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The significance of the wound

In a study from the early 20th century on over 321 stigmatized saints (behind which there's every reason to believe in a divine intervention) where 87% women, stated a certain Dr Imbert according to Katolik.nu. In more recent studies regarding self-injury; on young people cutting and burning themselves, the relation between women and men is about the same. Is this a coincidence?

We live in a culture marked by the wound. The side-wound of Christ on the cross is a dramatic sign loaded with meanings; signifies the sacrifice of God, his death and resurrection. The wound is a place for doubts and hopes.

Martyrs and saints have during history re-created the sufferings of Christ with their bodies. When St. Catherine de' Ricci (1522-1590) returned from her regular *Ecstasy of the Passion*, which always lasted for 28 hours, her body was covered with wounds, as made from whips, ropes and other instruments of torment. St Catherine was also hurting herself without the help of extraordinary powers; she was fastening extremely, carried a sharp iron chain around her neck and practiced other forms of self punishment. Narratives like this, describing suffering of women in the past have been interpreted as a reaction against an oppressive patriarchal structure, an inside rage that obtains an outside expression. At the same time the holy women gained a privileged and worshiped position in the social order and after their death.

The skin is an entity that both create a border between the subject and the outside world and a container of an amorphous chaotic inside. In times of internal or external struggle for power the skin becomes a site for different forces, social or individual, to carry out disciplinary actions, making marks of dominance and control, or of resistance. This paper address pre-modern representation of women marked with mystical stigmata's or traces of self-injuries. It will compare these texts with contemporary representations produced in subcultures in which mutual experiences of pain are a dominant and a mark of belonging. It is part of a research project studying visual representation of self inflicted pain financed by the Swedish research council.