. However, also these songs show elements that may indicate a meditative use, such as the description of various qualities and characteristics of the saint to whom the song is addressed, as well as references to sensory details.

5.1.3. Prayer-like section

In twelve songs, the descriptive, meditational section as discussed above continues to the end of the song.[234] Nevertheless, the ending in prayer, as discussed by Mertens and Van der Poel as the third step in the threefold structure, can be found in a significant majority of the songs in this corpus. Four songs are fully shaped in a prayer-like manner,[235] and the greater part of 26 songs ends in a distinct prayer or prayer-like section (for example because the prayer is not addressed directly toward God, Mary or the saint) after the descriptive section.[236] In seven songs the ending is shaped as an 'indirect' prayer: it is stated that praying will happen and is appropriate. In the earlier mentioned song X, for instance, the descriptive section, in which the Christmas story is told, is followed by a final stanza which suddenly focusses on praying:

16 Nu bidden wi der moeder gods
Al sonder verlaet,
Dat si ons hoeden wille
Van alre quader daet.
Soe dat wi alle comen mogen
Daer die ingelen gode loven,
Nacht ende dach.
Ons es her ihesus kerst geboren
In deser nacht.[237]

This final stanza is a clear distinct part of the song. Not only is the narrative no longer continued, the 'we' starts to be explicitly present and the speech act of praying is centralized. Furthermore, an important characteristic of the text of prayer is that it is spoken directly toward the subject of the prayer.[238] This is indeed the case in 19 songs.[239] In these songs, the prayer at the end of

[233] Songs XXI, XXXVIII, XXIV and XXXVI.
[234] Songs II, III, IV, VI, VII, XV, XVIII, XXII, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI and XLII.
[235] Songs I, XXI, XXIV and XXXVI.
[236] Songs VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVII, XIX, XX, XXIII, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL and XLI.
[237] 'We now pray the mother of God / Without any delay / That she shall protect us / From every sin / So that we all may come / There where the angels praise god / Night and day / Lord Jesus Christ is born to us'.
[238] Oosterman 1995: 18.
[239] Songs XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVII, XIX, XX, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVII, XXXVIII and XXXIX.

the song is even more distinct from the descriptive section because the addressee is from that point on approached directly. The number of stanzas dedicated to this explicitly and directly addressed prayer differs from four to one, but is always situated at the end of the song and always follows a descriptive, meditational previous section. The turn to direct speech can be illustrated, for example, by the two final stanzas of song XXV:

10 Si [Barbara] minden meest in deser tijt
Die dat lemmeken wijsde.
Christus wert sine herte verblijt
Als hi [si][240] sint ianne prijsde.

11 Wie bevelen alle ons noet
Uwer beider minnen.
Hoet ons vor die haestege doot,
Geeft ons claer bekinnen.[241]

In the second last stanza, Barbara is described as 'si' (she), as she is indeed in all the previous stanzas. In the last stanza, however, she and Christ ('uwer beider'; 'both of you') are suddenly addressed directly as 'u' (you) and a request is expressed toward them. There is one song in the corpus that ends in direct prayer but uses the direct speech in the descriptive section as well,[242] nevertheless, the other eighteen songs show a distinct *change* from a description towards the direct addressment of God, Christ, Mary or one of the saints in a prayer at the end of the songs.

5.1.4. Chorus

In addition to the overarching structure of introduction, description/meditation and concluding prayer, twelve songs in the corpus alternate the stanzas with a chorus of several lines,[243] use various repetitive phrases in each stanza,[244] or finish each stanza with one or more chorus-like, repetitive phrases.[245] In many cases, the chorus or chorus-like phrases function in a way as an alternation with the descriptive section: the descriptive narrative alternates with a chorus which usually presents an explicit 'we' or 'us' and that seems to function as a 'reflection' on the

[240] According to Van Seggelen, the 'hi' might be a mistake. It probably needs to say 'si'.
[241] 'She [Barbara] loved most in this time / He who guarded (?) the little lam [Christ] / Christ was joyful in his heart / When she praised saint John. // We entrust all our distress / To both your love / Protect us against a hastily death / Give us pure recognisability (?).'
[242] Song XXXVIII.
[243] Songs II, VII, VIII, IX, X, XVI and XXVIII.
[244] Songs IV and VI.
[245] Songs III, XXXIV and XLI.

preceding stanza,[246] for instance by inviting the 'us' to praise[247] or by repeating the most important aspect of the theme or saint.[248] It is, as it were, the performative 'reminder' of the essential function of singing: praising God, Christ, Mary or the saint. In song XVI, the chorus emphasises the most important, most admirable and illustrating characteristic of Saint Francis:

> En hi sal comen ten ordeel gods
> Geteekent metten teeken
> Des eeuwichs woorts,
> Metten heilegen .v. wonden.
> Dat wet voirwaer.
> Die selen wi daer scouwen openbaer.[249]

This chorus not only connects each descriptive stanza to the characteristic that proves more than everything Saint Francis' exceptionality and admirability, the chorus repeatedly emphasises the core aim of singing: to praise and be amazed by his holiness.

In the Christmas songs with a chorus, the interruption of the descriptive section has an even stronger effect because it alternates, in most cases, with the ongoing narrative, that continues over various stanzas.[250] An example is song VIII, in which the chorus 'Laet ons met herten reyne / Loven dat suete kindekijn / Het brinct ons uter weyne'[251] is repeated after every stanza. These repetitive, performative phrases – comparable to the performative introductions of a majority of the songs - make sure the singer is continuously reminded of what is most important: to praise that sweet little child. Every time the chorus returns, the singer is one stanza further and therefore a step closer to the divine. This spiral of meditation, to performative confirmation and remembrance, back to meditation, continues throughout the song, until it finally ends in prayer.

5.2. Narrative voice

Previous studies have pointed out the special role of the 'I' in script-like meditative, devout texts, such as affective meditations, visionary scripts and songs: the 'I' may function as a role for the user of the text to take on and in that way experience the 'passions' that the 'I' feels in

[246] Songs III, IV, VI, VIII, IX, X, XVI, XXVIII and XLI.
[247] Songs III, IV, VII, VIII and XLI.
[248] Songs II, IX, X, XVI and XXXIX.
[249] 'And he shall come to the last judgement / signed with the sings / of the everlasting word / with the five holy wounds / know that is true / there we will openly see him'.
[250] Songs III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XXXIX and XLI.
[251] 'Let us with a undefiled heart / praise that sweet little child / it will take us out of our sorrows'.

the text. As predicted in the introduction of this thesis, the main part of the songs present the first person plural rather than singular. The preference for the plural form can be illustrated by examining the overview of the 150 most frequent words in the corpus: it shows that the words 'ons' or 'wi' (also: 'wy'; 'us' or 'we') occur 269 times (word percentage of 1,994%), whereas 'ic', 'my' or 'myn' ('I', 'me' or 'mine') are used almost half as often, namely 144 times (word percentage of 1,0706%).[252] In the great majority of the songs, the narrator is the first person plural, who is explicitly mentioned as a 'we' or 'us' at least once.[253] An explicit mentioning of a first person singular narrator is present in thirteenth songs.[254] These two 'categories' overlap: some songs present both a 'we' and an 'I'.[255] In this paragraph, I will discuss what roles the 'we''s and 'I''s play and how these roles are related to the intended functioning of the songs.

