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Title: *Stigmatics and Visual Culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, by Cordelia Warr

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Warr, Cordelia. *Stigmatics and Visual Culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy*. Amsterdam University Press, 2022. Pp. 316. ISBN 9789463724562 (hardcover), \$183.99.

Cordelia Warr's book *Stigmatic and Visual Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Italy* offers a captivating exploration of the intricate relationship between religious stigmatization and the visual arts during the Middle Ages and early modern period in Italy. Through meticulous research and insightful analysis, Warr uncovers the profound impact of stigmatism on artistic expression and cultural developments of the time. One of the book's strengths lies in its comprehensive approach to the subject matter. Warr skilfully navigates the complex interplay between religious mysticism and visual representation. Drawing upon a diverse array of primary sources, including artworks, devotional texts, and historical accounts, the author constructs a rich narrative that unveils the multifaceted connections between stigmatization, religious fervor, and the creative imagination. An especially insightful aspect of Warr's work is her exploration of the gendered dynamics within the visual representation of stigmatism. By focusing on predominantly female stigmatic figures, the author sheds light on how societal norms and religious ideologies influenced the portrayal of these women. This analysis adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of religious iconography, revealing the power dynamics and cultural constructs that shaped the depiction of female mystics and their experiences.

The book's structure, organized into eight chapters, allows for a comprehensive examination of various facets of stigmatization. The chapters dedicated to individual mystics, such as Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Catherine of Siena, provide a nuanced exploration of their experiences and their influence on artistic representation. These chapters include Chapter 1, *Introduction: Stigmata and Visual Culture*, sets the stage by introducing the central theme of the book: the relationship between stigmatization and visual culture. It defines stigmatization and its religious significance, laying the groundwork for understanding its visual representation in art; Chapter 2, *Saint Francis of Assisi as Image*, focuses on Saint Francis of Assisi, one of the most renowned figures associated with stigmatization. The chapter examines the experiences of Francis of Assisi and delves into how his stigmatization was understood and portrayed in art; Chapter 3, *Representing the Invisible: Saint Catherine of Siena's Stigmatization*, centers on the stigmatization of Saint Catherine of Siena, a prominent 14th-century mystic and theologian and on the controversy regarding her stigmatization; Chapter 4: *The Stigmatic Spectrum and the Visual Arts* offers a broader perspective on various stigmatic experiences and their representations while Chapter 5, *Gregorio Lombardelli, Invisibility, and the Representation of Saint Catherine of Siena's Stigmata* focuses specifically on Gregorio Lombardelli, an artist known for his visual representation of Saint Catherine of Siena's stigmatization. It examines the challenges and creative choices Lombardelli faced when tasked with representing Saint Catherine and analyzes his artistic techniques, symbolism, and how he captured the essence of Saint Catherine's stigmatization. Chapter 6, *Performing Stigmata*, takes an intriguing angle by analyzing stigmatization through the lens of performance studies. It explores how stigmatic experiences were "performed" by the individuals themselves or how they were perceived as performative acts by society. Chapter 7, *Painting, Printing, Sculpting, Forgery (and Washing)* widens the scope to delve into various artistic media that were used to depict stigmatization. It discusses the challenges artists faced when translating the miraculous and mystical experiences of stigmatization into visual forms such as paintings, sculptures, and prints and touches upon issues of authenticity, forgery, and the impact of artistic reproduction on the dissemination of stigmatic imagery. Finally, Chapter 8, *Conclusion: The Timidity of the Visual Arts*, brings together the key findings and insights from the previous chapters. It offers a synthesis of how stigmatization influenced visual culture and how visual culture, in turn, shaped the perception of such a phenomenon.

One potential area that could benefit from further exploration is the reception and impact of stigmatization on broader society beyond the artistic and religious circles. The book appears to primarily focus on the representation of this occurrence in art and its theological significance. However, it might be valuable to delve deeper into how these depictions influenced the perceptions and beliefs of the general populace during that time. How did the visual representations of stigmatization impact the faith of ordinary individuals? Were there instances where these depictions led to increased devotion or pilgrimage to sites associated with stigmatized figures?

In summary, Cordelia Warr's "Stigmatic and Visual Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Italy" sheds new light on the role of stigma in shaping the visual culture of the time. The book's exploration of gender dynamics and its attention to cultural context further enrich our insights into the complexities of religious iconography and its resonance within society.

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