The explicit 'us' or 'we' is used most often in the introductory or the praying-section of the song. In addition, it is often present in the chorus or chorus-like phrases. As explained before, the 'us' in the introduction, chorus and prayer may serve as a performative role that the singers can take. The fact that the 'we' is used in practically every song implies a collective use: while singing as a group, each singer can recognise herself in this 'we' and take on that role. The 'we' presents the collective group and its shared ideas and emotions and is, therefore, accessible for every singer that identifies with these ideas and emotions. Similar to the impassioned I, it is an open, accessible role through which the singers can express their (collective) desires, emotions and praises. It is 'flexible': rather than referring to a clearly defined group, it is open for whoever takes on the role.[256]

Furthermore, the 'impassioned we', as I propose to call this perspective, implies a strong collective intended functioning of the songs: the collective identification with the 'we' confirms and creates a collective consciousness amongst individuals. It emphasises the 'togetherness' and the shared ideas, values and desires. When singing together and taking on the role of the 'we' together, the singers are 'all on the same page'. This collective quality marks the functioning of the 'we' and distinguishes it from the impassioned 'I'. Although the impassioned 'I' is also an open role, which can be taken by various individuals simultaneously, it still present

[252] The list of the 150 most frequent words in the songs can be found in the appendix.
[253] Songs I, II, III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLI and XLII.
[254] Songs I, XIII, XIV, XV, XX, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVII and XL.
[255] Songs I, XIII, XIV, XX, XXVIII and XXXII.
[256] More on the characteristics of the 'we'-perspective can be found in Richardson 2009: 146-152.

a singular perspective that is scripted for an individual 'role-playing'. The impassioned 'we' is a scripted role that is explicitly open for collective use.

Despite the dominance of the 'we'-perspective, thirteenth songs (also) present a narrating 'I'.[257] Six songs present an impassioned 'I': an open role that expresses ideas, desires or emotions.[258] This is, for example, the case in song I. In the 8th stanza, for instance, the 'I' expresses her desire to be faithful to God and mentions her own shotcoming 'Ic wille den heere alleene / Te male getrouwe sijn. / Ic minnen alte cleene / Dat es die scade mijn.'[259] In taking the role of the I, the singer's desire toward God and the realisation of her own shortcomings can be invoked and, simultaneously, be expressed via the 'vehicle' of the impassioned 'I'.

Furthermore, a few present a different functioning 'I'. In song XXXII, for instance, the I is explicitly mentioned once, in the phrase 'Ic segge u wel waer of'.[260] The 'I' is presented as someone who can verify the truthfulness of what is said. This 'I' seems to present a leading role. In five songs, such a leading 'I' can be found.[261] This 'I' is a magistral I, as explained in paragraph 2.3. The magistral 'I' in the songs in this corpus emphasises the truthfulness of specific statements or expresses a request or command toward others. An example of the second speech act can be found in the first stanza of song XXXI: 'Daer om soe helpten my alle loven'. The 'I' commands all others ('alle') to praise God together with her.

Arguably, the songs in this corpus usually present an impassioned 'we' as a collective script for the singers. Besides the presence of an impassioned 'I' in a minority of the songs, a few songs use a magistral 'I'. With regard to the functional contexts of these songs, these characteristics imply that the songs were generally used in a collective context, in which one sister might occasionally have taken a leading role. The collective identification with the role of the 'we' may strengthen cohesive ideas, values and desires because the 'we' expresses those in the song. Each time the group of singers goes through this process, the internal cohesion of

[257] As mentioned before, the narrating 'I' can be found in songs I, XIII, XIV, XV, XX, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVII and XL. I have not taken into account 'I''s that refer to a character when he or she speaks within the song. The speech acts of these characters do not function as impassioned or magistral 'roles' and are therefore not relevant in this paragraph. However, they do add to the vividness of the meditational part of the songs because they can be 'internalised' by the singers while singing the lines the characters speak. See paragraph 5.1.2.
[258] Songs I, XIV ('In u soe staet mijn hopen'; 'Upon you relies my hope'), XXVIII, XXXIII, XXXVII and XL.
[259] 'To the Lord alone, I want / to be entirely faithful. / I love him too little / that is my shortcoming'.
[260] 'I will tell you for sure about that': song XXII, stanza 2.
[261] XIV ('Als ic aensie vore ende nae (…) Daer ic af vinde bescreven': 'When I see, before and after (...), about which I can find'), XV ('Ic wils seker seggen'; 'I will tell you for sure'), XX ('Loeft alle die hier bi my sijn'; 'Praise, all that are present here with me'), XXXI ('Daer om soe helpten my alle loven'; 'Therefore help me, all, to praise him') and XXXII ('Ic segge u wel waer of'; 'I will tell you for sure about that').

the group as well as their 'internalisation' of the expressed ideas, values and desires may improve.

5.3. Grammatical tense

In addition to the performativity of structure and impassioned voices, the use of the present tense has been considered relevant for the functioning of affective texts in 'painting a mental picture', i.e. seeing and experiencing the content in vivid dramatic detail.[262] The use of the present tense may add to the performative, script-like character of the text and improve the experience of 'actually being there'. In the songs of this corpus, the present tense is used in virtually every song.[263] However, songs that use solely either the present or the past tense are very rare: there are three songs that use just the present and future tense,[264] and one song that is completely expressed in the past tense.[265] Usually, the present tense is accompanied by verses in the past tense.[266] In addition, eight songs in the corpus have phrases in the future tense as well.[267] Nevertheless, the role each of these grammatical tenses play and in what sections of the songs they are mainly used, differs.

The present tense is especially used in the introductory and prayer-section of the songs. The meditational descriptive sections are in the past-tense (the historical present is not used), except from the descriptions of the saints' positions in heaven, that are, naturally, eternally. The 'presentness' of phrases in the present tense is sometimes strengthened further by the addition of the word 'now' ('nu'). In over half of the songs in this corpus, 'now' is used and intensifies the present tense phrase,[268] and the word is listed as the 34th-most frequent word in the corpus, with a word percentage of 0,4833.[269] The word seems generally to be used in order to invite the

[262] Brown 2009: 96.
[263] Songs I, II, III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX< XXII, XXIII, XXIX, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLI and XLII.
[264] Songs XII, XXVIII and XLI.
[265] Song XLIII. Although the phrase 'dat is waer' (stanza 6) is indeed in the present tense, it is the only phrase and functions furthermore primarily as a stop gap.
[266] Songs I, II, III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLII and XLIII.
[267] Songs III, X, XVI, XXIII, XXVIII, XXXIX, XL and XLI.
[268] Songs I, III, IV, VI, VII, VII, IX, X, XI, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII, XX, XXIII, XXIV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVIII and XLI. Furthermore, song XLIII uses the phrase 'op den dach van heden', which also intensifies the 'presentness' of the phrase it is attached to. I do not take into account the use of 'we' in the speech acts of characters. This can be found only in song XXXI: 'Tot nu was hy die vader mijn / Nu salic sijn die moeder sijn' ('Hitherto he was my father / Now I shall be his mother'.
[269] See the appendix.

'we' to engage in a new, initiated activity: it is mainly present in introductory invitations,[270] in choruses or chorus-like verses[271] and at the prayer-like endings of the songs.[272] In addition, it can be found in performative, inviting and stimulating lines throughout the songs,[273] such as 'Nu laetse ons dancken want wi wel weten / Want si ons niet en heeft vergeten'.[274] It is, furthermore, expressed once in the descriptive, meditational section of the song in the description of christ ('Dit kint compt ons nu coopen')[275] and once in direct speech toward Saint Barbara ('O scone sonne nu openbaert')[276].

Lastly, as I mentioned before, twelve out of the seventeenth Christmas songs in the manuscript present dialogues between various characters. In the speech text of the characters, the present tense is, naturally, used to describe the devout scene. Without the use of the historical present, the described scene is depicted as if it is actually happening now. The dialogues thus increase the vividness of the meditational content and stimulate the singers to experience it as if it is actually happening.

However, a majority of the songs uses the past tense in the meditational section. This does not, however, weaken the meditational functioning of the song. The detailed descriptions given stimulate rethinking and meditation, both in the past and the present tense. In addition, the use of the present tense in the introduction, chorus and prayer and the way these are emphasised by the addition of 'nu', emphasise the importance of singing, praying and praising at this very moment.

5.4. Stimuli for emotional and sensational experience

As explained in paragraph 3.1, emotional and sensational expressions in text can stimulate a text's functioning as an 'emotive'. They can stimulate the mirror neuron system and, hence, invoke emotional responses in the users of the text. In this paragraph, I will discuss which various textual elements in the songs of the corpus might have stimulated feelings of emotional and sensational experience. Thus far, I have concentrated mainly on structural and narratological aspects. I will now focus more closely on the emotional and sensational discourse in the songs.

[270] Songs VI, XVII, XXIX and XXXVI.
[271] Songs III, IV, VII and XXVIII.
[272] Songs VIII, IX, X, XI, XV, XVI, XVII, XX, XXIII, XXXV, XXXVIII and XLIII.
[273] Songs I, XIII and XXIII.
[274] 'Now let us thank her, because we know / Because she has not forgotten us': song XXIII, stanza 4.
[275] 'This child will pay for us' (he will pay for our sins): song XXX, stanza 2.
[276] 'O beautiful sun, now openly revealed': song XXIV, stanza 3.

5.4.1. Depicted emotions

As I have discussed in the preceding paragraphs, singer are stimulated to identify with and take on the role of the impassioned 'we'. As shortly mentioned earlier, this impassioned 'we' – and the impassioned 'I' if present - expresses emotions, sensations and desires that may simultaneously be invoked in the singers themselves. When the singers do indeed experience these emotions, they can come closer to fully experiencing the devout content. The stimulation of these emotions can take place via various means.

Firstly, the text of the song may describe specific emotions of the impassioned 'we' or -occasionally – 'I'. Explicit emotions of the impassioned 'we' or 'I' can be found 21 times, in 14 different songs.[277] The expressions relate to various emotions. The 'we' may state that they are joyful because of the goodness of Christ, Mary or the saints. An example can be found in song XLI: 'Des selen wy alle sijn verblijt / Die coninc comt ons in corten tijt'.[278] In addition, feelings of sorrow because of the own shortcomings or poor behaviour, or feelings of compassion and pity toward the vulnerable baby Jesus are expressed by the impassioned 'we' or 'I'.[279] Besides, the impassioned 'we' or 'I' regularly expresses her love for (and from) Christ.[280] These various expressions of emotions[281] will enable the singers to give voice to their own feelings or desires via the impassioned 'we' or 'I'. The expression of their feelings will, furthermore, strengthen their experience of these feelings. In addition, the depiction of expressed emotions of the impassioned 'we' or 'I' might – through the working of the mirror neuron system – arouse the same emotions in the singers.

More frequent than the expression of emotions or desires of the impassioned 'we' or 'I', however, the emotions of various characters are mentioned. Especially in Christmas songs, the emotions and emotional responses of Mary and other characters are frequently mentioned, namely 33 times in total, in 15 different songs.[282] Several of these are related to Mary's distress and fright when angel Gabriel appears to her,[283] as well as to the distress of the shepherds when

[277] Songs VI (2x), XII, XIII, XX, XXIV, XXV, XXVIII, XXIX (2x), XXX, XXXII (3x), XXXIII, XXXVII (4x), XLI and XLII.
[278] 'Therefore we shall al be joyful / The king will come to us in a short while': song XLI, stanza 3. References to the joy of the impassioned 'we' or 'I' can furthermore be found in songs I, VI, VIII, XX, XXIV, XXV, XXIX and XXXII.
[279] Songs XII, XIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII and XXXVII.
[280] Songs XXVIII, XXXII and XXXVII (3x).
[281] Beside these, references are made to a feeling of sadness because Adam bit the apple (song VI) and a desired feeling of humbleness (song XLII).
[282] Songs III, IV (4x), VI (7x), VII, VIII (3x), IX (4x), X (2x), XXIX, XXX, XXXI (2x), XXXIII, XXXV, XXXIX, XLI (2x) and XLII (2x).
[283] Songs III, IV, VI (3x), X and XXXI (2x).

they are visited by the angels.[284] In addition, the joyfulness with regard to the message of the birth of Christ or of him actually being born, is often mentioned,[285] for instance in song VIII, in the message God gives to the angel Gabriel in order for him to pass on to Mary: 'Gruet my wel vriendelike / Die suete suver iuecht / Ende segt haer blidelike. / Si mach wel sijn verhuecht'.[286] This joyfulness relates as well to the absence of any sorrow or pain for Mary while giving birth, which is regularly mentioned. I will elaborate on the topic of pain and its meaning in the following paragraph.

5.4.2. Sensations and physical experience

According to Mertens and Van der Poel, the songs in *Die Gheestelike Melody* exploit the senses in the meditational part, in order to enable the singer to sensationally re-experience the devout process.[287] In the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*, the senses are also regularly addressed. References to vision are made by frequent notions of the brightness (also lightness, shininess and sun-likeness)[288] or beauty[289] of people or circumstances. Furthermore, specific colours are mentioned (mainly gold or red).[290] The use of vision by the impassioned 'we' or 'I' as well as by one of the characters is also often mentioned.[291] Next, the songs point out the sense of taste by many references to the sweetness[292] of people, things or circumstances. The opposite, bitterness, is mentioned just once.[293] A references to sourness can be found in two songs,[294] a reference to saltiness in none. The sense itself is mentioned in just one song.[295]

[284] Song VI (2x).
[285] Songs VI, VII, VIII (3x), IX (2x), X, XXXIII and XLI (2x)
[286] 'Greet her kindly on my regard / the sweet, pure youngster, / and tell her joyfully / that she may be joyful.': song VIII, stanza 2.
[287] Mertens and Van der Poel 2017.
[288] References to 'claerheit'/'verclaren', 'licht'/'verlichting', 'blincen', or comparisons with the sun, can be found in songs II (3x), III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, X, XIV (2x), XVI (2x), XVIII (4x), XIX (4x), XX, XXIV (4x), XXV (3x), XXVI (2x), XXVII (2x), XXXIII, XXXVI (2x), XLII (2x) and XLIII.
[289] References to 'scoenheit' can be found in songs XIV, XVIII, XVIII, XX (2x), XXIII (3x), XXIV, XXV (2x), XXVI (3x), XXVII, XXIX, XXXI (3x), XXXIII, XXXIV (4x), XXXV (2x), XXXVIII, XXXIX (2x), XLII and XLIII.
[290] Related to the frequent focus on brightness, the songs four times explicitly prescribe a golden colour to something, namely in songs XIV, XVIII, XX, XXIII and XXV. Furthermore, the colour red is mentioned frequently, generally to describe the colour of a rose (with which Mary, Clare or Barbara are compared), wounds or baby Jesus' lips. This colour is mentioned in songs II, XIII, XIV, XXII and XXXIII (2x). Furthermore, in song XIV the colour 'wit' is named, as is 'blau' in song XXV and 'bruyn' in XXXIII.
[291] Words such as 'sien', 'aensien' and 'tonen' can be found in songs II, III, IV, VII, XIII, XIV, XVIII, XX, XXVI, XXXI, XXXIV and XXXVI.
[292] References to 'suetheit' can be found in songs II (2x), III (2x), IV, VIII (3x), IX (3x), XII (2x), XIII (3x), XVII, XIX, XX, XXV, XXVI, XXIX (3x), XXXII, XXXVI, XXXIX (2x), XLI, XLII (3x) and XLIII. This 'sweetness' refers to things that taste sweet, that sound sweet (such as words) or that smell sweet (such as flowers).
[293] Song XIII.
[294] Songs I and XXVIII.
[295] 'Proeven' is mentioned in song I (2x), 'horen' in songs XV, XXXIII and XLII.

Vision and taste are the two most frequent senses to which the songs refer. References to the sense of touch can be found in one mentioning of something 'soft'[296] (with regard to how it feels, not related to sound) and twice of something 'wet'.[297] The sense itself is not mentioned. The sense of smell is mentioned once,[298] and is referred to by some of the before mentioned various references to 'sweetness' The same goes for hearing. It is difficult to distinguish if the sweetness mentioned refers to a sweet taste, a sweet smell or a sweet sound because the adjective is used to describe a large variety of things, people and circumstances and is often used in a metaphorical way. Hearing itself is, lastly, mentioned in three songs.[299]

The depiction of the inner image and its vivid character is underlined by various references to physical experiences. In both Christmas songs as well as songs that praise Clare, Francis or Barbara, experiences of pain (or the surprising absence of pain, also emphasised by references to blood and wounds),[300] hunger (or eating)[301] or thirst (or drinking)[302] are brought forward in characterising Christ, Mary or the saints. Especially the first of these may be considered a 'sensory symbol': the sensation of pain is a strongly emotional reference, that may have had a direct effect on the singers emotions.

The pain felt by the saints or Mary is generally related to Christ's suffering on the cross. As described, for instance, in song VI, Mary feels as if her heart has been stabbed when she sees her suffering son hanging on the cross: 'Want doen hi ane den cruce hinc (…) Een sweert al doer haer herte ginc'.[303] Something similar happens to Saint Barbara in song XXVII, although she sees the image of the suffering Christ before her mental eye: 'Ende sy sach ter selver stont / Enen edelen iongelinc / Die aent cruce was doer wont / Dat haer diep int herte ginc'.[304] The way Mary and Barbara share in Christ's pain is seen as proof of their exceptional, outstanding love for him. This connection is, again with regard to Barbara, clearly expressed in song XXV: 'Si heeft hoechleec gemint / Dat bewijst haer pine'.[305] Mary and Barbara show the desired response for the devotee: when seeing or imaging Christ on the cross, one should indeed feel

[296] Song XXXII.
[297] Songs XXXII and XXXIII.
[298] 'Rueken' (noun) in song XXXIV.
[299] 'Horen' in songs XV, XXXIII and XLII.
[300] Songs II, IV (4x), VI, VIII (2x), XI (2x), XIII (2x), XIV, XV, XXII, XXIII, XXV, XXVII (3x), XXVIII and XXXI.
[301] Songs II, XLII (2x) and XLIII.
[302] Songs XI (2x), XII, XXVI (2x) and XLIII (2x).
[303] 'Because when he was hanging at the cross (…) A swort penetrated her heart': song IV, stanza 21.
[304] 'And at that same moment she saw / a noble young man / who was wounded on the cross / which penetrated her heart deeply': song XXVII, stanza 6.
[305] 'She has loved greatly / that is proved by her pain': song XXV, stanza 7.

devastated. In other words, they serve as 'mirror characters': they show and express the feelings that are desired to feel and, thus, should be mirrored by the devotee in her meditation.

However, the exceptionality of the saints is sometimes also illustrated by qualities that are practically impossible to 'mirror'. In the case of Francis, the fact that he took on himself the five holy wounds of Christ is an ultimate proof of his dedication to Christ.[306] The exceptionality of Mary and her child is furthermore accentuated by various references to the surprising *absence* of pain when Mary gives birth, for instance in song VIII:

7 Die ingel sprac tot hare
O weerde suver maecht
En sijt in genen vare
Het wonder dat ghi claecht.
Want ghi selt sonder pine
Baren een kindekine
Ende bliven maget alleyne.
(…)
9 Die yngel sciet van daer,
Maria bleef bevrucht.
Sonder wee oft vaer
Oft sonder herte versucht
Baerde die edel suver greyne,
Den hemlschen drochtijn,
Des vaders sone alleyne.[307]

Not only will Mary stay a virgin when receiving the child, she will also stay without any pain ('pine' and 'wee'), fear ('vaer') or sighing ('sonder herte versucht') while giving birth. This miracle is explicitly mentioned in two other songs in the corpus.[308]

Besides the physical experience of pain (or its absence), hunger (and eating) and thirst (and drinking) are recurrent themes in the songs. These strongly depend on Biblical tropes. Song XI, for instance, is based on the content of the Biblical passage in John 7:37-38.[309] In the song, Jesus speaks, as he does in the Biblical passage: 'Hi riep met luder stemmen / Die dorst die come tot my / Mijn herte es u ontploken / Ic wille u maken vry.'[310] Whereas he speaks these

[306] Songs XIII and XIV.
[307] 'The angel spoke to her / O worthy pure virgin / Do not be afraid / You shall not complain / Because you will without pain / Give birth to a little child / And stay virgin all along. // The angel left from there / Maria was impregnated / Without any pain or fear / And without a sighing heart / She gave birth to the noble, pure jewel / The heavenly lord / The father's only son'.
[308] Songs IV, VI and VIII.
[309] Gospel of John 7:37-38: *And on the last, and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (Douay-Rheims translation).
[310] 'He said with a loud voice / Who thirsts shall come to me / My heart is opened for you / I will make you free': song XL, stanza 2.

words in the Bible to a group of feasting Jews, in the song they are directed to 'die dorstich sijt',[311] with whom the singer, longing for Christ, might indeed identify. With regard to hunger and eating, the main focus lays on Christ being the heavenly bread. This is, again, based on the gospel of John. In John 6:30-35, Jesus explains to his apostles that he himself is the ultimate heavenly bread, more heavenly and wonderful than the manna their ancestors received.[312] Both stories would not only have been deeply rooted in the common religious knowledge of the sisters who sang the songs but drinking and eating 'in Christ' and thus being thirsty and hungry for him was an essential part of their daily life in the eucharist. These recognisable scenes are, therefore, already connected with strong devout 'values' and emotions.

5.4.3. Mary's physical motherhood

A central topic in the songs with regard to physical experience is Mary's motherhood. Mary's position as God's mother is undoubtedly central in Catholic faith. In Late Medieval Christianity, Mary was a vitally important part of devotion and was considered the universal patroness by the Franciscans.[313] Mary played various roles for devotees, amongst which the personification of God's treasure, a means of salvation, queen of heaven and earth and, of course, merciful mother of Christ.[314] With a change to a more imaginative, human level of devotion from the thirteenth century onwards, especially Mary's identifiable human role became emphasized.[315] However, the songs in this corpus not only underline her human maternity but approach it in a very physical manner. They describe for instance how Jesus rested in her lap (during the pregnancy),[316] how she let Jesus suck her breast with his little red mouth,[317] how she wrapped him in cloths,[318] held him on her lap,[319] and how she washed him.[320] However, not only Mary

[311] 'Who thirsts': song XL, stanza 1.
[312] Gospel of John 6:30-35: *They said therefore to him: what sign therefore dost thou shew, that we may see, and may believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you; Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. They said therefore unto him: Lord, give us always this bread. And Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in me shall never thirst* (Douay-Rheims translation).
[313] Kieckhefer 1988: 89-90.
[314] Johnson 1988: 392-395.
[315] Johnson 1988: 393.
[316] Songs VI, XXIX, XXXIII, XLII and XLIII.
[317] Songs III, XXIX, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXIII, XLII and XLIII.
[318] Song IX.
[319] Song III.
[320] Song XXXIII.

is involved in this physical caring for Jesus: the angels rock him happily[321] and Saint Joseph takes care of him and uses his sock to dress the baby.[322]

Moreover, the narrator in two songs even expresses the desire to actually take part in caring for Jesus, by warming and washing the Child and providing him with a bed of their heart.[323] As the narrative voice expresses in one of these songs, taking caring of the child – even in once imagination – is an ideal way of praising him: 'Want wy met reynen gedachte / Dit kindekijn / Wiecht hy lovet al'.[324] Despite the few expressions of this desire, it might be considered an example of what the singers are supposed to do, feel or experience: an active engagement with or a 'taking part' in the described scene via the imagination. The image of the physical exercises of motherly caring might be especially suited to stimulate such an active engagement because it is such a recognisable, strongly emotionally coloured phenomenon. Furthermore, the physical details that are given with regard to Mary's motherhood stimulate meditation: they help the singers to 'zoom in' on the actual practices surrounding her motherhood and, by doing so, meditate wholeheartedly on Mary's exceptionality and the story of Christ's birth.

5.4.4. Emotional antitheses and paradoxes

In addition to frequent references to emotions, the senses and physical experiences, several songs may invoke emotional responses by mentioning specific antitheses and paradoxes. Several songs emphasise -more or less explicitly – the opposition or even paradox between the vulnerable baby of whom Mary, Joseph and the singers themselves need to take care and the fact that he is, simultaneously, the greatest king of all times. An example is song XXX, in which two adjacent lines sketch this opposition: 'In arme doexken gewonden / Genedich god geweldich heere'.[325] The same opposition between the baby's poverty and his greatness can be found in song XLI: 'In armoeden wil hy sijn geboren / Die alle rijcheit soude behooren',[326] and later in that same song: 'Sijn [Joseph's] couse moet sijn des conincx cleet'.[327] Various other songs underline the paradox of such a great God taking on himself the role of a small baby, a son: e.g. 'Hy was u eygen sone / Die ewige godheit fijn'.[328] Furthermore, the change Jesus

[321] Song VII.
[322] Songs III and XLI.
[323] Songs XXXII and XXXIII.
[324] 'Because he, whom with a pristine mind / lulls this little child, / he praises him fully': song XXXII, stanza 4.
[325] 'Swaddled in poor rags / Merciful God, glorious lord': song XXX, stanza 6.
[326] 'In poverty he was born / He to whom all riches will belong': song XLI, stanza 7.
[327] 'His [Joseph's] stocking has to be the king's clothe': song XLI, stanza 9.
[328] 'He was your own son / Die great eternal deity': song XXXIII, stanza 9. This paradox is also underlined in songs XXIX, XXXVI, XXXVI and XXXVIII.

personally made from one who needs to be cared for to the one who cares for all humanity is emphasized by several songs, such as in XXXII: 'Wy willen dit kindeken wermen / Met onser minnen gloet / Soe sal hy onser ontfermen / Huut minnen fijn / Gaf hy doer ons sijn bloet':[329] we will regain the care and love we give, because later he will care for all of us via the shedding of his blood.

Both Jesus' smallness and vulnerability, as well as his greatness and strength, are underlined by the comparison. This effect might also have had an impact on the emotions of those who sang the lines: both the emotions with regard to the small baby Jesus (such as feelings of compassion, pity or motherly love) as well as the emotions with regard to Jesus the king (such as feelings of admiration, being impressed or grateful) may further be enhanced by the comparison. In addition, the emotion-invoking character of these antitheses and paradoxes might be understood by taking in account Solomon's theory on 'absurdities': when encountering a reality that differs from the expected, usual reality, emotions may be invoked in the individual.[330] These specific paradoxes will, in some way, be 'expected', because they were part of a broader devout discourse that would most probably have been well-known to the singers. As is the case with the 'mystery of faith', the paradoxes are seen as accepted realities that, because they cannot be comprehended by reason, need to be understood by emotion. Hence, the emotional response upon the 'absurdities' is formalised within the devout discourse.

In conclusion, the songs present various emotional and sensational references that may be internalised by the singers. The emotions of both the impassioned 'we' or 'I' and of various characters may be 'mirrored' by the singers. In that way, the devout content of the songs is not only conveyed to the singers through rational ways, but especially through emotional ways. This is an important aspect of the performative, experience-orientated intended functioning of the songs: through the invocation of emotions, the content is thoroughly experiences. This is strengthened, furthermore, by the addressment of all senses, especially of vision and taste. These may stimulated the devotee to vividly imagine how the described scene actually was, in every little detail. This is also the case with regard to the detailed, physical mentioning of Mary's motherhood. The devotee may even be stimulated to imagine herself actually helping in caring for Jesus. Lastly, several songs present antitheses or paradoxes that may invoke

[329] 'We want to warm this child / With the warmth of our love / Likewise he shall protect us / From glorious love / gave he, through us, his blood': song XXXII, stanza 5. This change is also emphasized in song XXXIX.
[330] Solomon 1993: 49; 70.

emotional responses and that remind the devotee again of the exceptionality of the devout content and, therefore, of the need to praise God, Christ and Mary.

5.5. Stimuli for internal performance

The arousal of emotions by textual aspects in the songs, as described in the previous paragraph, are part of the 'script' provided by the songs. In this paragraph, I will elaborate further on which elements may imply this script-like, performative functioning of the songs. From the light of Turner's concept of liminality and his argument that performance itself can be considered 'liminal-like', I will delineate what position these performance-implying elements have in relation to each other and how each might contribute to the devotee's aim of spiritual growth.

5.5.1. Pre-liminal-like positioning of the scene

A first textual aspect that was probably intended to stimulate an inner performative use is the 'positioning' of the scene that is depicted. In the inviting or requesting introduction, the song often mentions *where* the depicted scene took place. While doing so, the inner 'gaze' of the singer is, as it were, directed toward a place that differs from the place he or she physically is. This difference is verbalized by the oppositions of 'hier' and 'daer' ('here' and 'there') or 'boven' ('above', or 'hoog': 'high') and 'onder' ('beneath', or 'neder': 'down'): i.e. down here in the earthly world and up there where God, Christ, Mary or the saints live. These references can be found in almost half of the songs, namely 20 times.[331]

Sarah McNamer argues that these kinds of 'deictic rhetoric' are typical for texts that function as 'intimate scripts'. Deictic rhetoric stimulates the reader to feel as if she is participating in the devout content, i.e. as if she is an actual eyewitness to the described scene.[332] The deictic rhetoric in the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Gheoyvaers* direct the inner gaze toward the other, higher place is, where they can witness devout scenes or see and meet holy people. This is explicitly mentioned in the first stanza of song XIX: 'In die *hoge weelde*. / laet ons vermeyen gaen. / Wi vinden *daer* onser moeder. / Seere hoechlijc ontfaen.'[333] 'Vermeyen' can be translated as to amuse oneself calmly, often in a natural, pure surrounding, such as a

[331] Songs I, II, III, VI, VII, VIII, XI, XII, XIV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXVI, XXIX, XXX, XXXI and XXXVIII. Furthermore, various songs refer less explicitly to a specific place, but use the adjective 'hoge' to describe a quality of a saint or place: songs II, XIII (2x), XV, XIX (2x), XXIII, XXV and XXXVIII.
[332] McNamer 2010: 12.
[333] 'In the high wealth / let us be joyfully (see further explanation) / We will find our mother there / very highly received': song XIX, stanza 1.

garden. Its spiritual meaning relates to that: to joyfully think about, meditate on or otherwise be concerned with a specific devotional topic.[334] The impassioned 'us' in song XIX expresses the desire for a joyful engagement with the place where 'their mother' St Clare is: heaven.

As discussed in chapter 3.3, Victor Turner deems the performance-like sections in religious practice 'liminal-like': they provide a state that is separated from everyday life and in and by which changes take place. Before the liminal or liminal-like phase in religious practice, however, the 'pre-liminal' phase takes place. In this phase of separation, the subject of the practice is being taken away from his or her regular surroundings and positioned – whether physically or mentally – in a place characterized by seclusion and difference.[335] If the performance-like, dramatic section of a practice is considered liminal-like, we might see the process of projecting the earthly view toward a different, higher place as, in some way, being 'pre-liminal-like'. Although the participants are not physically brought somewhere else, when they take on themselves the role of the impassioned 'we' or 'I', they are stimulated to point their gaze and focus toward a different place.

The explicit manner in which this process is presented in song XIX is rare. Generally, the opposition between 'hier' and 'daer' or 'boven' and 'onder' and what this direction of the gaze enables, is expressed more 'casually'. Song XVII, for instance, begins with: 'Nu laet ons sint franciscus loven / Met over grooter werdicheit. / Want hi es *int hof daerboven*. / Alte blidelijc gemerct.'[336] In this introductory stanza, the location of Saint Francis is mentioned as part of the reason why the 'us' should praise him. Nevertheless, the functioning of this stanza is comparable to the first stanza of song XIX: while singing, the inner gaze of the 'us' is directed toward the different, non-earthly place which is heaven.

In addition to references to 'hier', 'daer', 'boven' ('hoog') or 'onder' ('neder'), both heaven and earth are mentioned elsewhere as the 'troone',[337] 'dat hemels lant',[338] 'paradijs',[339] 'stat der sonnen',[340] 'eertrike' or 'eerde',[341] or just as 'hemel' and 'weerelt'.[342] Besides heaven and earth, some other locations are explicitly mentioned, both in the introductory as well as in

[334] *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*, 'vermeyen'.
[335] Turner 1966: vii.
[336] 'Now let us praise Saint Francis / With very great worthiness / Because he is, in yard above / so joyfully recognised': song XVII, stanza 1.
[337] 'Throne': songs VII, XVII, XIII, XXIII, XXVII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV and XLII.
[338] 'That heavenly land': songs XIII, XIV and XVI.
[339] 'Paradise': song XXXIV.
[340] 'City of suns': song XXIV.
[341] 'Earth': songs X, XXIX and XXXIV.
[342] 'Heaven': song XXIX.

the descriptive sections of the songs: the cities of Jerusalem,[343] Bethlehem[344] and Rome[345] are present, as well as more general places, such as 'int huys'[346] or 'allen landen'.[347] Each of these references to places imply a similar function: guiding the singer's inner gaze toward a place or point that differs from his actual surroundings. This process, which I propose to call pre-liminal-like, enables a liminal-like performance.

5.5.2. Liminal-like 'role-playing'

If the gaze of the singer is focussed upon the desired place or point, he or she might internalize the image or scene that the song depicts in the meditational section of the songs. On the basis of paragraph 5.4, it is safe to say that the meditational section provides a vivid depiction of the scene that the singer can experience through emotions and sensations. This experience relies upon the inner 'performance' of the scene: the devotee vividly imagines the scene before her mental eye, as if she was actually present as an eyewitness. The devotee has taken on the scripted role of the impassioned 'we' or 'I' during the inner performance which, through singing, guides him as an eyewitness through every emotional and sensational detail of the meditational content.

In contrast to the encouragements by Saint Bonaventure to the Poor Clares to 'become' Christ in meditation,[348] the impassioned 'we' or 'I' does not intend to take the place of one of the characters in the depicted scene. However, the voice of the angel seems sometimes to 'overlap' or 'harmonise' with the voice of the impassioned 'we'. The angel expresses ideas or desires that are in accordance with the ideas and desires that might be or are in other stanza's indeed expressed by the 'we'. In song VII, the last three stanzas concern the angels and how they take pleasure in and praise the birth of Christ. The final stanza is as follows:

9 Sijt willecome her iongelinc.
Die ons van boven es gesint.
Der reynder maget marien kint.
Ende alder yngelen coninc.[349]

[343] 'World': song IX.
[344] Songs IX and X.
[345] Song X.
[346] 'In the house': song VII.
[347] 'All countries': song XLII.
[348] See paragraph 2.2.
[349] 'Be welcome youthful lord / who is send to us from heaven / the child of the undefiled virgin Mary / and king of all angels'.

These verses are probably part of the lines of the angels, who start singing in the previous stanza. However, they might indeed as well be part of the text of the impassioned 'we'. They correspond with the chorus and the singers will most likely feel related to these verses. The process of internalising the voices of characters may be strengthened by the coherence between the voice of the 'we' – and thus of each singer – and the voice of a character.

However, when taking the role of the 'we', the singer generally takes the role of a spectating instance. In the descriptive, meditational section of the song, the 'we' or 'I' can closely examine all kinds of details of the depicted scene or described saint, as if they were actually present. To do so, the singers need to temporally leave behind their own being and the actual circumstances, and fully perform the role of the impassioned 'we' or 'I'. It is this 'metaphor' of pretending to be someone else which underlies every form of performance,[350] and which defines, according to Turner, the 'liminal-like' character of performances. The performer takes on a role that *differs* from him- or herself and in this ambiguous, metaphorical 'as if'-situation, he or she can experience something in a way that would otherwise not be possible. With regard to the songs in this corpus, the role intended to take by the singers is one of a meditating and experiencing 'we' or 'I'.

5.5.3. Post-liminal-like prayer

Furthermore, according to the theory of the 'liminal-likeness' of performances, the 'role-playing' enables the position of the subject to change – either temporarily or lasting - through the experiences it encounters. In the case of the current study, this suggests that the meditational practice of singing the songs may incite some form of change in or influence on the singers. As explained in chapter 2.1, Zerbolt of Zutphen argues that vivid meditation will help to arouse feelings of fear, hope and love, which are necessary factors to help the devotee on his spiritual ascent. In the case of the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*, the meditational section is usually followed by a section of prayer. This section of prayer is emphasised by the word 'nu' ('now'), by the change from the past tense in the descriptive, meditational part to the present tense and by the impassioned 'we' or 'I' that often directly adresses God, Christ, Mary or the saints in prayer. This might indicate that the meditational section has enabled a different position of the singers to the divine: both a closeness and desire is created that is expressed by prayer.

The pre-liminal-like process of turning the devotee's gaze toward the higher position of

[350] Courtney 1995: 41.

divinity seems to shift here. The meditative 'presence' in the devout scene is replaced for a focus on the 'here and now'. The 'now' is underlined by the use of the present tense and the use of 'nu', and the 'here' is emphasised by the explicit impassioned 'we' and as well by some references to the actual convent. In the concluding prayers of three songs, the own 'covent' is mentioned.[351] The convent is entrusted ('bevolen') to the saint as part of the requests in the prayer. The script of the impassioned 'we' or 'I' has thus brought the singers *through* a process of thorough meditation, to a position in which they can raise their voices directly toward the divine. According to Mertens and Van der Poel, it is the production of affect by engaged meditation that enables prayer in the songs of *Die Gheestelike Melody*. Although this production of affect can be recognised in the stimulation of emotional and sensational experiences in the descriptive, meditational section of the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* as well, the meaning of this development of the singers might be understood in an even broader sense.

Some sort of change seems to have occurred during the liminal-like process of performing the role of the impassioned 'we' through meditation: from a purely witnessing position, the singers are enabled to address their subject of devotion directly. From the perspective of performance-studies and Turner's concept of liminality, the prayer at the end of the songs might, therefore, be considered a form of 're-incorporation' of the gained emotional and sensational experiences in the devout practice. When interpreting the descriptive, meditational section of the song as 'liminal-like', the re-incorporation of the meditational experiences can be called 'post-liminal-like'. In the post-liminal phase of rites of passage, the individual returns to society (or into an afterlife society), now possessing new qualities or a new status.[352] I recognise this process in the shifting gaze from the devout scene toward the own devout concerns of the impassioned 'we'. This shift might imply that, during meditation, the right desires are invoked which improves the singers' devout 'capability'.

In the light of contemporary theories about the role of meditation for spiritual growth, I interpret the liminal process - going through the pre-liminal-like phase of directing the gaze toward the divine, the liminal-like phase of the inner performance of meditational content and through the post-liminal-like phase of re-incorporating these experiences in prayer – as a way for the devotees to advance on their spiritual journey. Each time one of these songs is sung, the intention is to stimulate the singers to go through this process once again and by doing so, step by step climb up in the continuing spiral of spiritual growth. The terminology of liminality originates in studies on transition rituals and I think that the devout songs in the corpus of this

[351] Songs XI, XIV and XX.
[352] Bowen 2014: 49.

study may indeed be seen as instruments of ‘transition’. However, rather than suddenly changing the subject from one state to another, they bring the devotee just slightly further in her devotional journey. It is the continuous repetition of meditation – through singing as well as through various other practices – that enables the devotees to grow spiritually.

6. Conclusion

Wel hem die suete ende sachte
Dit kindeken antieren sal,
Want wy met reynen gedachte
Dit kindekijn
Wiecht, hy lovet al

Wy willen dit kindeken wermen
Met onser minnen gloet.
Soe sal hy onser ontfermen.
Huut minnen fijn
Gaf hy doer ons sijn bloet.[353]

In this thesis, I have aimed to examine how the devout songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* 'work' as devout instruments, i.e. what their intended functioning is and how this relates to an overarching aim for spiritual growth. In investigating this issue, I have focussed on the potential performative and experience-orientated intended functioning of the songs and aimed to both examine and enhance the results of the recent study by Mertens and Van der Poel (2017). With regard to this objective, I have established a multidisciplinary methodology, based mainly on literary-historical and anthropological studies. According to this methodology, I analysed the structure, narratological aspects (the narrative voice and grammatical tense) and the experience-related and performative discourse of the songs. On the basis of this analysis, I explored their intended functioning. In this concluding chapter, I will present the results of my analysis and return to the research question. I will, furthermore, discuss the functionality of the developed methodology.

The various elements in my analysis are strongly connected. I will emphasise the coherency between these different aspects in this conclusion by discussing the characteristics of the main three sections that appear present in the majority of the songs: the inviting or requesting introduction, the descriptive, meditational section and the concluding prayer. First, contrasting to the results of Mertens and Van der Poel's study, the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers* do not start with 'lectio' of a Biblical section or theme. A majority of 24 songs in the corpus begin with a performative invitation or request toward the singers to join in praising, honouring or singing. Although the singers are sometimes stimulated or directed to join this

[353] 'Good is he, who will sweetly and softly / take care of this little child, / because he, whom with a pure mind / lulls this little child, / he praises him fully. // We wish to warm this little child / with the glow of our love. / He shall likewise protect us./ Out of glorious love / he gave, because of us, his blood'. Song XXXII, stanzas 4 and 5.

devotional activity by another narrator, the invitation or request is generally expressed by an impassioned 'we' – or occasionally an impassioned 'I'. While singing the song, the singing group may naturally 'become' the 'we' and, therefore, simultaneously do what they request. The considerable dominance of the use of a 'we' over an 'I' is noteworthy. Previous studies have focussed mainly on the performative and script-like function of an 'I'-persona. However, in this corpus, the 'we' functions as the impassioned scripted role for the singers to collectively take on. This 'we' expresses ideas, emotions and desires and leads the singers, as it were, through the meditation on the devout content of the song. In some cases, the impassioned 'we' is accompanied by an impassioned 'I' or a 'magistral I'. The dominance of the 'we'-persona implies a collective performative functioning of the songs: the 'we' is an open role, which can be taken by a flexible group of singers that recognise themselves in the ideas, emotions and desires expressed by it. Potentially, one of the singers was intended to take a leading role, to fulfil the role of the magistral 'I' if necessary.

Furthermore, the intended performative use of the songs is emphasised by the use of the present tense in the introductory part of the song, such as 'a child *is* born to us', rather than 'a child *was* born to us'.[354] This is regularly stressed by the addition of the word 'now'. In addition, the introductory parts of the songs often use deictic rhetoric, such as 'here' and 'there', which implies the intention to direct the 'gaze' of the singers to the different, higher place, where holy scenes or people can be witnessed. I propose to consider this introductory section of the song 'pre-liminal-like': in this section, the singers are stimulated to take on the role of the impassioned 'we' and their gaze is guided toward a place or point that differs from their actual surroundings.

After the inviting introduction follows a descriptive and meditational section, in 36 songs. In this section, the devout content is depicted in a way that intends to stimulate the singers to experience it, as if they were actually witnessing it. This is performed, first of all, by regular references to the emotions and emotional expressions of both the impassioned 'we' or 'I' and the characters. With use of the mirror neuron system, these emotions may be internalised by the singers and be actually felt. Emotions might also be addressed by the mentioning of emotional antitheses or paradoxes: these 'mysteries of faith' cannot be understood rationally and, hence, gain their meaning via emotions. These emotional responses are part of the 'discourse' that surrounds these paradoxes. In addition, the senses are often addressed, which may strengthen feelings of experience in the singers. The description of the scene is vividly depicted by

[354] E.g. song XXXIX: 'Dat scoenste kint es ons geboren' ('That most beautiful child is born to us').

referring to colours, flavours and smells. Physical experiences, such as pain, coldness, hunger, thirst as well as the various physical elements of Mary's motherhood are also regularly mentioned. These may serve, in some cases, as models for the singers' feelings and desires. Lastly, most Christmas songs present characters that speak. This may increase the feeling of actually experiencing the devout content as if one was actually present at the scene: the singers can hear and internalise the very words that are said at the annunciation and nativity. These various aspects enable the singers to rethink and 'zoom in' on the depicted scene or on the various qualities of the praised saints. This makes the descriptive part indeed 'meditational'. Rather than providing new information, it enables the meditative 'rumination' of the Christmas story or the qualities and praiseworthiness of Saint Francis, Saint Barbara and Saint Clare.

The intention of the meditational, descriptive section of the songs seems to be to stimulate the emotional, sensational experience of the depicted scene. The impassioned 'we' is, as it were, a spectator that is present at the scene. The performance of this role can be considered 'liminal-like': the singing group takes on the role of the impassioned 'we' in order to fully experience the meditational content. In other words, the singers take on a role that differs from themselves, which enables them to be in circumstances that differ from their usual situation and in which they can experience the devout content as an eyewitness.

A majority of 26 songs ends in prayer. In this section, the subject of devotion is frequently (although not always) addressed directly by the impassioned 'we' or 'I' with praises and requests. The finishing in prayer is in accordance with the songs studied by Mertens and Van der Poel. They argue that the prayer is enabled by the production of affect during meditation. In addition to that, I would like to argue that this prayer is also an incorporation of the experiences from the meditation in the here and now, which is underlined by the addition of the word 'now' and references to the convent itself. Liminal-like performances are characterised by their ability to bring forth changes and in this case, the liminal-like inner performance in meditation brings forth the possibility for prayer because it intends to have improved the singers' devout 'positions' in their spiritual ascent.

In conclusion, inner performance and experience are central aspects in the intended functioning of the songs in *The Songbook of Liisbet Ghoeyvaers*. The results of the study by Mertens and Van der Poel are partly applicable for this corpus. In accordance with their results, the songs I studied have a script-like character. They provide an impassioned role that the singers can perform and through which they can, by using their emotional and sensational faculties, experience the meditational content of the song. However, the impassioned role in the songs I studied provide an impassioned 'we', rather than an 'I', which implies a collective use

and, therefore, a collective performative practice. Furthermore, the threefold structure of lectio, meditatio and oratio is only partly recognisable, because the lectio of a Biblical passage is absent. In addition, I have positioned the intended functioning of the songs in a broader context. The process of pre-liminality, liminality and post-liminality that is intended to be experienced throughout singing the song can be considered an instrument for the journey of spiritual growth that the devotees would be on.

The developed methodology has proved functional for this kind of research. It enabled a structuralised approach to the analysis of a wide variety of textual aspects and made it possible to examine both the implications these aspects have for the intended functioning of the texts, and the connections between the various aspects. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary approach was fruitful in the interpretation of the textual elements. The use of anthropological theories helped in understanding what specific textual elements *do*, i.e. how they influence and stimulate the performers of the songs. However, for further research, it might be useful to narrow down the number of studied aspects in order to be able to gain a deeper understanding of the exact 'working' of one of the aspects. Furthermore, the method as employed in this study would be unsuited for a study to a very large corpus of texts. The method demands a detailed examination of the various aspects, which takes a lot of time. Using digital means may ease and speed the search for emotion words and sensation words, but is not very well applicable to the examination of the structure of the texts and the narratological characteristics.[355]

Nevertheless, the broad scope of the methodology would suit a comparative study. Because the method is not exclusively applicable to the study of songs, it may be used to compare the intended functioning of various devout and meditational genres. The comparison of the current results with other genres (such as prayer or meditational texts in prose) would be useful to gain further insight into the role experience and performance play in devout practice as a whole. Furthermore, it might be a useful way to examine the relationship between the thematic content of a text and its performative use. This might, for instance, help to understand the exceptional attention for Christmas in devout song. With the current study, I have aimed to determine the intended functioning of just one of the various textual genres that were used as

[355] I used digital means to establish a list of the most frequent words, which, for instance, showed the domination of the 'we' compared to the 'I'. However, in order to understand what these characteristics imply for the intended functioning of the songs, one still needs to precisely interpret the results.

instruments for spiritual growth in Late Medieval devotion. Hopefully, these results may be examined for various other genres in the future.[356]

[356] This thesis is the final product of my research master in Medieval Studies at the University of Utrecht. It derives from my interests in religious culture and devout practice in the Late Medieval period and is strongly rooted in my curiosity to how people experience the elusive, invisible, undefinable but simultaneously all-defining subject they call the divine. I have received great support by various people in this process of crystalizing these passions and interests into the final product of this master thesis. First of all, I am grateful to my supervisor dr. Dieuwke van der Poel for her critical and educational feedback, her suggestions, advice and her trust in a good outcome. I also want to thank prof. dr. Veerle Fraeters, my second assessor, for the feedback, suggestions and support in the first, orientating phases of this thesis. In addition, my sincere thanks go to prof. dr. Paul Wackers for his lessons in Middle Dutch and our fruitful conversations, and to dr. Frank Brandsma for our interesting conversation on emotions and mirror neurones. Lastly, I had great support from my friends and family. Eva, Charlotte, Jotte, Dorien, Maria, papa, mama, oma and most of all Floris: thank you for listening to my ideas – even if the subject might have laid very far from your own expertise - and for your helpful questions.

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Appendix

150 most frequent words

Order	*Unfiltered word count*	*Occurrences*	*Percentage*
1.	die	345	2.5651
2.	dat	271	2.0149
3.	in	242	1.7993
4.	ons	215	1.5985
5.	van	203	1.5093
6.	ende	171	1.2714
7.	en	160	1.1896
8.	es	157	1.1673
9.	een	144	1.0706
10.	daer	142	1.0558
11.	si	141	1.0483
12.	v	132	0.9814
13.	de	129	0.9591
14.	sijn	125	0.9294
15.	maria	123	0.9145
16.	al	116	0.8625
17.	hi	107	0.7955
18.	met	101	0.7509
19.	was	101	0.7509
20.	het	100	0.7435
21.	der	87	0.6468
22.	soe	86	0.6394
23.	haer	83	0.6171
24.	hodie	82	0.6097
25.	ic	75	0.5576
26.	heeft	74	0.5502
27.	ro	72	0.5353
28.	vo	71	0.5279
29.	hy	70	0.5204
30.	hem	70	0.5204
31.	den	69	0.5130
32.	o	68	0.5056
33.	god	66	0.4907
34.	nv	65	0.4833
35.	te	64	0.4758
36.	niet	62	0.4610
37.	als	53	0.3941
38.	want	52	0.3866
39.	is	51	0.3792
40.	cf	50	0.3717

41.	wel	50	0.3717
42.	my	48	0.3569
43.	hier	48	0.3569
44.	maget	46	0.3420
45.	des	44	0.3271
46.	sy	43	0.3197
47.	sonder	42	0.3123
48.	dit	42	0.3123
49.	sal	42	0.3123
50.	op	41	0.3048
51.	tot	41	0.3048
52.	vor	41	0.3048
53.	geboren	40	0.2974
54.	doen	39	0.2900
55.	alle	39	0.2900
56.	moet	36	0.2677
57.	moeder	35	0.2602
58.	ghy	35	0.2602
59.	quam	34	0.2528
60.	men	34	0.2528
61.	sijt	34	0.2528
62.	kint	33	0.2454
63.	edel	33	0.2454
64.	wi	32	0.2379
65.	wb	31	0.2305
66.	gods	31	0.2305
67.	est	31	0.2305
68.	hij	31	0.2305
69.	mnl	31	0.2305
70.	kyrieleison	30	0.2230
71.	geloeft	30	0.2230
72.	alleluia	30	0.2230
73.	scone	30	0.2230
74.	natus	30	0.2230
75.	groot	29	0.2156
76.	wilt	29	0.2156
77.	sprac	28	0.2082
78.	aue	28	0.2082
79.	noch	28	0.2082
80.	pro	28	0.2082
81.	sidi	28	0.2082
82.	sone	28	0.2082
83.	crimine	27	0.2007
84.	puer	27	0.2007
85.	plena	27	0.2007

86.	herte	27	0.2007
87.	bouen	27	0.2007
88.	nostrorum	27	0.2007
89.	bidt	26	0.1933
90.	laet	26	0.1933
91.	zijn	26	0.1933
92.	ihesus	26	0.1933
93.	minnen	25	0.1859
94.	aen	25	0.1859
95.	ghi	25	0.1859
96.	betekenis	24	0.1784
97.	fijn	24	0.1784
98.	kindeken	23	0.1710
99.	na	23	0.1710
100.	om	23	0.1710
101.	dracht	23	0.1710
102.	wy	22	0.1636
103.	vader	22	0.1636
104.	doer	22	0.1636
105.	ingel	22	0.1636
106.	voor	22	0.1636
107.	dan	22	0.1636
108.	int	22	0.1636
109.	sinen	22	0.1636
110.	uwen	21	0.1561
111.	dese	21	0.1561
112.	mijn	21	0.1561
113.	gratia	20	0.1487
114.	deser	20	0.1487
115.	hemel	20	0.1487
116.	doot	20	0.1487
117.	suete	20	0.1487
118.	haren	20	0.1487
119.	pag	20	0.1487
120.	ingelen	19	0.1413
121.	gode	19	0.1413
122.	ontfaen	19	0.1413
123.	comen	19	0.1413
124.	alder	19	0.1413
125.	leuen	19	0.1413
126.	claer	19	0.1413
127.	allen	19	0.1413
128.	coninc	18	0.1338
129.	tijt	18	0.1338
130.	hebben	18	0.1338

131.	mach	18	0.1338
132.	inder	18	0.1338
133.	hemels	18	0.1338
134.	r	17	0.1264
135.	reyne	17	0.1264
136.	heere	17	0.1264
137.	woude	17	0.1264
138.	vrouwe	17	0.1264
139.	minne	17	0.1264
140.	vol	17	0.1264
141.	kinder	16	0.1190
142.	lied	16	0.1190
143.	inden	16	0.1190
144.	maecht	16	0.1190
145.	man	16	0.1190
146.	wonder	16	0.1190
147.	groote	15	0.1115
148.	deze	15	0.1115
149.	dies	15	0.1115
150.	hadde	15	0.1115